


Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay on Love and Sex

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Abstract

The Bengali novelist Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay (1876-1938) of colonial India and the French *philosophe* of Enlightenment Europe Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) stand poles apart from each other—temporally, territorially, and culturally. Although Sharatchandra is reputed to have been familiar with a number of romantic writers of England, he does not seem to be acquainted with any literati of Europe, especially of Enlightenment France. Nevertheless, as this article contends, the Bengali writer's attitude to human sensuality and sentiment or, more precisely, to love, sex, and marriage, betrays an interesting similarity to that of the French author. An upshot of this comparatist exercise is that we gain a fresh outlook on both men's views on human condition that blurs, as it were, the distinction between modern European and modernizing and Westernizing colonial Indian mentalité.

Keywords

Asia, area studies, humanities, philosophy, literature, modern, history, morality, religious studies

Introduction

The popular novelist of late Renaissance Bengal, Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay (1876-1938),¹ and the *philosophe*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), of Enlightenment Paris and Geneva, stand poles apart from each other. Although, reportedly, Sharatchandra was familiar with a number of romantic writers of England, such as Mary Corelli, Ellen Wood, Edward George Bulwer, First Baron Lytton, and Charles Dickens, he does not seem to be acquainted with any literati of Enlightenment Europe, especially of France. Nevertheless, as this article argues, the Bengali writer betrays an almost similar attitude to love, sex, and marriage as does Rousseau. An upshot of this limited exercise is that we gain a fresh outlook on Sharatchandra's views on the human condition that brings Rousseau's worldviews closer to those of Sharatchandra, thus blurring the distinction between the two authors.

Despite exposure to Western education and culture, the genteel Hindu society of the urban and rural areas of Bengal continued to practice child marriage and look down upon widow remarriage (contrary to the exertions of Ishvarchandra Bidyasagar, 1820-1891). While apotheosizing womanhood, the Hindu society yet subordinated women to men by valorizing their identity as wife (*jāyā* or *bhāryā*) and mother (*jananī* or *garbhadhārīnī*), thus rendering this exalted status virtually contingent upon their role as a *satī* or *sādhvī* (chaste or loyal to their husband). Interestingly enough, such a feminine status was endorsed even by the so-called modern educated women. The oft-used word that became the leitmotif in

the articles composed by women for women in the *Brāhma* journal *Bāmābodhinī* was “*pātibratya*” or devotion to husband, a familiar term of Bengali conjugal life, received a new impetus and significance in the 19th century from increasing familiarity with Western literature dealing with love and courtship (Chakrabarti, 1995/1998, pp. 106-111; Chaudhuri, 1993 [1399 BE], p. 136).

Pātibratya permitted the wife's submission to her spouse's sexual demand that might not have required his erotic attraction toward her. However, the man seemed to harbor a negative attitude to his sexuality for his wife and considered it degrading for a true *satī*, and yet longed for her love (*prem* or *bhālabāsā*). The clearest and the most elegant example of this ambivalence and ambiguity must be credited to Rabindranath Thakur (Tagore; 1861-1941), the most talented and celebrated member of the literati of renaissance Bengal. His famous novel *Gorā* (1910) has its eponymous protagonist aver: “The altar at which Woman may be truly worshipped is her place as Mother, the seat of the pure, right-minded Lady of the house” (Tagore, 1999, p. 9).

Tagore also presents a contrary argument through Gora's friend and the second male hero of the story Binaṅ who, on the eve of his marriage to a *Brāhma* girl, says,

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Gora, I can tell you for certain that the one means by which in a single moment man's whole nature can be awakened is this love—no matter what the reason is, there is no doubt that amongst us the manifestation of this love is weak, and therefore all of us are deprived of a complete realisation of ourselves—we don't know what is in us, we cannot reveal what is hidden within, and it is impossible for us to spend what is accumulated in our hearts—that is why there is such joylessness on every side, such want of cheerfulness! (Tagore, 1999, p. 375)

Yet Gora, who believed (benightedly, though, as he would come to discover at the end of the novel) that “he was a Brahmin of India” and as such “desire and attachment were not for him,” cogitates upon the sudden departure of his beloved Sucharita,

God has revealed to me plainly enough the form of attachment, and has shown me that it is not pure, and that in it there is no peace. Like wine it is red and pungent—it does not allow the mind to be tranquil, it makes one thing appear another—I am a sannyasi, in my realisation and worship it can have no place. (Tagore, 1999, p. 378)

Nirad Chaudhuri astutely observes on the development of the idea of love in Bengal due to Western contact and impact,

We in Bengal began to deal with love from the literary end. That is to say, at first it was transferred to Bengali literature from English literature, and then taken over from literature to life. As a result of this double transplantation, the plant remains delicate, and a hothouse atmosphere is needed for its survival.” (Chaudhuri, 1993 [1399 BE], p. 166)

Sharatchandra's works reflect, *mutatis mutandis*, this Western influence with this ambivalent attitude to human sexuality. As will be clear from the discussion below, there was a lot in common between the East and the West in this respect.

Women had been assigned roles in Enlightenment Europe similar to their Asian counterparts. During the Enlightenment, femininity came to be defined in respect of their social and cultural differences from men as “natural” based on medical and scientific criteria. Medical writings concluded that women were virtually a separate species of humans with characteristic reproductive functions (a race of essentialized *jananīs*). They were considered the custodians of domestic morals and piety, but they were effectually denied full status as individuals, a privilege monopolized by the menfolk. In fact, it was Rousseau who, inter alia, as Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) pointed out in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792, cited in Outram, 2005, p. 79), regarded women as inferior to and different from men. The Enlightenment, as Wollstonecraft noted, was far from its popularized claim to be a “party of humanity”; on the contrary, its practice “set the stage for the creation of an entirely masculine political culture during the French Revolution [1789-99]” (Outram, 2005, p. 92).

The late Enlightenment penumbra of Rousseau's floruit and that of the late Bengal Renaissance of Sharatchandra's enable us to view the latter's outlook on gender, marriage, and sexuality not as typically Hindu or Bengali but as the product of their almost similar *Zeitgeist*. This comparative exercise thus seeks to add a global perspective and relevance to Sharatchandra's literary output created with and centered on local familial and social concerns. Such a perspective gains further poignancy when both authors' personal odysseys informing their major works are incorporated in the comparative framework.

