Chapter: III
Mujtaba Ali’s Travelogue

In the domain of Bengali literature Sayed Mujtaba Ali has widely won his a claim as a bellettrist, but the book for which in the tradition of Bengali literature Mujtabe found a niche in the temple of fame is a travelogue named ‘Desé-Bedesé’. Though a little clash of views does prevail over the nature and categorization of the aid book, yet it ha amply been recognised as ‘Travelogue’ (an account of a journey). The said account drew the attention of Bengali readers and critics when it as published serially in ‘Des’ from 13th March 1948 to 18th September 1948. Sayed Mujtaba Ali reached overnight the culmination of name and fame; but it was published in the form of a book in Baisak 1356 BS. Later, through out his life Alisaheb wrote some more accounts of journeys. His wandering bent of mind, the experiences gathered from travelling different countries as well as from the transfers under the compulsion of service rule-everything over and over again under different references got a ventilation in his literature. Travelling actually enriched his experiences and his store of knowledge was embellished with in various ways, and those are reflected leaf after leaf of his compositions. Besides ‘Deśe-Bidesे’, here follows a full list of other accounts of journeys by Alisaheb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Print Media</th>
<th>Date of Publication</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jale-Dāngay : ‘Masik Basumati’</td>
<td>From Baisāk 1361 BS to Jaistha 1363 BS. Composed in a book Magh 1363 BS.</td>
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<td>Bedese-II:</td>
<td>First instalment and other instalments captioned respectively ‘Air India’ and ‘Bidese’ in the column ‘Pancatantra’ Second: 30th January 1971 to 8th January 1972.</td>
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‘Des-Bidese’ was the first book authorized by Sayed Mjutaba Ali. After that whatever he wrote till death, the lines associated with accounts of journey did not forget to bless his pen. In fact, he entered the arena of literature through the travelogue, and the elements of travelling appeared to be as indispensable part of his literature. His accounts of journey breaking the barriers of history and geography whenever needed did transcend time and space. In the sky of Bengali travelogue Mujtaba has been till exclusively today a star of transcendent dazzlement. He was the originator of a style of his own. If we want to mark out the position of Sayed Mustaba ali at the gallery of Bengali travelogue, at first it is necessary on our part to study the course of development of Bengali travelogue presented in a nutshell.

It is said that the Bengalees have a permanent hunger for travelling. The
call of the remote has got its reflection in various ways in the life and literature of the Bengalees for thousands of years. But the Bengalees of the early or Middle ages being castigated by the pressing needs of something or other left their hearth and home and streamed out in the streets. Pilgrimage, quest for learning and livelihood were the sole needs of such outing. Mere visit to a country, enjoyment or the accumulation of knowledge and experiences could not have been the aim of the travellers. Journey by both land and water in Bengal from the period of Caryapada down the 18th century was not free from perils. Under such circumstances travelling could not be entitled as an indispensable part of the life of the Bengalees. The arrival of Krittibas before the royal authority of Bengal or leaving the village of Damunya by Mukundaram for an unacquainted path of journey and like such many more were not the instances of self-willed moves, rather the crying need to earn one's livelihood in such cases looked prominent. Nevertheless, their route of that movement an closely be regarded as the route of travelling. But the tale of Chand Sadagar or the wealthy merchant that is prevalent in the mundane course of life has indirectly quenched the thirst for travelling of he Bengalees. The description of the sea-voyage and of the shuttling of the traders for business flouting the facts and figures of geography and history that has ornamented the pages of Mangal Kabya (a particular branch of Bengali literature that glorifies the Hindu deities) has added relish to the travelogue for the Bengalees; and synchronizingly an urge for going on a pilgrimage was bubbling in the heart and mind of the Bengalees who have covetous eyes on the acquiring of religious excellences. Men under the spell of this invisible attraction crossing over river, mountain and forest did also advance a step towards inaccessible paths. The visits to
the holy shrines for the first time brought an opportunity to deck the literature of Bengalees with the elements of travelling. The genesis of such opportunity occurred centering pilgrim-cum-sannyasi Chaitanyadev of medieval age. He renounced the world at the age of 24. Chaitanyadev’s total span of life was 48 years, and the full innings of 18 years out of his spell of 24 years of renouncement was spent visiting the holy shrines. Of course before adopting the course of renunciation, he went of his ancestral land of Sylhet by land and water. But the minute description of that particular journey was not available. The second phase of journey of Chaitanyadev was to Gaya in order to offer obsequial rice to his deceased ancestors. Then about 1510 AD Chaintanyadev set out for southern region of India. What was indeed blanketed with fancy in Mongal kabya was rendered into reality in Chaitanya-Charit (a holy book that contains the glories of lord Chaitanyadev’s life and works). From this angle, it can be said that Bengali travelogue got its beginning in the 16th century. The liming of travelling being impregnated with geographical facts was roughly outlined by the biographers of Chaitanya for the first time. Even in the biographical sketch by Govindadas the description of journey is marked in various ways.

“ভর্মন্দীতীর হৈতে পঞ্চক্রোশ দূরে।
কাৰ্ত্তীয় নামে তীর্থে ঘোষ বহিয়ে।।
বরাহ দেবের মূর্তি আন্ধ্রে গঠন।
যাহী হেরি মুখ্য হয় মূলি খ্যাতিঙ্গ।।
দর্শন করিয়া প্রভু প্রণাম করিলা।
এক পাতা প্রভু কঠে মালা আনি দিলা।।
পঞ্চক্রোশ দক্ষিণেতে সজ্‌তীর্থে আছে।
যাহার করিলেন প্রভু মুহি পাছে পাছে।।”

Chaitanya had been to Sri Kurmasthan Rajmahendri from Puri via Allalnath, and then from this particular place his course of journey covered
various other places, namely Bidyanagar, Gautami ganga, Mallikarjun, Ahobalnrisingha, Sidhabat, Skandakhetra, Trimath, Bridhakashi, Tirpati, Sivakanchi, Bishnukanchi and at last to Madura via Sri Ranga Khetra that stands on the bank of river Kaveri, and afterwards having had his holy bath in Tungabhadra, he went to Urukhi, thirty six miles north from Mangalore, Canarra or Karnataka, and from Urukhi visiting many holy shrines he again came back to Bidyanagar, Orissa-- then to Puri though this long description of travelling happens to an asset of the medieval age, it can be a first successful travelogue in the history of Bengali literature. Later though description of Sri Chaitanya's pilgrimage is found in the books like Narahari Chakraborty's 'Nav^adwip parikramā' or 'Braja Parikramā', that description completely and directly found not achieve the status of a travelogue. Of course, these books in a few occasions provide us a little degree of interest as a travelogue. From the period that followed the 16th century up to the closing part of the 18th century the particulars about the travelling are not affluently available in Bengali literature. Since Bharatchandra wandered from place to place foraging for shelter and self establishment, we enjoy the gusto of travelling in his compositions. Likewise, something is also found in the compositions of Ramprasad. The facts about the country and roads of that particular period are to some extent portrayed in Gangaram's 'Maharastra Puran'. Besides this, Bijayram Sen composed 'Tirtha Mangal' in 1770. In this particular book the glories of many holy shrines are poetically highlighted. Apart from that, the description of dresses used at the time of pilgrimage, roll of companions with their identifications, the start of journey, and in addition to that, the significances of Jalangi, Rajmahal, Munger, Gaya, Kashi, Prayag, Bindhyachal and of many more places
are elaborated, moreover, it was almost at the same time, Jaynarayan Ghosal (1751-1820), King of Bhukalish, wrote 'Kashi Parikrama' while narrating the particulars of all the pilgrimages and temples that are within the territorial jurisdiction of Kashi.

All these books are written in Payar (Bengali measure of verse containing of two lines each containing 14 letters). This trend is prevalent in the succeeding era too. Based on the experiences of pilgrimages covering the period from 1853 to 1861, Jadunath Sarbadhikari wrote 'Tirtha Bhraman'. The book which was written in the style of diary keeping was published in 1915.  

The shifting of trend began occurring in Bengali travelogue in the 19th Century. Travelling for the sake of acquiring of religious merits— from this point the writers of Bengal gradually began withdrawing themselves. In this respect, the name of Iswar Gupta is first to be mentioned. Iswar Gupta started to make a journey from 1846. In the words of Bankimchandra : "শেষ অবস্থায় ঈশ্বরচন্দ্রের দেশ পর্যটনে বিশেষ অনুরাগ জগে।" Under the caption of 'Bharamankari Bandhu Haite Prapta' (From a travelling friend) a new phase of the accounts of journey began appearing in 'Sambad Prabhākar' from 1854 (7th Paus, 1261BS). It was for the first time that both literary and journalistic angles of vision mingled together in the history of Bengali travelogue.

The waves of nationalism and patriotism began cresting simultaneously along with the development of travelogue. Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya wrote 'Dhurakankher Britha Bhramon' in 1858. The language of the writing is quite sappy, and it may be regarded as avant-garde to many accounts of journey that appeared in the later years. After a little gap of time of Krishna Kamal, the
interest of a travelogue is enjoyed in a poem. That one is Dinabandhu Mitra’s ‘Suradhani’. The description of the notabilities of the course of journey that began from the source of the Ganga and then advanced kissing the line of its flowing gained prominence in it. After ‘Tirtha Mangal’, it was most probably the last travelogue which had been poetized.

