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Does adda have an exact synonym in any other language of the world? Even without being a linguist, I can say, no because in no other country would there be a spirit of adda or the right environment. People of other countries make speeches, crack jokes, offer arguments, have fun all night, but they do not do [the Bengali verb is "give"] adda.
Budhdhadeb Bose (cited in Chakrabarty 2001: 186).

This article explores the dialectic between speech genres and group identity through a linguistic anthropological examination of the distinct Bengali speech genre called *adda*. It argues that certain ideologies get associated with speech genres, like *adda*, which inextricably link them to particular groups and situations. *Adda* is a kind of informal social talk in Bengali, among friends and colleagues, but its content is always of intellectual significance, addressing issues such as local/global politics, art, literature, and music. Casual conversations and gossip are common in many societies, but the creative

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performance of this genre by Bengali elites made *adda* a marker of an urban middle-class identity, especially in response to the cultural hegemony of British Imperialism.

Currently in Indian public discourse *adda* has become synonymous with Bengaliness, so much so that tourism brochures selling Calcutta tout that visiting famous cafés or joints where *adda* is still practiced—even participation—is a must before leaving Calcutta. In this article, I use my ethnography of *adda* in Calcutta to establish that this speech genre is a discursive site of cultural identity production and a means of coping with globalization. I demonstrate that the combination of malleability of content and purposefulness of style has caused the elite practice of adda to be appropriated by non-elites. It also makes *adda* a tool for invoking the global in the local identity formation.

As evident from Budhdhaeb Bose's quote with which I began this article, *adda* is a distinct speech genre that Bengalis have practiced for a very long time. *Adda* is a kind of informal social talk, usually done in Bengali, among friends, colleagues, even family members, but historically its content has always been tied to something intellectual, like local and global politics, art, literature, and music. Also salient is its urban setting. *Adda* as a word means both a form of talk and a place associated with it. In Calcutta, for instance young men[1] cluster on "*rowaks*" (narrow platforms outside a dwelling house), parks, bus-terminals, canteens too engage in *adda*.

Adda became very popular in 19th Century Bengal when the British ruled India, and it would not be an overstatement to argue that its popularity was both enabled by and a reaction to westernization, because English and world politics were always tied to *adda*. The introduction of western print media had also influenced the content of *adda*. It was always in the public sphere, and was mostly engaged in by men, because they were the ones first to be exposed to westernization and English language. Many people participating in, or commenting on *adda* have also noted that after 1850 when women started gaining literacy there were instances of them participating in *adda*. The word *adda* exists in many Indian languages, but in Indian public discourse it has become synonymous with Bengali identity and culture. In the modern context its practice evokes nostalgia about Bengal's illustrious intellectual past, and the dearth of time to indulge in *adda* in late modern capitalism where work is valorized over leisure. About *adda*, famous South-Asian historian Chakrabarty (2001:181) writes,

> its perceived gradual disappearance from the urban life of Calcutta over the last three or four decades – related no doubt to the changes in the political economy of the city – has produced an impressive amount of mourning and nostalgia. It is as if with the slow death of *adda* will die the identity of being a Bengali.

Historians like Chakrabarty have commented on the significance of *adda* for the formation of Bengali identity, but he has not engaged with the language ideologies pertaining to it, or

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[1] *Adda* as a word is not gendered. It is a Bengali noun, but its was mostly practiced by men, at least when it began.

its performative or emergent aspect in contemporary society. The linguistic analysis has been completely brushed aside and in fact I am yet to come across any anthropological linguistic engagement with it, in spite of *adda* having all the characteristics of a speech genre. In this article I contend that instead of lamenting the loss of authentic Bengali *adda* we need to acknowledge its place in contemporary Bengali society and its centrality in the identity formation of diasporic Bengalis.[2] Another importance of engaging *adda* in its contemporary manifestations is to explore how the changing post-liberalization political economy of India has provided new venues for the practice of *adda* and how these particular manifestations under a market regime are affecting its form and content.

