AUTHOR'S MINDSET

Sunil Gangopadhay is a familiar name in Bengali Literary circles. Poet, novelist, playwright, columnist—all rolled into one, this multi-faceted personality is an inspiration to the writers of this generation. There is no doubt that there are very few resourceful personalities like him. He is very well read and his knowledge of literature—both Indian and foreign, is enviable. But his wealth of knowledge has not stood in the way of naturalness in his writings. This has been possible because he has digested his subjects well and has not felt the need to carry the baggage of that knowledge in his writings.

“A writer's sensibility does not grow in a vacuum. It is moulded very largely by this environment, not only physical environment but also by the currents and cross currents of ideas and values and attitudes, concepts and concerns prevailing in his environment. These sharpen his sensibility and help him evolve his own outlook. Thus a writer is closely linked with life, his creativity draws heavily from life and whatever he writes, reflects the social milieu to which he belongs. It is in this sense that a writer's work bears the stamp of his age.”

We get a glimpse of all paradoxes of present day existence—the God, atheism, the conflicts of body and soul, love and lovelessness, sexuality, the vicious circle of politics, the middle class struggles, besides the timeless yet animalist truths that unfold out of the backdrop of 'eternity' He believes that life in spite of all its turmoil, is ultimately guided by an auspicious, straightforward truth. We can find the traces of fighting spirit and the struggle for self-establishment in this great writer who as a refugee went through the vicissitudes of partition. He is an unprejudiced writer and has an universal appeal in his writings. He never projects himself as a moral guardian. He does not need to. He is opposed to a writer taking a moralistic stance. He is against preaching in writing.
To him, life is complementary to life itself. This life is not haunted by the memories of previous life; neither has it carried any burden after death. Human life is the result of evolution. There is nothing to be proud of or surprised about. That is why good and evil, rise and fall—all these are part of a natural rhythm of life.

Sunil Gangopadhyay does not see life from a negative standpoint. Rather he may be called a objective observer who takes the role of an onlooker who sees and enjoys life in all its variations and at the same time, keeps distance with a dispassionate indifference. Like a swan, he drinks wisdom from the river of life and discards what is unnecessary.

As a writer, he sometimes consciously broke the taboos, attacked obsolete concepts and beliefs and with great power pointed out the changes that were taking place in the new era.

"Ideology exercises a stultifying influence. It is also possible that an ideology exercises a liberating influence as well. It can pull the writer out of the narrow grooves of thinking and illuminate his mind........An ideology in its social context visualizes change, it connotes a rejection of what it regards moribund and retrogressive. As such it compels rethinking and reevaluating. It very often comes as a breath of fresh air." 2. Though he is well acquainted with the ‘isms’ and ideologies of contemporary socio-economic moors, his writings do not exhibit direct influence of any.

"আপনার মাধ্যমে কোনো আদর্শ মাধ্যমে বোঝা কিছু লেখার ক্ষমতা আমার নেই। সমাজ তত্ত্ব আমার বিশ্বাস থাকলেও সাহিত্য তার ব্যবহার জানি না। ব্যক্তিগত অনুভূতি ছাড়া আমি কিছুই আমার সহজ নেই সাহিত্যের কাছে আমি অসহজ।” 3

Woolf points out the infinite possibilities of the art that has no limit of horizon “no method, no experiment even of the wildest is forbidden but only falsity and pretence....The proper stuff of fiction does not exist, everything is the proper stuff every feeling, every thought, every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon, no perception comes amiss.” 4
There is no writer without his own beliefs, his own set of values, his own perspectives, and his own sensibility. Sunil Gangopadhyay is no exception. His ‘ism’ in the greater sense is humanism. He presents man as man only, who is not burdened with the hunch of morality.

In the never ending conflict of the ‘desire’ and the ‘desirable’, his characters are stirred up but not bruised. This is because he has a beautiful romantic sense, a natural poetic grace which is far removed from photographic reality. This is also the reason why his characters are not stereotypes, even though; they are steeped in middle class ethos. They are strugglers, at the same time they are dreamers. They look at the contemporary world disdainfully and with what can be called detached arrogance.

Some may question whether and if Sunil actually writes about his life and people. But those who raise such questions do not understand that the situation that the girl in the long queue in front of a ration shop is no more real than the dreams which she indulges in to get over his frustration and suffering. Sunil writes about the dreams of a melancholic, reality-stricken society.

