CHAPTER : 2

POETRY AND METRICAL COMPOSITION
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2.1 Verse and poetry of Ramkumar Nandi Mazumdar:

In the history of Bengali literature, Ramkumar Nandi Mazumdar is almost a disregarded literature. A hundred years have already elapsed since he breathed his last, but there has been hardly any change in our interest and about him or else, there is no plausible reason whatsoever as to why his vast literary works should remain unpublished till today. But it can not be denied that he was one of the leading writers of the nineteenth century who dedicated themselves earnestly to the cause of Bengali literature. Ramkumar has contributed immensely to our literature and culture. It will be amply clear if we cast cursory a cursory glance at his works:

A. Ancient Literature:

B. Modern Literature:
   i. Prose Narrative: ‘Mālinir Upākhyān’.
   iii. Text Book: ‘Ganit-Tatwa’

1. See, Shrihattabasi Sharman, Ramkumar Jiban-Charit, 1917, Silchar.
Ramkumar was proficient in composing literature in the old style; at the same time he showed much inclination towards composing literature in the modern style also. As a matter of fact, this ambivalence was visible in his life itself. He had to live an uncertain and vagabond life since his childhood days. Ramkumar had been living a vagabond life since his childhood. He could not settle personality anywhere— sometime at his maternal uncle’s house and sometime under care of his relatives. His poetic and artistic mind took a particular shape in such a situation. Undoubtedly he possessed a fertile creative mind which made him one of the reverend doyens of our literature.

Ramkumar’s father was Ramsantosh Mazumdar. His forefathers belonged to the ‘Rār’ area. Later on, they shifted to Bangram and there from they again migrated to the Bejura area under Sylhet. Ramkumar’s father Ramsantosh was devoid of any worldly knowledge; so he failed to protect his land and property. Consequently, he took shelter at his childless widow sister’s house situated at the Patli village in the suburb of Bejura. Ramkumar was born at this village in 1831 AD.

Ramkumar passed his childhood days amidst poverty and sufferings. He lost his mother when he was just seven. Then he took refuge at his maternal uncle’s house at Buriswar. Though he was formally admitted into the school at the age of five, he did not get the chance to pursue his studies. In the meantime, Ramsantosh began his marital life for the second time. It may be mentioned here that the maternal uncle of Ramkumar’s step-mother was a lawyer at the Nrisinghapur sub-division in the district of Tripura. This time Ramkumar found shelter with him. During those days, the Persian language enjoyed much importance, for, the court affairs were transacted through this language. That was why, Ramkumar took to learn Persian. But as ill luck it would have been, Gaurchandra Munshi, the person who gave shelter to Ramkumar, passed away suddenly. Consequently, Ramkumar had to go back to Patli. Though Ramkumar could not receive formal education of any considerable amount, he got immensely attracted towards the two national epics of India— the Ramayana and the
Mahabharata during this time. Herein lies, perhaps, the source of the vast use of mythological elements in his writings.

Now, Ramkumar found shelter with the Zamindar family of Guniyayuk. It was because of the benevolent nature of the Zamindar Golam Rashul Miyan that Ramkumar got yet another chance to receive found education. But unfortunately he was again compelled to return to Patli. This time he got seriously attracted to songs and music—"গীতবাদ্যের প্রতি তাহার প্রবল অনুরাগ জ্ঞাতিল।" Simultaneously, he continued reading and writing in Bengali.

Ramkumar could never complete his formal education. Persian, as an official language, had a great demand during those days. Consequently, at the instances of his father and uncle, Ramkumar came over to the Nasir Nagar under the Sarail Pargana.

The adolescent Ramkumar had to suffer a lot due to his poverty and lack of any permanent settlement. Once in his adolescence, he was attacked by cholera. Four of his family members succumbed to the disease. Ramkumar, however, came round from the disease and returned once again to the maternal uncle’s house of his uncle. But within a few days, he came back to Patli. Afflicted badly by financial hardships; he now began to look for a means of earning his livelihood. In such a situation, his education remained incomplete.

Since his childhood up to his setting feet on the threshold of his youth, Ramkumar had an unstable life. He had an earnest desire for education. But he could not translate it into reality. He had to face heavy odds over and again.

In a time when Bengal was completely swept away by the stream of western culture and thought, when the Hindu College was established and when dedicated teachers like David Dramound, Lui Derogéo and Vidyasagar kept the city of Kolkata illuminating, Ramkumar, having lived in a peripheral region, failed to receive even any considerable amount of traditional education.

With this title and incomplete fund of education, he came to Silchar in search of his luck. Here lived one Hargobinda Mazumdar, a relative from his

uncle’s side. He was a ‘tehsidar’. At first, Ramkumar had to serve as an apprentice of the ‘tehsildar’ without any salary. He, however, succeeded in managing a job for himself; for, Bengali was the official language of Assam during those days. He was appointed first as a private clerk for a salary of rupees three per month. Since he was staying with his uncle’s family, he could send all the amount of his salary to his father Ramsantosh at Patli.

Needless to say, this was for the first time that Ramkumar could take a free breath. He had been living an unstable gypsy life since his childhood. Now, coming over to Silchar, he became free from anxieties to a great extent. He could find time and occasion to devote himself to his favourite pastime music. He dedicated himself earnestly to the exercise of Indian classical music under some able masters.

The job under the ‘tehsildār’ at Silchar infused new enthusiasm into Ramkumar’s life. He got promotion by dint of his efficiency and sincerity and his salary was also raised to rupees six per month instead of three. Ramkumar attained the age of twenty-eight in 1859 AD. He entered into wedlock in that very year. The bride was the daughter of Sambhunath Datta, a resident of the Suhelpur village under the Sarail Pargana.

Ramkumar spent the greater part of his life at Silchar. He spent more than forty years there. He climbed up the ladder of promotion step by step. He joined his services as an ordinary ‘chirastadar’ and retired as a high ranked ‘khajanchi’. He was very much in the good book of the Deputy Commissioner Major Stuart. It was during this period that Ramkumar learnt a little amount of English under compulsion of his services. We come to know from his biography in this regard:

a. কোনে মনি অর্ডারের ফার্ম স্কল আসিলে দেখা গেল সমুদ্র ইংরেজী ভাষায় মুদ্রিত।
    তখন রামকুমার ফার্ম স্কল দেখাইয়া সাহেবকে বলিলেন, “অনুমান হয় কাজ কর্ম ইংরেজী
    ভাষায় হইবে, সুতরাং ইংরেজী ভাষাভুক্ত কাহাকেও এই কাজে নিযুক্ত করিলে ভাল হয়।”
    সাহেব উত্তর করিলেন, “তাহা হইলে, আমি যাহাকে মনোনীত করিয়া গেজেট করিলাম
    কার্য্য আরম্ভের পুরোহিত বলিয়া হইবে সে অনুপযুক্ত, আর উক্ত কর্মচারী আমাকে বলিলেন,
    তুমিও ডিপুটী কমিশনারের পদের অনুপযুক্ত, যাহা হউক এই কার্য্য তোমার দ্বারাই সম্পাদন

42
As the money order forms started coming, it was discovered that all of them were written in English. Ramkumar showed the forms to the officer and said, "I suppose that the activities will have to be done in English; therefore, it will be better to entrust this job to someone well-versed in English." The officer replied, "If it be so, then I must admit before the work begins that I have nominated an unworthy person through gazette notification. In that case, my higher officer will naturally say that I am also unfit for the post of Deputy Commissioner. Be that as it may, I shall get it done by you. You learn immediately how to sign your name in English. You will be able to learn all this without any difficulty. I haven’t said all this lightly. This is my order, you must learn".

In 1865 AD, a circular was published by the Revenue Board to the effect that all communication and activities of the accountant office will have to be done in English and those Accountants who don’t know English must be terminated from their services by giving them compulsory pension or allowance. Ramkumar suffered from anxiety at this circular. The little amount of English with the help of which he accomplished the job of money order agent, was evidently insufficient for performing the job of an Accountant. So, he tried hard to learn English.

