CHAPTER I

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE POST TAGORIAN BENGALI POETRY
AND JIBANANANDA DAS.

The poetry after the World Wars which is free from the influence of the poetry of Rabindranath is often considered to have marked the beginning of a new era called the Post Tagorian Age or the age of high modernism in Bengali poetry. The year 1914-1947 is said to be the period of great catastrophe in the history of mankind. This devastation is reflected in the state, society and its economic basis. Everywhere there is chaos and fragmentation. The high morals and values are shattered tremendously. They are delineated in the contemporary texts. The poets also are driven to despair by this fragmentation that take place in the society. Their works witness a sense of disillusionment, fear and disbelief. The romantic strain which includes glorification of love and beauty and the ontological view which were propagated by Rabindranath and his followers are discarded by these poets. Nature and the human life fail to create any kind of impact on the mindset of the latter poets. These poets view this mortal world in a firm grip and rejects the world of imagination.
The growth of Post Tagorian modern Bengali poetry takes place in the third decade of the twentieth century and established itself as a distinctive genre in the next decade. "The period between 1923-1930 is often said to be the age of self scrutiny. And the period between 1931-1945 is called a period of self discovery and illustration in the field of modern poetry" (1). The great personalities who tried to propogate their own philosophy through their poetry or tried to bring about a new revolution in the literature during the period when Tagore was still alive are Jibanananda Das (1899-1954), Sudhindranath Dutta (1901-1960), Buddhadeva Basu (1908-1974), Amiya Chakraborty (1901-1986) and Bishnu Dey (1909-1982).

As the literature is founded on society, so along the changing of society the ideas and values also change. The new moral values propogated by the young poets have made their best effort to bring about a new change in the society in the life time of Rabindranath Tagore. Some of the important events that took place during this period were the beginning of the First World War (1914-1918) and the accompanying sufferings and miseries, the Russian Revolution (1917), the massive killings in the Jallianwalla Bagh (1919), the launching of the Non-Co-Operation Movement and Satyagraha by Gandhiji (1869-1948) in 1920, the repressive measures adopted by the British Government to dominate the Indians, the formation of the Communist Party in India (1927-1928) and other development in the field of psychology devised by Dr. Freud. All these events created a furor in the history of mankind. This tremendous changes that occur in the society made it difficult for the younger poets to hold on the traditional believes and values, instead they imbibed themselves with the new ideas. Their writings reveal the pains and sufferings and the naked truth of life and thereby alienating them from the romantic world of Rabindranath.
The beginning of the modern Bengali poetry is marked by a mood of pessimism mainly in the poetry of Jatindranath Sengupta (1887-1954), the extreme materialism in Mohitlal Mazumdar (1888-1952), the manifestation of excitement and vigour in the poetry of Nazrul Islam (1898-1976) and the playing of the sounds and rhythm in the poetry of Satyendranath Dutta (1882-1922). These poets retained their own individuality even though inspired by the ideal of Rabindranath Tagore. In this regard the contribution of some of the poets is worth mentioning. They include Kumudranjan Mallick (1882-1970), Karunanidhan Bandhopadhay (1877-1955), Debendranath Sen (1858-1920) etc. This new trend in the poetry of the 20th century goes to Jatindranath Sengupta, Mohitlal Mazumdar and Nazrul Islam.