"কেউ কেউ প্রশ্ন তুললেন সূত্র সত্য সত্যি কতখানি নিজের যুগ এবং মানুষের কথা লেখেন তাই নিয়ে কিছু যারা এই প্রশ্ন করেন তারা তুলে যান যে রাশনের দোকানের লাইনে দাড়িয়ে থাকা বিশেষায়িতির ওই অবস্থাটুকুর চেয়ে বিশ্বাসী কম বাংলা নয় তার ডোকানের অস্তিত্ব, যা তার ওই বিষয় যুগ সময়টুকুতে সহনীয় করে। একটা বিশ্বাস তিন্দ্র মনরূপ নিয়ে লেখেন সূত্র গল্পোপাখ্যায়।" 5

Both the poet and the novelist in Sunil Gangopadhyay are virtually the one and the same persona. Basically Gangopadhyay is a poet. He started his illustrious career with poetry. Poetry is where his heart always is, like his dear mother land East Bengal (Now Bangladesh) which he left behind with lots of memories. The pain is always there, though due to the pressures of livelihood, he entered the ‘Kurukshetra’ of prose writing. There also he did not concede any ground to his contemporaries. The novelist in Sunil has always inspired the romantic poet in him. Therefore while exploring his mindset, we can, by no
Sunil Gangopadhyay’s entry in the Bengali poetry scene was in the fifties. Post independence, the process of disillusionment had just begun in the country. The traumatic experience of suddenly being reduced to an ‘alien’ in their own land bruised the psyche of most of them. The economy also started to suffer a series of setbacks. The cultural capital Calcutta wore a look of decay. The irresistible desire to enjoy life despite the pangs of existence that an educated middle-class youth suffered those days was reflected in his poetry. So it can be said that Gangopadhyay’s view of youth differs from Gyandas’s refrain in ‘Every limb of mine yearns for every limb of yours’ or even from Greensburg’s perspective of the same. This brand of understanding of the mind of youth is completely rooted to the Indian sub-continent and has cogently captured the broad mindset and sensibility of a particular time.

We were naturally curious towards the next generation of poets who were aggressive and desperate enough to challenge the direct and traditional style of poetry writing that had been in vogue in the forties.

That time around, a group of fretful, self-conceited poets wanted to snap the old connection. They provoked the reader, jerked him into awareness, but did little to build the bridge on a far stronger foundation. In this era of revolution, the main pioneer Sunil correctly diagnosed the weakness of Bengali poetry. He found out the reason for growing discontent with the reader and invented an idiom which is sincere and down-to-earth and at the same time so simple as to resemble our day-to-day vocabulary and to be fit for expressing inner emotions. He got rid of the temptation to unnecessarily ‘mist’ it up and in the process won over the heart of his reader.
Many criticize Sunil Gangopadhyay for projecting vulgarity and perversity in his writings. Youth is the best season of life. It is characterized by doubt, conflicts and pains of achieving and losing. All these paradoxes only go to make it more enticing.

If the poet is a worshipper of truth, then he should not deny physicality just as he cannot deny spirituality. Bengali poetry is indebted to Gangopadhyay for the brave depiction of physical attraction —— otherwise very central to youth sensibility, which the poets had so long kept hidden under the guise of superfluous ornamentation.

Nira represents womanhood in its condensed totality. If we try to find an onomatopoeic similarity, ‘Nira’ and ‘Nari’ (woman) are on the same tune. Is Nira one woman or more than one? Is she real or illusion? Such questions are irrelevant. Sunil Of course went on record saying that Nira is nothing special, she is the combination of many women, she is, in a way, the woman of the women. Nira stands midway between illusion and worldly existence.

"সে নারীর নারী। নীবা ময়া ও জৈব অভিজ্ঞতা মাধ্যমে একটি জায়গায় মৌলিক আছে।" 8

Nira is that receptacle where the lover in Sunil finds his all round reflection. The initial physical desire ultimately turns into a platonic, sinless, transparent love. Nira can be called the mirror on which the lover in Sunil sees a vivid reflection. Nira engulfs him in body and spirit.