It is needless to say that, Ramkumar's interest and dedication was unparrallal. He had busy work schedule for his job but simultaneously he was absorbed in creativity of literary works. His worth mentionable verses are—‘Virānganā Patrotrtar Kāvyā’, ‘Navapatrikā Kāvyā’ and ‘Ushodbaha Kāvyā’.

1862 AD Micheal Madhusudan Datta’s ‘Virānganā Kāvyā’ was published in that year. After almost a decade as reply verse to this work Ramkumar authored ‘Virānganā Patrotrtar Kāvyā’. At that time Ramkumar was forty one years old. And that time Silchar was:

Silchar, the Sudeer, i.e., principal station of the Cachar District, is a small place boasting only of a few brick buildings, including the cutherry or court-house and church.

There is a large native bazaar, the houses in which, as well as those of most European residents, are built of bamboo and mud. There are two large European shops, which, taking advantage of the necessities of the troops that composed the Expedition, raised their prices enormously.5

On the contrary it could be said that, in the year of 1872 AD the population of Silchar town was 4,925. I this k8ind of atmosphere Ramkumar had created his literary works.

We have no specific information about why did Ramkumar write ‘Virānganā Patrotrtar Kāvyā’. But it could be guessed that Ramkumar was became interested in Bengali literature especially in the works of Madhusudan and Bankimchandra, in Silchar. This was just like his reaction of studies that he had authored two books also. He made severe criticism against Bankimchandra’s works in a book called ‘Balad Mahima’. And he had authored ‘Virangana Patrotrtar Kavya’ as reply to the heroic female of Madhusudan. These two books are the reaction of study of two specially mentioned literary genius of contemporary Bengali literature of that period.

Micheal Madhusudan Datta was the representative of Indian renaissance of second generation. He had been tended in renaissance. Therefore his thoughts and intellect had the western influence at the same time the root of Indian culture also was seen in him. Madhusudan depicted the woman character or their thought in ‘Virangana Kavya’ with so much candour. He had taken us to the bottom of women’s heart. There are eleven letters in ‘Virangana Kavya’. Women made their protest or complain against their husband or lover in verses like ‘Somer Prati Tara’, ‘Niladhwar Prati Jana’, ‘Dushmanter Prati Shakuntala’ and others.

Madhusudan depicted the women’s heart and Ramkumar the men’s heart. Like a reply— after complain Ramkumar made a strong stand with logic and repentance. It’s like he completed the unfinished circle.

‘Virāṅganā Kāvyā’ published one year before the demise of Madhusudan.

‘Dhākā Prakāsh’ sadi about this book:

[After reading of Great Poet Madhusudan’s ‘Virāṅganā Kāvyā’ we expected that he will satisfy us with the reply. Perhaps he could not do it due to lack of time or health related problem.]

— We got the reply to the complain of heroic females of Madhusudan from Ramkumar. It is mentionable that, Bankimchandra started ‘Bangadarshan’, the journal in 1872 AD. And in this very year Ramkumar published ‘Virāṅganā Patrottar Kāvyā’ with the help of his friends.

In this work of Ramkumar there are eleven letters. But in the beginning as per tradition there are three parts— Invocation of Saraswati Devi, Kalpana and Michael. After these there are eleven letters:


This book is comparable to Madhusudan’s ‘Virāngana Kāvyā’. Madhusudan used his experience of foreign literature study whereas Ramkumar’s resources were Indian Mythology and Madhusudan’s literary works. With these resources Ramkumar concentrated in the reply verse and remembering Michael he said:

के लिया हो माइकल! कलहसरापेक
काबा सरसीर जले, देखिले तोराते
हेन सुधे आपनारे के चाहे बसिते?
नामिल ए फुक्त पाबू तेई एई तले,
कपुरा करिदेह शिक्षा समतिते तारे।
एकलबा यथा बने धर्ममिल धनु,
स्वरी गुरू दोपे, आजी, आमिओ धरीनु,
लेखनी तोमारे स्वरी, किन्नू ए निवन्ति,
हইতো না রেণুসক নিদয় হে তুমি।’

[In the lake of verse, Michael you had been frolicking like a swan. After watching you who should be deprived them from this pleasure? Therefore this little bird dived into the water, please give it a lesson of swimming. Remembering you I took the pen just like Ekalavya took bow and arrow in the forest after remembering Drona. But one request to you, don’t be hard-hearted like Drona.]

It could be mention that, Ramkumar as a Ekalavya compared Madhusudan with Drona. After ‘Meghnād Badh Kāvyā’ (1861) Bengali verse and poetry followed the way of Madhusudan. Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay (1838-1903), Rangalal Bandyopadhyay (1827-1887), Navinchandra Sen (1847-1909) and others had written literary epic following Madhusudan. But Ramkumar did not try to write in that genre. Rather he had written the reply to the heroic females of Madhusudan. This is an exceptional example in Bengali literature specially in the Madhusudan influenced literature. Because, before him nobody had written ‘Virānganā Patrōtta Kāvyā’. In 1899 AD Guru Das Chattopadhyay also had

written ‘Virāṅgana’ Patrottar Kāvyā’. But that was after Ramkumar. Therefore Ramkumar was the pioneer in this field.

One of the main feature of ‘Virāṅgana Patrottar Kāvyā’ is the reply of lovers or husband of heroic female came alive in the poetic imagination:

a. हाय! कि करिनु हाय। क्षम सकुस्तले।
   क्षम अपराध मम, अज्जने हालिनु।
   परम पिरित इयु ब्रजसम, तब—
   सुकौमल हददेते निदित्रे यत।

[Oh! Shakuntala forgive me, for what I have done. I hit the soft heart with firm thunder unintentionally.]

b. कि आर कहिब देवि! तोमार चरणे।
   तारानाथ नाम मम तेजागिरिया आजि
   हईव तारार दास जनमेव यत।

[What could I say you oh dear! I will change my name for good from lord of Tara to slave of Tara.]

c. क्षम हेमालिनी। आमि तुलिनु काञ्जने,
   काञ्जन सहिते किन्तु कि करिब बल
   कोठाय पाइब आमि उपमा तोमार?  

[Forgive me Henangini! I picked up gold. But what the use of it for me, where do I find simile for you?]  

d. क्षम गदे त्रिपथगे। क्षम ए दासेरे,
   ना जानिया करियाछे अपराध यत;
   नामे तब पाद-पदे भारत अधम्—

[Forgive oh Ganga! Forgive this slave for his unintentional crime. Bharata, the worthless prostrate before your lotus feet.]

10. Ibid, P. 16.
Ramkumar had given the accomplishment to the complains of Madhusudan’s heroic female in his ‘Virāngānā Patrottar Kāvyā’. Because Ramkumar heroes sometimes repented and sometimes prayed for apology directly to their respective wives and lovers. Undoubtedly it could be said that, Ramkumar expressed his modernist thought by this mentality of male characters in nineteenth century.

Not only they prayed for apology or made confessions, they also became impatient to meet their respective wives and dear ones. Sometimes they promised, sometimes they even made ardent invocation:

a. নারিব করিতে কান্তে। অভিসার আমি
এসো তুমি প্রাণেশ্বরি। আজি রজনীতে,
নাহি দিবাভাগে ইচ্ছা যে সময়ে তোম;
পানে তব পত্রাত্রির সেই বৃক্ষতলে,
যথা ছিল তব পত্র, কি কহি আর,
দেখি দিয়া বীচাইও অবশ্য আমারে,
উভয়ের মনোবাচ্ছা পুরান উভয়ে।\(^{12}\)

[I can’t go to date you oh dear! Rather you come to me whenever you can in the night or daytime. Beneath the tree I will give my reply to you just in a letter, what could I say? Meet me to help me. I will fulfill the desires of both of us.]

b. আমিব ফিরিয়া আমি পোহাইবে যবে
দুঃখের যামিনি, প্রিয়ে। চক্ষুকাক সম,
যথা চক্ষুকাক বধু কুলায় বসিয়া
সজল নয়নে চাহে পূর্ণাঙ্গ পানে।\(^{13}\)

[I will come back oh dear! when the darkness of sorrow gone away. Just like a heroin waiting on the bank of river and looking at the eastern horizon with full eyes of tears.]