The first section of my article is devoted to establishing *adda* as a speech genre, using the work of William Hanks (1987) and Richard Bauman (1992, 2001a, 2001b). Just as there are language ideologies implicated in accents, dialects, speech content, and usage; there are language ideologies associated with speech genres like *adda*. The second section of this article illustrates how "collusion" and "indexicality" helps in the constitution of speech genres. In this section I underscore the open-endedness and emergent quality of speech genres which leads to my third section on the *adda* and performativity, contrasting it with other existing speech genres in Calcutta such as the *tarka, majlish, jalsa*, which are far more textual. *Adda* as a speech genre is perceived as a more democratic practice compared to other stylized forms. The conclusion looks at *adda* in the present day context, and globalizations' effects on it.

This ethnography of *adda* is based on historical accounts of it, material on the Internet, and a 'quasi-*adda*' recorded among three friends J, M, and D[3], one of whom (M) is not a Bengali, or has ever lived in Calcutta long enough to know what *adda* is, and how it functions. She belongs to a southern Indian state called Kerala, and has married a Bengali. The other two participants J and D are natives of Calcutta and are presently living in the US. The meta-*adda* takes place in one of their homes. M, as it emerges from the conversation has some knowledge of *adda*, but thinks, as most people do, that Bengalis make a big deal out of this social practice. Through her interrogations about this speech genre, J and D try to recreate the historical past as well as the present for her.

Adda as Speech Genre

The concept of genre has been borrowed from folklore studies and on a very general level it means a system of classification of speech. At the beginning it was used to, "… designate a literary or folkloric or general discursive category, such as sonnet, legend, oration, or

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[2] As evidence of *adda's* contemporary popularity in India and in the Bengali diaspora please see the Wikipedia entry at

[3] I have used pseudonyms to protect the names of my informants who had provided informed consent for this recording.

greeting; but recent perspectives have been oriented more toward communicative practice than typology, viewing genre as an orienting framework for the production and interpretation of discourse" (Bauman 1992:53).

Bauman's analysis of speech genres is to a large extent influenced by William Hanks. Hanks while analyzing the Mayan documents of 16th century Yucatan, concludes that speech genres or discourse genres, like style, themes, and indexical schemes form an important component of linguistic habitus[4]. Genres also engender hybrid forms of action, which, are products of the actors' emerging subjectivities in the colonial situation. The written texts of the native officials in colonial Mexico consisted of innovations like blending Spanish and Mayan modes of representation to voice the tensions between their social responsibilities and their Mayan identities. Hanks describes these written genres as situated communicative acts in a historical period when Mayan society was colonized by the Spanish. The political and cultural repression at that time gave rise to these speech genres as a way of reconciling or reacting to their subjugation and in the process what emerged was this specific speech genre that got documented.

Although there is no documented evidence of when *adda* began, there is evidence to argue that this particular speech genre pinnacled in early nineteenth century colonial Bengal. As in the Mayan case, the speech genre called *adda* was mostly performed in Bengali, interspersed with the newly acquired English. I argue throughout this article that *adda* was an expression of the process of trying to cope with ones' westernized status within British supremacy and its effects on the dignity of the westernized Bengali middle class as a whole. It is, or at least it was, a very class specific practice, urban, and was a related to changes brought out by westernization. As noted earlier *adda* is a part of Bengali modernity, and western education had a huge role in it. In colonial Mexico, the native officers were renamed from *halach uinic* (governors in Mayan language) to *caciques* (Spanish equivalent) and this also meant picking up Spanish to do most of their official work. Similarly, in Calcutta, '*Babus*' (who were native officials of the East India Company) were given training in English language, politics, and law so that they could make good local administrators. It is these *Babus* who popularized *adda* to a large extent, since they had access to knowledge of world politics and global affairs and a western worldview they used to make sense of their own country's situation and their position within it.