"সুবোধ তার কবিতায় নীরাব প্রতি প্রাথমিক শারীরিক কামনার উদ্দেশ্য থাকালেও সত্ত্বেও পরিণতি ঘটিয়োন শারীরিক তেজস্কান্ত অপারিন্থ ভালবাসায়।" 9
Nira is the symbol of eternal beauty, which infatuates males, yet helps them come out of the delusion. Scorched by the fire of her love, the poet finds himself mentally elevated so much so that he no longer indulges in worldly sins. Here, Nira is anything but a mortal woman. She becomes an eternal woman. Many questions the necessity of bringing physicality into his writings but if the poet swears by truth, he cannot afford to live out anything, even if it is about the ‘body’. But in this physicality is a search for the ultimate beauty. Sometimes we see in this so called body-centric poet a strange streak of ascetic detachment.

"এই হাত লেগেছে নীরার মুখ
আমি কি এতে কোন পাপ করতে পারি?" 10

'This hand has stroked Nira’s face
Can I ever commit sin
With this hand!'

Or,

"আমি তোমার লোভ করিনি, আমি তোমার টান মাধ্যমে সূচিত
আমি তোমার মন্দিরের মতো শরীরে ডুরিনি হল ঘুটায়।" 11

'I did not use any pretext
To access your temple-like body.
Did not deflower you
With my blood-stained hands.'

"সেই সব পুরুষের দীর্ঘ মনে হয়
নব্রতার বিকৃত্তে একটি যুদ্ধে নেনে পড়ি
তোমার বাধামুখি মূঢ়তে গিয়ে সেই বর্ণের পতাকা।" 12

"Nira you are my absolution.
I am good enough to free the world today."

Nira, no doubt, is above the rules of this material world. Sunil did not wade through
the mud of bodily pleasures and yet helped blossom the lotus of divine love in that sludge.

His poetry is always upward-looking that enriches man further.

"প্রেম আর তাকেই সুন্দর গজন্ম তাকে বিষয়। হুঁহু মিলে সেই প্রাকৃত সরলতা। বারবার জীবনের নলা তুরে নানা বিষোপচারের মধ্যে তার ধরা পারে।" 13

Love and youth are the main themes of Sunil’s prose. Both combine beautifully to result in a kind of wild innocence, which comes alive at different stages of life amidst myriad contradictions. The paradox is captured by Sunil in his poems and novels. When Sunil entered the scene, fiction-writing had carved out its own niche after having gone through a series of experimentations. A great deal of change had taken place in style and plot-construction in the meanwhile. Sunil did not tread that beaten path. Like the mobile characters of his stories and novels, he always seemed to revel in rebellion and breaking the traditional mould. That he had a tendency not to conform to the prevalent style was amply evident from the beginning. Sunil’s story, that is why, is the story of ‘breaking

The tendency to break rule was existent in him from the beginning. Bohemianism is integral to the flow of life, so are a whimsical life style, passion and self-belief.

The ‘Krittibas’ group were more inclined towards demolition, be it that of myths, values, morals, rhythms and such like. They were very desperate when it came to speaking aloud their mind. They were accused of promoting cacophony, vulgarity and physicality in the name of poetry. They were not fond of ‘Vegetarianism’, i.e., the so-called brand of ‘pure’ poetry:

"আমাদের কোৱী ছিল ভাঙ্গুৱের কৰার দিকে। প্রথা দাঁত। ব্যবধান, নৈতিকতা দাঁত। মুলারোগ দাঁত। শৈল নিবন্ধন বেঁকোয়া। আমাদের বিদ্যমান ছিল, ছেলা সব চোকের কবিতা। অশ্লীল, বস্ত্রমালা বাজার। রুপ রস নেই, বিদ্যমান কবিতা। এবং মনে পাই মাঝেতাই না। কাল কবিতা গুলোই আমাদের হাসি পেত। না আমরা নিরামিশেরের ভঙ্গ ছিলাম না।" 14

Once he wrote that he feels like breaking a couple of rules just as he can do with the
More than this youth, what his poetry brings forth fairly emphatically is life—a life which is worthy of being lived with all its heat, warmth and thrills. In the process, immortality is subjugated. The life with all its kaleidoscopic variety, its myriad feelings and utterings, becomes truly alive.

To the Kololites, Tagore was the epitome of romantic ideology. So their revolt was not against Tagore, but against the romantic vision of life that his (Tagor’s) writing was associated with. But in their later life, many of the Kollolites who started their literary journey with an ‘anti-Tagore’ mission, came back to Tagore and surrendered them to the aesthetic, romantic vision of life.

‘Much as it has tried to dissociate itself from the influence of Tagore, the ‘Kollol’ literature has not been able to completely do away with artificiality. I have tried to see to it that that artificiality does not become part of my writing.’