But they were resolute to their promise. They were not deviated from their duties and responsibilities:

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[When I can fulfill my chivalrous duties, with own strength only then I will be satisfied in this life. Why should I leave the battle ground out of fear to be ridiculed in the eyes of my enemies. Who the hell want to live without the respect. I am the Kshatriya (chivalry) why should I fear my destiny?]

[If Partha will suicide tomorrow, then should I stay in the battle ground for a moment for the request of Duryodhan? I will come in the night and go back to my own kingdom with you. It is not shameful after all. But today I can’t fled away. Kshatriyas will ridicule me and say, Sindhupati fled away for the fear of Bibhatsu.]

Ramkumar’s heroes gave reply to the heroic females of Madhusudan. Therefore their letter became the assimilation of reply and retort. Both the works of Madhusudan and Ramkumar fulfilling each other. Madhusudan had given an introduction of the story before every letters of his heroic female, Ramkumar followed that introduction in brief. Example:

15. Ibid, P. 49.
Shakuntala, the daughter of Vishwamitra, the sage and Menaka, nymph of paradise. But they abandoned their daughter Shakuntala. They Karva Muni, the sage brought her up. Once in the absence of Karva Muni, Dushmanta, the king had come to his hermitage. Thus Shakuntala gave him the proper hospitality as he was the royal guest. Dushmanta became infatuated after seeing the immense beauty of Shakuntala. And when he came to know that Shakuntala born into a royal family then he fell in love with her. He then secretly married with Shakuntala and went back to his kingdom. But after that Dushmanta made no communication with Shakuntala. Therefore Shakuntala send the below mentioned letter to the king.

But Ramkumar had just written:

Maharsho durvârsâr shâpe râjâ duñçant shakoñtrâ shakuntâla paramâp rûpây vûtânt tuñîraiñcârâ, ajanâ tâhâr pahâre ânter nisñîtâm hrákhâchânâ sîbîraîñcârâ. 17

[Dushmanta had forgotten about his marriage with Shakuntala, it was the curse of Durbasa, the Great sage. therefore Dushmanta replied the below mentioned words to Shakuntala.]

It is needless to say that, comparing to Madhusudan the brief introduction which Ramkumar had given is more natural and it should be so.

a. Madhusudan’s Bhanumati expressed her fear to Duryodhan:

I became anxious at the very moment you entered the battleground of Kurukshetra. I became insomniac and anorexic. I began to hate all the food-stuff. I roam hither and thither like temple, royal garden etc. etc. Sometimes I go up to the top of the place to watch the battleground. But the sky is completely covered with dust. My eyes bedazzled with the burning arrows like thunder. Lion's roar comes to my ear, sometimes I hear the sound of conchshell. All these make my heart tremble.

Ramkumar's Duryodhan replied to Bhanumati:

[You are not aware of my strength dear. I am not tender as you fell when touch me. Who holds flower with firm hand? Do you know, my hands are too

strong. Like a tusker’s trunk, what more I can say? I will use the magnum mace to finish Bhim. I am the thunderous corpulent with the boon of mother.]

b. Madhusudan’s Jana complained to Niladhwaj:

क्षत्र-कुलवाला आमि; क्षत्र-कुल বধু;
কেমনে এ অপমান সর দৈর্ঘ রি?
ছড়িব এ পোড়া প্রাপ্ত জাহাজীর জনে;
দেখিব বিশ্বী যদি কৃষ্ণকলানীরে
লতি অস্তি! যাচি চির বিদায় ও পদে। ।

[I am Kshatriya by birth and by marriage. How could I tolerate this insult? I will finish my charred life in the Ganges. Let see whether I can forget all these. In heaven, I pray for departure to you feet!]

Niladhwaj made an worried statement in reply to Jana:

না হয় বাইং পুঞ্জ ইচ্ছা হয় যথা,
দেখিয়া জুড়াই আমি একবাক আমি।
হায় রে অবোধ আমি কেন বলি আর?
আসিতে তোমারে এ পাপরাজ্যে পুনরা।

[Wherever you wish you can go. But let me see you to my heart’s content. Oh! I am inconsolable, how could I ask you. To come back in this kingdom of vice?]

Niladhwaj even said, the palace, the interior, the ornaments all are lie useless to me.

Niladhwaj’s this letter is sort of confession. Because before he had written this letter Jana killed herself in the Ganges. Actually it is a monologue of a grief-stricken heart. Ramkumar state this as ‘lamentation’ — ‘Lamentation of Niladhwaj’ in ‘Reply to heroic woman’, Chapter eleven”(ইতি বীরাঙ্গনা পত্রাবলী কাব্য নীলাঙ্গ বিলাপ নাম একাদশ সপ্ত)।

22. Ibid, P. 55.
Ramkumar had written these reply verse with strange skill. We use this word ‘strange skill’, because we know his formal education was very little. So it is natural that he was unfamiliar with Ovid or western literature. It could be said, his mind intellect and thought infused with modernism by Madhusudan. Thus Ramkumar had been depicting the male characters in completely opposite direction of nineteenth century’s social context. He had not depicted any harsh or firm character. His male characters are empathies to women or their dear ones.

Ramkumar could not pursue formal education much, but he created his male characters with utmost love. His male characters had given complaining reply to their female counterpart with so much respect and love. It is really a strange phenomenon in the context of this marginal region in nineteenth century. Therefore, it could be said that Ramkumar was the pioneer of modernism.

Ramkumar followed Madhusudan to express the modern thought, he even do the same thing in terms of poetic style. Point to be stated over here that, Ramkumar had written ‘Virānganā Patrottar Kāvyā’ in ‘Amitrachanda’ (Blank verse). But Madhusudan had created a poetic language for ‘Meghnad Badh Kavya’ with vigorous, naturally this vigorous style is not seen in ‘Virānganā Patrottar Kāvyā’. Because the appeal of these two books is different. Thus Ramkumar expressed simple poetic language in ‘Virānganā Patrottar Kāvyā’. For example:

a. কেন যে দেখিনু হেন স্বপ্নে সুদরী!  
একান্ত চিত্তিত চিত্ত ছিল সে কাঠপে,  
রুকিলু মরম এবে কাহিব তোমারে  
সূচনু সপ্ন মম, হে চারু চরিতে।  

[Why I have dreamt of a beauty! Therefore my heart is so worried. My pleasant dream, oh charming beauty. I will say, I love you!]

b. কেন যে আইহু সম্প অন্ত্রিক্ষা হেতু,  
রুকিতে কাহার সনে কোন প্রয়োজনে?  
জান তুমি ধনলাভী নহে ধনজয়,  

[Why I have come here in heaven to learn weaponrey. What’s the use of fighting with others? You know Dhananjay, you are not greedy. I have no desire in wealth and means. Nor I have desire for glory in the royal world.]

But simultaneously Ramkumar was a skillful artist in terms of using imagery and simile. For example:

a. আশার স্পন্দন মন হেনে বিবাদিনি, ।
পর্যন্ত সুরিতে বসে স্বর্ণ সংহাসনে ;
আনিলে সে কথা মুখে, লোকে উপহাসে, ।
রাখে তেই সংগোপনে গুহমন্ত যথা ;
অব্য সরল অতি নারে সঙ্গরিতে, ।
বাহিরায় সেই সব ফাটিয়া হাদয়, ।
পক দাড়িয়ে বীজ থাকে কি গোপনে? ।

[My dreaming mind sees day and night. Golden throne in a hut made of leaves; I ridiculed myself with uttered these words. Thus I keep these secretly like a sacred chants. But these simple and innocent words can’t restrained themselves. All are come out bursting heart. Wheather the seeds of ripe pomegranate remain secret forever?]

b. কাচন-সিজুরে শুক শোকালুক মনে, ।
চতুর্দিকে চাহে পথ বাহিরিয়া যেন, ।
বাইতে উড়িয়া সেই তৃষময় নীঝে, ।
যথা শায়ী একাকিনী বিহঙ্গ কাজরা ; ।
মম পক্ষে স্বর্গভোগ জানিও তেমনি ।

[A bird is grief stricken in a golden cage. Staring all over to find a way out. To fly away to the nest of grass and leaf. Where his she-bird remains alone and estranged. Heavenly pleasures are just like for me.]