Among the poets of the Rabindranath circle Satyendranath Dutta was the first poet to retain his own style. He was very popular among the younger poets for his variations in the rhyme scheme and its structure. His extensive use of onomatopoeic words, use of various rhyme schemes, use of rustic and colloquial words paved the way for the emergence of modern technique in poetry. With regard to the subject matter of poetry he brought a new style. His famous poems viz "Amarā", "Methar", "Jātir Pātī", "Sāmya-Sām", etc. are successful in winning the heart of the readers. Later poets like Sudhindranath Dutta and Jibanananda Das was greatly attracted by his rhythm and gets influenced by it. Satyendranath Dutta’s experiment with sanskrit rhyme scheme thoroughly influenced Sudhindranath Dutta. The similarities between the poems ‘Puṣper Nibedan’ by Satyendranath and ‘Pratidān’ from the volume ‘Uttar fālgun’ is worthmentioning. The impact of Satyendranath over ‘Jharāpālak’ anthology of poetry by Jibanananda Das is not only confined to rhyming alone but also the subject matter and which we will
discuss in the course of our study. But inspite of all this Satyendranath Dutta was not well accepted by the modern poets. In this regard Jibanananda Das had said: "the lack of intellectual depth in his poetry greatly give us pain. Even from the structural point of view it cannot be said that Satyendranath excels Rabindranath."[2] In this regard Buddhadeva Basu had said: "the emotional intensity and his firm belief inscribed on his book entitled 'Juthibaner Dirghasvas' enable the readers to find new interpretation after every reading and to experience the diverse pangs of seperation in the poetry of Rabindranath, where as in the poetry of Satyendranath it often seems to be artificial and lacks true feelings".[3] Dr. Shashibhusan Dasgupta had stated clearly: "Though Satyendranath shares some similarities with Rabindranath in case of mode of thought but his successors do not seems to have been inspired by the formers".[4]

The modern Bengali poetry is a kind of revolt against excessive romanticism of Rabindranath Tagore. Some of the themes which pre-occupies Jatindranath are the relationship between man and nature, the futile search of man for happiness and the extreme materialism which grips mankind. Noted poet Jatindranath Sengupta(1887-1954) who was an engineer by profession very closely experience the misery and sufferings of the people. There are ample references to people driven to despair and pessimism in his poetry. The position of God to the suffering humanity is like an illusion. He says:

"tumi šālagrām śīla
sooyā basā yār sakali samān
tare niye rāśīlā"[5]

He raised a terrible question to those individuals who had a firm belief in the grace of God. He deals in his poetry themes like the loneliness of urban life, the selfish demands of self-centred people and gives it a new pattern:
“cerāpuṇji theke
ekkhāni megh dhar dite pāra Gobi saharar buke ?”

In this way Jatindranath with his best effort brings about a new flavour in the corpus of modern Bengali poetry. Rabindranath with his new style in the matter of subject matter, structural innovation, use of colloquial speech and different rhyme scheme enables him and his successors to defy the trend set of Rabindranath Tagore.

In the poetry of Mohitlal Mazumder (1888-1952) feelings of physical love, passionate lust and sexual element are first experienced by us. In this world the thought of death is irrelevant. The sexual drive is the only truth and religions has taught us to deny it:

“satya sūdhu kāmanāi mithā ciramaraṇ pipasa !
deḥaṁ, snehaṁ, āsruḥ, bākuntha-svapana.”

Due to the modern psychology, love means physical attraction. Rabindranath's love is divine, whereas it is lacking in modern definition of love. Mohitlal is the first poet who made the first definition of modern love to the Bengali readers as it is nothing but the manifestation of sexual love. In this context it can be assumed that he must have been inspired by the Bhowal poet Gobinda Das (1855-1918) by his famous line ‘āmi tomāy bhālobāsi asthi maṁsasaḥa.

Mohitlal a contemporary of Tagore was quite successful in attracting his readers and in finding a niche for himself. If we look back to the past we would find most of poets are lost or become obsolete in the passage of time but Mohitlal is still retaining his popularity. There is no doubt about the fact that Mohitlal is quit extraordinary in giving impacts to the future generation of poets with his experiment in materialism, uniqueness of subject matter in the third decade of the twentieth century.
The rebel poet as 'Agnibîna' who is said to be the guiding star of Bengali literature called Kazi Nazrul Islam (1898-1976) composes his poetry with an furious outlook. Being an active soldier who witness the ravages of war, an extravagant man, experiences the life from various aspects, encounter the real world, are some of the aspects which are reflected not only in his poetry but also through his lyrics. Moreover his inclusion of the words from the Arabic, Urdu and Parsian languages lends a new dimension to the Bengali poetry. During the time of Rabindranath he was the most popular poet of the period. His magnum opus 'Vidrohi' lends immortality to him and is still popular today. In this poem, the poet majestically announces:

"bala bîr
balo unnata mama šir!
šir nehâri natašir ai šíkhar himâdrir." (9)

There is no trace of serious thinking reflected in his songs of beauty and on the songs which highlight the youthful vigour and emotions. 'Mama Ek Hâte Bäsar Bäsqi Ār Ek Hâte Rañaturyya' with the changing trends in the minds of the people there arises a kind of pretentious glamour but the tune coming out of the flute made of bamboo will enlighten the Bengali musical world. Nazrul Islam was one of the notable poets who had the courage to go against the poetry of Rabindranath. Nazrul Islam plays a pivotal role in the movement of poetry during the 1930s.