Social Background

Both Sharatchandra and Jean-Jacques were outsiders with respect to the literary world they dominated: Rousseau of Geneva and Turin in Enlightenment Paris and Sharatchandra of Bhagalpur and Rangoon in renascent Calcutta. Both grew up outside of their respective families and both were autodidacts, though Sharatchandra attended school while Rousseau was taught by private tutors for some time. Both lacked a robust frame since their childhood, albeit possessed of youthful energy. Rousseau was self-conscious about his charm. He confesses conceitedly,

Without being what is called a handsome lad, I was well set up, I had a pretty foot, a fine leg, an easy manner, lively features, a pretty little mouth, black hair and eyebrows, small and even sunken eyes, which, however, vigorously darted forth the fire with which my blood was kindled.” (Rousseau, 1996a, p. 45)²

His onetime lover, a flamboyant noble woman, however, contemptuously considered him “alarmingly ugly” but “an interesting madman” (Damrosch, 2005, pp. 282-283). Sharatchandra never speaks of his looks except that he was very thin and, during the onset of midlife, not possessed of a photogenic face. Actually, he was gratuitously humble about his appearance as one can easily see his charming (even somewhat feminine) features in his midlife, with his shock of flowing white hair not quite fully groomed that bespeak the visage of an artist, an ascetic, or a dreamer.

Yet he was no intellectual, whereas Rousseau was one *par excellence*. Sharatchandra was a writer of fiction and Rousseau primarily of philosophical and theoretical essays, albeit also famous for two celebrated works of fiction: *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and *Émile ou de l'éducation* [Émile, or on Education] (1762).³ Nonetheless, their life experiences are significant enough to warrant this comparative exercise between the two luminaries as man and man of letters.

Rousseau's father Isaac, a watchmaker by profession, was well-educated and a lover of music. His mother Suzanne, daughter of a Calvinist preacher, died of puerperal fever 9 days after his birth. He and his older brother François were brought up by their father with the help of a parental aunt, also named Suzanne. But Isaac was a temperamental,

irascible, and volatile personality who, a few years after marriage, had brushed against the Genevan authorities, given up his clock-making vocation all of a sudden, and had once left his wife to seek fortune (as a clock-maker) in Constantinople (1705-1711). A contemporary considered him violent and irresponsible. Jean-Jacques may have inherited his emotional instability from his father. Yet Isaac Rousseau also encouraged his son's education. Jean-Jacques had no recollection of learning how to read, but remembered that his father encouraged his love of reading when he was 5 or 6 years old (Rousseau, 1996a, p. 7). He perhaps deplored his upbringing by his father when he wrote "Fathers' ambition, avarice, tyranny, false foresight, their negligence, their harsh insensitivity are a hundred times more disastrous for children than the blind tenderness of mothers" (Rousseau, 2010, pp. 161-162).

In Sharatchandra's case, his father Matilal, though not college educated but a high school graduate, was fond of fine arts such as painting and writing, though he did not have the financial or intellectual means to sustain his literary and artistic interests. A chip of the old block, the boy Sharatchandra developed a liking for cheap erotic romances that used to be his father's pastime. Sharatchandra read a couple of Battala romances he came upon serendipitously when once he foraged his father's dilapidated desk.⁴ His father Matilal, an idler and a dreamer, would while away his time playing with the kids of the family household as well as of the neighborhood, sit down to compose a poem or write a story (which he would never finish for one reason or the other or for reasons best known to himself), or smoke if he could scrounge the money to buy tobacco with (A. K. Ghosh, 2003, p. 11; see also Chapter 2). Rousseau, like little Sharatchandra, adored the romantic literature, read more serious books such as Jean Le Sueur's (ca. 1598-1668) *Histoire de l'église et de l'empire* (1681), Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet's (1627-1704) *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681), Ovid's (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 BCE-17 CE) *Metamorphoses* (8 CE), and above all, Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus's (46-120) *Lives of Noble Greeks and Romans* or *Parallel Lives* (in Jacques Amyot's [1513-1593] translation), which he would read to his father while he made watches (Rousseau, 1996a, pp. 6-7).

The relationship between Jean-Jacques and his father was problematic, and it is still more so for someone trying to understand its nature or intensity from the *Confessions*, which is our only source in this regard. He was once severely chastised for having torn a Latin dictionary. Later, he incurred his father's displeasure for having left the Calvinist church and converted to Romanism. Reportedly, once Isaac even disowned his son by telling him that "he no longer regarded him as his son." Rousseau's father is alleged to have convinced his son that he was, by his birth, responsible for his mother's death. The outcome of such relationships was that the young Jean-Jacques developed a sort of paranoia about displeasing and "became very prone to acts of submission." Consequently, as he grew older, his capacity for

normal self-assertion at critical moments atrophied (Grimsley, 1961, p. 26). Yet, Rousseau was very proud of his father. "My father was not only a man of honours," he observes, "he was a man of proved uprightness, and he had one of those strong souls which are capable of great virtues; in addition to which, he was a good father, especially towards myself" (Rousseau, 1996a, p. 52).

Sharatchandra's relationship with his father until the death of his mother was apparently uneventful. As he did not live in his parents' home for a long stretch of time but for the most part of his childhood and adolescence in his maternal grandfather's family along with his parents, there were no direct exclusive contacts with his father. Later in life he wrote about his father in adulatory terms:

Father was a great scholar, and he had tried his hand at stories and novels, dramas and poems, in short, every branch of literature, but never could finish anything. I have not his work now—somehow it got lost; but I remember poring over the incompleteness [*sic*]. Over again in my childhood, and many a night I kept awake regretting their incompleteness, and thinking what might have been their conclusion if finished. Probably this led to my writing short stories when I was barely seventeen. (Sen, 2002b [1400 BE], Vol. 2, p. 2103)⁵

Surendranath Gangopadhyay observes in a reminiscence of Sharatchandra that Matilal's filial piety, especially his affectionate attitude to children in general, worked wonders in the making of Sharatchandra's character (Gangopadhyay, 1959, p. 46).

There are, however, some indications about the growing coolness between the father and the son following Bhubanmohini's death when Matilal was obliged to leave his in-laws' shelter and be on his own at a nearby area, Khanjarpalli. Matilal was totally bankrupt and reportedly overwhelmed with grief at the death of his beloved wife and, by the same token, at his ouster from his in-laws' shelter to which he had been accustomed. Meanwhile, Sharatchandra had obtained a temporary low paid job that he disliked very much. He hardly stayed at home as his job involved frequent travels out of town. Sometime toward the end of 1901, he, reportedly, quarreled with his father for having gifted away some precious stones belonging to his father, and quit his home for an indefinite destination. On his own admission, Sharatchandra became an itinerant ascetic of the *Nāgā* sect. There is no further information about his father until his death in 1902.