Sunil tried to bring literature down to the level of the common man’s life from its heither-to ivory tower-like pedestal.
‘I am not affected by Tagore’s perception of beauty which is pure and unadulterated.’

He further said—‘Poets have no right to utter authoritative words. They are ordinary people and should write about the travails of daily life, nor sing the paeans of artificial beauty.’

"কবিতার জীবনযাত্রায় কবিতার বিষয়বস্তু হওয়া উচিত।’ 19

He wants that the style of his writing should resemble the make-up of a French woman. ‘A French woman rids of her cosmetics, once fully dressed and whatever remains of that becomes her only dressing which is enough to reveal her natural self.’

Though Sunil says unhesitatingly that he writes prose for his livelihood, there is no doubt that he is amongst the most powerful writers of our times. His spontaneous style, his modern outlook while portraying his characters has made him what he is, — widely acceptable.

Just as he has no place for artificiality in the realm of feelings, he does not like to take recourse to unnecessary similes and metaphors ( or ornamentation, figures of speech ) in driving home the felt truths. He has built a suitable vocabulary with which to express what he wants to.

He has a great feel for the psyche, imagination and language of the contemporary world.

That is why Sunil is modern. But he detests that brand of modernism that is laden with sloganeering.

Sunil is mainly a romantic poet. The determination and feelings that went to demolish the fortress of conservatism have come to be associated with Sunil in equal measure. The individualistic personality is his poetry’s main trait. The ‘city’ has been part of his poetry, so has been the city-bred mentality, which is steeped in practicality and reasoning. But that
squint-eyed expression, which characterizes the works of a whole range of poets from Boudelier to Eliot to Samar Sen, is missing. Their portrayal of despair is not there in his poems.

"সুনীল কিছু মূলত রোমাংসিক বাদী। রুক্মিনীগণ দূর্গত ভালবাসের মায়ে যে ভাববন্ধন জন্মে যা বাড়ির অনুভূতি এবং উদ্দেশ্যে প্রশ্ন এবং উৎসাহ দিয়েছিল সুনীল তীব্রতায় তার আন্দোলন। এই বাড়িতে ভাব করের পথে গুণ। সুনীলের কবিতায় নগর এনেছে বাটো, নগর চেনা যুক্তিরুদ্ধ। কিন্তু সেই তীব্রতা নেই যা বোর্ডলের থেকে এলিজেট থেকে সময় সেন পল্লব দিয়েছেল। ওদের বিপর্যয়ের চিহ্ন সুনীলের মায়ে নেই।" 20

The reason why the much controversial Sunil is not yet stagnant and has still retained creativity in him is that he is dynamic. He said in an interview given to Subo Acharya that “I am the biggest critic of my writing myself. I, myself, do not like my writing, so where is the need for others to criticize me?” 21. On the occasion of the North East Book Fare inaugural ceremony (5/12/2005) the researcher asked him what according to him, was his biggest weakness? His reply was very unconventional—"Real art is formless like music. Once unshackled by the burden of language, the tune touches the heart." 22 He wants to immortalize the ‘soul’ in his literature.

"সিঙ্গতীর দূর্কল্পতা টায় গাদা নেই। সুনীলের প্রতোকটি গদাই উৎসাহমূলক এবং সেই উৎসা হলা শিশ সংক্রান্ত অপ সংস্কার পাঠকের জিজ্ঞেস্বরূপ দৃষ্টিকোণে অন্য পরিবর্তে ফটোলা। আর তার গল্প এই করেন কেনার শিশের সংক্রান্ত হাস্য নেই, কেনা স্পষ্ট ভাষা নেই, বরং জায়গার জায়গায় কথা ছেন্টে ওঠা নোংরা মথন কর বাহ আসা বিশ্বাসলো আছে, তাকে আপনি গাদা বলতে চান, বা না চান।" 23

His poetry is not held hostage to the niceties of art. All his prose works are invested with some purpose and that purpose is to change the biased outlook of a reader, born out of age-old prejudices about art. That explains why his prose is not artistically structured, nor does it have any aim to be the last word on artistic brilliance. Rather, it carries with it a deluge of dirts deposited at various turns which you may or may not compare with a 'Gangetic' flow.
"The literary history of certain periods would gain by an analysis of the linguistic milieu as least as much as by the usual analysis of the political, social and religious tendencies or the country and climate." 24

"Language is quite literally the material of the literary artist. Every literary work, one could say is merely a selection from a given language, just as a work of sculpture has been described as a block of marble with some pieces chipped off." 25

The language of a novel captures both the prose and poetry of life. The poetry of life that a novel depicts is nothing but reality and that reality is not confined to the novelist’s personal experience only, it is a wholesome experience of life itself. That is why when the author lifts the curtain from reality, he looks for the poetry of life behind the veil, though novels reflect his outward active existence. The language of a novel has to be amphibious, the prose and poetry of life should mingle together and the diction of a novel shall bring the harmony.