All the poets that we have discussed already is not entirely free from the elements of humanism. In sense of the poem 'Kālāpāhar' by Mohitlal there is a slight touch of romantic sensitivily. In the poetry of Nazrul there is manifestation of plentiful romantic vigour and intense emotion. His notable contributions are the poems collected in the anthologies entitled 'Chāyānat' and 'Dolancāpā'. It has
been seen that though the later poets revolved against the excessive emotion and the subject matter they could not completely liberate themselves from the Rabindra circle.

The modern era in Bengali poetry started with the publication of these journals and periodicals 'Kallo' (1923), 'Kalikalam' (1924), 'Pragati' (1929) etc. Jibananda clearly states that: “The most Rabindric modern poetry flourishes after the death of Satyendranath”.^ That means after 1922 "Kallo" acted as the mouthpiece of the established younger poets of the 1923. The poets who made regular contribution to these magazines are--Premendra Mitra, Ajit Dutta, Annada Sankar Roy, Manish Ghatak (Yubonash), Achinta Sengupta, Bishnu Dey, Jibanananda Das etc are notable among the young poets, similarly Jatindranath, Najrul and Mohitlal also made their valuable contribution to this magazine. Hence most of the leading personalities who helped develop modern Bengali poetry as a definite genre made their valuable contributions to “Kallo” in their brief career as poets.

“Kallo” was created “as haunting ground for the appearance of new poets”[^11]. In the words of Achinta Sengupta: "Kallo brilliantly portrays what called the malady the trauma of the age".[^12] The poets of the ‘Kallo’ circle draws inspirations from the First World War and the Russian Revolution. These poets were also influenced by the development in the field of freudian psychology, foreign literature, the pessimistic philosophy scheopenhaver, surrendering oneself to the pessimistic side of life. Inspite of these the other events that illuminates the poets of this period are the 'Khilafat Movement' (1919-22), the Non-Cooperation Movement (1921) of Gandhiji and other National and International issues.

On the threshold of the 20th century i.e on the third or fourth decade, when
the whole world was blazing in fire, a tremendous change took place in the Bengali literature. The critical phase in the Indian National freedom movements, the acute economic crunch (1929-30) even worsened the situation during this hostile atmosphere. The preparation for the Second World War was going on, the inflation, the problem of unemployment, influence of Marx, the Labour Revolution etc. were the curses of fate which brought misfortune to the life of the people. The August Movement of 1945-47, the downfall of the Azad Hind Army, the Partition (1947), the communal clashes, the Bengal famine in the 1943s, the social, political, religious economic problems of the Bengal etc. led to the decline in the human values. In the international scenario the fascism which was active in the Civil War of Spain (1936), and in order to defy this powerful force, the humanists, the democratic and the socialists united together in Europe and formed the Popular Front. These events of national and international importance created a kind of purpose in the minds of the young poets. Moreover the poets of these periods were also familiar with the western movement in poetry. The major movements in poetry includes the ‘Symbolist Movement’, ‘Imagist Movement’, ‘Surrealist Movement’ etc. The notable poets of the ‘Symbolist Movement’ in poetry are, Paul Verlaine, Stephane Mallarme, Paul Volery and others.

Mallarme and Volery are of the opinion that excessive preoccupation with sound, affected the lyric quality of poetry. Mallarme says: “Poetry is not made with ideas. It is made with things or words that signify things”. (13)

During that time other movements in art and literature were also taking place. The growth of Futurism and Formalism in Italy, Dadaism, Cubism, Surrealism in French, Expressionism in Germany mark a new beginning in the world of poetry. The poetry were immensely affected by the ‘Surrealist
Movement’ (1924) that came after the ‘Symbolist Movement’. The ‘Surrealist Movement’ got enriched from the development made in the field of freudian psychology, surrealism which is actually exploitation of the material of dreams.

