AN UNPRECEDENTED PORTRAYAL OF A RECIPROCAL AMIABLE CONNEXION BETWEEN THE BENGALI LITERATURE CONTEMPLATION AND WEST BENGAL STUDENT STATECRAFT: 1970-80

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary political and socio-economical contexts have simultaneously scoured and influenced the practical semiotic of literary orbit and also concussed the attitudinal ambience of student politics. Though literature is not confined to any specific time like a mameluke but it is tenacious to realize the emergence of the light without unbolting the wrappage from which the author gives the rays of genius. Therefore literature becomes a form in which the true reflection of the entire human thought is revealed. Contrariwise the student politics often take harbor of these literary themes for the advancement of their psychological embellishment because it seeks to give clarity to their political awareness. Moreover the prominent period of 1970-80s created such a tumultuous atmosphere in both literature and politics of West Bengal especially around the Naxalbadi contexts which converted it into a decade of liberation and introspection. Among the popular novelists Devesh Roy, Loknath Bhattacharjee, Samaresh Basu, Boren Gangopadhyay, Mahashweta Devi; the poets like Buddhadey Guha, Kamal Sen, Sameer Roy, Ajit Mukherjee, Dhurjaty Chattopadhyay; the short stories of the authors like Swarna Mittra, Sankar Bose, Timirbaran Singh, Shirshendu Mukharjee have drastically recounted the contemporaneous socio-political endeavor in their compositions. On the other hand, the student politics has faced the Naxalbadi context, Durgapur engineering student movement, multiple splits and turmoil regarding ideological basis which resulted it in a major shift of attention of the students from the gradual state politics towards the ethnic educational demands in this period. Therefore the main purpose of this work is to ratiocinate the interaction of student politics with the literary works of that period which will inspire the subsistent generation by embellishing both the spirit of literary composition and political cognition and foster the process of revisiting the historical adherence.



1. INTRODUCTION

Student politics in India has a remarkable history. In India it has emerged in a critical historical juncture responding to issues and challenges faced by them and society at large. Having originated as a reaction to colonial exploration, the student movement has undergone considerable changes in course of its evolution and appeared as a mighty force. The overall state structure, political parties and leaders all have consistently recognized their untorpedoed operational magnificence and inseminate their subsistence as the most recognizant and influential group. If we tried to define the student politics with a stereotypical definition then it can be said that, when the student force adopts a conscious proactive approach through a modest self- engagement, successfully change the decision-making authority of state and completed the process of fulfilling the awaited objective by a constant stream of indefatigable concerted effort then it would be appear as student politics. Yet it is a well-known fact that politics has a strange attractive power and the student body is enveloped by the immense attraction of that power.

From playing a pivotal role in the freedom movement of the country the Indian student and the youth had upgraded their role with various new methods by extending them more widely in changing interfaces of independent India. Overtime their impetuous speired individualism thematically adopted followership of different ideologies. In this regard the uniqueness of West Bengal is most striking. The geographical diversity and cultural conception of Bengal had played a conducive role in implanting the seeds of political consciousness into the minds of students. And Bengal had faced adverse and favourable events in its political and social climate both before and after independence which also strengthened the semiotic of student politics.

As in the case of developing country the student politics sometimes can be fined as forms of reconciliation of changes brought about by the conversion from traditional life to modernity. Ross had given numerous examples of such events in the case of United State and Nigeria. And naturally in case of Bengal those components can be applied where they extended their vision from campus matters to post independent socio-economic problems of the region. After independence, student politics remained status quo in its quiet buried form till the 1950s in the Indian political scene, but in 1960s gradually Indian students began to change the qualitative basis of their thought process by the overall politic-economic crisis situation, a gradual clash of political principles, the militant mentality of western students, Bangladesh language movement and educational problems. Therefore, coming out of stagnation this student power got involved in the country's political, financial, social and cultural movements where sometimes they have driven by Communist ideology, Leftist theory, liberal- nationalist-secular forces and totally right wing reactionary political legion. Sometimes they maintained its identity through regularity, radical extremism, and ultra-revolutionary sentiment or even have ever been a pedestrian of extinction in the barbarous net of disunity and misguidance. The Naxalbari influenced political trend has kept the political landscape in check over in the 70s.

