



## The Woman-immigrant's Search for the 'New Mestiza' Consciousness: A Comparative Study of *Crossing Mexico's Other Border* and *Kantatar*

**Dr Ranita Chakraborty Dasgupta**

Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University, Kolkata

The author is an Assistant Professor at the Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University, Kolkata. She has a PhD in Comparative Literature from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. Her areas of research include Latin American Literatures, Translation Studies, Reception Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Comparative Cultural Studies. She is a member of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) and the Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI). She is also associated with the Centre for Studies in Latin American Literatures and Cultures at the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University.

### Abstract

Globalisation has come to shed its inimitable influence on the contemporary idea of borders. Borders today are set apart emerging with an altered nature and an altered series of meanings. Presently, we do locate quite a distinct difference between outside borders and inside/secondary borders. Borders on the outside are gradually melting while the secondary borders are tightening. Traditionally borders are supposed to create barriers and then contain within. However, in certain cases this function is being replaced by a peculiar bridging function enabling atypical contact. As a result, the meaning of borders needs a re-discovering and re-framing. The scope of Border Studies is growing by the day trying to understand how this politico-cartographical labyrinth is a constant life determining agent in the lives of those who survive in and around it.

Though the paper primarily considers the element of 'borders' and migration for study however the question of 'enclaves' is also touched upon. The paper looks at figure of the woman immigrant, in the context of the Indo-Bangladesh and US-Mexico border. The two texts in question are - a 2005 Bengali film called *Kantatar* and a docu-feature *Crossing Mexico's Other Border* shot as an episode of the Fringes docu-series by VICE. The texts are studied within the theoretical dimension of Gloria E. Anzaldúa's famous work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987).

### Keywords

borders, migrant woman, identity, hybrid realities, State and governance

Globalisation has come to shed its inimitable influence on the contemporary idea of borders. Borders today characterise an altered nature simultaneous with evolved meanings as well. One can distinctively locate a difference between outside borders and inside/secondary borders, where the prior seems to be melting by the day while the secondary borders emerge unencroachable. As a direct effect of globalisation there has been an increased flow of people, goods and information that has come to define border regions. As a result, the meaning of borders needs re-discovering and re-framing. The jurisdiction and the influence of the state no longer stop just at the border. As we witness an alteration from government to governance, borders offer a valuable prismatic lens on this evolving face of governance and its effects on the people/ 'citizens' on both the sides. I have been pondering upon this curious topic for quite some time and wanted to critically engage with the issue through the expanse of a study that would look at the figure of the immigrant women within the backdrop of cross-border migration. The perfect opportunity for the same seemed to be the TMYS Review December 2021. This unique project which is trying to map an informed and critical study on the theme of Migration, Displacement and Resettlement aims to do that by exploring Women's resettlement and Displacement with reference to gender identity and social inequality. It further proposes to investigate the sub themes of widow's migration-the socio religious and political stimulants, inter-caste and inter-community weddings - the social and personal biases against women and crime against women - physical and psychological rehabilitation for victims of rape and acid attack.

The paper here will concentrate generically on the first and third sub-theme. Though categorically migration of widows and physical and psychological rehabilitation of victims of rape and acid attack are mentioned to be the foci in this case, I will be taking the liberty of looking at migration as a process that marks displacement across borders and physical and psychological rehabilitation of victims viz-a-viz immigrant women negotiating body politics as a means of survival in and across the borderland.

Talking of migration, as meticulously pointed out in the very concept note of the TMYS Review, women's migration invites immediate attention not only towards the physical displacement of women in response to a situation, but also at the psychological rehabilitation due to social pressure, unequal gender rights and a corrupt civil system. I will catch upon this central thought investigating it along the lines of migration across the borders and implication of existing in the borderlands on the physical and psychological well-being of the migrant woman. Such a study asks certain basic yet significant questions like questions of identity, identification and belonging.

Borders become alive on various levels including anecdotal, narrative, and communicative through the experiences of the everyday as felt and shared by individuals. The meaning of "borders" is in constant flux; the more they are crossed and dealt with the greater number of times they are reproduced on various dimensions, both symbolic and cultural. Hence, it becomes a challenge for us as border scholars to interpret these narratives to understand the multifarious functions that borders have. When I started working on this paper it appeared more than natural to start with a more general discussion of what we understand to be "borders", "borderlands" and "belonging". How is this politico-cartographical labyrinth a constant and indispensable life determining

agent/catalyst in the lives of those who survive in and around it? Though the paper primarily focuses on the category of 'borders' for study I also prefer to bring in the question of 'enclaves' in this context. The following excerpt is going to be integral to our discussions further:

Mohammed Idris Ali's watery rice paddies shimmer in the monsoon breeze just like his neighbors'. His tepee-shaped stacks of jute, ready to be soaked, stripped and then turned into rope, stand as tall as the ones across the rutted footpath.