The crossing over of newly educated Bengalees to England in the 19th century led to the emergence of a few travelogues written in English. Though Michael’s account of journey in English was published in ‘Indian Field’ in 1862, later, it would not be traced out. Ramesh Chandra Dutta who sojourned in Europe from 1868 to 1870 also wrote in English. It was published in 1873 being rendered into Bengali. Touring Tibet from 1879 to 1881, Sarat Chandra Das of Darjeeling wrote ‘Tibbat Bhraman’ in English. In this way the accounts of journey of the Bengalees continued to be published in English.

The book which discovered a completely new route of advancement in the flowing stream of Bengali travelogue was Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay’s ‘Palamau’. This outstanding account of journey was published in two issues of the seventh year (1287 BS), in three issues of the Eighth year (1288 BS) and in a single issue of the ninth year (1289BS) of ‘Banga Darshan’. The whole book was published in Baisak of 1351 BS by Bangiya Sahitya Parisad under the editorship of Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das.

In fact, the chronicles of travelling were from the very beginning confined to the descriptions of the travellers. The travellers of the early period presented the things that they had seen and the collection of experiences before the readers. In some occasions the presentation was restricted to
mere information or facts. It was without any sort of introspections and there was no effort to make the gamut of feeling and realisations racy. The strokes of Sanjib Chandra's pen set the changed course of traversing of Bengali travelogue on the wheel of motion. 'Palamau' welcoming placed the protrait of travelling in the lap of literature. The last instalment of 'Palamau' was published in 'Banga Darśan' in 1882. Exactly after 67 years of it, there steps in Sayed Mujtaba ali in the world of Bengali literature in 1949 with a travelogue of new style. During the span of this sixty seven years the Bengali travelogue with new everyday strangeness moved forward interruptedly, moreover, the propelling course of this travelogue marched from rich to richer degree of excellence under the mighty and prolific strokes of pen of the writers like Rabindrnath, Jaladhar Sen, Swami Vivekananda, Annadasankar, Prabodh Kumar Sanyal. We want to present the sketch of the Bengali travelogue of this particular period briefly. Firstly, it is needless to say that as the accounts of journey in many occasions were based on the strength of the accumulated memories and recollections, so a gap of time appears to be palpable between the time of the occurrence of events and the time of composition. These lineaments are equally noticed in both 'Palamau' and in the compositions of Debendranath Tagore. Even Mujtaba Ali was not outside the radius of this very distinctiveness. The events and facts related to 'Dese-Bidese', occurred many years ago but those were immortalized in words of literature after a yawning gap of time. Hence, in order to draw an outline of the travelogues, the time of the publications of the books has been considered prominently. Of course, in some cases, the time of composition has, too, gained prominence.\textsuperscript{6}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Writers</th>
<th>Time of Publication/composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Europe-Prabasir Patra</td>
<td>Rabindranath Tagore</td>
<td>1288 BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Europe Bhraman</td>
<td>Girish Chandra Bose</td>
<td>1886 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bilāter Patra (Vol. I &amp; II)</td>
<td>Girish Chandra Bose</td>
<td>1886 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bombay Chitra</td>
<td>Satyendranath Tagore</td>
<td>1888 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Aryābarta</td>
<td>Prasannamoyee Dev</td>
<td>1888 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Himalaya</td>
<td>Jaladhar Sen</td>
<td>Composition began from 5th May 1890.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Europe Yatrir Diary</td>
<td>Rabindranath Tagore</td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Prabaser Patra</td>
<td>Nabinchandra Sen</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Europe Yatrir Diary (Part II)</td>
<td>Rabindranath Tagore</td>
<td>1893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Atma Jībanī</td>
<td>Debendranath Tagore</td>
<td>1894 (account of journey from 1846)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Paribrājak</td>
<td>Swami Vivekananda</td>
<td>1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Japan</td>
<td>Suresh Chandra Bandopadhyay</td>
<td>1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Turaska Bhramaṇ</td>
<td>Syed Abu Mahammad Ismail Siraji</td>
<td>1913 (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Norway Bhramaṇ</td>
<td>Bimala Das Gupta</td>
<td>1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Japan Yatri</td>
<td>Rabindranath Tagore</td>
<td>1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Bicitra Bhramaṇ</td>
<td>Krishnalal Basak</td>
<td>1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Padabraj Pasewar Yatṛā</td>
<td>Parag Ranjan Dey</td>
<td>1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Jāvā Yatṛī Patra</td>
<td>Rabindranath Tagore</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Yatṛī</td>
<td>„</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Russian Cithi</td>
<td>„</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Pathe Prabāse</td>
<td>Annadasankar Roy</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Prabaser Kathā</td>
<td>Sachin Sen</td>
<td>1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Desē Desē</td>
<td>B. Haldar</td>
<td>1934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Sāt Sāgarer Pāre</td>
<td>Amala Nandi</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Jāpāne Pārasye</td>
<td>Rabindranath Tagore</td>
<td>1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Paschim Yātriki</td>
<td>Durgabati Ghose</td>
<td>1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Paschim Prabāsi</td>
<td>Nitya Narayan Bandyopadhyay</td>
<td>1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Ami Cancala He</td>
<td>Buddhadev Basu</td>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Bicitra Jagat</td>
<td>Bichitra Devi</td>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
32. Tirtha Citra Rajlakshmi Devi 1938
33. Mahaprasthāner Pathe Prabod Kumar Sanyal 1939-40
34. Rabindra Sangame Dvipmay Bharat O Shyam Deś Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay 1940
35. Europā Debesh Das 1940
36. Prabāse Khitish Chandra Bandyopadhyay 1940
37. Turun Turki Ramnath Biswas 1941
38. Ajker America , 1941
39. Bilate Banga Nari Pratap Chandra Kundu 1942
40. Afganisthan Ramnath Biswas 1942
41. Japane Annadasankar Roy 1943
42. Europe Bhramaṇ Khitish Chandra Bandyopadhyay 1943
43. Bibhinna Deśer Narī O Samaj , 1944
44. Beduiner Deśe Ramnath Biswas 1944
45. Bhabaghurer Jhuli , 1944
46. Rupantarita Yayabar Gaurmohan Gangopadhyay 1945
47. Gharer Chele Baire Dhan Gopal Mukhopadhyay 1945
48. Jujutsu Japan Ramnath Biswas 1945
49. Aajāna Deśer Yātri Durga Mohan Mukhopadhyay 1946
50. Misarer Diary Makhanlal Roy Choudhury 1946
51. Bebasayir Bilāt Bhramaṇ Sachindranath Chattopadhyay 1946
52. Amar Bhramaṇ Swami Jagadiswarananda 1946
53. Deśe-Bideśe Sayed Mujtaba Ali 1949

One thing is noticeable form this brief outline of the travelogue of the Bengalees that even the mighty litterateures of Bengali literature welcomed travelling as one of the foremost component parts of literature.

Rapid changes were noticed form the second part of the 19th century in the outlook of the purpose of travelling of he Bengalees. The Bengalees of the British colonial rule before this enjoyed the first contact of modernism through the blissful light of western knowledge, science and philosophy. In the dictionary of European wakefulness, the word ‘travelling’ for ever did
stand for quest of knowledge, bond with strangers, and for ferreting out the marks of civilization, and in this way travelling was also considered as the modern means of universal feelings. Following the western thoughts, the flow of modernism of travelling came in the train of thoughts of the Bengalees. Travelling does not merely mean to see something wandering from place to place, nor is it the mere description of the external view— that time this feeling began knocking at the door of consciousness of the Bengalees. Vivekananda then wrote in a particular letter:

"আমাদিগকে কমন করিতেই হইবে, আমাদিগকে বিদেশে যাইতেই হইবে... যদি আমাদিগকের যথাযথ পুনরায় একটি জাতির মপ গঠিত হইতে হয়, তবে অপর জাতির চিত্তের সহিত আমাদের অন্য সত্ত্বে রাষ্ট্রেই হইবে।" 7

Rabindranath also started walking on this very track. Inquisitiveness about truth, historical reference, search of knowledge as expressed even in light descriptions everything was honored as indispensable element in the world of travelling. It is noticed for the first time that 'travelling' is yoked to 'literature'. The prevalence of the high sense of humour at every leaf of descriptions helped the travelogue to become exclusively a new class of its own in the domain of literature.