"‘সুনিলের ভাষা সাধারণ বাংলার বান্ধব এবং জীবনের কথা দুই কেই ধারন করে। আবার যেহেতু উপন্যাসে সে 
কাবার সমানি তা বাংলাতার অভিজ্ঞতা কিছু নয়, লেখকের অভিজ্ঞতার নির্ভর নয়। যেহেতু বাংলাতাব 
রূপ উদাহরণচাহিদে উপন্যাসে লেখক জীবনের কাবার অভিজ্ঞতা ধারন করেন। তার হরিণে অভিজ্ঞতার সমাধানে 
রূপান্তর করতে দিয়েই উপন্যাসে শৈলীর জন্য। উপন্যাসের ভাষায় তাই উদ্ভব হতে হয় এবং এই উদ্ভব 
কৃত্তিতে ঐকান্ত সারবলিতায় উপন্যাসের গলায় লক্ষণ।‘ 26

Sunil’s language is vibrant as well as down-to-earth and follows the common man’s everyday diction. This style has made him popular. Though basically a poet, the language of his prose is never ornamental like Kamal Kumar Mazumdar’s. It is never impregnated with metaphors. His diction is the diction of his times and is part of the vocabulary, used by the youth of the contemporary society, though not necessarily vocal. We hardly find his female characters mouthing longish dialogues. His language lacks the subtlety and smartness, though it is not over-ornamental or emotive. It carries the flavour of a metropolitan mindset.
even though it is not shorn of poetic beauty. He is adept at small descriptions and does not
like to lengthen them. A novelist’s strongest point is the mobility and vibrancy of his language
which is necessary to hold a reader’s interest in anything long. The success of Sunil’s
writing lies here.

"..."

Sunil’s poetry is replete with anger, sorrow, hurt, nostalgic childhood and adolescence,
love of youth, the natural curiosity about a woman’s body, ennui, the sparks of rare intellect.
But all these feelings should be understood at a subjective level. Though his feelings are
very honest, characterized by outspokenness and a lack of prejudice, the presence of
intellect is evident. But critics say that Sunil never leaves any food for thought or wisdom of
life for matured, experienced people. He is always young in his writing, behaviour. We
never see creases on his forehead. He never bows down to the pressures and pains of life.
His feelings exist on a very personal, subjective level that limits the scope of his poetry so
as to become objective and universal.

"..."
Some critics accuse him of using over-simplified language in his writings. In reply he said that he writes very consciously as he believes that in poetry there should not be any place for abstraction. The similes, metaphors and imagery, that act as the bridge of communication in poetry, between the poet and the reader. But in prose the author has the responsibility to communicate directly. That is why he feels that the language of prose should resemble the common man’s vocabulary. He is against the complex negative style. He believes that in the complexity of language, the author sometimes misses the thrust of the theme.

"The language I use in my writings is deliberate. I feel that there is room for abstraction in poetry just as there is for metaphor and imagery. But when it comes to prose, the writer has a responsibility to communicate 'directly'. The language of prose, according to me, should correspond more to the every day oral diction.' 29

Those finer qualities like keen sensibility, honesty, and love for beauty have no place in this heartless society have been beautifully documented by Sunil. In the adversarial background of such an unfair society, love, sympathy, aesthetic sensibility have to constantly strive to establish their presence and the proof of which is found in his novels such as 'Atma Prakash' and 'Jeevan Jerakam'.

"Modern prose writers, in returning to the rhythms of every day speech are trying to..."
be more honest with himself. Style is not an ornament, it is not an exercise, not a caper, nor complication of any sort. It is the sense of one’s self, the knowledge of what one wants to say and the saying of it in the most fitting words.” 31

In Sunil’s writings also, there is no pretentiousness and any overt attempt to be ‘different’. His diction is also as lively as his characters and does not sound laboured, in the least. He uses the language which we use in our letters, even in our conversations. This explains the easy flow and liveliness of his novels and their immense popularity amongst the readers.