But the house across the footpath sits in India, and its owner, Chitra Das, has all the trappings of citizenship: a voter ID and a ration card that entitles him to discounted rice and wheat at a government shop. His children go to local schools and have access to Indian government hospitals.

Mr. Ali, however, exists in a no man's land. The patch of earth here on which he lives and farms is part of an archipelago of villages, known as enclaves, that are technically Bangladeshi territory but sit entirely surrounded by India, stuck on the wrong side of the border.

"The Indians say we are not Indian; the Bangladeshis say we are not Bangladeshi," says Mr. Ali. "We are nowhere." There are 50 other Bangladeshi enclaves like Mr. Ali's inside India; there are 111 Indian enclaves inside Bangladesh. The people of the enclaves are orphans, citizens of no country. For decades, neither the Indian nor the Bangladeshi government has taken responsibility for them. Their villages do without basic public services like electricity and roads. Parents must forge documents to send their children to local schools. They cannot vote. Without identity documents they face arrest and imprisonment as illegal immigrants.

"We were born like this," said Abdul Mutalib, of Madhya Masaldanga. "Our fathers were born like this. Neither side claims us. But our land is here. What else can we do? Where can we go? (Polgreen)

This was an extract from a news feature by LYDIA POLGREEN which was published on October 9, 2011. A version of this article appeared in print on October 10, 2011, of the New York edition with the headline: At India-Bangladesh Border, Living in Both, and Neither.

Rizwana Shamshad, of the Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, in her paper "Politics and Origin of the India-Bangladesh Border Fence" at the 17th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia held in Melbourne from 1-3 July 2008 highlighted a similar story.

Every time Nazir Rahman Bhuiyan, a villager in Bangladesh, moves from one part of his house to another, he crosses an international border - the recently fenced India and Bangladesh border. A spokesman for the Indian Ministry of External Affairs cited the reasons for the fence as a combination of similar reasons that had made the United States build fences with Mexico to prevent illegal migration and terrorist infiltration. The idea of protecting the Indo-Bangladesh border with a fence is not new. Regional politicians in

Assam first proposed fencing the border in the 1960s in order to isolate the population of East Pakistan.

Experiences of the similar kind have been for long echoing in the voices and lamentations of long-term Mexican American natives of the South-Western parts of North America. The Mexico–United States border runs from Imperial Beach, California, and Tijuana, Baja California, in the west to Matamoros, Tamaulipas, and Brownsville, Texas, in the east. The border, separating Mexico and the United States from each other, traverses a variety of terrains, ranging from major urban areas to inhospitable deserts. From the Gulf of Mexico, it follows the course of the Rio Grande to the border crossing at El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua; westward from that binational conurbation it crosses vast tracts of the Sonoran and Chihuahuan Desert, the Colorado River Delta, westward to the binational conurbation of San Diego and Tijuana before reaching the Pacific Ocean.

Like the stories of the enclave settlers in India and Bangladesh who are unable to assimilate, enculturate or find their legal place and identity, the Chicanos/as and Latinos/as in and around the US-Mexico borders are constantly struggling with the process of socio/cultural assimilation. The question of belonging to a nation state that offers sanction and security is an ever-eluding category of pursuit for these people. Unlike the postulates of the new age model of immigration, these people cannot assimilate by the melting pot model and become Americans by severing their ties with the “Old World”; all the more so when these ties lie engraved in language and culture. In fact, blending in is practically impossible for these immigrants who are racially different, have a different skin tone and look different.