[I was looking for my dear every where. In the deep forest and water land and in the cavern. And in the ocean-river-sea like Shiv with Sati’s corpse. But unlike Shiv I was alone. I was looking for my dear everywhere like a female elephant. Oh! dear my eyes emersed in darkness without you.]

As we know that imagery is based on words and language. And it is expressed with simile. In literature imagery not only gives a concrete shape to the abstract, it is also extend the lexicographical meaning. It could be said that, the role of imagery is enough to expand the experience of the readers and to deepen their feelings. There is no doubt that Ramkumar succeeded in terms of using imagery.

Madhusudan had said in a letter to Raj Narayan Basu:

... within the last few weeks, I have been scribbling a thing to be called ‘Virangana’ i.e. Heroic Epistles from the most noted Puranic women to their lovers or lords. There are to be twenty-one Epistles, and I have finished eleven.  

Again after six months he had written:

It is my intention to finish this poem (Virangana Kavya) in XXI Books. But I must print the XI already. The proceeds of the 1st part must defray the expenses of printing the second.

As we know that Madhusudan could not finish the remaining letters of

29. Ibid.

It is to be noted that, Ramkumar Nandi Mazumder had written ‘Virāṅgana Patrottar Kāvyā’, at the same time he had written ‘Nava Patrikā Kāvyā’. In this later mentioned work he told about the women’s heart, in the form of letter like ‘Virāṅgana Kāvyā’. The letters of ‘Nava Patrika Kāvyā’ are:


Two specific things are noticeable that:

a. In, ‘Virāṅgana Kāvyā’ Sharmiṣṭha had written the letter to Jajati, but in ‘Nava Patrikā Kāvyā’ it is Devjani.

b. Madhusudhan’s one of the unfinished letter is ‘Naler Prati Damayanti’. Ramkumar had written it in one chapter nine of ‘Nava Patrikā Kāvyā’.

Other than theme what are the other thoughts Ramkumar had taken from Madhusudan, that could be discussed with these two letters.

Madhusudan had written in his unfinished ‘Naler Prati Damayanti’:

पङ्ख देवे बाँडि साधे स्वयंस्वर-स्तूले
पुजिल राजीव-पद तब ये किकबरी,
नरेन्द्र, बिजन बने अर्थ बन्धकुक्ता
ताजिले तुमी हे ताबे, ना जानि कि दोमे
नमे से बैदनी आजि तोमार चरणे।

[That woman worshipped that lotus-foot in a Swambar (Groom choosing ceremony by bride). Even though there were Gods. For which sin she worships your foot. Whom you oh king! abandoned in a lonely forest in a destitute manner.]

On the other hand Damayanti complaining to Nal:

পার কি চিনিতে ওহে মুর্তন সারথি!
নেই রথে ছিলে আগে রথীশ্বর তুমি—
নেই রথ, কেনই বা চিনিবে এক্ষণে?31

[Do you recognize oh new charioteer! You were the supreme of this chariot : Now why should you recognize that?]

Damayanti gave an explanation for the complaining in this manner:

যে সব দুঃখের কথা লিখিতে তোমারে,
কাপিছে অতুল যদি প্রাপ্তকান্ত তুমি,
শুনি যদুবিক হও অভাগীর দুঃখে।
কিন্তু যে তোমার কাহু, দুঃখের কাহিনী—
কহিলে, লাখ হয় মরম বেলনা;
এই ত কারণে নাথে! লিখিলাম পুনঃ32

[Me heart is thumbing oh dear to write the sorrow of mind! Lest you will be worried for the sorrow of unfortunate. But if I express my worries to you then my heart feels little relax that is why oh dear! I am writing it regain.]

Ramkumar’s Damayanti have no desire or expectation. Just she was willing to say her sadness this letter.

The language of this poetry is spontaneous example:

a. কেন তোমরা
দেখেছ কি পতি মের যাহীতে এ পথে?
তোমরা রমণী জাতি বুঝিবা সহজে,
স্বয়ং থাক যদি কূট মুচূর্তের তরে,
পতির বিরহ জ্যালা অভাগীর মত।33

[Did you see my husband on this road? You are women thus you feel it easily. If you have ever feel the estrangement with husband for a moment.]

32. Ibid, P.84.
33. Ibid, P.83.
b. केमने राजेन्र तुम्मि बिखारिला कह—
हेन अस्वर कथा, लोक मुखे शूनि।
पुरुष स्वयंसर काले (अचे किस वा मने)
ईश्व आंदि देवगणे उपेक्षिया आमि—
सपिनु जीवन मेि नलेरा चरणे;
बरिब काहारे एरे ताजिया से नले। ¹⁴

[How did you believe oh king! an impossible fact from a hear-say (do you remember). In the time of Swayambar I rejected Indra and other gods dedicated my life to Nal’s foot. How could I now reject you Nala to accept other.]

Ramkumar’s Damayanti never uttered harsh word to Nal while complaining. Not only Damayanti, even Padmavati expressed the fear of a woman’s heart to Karna like this:

तैं नलि महाराज! इतेत किछु नाई लाज,
परिताप कर तुम्मि राजा दुर्योधने;
ताजिया समर एंसो अपन भवने। ¹⁵

[Thus I say oh king! It is not a matter of shame. You leave king Duryodhana and come back home from the battleground.]

May be Madhusudan had soft corner for Sharmista. He had written a drama on ‘Sharmista’ and even a unfinished verse letter. In this unfinished letter Sharmista said to Jajati:

कि हेतु वा थेिे पोनु तोमार सदने,
दैत्यकुल-राजबाला आमि दासीरंगे। ¹⁶

[Why I remain here in your palace. Princess of Demon kingdom became a mere save.]

It is natural that Sharmista, Princess of Demon kingdom will attract Madhusudan. And in the completely opposite direction Ramkumar presented Devjani to Jajati she had lots of complain against Jajati. But Ramkumar’s Devjani

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34. Sutapa Datta Das (ed.), Ibid, P.83.
35. Ibid, P.63.
surrendered herself to Jajati instead expressing the independence of womanhood. For example:

a. কি আর কহিব নাথ, গুরুজন তুমি, 
   নহিলে শুনতা আজি (অন্য হতো যদি) 
   বাহিরায় কত কথা দেবযানী মুখে।[^37]

   [You are respectable person to me, therefore I could not say you anything. If you were other person then you would have experienced how much words were uttered from my mouth.]

b. দেখো নাথ। দাসী ব'লে থাকে ফেন মনে, 
   হইনু বিদায় এই জনমের মত। 
   করিলাম অপরাধ নিন্দিয়া তোমারে
   ক্ষম সেই দোষ মম অনুগ্রহ করি।[^38]

   [See oh mister! remember me as a slave. I am leaving for good. It is my crime to reproach you please forgive me.]

Actually Ramkumar did not depict his characters as protestors. Better it could be said that not want to. This is not a less significant that Ramkumar expressed his deep compassion towards women while he was living in the southern part of Assam. How many contemporaries of Ramkumar were interested to depict the women’s thought in the way of a woman thinks. In that period women’s education was just introduced in a small city like Shilchar. In this context Ramkumar’s thoughts give us a clear indication about his modernist intellect.