It is precisely due to the mixture of worldviews that *adda* involves a considerable amount of code switching. Code switching is furthered because of *adda*'s inherent bilingualism. Dipesh Chakrabarty, a South Asian historian writing about the emergence of *adda* in Colonial Bengal, underscores the coining of hybrid words by mixing English and Bengali to

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[4] Habitus is a term extensively used by the French academician Pierre Bourdieu in his works to talk about dispositions. Common examples of Habitus consist of language, body, speech etc. They are 'structured structures as well as structuring structures' and help individuals to strategize within a social setting to maximize on symbolic capital, which for Bourdieu is the aim of every social being.

express feelings about *adda*. He quotes the famous Bengali grammarian Suniti Chattopadhyay's memoirs of "Hostel Life" where the latter writes:

> The student has a large stock of hybrid words [mixing Bengali with English], which he can invent whenever he likes. *Addify* and *Addification* have nothing to do with mathematical addition; they simply mean to enjoy a chat…..and come from the Bengali word *adda*." Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay (cited in Chakrabarty 2001:197).

The formation of these hybrid words point towards novel ways of expressing one's feelings and opinions in a particular historical time. Similarly, in the meta-*adda* that I recorded (Appendix 1) J uses similar hybrid words to discuss the significance of *adda* for Bengali nationalist politics. Please see Appendix 1 at the end of the article to see the data selection from the meta-*adda* that was recorded as one form of data for this project.

The word *dada-ism* or big brother-ism is a hybrid word like *addification* which characterizes the influence of the English language on the worldview of the Bengalis. Present day Bengali is full of such hybrids, and since English is the 'official' language of India such hybridities do not raise an eyebrow now. Hinglish (mixture of Hindi and English), Benglish (mixture of Bengali and English) are of common parlance today, but speech genre's like *adda* made definite contributions to their origins. With the hybridization of words collided two languages, and also two modes of representation.

There are claims that *adda* played a role in the development of the Bengali intellect, which took place it is argued through an intermingling of European and Bengali literature. The establishment of Calcutta University and many other colleges under it, the introduction of English Literature as a discipline in these institutions all had an effect on *adda*. What started off in these elite colleges and colonial institutions through *adda* spread to the middle classes. There was also a spread of Club culture. Clubs were not only for the use of the British officials, but 'indigenous' clubs were also formed with names like Monday Club, and Four Arts Club (Chakrabarty 2001:197).

To this day such non-elite clubs form a vibrant part of middle and lower-middle class social life in Calcutta. Their roots can be traced back to colonial times but even now they have various political leanings. But returning to the activities of early 20th century clubs in Calcutta Hirankumar Sanyal writes "The activities included discussing everything from Plato-Nietzsche to Bankim-Vivekananda-Vaishnav poetry, Rabindranath's poetry." (Quoted in, Chakrabarty 2001:198). The popularity of European literature was also a product of the mounting book trade in the city and the rise of print media. But because of *adda*, orality remained a significant medium for the spread of western ideologies. With western education came not only a literacy in a new language but also in world politics, which before the spread of print media was only the privilege of the upper classes. Everybody could now form independent opinions on world politics and its effects on people. The writer Pramatha Chaudhuri in a bookstore *adda* session made the following statement while expressing his views about European literature:

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> You see, this new poetry now being written in England and France contains a very big tragedy behind all this seeming disorder of meter and rhyme. The Great War [1914] came and destroyed all the old world beliefs in the minds of their young; their restless minds are seeking new refuge. Pramatha Chaudhuri (cited in Chakrabarty 2001: 195).

I earlier mentioned the effects of westernization on the mind of middle class Bengalis. The above quote describes in one such person's words the sense of participation in world politics which *adda* made possible for him. *Adda* was a space of expressing the new literacy of the Bengalis. The emerging cosmopolitanism of colonial subjects is expressed in their opinions about world affairs. Through this speech genre of *adda*, I argue Bengali males were able to express their opinions about global affairs and it helped develop a particular kind of cosmopolitanism in their otherwise colonized lives.

I would not say that *adda* was a resistance to westernization, it was not a conscious attempt by the Bengali middle class to use it as a medium of subversion, but its effects point towards a process of hybridization of modes of expression. This corresponds with what William Hanks (1987:671) has to say while defining speech genres. For him:

> speech genres are seen as both the outcome of historically specific acts, and themselves among the constitutive dimensions in terms of which action is possible. Genres then, as kinds of discourse, derive their thematic organization from the interplay between systems of social value, linguistic convention and, the world portrayed. They derive their practical reality from their relation to particular linguistic acts, of which they are both products and primary resources.