However, mobility across the border allows these people to remain connected to their native language and culture and their homelands continue to be parts of their new lives. But unfortunately, even that “home” undergoes a change inside them. This to and fro journey neither allows them to go back home nor allows them to fit in. They are literally caught between two worlds, in the no man’s land! One of the discussion sessions held as a part of the TMYS Review 2021 that largely enhanced my thinking in this regard was the session titled “Bodies in Movement: Migration, Sexual Violence and Citizenship” contributed by Dr. Udit Sen, Dr. Priya Deshingkar and Dr. Rashmi Luthra. During the session Dr. Deshingkar had enlightened us on how the migration industry necessarily works through an act of mediation and selective appropriation. How some groups of people are manufactured as “other” and a “territory” is made through certain laws and regulations which work as geo-political instruments for defining who belongs and who doesn’t belong in that territory. She further highlighted that the defining of national borders and who should be served is delineated as opposed to who is a threat to security and integrity of the nation. This seems like an echo on the situation and treatment of both the enclave dwellers along the Indo-Bangladesh border and the Chicanos/as and Latinos/as in and around the US-Mexico borders that we were just talking about. The popular narratives that stereotype these ideas and feed into them further marginalising these groups of people is an area of concern here.

For further discussion, let us look into two particular texts - a 2005 Bengali film called *Kantatar* and a documentary feature called *Crossing Mexico’s Other Border*

(CMOB) shot as an episode of the Fringes docu-series by VICE. The critical analysis will largely borrow from a close reading of Gloria E. Anzaldúa's critical work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987).

Though *Kantatar* is a motion picture and supposedly a work of fiction, nonetheless the storyline and screenplay closely draw from real life incidents and experiences of women immigrants in and around the borderlands between India and Bangladesh. The film heavily borrows from real-life stories heard, memoirs read and interviews taken. That being one of the primary reasons of its suitability to be analyzed on the same plain with a documentary film like CMOB. The crucial element of similarity between the two texts is the prismatic view they offer into the lives of migrant women and the life changing experiences the border ensues in their lives. The purpose here is to read into the border practices highlighted by these two features to understand how bureaucratic practices of border control and scrutinization have different impacts based on gender and other markers of identity. Detention policies create conditions for suffering and exploitation that affect women and men in different ways.

*Kantatar*, the film revolves around the journey of Sudha. She is an illegal immigrant whose search for a safe household and a respectable life morphs into her search for identity and her struggle to survive in the border areas of West Bengal. How in search of an identity/social acceptance she moves from one man to another while shifting from one religion to another. How the sudden threat of cross border terrorism completely changes the socio-political situation in a remote village close to the frontier. As the army starts rolling into town there are drastic changes that take a toll on the inter-personal relationships which are marred by suspicion and fear. Sudha constantly weaves herself in and out of different relationships with men which are also played out in the guise of new names and new religions. This immediately rings a bell with Dr. Udit Sen pointing out how within the corpus of the geo-politics of migration and border control, fake marriages are often resorted to in order to access plans of rehabilitation or at the least an acceptable standard of social sanction. But these settlements often come back and hit the woman in question as a boomerang.

The film sews together a set of unfettered exploration of the ongoing conflict at the Indo-Bangladesh border. It spreads out a collage of characters and situations - from corrupt lawyers to lustful government officials and military men, from helpless flesh traders at a brothel to immigrant women with bastard children, we see them all. There are extraordinary touches of satire and social commentary. The character of the lunatic man with a gun who keeps dictating long letters with hordes of complaints to government officials addressing administrative corruption and demanding explanations for carelessness in government policies, the sly lawyer who on one hand exploits helpless women giving false promises of officiating legal citizenship and on the other hand lets out these hapless women on the first chance. These and many more such plots in the film say a lot about life around the borders in today's India.

CMOB on the other hand is a 23-minute documentary where the team follows Joana, a young Guatemalan girl who lives in the small town of Huixtla, Chiapas. She is a prostitute with two sons. The makers tag along with a special team from the State Government which is responsible for migrant protection while they travel through

Chiapas. The documentary takes one to the dark little rooms and by-lanes of the bars, night clubs and brothels of the Tolerance Zone. Often people from various parts of Central America travel to the United States through Mexico. On the journey they are forced to grapple with human traffickers, corrupt police officers and drug cartels even before they get any close to the US borders. Migrants cross River Suchiate on rafts and get into Mexico. They are forced to travel on foot and finally ride on "The Beast" which are freight trains that travel from the southern fringes of Mexico all the way to the North. There is a common assumption that most immigrants who cross the US-Mexico border in search of job opportunities and better living conditions are mostly Mexican. Nonetheless, a huge number of these people are from Central America who embarks on the gruelling journey to the North. The flow of migrants from Honduras has seen a significant increase in the recent times due to degrading economic factors, people from El Salvador have also started moving due to continuous gang wars and Guatemala is seeing an all-time low availability of jobs which is forcing people to migrate in search of opportunities. Nonetheless, what lies in way is the ordeal called Mexico passing through which is often a lot more challenging than getting to the US. Even though bulks of the migrants are men, a proportion of them are women who are moving in search of a real job. But they must undergo adversities like trafficking and being raped by anyone and everyone who comes in the way. Some are even forced to stay back in Chiapas (in the Tolerance Zone) and start working as flesh traders or prostitutes as they need money to continue the journey. Often some of these women become sex workers by choice travelling back and forth between their home countries and Mexico to visit their family and children while making money at the same time. But there are others who are not interested in prostitution let alone being treated like slaves.

