

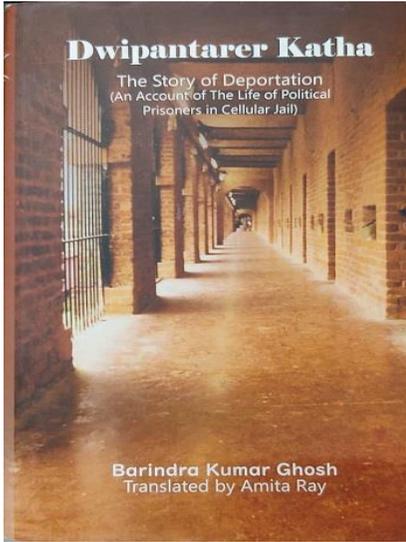


Book Review of Dwipantarer Katha's *The Story of Deportation*

Subhajit Bhadra

The book *Dwipantarer Katha* was originally written in Bengali but it was translated into English with the title *The Story of Deportation* which also has a subtitle named *An Account of the life of political prisoners in cellular jail*. The original Bengali book was written by Barindra Kumar Ghosh, a political prisoner under the British rule in India, who was sent to the Andaman to stay in the cellular jail as he was

charged of severe allegation for making an attempt to kill British officers in India, particularly in Bengal by making



bomb and unfortunately was caught red handed. The English translation of the book has been rendered by Amita Ray. Barindra Kumar Ghosh, who happened to be the younger brother of Aurobindo Ghosh (the revolutionary who later on became a spiritualist and started staying in Pondicherry where he had created a religious site which still exists). In this memoir cum autobiography the writer describes the trials and tribulations of living in the cellular jail in Andaman as a

political prisoner along with ordinary prisoners in small cells and his first person account of the experiences inside the jail brings tears to the eyes of the readers as they were not only given hard and harsh work within the jail, but were also deprived off necessary food and they had to live in an environment that was not better in any way to bolster the self image of the conflicts. It's a tale of loss, pain, torture, bullying, occasional beating and very bleak condition which was a threat to the physical and mental health of the prisoners.

The forward written by Dr. Aneek Chattarjee is very precise, insightful, informative, subtle, vivid and even analytical. He minces no words to provide a background of such heart - rending tales of the political prisoners of India, who were deported to Andaman to stay in cellular jails and his account both moves and stuns that readers.

In the very beginning I would like to say a few words about the translation of the book from Bengali into English and the

translator is Amita Ray, who is herself a creative writer. For an able translator to succeed in his on her mission to translate a book, it is quite mandatory for the translator to have knowledge about both the source language and the target language and it can be said without any exaggeration that Amita Ray has ample command over both Bengali and English language and her mesmerizing touch with lilting and sonorous prose makes the account of Barindra Kumar Ghosh both heart rending and a joy to read. She does not falter anywhere and the translated narrative is so smooth that everything appears to be alive; so she deserves kudos and also a sense of gratitude on part of non Bengali readers for whom she has opened up a treasure trove.

The narrative is full of animal imageries as the inmates of the jail were condemned to live like animals and every moment there was strong vigilance to look at the activities of the prisoners. The narrator has an eye for detail which is praiseworthy and even in a tragic tale like this a pungent humor prevails in the tale. We also get a picture of one of the most tortured and venerated prisoner named Ullaskar Dutta in this tale --- whose life story has also been painted by Ashok Kumar Mukhapadhyay in his celebrated Bengali book titled *Agnipurush (The Man of Fire)*. In between the descriptions of harsh prison life the narrator also describes the beautiful natural landscape through similes and imageries which adds a poetic touch to the narration on occasions. Sympathy from the British officials moves the narrator but these very officers turned to beasts when they found any fault with the politically accused persons of India. The writer wonderfully portrays the nature and flora and fauna, the changing seasons, the desperate attempt of the prisoners to become at one with their sad plight. There are many happy and sad anecdotes in the narrative which make it both a pleasure to read and also a tragic sense emerges in the heart of the readers who can hardly tolerate the torturous environment of the cellular jail. Throughout the narrative there are various mythological

allusions, mostly derived from the Indian epics titled *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. The author also provides a graphic description of fear, panic and death on the mind of the prisoners, who had constant longing for life. Many inmates could not bear the torture and succumbed to death. Some of the visual details bring to the eyes of the readers the deplorable condition of the prisoners. The writer indulges in both self-pity and bleak humour. There is also a philosophical touch with a stoical sense of living within dread and death. The British sentry within the jail was very careful and rough behaved which mostly consisted of Indian sentries who ironically served the colonial regime.