At the time of independence, India's socio-economic and political situation was going through various difficulties. Among them, the situation in West Bengal was not able to achieve a healthy stability at all due to the refugee problem, food crisis and larger political party problems. In particular, the influence of the Naxalbari movement of the seventies and eighties affected all aspects of West Bengal. Among these, two prominent aspects are student politics and Bengali literary works.

2. FEATURES OF STUDENTS POLITICS

In the segment of the student politics of this period, it can be said that the trend that emerged in the communist politics of India centered on the Naxalbari Peasant Struggle of May, 1967 had a strong influence among the student-youth force. After expulsion from C.P.I (M)ⁱⁱⁱ Kanu Sanyal, Charu Majumdar, Sauren Bose, Sushital Roy Chowdhury and Saroj Dutta in 1967 had started to form All India Coordination Committee of Revolutions, All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionary, and Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee which ultimately gave birth of C.P.I (ML), iv As a result, revolutionary students began to voluntarily participate in revolutionary politics under the Chattra Fauj and Presidency College Consolidation groups. Now students become a mainstay of politics. where global movement against imperialist exploitation, comparative role of China- Soviet Union, national liberation struggle, liberation struggle of Vietnam, China's revolutionary position, country's agrarian revolution, role of first united front government of West Bengal context etc. It is in this context that the student political movement under the leadership of Binod Mishra, a communist student leader of Durgapur Regional Engineering College, became stronger. Starting from the inflexible attitude of the college authorities towards the students, they protested incidents like police firing on workers in Kashipur-Ichapur area. With the fall of the Second United Front government after 16 March, 1970, factional conflicts within the Communist student movement began to intensify. vi Originally controlled by the C.P.I (M), students began to deride the C.P.I (ML)-influenced pro-Naxalite student groups as the so-called New Left Student- Youth Leadership. Incidents of physical violence also became a regular occurrence. As the Bengal Provincial Students' Federation attempted to form an organization at an all-India level in its Siliguri session from 25th-28th December, 1969, which gave birth to SFI. vii Then on March 27, 1971, Bengali students held a state-wide strike and rally in support of the liberation struggle of Bangladesh and held a rally against US imperialism in 1972 in support of the liberation struggle of Vietnam. Viii In 1973 Anti-Unemployed Day celebrations, 1974 propaganda movements on education demands, in 1967 at the state of Emergency student rallies demanding restoration of democracy etc had happened. However, due to lack of popularity politics, in the 1980s, SFI's alliance with left-wing politics again increased. Also this time in the form of various college based student organizations in West Bengal like student Association, Democratic Student Association

(1977-78), Democratic Students Coordination Committee (1980), Indian student Association, All Bengal Student Association, Progressive Democratic Students Association, Democratic Student Centre, All India students Association conducted agitations with various democratic themes. The National Congress-led Chhatra Congress, Jatiya Chhatra Union, Chhatra Parishad etc. have always asserted their declared goal of peace against imperialism. Again, the political activism of the Socialist Student Organization and the Chhattra Janata Dal by moderate Janata Party during this period cannot be denied.

3. PROPENSITY OF LITERARY WRITINGS

If we want to write something about the socio-economic political and cultural context of any decade, the history of that period also comes to mind. Therefore, before analyzing the characteristics of this literary work, it is very important to briefly discuss the context of political events. This decade taught our writers and intellectuals to throw away the fixed and cherished beliefs and think anew about the country and the people, the awakening of historical consciousness as, the idea of true history is in the history of the masses and presented us with a new appreciation of literary achievements, taught not to choose things in its confinement mode rather choosing it by judgment and analysis. And guided to follow ruthless and unbiased nature in rejection and acceptance while doing any assessment. It can be said that earlier those who had started writing literature with the cocktail of Naxal love, sex, anarchy, have now moved on to the thoughts of religion, indiscriminate sex, decadence of the upper caste society and the cocktail of anarchy. The categories of such literary works are given in this context:

4. POETRY

In this regard, Subhash Mukhopadhyay's poetry is very significant, 'Joto Durei Jai, Kaal Madhu Mash, Ful Futuk' Series and 'Chale Gache Bone'. On the other hand, Virender Chatterjee raised his voice against the unrestrained and arrogant tyranny of the ruling class in the seventies captures a uniquely ordinary human face and a distinctive initiative of his sensitivity. In one of his poem, 'Eai Janmo' about the reign of terror created by pro-Naxalite youth can be traced out. It is not that the impression that we witnessed in the last part of the 60s decade and the beginning of 70s, the time of war, festival of blood, and the fierce denial, is not completely lost in all these poems, but we cannot decide how much poetic passion was behind capturing those days of terror and potential in poetry, and how much was the fierce competition of commercial fashion. There can, however, remain some doubt as to what the attitude was. Whereas unbridled tyranny in the criminal state apparatus, terror and the unequal struggle of the dreaming people against it, bright lights all in all, in the thick of black and white images, we get a counter current of cheap sentiments in the lines of 'Jara', 'Kaffin Kimba Sutcase' by Buddhadev Guha. Kamal Sen and Sameer Roy are notable among the poets who considered the Naxalbari peasant uprising as their own. Kamal sen's 'Lalpoth' and 'Ek Lakksho Sajjito Manush Uttorer Mathe/Sajjito Manus' is also noteworthy in this regard. In Ranjit Gupta's poetry, 'Dak Dao Manusher Maa' and Dronacharya Ghosh's 'Bastuto Akhon *Proyojon'*, the impression of maternal respect becomes clear at these times. Poetry becomes so political that even the title of a political essay and its content are included in various poems. So any historian has to take the help of these poems which are politically so important in revisiting history: Such as Ajit Mukherjee's poetry: 'Astro Hate'; 'Dosh Bachorer Galpo Kobita', Indra Chowdhury: 'Bishforon', Satya Roy's poem: 'Biplo-e Aaj Sara Duniyar Sarbopradhan Dhara', Samir Roy's 'Lal Santrash Chai', Dhurjyoti Chattopadhyay's 'Jeler Gorad Theke' (Anushtup, Jan, 1973), Srijan Sen's 'Tin Premiker Gaan' (Lalpath, Oct, 1974), Avik Gangopadhyay's 'Bhola Jai Na' (Anushtup, Oct, 1973), 'Tarit Choudhury's 'Keu Keu' (Samproti, 1974) and 'Dharmaghaty Anwar Ali' (Anushtup, 1979), Sagar Chakroborty's 'Tran Ba Uddhar' (1976), Amit Das's 'Jera' (Spandan, July 1972), Alokranjan Chakroborty's 'Pradarsahni' (Anik, Feb. 1975), Manibhushan Bhattacharya's 'Daddhichi' (1976) and 'Shishuborsho' (Prastutuparbo 1979), Anindya Chaki's 'Bankurar Ghora' ((Anik, 1979) and lastly Amitabha Chottopadhyay's 'Dokhol / Kalchetona' (1978) are truly noteworthy. ix

5. SHORT STORIES

Manoj Bose's two stories titled, 'Palatak' and 'Anusaronkari' and Sunil Gangopadhyay's 'Bibek' depict a political movement during the decade of 70s. While his 'Amar Bhai' talks about a Naxalite youth with Gandhian jokes. On the other hand, in Samaresh Bose's short story, 'Sahider Maa' we can see the political conflict within a family, the mother's role, and finally the strong rebellion in front of her martyred younger son Badal, are emerging. During this time a trend of