I find this entire corpus of body politics on one end of the praxis, curiously balancing with the question of migration/immigration on the other end, rather seizing. When Joana or for that matter the bar keeper, Patricia, or the brothel manager, Josue Toledo, are interviewed, there emerges a very interesting perspective on this apparently pitiable situation. To quote Joana:

Guatemala is a bit dangerous... I came here because someone else told me Huixtla was a little better.... I came here spoke to the manager and asked if he could give me a job and he said yes. We don't have a schedule we can go in and out whenever we want. No one is making us do anything.

Patricia says:

They come here to work out of necessity. One could say all of them are migrants. You won't find any Mexican women here. Most of them are from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua. Money lasts them longer here than there. They have a better quality of life, better food, better clothes, better things. The time they give each client is ten to fifteen minutes. Whether the man ejaculated or not is not relevant, he got his time and he must leave. They are here from 9am to 11pm. If they're doing well, they will stay fifteen days or one month. If not, they will stay one week and then leave. All of them have kids. They work here to provide for them. I think that's why they come to work, for their kids. Most of them charge 5

dollars and up. They earn 90 to 140 dollars on a good day.... Most of them come by themselves but some are pimped and what she makes goes to him.

Presumably, human trafficking and prostitution are two different things. Prostitution is often exposed and hygienically controlled as well. Human trafficking is common in/around the Mexican border territories and deceit plays an active role in this context in the Tolerance Zones. According to the government official in the feature once the girls get to the Tolerance Zones their papers are taken away as a means of extortion. Women are tricked into sexual exploitation. Human trafficking is even more de-humanizing as it follows a process of psychological slavery. The women are forced to believe in their worthless, valueless existence and their dispensability. With lower self-esteem it becomes easier to push them into addiction. All that makes human trafficking the modern format of slavery. In situations like this they experience a kind of 'trauma' which in the words of Dr. Udit Sen is beyond articulation. This is a kind of trauma that doesn't have a narrative, it only leaks in ways that cannot be mapped into orality.

However, Joana, who is a sex worker by choice, envisions it from a different perspective all together. One realizes how the epistemic privilege of the marginalized is coming in to play, when a sex worker or the brothel keeper is looking at this arrangement. In the face of migration/immigration, selling of the body becomes same as selling of labour making it an indispensable part/type of migrant labour. Sudha's journey in *Kantatar* gives an entirely different angle to this idea from her subjective location. Joana shows an objective distance from the question of being the victim and takes the reins of the situation in her command. Sudha seems to lack that cold, distanced, matter-of-fact sense of self and its reversed ontology in the first place. The question of self-worth is an emotional concern for her which transforms through her maturation and coming-of-age. Joana seems to be negotiating with the battle of displacement and the battle against patriarchal normalization in ways that carve a niche for migrant labourers like her.

In a long and heart wrenching soliloquy she narrates how hard she is trying to come to terms with her 'identity'. At the same time, she shares the experience of how that 'search' is influenced by her location in/around the borderland. The "forked consciousness" and divided selves of both Joana and Sudha are the results of complicated and ever-changing cartographies of memory, nostalgia and belonging. An interesting dimension for comparison that I draw from Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* here is the model of the immigrant woman. She is a woman within whom the idea of 'home' undergoes change because of the act of crossing over. Neither can she think of going back, nor is fitting-in an option, she feels a kind of a cultural schizophrenia.

What is it about a border that triggers these kinds of cultural forms, such souvenirs of bifurcated consciousness? Is the border a particular kind of region or social environment? If so, does the border tend to produce a particular kind of culture? And what is the relationship between this environment and its culture?

