



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

The Unfolding and Expansion of Modernism in Bengali Literature: From Nineteenth to Twentieth Century

Dr. Barunjoyti Choudhury
Assistant Professor
Department of Bengali
Assam University

It is already discussed in the first chapter that tearing the roots of tradition, modernism appeared in this country in the nineteenth century. Then the continuity with indigenous culture got disrupted. The modernism that emerged in colonial India under the influence of accidental thoughts was at the same time “বাস্তববন্মিখ, অতীতচারী, পলায়নবাদী ও সমঝোতা প্রবন” (apathetic to reality, moving in the past, escapist and given to compromise). This imported and imposed modernism was created out of necessity pertaining to cultural politics of colonialism, and which came into existence in the nineteenth century spreading out its branches in the twentieth century did strike its roots to a deeper level in the life of Bengalees as well Bengali literature. Prior to 5/6 years of the first freedom movement of India concerning 1857, that is 1852, when the poet Rangalal Bandopadhyay for the first time used in term “Adhunik” (modern) in Bengali language, then nobody thought of its side of stinging; but he wished to see it as a larger plan. If it was not so, then why did a picture of confidence got unveiled on artistic impression in respect of his arrangement of historical narrative? It, by the way, needs to be mentioned that even about three years before of Rangalal himself satubrinayar in the west projected his departure from thought about ‘Adhunikata’ (La modernite) in the west, but his poems did not carry the reflection of that theory. Nevertheless, with the immediate arrival of the globally acclaimed poet Charl Bodlayer, in 1859, the shadow of modernism spread all over the world through his bunch of poems. Without cooking up (গাঁজামলি নাদয়ি়ে) the account of expansion of modernism in the Bengali literature, rather

its stepping stones of development need to be discussed clearly, as because all variegated paradoxes and complexities exist in this modernism which unfolded itself in every phase and those should be marked off.

Achintya Kumar Sengupta's novel 'Bedo' was published in the Falgun issue, 1333, of 'Kallol: A violent reaction erupted regarding sexuality of this novel. A state of discontent and unrest was read in various contemporary journals and magazines upto 1335. Reading the novel, Rabindranath wrote a letter addressing Achinta Kumar, which was published in first issue of the seventh year of 'Kallol'.

The faculty if Rabindranath's mind about the sexuality imported in Kallol centric modernism clearly comes to light from the very letter. Rabindranath wrote an essay entitled 'yatrir diary' in Agrahayan issue, 1334, of 'Prabashi' and which was published under the title of 'Sahitye Nabotwa' in his essay book named 'Sahityer path'. Whateer Rabindranath wrote in this essay, too, goes against so called kallol based 'Bidroha' (revolt). Besides this, this essay, too, has pronounced a strong protest against the fact that the western centric Bengalees who making his own adhunikata aberrated glibly have been publicizing modernism imported from Europe as an indicative mark of civilization and culture based on colonial reality and thus in consequence of that the colonialization of the faculty of mind is being made unpreventable.

It is understood from the suggestiveness of the phraseologies namely “লঙ্কার গুড়ো” (chilly powder) and “রয়ালটিরি কার-পাউডার” (curry powder of reality) given in the above quoted comment that the young brigade of 'Kallol' in course of “পররে অস্ত্র কনিতা গয়ি” (buying the weapons of another ones) they have themselves chopped off their own hands. In order to indemnify psychological aspects they prepared themselves for “জলরে নীচকোর পাঁককে উপরে আলাড়েতি” (the act of stirring the mud lying under water on upper surface). Unbridledness of lust seemed to have been the sign of kindred of their literature. The victory message of the Russian Revolution and all the significances included in communist Hanifes to might have made the thoughts of some of them reality – oriented, but that social reality contained in their literature is an emotion packed one in regard to observing the sufferings and poverty of the rural and civil societies away from the nationality. If the political point of view is not transparent, and if there is no ideological force of the philosophy of realism in consciousness, the emotional and diluted sympathy towards the sufferings and poverty of “কামাররে আর কাঁসারীর, মুটে-মজুর” (blacksmith, srazier and labourers) plus the common folk get cast off, that exposition is noticed

in Kollolean literature. Even the ultra-modernists also of 'Dhoopchaya' publicized the impact of zeitgeist (যুগধর্ম) at the top of their voice as the mark of ultra-modernism.