Apart from ‘Virānganā Kāvyā’ and ‘Nava Patrikā Kāvyā’ Ramkumar had written ‘Ushodbaha Kāvyā’. But this is not letter in verse, rather narrative verse.

As we know in ‘Shrimad Bhāgavat’ there is a character called Ban Raja. The theme of Ramkumar’s ‘Ushodbāha Kāvyā’ is the marriage of Ban Raja’s daughter Usha and Shri Krishna’s grands on Aniruddha. The first part of ‘Ushodbāha Kāvyā’ has chapters like ‘Pramodban’, ‘Swapna’, ‘Barprāptibarnan’,

[^38]: Ibid, P.45.
'Alekhyadarshan', 'Sur Samiti', 'Haran' and 'Sammilan'. Shrihattasi Sharman had said:

[After reading the manuscript poet's friends were too much excited, they even collected money to publish it. Thus before the completion of 'Ushodbaha Kavya' the first part of it had been printed and published.]

Although, later enlarged version of 'Ushodbāha Kāvya' had been published. Second education of this book was published in 25 Baishakh 1309 Bangabda (1902 AD). The author said in its preface:

[The first edition of 'Ushodbāha Kāvya' was accepted by readers thus I have got the courage to publish the second edition instead of publishing the second part of this book differently I included the complete book in second edition. Here I concluded the book with the remaining eight, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth chapter as my earlier commitment to write a complete book on this subject.]

That means the complete edition of 'Ushodbāha Kāvya' was published in 1902 AD. It was printed at Bharat Mihir Yantha in Kolkata and the publisher of this book was Sanyal & co.

Ramkumar authored 'Ushodbāha Kāvya' after invocation to Devi Saraswati and Vyasdev:

বাজায়ে মধুর বীণা, তুষিয়াছ যথা

You gave pleasure to the three domains by your sweet vina (string based musical instrument). Just like that I want to give pleasure to the native of Gaud thus I took the vina with a new kind of music.

Ramkumar used the story telling style for the narrative description of Usha and Aniruddha. He started his verse like story telling:

[Usha the daughter of demon king Ban stepped into the young stage. Once in the afternoon she was rooming in a grader. She was escorted with her female comparisons. Just like the Vrishabhanu’s daughter amidst of Gopis.]

It is significant that Ramkumar addressed Usha as the daughter of demon king Ban, ‘daughter of demon’ and daughter of Vrishabhanu. Naturally the question has arouse that why Ramkumar addressed Usha in different names. Actually Ramkumar had deep affection to wards woman. With this affection he said:

42. Ibid, P. 3.
43. Ibid, P. 5.
[Girls are too much adorable they live with parents for a few days. But after that they have to leave their parents house.]

Ramkumar’s narrative verse based on mythological story. But he infused modern thoughts while depicted Usha. He created the character with his own colours of mind. Therefore a comment was published in ‘Hitabadi’:

গীতকারের নাম অপরকারিত্ব থাকিলেও তিনি যে একজন সুন্দরী তর্কিয়ে সন্দেহ নাই। আমরা তাহার গ্রন্থায় গ্রীত হইয়াছি। কাব্যখানি সুন্দর হইয়াছে। 44

[Although there is no author’s name but there is no doubt that he is a good poet. We are pleased to read his book. The verse is really beautiful.]

The editor of ‘Hitabadi’ was Krishnakamal Bhattacharya and the editor for literature section was none other than Rabindra Nath Tagore. It could be said undoubtedly that, ‘Ushodbāha Kāvya’s a brief and important discussion had been published in ‘Hitabādi’ it was really a recognition of Ramkumar’s literary work.

2.2 Verse and Poetry of Pyaricharan Das:

After the name of Ramkumar Mazumdar, the name of Pyaricharan Das deserves mention. He was a poet and an editor. Pyaricharan Das was the product of the neo-renaissance movement of the nineteenth century. The odyssey towards Kolkata for the sake of job and then circumstances which led to his return towards Sylhet— Pyaricharan’s life was synonymous with the plot of a novel.

There was rarely any mention of Pyaricharan Das in the contemporary books which highlighted the history of Bengali literature. In Sukumar Sen’s ‘Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihas’ or in Asit Bandyopadhyay’s ‘Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itibrittwa’, the name of Pyaricharan had not found any mention. Even in the later volumes by Bhudeb Choudhury’s ‘Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itikathā’ or Shrikumar Bandyopadhyay’s ‘Bāṅglā Sāhityer Bikāsher Dhārā’, the name of Pyaricharan Das had been left out. However, whatever discussion could be conducted on Pyaricharan Das, it could be done so from the following volumes:

44. Quoted in Shrihattabasi Sharman, Ibid, P. 75.
All these books have depicted the significance of Pyaricharan Das’s contributions.

Pyaricharan Das was born to the family of Munshi of Latu in the year 1850. His father’s name was Shyamcharan Das. In Karimganj, Latu was a population gradually rising with time. It was in Latu where in 1857, during the Sepoy Mutiny, a platoon of revolutionaries took shelter. It was during this time, songs of revolution proliferated in the voices of the mass. Pyaricharan was then 7 years old. It needs mention that it was during this time that the poet inside Pyaricharan was gradually getting nurtured. At the age of seven, Pyaricharan established his talent in composition of poems. He used to utter in humour:

[Stop your blah! Blah! Talk less. Be certain that I am your nemesis!]

The seven year old Pyaricharan wrote this poem aiming towards his elder sister’s mother-in-law.

Studies were thus going on among all this. In the year 1867, he passed his matriculation from Shrihatta Mission School. He then moved to Kolkata for higher studies. It needs mention that in the nineteenth century, many travelled to Kolkata with the aim of attaining higher studies. The son of the Munshi family of Latu, Pyaricharan was not an exception in that matter.

Pyaricharan couldn’t study much in Kolkata as he got engaged in a job there. He joined the India office in the department of foreign affairs as a clerk. In his book Achyutcharan Choudhury informed thus:

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46. Quoted in Achyutcharan Choudhury, Shrihatter Itibritta Vol. IV, P. 84.
[In the job of a clerk, he performed with such expertise that there was no doubt about his rise. The senior officers used to adore him a lot. But an inadvertent incident made him resign from his job and thus he returned back home.]

The inadvertent incident was of the following nature;

One day when Pyaricharan Das was returning home from his office, in the Wellington area, a particular person named William Circess made some annoying remarks regarding the culture and tradition of India. Pyaricharan protested about the remarks and an altercation started between the two. The altercation took a violent turn and Pyaricharan took out a knife he used in his office and slashed Circess’s throat with it. There was bloodshed as a result and William Circess died on the spot. The case went to trial after that. The court sentenced Pyaricharan to three months of imprisonment. The sentenced was minimal as it was found that Pyaricharan did not commit the crime deliberately. After he was released from prison, Pyaricharan did not join his office again. Albeit, when he met his senior officer before leaving, the officer requested Pyaricharan to join office again:

[The kind hearted officer liked Pyaricharan a lot. He asked Pyaricharan to stay in Calcutta and requested him to join office again. But finally, Pyaricharan did not agree to his request.]

The twenty-nine year old Pyaricharan returned from the Cultural capital of India and back to his hometown Sylhet. The region of Sylhet was just then included as a part of Assam.

48. Ibid.
At that time, there was no newspaper or journal published from the valley. At the behest of Pyaricharan, the first newspaper-journal ‘Shrihatta Prakash’ was published from the Surma-Barak valley region. The first edition was published on 1st January, 1876. We have already discussed about this journal in the fifth chapter. In this chapter we are going to discuss about Pyaricharan’s poetry and metrical compositions.