In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* Anzaldúa provides a radical theory as a possible answer to multiple questions of this sort. According to her, "The US-Mexican border 'es una herida abierta' where the Third World grates against the first and

bleeds. And before a scab forms it haemorrhages again, the lifeblood of the two worlds merging to form a third country- “a border culture”. She talks of the *mestiza* consciousness and how it would establish the border identity for the Chicana/o people. She illustrates that 'all' identity is constructed across difference, thereon arguing for the necessity of a new politics of difference to accompany this new sense of self. *Borderlands* map a sense of plurality of the self, which Anzaldua calls the “*mestiza*” or the “border consciousness”. This consciousness emerges from a subjectivity structured by multiple determinants—gender, class, sexuality—in competing cultures and racial identities. In the Indo-Bangladesh paradigm, the added determinant of religion comes in. Anzaldua’s book consists of a set of essays and poems exploring identity, each drawing on her experience as a Chicano, a lesbian, and an activist. Anzaldua challenges the conception of a border as a simple divide. *Borderlands* illustrate the pain the border has brought to the *mestizos/as* by both dividing their culture and trapping them on one side of the border. It further shows how the border fence does not just separate two countries, but it also affects the people both sociologically and psychologically. In Anzaldua’s words:

The reason that borders exist is to separate the good from the bad, the safe from the dangerous, us from them. When those of colour cross the border, whether legitimately or not, they are raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, and shot. (Anzaldua 22)

But most importantly, the text doesn’t just trace the lament of the physical border between America and Mexico, and the linguistic border between Spanish and English. It also explores the borders of gender and sexuality in the *Borderlands*. A self-described, “chicana dyke-feminist, tejana patlache, poet, writer, and cultural theorist” (Beavan, Katie. Inspiration: Gloria Anzaldua 1942-2004. 2004, [www.katieandjames.dev/blog/september-inspiration-gloria-anzaldua-1942-2004](http://www.katieandjames.dev/blog/september-inspiration-gloria-anzaldua-1942-2004)) Anzaldua focuses on the cultural response to a figure like herself that overlaps so many different borders.

As a Chicana growing up in the borderlands, Anzaldua had conceived it to be a vague place created by the emotional residue of an un-natural boundary and all those who are forbidden and prohibited are its dwellers. It is a zone inhabited by *los atravesados*, the perverse, and goes past the confines of the normal. Anzaldua's text deals with the psychological mindset involved in the act of resisting to oppression. The new *mestiza* consciousness that she talks about is born out of the interplay between the self that is in the process of being oppressed and the self that is in the process of resisting the oppression. While explaining her condition Anzaldua explains how there are two distinct states of the ‘self’ under oppression, the first is a state of intimate terrorism and the other is the *Coatlque* state. These two are the two faces of the coin that says, ‘being oppressed’. Under multiple layers of oppression, the self attains a state of multiplicity. For example, on one hand Anzaldua is oppressed in/by the Mexican world and on the other hand she is oppressed in/by the Anglo world. In between these two selves is the Self that germinates in the borderlands and is constantly trying to resist oppression.

Anzaldua's focus is even more crucial because she looks at the subject right at the moment of being oppressed. Hence both an everyday history of oppression and that of resistance is captured. She talks of an intimate state of terror when the Self gets oppressed and that is when she feels:

Alienated from her mother culture, "alien" in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can't respond, her face caught between los intersticios, the space between the different worlds she inhabits. (Anzaldua, 20).

When the self is subjected to acute oppression it starts to feel limited and hence the capacity of the individual to respond is constrained, often denied. The cold, impassive expression on Joana's face while she informs intricate details of her trade and work hours echoes peculiarly the petrified cultural schizophrenia that Anzaldua talks about.

To quote Maria Lugones, "Borderlands/La Frontera deals with the psychology of resistance to oppression." The possibility of resistance is revealed by perceiving the self in the process of being oppressed on one hand; and then viewing it also as the flip side of the same self in the process of resisting oppression. The new mestiza consciousness is born from this interplay between oppression and resistance. Resistance is understood as social, collective activity, by adding to Anzaldua's theory the distinction between the act and the process of resistance.

Nonetheless, Anzaldua manages to put her finger on the fact that the agency to resist depends on the possible creation of a new identity and acculturation of the self to a new world of sense in/on the borders. According to her the new mestiza "is an ambiguous border-dwelling self that emerges from the consciousness born out of racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization". Hence such a consciousness characterizes an increased state of tolerance for contradiction and creates a different value system through ripping apart of dualistic thinking.

