

Women in Manik Bandyopadhyay's Novels

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Abstract – *Bandopadhyay's writing was inspired by both Marxian philosophy and Freudian philosophy - which are quite contrasting in nature. His writing stands in stark contrast to that of other contemporary luminaries like Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay who portrayed life in rural Bengal in a gentle, lyrical light. Although he had some common grounds with Tarashankar Bandopadhyay, he distinguished himself with profound and rational analysis of the lives of ordinary people. Manik's writing dealt with the pettiness and wretchedness of existence in the context of rural Bengal. His primary concern was the dark alleyways of the human mind, even among the supposedly simple village folk, and not the serene beauty of nature that was always in the background in his novels.*

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INTRODUCTION

In *Putulnacher Itikatha* he took on rather savagely the hypocrisy in villages: An elderly couple are canonized as saints after committing morphine-induced suicide; the daughter of one of the village elders gets married off to a wealthy businessman in Kolkata who treats her as a concubine ... she gets hooked to alcohol and returns home a shadow of her former self. However, the people around her keep pretending that nothing untoward has happened. Numerous other examples abound.

Shortly after making his debut in the world of fiction in 1935 through a short story titled *Atashi Mami*, Bandopadhyay embarked upon writing novels. Publication of *Diba-Ratrir Kabya* in 1935 and *Padma Nadir Majhi* and *Putul Nacher Itikotha* in 1936 established him as the most notable novelist Bengali literature since Bankimchandra, Rabindranath and Saratchandra. He distinguished himself with focus on the life of ordinary rural and urban people, with colloquial language and with a neat narrative. He was a great storyteller who perfected his fiction with insight into human mind. In the earlier works he took a Freudian approach. In the later life, he showed influence of Marxist theory. His treatment of human sexuality in *Chatushkone* is path-breaking.

Putul Nacher Itikatha is one of the most notable works of Bandopadhyay. In one of his letters, he wrote that this novel was a humble protest against those who tend to play with the lives of humans as if they were puppets.

It narrates the struggle of Shashi, the protagonist, and doctor, who relentlessly strives to uplift his village and free it from baseless superstitions

surrounded by hollow Hindu rituals. In a rural backdrop, it depicts the lives of different individuals showing the variety of lives in Bengal. It deals with the hypocrisies, alcohol addiction and irresistible carnal impulses unveiling dark, nasty and pseudo-conservative shades of Bengali ethos. The intricate psyche of women along with ups and downs in relationships causing extreme consequences leading to extramarital affairs and subjection to savage instincts has been well narrated in this novel. Being a Marxist story-teller and deeply influenced by Sigmund Freud, Manik Bandopadhyay exceptionally shades light on the constant conflict between city against the village, man against destiny and trust against jealousy. It is a staunch protest filled with anecdotes of kindness and cruelty, love and hate, trust and betrayal, all of which strike at the root of the forced, shallow customs feeding on the Bengali society.

WOMEN IN MANIK BANDYOPADHYAY'S NOVELS

It was serialised in the *Bharatbarsha* from Poush 1341 to Agrahayana 1342. D. M. Library of Calcutta published it as a book in 1936. A film was produced based on this great novel in 1949. The film was directed by Asit Bandopadhyay under the banner of K. K. Productions.

Since early life, Bandopadhyay had struggled with poverty and epilepsy. The signs of epilepsy first surfaced when he was engaged in writing *Padma Nadir Majhi* and *Putul Nacher Itikatha*. Continued and unabated ailment, problems and crises devastated his mental disposition. Eventually he resorted to alcohol for respite, adding to his misery. On 3 December 1956, he collapsed and went into a

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coma. He was admitted to the Nilratan Government Hospital on 2 December where he died the next day. He was 48. His funeral took place at Nimtala crematorium in North Calcutta. A huge crowd attended the memorial meeting for Manik Bandyopadhyay held on 7 December 1956.

