



International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)

A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal

ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)

ISJN: A4372-3142 (Online) ISJN: A4372-3143 (Print)

Volume-VI, Issue-V, September 2020, Page No. 106-110

Published by Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>

DOI: 10.29032/ijhsss.v6.i5.2020.106-110

The role of Bengali Literature and Song in the Freedom Movement of India: A brief study

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Abstract

History shows that literature, art and song have always played an important role in any kind of movement in the society. The same is true of Indians' independence movement. The British have ruled our country for almost 200 years. Disgusted by the exploitation, oppression and tyranny of the British, the Indians also carried out innumerable movement. Bengali literature and song have made important contributions behind these movement. In other words, it can be said that Bengali literature and song have given a great impetus to the independence movement of India. Bengali literature and song have sown the seeds of patriotism in the minds and hearts of every Indian. Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, Madhusudan Dutta, Dinabandhu Mitra, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Dwijendralal Roy, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Kazi Nazrul Islam – each of their poems, novels, plays and songs have greatly influence the Indian Independence movement. The influence of some novels and plays was so serve that the British government was forced to ban these. We will try to discuss here how Bengali literature and song accelerated the Indian independence movement.

Keywords: British Rule, Freedom Movement, Bengali Poetry, Novel, Play, Song.

1. Introduction: There are many factors that contribute to the independence of a nation. The subjugated nation has to fight against the colonial power in different ways for independence. With constant movement and with arms at the end. But none of this will work if the nation can't be immersed in the mantra of independence. And this is where the role of artists and writers is very important. It is said that pen is much stronger than the weapon. Bengali artists and writers living in subjugated India have done this difficult work. But for this they had to suffer physical and mental torture from the ruler. Despite living in this independent country we have seen many artists and writers being arrested. Thus, it is

only natural that they should be subjected to more severe torture in subjugated India. In this context, how Bengali literature and song played an important role in the independence movement of subjugated India will be our topic of discussion. We know that multidimensional Bengali literature has been created from the poisonous sting of subjugation which was more terrible than bullets. Almost all the major writers of Bengali literature have settled in subjugated India and have ignited a fire in literature and given impetus to the independence movement. However, the independence movement in subjugated India was not one-sided. Some have moved in a non-violent way or some in a violent way. We find evidence of this in Bengali literature. However, whatever the approach of the movement, the artists and writers think that revolution is inevitable in this crisis of the nation. It is from this thought that the writers have instilled a revolutionary attitude in their literature. Moreover, the traditional literary work became unnecessary for the reader at that time. The kind of literature that works like firecrackers to liberate the motherland becomes the kind of literature that is desired by the reader and the viewer.

2. Objective: The objective of this paper is to highlight how Bengali literature and song played an important role in the Indian independence movement.

3. Methodology: Methodology is one of the significant aspects which helped the researcher to conduct his study. It is a systematic way through which a study can be conducted. The paper is purely descriptive and based on secondary sources.

4. Research Value: This paper will play an important role in researching the contribution of Bengali literature and song to the Indian independence movement. Moreover, the contribution of Bengali literature to the independence movement was not studied in that way.

5. Overview: Let us first come to the words of poetry. Rangalal Bandhopadhyay(1827-1887) conveyed the spirit of patriotism in Bengali poetry through historical stories. Patriotism is the main motivation of his poetry. Rangalal embodied in his poetry the patriotic sentiments that arose in the mid-nineteenth century centering on the ugliness of subjugation. The famous quote(‘Swadhinota Hinotay Ke Bachite Chay Hey, Ke Bachite Chay./Dasotto Sringkhol Bolo Ke Poribe Pay Hey, Ke Poribe Pay?’) from his poetry ‘Padmini Upakhyan’(1858) gives impetus to India’s independence movement. Michael Madhusudan Dutta(1824-1873) in his poetry ‘Meghnadabadh’(1861) compares Rama to foreign Englishmen and Ravana to the children of patriotic heroes. He compared Vibhishan with traitorous Indians. So this poetry also influence the freedom movement. Nabin Chandra Sen’s(1849-1909) poetry ‘Polashir Yuddho’(1875) played a special role in instilling a sense of nationalism in Indians. It is a patriotic narrative poetry composed in 5 cantos. In this poetry the poet has expressed the pain of subjugation based on the story of the fate of Nawab Sirajdaulla of Bengal. The influence of contemporary movements and events deeply influenced Satyendranath Dutta’s(1882-1922) poetic mind. He did not join the Swadeshi movement, but his patriotism was pure. He composed ‘Charangaan’ during the Swadeshi movement. Besides, he also directly participated in ‘Shivaji Utsav’, ‘Rakhibandhan’ etc. He has beautifully highlighted the aspect of boycotting foreign goods

in his poetry 'Sandhikshan'(1905). He wrote, "Pathsale Chatro Kore Bideshi Borjon,/Chomotkar! Drisyo Chomotkar!/Bilasborjone Heroo Toruni Chatrira/Agrogami Aji Sobakar." Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam's(1898-1976) 'Agniveena'(1922), 'Bisher Bashi'(1924) and 'Bhangar Gaan'(1924) – these 3 poetry gave impetus to the freedom movement. He did not turn away from the partition of Bengal movement, revolutionary movement, non-cooperation movement etc. Nazrul's rebellion against torture, exploitation and injustice. Through revolt, he wanted to awaken the masculinity of the subjugated and exploited Indians. His poem 'Bidrohii', 'Kandari Husiyar' gave impetus to the freedom movement and it remained in the face of every revolutionary. Nazrul's poems have played a sharper role than the atomic bomb in inspiring the anti-British movement. Nazrul also formed a political party to save India's independence. The name of the party is 'All India Swaraj Party'. Feeling the devastating effect of Nazrul's poetry, the British government arrested and tortured him. He inspired the students in the freedom movement by composing 'Chatrodoler Gaan' to save the independence of India.

