The Flute Player and Manik Bandapadhyay

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ABSTRACT

Manik Bandapadhyay (1908-1956) is one of the greatest novelist and story writers in the Bengali language after Rabindranath Tagore. He wrote many master pieces like dibaratrir kabyo (1935), putul nacher itikatha (1936), padma nudir majhi (1936) along with magnificent short stories like atasimami, pragualithusik, atmoshtayar adhikar, chhoto bakul purer jatri etc. He is a man of real fighter like a revolutionary. His sympathy for the unprivileged and the downtrodden is perfect. The new rising of intellect of society through personal crisis in his characters is the uniqueness of Manik Bandyapahaya. He wrote a novel without main story with the help of sub-stories where Freud and Marx both surge. This is the unique appearance of his writing in Bengali literature most probably in the world literature too. He is the pioneer of these type rare creations in Bengali literature. He and his created characters are indifferent which is really implausible to figure out one from another.

Introduction

The man plays the flute and very strangely whenever he plays, stream of blood flows from his throat. But if he does not play the flute, nothing happens. In spite of this, he could not resist playing. This is his fate and this is also his destiny. In fact, he does not play the flute only, actually he plays his life; might be he plays his death accordingly. He says, ‘Would not I play flute, then how will I live?’ But it’s the regime of life. Tangled with life and death, this banalised art will be bided one day. May be one has to embrace death unwillingly, mostly being forced and sometimes in poverty too. Again he has to leave with the intention to make the lady love gladsmore. After death he leaves the outer world and resides in the centre. There, a continuous agony always rings. This kind of passion for art transforms from person to person within the time and era.

Objectives and Methods

Keeping previous in mind, using the observation method about a complex personality like Manik Bandapadhyay to find out his writings and life together a synthesis of philosophical profundity and aesthetic exuberance.

The seed of Manik Bandapadhyay’s future life and literature

I do not remember the exact time and date when I had read the writings of Manik Bandapadhyay. Not likely other school going student I was introduced with his ‘PASS FAIL,’ but his evergreen creation ‘ATASI MAMI’ introduced me long ago. After that the circle of time spent. With the maturation of age, I became closer with his writings. I tried to understand him as well as his writings. But after so many years whenever I think of writing something about his creation, the character of JATIN, an eternal evocation in Atashi mami flashes my mind playing the flute continuously. I can’t figure out Manik Bandyapadhyay from the protagonist Jatin’s character of ‘ATASI MAMI’. Both are mingled. Actually the characters in Manik Bandapadhyay’s pieces are so realistic that they cannot be easily differentiated from his life. But we the reader of

Manik come to know that actually he wrote the short story ‘ATASI MAMI’ in a fickle challenge with mates only when his ages was just twenty years. He strictly informs, “…not in sake of art I wrote this story – I just wanted to win the challenge so that my writing gets published in the famous monthly journal”- And also he became victorious in the challenge too which is known to us. Unfortunately, but we don’t know the maximum of his life which he crossed with greater challenge. The challenge what was begun with the writing with “ATASI MAMI” was continued to the last breath of his uttered life. “ATASI MAMI”-the short story what was written in his twenty years of ages the researchers don’t get entirely ideas about Manik Bandyapadhyaya. He himself flouts it saying, ‘choked with excessive romance.’ But that unreal story became the seed of his future life and literature-which becomes too much objectives in my vision. The very famous critic said aptly, ‘The attitude of a writer is his idiosyncrasy with the help of which he can be free and amble in the creation of writing. This free ambience is felt everywhere in the novels or stories in respect of making the structure, character, selection of language and the interpretation of life.’(1)

An angry man, against the common flows

As a student of science Manik could have easily gone with the flow. He could have established himself as a successful one. But he was very much determined to go against the common flow. In spite of being a Math’s student from prestigious Presidency College, all the rooms were filled with foreign writings especially Russian writers. At the age of twelve or thirteen, writings of Rabindranath Tagore and popular writer Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay had already enchanted him. Addicted by literature, his own subject was out of focused. As a result though he was approved in the examination, but could not pass. After that the consequence was obvious, he was thrown out of the college. Everyone in the family was taken aback. How is this possible! But who knows that at that time he was not within himself. He was trapped in the magic of the art. Manik received a letter from his elder brother which clearly stated that he would not get any pocket money if he continues like this. According to him at
first Manik had to complete his studies and then he can pursue with his passion for art. In response to this Manik clearly stated without literature, his life is nothing. And for this if he need to quit studies, he does not even bother. He even challenge that with his future study in literature, a time will come when his name will be taken in contemporary with the great Rabindranath Tagore and the beloved of all Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay in parallel. What a confidence! Or is it arrogance!