The union of sense of humour with exceedingly witty language was first marked in Sanjib Chandra’s ‘Palâmau’:

“যে বক্ষোদ্দীর গৃহে আত্মোচ্ছে জীবিকায় করিতে যাইতেছিলাম, তাহার উল্লাসে গাড়ী প্রবেশ করিলে তাহা কেন ধনবদ্ধ ইন্দৰ্জের হইবে বলিয়া আমার প্রমথে কম হইল...না চিনিয়া বাংলার অভিবাদন আমি সবচেয়ে গ্রহণ করিয়াছিলাম, তিনিই বাটীর কর্তা। ...সে প্রসন্নতাবাঙ্গকে ওর আমি অতি অন্য দেবিকাছি। তখন তাহার বয়ন্তম বোধহয় পত্রায় অতীত ইহিয়াছিল, বৃদ্ধের তাঁহায় তাহার নাম উঠিয়াছিল, তথাপি তাহাকে বৃদ্ধ সুদর দেখিয়াছিলাম। বোধহয় সেই প্রথম আমি বৃদ্ধকে সুদর দেখিয়াছিল।

যে সময়ের কথা বলিতেছি, আমি তখন নিজে যুবা, অতএব সে বয়সে বৃদ্ধকে সুদর দেখা
The wordings used in the delineation of the art of dance belonging to the Santhal community sometimes scintillated:

"বৃদ্ধমা ইচ্ছিত করিলে যুবাদের দলে মাদল বাজিল, অমনি যুবকীদের দেহ যেন শিহরিয়া উঠিল। যদি দেহের কেলাহল থাকে, তবে যুবকীদের দেহে সেই কেলাহল পড়িয়া গেল, তাহারা নৃত্য আরম্ভ করিল।" ⁹

The first prose-work of Rabindranath was itself a travelogue; and in that every work Rabindranath portrayed the boatman of the Suez canal in this way: "চোক দুটো যেন বাধের মতো, কালা কুচকুচে রঙ, কপাল নিজু, ঠেটি পুরু..." The Saheb asked:

"(পোস্ট অফিস) কতদূর যাকি আছে?" Bursting into a rage, the boatman bawled out:

‘Two shilling give, ask what distance!’ This queer English in translation reads thus: "সবে দু শিলিং মাত্র ভাড়া দেবেন, তা আবার জিজ্ঞাসা করা হচ্ছে কতদূর?' ¹⁰

The Bengali travelogue henceforth on the strength of language, feeling, gestures, sentiment and contemplation became more cogent. The travelogue through Vivekananda’s ‘Paribrājak’, Jaladhar Sen’s ‘Himalaya’ (or ‘Himadri’), Swarna Kumari Devi’s ‘Darjeeling’, Kedarnath Bandyopadhyay’s, ‘Cīn Yātri’, Dilip Kumar Roy’s ‘Bhramyaman’ Annadasankar’s ‘Pathe Prabāse’, Prabodh Kumar Sanyal’s ‘Mahāprasthāner Pathe’ was converted into a colossal tradition in Bengali literature.

A. Desé-Bidesé:

Then in 1949 by dint of his ‘Desé-Bidesé’ Syed Mujtaba Ali put his name on this very roll of writers. He not only added himself to, but also connected the sea of readers along with himself. The event was of 1927. Place of occurrences: partly at home and partly abroad; and that is indicated in the very title of the book (‘Desé-Bidesé’). The writer wrote after a gap of
20/21 years. Resources solely banked upon the storehouse of memories and recollections. Here he begins in a light way: “বাবা হয়তো কহিলেন ফিরিয়া যাওয়া না তাই দুই দিনে আসে তোমার কাছে, নিয়েছিলাম।” The journey started from Howrah Station. Thenceforth he had no time to look behind. The readers like inebriated persons have to move along with the writer. Sayed Mujtaba crossed over all the established outlines of Bengali travelogue completely by means of a new set of temperaments and moods and exclusive style. “এই বাবার ভাবায় দেশায় দেশায় করতে হবে আর গদ্দার মাধ্যমে প্রকাশিত অন্যতম রসায়ন!”

There lies a significance in entitling ‘Dese-Bdeše’. One of the chief features of Sayed Mujtaba Ali’s life and literature is his allegiance to Rabindranath. Obeying ‘Gurudev’ implicitly, he liked to tread on the path of continuity. So, the writer Mujtaba himself admitted that even the book was entitled at the remembrance of Rabindranath. Mujtaba penned a thorough letter to his eldest son Firoz in this regard on 3rd October, 1955:

“ছাব্ব ফিরোজ,
আমার একটা বইয়ের নাম ‘দেশে-বিদেশে’। বাংলায় ইতিহাস দেশ বিদেশে
অর্থাৎ সর্বত্র, অর্থাৎ ‘বিশ্বরক্ষণা’। আমি কিন্তু ‘দেশে-বিদেশে’ শব্দার্থে লিখিয়ে অর্থাৎ এ সৃষ্টিতে
কিছুটা ‘দেশের’ বর্ণনা পাবে যথা শেখাওয়ার ইতিহাস, আমার বক্তা ‘বিদেশের’ অর্থাত এ হলে
কাবুলের।

‘দেশ-বিদেশের’ অর্থ অর্থ ধরে।
আমি যদি কখনো ‘দেশ-বিদেশে’ লিখি তবে তাতে জনতাটা বর্ণনা পাবে। সে-বই তা
হলে বিয়ালিন্ড-ভলে হবে। তার মুনসি আমার নেই। রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিখিয়েছেন, (রবীন্দ্র রচনাবলী, ২৬
খণ্ড, পৃ ৩২৪) রাজী জ্ঞাত যেরূপে বারিয়েছিলাম দেশ বিদেশে।

তিনি ‘দেশে বিদেশে’ কি অর্থে ব্যবহার করেছেন একটু অনুসন্ধান করেো তো।

আন্তু”

There is a background to the composition and publication of ‘Dese-Bišdeše’. Though Alisaheb toured from one country to another from 1921, he did write nothing regarding those journeys at the initial period. He was
proficient in many languages and he had had his education in different places, but he did not have initially the practice and culture of writing anything. Kanai Sarkar, an alumnus of Santiniketan, introduced Mujtaba in 1944 to Suresh Mazumdar, editor of the ‘Ananda Bāzār’. He used to write after edit twice in a week under the penname of ‘Satyapir’. Besides these tit-bits, still then he did not take up any great literary work. If anyone disregarded any Bengali book before Jahanara, eldest daughter of Mujtaba’s eldest other Mostafa, she allegedly pronounced : “ছোট চাচা যদি এতই জানে তাহলে নিজেই একটা বই লিখলেই পারে।” Younger uncle Mujtaba used to hold discourses on various sides of literature with Jahanara. Since then unrepellingly adherence to literature began crystallizing in Mujtaba’s mind. Time also blessed him with opportunities. Description of that very chance itself came from the pen of Mujtaba in this way :

“১৯৪৬ সাল। আমি তখন ব্যাংকলোরে [বন্ধু আবু সরীদের চিকিৎসার জন্য।] পকেটে পাচটি হাজার টাকা। ... থাকতাম সমুদ্রের পারের এটি হোটেলে। হাতে অটোল সময়। ...তখনই আমি ‘দেশে-বিদেশে’ বইটা লেখা শুরু করি।”  

Aub Syed Ayub and Fozlul Hoque went through the manuscript. He was advised to send it to ‘Des’, moreover, Mujtaba was well acquainted with the Anandabazar Group of publications for contributing to the column of Satyapeer, and for this he had a link with Sagarmay Ghose. Sagarmay jubilantly welcomed the manuscript. It is indeed the side of the coin. Sagarmay himself wrote in this regard :

“বৈঠকের গালিক সাহিত্যিক ...বিরতির ডাব প্রকাশ করে বললেন—‘রামজিল্লার হাতের লেখায় যে বিরত পাপ্ত লিখিতাটার উপর আপনি এতক্ষণ হরমড়ি খেয়ে পড়েছিলেন সে-কোন কী জানতে পারি?'

'অমৃদ্ধ-কাহিনী।'

....

'লেখকটি কে?'
Meanwhile, Prof. Benoit and Prof. Bogdanov had already from Santiniketan joined the Department of Education in Kabul. Both of them were the teachers of Mujtaba at Santiniketan. They called their dear Student. Mujtaba on their recommendation joined Krishi Bigyan College, Kabul in 1927 as a teacher of English and German. This tour to abroad was cited in his ‘Dese-Bidesé’. The conservative circle of Afganistan could not accept the reformatory measures adopted by liberal Amanullah Khan. Specialy the efforts to abolish the ‘Parda’ system and to introduce the English costume created massive waves of agitation amongst the zealots. Seizing that opportunity, Baccha-e-Sakaw, leader of the gang of robbers started civil war. Amanullah fled the country; and Kabul went under the control of the Muslim clerics. The efforts for educational reform by Amanullah was smashed root and branch owing to such explosive situation. The foreigners started to return to their respective country. Mujtaba Ali had to face a ticklish situation due to civil war. Jittery father Sikandar Ali requested the then Vice-President of Lok Sobha Mr. Abdul Matin Choudhury, who halied from Sylhet, to kindly make arrangement of taking back Mujtaba to his nativeland. An urgent instruction was sent to Sir Francis Humfray, British Ambassador in Kabul, by Foreign Secretary Sir Dennis Bray to take necessary steps in his regard. Mujtaba was
taken back to Peshwar by air. When Mujtaba was on the flight, then there in
the town of Jalalabad fire was burning furiously. Anyway, Mujtaba was brought
back from Kabul to his native land in the middle of year 1929. 16

‘Dese-Bidesē’ clearly consists of two parts— though it is divided into
‘Dese’ (at home) and ‘Beidese’ (abroad), the account can be divided into
three periods.