One of the most important features of this book is the discourse of culinary process and its execution. The political prisoners had to eat very low grade and anti-health food items and regarding that they did not budge to complain but these demands did not reach the British officials who intentionally rejected any demand to improve the condition of the inmates. Some convicts fell in love with the natural surroundings of Andaman Island and the narrator depicts the topography of the place quite graphically and with the touch of an anthropologist. The deportation to Andaman may remind one of *Ghulag Archipelago* and the demography of Andaman is also described meticulously. The veil resting on the face of the island is lifted with great details and tit-bit of information. There is an eco critical concern on part of the narrator while he talks about the destruction of the natural world of the island by the brazen British officials. Many inmates died in the cellular jails as they became victim to the unaccustomed weather and lack of proper digestive and nutritious food made their plight worse. We come to know that the island also has commercial value as its rich in natural resources which were actually taken away to England by the colonizers, in this case, the Britishers. The cartographic venture of the colonial administration is also mentioned here. The history of the island regarding it as a site of power is also described coupled

with the above mentioned point. Both colonial and native historiography is discussed here. Most of the inmates were beaten, tortured, silenced by repressive measures and the outbreak of epidemics had no cure. Even though there was a nearest hospital, still the ailing inmates were not taken there. The British officials were apprehensive that it could have paved the way for the convicts' comfort and pleasure. The native island is known as primitive as the Jaruas could be furious when they found encroachment into their demography by the so called civilized people and then the Jaruas attacked their counterparts with sharp bows and arrows and killed their adversaries. The cross-cultural relation with the so called "jungless" is also depicted with great relish. The "Jungless" did not have language, but they had dialects. The need for quarantine was always felt as new prisoners thronged the jail premises quite regularly coming from different parts of India. The British officials were afraid about some convicts who according to them might have been carriers of germs and disease.

In the jail the natives were regularly flogged and sometimes given less amount of food than necessary. There was a frequent incident of autoeroticism and homoeroticism as the prisoners were deprived of female companions for a long period of time. There was also rampant corruption on part of British officials who indulged in financial corruption. Most of the British officers were very cruel with a few exceptions. Moral corruption coupled with financial miasma created an atmosphere of doubt and disbelief.

The book becomes a rich galaxy of different people with different characters and the credit of the author is that he describes the satire, banter and sarcasm with an expert novelist's gaze. The narrative does not appear to be boring as the writer tells incidents after incidents with a deft stroke of pen. An empirical study of the narrative is also possible as he combines the reasons for degradation of prisons along with

suggestions for measures to control it. A deep sense of nationalism imbues the heart and mind of the narrator and he does not hesitate to blame these native sentries, who became mere toys in the hands of the British officials. All in all this non-fictional book is very rich as it sheds light on a hitherto unknown part of Indian penal system during pre-readers independence period and both the writer and the translator deserve accolades for presenting to the readers with a rich tale.

Title: The Story of Deportation

Author: Dwipantarar Katha

Available: [Amazon](#)

Subhajit Bhadra

Subhajit Bhadra, born in 1980 in Guwahati, Assam, is a gold medallist in M.A from Tezpur University. He is a freelance writer, poet, critic and translator. He has published a number of books including *The Masked Protagonist In Jewish American Fiction*, *The Man Who Stole The Crown*, *The Rising Sun*, a book of poems in Bengali and a translated work titled *Selected Stories of Arun Goswami*.

He has written a book on *History of English Literature*. He has also been published widely in Indian literature, a bi-monthly journal of Sahitya Akadami. At present, he is an assistant professor in the Department of English at Bongaigaon College, Bongaigaon, Assam.

[Get Your Book Reviewed](#)

If you have got any book published and are looking for a book review, contact us. We provide book review writing service for a fee. We (1) write book review (2) publish review in CLRI (3) conduct an interview with the author (4) publish interview in CLRI. [Know more here](#).

[Authors & Books](#)

We publish book releases, Press Release about books and authors, book reviews, blurbs, author interviews, and any news related to authors and books for free. We welcomes authors, publishers, and literary agents to send their press releases. Visit our website <https://page.co/Vw17Q>.