Adda is not only a speech genre, but there are language ideologies associated with it, and that is where it gets mingled with issues of identity and performativity which I will discuss in my next section. Those who practice it consider it is an expression of belonging to a speech-community, and outsiders see it as a deliberate attempt to exude Bengali-ness. As a speech genre it is difficult to call *adda* a counterculture or a subculture because it is part of the mainstream Bengali life. At least it gets associated with "Bengali-ness" in a metonymic way as evident from one of the participants in my quasi-*adda* group (see Appendix 2).

If we look closely at the interview transcripts included in Appendix 2 at the end of the article we clearly see that M makes a very interesting observation. She has studied in Delhi and compared to her native city Trichur, there are more Bengalis is Delhi, especially in the universities. M jokes about the fact that one does not have to travel all the way to Calcutta to be part of *adda*. For her "even if you are Bengali or not" if you are in a place with Bengalis you are subjected to it. The language ideology implicated in this speech genre called *adda* is specifically reflected on lines 23-29, where M, who comes from a different socio-linguistic region of India, locates in the practice of *adda* deliberateness. She thinks that Bengalis in general make a big deal out of their own cultural practices, like eating fish and sweets, and *adda* is no exception to that. D's response is an effort to redirect the conversation into finding substitutes for *adda* to further discern its Bengaliness.

Apart from this, *adda*'s metonymic association with Bengali-ness is evident in internet sites[5] and tourism brochures promoting Calcutta. Just as visiting the National Museum, and going to Victoria Memorial, a visit to College Street Coffee house[6] is a must to relive the Calcutta (*adda*) experience. Other ways to do it is to take part in internet *adda*s on Bengali net (reference in footnote). So just like accents, word use, and dialects, speech genres get associated with the cultural identity of particular people.

Joseph Errington while trying to define language ideologies notices their vastness and implications. He writes that:

> …plural, often tacit, and sometimes conflictual, ideologically grounded perceptions of language use can be related to broader constellation of institutional forces, historical processes, and interests. Framed in these multiple ways talk can be as a point of convergence between immediacies of social life and the long-term shaping of community, sameness and difference. (2001:110)

So there seem to be some common strands of thought among authors from different geographical regions and intellectual climates about the centrality of speech genres in the making of language ideology. This is specifically significant for *adda* since it is related to western education. The concept of "Language Ideology" draws our attention to particular relations of signification, not between language structure (grammar) and social structure as we might think, but between particular language use and social distinction (Bourdieu 1991). I would elaborate on this and say that it is also a process of signification between speech genre and social (group) identity. This process of signification reaches its zenith in linguistic nationalism a la Anderson and many others, as in the case of '*adda*'. An analysis of language ideology also helps us understand the politics of production of the self and its other and that is why it is a reflexive process. Each and every participant brings their own opinions and subjectivities to this practice, but at the same time there seem to be certain commonalities in themes and orientations. *Adda* is thus a space where individual cultural subjectivities contribute to the making of society and simultaneously the social identity of its members. We can see this in the case of *adda* where it is being used to specify Bengali cultural identity vis-à-vis other Indian forms of identity. Both Bengalis and Bengaliness is being made and remade through *adda*s.

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[5] Common Bengali chat rooms can be found in, http://www.barnamala.com/main_b.html, http://www.ganguly.de/banglachat.html.

[6] College Street Coffee house is the most famous café associated with the rise and dissemination of adda. It was the hub of famous writers, nationalist leaders, politicians, film makers and still is though ho at the same level. Emulating Coffee House many others sprang up.

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Speech Genres and Indexicality: A Tussle with Heteroglossia

I would like to begin this section with an assertion: while speech genres like *adda* do not create linguistic barriers in terms of form or content nevertheless they assume an implicit understanding among speech community members regarding what needs to be spoken and when. A unified voice concerning *adda* emerges, and heterogolssia is contained. Certain indexical references are made and understood among *adda* participants. My two participants in the meta-*adda* begin their conversation with questions like, "What is *adda* about?" In response this person gets a reply from one of the participants in this meta-*adda* who claims that the entire conversation I recorded. He says "*This* (emphasis mine) is *adda*."