The genre of literature that has the most and most rapid influence in any social or state movement is play. Because it is possible to stage the play as well as read it. In this case, Bengali play made an important contribution to the independence movement of India. For example, the melody of nationalism in Michael Madhusudan Dutta's(1824-1873) play 'Krishnakumari'(1861) and the self-sacrifice of Krishna for the welfare of the country and the nation gave impetus to the Indian independence movement. Deenabandhu Mitra's(1830-1873) play 'Nildarpan'(1860) had an unparalleled impact on the Indian independence movement. The main story of the play is the real story of the struggle and movement of the peasants against the horrific oppression of the peasants by the British in the nineteenth century centered on indigo cultivation in India. In the context of the Swadeshi movement, Girish Chandra Ghosh's(1844-1911) most successful historical play is 'Sirajdaulla'(1906). This play had a profound effect on the independence movement. Through the play, he has conveyed the feeling of nationalism. That is why he has portrayed the character of Siraj as a heroic character. Girish Chandra wants to show the intimacy of subjugation through this character. On 8 January 1911, the British Government stopped acting and promoting the play 'Sirajdaulla' to promote nationalism. Girish Chandra's other two notable historical plays written in the context of the Swadeshi movement are 'Mirkashim'(1906) and 'Chhatrapoti Shivaji'(1907). In both this plays, the playwright has promoted nationalism and portrayed Mirkashim and Shivaji as heroic characters. The playwright Amritalal Basu(1853-1929) joined the Swadeshi movement directly. In this context of this movement, he also wrote a play called 'Sabas Bangali'(1906) which gave impetus to the independence movement of India. In this play, an attempt is made to make the people of the country self-reliant through boycott of indigenous products. Dwijendralal Roy(1863-1913) has also given impetus to the freedom movement through his plays. His two notable plays written in the context of the Swadeshi movement are 'Pratap Singha'(1905) and 'Durgadas'(1906). The playwright has portrayed both Pratap Singha and Durgadas as national hero characters. And the bravery, semen and patriotism of both the characters greatly affected the movement. The playwright Kshirod Prasad Vidyabinod(1863-1927) has become popular for awakening patriotism and

sense of nationalism among the people. His plays like 'Banger Pratapaditya'(1903), 'Polashir Prayaschitta'(1907) and 'Nandakumar'(1907) written in the context of Swadeshi movement have made important contribution in the freedom movement. Because through these plays he has inspired the countrymen with the mantra of strong nationalism. The playwright's concentration in instilling patriotism in the Bengali audience is commendable. Manmotha Roy's(1899-1988) 'Karagar'(1930) play is set in the context of the lawlessness movement. The play depicts how the prison of a foreign ruler became a meeting place for patriots on that day as a result of breaking the law. The play had such an impact on the Indian independence movement that the British Government was forced to stop acting.

A number of timeless novels have been created in Bengali literature about the Swadeshi movement. Those novels greatly influenced the revolutionaries. Novelist Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay(1838-1894) wrote the first novel centering on the Swadeshi movement. In this context, he established himself as the organizer of the nation by constructing the novel 'Anandamath'(1884). The song 'Bandemataran' in this novel is especially noteworthy. Because in the song the country is addressed as mother which became the main mantra of the revolutionaries. Besides, Rabindranath Tagore's(1861-1941) 'Ghore Baire'(1916), Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's(1876-1938) 'Pother Daabi'(1926), Kazi Nazrul Islam's(1898-1976) 'Kuhelika'(1931) gave impetus to the freedom movement. Among these, the novel 'Pother Daabi' is considered as an ideal book by the revolutionaries.

Several patriotic Bengali songs composed during the British period also played an important role in the independence movement. Nazrul Islam's songs like "Chol Chol Chol", "Durgom Giri Kantar Moru", "Karar Oi Louho Kopat" etc. revolt against the British colonial rule. Pitambor Das's "Ekbar Biday De Ma", Mukundo Das's "Chere De Reshmi Churi" etc. played an important role against the British colonial rule. Dwijendralal Roy has always been remembered by revolutionaries for his song "Dhono Dhanyo Puspo Bhora". Besides, songs like Rabindranath Tagore's "O Amar Desher Mati", "Amar Sonar Bangla" etc. inspired the revolutionaries in many ways.

6. Conclusion: In the above discussion it is seen that Bengali poetry, plays, novels, songs etc. have made more or less important contribution in the independence movement of India. However, play and verse have played the most important role than novels. Because poetry and songs are small in size, the feeling of patriotism can be easily instilled in people through these. And the play is called a visual poem, it is very easy to awaken the feeling of patriotism in people. In conclusion, it is undeniable that the various genres of Bengali literature have made significant contributions to the Indian independence movement in various ways.

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