First period—from Howrah station to Kabul via Peshwar and second
period—stay and passing of life began in Kabul. Third period—Amanullah’s
reformative measures, the Sinwari Revolt, seizing of power by Baccha-e-
Sakaw, civil war, and the writer being barely alive returned to his nativeland
somehow.

Most of the description of the first period are related to the events that
happened in his homeland and his journey to foreign land. Long journeys by
both train and bus, varied experiences and to go his way are the basic fea-
tures of this period. This delineation is spread out from first to thirteenth
chapter, and the fourteenth chapter carries the countinuity of and an introduc-
tion to the background of the thirteenth chapter. It is from the fifteenth
chapter than the writer began to live in he suburb of Kabul.

Mujtaba started with minor but bright characters and events. No sooner
did the writer board the train than the story began snowballing, Mujtaba ar-
ranged every snatch of experience and every moment in a witty way. The
delicate comic sentiment sometimes scintillates by virtue of description. and
short annotations were blended with it. There is a stamp of the parade of
variegated learning. He placed even the most ordinary things in he humorous
world by means of the splendid ingenuity of presentation. Indeed, all the said
excellences are scattered all over 'Desē-Bidesē'.

The writer purchase a shirt from Chandni and then as soon as the boarded the 'European third', he came across a 'Phiringi'—‘native from Taltala’. The state of writer’s mind “কপুরুষস্য নোন্তন—মনে হল, আমি একা!”, but that was effaced to some extent after having had a talk with the Anglo-Indian. Finding the similarity in the nature and tastefulness of the respective edible substances of the natives from Taltala and the pure Indian natives, curiosity for the first time surged through the readers. Writing on a piece of paper 'good luck for the long journey', the Anglo-Indian alighted at the dead of night. Waking up, the writer saw “ইয়োরোপীয় কম্পার্টমেন্ট দিশী বেশ ধারণ করেছে—এঃ তোরন্ত পোটরা চাষার চতুর্দিকে ছড়ানো।”

After that there was no description about the experiences related to path of his journey. He just simply delineated he experiences of a single night in a nutshell by means of his wonderful embroidery of wordings. The sterling description of the blistering heat of the month of June that hit the western part of India and of the train in motion is as follows:

“গড়ি ফেন কালোয়া। উষ্ণতাসে ছুটেছে, কোনো গতিকে রোদ্ধরের তবলাটীকে হল। মানিয়ে ফেন কোথায় গিয়ে ঠিকায় জিয়েছে। আর রোদ্ধর চলেছে সঙ্গে সঙ্গে তথে তথাকট।

�র্ধ্বশাস্ত্রে সে পালায় প্যাসেঞ্জারের প্রাপ্য যায়। ইন্টেলিজেন্স ইন্টেলিজেন সম।”

The first chapter is over. Under the spell of severe heat the writer could not help composing a poem during the declining hours of the day.

It is narrated in the second chapter that gradually the numbers of Sikh and Pathan passengers began swelling up in the compartments of the train bound for Peshwar. Seeing the various styles of the netled-beards of the Sardarjis (Punjabi gentlemen), the writer remembered the trifling story of the novel of Tayofil Gotiyar. Both the Pathans and the Sardarjis kept the party in
the compartment of the train in good humour, and stories after stories were continued. At last they reached Peshwar at 9 o’clock at night. Sekh Ahmed Ali, who was even taller than a six footer Pathan, catching hold of the hand of Mujtaba at the platform with great delight and warm welcome made inquiries about Mujtaba’s well-being. No sooner had he entered the different country, than the writer introduced the readers to the etiquette of the Pathans; in addition to that, instances of jocularity also came simultaneously from the pen of the writer. The readers at the very beginning came to know:

“...পাঠানের অভাবনী সম্পূর্ণ বিনিময় আত্মীয়। অতিথিকে বাড়িতে ডেকে নেওয়ার মত অনন্দ পাঠান অন্য কোনো জিনিস পায় না—আর সে অতিথি যদি বিদেশী হয় তবে তো আর কিছুই নেই।”

Tangas were being drawn through the roads of Peshwar and the readers could know the new rules of the new part of the world:

“আমাদের দেশে সাধারণত লোকজন রাজা সাফ করে দেয়—গাড়ি সোজা চলে। পাঠানমুল্লকে লোকজন যার থেকক খুশী চলে, গাড়ি একেবারে রাজা করে নেয়। খট্টা বাজানো।
চিত্তরা কাঁচা বৃষ্টি খান পাঠান কখনো কারো জন্য রাজা ছেড়ে দেয় না।”

The readers started to know about the hospitable Pathans right from the wheeling down of the tanga. Ahmed Ali invited for dish halting the tanga frequently. Reaching home, he met with a fresh incident. The policemen came to know Mujtaba’s proper identity and address. The CID Inspector with smiles on lips wrote at the bottom of the letter “ভজলোক অতিথি” . Can there be any more instance to understand the cordiality of the Pathans?

The writer had to stay a few days. The strokes of the writer’s pen portrayed the roads, market-places, the way of life of the people, and above all, the natural view dexterously. He painted the natural panorama with the brush of poetic beauty and quality. The day-time temperature of Peshwar
reading 114° dropped down with the advent of darkness. The gentle breeze of the evening scared away the load of weariness and sorrows. Peshwar woke up after darkness.

The writer also started describing the nature of the clubbable Pathan. They are so much fond of companionship, if they do not get anyone to converse with, then they on the pretext of getting the shoes repaired start conversation with the wayside cobblers. The most attractive description is of how the Pathans have their meal sitting in a body. To eat something is not prominent to them, but to sit together and gossip are their first and foremost points at the time of having their meal. The writer gave some ideas about the wonderful picture and philosophy of life of the Pathans to the readers. Though two sons and wife of Prof. Khudabaksh died in a gap of few months, he was poised in mind and indifferent, but he broke down wailing widely over the death of his brother. Because “মীরের জাত মার্জ ডাইকে অতস্ত তালোবাসে”। This truth came to light here.

The more we read, the more we get instances of the parade of Mujtaba’s learning. We came to know that there is no difference between the words Gāndhār and Kāndāhār. 20

It was after seven days, on one morning of the eight day the writer boarded a bus bound for Kabul. The driver of that very vehicle was a Sikh named Amar Singh Bulani. “বাসের পেট একপাল কাবুল বাবসারী”। Relieving him the 114° temperature of Peshwar, the writer travelled along that very road which runs through the desert area that stretches endlessly. Not a single piece of leaf could be seen, even though someone used a telescope. After crossing over ten and a half miles of level surface (or plane land) the writer got the Jamrud
Fort. Then the world famous Khyber Pass. This particular phase of journey had been splendidly described by the writer in this way:

"দুর্দিকে হাজার ফুট উঁচু পাথরের সেতু পাহাড়। মাঝখানে খাইবার পাস। এক জোড়া রাস্তা একেবারে একে অনেক গা খেয়ে চলেছে কাশুলের দিকে। এক রাস্তা মোটারের জন্য, অন্য রাস্তা উঁচু খচ্চর গাধা জোড়ার পশুবাহিনী বা কাশুলের জন্য। সকল স্থান হলো যুদ্ধ রাস্তায় মিলে তিন হতেও হবে না। যে রাস্তা আবার মাতালের মত টলতে টলতে এভাবে একেবারে গিয়েছে যে, যে-কোনো জায়গায় দৌড়ালে চোখে পড়ে ভাইনে বায়ে পাহাড়, সামনে লুটছে পাহাড়।

জিয়হর সূর্য সেই নরককুণ্ডে সোজা নেমে এসেছে—...এই গাঞ্জি কি কাশুলের বধু গাঞ্জারী অজ্ঞ হয়ে গিয়েছিলেন?" 21

A group of fine companions accompanied him. Besides Sardarji, there was an officer of the Radio department, and above all, a vehicle suited for the hilly roads. The vehicle with the blissful touch of Mujtaba’s pen, as if, had been personified as a character.

Course of conversation continued between Mujtaba and his companions of journey. The natural view on either side of the road attracted the writer, moreover, touches of history, archaeological glories, radix of Hindu and Buddhistic culture and even the course of recent happenings came to the notice of the writer. We gradually came to know that though the Pathans were the denizens of Afganisthan, the Indians were the actual inhabitants of Kabul. The mother-tongue of the Iranians is Persian and that of the Pathans is Pastu.

Through the course of writing sometimes in a lighter vein to present fact and reality and at the sametime to find out the special inclination of a particular tribe and the characteristics of a particular class — all these had been very skillfully delineated by Alisaheb. But the charm of literature was no where killed by the parade of learning.

Dokka is ten miles away from Landikotal. While travelling, Mujtaba met with a titanic skeleton of a camel on the road; and both sides of the road
miles after miles were carpeted with pebbles and there stands the Dokka Fort. There were rows of holes on the wall of the Fort. The eye-catching sight at the left side of the Fort mesmerized the writer. The Kabul river winding its course here has flowed down.