It is not true to say that an identical tune was played on same harmonium of Kollol. Rather, a passionate consciousness of democratic revolution is found to be present in their prose and poetry, victorious praise of youthfulness, erotic attachment, an extensive picture of sexual enjoyment putting upside down the flagon of biological hunger and thirst, pessimism, liberal humanism, impact of Freudian psychology, plus psychological analysis of love, revolt against injustices of society, an orderly arrangement of a new brand of relationship born out of reassessment of family and social relationships. These effects resulted from the fact of familiarity with the European and foreign literature. The subject and structure of the writings of world famous writers such as Flaubert, Jola, Ibsen, Nyut Hamsur, Gorky, Gogol, Turgeniv, Antan Chekov, Dostoyvoski, Tolstoy, Materlink, Johan Bowar, Jasinto Benavante undoubtedly provided resources and inspirations to the so called ultra-modern prose and poetry belonging to Kallol circle, and these writers driven by youthful urge of moving away from Rabindranath knocked at the door of western literature, but in consequence of adopting those resources from the west promiscuously, they poured poison into the pot of nectar of tradition causing various diseases in literature followed by picture of unprecedented perversity coupled with symptoms. Their world of writing was overcast with sexual perversity rather than sexology itself. We find exactly the opposite tune of the maxim contained in the Upanishad in the pessimism of Jatindranath Sengupta an adorable personality of community of poets of Kallol. He, as if, seems to say that all the creatures are born out of misery, live in it and after death they go to a sorrowful unseen world. Of course his pessimism was developed right before the emergence of kallol driven by the urge of moving away from Rabindranath.

"Kalikalam" was published in 1926 in the contemporaneous period of "kollol" followed by the publication of "Pragati" in 1927 and "Sanghati", "Uttara" plus "Bichitra" published in 1923, 1925 and 1927 respectively having same lineage and mind of "Kalikalam" plus "Pragati". Bengalees have been always fond of indulging in idle talk with others. As the adda in "For Arts Club" happened to be the pioneer of "kallol", similarly, "Pragati" came into existence from the great adda in old polton of Dhaka centering Buddhadev Basu. The first issue of "Pragati" was published being pointed under the editorship of namely Buddhadev Basu and Ajit Kumar Dutta in the month of Ashar, 1334 and whose office was situated at 47 No. Purana Polton, Romna, Dhaka, but of course earlier to that hand written "Pragati" came to light. There was an ideological similarity of "Pragati" with "Kallol" and barring a few, same writers group used to contribute to both the journals. Writers like Sushil Kumar Dey, Mohitlal

Mazumdar, Priyambada Devi, Nazrul Islam, Achintya Kumar Sengupta, Ajit Kumar Dutta, Amarendra Ghosh, Amalendu Basu, Jagadish Gupta, Jasimuddin, Jeevananda Das Gupta, Buddhadev Basu, Manish Ghatak, Hemchandra Bagchi, Bishnu Dey, Abdul Kader, Gayatree Devi, Parimal Roy, Prafulla Shankar Sen, Prabhu Guhathakurta, Balarani Guha, Bela Dasgupta, Bhriugu Kumar Guhathakurta, Jogendranath Gupta, Ramesh Chandra Das, Samarendra Gupta, Saurindra Mohan Chattapadhyay belong to writers circle of 'Pragati'. Some of the writers also wrote under pen name for 'Pragati' such as –

	Pseudonym		Real Name
1	Abhinav Gupta	1	Achintya Kumar Sengupta
2	Devdutta	2	Ajit Dutta
3	Yubanaswa	3	Manish Ghatak
4	Bipradas Mitra	4	Bishnu Dey

Apart from that, even the translations of foreign stories and poems were being published in this literary journal.