The notable poets of this movement are Andre Breton, Louis Aragon, Dylar Thomas etc. The ‘imagist Movement’ began in the year 1909. It is not a mere narration but emphasis is laid on the diverse images. All these contemporary movements tremendously influenced the Bengali poets. The age marked “the dawn of an era in which the figure of Rabindranath is absent but this absence has been compensated by the emergence of a new group of talented poets. This age does not belong to a single poet but to many poets. These new poets are a gift of time, after enriching itself from the sole reign of Rabindranath for many years”.

In “Kallol” magazine, Manish Ghatak’s ‘Patal Dañgar Pãcali’, Achinta Kumar’s novel ‘Vede’ Pamendra Mitra’s ‘Benamî Bandar’ was published at that time. Within a gap of few months, Buddhadeva Basu’s ‘Bandhîr Bandana’ and Ajit Dutta’s ‘Kusumer Mås’ was published in the year 1930. In the year 1932 Premendra Mitra’s ‘Prathamâ’, an anthology of poetry got published. Even though Sudhindranath Dutta’s ‘Tambi’ was published in the year 1930 but he came into limelight with the publication of ‘Orchestra’, a collection of poems in 1935. Bishnu Dey’s first volume of poetry entitled ‘Urvaśi O Artemis’ came out in the year 1932, and during this period was published ‘Jharâpâlak’ (1927), the first anthology of poems by Jibanananda Das, the poet of our discussion.

The first phase of modernism after post Rabindranath, Bengali poetry was marked by the emergence of several new poets like Sudhindranath Dutta, Amiya Chakrabarty, Buddhadeva Basu and Bishnu Dey but even then it would not be wrong to consider Jibanananda Das as the harbinger of modern Bengali poetry.
In the initial stage his poems were often considered as complex, hard to comprehend for the common readers. He was newly discovered by a group of poet friends and the notable among them is Buddhadeva Basu. Buddhadeva Basu witness in his poetry a twilight evening filled with the scent and smell of subconscious world where ever the sound of insects and the movement of fishes fins found. Buddhadeva Basu’s attempt at categorizing the art of Jibanananda’s poetry can be summarised as follows:

(a) A new trend in Bengali poetry was developed,
(b) Avoidance of Sanskrit words, and use of indigenous words.
(c) Use of new words lends a new life to poetry.
(d) To creat a sense of mystery through the use of images.
(e) To bring about a sense of consciousness in the soul of poetry.

There is no doubt that Buddhadeva Basu recognized Jibanananda Das as an eastablished poet of post Rabindrian era, in a sense it marked the dawn of modernism in Bengali poetry. Jibanananda was quite sensible in this regard as he said: “every eminent poet seems to be conscious of his age and society and while he tried to complete his accomplished tale there is sponteneous overflow of words, which is suitable only for the composition of his poems. If the above mentioned qualities can be applicable to what is known as modern Bengali poetry in the land of the Bengalees then it would be a big success.”

Besides Jibanananda, there was another group of poets who also tried to bring about a change in the art form of poetry by introducing use of appropriate word, use of pictiorial images and rhetorical devices, experiments with rhyme scheme. The differences between Rabindranath and his succeeding poets brought about a new beginning in the history of Bengali poetry.
Within the context of post Rabindrian movement in poetry, it has to be kept in mind that unlike the other poets Jibanananda was not mislead by the influence of Rabindranath.

Just like Buddhadeva Basu, he started the first phase of his career by taking inspirations from the contemporary life, environment and other poetic movements, but the second phase of his career started with the advent of modernism in his potry, “In that sense Jibanananda seems to be more matured than Buddhadeva Basu, who realises at the very beginning that freedom of Bengali poetry lies in imitation of Rabindranath.”