The use of the word **this** is indexical, shows the cultural understanding among the two members who are both non-resident Bengalis about the nature of the speech genre called *adda*. This is also a moment where an alternative interpretation about this tea-time conversation being anything other than *adda* is brushed aside in a very subtle manner. To emphasize how *adda* even in peri-urban areas involve intellectual themes, one of my meta-*adda* participants said that in small-town Kakurgachi in the outskirts of Kolkata there is Kakurgachi Hegel Club. Since local clubs in urban and peri-urban Bengal are physical spaces for the practice of *adda* the mention of Hegel, the great western thinker is emphasized as a mark of intellectual cosmopolitanism.

These kinds of situated practices and their references are characteristic of *adda*, and I quote Chakrabarty (2001:183) yet again to provide evidence of this. He writes:

> The tradition of men and women gathering in social spaces to enjoy company and conviviality is surely no monopoly of any particular region. Nor is the word only a Bengali word; it exists in Hindi and Urdu and means a 'place of gathering' (bus terminals in north India are called "bus-*adda*s"). What is peculiar, if anything, in twentieth-century Bengali discussions of the practice of *adda* is the ***claim***[7] that the practice is peculiarly Bengali and that it marks a primary national characteristic of the Bengali people to such a degree that the 'Bengali character' could not be thought without it.

These indexical moments also bring to notice the suppression of heteroglossia in the creation of group identities that Bakhtin (1981) has argued for. The building of a national character and using this speech genre to signify the distinctiveness of a particular group of people vis-à-vis other groups within a nation creates these collusions among the members of the community. Chakrabarty rightly uses the word **claim**, and I will provide evidence for this from my meta-*adda* recording. J, who is a Bengali brought up in Calcutta, tries to argue that discussion of global politics was more prevalent in Calcutta at a time when it was not in other parts of India. D and M also share his opinion, though they are skeptical.

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[7] emphasis on 'claim' is mine, it is used to show the indexical nature of speech.

Participants in my recorded meta-*adda* and in interviews in Kolkata also used the reference of a popular Bengali films like Charulata and Ghare Baire to reference the historical time when *adda* was becoming popular. They argued for the rise of the cosmopolitan Bengali urban identity in Calcutta before other areas in India and its effects on *adda*. D and M collude with J on *adda* providing a semblance of participation in global politics. Later again, while discussing the effects of westernization and urbanization on this speech genre and whether it was present in agrarian societies, J indexes a common knowledge of Indian history to talk about the nature and rise of *adda* in urban areas.

The historical specificity is used by J to highlight *adda*s presumed Bengaliness. At each and every moment there is an attempt to contain heteroglossia, which in this case for instance would be giving *adda* a pan-Indian look challenging its Bengali-ness. Heteroglossia for Bakhtin was the simultaneity of many languages, and multiple processes of signification in written or spoken texts. Heteroglossia in that sense is opposed to the presence of a unified voice regarding matters. In the latter sense heteroglossia and hegemony can be said to be opposites. The third participant in this conversation is from Kerala, and she is trying to find out from the other two about the distinctiveness of *adda* as a Bengali discourse. The other two D and J try to co-create the specificities of *adda* for her. The co-construction is based on a process of selection which creates this particular speech genre called *adda* and in these actions heteroglossia is contained. As it appears from M's remarks about the specificity of *adda* throughout the transcript, she constantly refers to *adda* as a cultural construct. Her questions somewhat imply that she is not convinced about the Bengaliness. Her voice is a constant reminder of heteroglossia, and that there is no "natural" relationship between Bengaliness and *adda*. McDermott and Tylbor refer to this process as 'collusion' where members of a particular social order cooperate:

> ...to posit a particular state of affairs, even when such a state would be in no way at hand without so proceeding. Participation in social scenes requires that members play into each others hands, pushing and pulling each other toward a strong sense of what is probable and possible, for a sense of what can be hoped for and/ or obscured (McDermott and Tylbor 1995:219).

I will argue in the next section that the specific indexical references and collusion in the production of a speech genre makes performativity an important attribute of *adda*. The performative attribute also makes *adda* as an emergent cultural form in contemporary Bengali society and culture.