'Pragati', too, participated in that storm of hot debate that continued at that time through different journals over ultra-modern prose and poetry. It was 'Pragati, which pleaded for the ultra-modernists in this debate. The western-dependent circle of writers apart from self-indignity made their self-crisis more severe by means of editorial of the journal and very clever artistic skill of 'Mashiki'. So, no positive waves rolled over their colonized faculty of mind of taxing any hasty decision for sending Rabindranath and Saratchandra 'চরি নরিবাসন' (transportation for life). Since Rabindranath had been conscious of these perversions and transition of the western literature and of the ultra-modernists of Bengal, he wrote an essay entitled 'Adhunik Kabya' in 'Parichay', Vaisakh issue, 1339 . It becomes crystal clear from this comment of Rabindranath that neither perversion nor transition can never be the sign of modernism. The fact of observing "নরাসক্ৰুত চত্ৰিত্বে বশ্ৰিবক্ৰে সন্সগ্ৰদৃশ্ৰুত্ৰিত্বে" (the world thoroughly with a disinterested mind) that he uttered in the concluding of the quoted excerpt, the sense of that humane entirety had been absent from the writers regarded as the representatives of ultra-modernism. Their perception is divided, individual centric and they were mistaken of taking "কালাপাহাড়্ৰিতাল ঠক্ৰেকা" (the act of beating time of iconoclasm) for modernism. They were able to see

“সহজ দেহস্বভাব” (natural bodily nature) lying behind the screen of ‘influenza’. The concept of physique being all turned their kindred sign for anti – Rabindranath stand.

Question may be raised here whether Rabindranath was a modernist? Didn't consciousness of inauspiciousness ever unfold in him? Was he engrossed only in philosophy of Upanishad like a seer? We may take the help of Abu Saiyad Ayub in order to give the answers of these questions. His famous book named ‘Adhunikata O Rabindranath’ was published for the first time in April, 1968.

The doorway of not calling Rabindranath modern is shut from this very analysis of Ayub. If mankind centricity is one of the signs of modernity, then Rabindranath is certainly modern. He did never forget the matter of misfortune and untruth even amid his perpetual trend of optimum thinking. That is, as there had been romantic marks in the literature of Rabindranath, so also there were signs of modernism in it in terms of context and technique, but there was no blind imitation of westernism in that modernism, on the contrary, he accepted the thought pertaining to west in “দেশীয় আধারে” (indigenous receptacle). It would be wrong to compare Rabindranath with Ezra Pound T.S. Eliot, rather he may be called a romantic modern, and again there is no point to get surprised if someone does not find romantic melancholy of Baudrillard in him. The colonial intellectuals and writers suffered the consequences of their own action for observing the own country and nation through the lens of west, but Rabindranath did not become the victim of that rashness, when the idea of west being all causes widespread fatality of consciousness owing to lack of self-dignity and self-confidence on the platform of colonial reality, then someone has to face rainy days like bats, that, even animals do not admit them as animals, nor do the birds, too.

It is neither possible to be a thorough European nor to be a complete Bengalee why does Rabindranath under such ruinous condition not show his interest for theoretical modernism, and the reason as why he wants to assess and reconsider the limit pertaining to time and local extent on the basis of eternal perspective is not traced in the web of consciousness. Since Rabindranath wants to realize the conflict between source and context by adding literature of recent time with continuity of tradition, so he happens to be “শাশ্বতভাবে আধুনিকি” (a modern in an everlasting manner). That's why he ignoring the effervescence of the passage of time emphasized the complete flow and disbelieving piecemeal set his trust in its entirety where modernism that grew up on colonial reality invited the total ruin by separating itself completely from tradition, there the mind of Rabindranath was devoted to building up bridge between the past of indigenous tradition and present one. The identifying

particulars of consciousness related to Rabindranath are found in the excerpt given below occurring in his writing entitled ‘Sabhapatir sesh Boktobya’ belonging to his essay book names ‘Sahityer Pathe’.

There lies immense significance in the say “অনুকরণ করতে হবে, এমন কথা বলিনি” (I do never say that someone is to imitate) Rabindranath going against that modernism which moves in the past on colonial reality advocates for reconstruction of tradition. Desire for imitation is kindred sign of so called modernism. Hence Rabindranath does not desire to have a Xerox copy of the ideologic past, as where there remains latent a sort of conservativeness. Instead of that, making the essence of the component experiences of many generations of the past as his asset, he wants the reconstruction of the present. Since he had the sense that “পশ্চাতরে আমি” (I of the past) pushes forward “I” of the present. He did not paralyse his own resources in course of importing weapons from some other else. As because he being aware of fact that tricks and posturing of cultural politics of colonialism putting us in the cage of westernization was swallowing our individualism.