Rousseau had led an uprooted bohemian existence for the first 37 years of his life, shuffling between Geneva, Savoy, and France (Lyon), though these bohemian years were marked by two startling breaks. The first was his meeting at 17 with the stunningly beautiful Louis Eléanore de la Tour, Baronne de Warens (1700-1762), who provided him the idyllic life of a happy parasite and made him yearn for an aristocratic status and style. The second break, occurring since his remove in Paris in 1742, was a turning point in his career in 1749 when he underwent a conversion experience

under a tree in the park of Vincennes following his reading the title of the Academy of Dijon essay competition—"Has the reestablishment of the Sciences and the Arts contributed to purify Morals?" He came to his life's abiding conviction at Vincennes "that man is naturally good, and that by their institutions alone that men have become wicked" (McManners, 1972, p. 297). His entry titled *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* (1750) won the competition, and it circulated widely following its publication by the encyclopedist Denis Diderot (1713-1784) (who wrote that "it has gone up like a rocket" [Rousseau, 1996a, p. 352]), though slightly more than a century and a half later, the distinguished critique Jules Lemaître (1853-1914) would regard Rousseau's celebrity on this account as "one of the strongest proofs ever provided of human stupidity" (cited in Johnson, 1988, p. 7).

Sharatchandra had a rootless and rudderless life until he carved out a niche for himself in the literary world of late nascent Bengal following the publication of his novella *Baradidi* published in the literary magazine *Bhārati* in April-July 1907. Sharatchandra's novella created somewhat of a sensation in the literary circle of Calcutta. The Tagores, including Rabindranath, Abanindranath (1871-1951), and Gaganendranath (1867-1938), hailed the piece as a fine work of a maverick but an "extraordinarily powerful writer" (S. Mukhopadhyay, 1959 [1366 BE], pp. 23-24). He does not seem to have experienced any inspirational moment such as Jean-Jacques's mystical vision of the true human nature at Vincennes in 1749 or Rabindranath's *Sturm und Drang*⁶ that led to the creation of the "The Awakening of the Waterfall" (*Nirjharer Svapnabhāṅga*) sometime in 1882. Nevertheless, on his own account, Sharatchandra received a call to serve the cause of letters, rather unexpectedly, when he had crossed his adult youth into midlife. As he declared in a public lecture in 1338 BE (1931),

When I received rather unexpectedly an invitation to serve the cause of literature, I had crossed over my youth into middle age with a tired body and limited energy; the days of learning something new were over . . . Yet I responded to the call unhesitatingly. (Sen, 2002b [1400 BE], Vol. 2, p. 1998: Sharatchandra's speech at the Tagore birth anniversary [Rabīndrajayantī])

The precise date of this turning point in his life, as calculated by Theodosia Thompson, is the year 1913 (Thompson, 1922, Preface). By 1926, the talented bohemian had settled himself in his own *Shangrila* at Panitras and established himself as a major figure among the literati of Calcutta.

Literary Characteristics, Aesthetic Taste, and Addiction

As writers, Sharatchandra and Jean-Jacques follow their own quirks and styles. Sharatchandra observes that the most crucial and problematic part of composing a story is its beginning because it is the fulcrum of the narrative's structure, as

it were. Then, he warns against paying too much attention to the plot neglecting the *dramatis personae* and their character (Ray, 2009, p. 152, Sharatchandra's letter to Lilarani Gangopadhyay [ca. 1894-1938], Bhādra 7 1326 BE [September 1919]). As he explained in a public lecture, "I never worry about plots. I first decide on some character types. Thereafter the appropriate stuff [actions and events] come up automatically. The only thing is the imaginative touch [*maner paraś*] that has nothing to do with the plot" (cited in A. K. Ghosh, 2003, pp. 352-353). The cardinal characteristic and quality of his writings is his controlled but calculated diction that is at once luminous and rhetorical. He of course took ample care about the proper environment for his writing, especially complete privacy. He wrote patiently, after careful reflection, and hence, his draft was always clean without unsightly emendations and corrections. Following augmented income from his writings, he developed the only luxury of collecting expensive imported fountain pens and expensive paper to write on. However, he usually devoted more time (10 to 12 hr a day) to reading than to writing for which he spent no more than a couple of hours every day (Ray, 1996, p. 58, Sharatchandra's letter to Phanindranath Pal [1881-1939], March 28, 1913). As a rule, he never wrote anything in the early evening that was spent socializing with friends and associates (Ray, 2003, p. 295). He also developed an expensive sartorial taste, his reputed love of "plain, humble, and homely lifestyle . . . [and his] defiance of artificiality, atrocity, and inhumanity" notwithstanding (Poddar, 2003 [1401 BE], p. 27; Ray, 2003, p. 281).

As for Jean-Jacques, it is best to let him speak:

My ideas arrange themselves out in my head with almost incredible difficulty; they circulate in it with uncertain sound, and ferment till they excite and heat me, and make my heart beat fast; and, in the midst of this excitement, I see nothing clearly and am unable to write a single word—I am obliged to wait . . . My manuscripts, scratched, smeared, muddled and almost illegible, bear witness to the trouble they have cost me. There is not one of them which I have not been obliged to copy four or five times before I could give it to the printer. I have never been able to produce anything, pen in hand, in front of my table and paper; it is during a walk, in the midst of rocks and forests, at night in bed while lying awake, that I write in my brain. (Rousseau, 1996a, p. 109)

Both Sharatchandra and Jean-Jacques, however, were noted for their calligraphic skill. The distinguished linguist *Ācārya* Sunitikumar Cattopadhyay (1890-1976) observed upon his first meeting with the novelist, "I saw his writing book [*lekḥār khātā*] and noted his clear pearl-like scribbling. He had a flair for writing with expensive fountain pens and on expensive paper" (cited in Ray, 2003, p. 292). He often received gifts of pen and paper from associates and admirers (Ray, 2003). Rousseau, too, was noted for his magnificent handwriting and he actually made two great handwritten copies of his blockbuster *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, one

each for his patrons Duchesse de Luxembourg and Madame de Warens (Damrosch, 2005, pp. 310, 315).

Sharatchandra and Jean-Jacques shared a taste for music. Sharatchandra was gifted with a sweet voice and he loved to sing, especially, the devotional airs, *kīrtan*, and was, reportedly, also a percussionist (*tablā* player), a *sītār* and a *bānsī* (flute) player (Ray, 2003, p. 12). In fact, he founded a *kīrtan* (devotional songs devoted mainly to the love play between Kṛishna and Radha of Hindu folklore as well as to the goddess Kali) group in Rangoon and reportedly impressed a young woman, the object of his obsession (Sil, 2012, p. 37). For some time, he gave music lessons to his Rangoon host Aghornath Chattopadhyay's daughter. Beyond all these references to his musical skill, there is no evidence of his formal training in vocal or instrumental music or his academic interest in musicology.⁷ But he was noted for his musical talents in Burma and even awarded the sobriquet of "*Reṅgun'ratna*" [Jewel of Rangoon] by an admiring distinguished visitor from Calcutta (A. K. Ghosh, 2003, p. 84).