It feels almost eerie to come across this uncanny similarity between what Anzaldua describes as the borderlands and its inhabitants and what *Kantatar* shows us on screen. The fact that, every time Sudha gets closest to assimilating in a foreign environment, settling down with a particular name and religion, coming to terms with a particular lifestyle, she is forced to step aside, seems so familiar to what Anzaldua says about "the troublesome" and the ones who have crossed over the confines of the normal. Like Anzaldua, who is a Chicana lesbian of working-class origins, Sudha is introduced as a working-class woman who enjoys no privilege in the categories of race, culture, gender, class, or sexuality. Hence, obviously she belongs nowhere. This observation I make here was effectively echoed by Dr. Uditi Sen during her session when she further mentioned how within the context of immigration/ migration, particularly along the Indo-Bangladesh border, certain occupations develop as more gendered. Looking at them through the lens of feminist geography one can understand why this happens. Certain identities are automatically channelled into certain kinds of jobs and they are produced and re-produced. This shows how effectively gender intersects with differentiators like race and class. And there on this entire situation is navigated further through spatial mobility. Such an analysis clearly helps us read into the situations that both Joana and Sudha are stuck in and the extreme dearth of opportunities that they face.

Like Joana she suffers from the nostalgia of a home lost and is simultaneously unable to find a home in the foreign land as well. There are various aspects of her multiple identity or non-identity (if we may say so) which always prohibit her from feeling completely "at home" in any one of the places or communities that she inhabits.

The saddest part is where Anzaldua can show the zest and the spirit for creating her own “home” through writing, Sudha’s search seems unending, and Joana is simply contented with a non-interfering brothel manager. Anzaldua says:

I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face... to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—una cultura mestiza—with my own lumber, my bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture. (Anzaldua, 22) Mestiza consciousness is not a given but must be produced, or built, spatialized and presented as a new mythology, a new culture, a non-dualistic perception and practice. The future depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos—that is, in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the way we behave—la mestiza creates a new consciousness. (Anzaldua, 80).

Sudha is in no place to claim that kind of a consciousness/space. As pointed out time and again by the lawyer in the film, Sudha doesn’t have a ration card or a voter’s identity card to identify her, to help her carve and chisel her face, her identity. It is these categories of governances (as highlighted by Dr. Udit Sen) that essentially marginalize her. Nor is she literate enough to claim her own space or her new consciousness. She pines over her life and her multiple faces each one of which has a different name and a different religion, once she is Pirani, the contractor’s wife, then she is Rehanna khatun, companion of the smuggler Majid, again she is Sudha wandering about in search of job and shelter, and finally caught as a cross border currency smuggler. The fact is all these different faces are indispensable parts of the collage that constructs Sudha’s bordered identity, the geographical borders have actually managed to seep into her being, her psyche and give rise to multiple hybrid realities which make her say “amar tin te jibon, shokale ekta.... dupure ekta...raate ekta” (I have three lives, one in the morning...one in the afternoon.... and one at night). However, they both are equally vulnerable. In Anzaldua’s words, “Woman does not feel safe when her own culture and the white culture, are critical of her, when the males of all races hunt her as prey” (Anzaldua, 20).

On another level, what exists as the real physical barbed wire of a border for Sudha which bifurcates her identity and forces her to shed all the accent hangovers of her mother tongue, for Anzaldua the border of language and the “blood in the throat” idea that she talks of can be seen in the same comparative light. The fact that she is held a cultural traitor because neither can she speak English properly nor Spanish, the act of talking and using her language as her voice becomes a both ways sawed experience. On one hand she is held the pocho by various Latinos/as for speaking the oppressor’s language thereby ruining Spanish. Chicano Spanish developed on its own as a border tongue, no matter how very living this form of Spanish was, it was incorrect. For people like Anzaldua who don’t live in a country where Spanish is the first language, rather live in a country where English is the reigning language but they themselves are not Anglo, they can neither identify with standard Spanish or standard English, their only recourse is to create their own language. This emerges as a language that helps them connect to their identity and communicate their realities which is neither English nor Spanish but both. Their tongue is a forked one.

What we have been discussing till now is the thematic of comparison that can be brought into study when looking at these texts. But to build up from there the most important question that appears is that of ontology? What is it to think from any kind of a borderland? How is it articulated in practice? Is there any particular aesthetic vision at play in representing the border identity and experience which surfaces in both the texts? The ontological question is what constructs the “border being”?