**Sketch of human life-Rabindranath and Manik Bandapadhyay**

This type of perfect scientific and stubborn personality who has the power to investigate, reaching into the blood cell and make a postmortem. As a surprising result he gets a figure of naked ‘Bangali’ personality from the womb of the Colonial estate. Only polished in look but parallel very spindle shanked. This character is differently represented by making his whole body scan time by time. “When he started to realize himself putting glance, he understood what a tremendous decay begin in his depth! He was almost reduced to half. The pathological report clearly stated that nothing could be done. The disease with which he has been detected cannot be cured. ‘(2) Sashi (One character from the very famous Novel ‘Putul Nacher Itikatha’) doctor himself had given up. Thus it became clear that the ‘flowers’ (Kusum, another character from the very famous Novel ‘Putul Nacher Itikatha’) are about to shed their petals. This minute portrayal of human life gains its momentum in Manik’s writing. Previously Rabindranath Tagore had an ability to sketch human life but now it has been nicely adapted by Manik Bandapadhyay.

**Dedication and responsibility towards literature, family, society, politics…**

In the beginning of his writing he was influenced by Sigmund Freud but in unconscious mind Karl Marx is also there. Gopal, a character from Putul nacher itikatha is a ready example. Later his writings contained Marxist philosophy but in unconsciously Freud is always there. So the clear two divisions of his writings about Freud or Marx made by some critics does not matter of a significant world class Bengali writer in the light of present criticism.

Manik was always dedicated about his passion for literature and at the same time he was also conscious about his social and political duties. He had tortured himself a lot. Almost he had drawn himself to death without any ailment. The entire family had to fight with poverty. In his writing when his fight against poverty is depicted, one will get a goose bump. He used to say in a rented house with his wife at Baranagar (Kolkata). At the time his wife conceived a baby, but the baby died. His wife was not much affected though. According to Manik, “Dali is not unhappy for the baby. She said that she is saved. Now she has been relieved from several tantrums. She will return home and take a long rest for a month. Then she will take the responsible of kitchen bidding the maid. Lot of expenditure will be saved.” In their critical days also, he was dutiful to his family and the society. When his so called rich brothers stand aside to take their father’s responsibility, it was he who took care of his father. He had not come out of politics too. This responsibility shows how much he is dedicated towards literature. But later he finds out his faults with the aim of strict realism. Whole the life he was detached from spiritual relevance.

May be an example of Manik’s highest responsibilities to create literature of sub-story ‘Kumud o Moti’ in the novel Putul Nacher Itikatha, ‘’ Moti, the simple village girl adapted the vagabond lifestyle of his husband Kumud with an ardent desire that someday her life would find love and shelter. The contemporary rules and regulations of life will be valuable for them. Story of them in the ‘Putul nacher itikatha’ is enough for now. If I find the necessity of this I will utter, composing a book.” In later he doesn’t feel to write. But why? Because, he started notice the vagabond now a days. But still he is confused about their final destination.

In an ‘Elegy: Manik Bandapadhyay’, written by Sakti Chattopadhyay he has vividly portrayed the social responsibilities of Manik Bandapadhyay.

‘As I can perceive
AS I can witness
In your illness—-
Whether you have got the medicines,
Play in the external world- far apar-make wordless.’

**An unconventional, an honest**

It is a very normal phenomenon that whenever we are sad or worried, we start sobbing but in his case it was different. He used to sing. The more he get pain, the more his tune become melodious. Not only he but also the society too suffers the pain. That’s why the pain decreased. Manik had not composed his writing in the conventional mode. He had gone off beat and created something unconventional and there lies the difficulty. Since we do not understand his ways, we feel uneasy. Actually Manik did not follow the conventional norms and that made him different from others.

Gradually as time went on many new artists came along. Many new publishers emerged. There was and style of writing was so different that Manik’s writing seems to be unfit. Now a day’s people are more engaged in party, politics, idealism has vanished. Marx, Lenin does not exist now. One has to identify by the name of the party. Thanks to God that Manik did not had to witness such a downfall or else he would have to commit suicide. Now days it becomes usual when we come to know ‘Prabodh’-the real name of Manik Bandypadhaya. Born in middle class family, Manic has left the contemporary middle class family life style from the than time society.

Manik Bandyopadhyay was so honest and great that one month before his death, he distributed books himself. He made an ardent request to the shopkeeper of ‘Signet Prakashani’ to make direct cash payment for at-least five books, because he was under dire poverty at that time. He did not have the money to buy even a bottle of wine also. But unfortunately he could not resist drinking. This was his fate and life. May be it is the irony of fate.

‘Life is a seed sowing processes:

The feeling with which he had started writing on his first day of life has continued till the last day. Always it comes to mind why people keep addiction in that great respect? Because, ‘A true writer understood -that life is more significant than art and that is why art can never be able to get separated from life. He will search the art throughout the continuous searching of life. That is why no temporary success of art could be able to make him recede.’(3) Thus Manik Bandyopadhyay has put forward this truth-“Life is a seed sowing process. But this not the perfect season to get feedback…” (4). So the man plays the flute and so strange wherever he plays the flute, blood oozes...
out. But the essence of life that oozes out from his music is not it eternal?

Note:

I have used the original Bengali writings of Manik Bandapadhyay for my discussion. All the textual and incidental quotations translated by the present author.

REFERENCES

[1] Saroj Bandapadhyay, bangla upannyaser kalantar, day’s publishing, 1988
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