Once while he was with his friends in their college canteen, one of them asked him if he could publish a story in the magazine *Bichitra*. The would-be novelist replied that his first story would be good enough for the purpose. At that time, *Bichitra* was a leading periodical which carried stories only by eminent authors. Manik walked into the office of the periodical and dropped the story *Atashi Mami (Aunt Atashi)* in their letter box. At the end of the story he signed off as *Manik Bandhopadhyay*. After four months, publication of the story (in 1928) created sensation in the literary circles of Bengal and, from then on, the pen name stuck.

His stories and novels were published in literary magazines of the then Bengal. They included *Bichitra*, *Bangasree*, *Purbasha*, *Ananda Bazaar Patrika*, *Jugantor*, *Satyajug*, *Probashi*, *Desh*, *Chaturanga*, *NoroNari*, *Notun Jiban*, *Bosumati*, *Golp-Bharati*, *Mouchak*, *Pathshala*, *Rang-Mashal*, *Nobo Shakti*, *Swadhinata*, *Agami*, *Kalantar*, *Parichaya*, *Notun Sahitya*, *Diganta*, *Sanskriti*, *Mukhopotro*, *Provati*, *Ononnya*, *Ultorath*, *Elomelo*, *Bharatbarsha*, *Modhyabitta*, *Sharodi*, *Sonar Bangla*, *Agami*, *Ononya*, *Krishak*, *Purnima*, *Rupantar* and *Swaraj*.

Bandopadhyay published 57 volumes. He also wrote poetry, but not much is heard about his poems.

Even a critic like Budduadeb base, who never rated M-B as an extra-ordinary genius, remains in appreciation that in the story writing in Bengali, M-B is second to none in objective representation. Like Bankim any other subsequent writer, he did not go far and wide to find materials for literature. Throughout his life he sought them in direct perception and in the immediate vicinity, not on of life that he has presented artistically is universally known to the illiterates devoid of wealth.

DISCUSSION

The pictures of our rural urban lives, disintegration of the old joint family, families, family quarrels, conflict in love and affection, conflict between religious superstition and humanistic values and the final triumph of humanism provide a pageant of the entire Bengal life.

Along with the central themes of his stories, nature runs consistently in his stories side by side. Very often it has been seen that nature remains as the background of the story; sometimes nature stands as a soul mate, as a true companion of loneliness, etc.

The direct touch of lofty, beautiful natural surroundings of the Himalayas created immense happiness and a sense of togetherness with nature in the tender mind of her. So, from the childhood he had internal inclination to nature. She was out and out a nature lover. She considered nature as a living entity and realised as a real companion from his very childhood.

Living here the poet was impressed on the one hand, by the wide expanse of water and on the other by the unknown human beings who had inhabited the villages for generations and centuries (P. 285). The surrounding natural environment of Rural Bengal had immense impact on her short stories. He enjoyed much to write stories amidst the serene beauty of nature.

The significance of these stories is that all were written during the period when he was staying at North Bengal, along with the banks of the river Padma. He gave a true picture of Bengal with all her natural beauties through these stories. Nature plays a specific role in these stories. In these stories of Bandopadhyay nature is depicted to fulfill various functions. Being the lyrical poet he could feel the pulse of nature. Due to that the intuitive link between man and nature is clearly revealed in these nature stories. In these stories a true picture of Bengal with all her beauties is present. Bandopadhyay used nature to create certain mood of the central characters or the surrounding environments. He showed that human feelings get depth and completeness through nature. Bandopadhyay is realistic in the depiction of nature.