The readers are pleased discovering the living poet-like self that is in the officer of the inaccessible Fort. It was first learned from this very officer regarding the political change in Afghanistan. The officer commented about the reformative measures of ‘Natun Badsah’ (New emperor) Amanullah in this way: ‘নতুন প্রাপ্ত সরুজ ঘাস।’

This very period of ‘Dese-Bidese’ is important from a special point of view. The account of journey took a new turn in the eighth chapter. Many references came into focus centering the course of journey from Howrah Station to the Dokka Fort. The more Mujtaba was nearing Kabul, the less the story was confined to mere travelling. We gradually began to know and enjoy Afghanistan of a very specific period. The statement of the officer of the Fort had given an inkling of gradually unlocking the door of that very period. In its literal sense, the account of journey up to this chapter has got a blooming expression. But after that his intuitive awareness in a comprehensive way deluged his power of observing something with external senses.

It was from Dokka to Jalalabad—the second largest town of Afghanistan. On his way to, Mujtaba spent his night at an inn full of many small but filthy and stinking rooms. The writer gradually widened his range of discussion with the employee of the Radio department. The discussion covered the topics like vision of life, religion, language and the pros and cons of the culture of life of the Afgans. The writer very perfectly enjoyed and de-
scribed the external view of Jalalabad:

“দেই নবীর মাটির দেওয়াল, অভ্যন্তর গোল্ডাম্পাটঃ সব মাপানী মালে ভালুক—বিক্রেতার দেওয়াল, আর অসংখ্য মাছী। হিমালয়ের চর্চাতে মানুষ যেরকম মাছী সম্পূর্ণ নির্বিকার।
এখানেও ঠিক তাই।” 22

Jalalabad is five scores away from Peshwar and Kabul is of same distance from Jalalabad. There were cucurbitaceous fruit-gardens by the side of the road standing like the rows of betel-nut tree, and moreover, narcissus plants added beauty to that. Here also the delineation of natural beauty by Mujtaba is inexpressible. Reciting his morning prayer, he resumed his journey being escorted by Sardarji who went on telling stories of different tastes.

At last they reached Kabul. The only familiar personality of Mujtaba in the town was Prof. Bogdanov. He was a teacher of Mujtaba at Santiniketan who taught Persian. He then used to work in the French Consulate in Kabul. Mujtaba hired a tanga to find out Bogdanov and he had to experience a lot of troubles in his effort of finding out him. Mujtata’s arrival in Kabul is portrayed at the last part of the thirteenth chapter and henceafter there appears a long description about Bogdanov. In how many ways Mujtaba observed his own teacher is comprehended after going through this very description.

The writer presented the background of Afghanistan in a nutshell in the 14th chapter. First clarifying the reason of his doing so, then he entered into the realm of discussion:

“মোকামে পৌছেই প্রথম, দেশটির ঐতিহাসিক পটভূমিকা দেব, কি দেব না। যদি না দাও তবে সমস্তক্ষণ দূর্ৰীবেনা, ভাঙ্গা করবেন, না মন্দ করবেন।” 23

In order to get rid of his mental oscillation, Mujtaba proffered very briefly the political and cultural pictures of Afghanistan right from its ancient age down to the age of Amanullah. Here we get a glimpse of Mujtaba’s erudi-
tion in different branches of knowledge. Though Mujtaba represented the sanguinary path of history in a nutshell, but all weighty matters had been touched upon. The significance of his very chapter happens to be regarded stupendous in determining the actual nature and condition of that very crucial period of Afghanistan when the writer was himself physically present there.

The writer of ‘Desé-Bidesé’ from the 15th chapter began to live abroad permanently. Arrangement were made for him to live at the village of Khajamullah belonging to the suburb of Kabul. He had a personal servant named Abdur Rahman. We first of all remember the name of Abdur Rahman as the most captivating character of ‘Desé-Bidesé’. In the entire domain of Bengali literature this very character is totally exclusive, new and never-to-be-forgotten. We will take up the character of Abdur Rahman for elaborate discussion in the section of the portraiture of characters of ‘Desé-Bidesé’.

The total number of chapters of ‘Desé-Bidesé’ excluding appendix is forty two. The first 14 chapters cover the incidents of his journey from Howrah to Kabul, that is, most of the part of these chapters are overlaid with the account of journey and all the remaining chapters beginning from the 15th hold the collection of experiences of the writer during his stay at Kabul. Here the points of journey turned to be secondary. The writer hardly frequented outside of Kabul. It was only the first one year when he lived in the neighbourhood of Kabul. From this point of view some scholars have raised the question whether the book can be called a travelogue at all.

“নেয়দ মুজত্বা আলীর দেশে বিদেশে কি আত্মী জমকাহিনী। যদিও এর নাম দেশে বিদেশে, কলকাতা থেকে পশ্চিমার হয়ে আফগানিস্তান যোগ্য পর্যন্ত যাতায়াতের কিছু বিবরণ আছে, তারপর আফগানিস্তানে গিয়ে তিনি যে কয়েক বছর কাটিয়েছিলেন, রাজধানী কাবুলেই তার বাস, কাবুলের উপকূলে একটি গ্রামে ছিলেন কিছুদিন। পশ্চিমার তখন তাঁর দেশের অক্ষরিত.
Of course, that the book is nothing but a travelogue had been indicated in a clear-cut way by the writer himself:

"সেরা যে কাবুল সৌখ্যে পেরেছিলুম তার একমাত্র কারণ বোধহয় এই যে, রাগারাগে উপন্যাসের গোয়েন্দা শত বিপদেও মরে না—হুমকি-কাহিনী-লেখকের জীবনেও সেই সূত্র প্রয়োজন।" 25

After beginning to live in the suburb of Kabul, Mujtaba at the intervals of his duty-hours tried as far as possible to understand and know Kabul as well as Afghanistan and that was not by way of shuttling hither and thither. Meanwhile, many a new face became familiar to him. Sange were those creatures! Capital Kabul was then passing through a period of transition and the situation as a whole was not at all peaceful. The more he (Mujtaba) passed the days, the more he was enriched with experiences. His constant companion-cum-servant Abdur Rahman used to tell his master (Mujtaba) regarding his native land Pansir and in addition to that, Abdur Rahman also provided Mujtaba with new facts of the way of life of the Afghans. Thus Abdur Rahman by degrees began unlocking the door of information and facts before and coming intimately close to the writer and the readers. The writer went to see the Gulf Bag that was in the very vicinity of Kabul and ‘Lob-e-Dariya’ was highly charmed at the bonzer beauty of the Kabul river, he minutely observed and studied the market-places of Kabul. Mujtaba also heard four Sardarjis playing records, 'নেত্রে মজু পালিশ' (as glossy as nail) in gramophone:

"হরিরি বোতলা
ফরসি বোতলা
পালিশ বোতলা
লাল বোতলা" 26
The social life of Kabul had been divided into three parts— this even could not escape the notice and attention of the writer.

One. The bonafide natives of Kabul.

Two. Indian, that is, the Muslims of Punjab and Frontier and the persons who joined the Khilafat Movement.

Three. The English, the French, the German and the Russian embassies.

The biggest achievement of the writer was his building up of intimacy with an open-hearted friend like Mohammad Khan who himself enjoyed an unopposed right of movement to all those above said phases of Afghan social life. Nearness developed between Mujtaba and Mir Aslam who was well versed in speaking Persian with an Arabic accent. Mujtaba was even invited to matrimonial feast of the Afgans. The focal point of attraction of marriage in the Afgani Society is their social get together for entertainment. Though a group of about twenty young chaps clustered, there was an old man in a corner. Night was slowly ticking away and slumber embalmed one after another. That very old man at the third watch of that night silently placed the sitar on his knees and then electrified the atmosphere with the sonorous lines of the Persian Gazal:

“‘शबि आगर, शबि आगर, शबि आगर—’
‘यदि एक रात्रि के वर, मात्र एक रात्रि के तरह,
एक रात्रि के तरह—
प्रियार अथवा तब तक एक चुम्बन पाइ...’ 27

Even the readers cannot forget memory of the musical entertainment that took place at dead of night in Kabul.

Mujtaba wrote at the very outset of the 21st chapter.
That the situation of Afghanistan including Kabul was gradually becoming turbulent has its indication in this part of ‘Dešë-Bidešë’. At that time the writer incidentally on a late afternoon had a talk with ‘Moin-Us-Sultan’ himself. It was not confined to mere talk, rather the writer was formally invited to play tennis with. Though the writer could not know first, later he came to know that ‘Moin-Uss-Sultan’ was none but the Afghan Prince himself. That is, he was the elder brother of the then Afghan administrator Amanullah. Here was the scruple. Way was the younger brother enthroned when the elder one was alive? The writer uncapped this mystery in the 23rd chapter. Mujtaba indeed delineated the Afghan political scenario of both past and present eras. It can be said that the brief analysis of the historical background of Afghanistan portrayed in the 14th chapter has its link with this very political portraiture. With this clue in mind, we want to present here the brief outline of the Afghan history; and this will unveil the basic background of ‘Dešë-Bidešë’. We can too, properly ponder Alisaheb’s awareness of history.