“সুনিলের ডাঃমার মধ্যে কেনও বানিয়ে তোলা বাণ্যব্য নেই। যে-ডাঃমার তিনি তার পন্ত-উপন্যাস লেখেন, তার মধ্যে কোনও কোনও বাণিয়ে কিছু পাইছেন না কিংবা কিছু নিয়ে আলোক করে দেখায় চোঁচ আমাদের চোখে পড়ে না। তার ডাঃমার যাবে একটু চিন্তামীলিনি নেই। যে ডাঃমার আমরা কথা বলি, চিঠি লিখি, একে বল যায় বিশ্বব্যাপী ডাঃমার। আর এরই ফলে তার পন্ত-উপন্যাস একটি গণ্যতার সাধারণ সংস্কৃতির সংস্কৃতি হয়, পাঠককে যা প্রকল্পের নাম।” 32

The modern post-independence literature has become the mirror of existence of a country, a race and even an individual. The naked, real image of a society, nay a country which is cruel and warped, has come to the fore.

The contemporary writers have been very forthright to openly criticize the hush attempt to sweep sexuality and the ill points of religion and society under the carpet. Naturally, they have earned the not so flattering an epithet ‘decadent’ and have been accused of imitating foreign culture. The establishment has put the label ‘indecent’ and ‘obscene’ on them. They did not understand that——— So far as the writings of the young writers are concerned, sex is no factor. Sex is just another cog on the wheel of livelihood and existence. To these writers, sex symbolizes creation. The moot point is that a class of readers, accustomed to a cocooned existence in an artificial atmosphere, can not accept those views open-heartedly and therefore have nothing but shrill outbursts to make, once the
unpleasant home-truths are unveiled.

For the sake of truth, it has to be admitted that the younger breed of writers writing in this contemporary milieu, has nothing to emulate, either from the front or behind. As a tradition, they have bequeathed, however, insufficiently, the complex philosophy and dreaminess of Jeebananda, the slogans and oblique wordings and yet easy symbolism of Subhash Mukhopadhyay, the churning of Samar Sen that are borne out of urban existence, the smouldering burns of Manik Bandopadhay. Their image of future is one of helplessness and the experience they have got in the present is such that they can not help feeling very angry and hungry as well... They have adopted a masculine stance to unmask the crime-prone society and to deal a deathly blow to all the artificialities and hypocrisies so that they carve out a life of their choice which they can love and above all, create a literature based on that viewpoint.

"সত্যের খাতিতে এ কথা জীবার করতেই হবে যে, সামাজিক পরিবেশ পরিহিততে লিখতে আসা তরুণ অভি

তরুণ সাহিত্যিকের সামনে পেয়ে থাকা ভাষণের কিছুই নিঃসন্দেহ। ঐতিহ্যের হিসেবে তারা জীবান, কলকাতা নগরীতে,

সে চেষ্টা শেষের মনস্তাত্ত্বিকতার জোয়ান আর মানিক মুখোপাধ্যায়ের ভাষ্যকর প্রভাব। ভবিষ্যৎ সমগ্র পেয়েছে ভারতের জীবানদের জাতি, জীবন ভিড়াল ও ফ্রাঁড়ান্ত, সুতায় মুখোপাধ্যায়ের প্রশান্ত রক্ত, তারা জীবানদের ভাষ্যকর অভিজ্ঞতা দিয়ে তার বিশ্লেষণেতেই তারা কুঞ্জ ভূমিতে। একটি মার্কুলিন ভূমিতে "... এটা অপরাধ প্রকৃতির সমাধান সম্পদ জীবন হিচে ছুঁড়ে

ফেল কৃত্রিমতা এবং সে সমস্তের প্রেক্ষায় তারা জীবানকে জীবানের মত করে ভালোবাসতে চেয়েছে আর তারই আধিকারিক অনুভূতিতে চেয়েছেন সাহিত্য।" 33

In a frustrating backdrop where politics is self-seeking and futile, where there is no
guarantee of life, only hopelessness about an uncertain future, where unemployment reigns

supreme and education means next to nothing, the modern writer nonchalantly discards
the time-worn dogmas of the so called life-centric littérateurs so as to arrive at the real
meaning of life, complete with a discovery of the ‘fundamental’, nay ‘eternal’ truth.
The names in this genre of writing that are worth mentioning are Samaresh Basu, Dipendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Moti Nandy, Shyamal Gangopadhyay, Debesh Roy, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Sankar Chattopadhyay, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Sandipan Chattopadhyay, Shakti Chattopadhyay, Moloy Roy Choudhury, Subhash Ghosh etc. It should be borne in mind that they are individuals with distinct personalities, but the likeness of their milieu and circumstances binds them together like a garland.