It appears to be a consciousness that is both rooted and denied a geo-physical rooting. It is a double consciousness. Anzaldua further lifts it to the position of a generic consciousness as well, where she practically violates the borders between fiction and non-fiction, poetry and essay, history, and criticism. She doesn't allow the reader to pin her down in any single genre, symptomatic of her bordered consciousness which is multiple. But the new height of “mestiza consciousness” that Sudha or Joana, even if in the form of passing moments, manages to achieve is by being desired. Anzaldua doesn't taste that at all. Her consciousness is defined by her queer identity. But, thanks to the many stories and the many lives that Sudha manages to weave, they force the men around her to desire her along with her stories. Her consciousness is multilayered, all her selves- Pirani, Sudha, Rehanna, Firoza, all are equally true and that way she achieves a multiple awareness. That way *Kantatar* manages to go a few steps ahead of Anzaldua in articulating this “miniscule of power” drawing it from the rock bottom of the “othered” who exist at the periphery of the mainstream society. If not similar but in a comparable way, Joana, by the dint of the fact that she sells her body at her own choice, her own convenience and her own whim manages to achieve the much-desired agency that is otherwise denied to her by society. This stance forces the society, forces us for once to engage with them and their stories as subjects creating history rather than as objects. The scope for bringing in their perspectives is born rather than the perspective of the director or the interviewer finding the sole importance.

### Works Cited

- Anzaldúa, Gloria E. *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
- Galbraith, Janet and Members of WTF 2014. "Writing Through Fences: Breaching the walls through a nourishing practice of resistance." *Borderlands e-journal*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2014
- Lugones, Maria. *On Bordelands/La Frontera: An Interpretative Essay*. *Adventures in Lesbian Philosophy*. Ed. Claudia Card, Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Polgreen Lydia. *At India-Bangladesh Border, Living in Both, and Neither*. 2011.
- Schendel, Willem van. *Bharot-Bangladesher Chhitmohol*. Prothom Alo. Idshonkha, 2004, pp. 265-279
- Shamshad, Rizwana. *Politics and the Origin of the India-Bangladesh Border Fence*. 17th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, 2018.

### Webliography

- <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzEUHF1KPY8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzEUHF1KPY8)>
- <[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=Kantatar](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Kantatar)>
- <<http://smithsonianeducation.org/migrations/bord/intro.html>>
- <<http://smithsonianeducation.org/migrations/bord/cultid.html>>
- <<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/winter00/niday.html>>
- <<http://rupkatha.com/V2/n3/BorderIdentityPolitics.pdf>>
- <<http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/mai/files/2012/07/rizwanashamshad.pdf>>
- <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/10/world/asia/at-india-bangladesh-border-living-in-both-and-neither.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/10/world/asia/at-india-bangladesh-border-living-in-both-and-neither.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)>
- <<http://mellenpress.com/mellenpress.cfm?bookid=7183&pc=9>>
- <[http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia\\_July07/bim%20.htm](http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_July07/bim%20.htm)>
- <[http://www.google.co.in/#hl=en&sugexp=les%3B&gs\\_rn=4&gs\\_ri=psy-ab&cp=23&gs\\_id=2s&xhr=t&q=Mexico+US+Border&es\\_nrs=true&pf=p&sclien t=psy-ab&oq=Mexico+US+Border+expero&gs\\_l=&pbx=1&bav=on.2,or.r\\_gc.r\\_pw.r\\_qf.&bvm=bv.42661473,d.bmk&fp=aa90ac8337e66c03&biw=1517&bih=741](http://www.google.co.in/#hl=en&sugexp=les%3B&gs_rn=4&gs_ri=psy-ab&cp=23&gs_id=2s&xhr=t&q=Mexico+US+Border&es_nrs=true&pf=p&sclien t=psy-ab&oq=Mexico+US+Border+expero&gs_l=&pbx=1&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.&bvm=bv.42661473,d.bmk&fp=aa90ac8337e66c03&biw=1517&bih=741)>

### Talks Referred to:

- CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN: physical and psychological rehabilitation
- Sen, Udit, Priya Deshingkar, Rashmi Luthra. "Bodies in Movement - Migration, Sexual Violence and Citizenship." Interview by Sneha Roy. *Tell Me Your Story Review*, 3 October 2021, <[https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=161252152847237](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=161252152847237)>