Music to Rousseau was, in his own words, "as necessary as bread" (cited in Mason, 1979, p. 31). He demonstrated aesthetic as well as intellectual interest in music, especially Italian music, and even contributed articles on this subject to Denis Diderot's (1713-1784) *Encyclopédie* and, in addition, three monographs: *Dissertation on Modern Music* (1741, written after he had failed to get his essay on the method of notating music accepted by the Paris Academy), *A Letter on French Music* (1753), and *Dictionnaire de Musique* (1767). He also composed numerous operas for the Parisian stage among which *Le Devin du Village*, performed at the court of Fontainebleau on October 18, 1752, elicited royal approbation. However, Rousseau never bothered to accept King Louis XV's (r. 1715-1774) generous offer of a lifelong pension as the reward (Rousseau, 1996a, p. 369). His essay on the French music was a sharp critique of the musical theory of Paris's most distinguished authority Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764). He also earned a modest income from copying music. He was proud of this work, and he was quite pernickety about executing it. "For me it's a labor and pleasure at the same time," he is reported to have said (cited in Damrosch, 2005, p. 468). He carefully recorded the number of pages he copied and these totaled more than 11,000 pages by 1777. Guillaume-Olivier de Corancez (d. 1810) informs that Rousseau "copied with an exactitude that is rare among those who ordinarily live by this work (cited in Damrosch, 2005, p. 469). He believed that "the most skillful copyist is the one whose music is mostly easily performed, without the musician himself suspecting why" (*Dictionnaire de Musique* cited in Damrosch, 2005, p. 312).

Unlike Sharatchandra, who was a tobacco, hemp, alcohol, and opium addict (the last-mentioned addiction became an analgesic drug for him later⁸), Rousseau was a hypochondriac, who frequently complained of ailments, though contemporary accounts and later researches by scholars confirm that he imagined himself to be physically decrepit, when, in

fact, his English associate, the philosopher David Hume (1711-1776), observed that

he [Rousseau] imagines himself very infirm: he is one of the most robust men I have ever known . . . I think that he has an inclination to complain of his health, more than I imagine he has reason for: he is not insincere, but fanciful, in that particular (Greig, 1932, Vol. 2, pp. 2, 16).

Sharatchandra complained of his real illness though he hardly ever talked about his discomfort when he was terminally ill. He did occasionally refer to his "old age" after he turned 40 years and to the swelling of his leg a few times to his publishers, but never to his discomfort due to liver and kidney failure. His stoic fortitude in the midst of his suffering and pain is in marked contrast to the flamboyant Rousseau's paranoia of peril. It may be that the Genevan's actual physical discomfort from uremia along with his social embarrassment because of it caused his frequent *cri de coeur*.

Sensibility and Sensuality

Sharatchandra and Jean-Jacques were creatures of *sensibilité, par excellence*. Both writers suffered from an acute lack of emotional balance. Sharatchandra harbored a penchant for weeping both in his personal life and in his fictional characters, male as well as female. On meeting his relation in Rangoon following his quarantine upon arrival in Burma, the indigent newcomer sobbed profusely (*hāu hāu kariyā kāndiyā uṭhilen*; Ray, 2003, pp. 64-65). He wept for days mourning the demise of his pet mongrel Bhelu (A. Mukhopadhyay, 1958 [1880 Saka Era], p. 20). He wept uncontrollably lying at the poet Rabindranath Thakur's feet, asking for the latter's forgiveness following the resolution of a misunderstanding (Sen, 2003). Similarly, Rousseau was a lachrymose Adam. He pressed his face against that of his dear friend Diderot whom he met at the chateau of Vincennes as a parolee and shed tears "choked with tenderness and joy" (Rousseau, 1996a, p. 339). When, as a fugitive from France, he reached the English shore on January 11, 1766, along with his Genevan acquaintance M. de Luze and his Scottish associate David Hume, he threw his arms around Hume's neck, embraced him, covering his face with kisses and tears (Guéhenno, 1966, Vol. 2, p. 162). He shed tears when he received the gift of Mme d'Épinay's (Louise-Florence Pétronille de Tardieu d'Esclavelles d'Épinay, 1726-1783) petticoat to be tailored into his waistcoat. The idea of wearing a woman's undergarment, suitably adapted, next to his body was so stimulating that he kissed it 20 times (Rousseau, 1996a, p. 426). Alone in the room with the Venetian harlot Zuletta, he "felt a deathly chill run through [his] . . . veins; [his] legs trembled . . . and, feeling ready to faint, [he] . . . sat down and cried like a child" (Rousseau, 1996, p. 309). It is to be noted further that Sharatchandra's novellas such as *Debdās*, *Barādidi*, or *Arakṣaṇīyā* produced an epidemic of

emotion in the world of his readership as did Rousseau's *Julie* in that of Europe.⁹

Louis Proal comments on Rousseau's disequibrated sensibilities characterizing arrogant and defiant attitude as well (Proal, 1923, p. 254). Admittedly, his sensibility perhaps stemmed from a physical affliction—painful retention of urine in the bladder due to a congenital malformation of the prostatic region of the urethra (symptoms becoming pronounced after he turned 36 [Rousseau, 1996a, p. 350]), and his abnormally frequent urge to urinate, though it has been argued that this condition known as *pollakiuria* (abnormally frequent urination) was as much psychic as somatic, that is, “the somatic expression of a haughty, anguished refusal” (Starobinski, 1961, p. 73). Sharatchandra's condition appears to be spontaneous, even normal, in his case, even though he was also a victim of frequent bouts of hemorrhoids and, during his later years of heart, liver, and kidney troubles.

Their remarkably similar life situations and experiences as well as their distinct differences notwithstanding—Rousseau was a *philosophe* (though he disliked his fellow *philosophes*), an intellectual who was a political theorist (vide his *Du contrat social, ou principes du droit politique* [The Social Contract or the Principles of Political Right], 1761; *Considération sur le gouvernement de Pologne* [Consideration for the Government of Poland], 1771; and *Projet de constitution pour la Corse* [Project for the Constitution of Corsica], 1765), as well as a theorist of education (vide *Émile ou de l'éducation*, 1762). Sharatchandra, on the contrary, was primarily a *tusitala*, although he did publish a few essays on literature, nationalist politics, and education (*Nārīr Mūlya* [Women's Worth], 1923; *Taruṇer Bidroha* [Revolt of the Youth], 1931; *Svadeś o Sāhitya* [Our Land and Literature], 1932; *Śikṣār Birodh* [Disputes on Education], 1328 [1921]; *Śaratcandra o Chātrāsāmāj: Bhāṣaṇ Samāṣṭi* [Sharatchandra and the Student Community: Collection of Speeches], 1938; cited in Sen, 2002b [1400 BE]). Unlike Rousseau's repertoire, Sharatchandra's were no scholarly discourse, albeit critical and impassioned articles and lectures.