anti-communist thought came forward constantly in the hands of Desh and Anandabazar newspaper. Therefore, in the writings of writers like Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, it is strongly seen the attacking approaches towards revolutionary ideas in many of his short stories. Politically, it was not too late for the pro-Soviet writers of the Communist Party of India to take a stand, in the early stages of the Nakshalbari movement. But when the movement identified the Soviet leadership as social imperialist and placed the Mao Ze Dong as their great leader, a role of transition and identity became necessary and poet Subhash Mukharjee's poem 'Maow' sound began to spread through the loud speakers of the newspaper like Desh. They opposed it theoretically but the cultural fonts of the two Communist parties did not have the capacity to challenge this movement through culturally creative literature. They couldn't do anything significant except to satirize a couple of poems and stories, they didn't have that ability, so here too, in the cultural field, there was a direct clash in the cultural field with the newspaper-based opposition of Desh, Anandbazar and Yugantar instincts and the sharp fresh young people who emerged in the seventies. The Deshobroti, Kalpurush and Frontere played into that cultural resistance and counter-attack. These cultural questions took the form of political movements by breaking idols and closing schools and colleges. Some short stories like 'Ani', 'Dhowa Dhulo Nakshatra' and 'Srenisatru' by Asim Roy; 'Khodahatir Dak' by Brojen Majumdar and 'Basir Alhelal' by Pabitra Sengupta are very significant in this context.

6. NOVELS

In this regard Debesh Roy's: 'Manus Khun Kore Kano', is noteworthy where the main character, Ashwini here bares the face of the ugly urge for survival of the middle class in the midst of rough political and economic times of 70s. Though he managed to get out of the middle class intoxicating lifestyle of Kolkata to Darjeeling but still realize a confinement stage of middle class mindset. Where Subhas Mukhpadhaya's: 'Hangras' is an autobiography of political ganj and representing a mental prison when the entire country was converted into prison in the 1970s. Here the main character recounts his memoirs in the context of the food movement, and the life stories that coincide with it make the prose an enjoyable subject. But surprisingly, the political sense is getting a bit stale there. On the other hand, in Samaresh Majumdar's novel: 'Uttoradhikar', we can see by the life experiences of the main character that in the 70s politics was no longer an external event but transformed into an internal part of his life. Also in Loknath Bhattacharya's novel, 'Babughater Kumari Mach', we see that the profound distorted form of fascism that emerged in India in the 70s. The same aspect is caught in Syed Mustafa Siraj's 'Krishna Bari Fareni', Samaresh Basu's 'Apadartha', and Debesh Roy's: 'Apatatoh: Santikalyan Hoye Aache'. Gaurikishor Ghosh's novel 'Gariyahat Bridger Opor', was became heavily propagandistic and the opposition to Marxism. Samaresh Basu's novel 'Jug Jug Jiye', which was continuous published in Desh Magazine, had showed that the hero Tridivesh became an activist of the Communist Party but at the same time Samaresh wanted to prove that the Communist Party has become a machine by citing various activities of the party. Based on that formula, he wanted to cancel left-wing politics. Moreover in 'Mahakaler Rather Ghora', he rather creates an idea that left-wing politics are closely related to actually some selfish opportunistic work. The main character Hiranmoy in Swarna Mittra's 'Saowlaa' is a pro-Naxalite young lonely man who has taken a lot of dead bodies, extorting money from old colleagues and waiting at a bus stop for a girl. The author wants to show here that this kind of outcome of Naxalbari politics gives rise to frustration, exhaustion and filth. The revolutionary hero in Sunil Gangopadhayay's: 'Kalo Rasta Sada Bari', is drawn into an atmosphere of romance where the direct stirrings of politics being stopped and various problems that the hero begins to think about is essentially humane, and politics fall by the wayside as his heroine Beethi's assault by miscreants suddenly takes on more emphasis. In Saibal Mitra's 'Taruni Pahare' we see Vasant, the hero, coming out of the C.P.I(M), got engaged in the new political party activities, and then moving forward with various skepticism and appreciation of separation. Jayant Jowardar's novel, 'Eabhabei Eagoi', is about a Calcutta based party worker and about various party activities in the village of Malda. In Swarna Mittra's 'Grame cholo' moving away from the city, Raghu starts a new life in the village and there he assimilates himself, making politics a part of life and the signs of breaking out of the familiar confines and changing their lives has taking shape in the novel. Shankar Bose in his 'Comunis', talks about how the ordinary boys and girls of lower middle class families of Kolkata, Beleghata region were changing in dreams and struggles. Without direct connection to politics, one of the novelists who felt the strong movement and gave shape to it, simultaneously took forward the life of the middle class by reshaping her novel, is Mahasweta Devi. Her 'Hazar Kumarir Maa' was written in the context of the apparent failure of the Naxalbari movement. Brati's mother Sujata was one of the many mothers who had to bear the pain of child loss during 70s decade and withdraw herself from the world of class self-indulgence, including her husband, daughter and son after Brati's death. 'Operation Basai Tudu' reflects that being pro-Naxal people to do many mistakes which Tudu the main character does not agree to follow here. But Tudu respects the Naxalbari approach here because he has never seen someone before who can kill or die for political or social interest. She also tried to express the context of field laborers in a larger sense in a more informative form in the novel 'M. W.' and she gradually reached another burning issue of feudalism in rural India, the tribal and Harijan problem.