Sunil Gangopadhyay starts his prose from where he leaves his poetry. His prose has distinct stamp of poetry written all over it. But his poetry has captured the soul of the big city comprehensively. His novels are mobile and dramatic.

"সুনিল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়ের সমস্ত উপন্যাস পত্র ভারত মুক্তিতে দোলাম দিয়ে বলতে হয় যে তার সবই বিশ্বাস সাহিত্য কৃতির জন্য এ পাঠ্যের জন্য রচিত নয়। আদর্শ যুবক বলে আদর্শ বয়স বর্তমান ও অন্যজাত মধ্যে দে দুর্লভ জ্ঞানের সন্ধানে তার সাথে তার ব্যাপকতা, অবস্থান, অজানা ভীতের মূল্য ও স্বর্ণাল হাতে দেবলের ধ্বংস এবং অভিমুখে শুচি অভিলেখ ওপর পরিলক্ষে ও ভাষার ধর্মতার বিচারে স্বল্পতর উক্তির সহজ এ অস্ত্রেশ্বরীতে তুলা ধ্রুব ভীতি সুনিল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়ের।" 34

Even though, one can not help praise the deftness of his language in novels and short stories, it must be said that most of those works do not represent classical literature or are not written keeping in view the reader’s perspective.

His endeavor has been to register his protest against an unfair society and environment and to narrate his forceful progress through the various stages of upheavals experienced by him and his friends in those distressful adolescent years which were further accentuated by a feeling of helplessness, a compelling urge to know the inner self and a yearning for a settled, steady life amidst uncertainties and for the elusive light after the proverbial dark tunnel, in a lucid and intimate manner. Though his story is heart-rending and the background is fraught with dark portents, he could not invest it with any deep meaning. The smart metropolitan mindset so visible in his poetry is absent in his novels.
His poetry has beautifully captured the poignant tragedy of his time and life and the ingrained restlessness of the urban life. His poetry contains thematic straight-forwardness, the strength of personality, the sharpness of expression, the complexity of form, the irresistibility of emotions and above all the inner faith. The individual as well as the social mindset has been reflected in his poetry as an art form which is exceptional. In a world riven by wailing and lust or suffering and enmity, the truth behind man’s striving for existence which is reduced to a mechanical routine, is so beautifully captured in his poetry as to overwhelm his reader. The appeal of his writing is not in the heart, but in the head. He has avoided treading the beaten track, has slightly discarded the moralistic viewpoint, and has unmasked the hypocritical and duplicitous side of the society through some plain speaking in his poetry. He has discovered the actual truth of this world by depicting the grimy and dismal reality of the surroundings in his poetry.

"Look within life it seems is very far from being like this; examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad of impressions, trivial, fantastic, evanescent or engraved with the sharpness of steel.... If a writer were a free man, not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work
upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style........... life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.” 36

“জীবনের প্রগতিতের কাছ থেকে গভীরতর উপলব্ধির মধ্যে তিনি যে খুঁজে বেড়াচ্ছেন তার বিদ্বান সতর্ক পাঠক মনোযোগ ও প্রভাব সঙ্গে তা নিশ্চিতই লক্ষ করবেন। একে বেশ বুদ্ধিক শব্দ গত স্পষ্ট মহিমা ও ঈশ্বরের আধ্যাত্ম প্রতি পদ্ধতে কাজ দিয়ে এটি শিক্ষা, আধ্যাত্মিক মধ্যে অনেক বিষয় ডাক বেঁধে ওঠে।

“কখনো জীবনে আছে ৷ এই উদ্ভাবনের সাহে সুন্দীর সম্পর্কে আবৃত আয়ত্তী করে তোলে আমারের।” 37

With the exception of his epical novels such as ‘Seisamay’, ‘Purba pascim’, ‘Pratham Alo’, Sunil’s novels generally lack intense living. We hardly find interior monologue in his diction unlike the modern ‘Stream of Consciousness’ novels. His characters lack duality of existence and ‘conflictuous’ selves. That is why it can be said that his characters are, sometimes, monodimensional. Their journey almost stops at the same point from where they began. They rarely show any psychological growth, simultaneous to their outer actions.

