

**What does the border mean for children?: Narratives from the Indo-Bangladesh
borderlands in Manjira Saha's *Chhotoder Border***

Samata Biswas

Abstract:

In this presentation, I will closely read Manjira Saha's 2018 volume *Chhotoder Border* (Children's Border, Gangchil), a collection of children's line drawings and short narratives collected from school children in the India- Bangladesh borderlands. Certain recurring tropes emerge from these rough drawings and short descriptions, rife with spelling mistakes. The border, an English word repeatedly transcribed in Bengali, does not need an introduction or justification in the lives of these children of the borderlands--the materiality of the border gets represented through barbed wire fences, through the 'police' (Border Security Force) who are at once scary and helpful, and the repeated, casual reference to trafficking in goods=smuggling.

How does the materiality and the affective dimensions of the border get manifested through the narratives and drawings in *Chhotoder Border*? What do we learn when we tease out the representational logic of this state of exception, this site of liminality? This presentation analyses the linguistic and visual texts collected by Saha in the volume to understand the framing of the materiality of the Indo- Bangladesh border as well as its affective import among the students who are the contributors to Saha's volume. In so doing, it contributes to the burgeoning discourse around the "cultural aspect of borders" (Kurki 2014, 1057).

Keywords

Indo- Bangladesh border, borderlands, border children, smuggling, Border Security Force, representation of borders, Manjira Saha