7. THEATRE

The indirect influence of the Naxal movement and the social consciousness that made its debut on the Bengali stage inspired it even after a century. The biggest positive aspect of Bengali drama is that various theatre groups have been able to stage protest dramas in front of the middle-class audience despite the government's repressive policy and antisocial attacks. During the period of emergency in Indian politics, if the protesting voice of Bengalis was heard the most, it was in amateur dramas, but as protesting was not the aim of dramas of 70s, various theatre groups tried to make the protest a real art. Directed by Asit Bose, C.P.A.T's 'Hamlet' of Calcutta' is new in Utpal Dutt's dramatization. By blending reality and fantasy, author manages to bring a depth to the protest drama that no one could live without appreciating. On the other hand, Jochon Dastidar's composition 'Karnik' is very important. This realist art style of P.L.T's 'Bariked' was mixed with other styles at various times to create a style never seen before in Uppal Dutt's more flamboyant theatre productions. Another drama like 'Rifle', 'Dinbodoler Dwitiya Pala', 'Kalohat', 'Communier Dinguli', are notable under the direction of P.L.T. and 'Dwoino Mancher Sainik' is also important in this aspect under the direction of Lime Light Theatre Group. The theatre workshop's 'Rajrakto', Theatre Commuin's 'Kinng Kinng Chatanar Marich Sambad', and Nandikar's 'Antigone' and 'Football' etc. transformed into a new horizon in the world of valid Bengali drama opens up.

7.1. THE RECIPROCAL AMIABLE CONNEXION

Finally, a reciprocal approach is highly desirable in this context. Because contemporary political and social conditions have controlled student politics just as literary composition has served as a logistics source. Students are also influenced by the creative work that literature gathers all these inspirations from the real world in order to take its form. Because literary works are very close to students, both taking shape of ideological standard and for educational reasons. It encourages them to form their opinions and get an idea of what the mental climate is like in the real world. By which they determine their next steps and keep their political activities in motion. For example, famous leader Sujan Chakraborty in his interview revealed that he was greatly inspired by these literary works during his student life^{xi} and the same opinion was expressed by the current Deputy Speaker of West Bengal, Ashish Banerjee. He himself is a professor of Bengali language, so he has easily justified the interpretation of the political mentality effect of literary works in his statement.^{xii}

Respondents	Impact of Books				<u>N</u>
	Yes		No		
	%	No.	%	No.	
C & LS	72.00	18	28.00	7	25
BLNS & RS	60.00	45	40.00	30	75

Table 1 Communication Media Disclosure: Literature.*Xiii

Another significant point to note is that a very high majority of the Communist respondents (72 percent) believe that books/magazines have a tremendous impact upon their partisan attitude and outlook, while such percentage among the non-Communists is somewhat lower (Table 1).