Performance and Performativity in *Adda*

What function does *adda* fulfill for its participants? The answer to this question leads to a discussion of *adda* as performance. Richard Bauman used the idea of speech as "verbal art" or performance within the field of linguistic anthropology. Bauman used it to study folklore and very specific cultural and artistic performances. But in his later article (2001) he

acknowledges the use of the performance metaphor in analyzing everyday speech practices. This later development in his thinking was due to the increased recognition of the negotiated terrain of cultural/social identity formation. Speech accomplished both material and semiotic functions for identity formation. *Adda* as a speech genre also serves the latter purposes. *Adda* (as speech) helps in the consolidation of group identity. In that sense *adda* is a verbal performance involving self-interpellation. But *adda* is also a performance in the conventional sense (of performance). The state of West Bengal organizes "ceremonial" *adda* at special occasions at the time of Durga Puja, Bengali New Year etc. These performances are like social artifacts, or ritual performances.

M, also hints at the deliberateness of *adda*. In one of my previous quotes from Chakrabarty he notes that the most interesting thing about *adda* is the **claim** by people that certain speech practices are *adda*. The participants of *adda* are very conscious of that claim, and hence every time engage in *adda* they perform its specificity, its cosmopolitan and intellectual content.

William Hanks (1987) and Richard Bauman (1992, 2001a, 2001b) thus both underscore the open-endedness of discourse genres. Both seem to agree on the performance and practice oriented nature of these genres. For Hanks genres become part of the habitus of members of a speech community through performances, yet they are not bereft of "innovation, manipulation, and change", they are produced and transformed according to changing, local conditions, as opposed to merely instantiating preexistent structures. On the Mayan discourse genres he comments "being 'boundary genres' derived from a fusion of Spanish and Maya frameworks, these texts document an ongoing process in which genres, and not only works are being produced" (1987:677). Genres therefore are in dialogic relation with the cultures from which they emanate.

Though *adda* happens mostly in Bengali, through its simultaneous use of English codes and contexts it produces something more than just Bengaliness, it increases the global reach of a particular cultural practice. *Adda* is also open-ended, and it has always taken new forms, but to retain its distinctive character it relies of the performativity of its patrons to produce this genre. Politics has always been a focus of discussion in *adda*s and the competence of *adda*–participants consisted of keeping up with local but more importantly global politics. We saw in the earlier quote from Charkabarty's article where World War I and its influence on the nature of British poetry was a topic for one of the sessions. Similarly J shows (in previously cited line 127) how *adda* is the hot-bed for discussing local politics.

Thus *adda* as a culturally specific genre is continuously being produced, and revised in dialogues among its participants to make the connection between *adda* and Bengali identity appear natural. Since it is not a written genre, language (orality) becomes the only way to document it (apart from the recent use of the internet). Language is inherently dialogic and not a closed system, therefore *adda* as a cultural practice has an emergent quality (Bauman 2001a). The current rise of Internet *adda* alters the character of *adda* from being completely oral, yet it claims to retain the spirit of *adda*. It becomes a way for Bengali's dispersed all

around the world to relive this particular Bengali experience. Thus speech genres are inherently intertextual creating what Bauman (2001a:80) calls the intertextual gap. He further states that,

> …the calibration of intertextual gaps offers a useful vantage point on ideology and politics of genres. Within any speech community or historical period, genres will vary with regard to the relative tightness or looseness of generic regimentation, but certain genres may become the object of special ideological focus (2001a:81).

This is certainly the case with *adda*. In comparison to other speech genres like '*tarka*'(debate), '*majlish*', '*jalsha*'[8] it has been able to survive the test of time to be practiced in rural, per-urban, urban and diasporic locations, while the former ones have become archaic, or old fashioned. This is because it has been able to incorporate advanced modes of communication into its practice. So the open-endedness or malleability of speech genres actually augments its chances of survival.