The Afghan history is always ornamented with the politics of capturing power. Besides civil war, other colonial powers always cast their edacious eye over Afghanistan. When this sub-continent was under the British rule, then both the British and Russian imperialistic powers cast their devouring eye on Afghanistan. On the other hand, the neighbouring Shiite dominated Iran was a matter of deep concern to Sonnite dominated Afghanistan. Apart from that, there were many tribes and the machinery of the state of Afghanistan had been
run by the theological dicta of the mullahs and the role of those mullahs was responsible in various ways for wild fluctuations of the Afgan politics. The fights for capturing power started in modern Afganistan just after the death of Taimur Shah (1793 AD). The internal fights continued almost for a century. It would be better to prepare a chronological table of events in order to show the transfers of power.

1793 AD—Death of Taimur Shah, his son Shahjaman came to power. After a brief spell of time, his brother Mamud Shah captured the power.

1803 AD—Brother Sujaulmullque Mahmud’s accession to throne.

1803—1863 AD—The rise of Daust Mohammad Khan; and he declared himself emperor of Afganistan dethroning Shah Mahmud. Interference from the British royal authority and being backed up by the British, Shahsuja achieved the Kingship. Daust Mohammad re-captured power and Daust Mohammad joined the majority in 1863.

1863—1868 AD—Though Daust Mohammad’s first born-son Afjal Khan was the actual claimant of the royal power, another brother Sher Ali declared himself ‘Amir’. Other brothers were assassinated by Sher Ali. Afjal with the help of his son Abdur Rahman drove out his younger brother Sher Ali and henceafter brought Kabul under his control. Afjal Khan died in 1867. His eldest son with claiming the right of enthronement for himself offered the Kingship to his younger brother Ajeem Khan. Sher Ali again brought Kabul under his control in 1868. 29

The basic background of ‘Deșe-Bidesê’ is based on from the period of Abdur Rahman Khan. As soon as Sher Ali grabbed the reins of power for himself, Abdur Rahman and his younger brother Ajeem Khan took asylum in
Iran. Even coming back to power, Sher Ali could not spend his days in an undisturbed way. On one side it was the British and on the other hand, it was Russia—he was extremely harassed by the cabals of those two superpowers. Simultaneously, his own son Yaqub Khan’s leanings towards the British made twitchy. He put Yaqub behind bars. Both Britain and Russia sent their respective proposal to enter Afganistan. But Sher Ali pooh-poohed the proposals. While the English had been lurking for an opportunity, the Russian General Stoletoff in 1878 marched for Kabul from Taskhand. Mr. Stoletoff threatened Sher Ali that if he tried to challenge Mr. Sfoleloff, Abdur Rahman on the strenght of the Russian force would soon take possession of Kabul. At last, Sher Ali was coerced into entering into a secret negotiation with the Russian General. This infuriated the English. They also informed Sher Ali that the British Mission had been slated for arrival and any foreign policy of Afganistan would have to be blessed with a nod of approval from the British. As a result, Sher Ali was completely reduced to a nonplus and leaving behind his son Yaqub, he fled the country.

The British Mission was set up in Kabul. Both the Afgan people and the Afgan army made an attack upon the British Mission in 1879 and consequently it was totally destroyed. Being distracted with it, the British imprisoned Amir Yaqub and took the possession of Kabul.

Seizing the opportunity of this chaotic situation, Abdur Rahman, who was sojourning in Iran, advanced towards Kabul. This message, too, came to the British:

"Early in March 1880 word came to the British authorities in Kabul that Sardar Abdur Rahman, son of Sher Ali’s elder half-brother, Muhammad Afjal Khan, had quitted Russian
After the death of Abdur Rahman in 1901 his son Habibullah took over the reins. Mujtaba exhibited this political-heirship in his ‘Dese-Bidese’ with a tree-diagram. It is as follows:

Habibullah had two wives. The first one who died prematurely was the mother of ‘Moin-Us-Sultan’ or the ‘Prince’, and the second wife of Habibullah came of a family which was descended from the very influential ‘Barakjai lineage’ of Afghanistan. The whole body of Afghans called her ‘Rani Ma’ (Queen, the mother) or ‘Uliya Hazrat’. Even Habibullah himself also respected this very woman who was an idol of extraordinary farsightedness and of sky-rocketing personality. However, since Habibullah’s brother Nasarullah got entangled in ‘Mullah-tantra’ (influence of Islamic religious injunctions and laws maintained fanatically by the Mullahs), Habibullah did not dare to proclaim his eldest son Yenayat as Amir in the absence of Nasarullah. Therefore, being in a tight pressure-cooker of such odd circumstances, Habibullah announced that he would hand over reins to his brother Nasar.
the condition that Nasar’s daughter would be given away to Prince. But Amanullah’s mother by means of chicanery wanted to make the path of his son thornless.

The 23rd and 24th chapters of ‘Dese-Bidese’ had been respectively crowded with references to these historical facts. The second queen, this the stepmother of Prince, pressed Kawkab of an aristocratic Kabul family into the place of Nassarullah’s daughter, realising it, Habibullah married Suraiya, younger sister of Kawkab to Amanullah, assassination of Habibullah, the responsibility of assassination was pinned on brother Nassarullah, the seizure of power by Amanullah— and many other historical references had been portrayed by Mujtaba on the strength of authentic historical facts, despite his comments in this regard on one occasion: “এসব আমার শোনা কথা—কতটা ঠিক কতটা ভুল হলে করে বলতে পারব না।”

That the ‘শোনা কথা’ (hearsay) of Mujtaba has its roots in the historical facts is beyond question.

Mujtaba had been to Kabul during the period of Amanullah. It was an important era for the Afgan history. The role of two women is said to be unfathomable in the life of Amanullah. First, his mother ‘Uliaya Hazart’, and secondly his wife Suraiya. Suraiya belonged to a family which was routinized according to modern way of life shaped and fashioned by western education. Her father Mahmud Torzee, a man of towesing personality, was journalist, and who was subsequently appointed Foreign Secretary. Amanullah’s father-in-law had an enormous influence on Amanullah.

No sooner had Amanullah come to power, than he declared war against the English and side by side, in order to modernize the way of life of Afganistan
in the twinkling of an eye, he adopted some doughty but irrational and absurd and ludicrous measures. In the words of Mujtaba: “কাবুল শহর তখন আমান উল্লার চারুক থেকে পাগলা ঘোড়ার মত ছুটে চলেছে...” The host of measures that were adopted by Amanullah are found in the creation of Mujtaba.

“১. মোয়েদের শিক্ষার জন্য আমানউল্লার আর তার বেগম বিনী সুরাইয়া উঠে পড়ে লেগেছে। বোরকা পরে এক কাবুল শহরেই প্রায় দুঃহাজার মেয়ে ইসলামে যায়, উচু পাঁচিবেলা আফিনায় বাজেট-বল, ভলি-বল খেলে।”

২. কাবুল শহরেই ’দেরেশি’ পরাশুর হয়েছে মহামারি আকারে। ’দেরেশি’ কথাটা ইংরেজি ’ড্রেস’ থেকে এসেছে। হাট, কোট, টাই, পাঁজ্জুন সমত সাহেবি পোশাক। সরকারি কর্মচারী হলেই তাকে ’দেরেশি’ পরতে হবে।”

৩. হারমের মেয়েরা রক প্রাঙ্গণে ধরা ছেড়েছেনই, এবারে সাধারণ নারীরা ’উচু হিলের জুতো, ইটু পর্যায় রক, আর্ক সিল্কের মোজা, লপ্তা হাতার অট্টাল প্রাঙ্গণ, দানা আর হাট পরে বেড়িয়ে বেড়াচ্ছেন।” ৩২

While delineating the set of events, Mujtaba brought some more measures of that ilk into light scattered 26th chapter to 32nd chapter for the information of the readers:

ক. “শুতুবারের বদলে বৃহস্পতিবার ছুটির দিন করা।” ৩৩

খ. “কাস্পিটার উপর পায়ানে বসে সোপান চালান কামাক্ষী করা হল; সব সোপানে বিলিতি কামান্ড দেয়া টোলি চাই।” ৩৪

গ. “আফ্গান সোপানের মানা করা হয়েছে, তারা যেন কোনো মোল্লাকে মুর্শীদ না বনায় অর্থৎ শুরু করার করে যেন মনুষ্য না নেয়।” ৩৫

ঘ. “একদল আফ্গান মোয়েদেকে উচ্চ শিক্ষার জন্য তুল্যতে পাঠানো হবে; স্রষ্টা বান্ধবা উপস্থিত থেকে তাদের বিদায় আশীর্বাদ দেবেন।” ৩৬

A capitation tax of rupees five for each Afgan was imposed along with these reformative steps.

Reading upto this extent of ‘Dese-Bideshe’, a reader naturally forgets that it is a travelogue. A touch of accounts of travelling is no more. Mujtaba made here no mention of his course of going to and coming from barring various pieces of information regarding Kabul. After living for seven months
in the suburb of Kabul, the writer during winter was on vacation in this native land Sylhet for two months. The description of his journey from Kabul to Sylhet.

Mujtaba finished the description of his coming from and going back to the 19th chapter— the smallest one of ‘Desê-Bidesê’.