Rousseau proclaimed his belief in human being's ontological gift—their *bonté naturelle*—that has been corrupted by civilized society. The natural human goodness that underlies self-love or *amour de soi* is degenerated in society into self-interest or *amour propre*. In John Mason's (1979) succinct explanation of the quintessential Rousseauism:

Evil arises with society. It stems from our acceptance of conventional values, seeing ourselves through other people's eyes rather than our own and it stems from the bad social forms which reinforce these inequalities and values. But these social forms are not God-given, they are human constructions; they can therefore be changed. To create a just society will be to realize ourselves completely. (p. 1)

Jean-Jacques thus advocated social change, even revolution. At the same time, he was averse to violence in any form. For

him, revolution was evil, though sometimes necessary (Mason, 1979, p. 11; see also p. 314, n. 20).

Although Sharatchandra has generally been regarded as a social revolutionary in literature or a high priest of freedom, in reality he was totally against revolution. He never wanted to hurt society in any way. As he argued in his “*Samāj-Dharmer Mūlya*”,

I am not saying that it's the ruler who should have a say about his law. But the social rules and regulations must be obeyed their incongruities and inequities notwithstanding. Insofar as it's the society's rule, it cannot be violated by force in the name of personal legitimate rights. Instead of seeking redress of the wrongs and injustices of society through discussion, one cannot hope to good result by gathering a few folks to raise the standard of revolt. (Sen, 2002b [1400 BE], Vol. 2, p. 2087)

Yet he insisted, “I respect society, but not as God. It contains many lies, superstitions, and cruelties accumulated over the years” (Deb, 1938 [1344 BE], pp. 107-108). He asked his friend Pramatha in a letter from Rangoon,

Who's to treat the wounds of society? Covering a rotten sore with mere cotton may look safe to others, but that does not benefit the patient. The novelists have a deeper obligation than being busy with aesthetic creativity. If he wishes to discover the hurts and humiliations [of society] he must work toward that end. Writers such as [Jane] Austen [1775-1817], Marie Corelli [1855-1924], and Sarah Grand [1854-1943] exposed many diseased parts of society not to scare the readers but to inspire efforts to cure the malaise. (Ray, 2009, p. 17: Sharatchandra's letter of May 12, 1913)

Despite his protestations that he had never known “hateful passions, jealousy, wickedness, vengeance,” “admitted no rivalry, no quarrelling, no jealousy,” and that he was “never crafty and never [bore] . . . grudge,” Jean-Jacques was often mean, ungrateful, vain, egotistical, and cantankerous. His treatment of Diderot (who had helped him establish himself in the intellectual circle of Paris), Paul-Henri Thiry, baron d'Holbach (1723-1789), Frederick Melchior Grimm (1723-1807), Mme d'Épinay, and Hume speaks volumes of his ingratitude, cruelty, and cynicism. Naturally, Hume came to consider Rousseau “a monster who saw himself as the only important being in the universe.” Diderot's painful discovery of his former friend's true nature was that of a man “deceitful, vain as Satan, ungrateful, cruel, hypocritical and full of malice” (cited in Johnson, 1988, p. 26).¹⁰ Responding to her erstwhile protégé's arrogant and ungrateful missive, the ailing and angry Mme d'Épinay wrote back contemptuously, “I can now only pity you” (Rousseau, 1996a, p. 475). At the end of his *Confessions* written during a period of crisis and paranoia, the defiant and self-righteous Rousseau proclaimed,

As for myself, I declare openly and fearlessly: whosoever, even without having read my writings, after examining with his own

eyes my disposition, my character, my manners, my inclinations, my pleasures, and my habits, can believe me to be a dishonourable man, is himself a man who deserves to be choked. (Rousseau, 1996a, p. 645)

As a matter of fact, he was quite scared of being thought ordinary. As he wrote, “I would rather be forgotten by the whole of the human race, than regarded as an ordinary man” (cited in Guéhenno, 1966, Vol. 1, p. xii, n. 1).

In sharp contrast to Rousseau, Sharatchandra was noted for his humility, friendliness, sincerity, and simplicity, in fact, for his natural *bonheur* that, ironically, Rousseau had associated with the natural man prior to his fall from purity into civilization. He easily made friends and delighted in their company. In fact, his literary career owed significantly to the exertions and help of his friends and relatives. His letters to them testify to his conviviality and collegiality. On the day of his departure from his favorite home at Panitras for Calcutta, sometime in late December 1937, the terminally ill patient saluted his beloved idol of Lord Kṛishna, “Gobindajī,” and sang,

*Pather pathik karecha āmāy—sei bhālo, ogo sei bhālo.
Aleyā jvālāle prānter bhāle sei ālo mor sei ālo.*

It's all right [O Lord] that you made me a tramp.

The will-o'-the-wisp that sparkles on the horizon will be my beaconing light. (cited in A. K. Ghosh, 2003, p. 308)

However, both Rousseau and Sharatchandra betrayed an anxiety to prove their mettle to their senior cohorts. Rousseau, who owed his entry into the circle of the Parisian *philosophes* to Diderot, later turned against him. He was particularly concerned to prove his merits to Voltaire, the doyen of the Enlightenment and the arch-*philosophe*, who of course initially regarded the enigmatic and irrepressible Genevan with a benign contempt, and subsequently, as “completely mad” or the “arch-maniac.”¹¹ In some respects, the Sharatchandra–Rabindranath relationship mirrors the Rousseau–Voltaire conundrum—both betraying an agonistic attitude between an acknowledged master and an aspiring neophyte.¹²

The *philosophe* Jean-Jacques lived the life of a parvenu, lover, intellectual, and a creative and scholarly writer amid physical and psychic pain that climaxed into paranoia toward the latter part of his diseased life and he died “the sickest, the greatest criminal, the most damned, and yet a great Scholar” (“*le grand malade, le grand criminel, le grand maudit et le supreme Savant*”; cited in Starkie, 1968, p. 123). Fittingly, a distinguished French scholar of the first decade of the 20th century observed, “We wish not to know whether he were neurotic, hysterical, or simply melancholy mad. What is certain for us, is that he was a man of heart and of genius to boot” (Compayré, 1907, p. 118). By contrast, Sharatchandra, *mutatis mutandis*, lived a relatively peaceful and creative life upon his return from Burma (1916–1934), though he, too,

had to cope with multiple physical problems (that degenerated into fatal illness during the last 4 years of his life [1934–1938]) but was generally held in great affection by his friends, relatives, associates, and admirers.

Rousseau's Ideas of Love and Lovemaking in His Works

The single remarkable contrast between Sharatchandra's conception of femininity, love, and lovemaking and that of Rousseau's is, ironically, imbricated in the convergence of their ideas in this regard. Both highlight women's influence on men's life, both aestheticize love as romantic yearning, and both agree on the vulgarity and obscenity of carnal sex. However, they differ significantly in their depiction and explanation. Sharatchandra does not adduce any historical, philosophical, or sociological arguments but merely conveys his ideas through the dialogues of the significant characters of his novellas and short stories, or occasionally, in authorial asides. Rousseau, on the contrary, purveys a discourse on love, family, and sexuality in a number of theoretical essays as well as in his two works of fiction: *Julie* and *Émile* (see, especially, Rousseau, 1964, 1996a, 2009).

