

Aesthetics and Embodiment in Bangladeshi Language Ideologies in the Mirror of Madness:  
Attunement and Its Discontents

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TRANSCRIPT: OLNÄ AND HER FAMILY

M: Mother of Olnä

S: Shapla Sister of Olnä

O: Olnä, diagnosed with schizophrenia

W: Jim Wilce

EXCERPT 1

W1	tomār kēman ghūm hayesilo (.8) gato rātre?	[To O] How did you sleep?
O2	(??) / <i>maniyā</i> /	/(?? in my mind??)/
W3	/ghūm hayesilo?/	/Did you sleep?/
O4	<i>maniyā jālāy je dīn</i>	<i>On the day my mind was burning.</i>
W5	(1.5) Hm?	Hm?
O6	jā::lā::y	It burns.
W7	(2) bujhlām nā. (2)	(2) I didn't get that. (2)
O8	(he Āllāh-e ayṭā) wāstāy /ṭhik āse?/	(for Allah's sake??), OK?
S9	/bal (paṛār matan)/ kī nā kathā kaite /pāras/?	/Speak (like a recitation)/-- can't you speak like that?
O10	/niye/jāy nā (??)	/[They]/ don't take [it]
S11	(O's name) bal! (.5) sundar kare bal.	Speak! (.5) Speak beautifully.

EXCERPT 2: ABOUT 10 MINUTES LATER

O12	dik e	(?Let [someone] give?)
O13	dik a dā ay dīs eṭā	
W14	āchā	Well...
O15	dik a rā dī	(? Let someone give)
O16	dite balle	if someone says give.
O17	mullo	The value...
C18	kato dām	What was the cost?
W19	kabi- kabirājke tomār kēman lāgsilo	How did you feel about the healers?
	(.8)	
W20	kabi- kabirājer cikitsā kēman lāglo?	How did you feel about the healers' treatment?
O21	[smiles] °(?) haiye gesegā°	[smiles] °It went like (x)°
S22	bal	Speak.
M23	bal!	Speak!
S24	(name)	(calling O's name)
M25	[leaning forward] kabirājer cikitsā /kēman/?	[leaning forward] The healer's treatment- /how was it/?
O26	[shaking head negatively] /kabirāj/ bhālo	[shaking head negatively] /Healers/

O27	hay nā.=	don't succeed
M28	=bal "bhālo hay nā" [ [starts echoing O's head shake]	Say "doesn't succeed" [ [starts echoing O's head shake]

*"What troubles me with [those] analyses which prioritize ideology is that there is always presupposed a human subject on the lines of the model provided by classical philosophy, endowed with a consciousness which power is then thought to seize on." (Foucault 1980)*

*"Ideology is most effective when it remains interred in habit" (Comaroff 1985: 5)*

*"The most successful ideological efforts are those which have no need of words..." (Bourdieu 1977b: 188)*

## 1. Immersion in the Data: Olna and her Family

- 1.1 Telling Olna to "speak beautifully": Sundering speech or speaking *sundar*?
- What are the ideals and typifications of speech underlying the metadiscursive commands which Olna's family issues?
- Shapla's use of the descriptor *sundar*, beautiful, as a particular aesthetic, a metapragmatic sensibility constructing intersubjectivity as object of desire
- Olna herself seems to enjoy the act of speaking as a device not for signification but for pleasure.

"[This heterogeneity of the speaking subject, which originates in children's first echolalias,] is also detectable when reactivated as the rhythms, intonations, and glossolalias of psychotic speech, where it serves as the last prop of the speaking subject threatened with the complete collapse of the signifying function. ... it produces so-called musical effects. But it also produces non-sensical effects, which destroy not only accepted beliefs and meanings but even, in more radical experiences, syntax itself... Heterogeneity is the proper term... [I]t is not the modality of meaning or signification" (Kristeva 1993: 156).

### 1.2 From Bangladesh to Boston: Schizophrenic discourse as aesthetic

- Olna's aesthetic as Peircean Firstness
- Compare the semiotic-aesthetic sensibilities in a Boston shelter for the homeless mentally ill (Desjarlais 1997)
- Residents play "ragtime" with language
- Shelter staff seeks to impose transparent referentiality and incite the desire for intersubjectivity

## 2. Aesthetics, Embodiment, and Language Ideologies

### 2.1 The challenge to the “language ideologies” rubric presented by Olna’s family

Shapla’s metapragmatic sensibility, and her order to “speak beautifully,” challenges a reconsideration of linguistic ideologies in their on-the-ground deployment.

### 2.2 Definitions and connotations of “linguistic ideologies”

- Rumsey: *shared bodies of commonsense notions of the nature of language in the world.*”
- Linguistic ideologies
  - 1) embody diverse situated perspectives,
  - 2) reflect the positioned interests of those invoking them,
  - 3) are expressed at varying levels of awareness (dominant ideologies are the most implicit and assumed),
  - 4) play a role in identity formation— in the effacing of differences of power and status and in the imagining of solidarities, and
  - 5) filter perceptions of communicative and social practice
- The disembodied ideational bias in ideology’s connotations
  - ... despite Althusser’s invocation of Pascal’s dictum— “Kneel down and move your lips and you will believe”— as a perspective on ideology.
- Rethinking linguistic ideologies as embodied metapragmatic sensibilities

## 3. Postlude: The Natives Prefer Croce to Gramsci

- Croce (1992): Language as social aesthetic
- Sapir (1949): The unconscious patterning of linguistic behavior is aesthetically organized
- Mashima’s perception of a breakdown in intersubjectivity and her action to bridge the gap are both rooted in her body, as are Shapla’s.
- Olna’s family, in other words, prefers both the aesthetic linguistics of Croce-Sapir and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1963) to the sometimes Machiavellian, sometimes rarefied, but rarely embodied connotations of the term ideology.

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