After a year the writer came back to the city and used to stay with Mr. Benwa in the same residence adjacent to the Russian Embassy by the side of the Kasul river. The writer got the chance to witness the crisis-hit Kabul from a close range.

The mollaheracy and the tribe gradually got agitated against these reformative measures of Amanullah; and which led to break out the Sinwari Mutiny (Revolt), moreover, many rumours instigated it. Dut to all these the public life of Kabul day by day became restless. Abdur Rahman was the reporter -cum-servant of the writer. He supplied “Sambad Bulletin” (News Bulletin) to the writer repeatedly from morning to night. When the situation was very explosive, then Baccha-e-Sakaw, a gang leader of three hundred decoits of north Kabul, invaded Kabul. The writer described the condition of this civil war in the 34th chapter. There were anarchy, lootings and murders everywhere. The booming of guns was heard from all directions. It continued whole night, and the people streamed out in the streets in the morning. People from the village gathered in large number in the streets of Kabul just to loot. The situation was dreadfully still. There was no way to determine true or false. Every thing stood on rumours. The writer coming near the Arch Fort where Humayun was born, saw that the army officers were instigating the people against Baccha distributing guns among them freely. Every boy was
going away with the guns, but nobody was going to the battle side. Seizing
the opportunity, the writer’s servant Abdur Rahman brought a new and shiny
rifle for the writer and told him:

“হজুর, চাই করে একখানা কাগজে লিখে দিন আপনার রাইফেল নেই। আমি আরেকটা নিয়ে আসি।”

The mind of the writer was then migrating to the house of his
Santiniketan’s companion Maulana, Ziyauddin. The residence of Maulana was
the foot of the hill of Dah Afganistan and the fight was going on there. The
wife of Maulana was at the advanced stage of pregnancy. The writer went
next day in search of them and they were brought somehow.

Four days elapsed in this way; and the situation seemed to be quite
suffocating accompanied by the wintry atmosphere of the month of Decem­
ber. They were to go without food as the shops were closed. But they passed
their days taking just bread, tea and dal. Meanwhile, the British ambassador
Sir Frances Hamfray met Amanullah and made the arrangements for the evacu­
ation of the foreigners. All were going away except the Indian. Mijtaba wrote:

After a month of lawlessness, it was learned in the middle of January that
Amanullah left Kabul and Bacchha-e-Sakaw captured the corridor of power.
Issuing a firman, Baccha directed that all the native and foreign school mas­
ters and Professors had been dismissed and the schools and colleges to be
closed. This declaration brought an end to the stay of Majtaba in Kabul.
When Maulana Jiyauddin was passing time in starvation and wintry weather,
then came across one of the ex-students of the writer. He was then ‘Colonel’
of Baccha’s army. Maulana was blessed with food after many days at the mercy of that student. The writer saved him from the verge of death. All well that ends well. The writer got rid of two consecutive problems. One, to get a chance of studying in Germany through an officer of German Embassy and at last his arrangement of return to India by the courtesy of the British Embassy.

The first thing that comes to our notice after reading ‘Deśe-Bediše’ is its characterization:

“যে মানুষগুলির ছবি তিনি এঁকেছেন তারা প্রতোকেই জীবন্ত, প্রতোকেই বিশিষ্টতা-যুক্ত। ডাক্তার আলীর চোখে দেখে তাদের সঙ্গে আমাদেরও দোকি হয়ে যায়—মেন হয়, তারাও আমাদের চেনা, আমাদের পরিচিত। যাদের পথে বা কাবুলে অবস্থানিকালে, চলচ্চিত্রের মত তার কথার যাত্রা যাদের ছবি তিনি নিয়েছেন, তারা প্রতোকেই প্রাণ পেয়েছে—সাহিত্যের ক্ষেত্রে আর সাহিত্যের ক্ষেত্র থেকে পাঠকের হাসদে তারা অমর হয়ে থাকবে।”  

We see a galaxy of queer personalities in the book from the very beginning. The native Anglo-Indian of Taltala, co-travellers Sardarji and a Pathan in the train, a Pathan friend Ahmed Ali of Peswar, an old Sikh bus-driver, Afgan raido-employee, poet-officer of the Dokka Fort, witty friend Mir Aslam, Professor Saiful Alam, Professor Dost Mohammad, Mr. Benwa, Professor of the Persian language and whom the writer knew from Santiniketan, the Russian Professor Bogdanof, and Demidof, Bolsof, and the other gentry—the writer’s friends from the Russian Embassy, the writer’s students who happened a colonel and relative of Baccha-e-Sakao, and bosom friend Jiyauddin, and above all, constant companion and servant Abdur Rahman have been able to impress upon the readers permanently.

Our curiosity seems to have no end about Abdur Rahman. We have met him for the first time in the chapter 15. Mujtaba gave the description of Abdur Rahman in this way:
He was in shalwar, kurta an washkit. He hailed from Pansir and he was an expert in the matter of snow. But only his eyes could not be seen, as his eyes were carpeted with bushy eyelesh. He was stick to Afgan culture and etiquette upto the last day—one should not look at the eyes of his master.

Though he was physically gigantic, yet the readers along with writer discovered a pure man coupled with loyalty, faithfulness, flower-like tenderness and childlike simplicity in him. This wonderfully good-natured character, who was physically like mythical Bhimsen as well as able to cooking like him too, a friend in time of crisis, an unfailing companion to his master in his weal and woe, is not only an exceptional character in ‘Dese-Bidese’ but in the whole domain of Bengali literature. A great deal of interest and curiosity was also there about him among the contemporary litterateures. So, Mujtaba wrote to his writer-friend ‘Jarasandha’:

"আপনি সহজল। তাই আবুবুর রহমানো—সেও দরদী ছিল—আপনার হাদয় সরাসরি চুকে গেছে। আপনার মজা কোনো সময় যখনই তার প্রশিক্ষা করেন তখনই আমার মনে বড় সুন্দর।" জাগে, তার সম্ভাবনা তো আরো অনেক অনেক কিছু বলার ছিল, কিন্তু আপনি কঠোর লেখক, বিলক্ষণ অবগত আছেন, কোনো চারিদিন অঙ্গে একটা অপরিমাম মাত্রা আছে। কিছু বলতে পারেন, আপনার ( ‘আমার’ না বলে "আপনারই" বললুম, কারণ সে ছিল আমার সৈনিক জীবনের ডালালতাতে আর আপনার কাছে রসপ্রতিম। ) আবুবুর রহমান আমার কাজের উপেক্ষা উমিলা।"  41

We love Abhur Rahman for many a reason. His childlike activities and emotional talks easily help us to be familiar with his heart. We come to know that though he is physically gigantic, but his mind is as tender as flower. He drove away the gang of dacoits on the night of war by means of bullets and
that was of his robust physical ability, moreover, at the same he began bounc-
ing and pouncing like the children out of joy. His coming in Kabul’s fashion-
able ‘Deresi’ provides us with spotless humour. He supplies as a “personal
reporter” of his master the hot facts of the rumour both in the morning and
and in the evening. He does not like to keep his master out of sight during the
war time, so he wanted to sleep in the very room of his master. The writer was
out of job. The want of food was getting harder. When the writer wanted to
say good-bye to Abdur Rahman as he was getting thinner due to want of
food, his voice was chocked with wounded feelings and emotions: “আজ কিছু
জুটছে না বলে আমাকে খেদিয়ে দিতে চান? আমি কি এতই নিম্বক্ষারাম?”

The character of Abdur Rahman become brighter when the last phases
of the writer’s sojourn in Kabul was marked with disease and starvation.
Under such circumstances, Abdur Rahman seems to be like to serve of
Rabindranath’s poem “Puratan Bhritya”.

Tears blurred the eyes of Abdur Rahman when the hours of departure
arrived. He covered his eyes with the two hands of the writer, tear were well-
ing up in his eyes. That very moment even the eyes of the reader are filled up
with tears.

When the writer spoke his last word before boarding the plane: “বল
আমাকে খুদা, আব্দুর রহমান” (I place you in the custody of Almighty), then Abdur
Rahman, too, replied in the grave sonorous voice: “বল খুদা সপূর্বমৎ, সাহেব” (I two.
place you at the benign care of God, Saheb)

As the plan was soaring up, the immense layer of white snow was seen
through its window. Abdur Rahman waved the end of his turban from the
airfield to bid good bye to his master. Majtaba wrote:
Some salient features of this book of Sayed Majtaba come to our notice and which are as follows:

1. Various lights of knowledge are there in every line of the book. The pros and cons of history, philology and linguistics, archeology, custom and usage of a country, have repeatedly been spotlighted in the book, no where the literary taste and purity has been otherwise due to accumulation of such facts.

2. The chief charm of Mujtaba’s literature is its humour and what is even available in this very first book of Mujtaba. The introduction witty remarks, drollery and mockery have enhanced the suaveness of language. Even the description of unspeakably rainy days of life have been touched with pale smile. Of course, the shadow of melancholy lies behind the smiles and frolics.