Rousseau considers love in the life of civilized men and women (as contrasted with their primitive or “savage” forbears) not natural but preferred (consensual) and political—and thus, an instrument of domination. He argues that men are physically stronger than women but endowed with a weak desire (potency), whereas women, the weaker gender, possess a stronger desire or sex. Women exercise indirect and covert influence on men who are overtly politically and socially dominant. As he concludes, women in modern times resemble men while they, by their overt submissiveness and covert manipulative influence, have feminized men. In this way we have masculine female and effeminate male in a “civilized” polity (Schwartz, 1984, Chapters 2 and 3).

As Mira Morgenstern demonstrates, Rousseau's two famous concepts of love, *amour de soi* (selfish love) and *amour propre* (love of self), the former understood as instinct for self-preservation, and hence, natural and benign, and the latter as a product of imagination based on a competitive comparison of self with others, and thus, manipulative, and hence, bad, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Although *amour de soi* and *amour propre* are the two aspects of self-love, the former entails reciprocal love that underscores equality and mutuality unlike the latter that valorizes self above others. *Amour de soi* is thus the basis of social cohesion and justice leading to man's moral, aesthetic, and philosophical developments (Morgenstern, 1996, pp. 84ff). In sum, love is the high road to human happiness. However, because happiness is a balance between what we want and what we can actualize and because love is dependent on another individual, the maintenance of balance, that is, happiness is beyond a single person's control. Rousseau here

rather ambiguously writes about self-referential selfish love and its connection with the other-directed, social and manipulative love of self. Rousseau rigorously works out this problematic of love in his two famous didactic novels: *Julie* and *Émile*—the former exemplifying *amour propre* and the latter *amour de soi*.

Although *Julie* is an epistolary novel of romantic love and unromantic marriage, it is also a defense of morality and fidelity of married couples. Briefly, the plot of the story runs thus: A talented and sensitive middle-class Swiss young man Saint-Preux, tutor to Julie, daughter of the Genevan aristocrat Baron d'Etange, falls in love with his student. But the baron strongly opposes his girl's marriage to a mere private tutor and instead plans to get his noble friend Baron de Wolmar as his son-in-law. Upset by this family tension, Julie's mother dies of distress. The hapless tutor is obliged to leave his job and trots around the world, but he maintains a regular contact with his lover through letters (hence, the novel's characterization as epistolary). Sadly, when Saint-Preux returns, Julie is already married to her father's choice Wolmar. Far from being a decadent feudal character, Wolmar is frugal, virtuous, practical, and rational, thus representing Saint-Preux's middle-class ethos. Wolmar employs Saint-Preux as tutor to his children and the latter joins the couple's family without, however, reigniting the flame of his previous *affaire de coeur*. Yet the precarious peace of the *ménage à trois* breaks down when Julie dies of a fatal injury sustained while trying to save her boy from drowning.¹³

On the surface, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is a saga of sensual love sparked off by Saint-Preux's first kiss to his two pretty charges: Julie and her cousin Claire. He is smitten by overwhelming passion for Julie in particular but her response to Saint-Preux's romantic madness (*amour de soi*) is cautious. "I had foreseen all too well," she writes him, "the time of happiness passed like lightning; the one of disgrace begins, without anything telling us when it will end" (Moscovici, 2010, p. 5). She would like to fortify and dignify her love with the rules of her society (*amour propre*) or, in other words, in marriage, sanctioned by society and approved by her family. Alarming, her aristocratic family is unlikely to accept a socially incompatible marriage alliance between their daughter and the vile middle-class suitor with equanimity.

Another dynamic in the affairs of Julie and Saint-Preux is the role of jealousy in the relationship between the two. Saint-Preux, in fact, attempts an experiment by informing Julie of his passionate attachment to one Mme Belon, while protesting his enduring love for his "incomparable" Julie. She "requires her lover's mental self-awareness to fortify his moral restraint" by appealing to his "sense of honor, not his love" (Moscovici, 2010, p. 7). Rousseau would like to see a sublimation of intense passion into calm passion when love matures and deepens. He thus contrasts Saint-Preux's voluble passion with Julie's husband Wolmar's respectful

"attachment"—a combination of the Stoic *apatheia* and the Calvinist ethic of moral health.

Rousseau's *Émile*, the eponymous hero of his *Émile, or on Education*, is a "natural man" (a man who is "entirely for himself"—an "absolute whole which is relative [not] only to itself [but also to] its kind") who was trained by the pedagogue (Jean-Jacques) to be "enclosed in a social whirlpool" without adopting "either the passions or the opinions of men" (cited in Schwartz, 1984, pp. 75-76). *Émile*'s mentor believes that a well-bred adolescent knows friendship rather than sexual love. This interest in friendship is a sublimation of his sexual energy. With sexual maturity he develops the capacity and the psychological motive for moral behavior. However, it is morally beneficial to delay the adolescent's sexual activity until he develops the capacity for sexual imagination. When *Émile* is finally introduced to Sophie, his well-managed sexual awakening, that is, moral, mutual, and responsible love, socializes him. The goal of *Émile*'s education is thus the inculcation of *amour de soi* until he matures into a responsible citizen capable of cultivating *amour propre*.

Although Rousseau considers women weaker than men, he emphasizes their natural guile, the "peculiar cleverness" that enables them to exert their invisible and indirect manipulation whereby they make men want to do everything that women cannot (Schwartz, 1984, p. 87). Female political power is ultimately beneficent for society. As for men, Rousseau's admonition is unabashedly unambiguous:

Be a man; restrain your heart within the limits of your manhood . . . It is only when we wish to go beyond them that we are unhappy, only when, in our mad passions, we try to attain the impossible. (Mason, 1979, p. 206: *Émile*, Book V)

This is what Mark Jonas calls Rousseau's "eudaimonistic teleology" that prepares an individual to live happily as a unified human being who has achieved a resolution between desire and duty. In the ultimate analysis, Rousseau avers that happiness comes from self-mastery (Jonas, 2013, p. 1). Thus, the tutor admonishes *Émile*:

Do you want, then, to live happily and wisely? . . . Let your condition limit your desires; let your duties come before your inclinations . . . Learn to love what can be taken from you; learn to abandon everything when virtue decrees it . . . Then you will be happy in spite of fortune and wise in spite of passion. (Rousseau, 2010, p. 446)