Pyaricharan published six books of poems. These are:

a. Varna-Parichay Vol. I (Introduction to letters)
b. Varna-Parichay Vol. II (Introduction to letters)
c. MitraBilap: 1870
d. Padyapustak Vol. I: September, 1876
e. Bhārateswari Kābya: 1st January, 1877
f. Padyapustak Vol. III: January, 1877

Besides these, his unpublished works were: ‘Pyāripadya or Franco-Prussian Revolutionary Songs’ and ‘Premer Rahasya Kathā’ (The enigma of love). One can classify the writings of Pyaricharan into two parts:

a. Poems written for poetry books of school curriculum and
b. Poems written for expression of feelings or sentiments

Pyaricharan’s ‘Padyapushtak Vol I’ (Book of poems), was published in the year 1876. The publication was aimed towards school curriculum. At that time, the book was recognised by the ‘Calcutta School Book Society’. It needs mention that although the Nagaon based school book society was the controller of school books in Assam; Bengali books had to be recognized by the ‘Calcutta School Book Society’ to be included in the school curriculum. The text by Pyaricharan was a part of the syllabus of the primary section in this region for a long time. In the preface of the book, Pyaricharan informed:

एই কুষ্ট পন্ত পুস্তকখানি শ্রীহট্ট ও কাছাড় প্রদেশের বালক বালিকা দিগের পাঠ সৌন্দর্যায়ে প্রচারিত হইল ।

[The publication of this little book of poetry has been aimed towards the school children of Sylhet and Cachar.]

The text of Pyaricharan had two parts—Part I and Part II. The first part starts with the topic of morning and the second part depicts about afternoon. Pyaricharan tried to imbibe into the minds of the children the two aspects of nature. Along with that, there was also the depicting of moral teachings.

In the first part, Pyaricharan described about eight elements of nature. They are as follows:

Morning, Sun, Blooming of flowers, reading, writing and play, learning lessons, bad behaviour is wrong, honey and come, brothers, let us play.

The second part contained the elements of moral. Such as:

Afternoon, Kadamba flower, good behaviour, lying in wrong, bird inside a cage, to steal is wrong, Yadav, it’s wrong to keep nagging for things.

The text of poetry by Pyaricharan starts in the following way:

বিহান
রাত পোহাল
বিহান হল
ফুটল যত কুল।
বদ বাগানে
হঠিয় মনে
তাকে পাখীর কুল।

দুর আকাশে
সূর্য হায়ে
অংঘার গোল চলে।

[Morning
Night ended. Morning arrived. The flowers began to bloom. In the gardens

and the jungles. The birds chirped in delight far away in the sky. The sun smiles, darkness fades away!!]

Thus at the onset, just as a painter paints a picture with colours, Pyaricharan painted the picture of morning with his words.

Pyaricharan wrote for the poems for children. Due to that, the words used were simple and easy. The following are few examples:

a. দেখ কিবা
   মনোলোভা
   তানুর বদন।
   পুর ভঙ্গে
   রাঙা রঙে
   উদয় কেমন॥
   গোল গাল
   ফেন খাল
   বক্কমুক করে।
   মনোহর
   দিনকর
   সবে কর ওর॥ ৫১

[See there the alluring body of the sun. Escape towards the east. With the tone of the red. How it rises round and round like a plate. It shines
Captivating day-bringer all calls it so!!]

b. হাসিবেছে শেফালিকা
   কেলফুল মাধবিকা
   মালতী চামেলী চৌপা সুমধুর বয়ানে॥
   গোলাপ কামিনী কুল
   গড়িরজ গাঁদা ফুল
   কে গণেরে? অগণন ফুটিয়া রয়েছে॥ ৫২

[Smiling Shefalika wood-apple Madhabika, Malati, Chameli (kinds of flowers) growing in the mesmerizing ground. Rose is blooming like a damsel.

52. Ibid, P. 6.
Gandharaj growing in groups. Who would count? They bloom in lots and groups!

c. আম বাংলায়
পায়ী গণে
কলরবে গায়।

দিন গোল
বেলা নাই—
রবি অস্তে যায়।

[In the mango garden. Birds count kalarbe sings day passes. Time is no more. The sun sets away!!]

d. থই থই করে জল নীল সরোবরে।
সুশীতল প্রভাতিক সমীরণ ভরে।
হেন জলে খেত রস্ত কমলের ফুল।
ফুটে আছে অগণন সৌন্দর্যে অতুল।

[With splashes, water in the blue lake. Pleasantly cool, flowing air fills up. There lies in the snowy water the red lotus. Beauty blooms in lots, incomparable!!]

Along with the picture of nature, in Pyaricharan’s Book of poems, moral teaching also played a significant role. Why did he choose moral science? Actually, Pyaricharan provides knowledge for children in his book. That is the reason that moral teaching became a part of his writings, which actually is an inherent element in children’s education. ‘Varnaparichay’ by Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, ‘Sishusikshā’ by Madan Mohan Tarkalankar and Ramchandra Vidyabagish’s ‘Sikshāsebadhi’—all these texts contain the element of moral science. Due to that, in the second part of the nineteenth century, Pyaricharan Das emphasized on moral teachings in his verses. Some examples are as following:

a. পড়িবার সময়েতে মন দিয়া পড়িবে।
খেলিবার সময়েতে খেলাইয়া আসিবে।

[When its time to study, concentrate on studies. When the time is for play, go and play!]

55. Ibid, P. 7.
b. আজ থাকু কল্প হবে, একথানী বল না।
কি জানি কি হবে কল্প
সুখ দুঃখ ভালাভাল
শরীর অসুখ কিনা, কত মত ঘটনা। 56

[Never procrastinate what you can do today. No one one knows what will happen tomorrow. Happiness and sadness is unpredictable. What if sickness befalls, or unforeseen occurs!!]

মহা পাপ মিথ্যা কথা বেইজন কথা
নীচ লোক মধ্যে তারে সকলে গণয।।
বিধান না করে কেহ তাহার কথায।
মিথ্যা যুক্তি সদা তুলনা সমায়।। 57

[Lie is a sin whoever says. He is counted within the lower humans. No one trusts the liar. The liar is always rebuked by the descent!!]

The above examples clearly portray elements to develop the intellect of a child. In the second part of the nineteenth century, Pyaricharan’s ‘Padyapustak’ became quite popular in Assam, especially the southern part of Assam. Pyaricharan might have planned to write a series for primary students just like ‘Sishusebadhi’ and ‘Sishusiksha’. It needs mention that the ‘Padyapustak Vol. II’ was supposed to be written by Bipin Bihari Das. Although written, it was never published. But Pyaricharan wrote the 3rd volume of ‘Padyapustak’. In the preface, he wrote:

ইই পাদপূজকাণি আমার পাঠার্থার ভিন্ন ভিন্ন সময়ে বিভিন্ন স্থান নানা বিষয়ী কবিতার সংগ্রহমাত্র। বহুল পাদপূজ বিষয়ানে এই পুনঃপুনঃ প্রকাশের কৌশল প্রয়োজন ছিল না, কিন্তু বহু দর্শনে দেখা গিয়েছে বালকেরা নীতিবিশ্লেষণ প্রহ্লাদি অপেক্ষাতঃ স্থায়ী কবিতা অধিক ভালোবাসিয়া থাকে, কারণ, উহা আপনার বলিয়া তাহাদের আন হয় ; সুতরাং হাদয়ের প্রিয়তম মধ্যে গণ করিয়া থাকে এবং পাঠে নিতান্ত উৎসুক প্রকাশ করে। বালকদিগের পাঠের আশায় ও উত্সাহ জ্ঞানই দেওয়া অতিশয় বাংলানী এবং তজনোই এই পাদপূজকের সৃষ্টি হইয়াছে। এই আশা কথাকিং ফলবর্তী হইলেও হর্ষকিন্তৃ সহকারে সিদ্ধকাম হইলাম আজ কবিতা ইতি। 58

[This textbook is a collection of the poems on various topics I wrote during my days of education. With so many poetry books available, this book might not have been required, but it has been found many a times that the young children anxiously wait for local poetry books rather than conventional books, because those books provide them with first hand knowledge from our experience. They thus develop an interest and excitement in the perusal of such books. It is absolutely essential in induce a sense of interest and excitement in the minds of the young readers and it is for this reason that this book has been compiled. With this wish that the effort would assist in the development of knowledge in the child’s mind, this offering is presented.]