It is an interesting fact when he realises that: “it is the duty of the poet to understand society, since inside a poem lies the historical sense, and the sense of time.” Jibanananda started his poetic career always keeping in mind his responsibility towards the growth of the society. His first volume of poems entitled ‘Jharapalak’(1927) was composed in the highly conventional way. Rabindranath is quite apparent but the significant role had been taken by the historical sense of Satyendranath, appropriate use of indegenous words, the theory of Hedonism practiced by Kazi Nazrul and also his glorification of the youth, sensuousness of Mohitlal, use of Arabic and French words created a world of aesthetic beauty. In the entire book called ‘Jharāpālak’ only three poems entitled ‘Nilimā’, ‘Pyramid’ and ‘Sadin E Dharante’ seems to have traces of Rabindranath. For example:

“nitya naba dibaser mṛtyu ghantā bāje!
śatabdir savadehe śmaśaner bhasmabāṇhi jvale!
pāntha mlān citār kabale
ēke-ēke dube yāy desh, jāti- saṁsar, saṁāj.
kār lagi he samādhi, tumi aka base ācho āj”

[Pyramid, Jharāpālak]
In order to avoid the influence of Rabindranath over the age of 'Jharäpälak' he consciously follows poetic style of Nazrul and Satyendranath. The rhyme scheme of Satyendranath and the poetic style of Nazrul is fully revealed in the poems of this anthology:

"āmi praśāpati-mīthā māthe-māthe sōdale sarśēkṣete
roder saphare khūjināko ghar
badhināko bāsā-Kāpi thar thar
atasi chādir thōter upar
sūdir gelāse mete!"

[Ye Kāmanā niye, Jharāpālak]

Again the poetic style of Nazrul is fully visible in some of his poems:

"ke yen rekheche sabuj ghāser Komal gālica pāti;
yata khun yata khārābir ghore parān āchilo māti,
nimese giyeche bheṅge
svapan- Abese reṅge."

['Māriciker Piche', Ibid]

Mohitlal’s influence is obvious here:

"pallipassārini yabe puṇyaratna hēke geche cale
tumār piṅgal ākhi utheni tē jvale
ākāṅgkṣar ulaṅga ullāse!"

[Āleya, Ibid]

Jatindranath Sengupta’s impact is reflected in some of the poems. For example:

"nikhil āmār bhāi
kīter bukete yai byathā jāge āmi se bedanā pāi;"
Following the footsteps of Nazrul, Jibanananda often uses words of Urdu origin in his volume of poems 'Jharapālak' moreover the poetic diction of Satyendranath also greatly impressed him. The followers of Rabindranath like Karunamidhan Bandhopadhaya, Jatindramohan Bagchi, Kalidas Roy, Kumudranjan Mallik etc, showed a keen interest for the rural life in Bengal. On the contrary in the 'Kallol' group of poets a sense of hatred towards urbanisation is revealed. In the poetry of Jibananaanda the love for nature which is the prime character of Rabindranath and his fellow poets is lacking but there is glorification of the traditional rural life of Bengal, its heritage, culture, use of colloquial words, use of folk-tales etc are the basic characteristic of his poetry. His poetry echoes:

1. "pallabe nistabdha pik, nīrab pāpiyā
gāhe ekā nidrāhārā birahini hiyā!
ākaśe godhuli ela,-dik hala mlān,
phurāy nā tabu hāy hutāśir gān!" [Dahuki, Ibid]

2. ekdin khujechino yāre
baker pākhār bhide bādaler godhūli-ādhare,
mālatīlar bane,- kadamer tale,
nijhum ghumer ghāte,-keyāphul-śefālir dalel’”

[Nikhil Āmār Bhāi, Ibid]
3. “বাঙ্গলর মাথে-ঝাটে পেইরেচিনু বেনু হাটে একাঃ
গঙ্গার তীরে কার সাথে হয়েছিল দেখাও।
’ফ্রিল ফ্রিটে কাদিনু উথিলে’ অমানই রুপালি রাতে
কাদাম্তায় দাবাতাম গীয়ে বাসের বাসিত হাটে।”

[Astacāde, Ibid]

This is the way Jibanananda Das began his career. His later compositions like 'Rupasi Bānglā' and 'Dhusar Pāndulipi' have a personal note which lends individuality to his poetry.