It is understood from this that Rabindranath was able to know the blood sucking, exploiting and dirty face lying behind the mask of imperialistic power. He had been a strong emulative personality against those for whom the idea of west being all happened to be their family sign. He used to believe heart and soul that the devastating gusty wind of urban centrality which was rushing hastily to this country from the west can only be prevented by the sense of entirety latent in the rural life of this nation.

When we were becoming subservient from the angle of cultural aspect in consequence of extensive westernization and urbanization, it was only then Rabindranath showed us the path when a nation becomes subservient not only from political and economic angles, but also in respect of cultural and intellectual aspects, his all sorts of yardsticks of consideration are determined and controlled by hegemonist class for the sake of hegemonial interest Rabindranath also hinted in his aforementioned essay that under the then social reality in Indian colonialism it was imperialistic power which prepared criterion of determining our good and bad.

The purpose of so much expansion of wheedling language is to be aware of Rabindranath’s thought and point of view regarding, above all, adherence to tradition and its continuity including technical devices of economic, political factors of imperialistic power, cultural politics, its devastating appearance under colonial reality of Indian subcontinent, kindred sign of so called modernism

imported from the west, and to have an idea about native source and context. It is understood from the above dissertation that it is not possible to assess and analyse Rabindranath's departure from thought plus his literature on the basis of any predetermined criterion and the standard obtained from the west. One whose world of consciousness was completely free from colonial circle of implication, so there is nothing to be surprised that the modern feelings and inclinations would be regarded as “ব্য়স্তু বাগীশরে চত্বেত্বত্বে” (faculty of the mind of fussy persons) in his observation.

Question crops up as why the revolting scribes in the aforesaid phase of ultra-modernism despite being endowed with profound erudition could not know the nature of “বলিত্বে কবদিরে আধুনকিতা” (modernism of European poets)? Actually, having been attracted to colourful smokescreen of colonial cultural politics as well as westernization plus urbanization, they voluntarily surrendered to them, rather it is better to say that they accepted incarceration. As the action of poison does not work on the body of most of the addicts even if they are bitten by snake, so also likewise the so called ultra-moderns addicted to and overwhelmed with intoxicant of west being all could not feel the bites of ultra-modernism and here lies their reason of opposing Rabindranath. Nevertheless, we get the support in the assessment Jeevanananda that Rabindranath had been no doubt a modern in respect of his own independent characteristics, so to say, “শাশ্বত আধুনকি”(timeless modern).

Here before coming back to uniform of dissertation, a state of difference between ultra-modernism and Rabindra-related modernism may be displayed through a table:

Sl. No	Ultra modernism	Sl. No	Rabindra-related modernism
1.	West centricity, west being all	1.	Nativeness
2.	Rapt in mental obsession of urbanization	2.	Beaming with a longing for naturalization
3.	Effervescence for a short time	3.	Flow of eternity
4.	Strayness from tradition	4.	Adherence to tradition
5.	Rejection of tradition	5.	Having the acumen to delve into tradition
6.	Pertaining to worldly pleasure and enjoyment	6.	Pertaining to aesthetics/sentiment
7.	Barefaced picture of unbridled sensuality	7.	Modest art of restrained sensuality
8.	Individualistic	8.	Impersonality
9.	Western source and content	9.	Indigenous source and content
10.	Indifferent to colonial cultural politics	10.	Consciousness about colonial cultural politics
11.	Dividuousness	11.	Totalizedness
12.	Cultural subserviency	12.	Free cultural thought
13.	Imitation	13.	Assimilation
14.	Lack of compactness	14.	Continuity
15.	Transition, deviation from the natural path, deformity	15.	Recovery and reconstruction
16.	Pessimism	16.	Optimism
17.	Import of western modernism	17.	Formation of modernism of tradition
18.	Ultra-modern	18.	Timeless modern

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