Sharatchandra's Ideas of Love and Lovemaking in His Works

Sharatchandra's description of female character and behavior as well as his depiction of love are most vivid and variegated in his novels and short stories such as *Baradidi* [Big Sister] (1913), *Debdās* (1917), *Denā Pāonā* [Assets and

Liabilities] (1923), *Pather Dābī* [Right of Passage] (1923), *Śrīkānta* (1917-1933), *Caritrahīn* [Libertine] (1917), *Gṛhadāha* [Burning Home] (1920), and *Śeṣ Praśna* [The Final Query] (1931). Sharatchandra's idea about love is either what is popularly called "calf love" or "virgin love" (somewhat akin to *amour de soi*), that is, love between pre-pubescent boys and girls (between Parbati and Debdas in *Debdās*) that seldom gets social imprimatur and thus remains unrequited, or marital love (somewhat akin to *amour propre*) developing in marriage arranged by parents (between Upendra and Surabala in *Caritrahīn*) and approved by society. He provides neither a philosophical nor a theoretical discussion of love, nor any description of such affairs except referring to them as part of his narrative. However, he does write about immaculate love (erotic attraction *sans* carnal contact) between young widows and unmarried men as between Surendranath and Madhuri in *Baradidi*, and its expression is always veiled in innuendos, tears, and filial affection. The single most exalted and predominant feminine feeling apparent in Sharatchandra's *œuvres* is the maternal one characterized by tolerance, tenderness, forgiveness, charity, chastity, and liberality with food: a heady amalgam of the goddesses Lakṣmī ("divine provider of welfare and bounty") and Annapurṇa ("divine purveyor of food") as gloriously depicted by the character of Rajlakṣmi in *Śrīkānta*. By the same token, a woman's erotic feelings and behavior are viewed as unbecoming, if not outright culpable (as in the character of two *femme fatales*—Kiranmayī of *Caritrahīn* and Achala of *Gṛhadāha*; see Sil, 2012, Chapters 7 and 8).

His ideas of love between man and woman sometimes appear to be progressive, and even to a great extent radical, for his society, in that he also valorizes women's humanity far more than their loyalty to husbands when, in his presidential address to Literary Society of Munshiganj, he elevates a woman's humanity over her chastity ("*paripūrṇa manuṣyatva satītvā ceyo bāra*"; Sen, 2002b [1400 BE], Vol. 2, pp. 1980-1981). Sadly, such progressivism is soundly subverted in his works that deal with widows and whores whose redemption is contrived by the author as relegated to their aspiration either for the ascetic life of a nun or for the life of a chaste housewife. No wonder Sharatchandra has been taken to task on this score by one of his critics who rather unkindly remarked that he made a chaste wife out of whores even ("*Śarat-candrer beśyā paryanta satī*"), as in the character of the courtesan Chandramukhi in *Debdās* (cited in S. Mukhopadhyay, 1991, p. 137).

Sharatchandra, of course, never confuses love with love-making. For him "superior [true] love is that which not only attracts lovers to each other but also distances them from each other" ("*bāra prem śudhu kāchei ṭāne nā—ihā dūreo ṭheliyā phele*"; Sen, 2002b [1400 BE], Vol. 1, p. 324: "Śrīkānta"). More to the point, "*atripta kāmānāi mahat-premer prāṇ*" ["unrequited passion is the soul of sublime love"] (cited in S. Mukhopadhyay, 1991, p. 137). Another of Sharatchandra's ideas of love, as a sentiment of

pity, is expressed by Kamal, the female protagonist of *Śeṣ Praśna*, when she tells Ajit, "Keep me bound to you by your feebleness" ("*tomār durbalatā diyei āmāke bēdhe rekho*") and adds further, "I'm not so heartless as to let a character like you be swept away by the currents of mundane life" ("*tomār mata mānuṣke saṁsāre bhāsiye diye yābo, ata niṣṭhur āmi nāi*"; Sen, 2002b [1400 BE], Vol. 2, p. 1387: "*Śeṣ praśna*"). Such observations may not uncritically be construed as a genuine product of conviction predicated on any philosophical, psychological, or cultural considerations on Sharatchandra's part. They may very well be inspired by his personal aversion to sex. As he wrote to an acquaintance,

I was never a lecher in respect of women. I was an addict of drug and alcohol and visited forbidden quarters, but . . . I never lusted after their body even when intoxicated. It's not because I exercised great restraint or was an ascetic or a moralist, it's because I find . . . [sex] quite disagreeable. (cited in Ray, 2003, p. 78: Sharatchandra's conversation with Harids Shastri)

Sharatchandra's anti-sensual attitude may have been induced by his idea of womanly love as pity or compassion (*dayā* or *mamatā*) or by his unconscious internalization of Vaishnavic distinction between *kām* and *prem*: *ātmendriya prītiicchā tāre bali kām/Kr.ś.n. endriya prītiicchā dhare prem nām* ("self-centered desires make for lust [*kām*]/theo[Kr.ishna]-centered ones constitute love [*prem*]" ; Sen, 2002, p. 7).¹⁴

On his own account, Sharatchandra never had any carnal contact with the prostitutes he encountered (Ray, 2003, p. 78). He told Radharani Debi (1904-1989) that though "he used to pry into the snake's hole and catch snakes . . . he was extremely wary of the '*biṣakanyā*' (poisonous maid) and never dared to touch them" (Debi, 1982, p. 45). As a matter of fact, we do not have any information in this regard from his biographies, contemporary or posthumous. The only story of his physical attraction for a woman in Rangoon comes as a failed amorous overture in the reminiscences of his acquaintance Girindranath Sarkar (1958 [1365 BE]). We have some idea of his pre-pubertal intimacy with one Kalidasi, his classmate in the village *pāthśālā*, and his youthful crush on his friend of Bhagalpur, Bibhūtibhusan Bhaṭṭa's widowed sister Nirupama (S. Mukhopadhyay, 1959 [1366 BE], pp. 5-6; see also Ray, 2009, p. 260, Sharatchandra's letter of *Baiśākh* 20, 1377 BE [May 1930] to Radharani Debi). His entire adult life was spent amid multiple physical torments for which he had become an addict to such analgesics as opium. It is thus quite likely that he remained throughout life merely an admirer of female beauty, behavior, and character that he expressed effectively in all his writings. His idea of an erotic male is that of a sexual predator or a lecher such as the unreformed Jibananda of *Denā Pāonā* or the impetuous Suresh of *Gṛhadāha*. By the same token, his idealized males are Apurba the *kaci chele* (little kid) of *Pather Dābī*, who despised girls in his boyhood and thereafter never encountered any woman outside of his family until he met

Bharati in Burma (Sen, 2002b [1400 BE], Vol. 2, pp. 1149, 1155); the effeminate Ajit of *Śeṣ Praśna* who turns red and bashful on being asked by the domineering Kamal to address her by name and who confesses to her on another occasion that he is “truly a helpless weakling having no stamina to insist or persist on anything” (Sen, 2002b [1400 BE], Vol. 2, pp. 1283, 1383); the consumptive and timid foursome Surendra of *Baradidi*, Debdās of *Debdās*; and Hārāṇ and Upendra of *Caritrahīn*, or the parasitical vagabond Shrikanta of *Śrīkānta*—all of them appearing tantalizingly as sexually timid or phobic.