The fact the *adda* has no fixed rule adds a performative dimension to it. Participants are always trying to perform in particular ways to recontextualize *adda*, to retain its cosmopolitanism because they desire to be identified as Bengalis even in varied cultural contexts. The history of *adda* is thus a manifestation of a desire to create particular identities, and hence the performative aspect is important. Butler (1997:161) writes that "..the speech act as a rite of institution, is one whose contexts are never fully determined in advance, and that the possibility for the speech act to take on a non-ordinary meaning, to function in contexts where it has not belonged, is precisely the promise of the performative, one that positions the performative at the center of hegemony…" Therefore when J, D, and M get together far removed from Calcutta both by time and space, they create for their Keralite friend an atmosphere to take part in *adda*.

Conclusion

The article began with an objective of extending the scrutiny of *adda* beyond historical analysis to linguistic anthropological analysis and it realize its contemporary significance in the social life and identity formation of Bengalis from all walks of life. *Adda* is a speech genre and the application of theoretical tools from linguistic anthropology helps one discern the language ideologies pertaining to *adda*. Its metonymic relation with Bengali cultural identity is not maintained through a set of static social practices, but the situated performance of its practitioners. The study of speech genres can thus make insightful contributions to the study of identity formation. *Adda* can now happen anywhere in the world, its medium can become text as opposed to speech, but because of its linguistic

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[8] *Tarka* is a Bengali folk form of debate, and no longer happens in Calcutta. *Jalsa* is a musical performance, or a folk play, *Majlish* is also similar to *Jalsa*.

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anthropological situation as a speech genre, and its performative aspect, it will continue to be *adda*, taking on the imprints of changing historical time on its stride.[9]

Note on the usage of Bengali and other Indian language words in this article

All Bengali, Hindi and Malayali words are placed in italics and their translation provided in parenthesis or in a footnote.

Note on Transcription

To indicate pauses in conversation in this meta-*adda* that I recorded for this article I have used the following symbol ^^^.

APPENDIX 1

M- *aise* how can you can you distinguish *adda* from…

D- then basically I think then it's a issue of holding

J- and then this,

D-of holding a part of like Bengali identity

J- no but the point is this

D- don't you think so? like if its,

J- this gathering, this gathering in the neighborhood^^^then the difference between I think the difference between *addas* elsewhere *adda* I mean people the things which we do not call *addas* but have characters of *addas* like public discourse elsewhere and public discourse in Calcutta is that these exactly these points of a::chatting those points I mean, those gatherings became the points of socialization for a particular ideology. During the nationalist movement it was nationalism, during the same time during the terrorist movement it was terrorism I mean terrorism against the British and during the communist movement it was communism **and t**he one particular thing I mean the^^ whole the **"*dada ism*"**(big brother-ism) of Bengali um politics where you have you consider your mentor political mentor your dada *ha,* and that dadaism comes especially from *adda* because it is

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through that gathering you also develop a kind of a:: sort of pseudo kinship relationship where someone is a elder brother and someone is a younger brother, so

D-*hum*

APPENDIX 2

M-*Oh JNU te* (Oh in JNU)[10] inspite of oh despite whether you are Bengali or not you

can see *sub dhaba ke samne* I mean all in front of the food joint

D- hummm

M-that is what you see every day or that is what you practice everyday

D- *he* But how about like, how about a, a campus in where you studied like like^^^ in like in Trivandrum

J- *tui ki groom jol boshiyechish?* (have you put the water for boiling?)

D- in Trivandrum .where did you study in Trivandrum

M- I studied in Trichur but it was like for me it was the same but here I am seeing that,, people are **making** it a thing, constructing a thing out of this *adda*, like *aisa* (like) how you construct things out of *mach* (fish), *amrao mach khai* (we also eat fish) the people in Goa they also have *mach* but you have, **creating** so much out of having *mach* **creating** so much out of having **sweets** and all

D- Yes yes yes

M- So I am finding **that** quite interesting, or how you are giving, giving a big aura to this cultural practices you have

D- I mean do you think its like; it's like carving out a **space** for general talking? like, and do you think it's equivalent in American culture would be well just hanging out or^^^ but hanging out could probably mean hanging out while watching a movie but would it be the same **thing** if we are talking in terms of *adda* in Calcutta

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[10] JNU is an abbreviation for Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi.

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