The majority of poems published in 'Jharapālak' had been already printed in other journals and magazines which was already mentioned ahead in the preface of the Book. "Some of the poems of Jharapālak are published already in magazines like--Prabāsi, Baṅgabānī, Kallol, Kālikalam, Pragati, Bijuli etc. But the rest of them are new." (19) These poems present a comprehensive picture of local rustic life using the colloquial language. Though in some of the poems there are influence of earlier poets but inspite of that he manages to retain his originality. In this regard Sunil Gangopadhaya said: "In Jharapalak the young emotional poet presents a profound idea relating to this world and life which is actually a repetition of a traditional view. The poems are lacking in originality and it is a mere expression of sentimentality. The book manages to retain its significance through it is inferior to some of the volumes of much insignificant poets. He is not like a falling star, but has a dominant position in the history of Bengali literature. He is well versed with the traditional art of poetry. He is immensely influenced by Nazrul in his selection of words and by Satyendranath in rhythm. Inspite of this, surprisingly he well manages to keep himself aloof from these influences and establish his own individuality. But Nazrul and Satyendranath cannot totally
overcome the influence of Rabindranath. Whereas Jibanananda can well manage to separate himself also from these influences and assert his own individuality." In his poem ‘Nikhil Āmār Bhāi’ there is a touch of humanity and also a mark of Premendra Mitra’s poems. Stimulated by the spirit of patriotism he composed ‘Hindu Musalmān’, ‘Bangabānī’, ‘Bhārat Barṣa’, ‘Rāmdās’, ‘Desābandhu’, ‘Vibekānanda’ and later poems like ‘Rabindranāth’ etc were imitation an invitation of Satyendranath. Like the poets of the contemporary period he was suffering endlessly from the trauma caused by the mechanical and ruthless urban life. He narrated about this desire and anguish in some of the poems of Jharapalak. For example:

“nagarī kṣubdha bakṣe jāge yai mṛtyu pretapur
   dākinir ruksa attahāsi
   chanda tār marme taba uthe nā prakāśi!
   sabhyatār bhīhatsa bhairabī
   malin kareni taba mānaser chabi,
   phenil kareni taba nabhonil, prabhāter ālo,
   eudbhrānta yubaker bakṣe tār raśmi āj dhālo, bandhu dhālo!”

[ Kisorer Prāti, Ibid]

This suffering is also reflected clearly in his later poems like ‘Bodh’ and ‘Aat Bachar Aager Ek Din’.

Jibanananda started his poetic career on the same platform with the ‘Kalol’ group of poets whose main ideas is representation of the dismal world, romanticism and rebellionness, but later he manages to get a strong position among the contemporary poets. He also successfully alienates himself from the rest of the poets which is reflected in his volumes of poetry like – ‘Dhūsar

It is with the publication of his magnum opus ‘Dhusar Pāndulipi’ that developed his own inimitable style. He is very much conscious regarding the fact that he is going to introduce a new kind of meter in the world of Bengali poetry. He says:

“keu yāhā jāne nāi-kono ak bānī
āmi bahe ānī
ekdin sunecha ye sur
phurūyech purāno tā kono ek natun kichur
āche prayojan
tāi āmi āsiachi, āmār matan.
ār ņai keu! ”

[Kayekti lāin, Dhūsar Pāndulipi]

Why did the theme of this poetry or the reason behind the modernist tone—all these question we would also like to highlight in the following chapters. This chapter mainly deals with the aspects which unquestionably makes him a great poet of the post Rabindrian era. In this chapter we will confine our discussion to the growth of Jibanananda Das as a poet.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


6. Ibid, (Dītya jhoka).
11. “তারের আত্মাবিশ্বাসের এক অবধারিত ক্ষেত্র” — Singha Roy, Jibendra, “Kalloler Kāl”, 1st.....


20. “রবীন্দ্রনাথের আবেগময় কিশোর কবি জীবন ও পৃথিবী সম্পর্কে অনেক ভবগত কথা উদ্ধৃত করেছেন — যা আসলে চিন্তাচিন্তার পুরুষরূপে মান। কবির নিজস্ব নেই, চন্দ্রের মায়া নেই, ভূমিকায় দৃষ্টি আছে। জীবনানন্দের তুষ্ণায় অনেক অপ্রত্যক্ষ কবিরও হয় এই একটা কথা নয়। তবে ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ’-এর একটা বিশেষ মূল্য আছে। এই কবিতাগুলি দেখে বোঝা যায়, উদ্ভাবনের মতন এই কবি বাংলা কবিতার জগতে আলিপ্ত হয়েছেন। তিনি টাইমসের