Conclusion

Yet, interestingly enough, Rousseau and Sharatchandra agree on the desirability of love without *desir*. This is all the more intriguing as, unlike Rousseau who had a wide experience with women, mostly though not exclusively, from the upper class, Sharatchandra does not seem to have much contact with women either from his extended family or from his work world, except some whores of Baje Shibpur in Calcutta who, reportedly, held him in great respect addressing him as *bābāṭhākur* (“revered father”; Ray, 2003, p. 78).¹⁵ All the extant sources, including his own reminiscences, describe his interaction mostly with men—his relatives, associates, friends, and readers. And yet his works have mostly women as protagonists or major characters. Indeed, as Sukharaṇjan Mukhopādhyāy observes, all the lead female characters (*nāyikā*) of Sharatchandra’s greatest novels are widows (S. Mukhopadhyay, 1991, p. 135).

Nevertheless, both Jean-Jacques and Sharatchandra agree on the vulgarity of sensuality unless it is restricted to lovers who are either married or pledged to get married. In *Émile*, Jean-Jacques informs his pupil about sexual pleasures deriving from sex with a woman who must possess physical as well as spiritual beauty and in which the two lovers must appear inseparable. Allan Bloom (1978) comments, “Emile learns that the peak of sexual longing is the love of God mediated by the love of a woman” (p. 151). Sex needs to be sublimated from the level of carnal coupling (reminiscent of *ātmendriya prīticchā*) to the spiritual/metaphysical height of love (reminiscent of *Kṛṣṇendriya prīticchā*; see note 14 above). This is what Sharatchandra would like to call *barā prem* or “superior or true love” and so endorse the insight of his European forbear wholeheartedly. Such a meeting of the mind with respect to the primal human sentiment transcends the ethnic and cultural differences between the Indian and the European authors, thus blurring the stereotyped radical disjunction between the worldviews of the East and the West. Both Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay and Jean-Jacques Rousseau would have delighted the heart of Terence (ca. 195–56 BCE) who wrote, “*homo sum, humani a me nihil alienum puto*” [“I am a human being and nothing human is strange to me”] (Bartlett, 1919, p. 77).

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Notes

1. The anglicized version of the name has been used below. That the author is referred to by his first name is in accord with Bengali convention. In fact, diacritics have not been used on any proper or place names used in the text. BE stands for Bengali Era that follows the Gregorian Calendar by 593 years 3 months 14 days.
2. Rousseau also writes unhesitatingly about his frail health due to a congenital condition:
I was brought into the world in an almost dying condition; little hope was entertained of saving my life. I carried within me the germs of a complaint which the course of time has strengthened, and which at times allows me a respite only to make me suffer more cruelly in another manner [an allusion to his uremia]. (Rousseau, 1996a, p. 5)
3. For an overview of Rousseau’s political and educational theories, see Sil (1976).
4. Battala (*Baṭṭalā*, literally, “at the foot of the banyan tree,” probably a prominent landmark of the area) was the site of the Bengali printers of north Calcutta (encompassing several streets and neighborhoods) specializing in publishing cheap chapbooks, books on romance, myths and legends, folk religious rites, magic, astrology, witchcraft, and folklore, hagiography, pornography, and even folk medicine—somewhat comparable to the “Grub Street” of London. For an interesting analysis of the Battala literature, see Shripantha (1997), Bandyopadhyay (2003), and A. Ghosh (2006).
5. The sincerity of Sharatchandra’s paeon for his father is problematic for the only sources of information on Matilal’s literary enterprise are, besides himself, his maternal uncle and close friend Surendranath Gangopadhyay (1881–1954).
6. *Sturm und Drang* is the title of a play (1776) by Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger (1752–1831) about the unfolding of the American Revolution. This phrase became a *cantus firmus* in the works of a number of Romantic literary figures of the era of the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) such as Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), and Jakob Michael Reinhold (1751–1792), among others.
7. He probably learned how to play on the bamboo flute from his buddy Raju and the harmonium at an opera group he frequented in his youth—both informally practiced (see Bhatta, 1938 [1344 BE]; Gangopadhyay, 1959, p. 68; S. Mukhopadhyay, 1959 [1366 BE], p. 95).
8. He wrote in his letter of October 12, 1920, to his friend Kedarnath Bandyopadhyay (1863–1949) about his acute back pain and his dependence on opium for relief: “My only recourse is to opium. My days of woe will somehow pass provided I can manage to retain my faith in it” (Ray, 2009, p. 164). Apparently, he changed his mind later in this regard and reportedly expressed his disappointment in a conversation with Surendranath:

This addiction has been a serious blunder on my part. Whenever I stay away from opium, the world becomes luminous to me and I am able to see everything clearly and nicely. Had I not been an addict, I would have matured into a far greater author. (Gangopadhyay, 1956, p. 161)

9. On Sharatchandra, see Sil (2012, pp. 41-42). Rousseau's novel unleashed a veritable emotional storm among readers who wrote to the author in droves. One reader in particular wrote that after having read *Julie*, he "was past weeping." "A sharp pain convulsed me. My heart was crushed," he confessed (cited in Darnton, 1984, p. 243).
10. For the rupture of relationship between Rousseau and Diderot, see Rousseau (1996a, pp. 444-449, 485). For the Rousseau-Hume encounter, see Guéhenno (1966, Vol. 2, pp. 160-203).
11. For the Rousseau-Voltaire affair, see Green (1955, pp. 174-176), Mason (1979, pp. 110-115, pp. 258, 282), and Guéhenno (1966, Vol. 1, pp. 226-227, 320-322).
12. For the problematic relationship between Rabindranath and Sharatchandra, see Sil (2012, pp. 93-103).
13. Julie was modeled after Richardson (1740-1741, 1748). For a good translation of the novel, see Rousseau (1996b).
14. This poetical hagiography of Shri Chaitanya (1486-1533), the leader of the Baiṣṇab (Vaiṣṇava) sect of Bengal, is considered a canonical scripture by his followers. The Baiṣṇabs belong to a Hindu devotional sect that worships Viṣṇu or his incarnation, the folk god Kṛṣṇa, one of the Hindu Trinity (Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Maheśvara). Their principal creed is unqualified love of God.
15. Amarendra kumar Ghosh (1975 [1382 BE]) maintains that Sharatchandra was a like a mudfish (*pāṅkāl māch*) that swims in dirty water without getting muddy (p. 27).

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