The above paragraph suggests that Pyaricharan in this volume of his ‘Padyapushtak’, decided to divert from customary rules. Compared to his previous publication of ‘Padyapushtak, Vol. I, where custom and traditions were highlighted, this volume highlighted more on varied other topics. He wanted to put forward among the children local topics, so that they gain interest in the writings. An example of such namely ‘Shrihatter Prakritik Shobha’ (Natural beauty of Sylhet) is mentioned below:

শ্রীহত্র প্রকৃতিক শোভা, আমাদের অনেক নামে।
অথবা হে সুন্দর প্রকৃতি নীরব নদী।
শ্রীহত্র প্রকৃতিক শোভা অনেক নামে।
বিশ্বের বন্ধনীয় মুখ তনু মন, মোহবশে দেশপানে চাইলে কখন।
ভাগ্যমাতা আমি যথা তথা যাই, অনেকের পানে হায়! কি রয়েছে না চাই।

[Sylhet is the land of Goddess Lakshmi, the house of happiness. Like a heaven, this land bears the name. Motherland, it is close to me. Where the deity resides, pride emerges your mind is mesmerized by the talks of the foreign land.

You have never looked at your own land. I roam around here and there in illusion, I sip the froth of my country. I do not want to look back anywhere!!

Pyaricharan was enchanted by his motherland, Sylhet. He returned back to his land. In describing the beauty of his town, the natural beauty of his motherland, there was none comparable. It needs mention that in the ‘Padyapushtak Vol. I’, in the title section, there were lines from Michael Madhusudan Datta’s ‘Meghnād Badh Kāvyā’s “Swadesh sangeet-dhwani suni re ullase” (I hear the echoes of patriotic songs in wonder).

It is with opulence we have to mention that Pyaricharan wanted to reflect the local topics in his poems. He was quite active in this endeavour. It was not just nature he talked about, he also mentioned humans who have contributed to his homeland’s development. Reverend William Pryze was the pallbearer of English language teaching in Sylhet. Bipinchandra Paul wrote:

রেভারেন্ড ডবলিউ প্রাইজ কে শীতের আধুনিক শিক্ষাগুলো বলিয়া ইংরেজীনবিশেরা আজিও সম্মান করেন। শীতের প্রথমে যাহারা ইংরেজী শিক্ষা লাভ করেন প্রাইজ সাহেব তাহাদের সকলেরই গুরু ছিলেন।

প্রাইজ সাহেব বাংলায় পুনর্জীবন বাণ্ডি ছিলেন। কলিকাতার আধুনিক শিক্ষার ইতিহাসে ডেভিড হেয়ারের মে স্থান, শীতের ইংরেজী শিক্ষার ইতিহাসে প্রাইজ সাহেবেরও সেই স্থান।

[Reverend W. Pryze is regarded as the modern mentor of English teaching in Sylhet by the learned and the learners even today. In Sylhet, whoever had learned English in the beginning, Pryze Sahab was the mentor of all of them…

Pryze sahib was truly a personality of virtuous character. As David Hare was in Calcutta to modern education, Pryze sahib was so to English education in Sylhet.]

A student of Pryzesahaheb Pyaricharan wrote in his melancholic poem “Bilaplohor” about him:

হার রে! কে আছে দুঃখ কারে কব আর,

Alas! Who is there to whom I wail. Unfortunate Sreehotte your ill-fate. One by one, they perish, who care for you. Finally without judging the time. The pearl of your heart turned from blue to black!

It needs to be mentioned that the first collection of poems of Pyraicharan Das was "Mitrabilāp" (Wail for my friend). The collection was published in the year 1876 from Kolkata. He dedicated the poems to his friend Sarada Mohan Das. Achyutcharan Chowdury informed:

This was his first book. He was then residing in Calcutta.

Significantly, ‘Mitrabilāp’ was included in the third volume of Padyapushtak.

Pyaricharan wrote in remembrance of his lost friend:

1

2

[Silent am I, in my face, there is despair. When I heard the news penetrate
my love. Drowned the man, I cried in vain. I remember Sarada, your image is
enchanting!]

Never thought in my dreams, untimely. In the lap of time, you would be
grabbed. Gulped in the net of oblivion. Sharad, the light of the full moon. Engulfed
in the in-appropriate time passing the happy days, with the rocks of sadness.
Leaving everything, where did you go, brother. In silence, alone? We are here in
this world. One who should have gone, has not gone still?]

In the nineteenth century, Pyaricaharan was one of the foremost in the
region to write melancholy poems. Alongside, he was also a pioneer in sonnet
writing in this region. Below is an example of a sonnet by him:

गार्हस्थ्य कविता

(पिता)

नमि तात्रं स्रीचरणं आमं ईश्वर
ए तब भवने तुम्हि; करत ना आदरे
शिखाइले लेखापड़ा; किस्त ए पामर
आजिब तोमारे भुले आं गर्भ धरे।
अमि पुरानो तब; अवैयं असार
तोमार भुलने; तुमि आन पाराबार
बुद्धि बुहस्पति; देशेन लोक कोठा आर
ये तोमारे ना जिज्ञासु गुरु कथा तार
बिकुट सकट यवे, किबरा बाबहार
विषये गाँहथम शीमांसा करति।
आरबा, पारस्य, उर्धु विदेशी भाषार
बिजरी पंजित तुमि अर्थ समीतिन।
बिद्यार गौरव पुश्पे, — बिषाद आमार।
नारिनु पुजिते पितः चरण तोमार।'*

[Domestic Poems (Father)]

I bow down at your feet, my lord. You are on the earth, on the hall; with

64. Pyaricharan Das, Ibid, P. 24-25.
great care. Taught me to learn and write; but this sinful. Is living today as a fault of yours. But I am blessed to be a son, incompetent, worthless compared to you; you are an ocean of knowledge. Intelligent as Sage Brihaspati; the land, the people talk. If you don’t enquire, words remain clandestine. When in deep trouble, or behaviour. The issues deep, the judgement difficult. Arabic, Persian, Urdu foreign languages. You are an authority, an honourable institution. Erudite pride as a blooming flower—Morose am I? I pray at your feet, o my father!]

In the sonnet, the feelings and dedication has been wholesomely denoted. His inner feelings about his likings, his dis-likings, his happiness, his sadness, his melancholy has been visible in the sonnet. Pyaricharan’s sonnet ‘Garhasthya Kabita’ is not an exception. His sentiments towards his father— he has depicted with appropriate feelings and context.

It was evident that Pyaricharan was influenced by the verses of Michael Madhusudan Datta. We have already mentioned about the title section in Pyaricharan’s ‘Padyapustak Vol. III’. It is not just there, but in his poem ‘Durgotsav’. He has inserted two lines from Michael Madusadan’s poem ‘Ashvin Mas’ from his collection ‘Chaturdashpadi Kabitāvali’:

“এসেছেন ফিরে উমা বৎসরের পরে,
মহিষমদিনী রাপে ভক্তেরে ঘরে।”

[Uma (Durga) has returned at the end of the year. As the slayer of demons, she is in the house of her devotees.]

In true sense, western literature began to be published in this region only in the second part of the nineteenth century. Although there was an influence of Western literature directly on Pyarichran, but the route of that influence has traversed through the poems and verses written by Michael Madhusudan Datta. Significantly, Pyaricharan was much influenced by the lyrics and songs of Michael Madhusudan. This aspect has been clearly observed in the journey from his ‘Padyapushtak’ and ‘Bhārateswari’.

In the same year that ‘Padyapushtak Vol.IIF, had been published, Pyaricharan’s ‘Bharateswari’ was also published. In 1877, the book thus published had on its cover paged in English and Bengali:

THE
EMPRESS OF INDIA
A POEM IN BENGALI
BY
PEARY CHURN DOSS

This book was printed in the printing machines of Sylhet and the publisher was Shri Kusharam Datta. The aim of this text was in praise of Queen Victoria. She was not just the Queen of England, she was Bharateswari (The Goddess of Bharat).