Table 2: Communication Media Disclosure: visit to Concert/Cinema/Theatre/Jatra etc.*

		•		
Impact of	C & LS		BLNS & RS	
Cinema/Theatre/Concert/Jatra etc.	%	No.	%	No.
Not at All	60.00	15	50.67	38
Not much	12.00	3	6.67	5

Not in Indian Context	8.00	2	21.33	16
To Some Extent	4.00	1	8.00	6
To a Great Extent	16.00	4	13.33	10
Total	100.00	25	100.00	75

As Table 2 shows, very insignificant percentages of respondents in both sets believe that cinema, stage etc. had any positive role as a conducive factor leading to their political mobilization or building up their attitudinal network.

* C & LS= Communist and Leftist Leaders. BLNS & RS= Bourgeois, Liberal, Nationalist, Socialists and Rightists Leaders

Again this perspective can be used and observed in student politics where they have successfully applied literary elements in various youth festivals to promote their political goals. For example, the Youth Festival of 22nd - 23rd May, 1955 organized jointly by the Bengali Provincial Students Federation and the Calcutta Youth Association. Here B.P.S.F specially recommended to create individual youth festivals in each regions foe future nucleus youth organs they also wanted to make the themes of the conference and for the selection of the dramas which was going to be performed should reasonably co-related to the current socio-political overview. You so the discussion of problems related to Indian Democracy by Mr. Sadhan Gupta and the discussion about Non-Alignment policy and world peace by Prof. Joyti Bhattacharya was being relevant in the festival. The dramas like 'Thug' written by Umanath Bhattacharya staged by the Theater Group, 'Fariyad' by the Theatre Unit and 'Adrishter Parihash' by the Calcutta Tramway Theatre Association and lastly 'Guerrilla' of Mr. Utpal Dutta has been staged at the festival. You the occasion of centenary celebration of Calcutta University a youth festival was also arranged from 18th - 24th Jan, 1957. Here the 'Raktakarabi', 'Bisharjan' and 'Falguni' of Rabindranath Tagore have been staged. You here the dramas or theatre are as performing arts have majestically approaches and mass appeal which can resonate many people in a very short time at one place and bound with enthusiasm.

8. CONCLUSION

The cultural as well as the literary atmosphere has the power to easily attract the common people. Therefore, the use of literary material as a means of propaganda is one of the successful methods of student politics. Again through this, literary works get an easy way to establish their impression in the hearts of the readers; they also get a chance to gain popularity and can inspire future generations of writers to write literature. And the uniqueness of the seventies is that this decade taught us that a constant stream of protest flows through society. Because it has shown that the country will face various social movements even after independence, and therefore, whether it is political activity or writing literary material, it is not desirable to be bound by stagnant position, which is nothing but self-immolation. So we should strive to keep up with the constant flow of changing social trends which is another form of creativity.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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^{iv} The Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) also referred to as the Liberation Group is a Communist political party in India. Cited in Bose, Sumantra, Transforming India: Challenges to the World's Largest Democracy, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press, 2013, P. 179.

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- vi Ibid, PP. 441-44.
- vii The Students' Federation of India (abbreviated as SFI) is an Indian left-wing student organisation politically aligned to the ideologies of independence, democracy and socialism. Currently, V. P. Sanu and Mayukh Biswas are elected as the All India President and General Secretary, respectively.
- viii Dasgupta, Hiren and Adhikari, Harinarayan, op.cit., PP. 450-55.
- ^{ix} Acharya, Anil, ed., Sattar Dasak: A socio-economic political and cultural evaluation of the seventies, Published by Ashis Ghosh on behalf of Anushtup, Kolkata -09, PP. 251-55.
- ^x Kolkata Little Theatre Group was founded by Utpal Dutta, in the late 1940s and in 1971 that theatre group was registered as People's Little Theatre.
- xi In conversation with Mr. Sujan Chakroborty, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Member of Central and Provincial Committee.
- xii In Conversation with Dr. Ashis Banerjee, Current Deputy Speaker of West Bengal Legislative Assembly.
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