Nature is presented here in diverse ways; sometimes as a means to disconnect him with the world of Ulapur and some other times it plays the role of creating the sense of craving to go back to the metropolitan setting of Kolkata (formerly Calcutta). Bandopadhyay described the natural setting of his office that "Ekkhani andhakar aatcalar modhye tahar aapis; adure ekti panapukur ebang tahat cari pare jangal" (Galpa Samagra, P. 51). The postmaster could not adjust with the environment. In spite of greenery everywhere in his surrounding, he imagined to his metropolitan residence. Again the seasonal change of nature also reflected in this story. It was presented in the sense of having negative impact on the postmaster's health. It is revealed in the story when the postmaster blamed the natural weather of Ulapur after falling ill due to the continuous rain. Here also nature stands as a means to disconnect him from Ulapur. At the climax of the story, nature plays the critical role while explaining the suffering heart of the orphan girl Ratan. At one moment the postmaster thought about to go back and bring away Ratan with him. But the wind had just filled the sails, the boat had got well into the middle of the turbulent current, and already the village was left behind, and its outing

burning ground came in sight. Here, the combination of the turbulent current of the river and his own powers of rationalization helped the postmaster to overcome his momentary feeling of pain in his actions towards Ratan.

This is accented with the swift flowing river that continuous on, regardless of human affairs. The nature in the form of river is presented here as an entity which is continuously doing her work in a disciplined way without looking for anyone's interferences'. Bandopadhyay states thus: Jakhan noukai uthilen.....takhan hridayer modhye atyanta ekta bedana anubhav karite lagilen.... ekti samanya balikar karun mukhachchabi jen ek bishwabyapi brihat abyakta marma byatha prakash korite lagila. Ekbar nitanta echcha hoila "firiya jai, jagater korbichyuta sei anathinike sange koria loiya aasi".....kintu takhan pale batas pailache, barshar srot khartar bege bahiteche, gram atikram kariya nadikuler shashan dekha diyache. Ebong nadi prabahe bhasaman pathiker udas hridaye ei tattver uday hoila, jibane eman kota bichched, kata mrityu ache, firiya fal ki. Prithibite ke kahara (Galpa Samagra, P. 57)

CONCLUSION

Here also nature is presented as a continuous disciplined process following its own laws. Bandopadhyay had drawn the picture in the following way: gramer nam chandipura. Naditi bangladesher ekti choto nadi,niralasa tanvi naditi apon kulroksha kariya kaj kariya jai; dui dharer gramer sakalerai sange tahar jen ekta na ekta samparka ache. Dui dhare lokalay ebong taruchchayaghan uccatat; nimnatai diya gramlakshmi srotasvini atmabismrita druta padakshepe prafullahridaye apnar asangkha kalyankarye caliache (Galpa Samagra, P. 237)

The story Chuti was written by Bandopadhyay in between 1892-93. Chuti is the reflection of his realization of companion of nature for the proper development of a child. In this story nature is reflected as a source of joy, a true companion from beginning till the end. Here also river plays the significant role. The story start with a tale of a boy named after Phatik who was nursed and groomed in the lapse of nature. He spent maximum of his time enthusiastically at the river side, under the open sky. But after coming to Calcutta he had to spend his time within the boundary walls like a prisoner. He had to follow strict rules at home as well as at school, without any entertainment or entertainer. There was no river to jump into and swim. He totally annoyed with city and busy life. His internal urge for the nature's lap, his mother's lap provoked him to take risk of his life to left Calcutta during the heavy rain. Bandopadhyay expressed Phatik's reaction in the following manners: Gharer modhye airup onadar, ehar por aabar hanf chadibar jayga chila na. Deyaler modhye aatka poriya keboloi tahar sei gramer kotha

monot porita.....prokanda ekta dhaus ghuri loiya bo bo shabde uraiya bedaibar sei math, 'taire naire naire na' koriya ucceisware swarocita ragini aalap koria, akornyabhabejhuriya beraibar sei noditir, diner modhye joghon tokhon jhap diya poriya satar katibar sei sankirno srotasvini, sei sob dol bol, upadrob, swadhinota abong sarbopori sei atyacarini obicarini mahornishi tahar nirupay citoke aakorshon korita (Galpa Samagra, P. 232).

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