Pyaricharan wrote:

राज-राजेश्वरी भारत-इश्यूरी
दाओड़ को मार नियत एवं
दाओड़ ना दुरे आगे दे मेन
दाओड़ एवं निकट हुए से।
इंग्लिश की बांधी ना आर,
भारत-इश्यूरी दाओड़ एवं। 67

[Queen of Queens, Goddess of Bharat. Would stay together forever. You would not be far as you were before. We are all close to each other. Would call no more the Queen of England. Would call you Goddess of Bharat!]

The sentiment of Sovereignty was still not active in the minds of India. Paradoxically, it was quite the opposite. As a result, in the middle class Queen

66. Pyaricharan Das, Bharateswari Kavya, Title Page.
Victoria was the Goddess of Bharat. After the Sepoy mutiny, this sentiment was visible in Pyaricharan’s verses. He composed:

जय जय महाराणी विजयरिया
भारत इश्वरी सृष्टिया जय,
भारतेर दिक निग्रिते शूनि गो
सकले तोमारि बोलिहे जय। 68

[Hail! Hail! Queen of Queens Victoria. Wish you well-being, Goddess of Bharat. Heard the rise and shine of Bharat. All utter Hail for you!]

Queen Victoria was enthroned as the Queen of India. And as an anecdote to that, Pyaricharan wrote ‘Bharateswari Kavya’. AtyutCharan Chowdury wrote:

তদীয় “ভারতেশ্বরী” কথ্য স্বরীয় মহারাণী ভিজয়রিয়ার “এম্প্রেস” উপাধি গ্রহণ উপলক্ষে লিখিত হয়। 69

[“Bharateswari” was written at the time when Queen Victoria was titled the “Empress”.

The book, written in celebration of Queen Victoria, was dedicated to Shri Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay’s memory. Pyaricharan wrote:

ভারতী-বীণা-বাদক
কবি
শ্রীমুখ বাবু হেমচন্দ্র বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়
মহাশয়ের কর্কমলে। 70

[Bharati Veena maestro, Poet Shri Hem Chandra Banerjee praise to him!]

Pyaricharan wrote his verses adopting the technique of the Payar (two liner verses) and Tripadi (four line verses). Examples are:

Payar:

a. বিখিনতা বাণীধন, সকলেই চায।
অধিনতা ভেন দিকে দুঃখায। 71

68. Pyaricharan Das, Ibid.
70. Pyaricharan Das, Bharateswari Kavya.
[Freedom, my child, all thrive for the authorities feel, chains are the means!]

b. বাড়িতে করিলে চুরি করে মার খাবে।
অথবা শরমে মারি কেনে ঝোলে যাবে।॥

[Steal in your own house, whip will lash you. Or you would die crying in shame!]

Tripadi:

a. ভূলোক দুলোক করে, সমুচু সামগ্র স্বরে,
বীর শুধ্ষ সবর্ভু শীর্ষন
একতার প্রাণ মনে, সেই প্রাণ সনাতনে
নিমি আশ্বস্তি সনাতন॥

[Splish splash way unions gatherings crossed, whose name is the prayer forever. With a firm heart, in that divine eternity. I offer myself in all my self]

b. অজি গুড়দিন, উৎসবের দিন,
হবেকি এদিন আর।
প্রাইজ মহোয়া, হইয়া সদয়
লও এই জ্ঞাতি হার॥

[Today is August, the day of celebrations. What would otherwise happen? Gentleman Pryze, being him. I accept the garland of love!]

Vis-à-vis such compositions, Pyaricharan was also adept at ornamentation of words using the Upama (Simile) and Anuprash (Alliteration).

Example:

Upama:

গোল-গাল
কেন গাল
বক্কে মুক্ত করে।

Anuprash:

[Round! Round! Like a dish. Shining bright and stern!]

74. Ibid, P. 10.


Kamala Kusum Aaha Kibar Monhorer,
Mudhlothe Mudhkor Pashe Niranjra [76]

[Kamala, Kusum(Flowers) you are so enchanting. In greed for honey, the honey bee wait till infinity!]

At the time when Pyaricharan was writing, Bengali poetry was abundant from Michael Madhusudan Datta till Biharilal Chakraborty. Poems are not just penned as statements about something; it is also a work of art. The writings of Michael Madhusudan and Biharilal represented that element. But the contemporary Pyaricharan’s works were not just works of art; they depicted principally material statements. It can be said that the manner of Pyaricharan’s verses depicted materialism. According to Ishwarchandra Gupta, he stressed on materialism. Such as:

a. 

The land where shine of the orange is enchanting. Lohit(River) takes in it the flamboyance of the red. So soft parts! The fragrance travel. So sweet the juice! All drink and gratified!

b. 

Where gets birth the sweet pineapple. Abundance in perfect sweetness in its juice. Jackfruit juicy, papaya and many more fruits. Born in abundance in time, who would count?

In reality, editor of ‘Shrihatta Prakash’, Pyaricharan Das’s poetry exercise

77. Ibid, PP. 4-5.
78. Ibid, P. 5.
was an extension of his journalistic attributes. Of course, there was another reason for this—the publishing of school textbooks. In this region, he was the pioneer in Bengali Primary and children books publication. He realized that children’s books were in scarcity in that region. That is the reason that he wrote ‘Varnamālā, Vol. I & II’ and published ‘Padyapushtak, Vol. I & III’.

It needs mention that in the second half of the nineteenth century, Bengali childrens’ education was approached with rational and scientific outlook. In that case, the textbooks ‘Sishusebadhi’ and ‘Sishusikhshā’ contributed specially in Bengali childrens’ education.

‘Sishusebadhi’ was composed for Hindu College school and ‘Sishusikhshā’ was written for Bethun Girls’ school.

The Principals of Hindu College, namely Ramchandra Vidyabagish and Khetramohan Datta, contributed to the publishing of the text ‘Sishusebadhi’. With the publication of text ‘Sishusikhshā’, stalwarts like Madan Mohan Tarkalankar were involved. Whatever, the philosophy with which children’s education was propagated in Bengal, with that same philosophy and goal, Pyaricharan developed the same in the far away Sylhet town. Pyaricharan was not in the management of Hindu College or Bethun girls school. Even then, for the benefit of school children, he published ‘Varnaparichay, Vol. I & II’ and ‘Padyapustak, Vol. I & III’, as a personal endeavour.

It has to be accepted that Pyaricharan Das exercised poetry writing not as a work of art. He was flowing in the same stream as Madan Mohan Tarkalankar and Ishwarchandra Gupta. However, the influence of Michael Madhusudan was clearly evident. The influence was although superficial.

Pyaricharan had a purpose in his verses. The poems emanate statement of purpose and description of reality. His poems have not been born from the depth of life’s existence. Although, there have been exceptions. Such a poem of his was ‘Pinjare Pākhi’ (The bird in the cage). In this poem, Pyaricharan wrote:

kt knde pādhī bōsi sēnār pīṣôr
kt khētē dēi tūkt knde nirôṣṭôr

79
The birds cries so much inside the golden cage. It gets to eat in full, but still cries in eternity. Why is not happy and cries day and night. Seems the bird wants to fly to the wild again!!

The sincerity of his feelings touches our souls. In his compositions for children’s poetry, he has highlighted many such instances—which were later heard in Rabindranath Tagore’s ‘Dui Pākhi’ (Two birds) essay. In a varied platform, varied art forms are presented.

In the year 1887, at the young age of 40, Pyaricharan expires. All those who have ushered in light towards the progress of Bengali verses and poetry, Pyaricharan was one of them. His verses or poem might not be interesting for the reader of the 21st century, due to his lack of art in it, but it needs to be remembered as a contribution in the history of Bengali poetry. In the pages of history, the contribution and achievement of Pyaricharan Das would be eternally eminent.