In his epical novels, viz., ‘Seisamay’ (That covered the period of Bengal Renaissance), ‘Pratham Alo’ (Bengal Renaissance and the rise of nationalism) Sunil became a historian of sorts of those eras and ‘Purba pascim’ (Bangladesh liberation war and political unrest in India). Those times have presented themselves as existential crises in Bengali life. He never let his works be affected by personal experience or bias. He acted as a worshipper of life in those epical novels of his. Overcoming the waves of political turmoil, religious crisis, he led his readers with great sympathy to the realm of that life-centric wisdom where his characters overreach the confinement of time and space and become universal.

“উল্লাস ও সৌন্দর্য নাক নারীকে কোন বাতিল বিশেষ নয় সমুদয়ই এই মহাগুণের বিপুলতাক এবং তার অদৃশ্য সজ্জামল মনুষ্যের ভাগা নিঃশেষ হয়েছে। প্রতিটি বাতিলএকক পরিচয় একমার সমাহ হয়ে গিয়ে হৃদয়ের পক্ষেন প্রতিরক্ষার সাহায্যে এসেছে, যখন মেয়ে একই সত্য প্রস্তরে জীবনের নিঃশেষ হয়েছে, যখন ঠান্ডায় একই সত্য প্রবাহিত।” 38

38
The protagonists, here, are not mere individuals. Time itself is the guide of these great novels and it is he who directed and controlled the fate of the characters. The individual’s identity was effaced for highlighting their social identity. The same truth equally applies to the incidents also. Here, we find Sunil as a visionary who sees beyond his time. The sublimity and lucidity, the expansion and depth of these novels are of rare quality. But surprisingly, these qualities are absent in his other shorter novels (As most of the characters of these novels have their feet firmly rooted to history, the researcher has deliberately kept those important historical personalities aside to avoid controversy and has brought some of the apparently non-historical characters to focus).

An aware reader of his poetry with all his concentration and regard will definitely notice that he is on the look out for a deeper meaning from the profundity of life. Hidden in the youthful exuberance of desperation which is not without its share of sound-bite, smell and touch, there rings a shackle somewhere at every footstep and a melancholic tone calls out — ‘O, Captive, are you awake?’ This hint of progression makes us more curious about Sunil.

Sunil Gangopadhay is modem both in his writing and in his view of life.

‘The person who writes is not me. Why then am I blamed?’

‘যে লিখে সে আমি নয়, কেন যে আমায় দোষী করে’

An element of attractive indifference is what characterises Sunil’s writings. His modernity lies in his indifference.

‘আমি না লিখলে বাংলা সাহিত্যের কেনও ক্ষতি হত না। আমার অবদানশীল। সাহিত্য জীবনের অস্থি এবং বোধ থাকায় সব চেয়ে বড় কথা। অমরকের চিন্তা করে সে তো মূঢ়া।’

‘Had I not taken to writing, the Bengali literature would not have been poorer. My contribution to the Bengali literature is all but nothing. Literature is a part of life and being alive is the most important thing. Those who think of immortality are nothing but fools.’
He is always possessed with a ‘Bohemian’ mind. Just as a bird shakes the water drops off its back with the help of its wings, he can also let go of anything worldly with a detached mind. Such dispassionate his mind is! To a bird, the sky is as real as the nest. Sunil’s sky is his self-rambling world. Sunil’s nest is his country.

That is why Sunil’s writings depict the contemporary world that he is associated with. Deeper philosophy and introspection are not the strong points in his writings. May be, he has not tried to be analytical and theory-centric in his approach. Seventy plus, he. that is why, can say nonchalantly—“I am living well, am enjoying life.” After going through tribulations in the form of the pangs of partition, poverty, struggle for existence, he does not let himself to be weighed down by the burden of life. In fact, he brims over the happiness of a life lived to his utmost satisfaction and without any regrets.

We wonder then where he gets his tremendous energy from! I got a reply to this question from him only—“I saw a handicapped person ascending the difficult Himalayan terrain with the support of clutches. I (Sunil) asked him, ‘Since you are without legs, how can you negotiate such a great height?’ The man’s reply was—‘Does a man scale mountains with the help of legs? No, he does it with his mind.’…” 42

Similarly, Sunil is climbing height after height even today. The aim — to reach that ultimate goal, stage, where his art will be transcendental, will become tremendously joyful an experience. This progression, is, of course spiritual, not physical. His gradual intellectual progression will definitely make Bengali literature more enriched one day.
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