3. The use of mighty language is found in the expression of the literary charm of the book. We are amazed at finding the excellent description of serious subjects in lighter style; and synchronising the writer used both native and foreign vocabulary including Arabic and Persian in a dexterous way at their right place. In the words of Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay:

"বহুকালি পড়তে আরন্ত করলে, বাঙ্গলা ভাষার সূক্ষ্মার্থ মেহেরী লেখকের এই ভাষার প্রয়োগ দেখে কেউ সাধারণ না করে পারবেন না। বাঙালিভাষার শক্তি আর সৌন্দর্য তার বাচ্চনক্রমতা আর ভাবপ্রচুর, আবার তার অজন্ততা আর বৈচিত্র্য—একজন, চল্লি বাঙলায় কত জোরদার ভাষা, তা ইনি নিজের বিশিষ্ট ভঙ্গীতে বা চঙ্গ নেতুন করে প্রকাশ করে দিয়েছেন। এই রকম ভাষা পৃথিবীর যে কেউ কেউ শ্রেষ্ঠ ভাষার সঙ্গে তাঁর রেখে চলতে পারে, তাতে সন্দেহ নেই। অনন্যিন্তায় শক্তিকে ঠেনে বার করাই মুন্সিয়ানা—ভাস্কর মুঝতা আলী সে মুন্সিয়ানার অধিকারী। সহজভাবে কথার মত সুপ্রসেক শক্তিশালী ভাষার বর্ম তার লেখার ভাবেই ঘটেছে।"
Some scholars like to put ‘Dese-Bedese’ to the category of belles letters judging and considering the propensity of Alisaheb in expressing the serious subject in a lighter style. Distinguished critic Hirendranath Dutta wrote:

“সেয়দ মুজতবা আলীর ‘দেশে-বিদেশে’ তার নিজস্ব ভঙ্গিতে হলেও কতকটা ‘পথে প্রবাসে’।
র ডঃ এ লেখা, অর্থাৎ আদর্শ রচনা। অভিলম্ব সুখপাঠ্য প্রাচু।”

On the other hand, some other scholars discovered the trace of unit of Pramatha Choudhury and the satire of Unpendranath Bandyopadhyay. 45

4. Whenever Mujtaba tried to deviate from the path of light style, inquisitive vision, wit and humour, then and there his style took a new turn and we get the indication of it in the thorough delineation of nature in the book. Sometime the art of language gained poetic rhythm in case of the description of nature. It seems, as if, a different self of Mujtaba is speaking out.

5. In the book, Mujtaba observed everything from the angle of ordinary travel-fondness. He dived deep into the core of a country and time. He portrayed numberless characters, a collective society and time. Mujtaba tried to picturise the wholeness.

6. Though the book opens with the lines of travelling, but it ultimately turned to be an excellent story. So, the taste of a novel is felt at extremity of the book.

7. We realise two kind of selves of the writer individual and international and side by side deep sense of loyalty to Rabindranath.

“তিনি একদিকে যেমন international, বিশ্বের একজন, বিশ্বাসনিকতায় ভরপূর
উচ্চশিক্ষিত ব্যক্তি, ... অন্যদিকে তিনি হচ্ছেন বাঁটি বাঙালি।”

B. Jale-Dāngay:

‘Jale-Dāngay’ was written in 1953 at the end of the winter season while he was in Maymonsing. The novel ‘Abisvasya’ was just on the way of comple-
tion. Sitting in the varandah every morning he used to write it; and little child Firoz went on making a lot of trouble near him. And at that time at the interest of wife Rabeya, he started to write a book for the children. Majtaba wrote the purpose of ‘Jale-Dāngay’ for Firoz in his diary-page of 3rd October 1956.

We come to know from that very diary:

“এর কয়েকটা instalment আমি ৪৮-৪৯ সালে ‘বসুমতী’-তে প্রকাশ করেছিলুম বটে কিন্তু তারপর ওটার কথা ভাবিছি। তাই নতুন উৎসাহে বইটা লিখতে আরম্ভ করলুম।

উৎসাহের কারণ:

1. তোমার মা বলেছেন

2. সেখানে, তোমার বয়স যখন ১২/১৪ হবে, তখন তো আমি এ-লোকে থাকবো না।

তাই তোমার জন্যে তোমার ঐ বয়সের উপন্যাস—কিছু লিখে গেলে তুমি খুশী হবে। উপন্যাস
‘জলে-ঝাজে’ বসুমতীতে বরেছে!“ 47

It is mentioned in the bibliography of the works of Mujtaba about the book:

“‘জলে-ঝাজে’ সম্বন্ধে সৈয়দ মুজতবা আলীর এককাত শিপোলা উপন্যাস কিংবা অমণকাহিনী। ‘জলে ঝাজে’ বেঙ্গল পাবলিশার্স প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড... থেকে মাঝ ১৩৬৩ বঙ্গাব্দে প্রথম প্রকাশিত হয়।” 48

The dedication-note of ‘Jale-Dāngay’ is also of different nature. He wrote that book keeping the subject of his little son Firoz in his mind, no doubt about it. The note carries the fatherly emotions and sentiments:

“বাবা ফিরোজ, অমণ-কাহিনী তুমি যেদিন প্রথম পড়তে শুরু করবে সেদিন খুব সত্য আমি গ্রহ-সূর্যে তারায়-তারায় যেতে বেড়াচ্ছি। সে বড় মজার অমণ—তাতে টিক্কিট লাগে না, ‘বিভাজিকা’ও দরকার নেই। কিন্তু, হয় যেখান থেকে অমণ-কাহিনী পাঠাবার কোনো ব্যবস্থা এখনো হয়নি। ফেব্রুয়ারী উপায় নেই।

তাই এই বেলাই এটা লিখে রাখছি।

শার্মিনেকেন তোমার
পৌষপার্ব্ব, ১৩৬৩। আকু।” 49
The incident narrated in 'Jale-Dāngay’ covers the year 1929. During the first part of 1929 Mujtaba was able to save himself somehow from the clutch of trouble-torn Kabul and returned to his native land. During the last days at Kabul, an arrangement for his studies in a foreign land was made on account of his correspondance with a certain employee of German embassy. At that time the degree from 'Visva-Bharati' was not recognised in any foreign countries. However, there was even exception to it. Germany which happened to be defeated by British power recognised 'Visva-Bharati' of India and Jamiya Milia University of Delhi. Seizing that chance, Mujtaba set out for Europe. Mujtaba sailed for Europe in the month of September 1929 from Bombay (now Mumbai) by a ship named ‘Me-ssagerie Maritimes’ of a French shipping company. The journey route of this book is from Madras (Chennai) to Egypt. The first part is in the ship, so it is 'Jale' (water) and the last part relates to the road, so it is 'Dāngay' (land).

Though 'Jale-Dāngay’ was primarily written for the children, yet sometimes, the lines about history and society were also included. Apart from that, there is a galaxy of some queer characters, description of the journey. Subject for discussion had undergone repeated changes, yet, above all, an interesting atmosphere remains intact.

The total number of chapters of 'Jale-Dāngay’ is 23. The journey began from Madras (Chennai) to Suez Canal and Port Syed via Colombo and at last toward Palestine. The writer spent most of the time on the ship than on the land. Some time was spent on the road leading to Egypt. The description ended in small supplement of the book where the writer dedicated his unwritten story to his journey-companions Paul and Persy.
Mujtaba began unlocking the doors of various topics in his own style as soon as the ship left the port. He was giving almost in conversational way the titbits of facts for the children. The tumultuous condition for the sailing of ship, description of sumptuous feast of a Bengalee family by means of Sukumar Ray’s poem, many facts of many countries of the time when ship started its journey, topic of the shipman have been actually considered as the introduction to the book. Now and then some chains of recollections followed coupled with the description of life on the ship. The catching of fishes by the fisherman at the coastal area of Madras remained the writer about their passing of days in abject poverty. The writer even began to think about the crews, sailors and shipmen of the ship and these people feel a strong urge for the land remaining most of the time in the seas and oceans. On the other hand, they are also charmed by the call of the sea. Incidentally, the circumstances remained the writer of the Beduins and Gypsy tribes and their enjoyment of life lies in the abandoning of their hearth and home.

We got acquainted with two little friends Paul and Persy of the writer at the end of the first chapter. Funs and talks with them are the special attractions of ‘Jale Dāggay’. Short tales, light fun, or humorous talks become very much enjoyable. The ship went on and the ‘adda’ (friendly talks) too continued at the same rhythm. The writer in course of “adda” advanced and provided many facts of many countries. The writer began reading a big book containing the information about the climatic condition of the Arabian sea and we come to know from his assertion:

“উভয়-পূর্ব দিকে মূম্ব মৌসুমী হাওয়া বইছে তখনো—এই হাওয়ায় পাল তুলে দিয়েছি ভাস্কো দা গামা আফ্রিকা থেকে ভারতে পৌছতে পেরেছিলেন। কিন্তু এই সময়ে ঐহাওয়া ভারতের দিকে অধ আবিষ্কার গামার নয়। আরবরা এ হাওয়ায় গতিরিক্ষ সম্বন্ধে বিলক্ষণ ওপর-হাল ছিল”
The ship was probably advancing touching the lines of Maldeep and constant talked with Paul and Persy, too, continued. Many facts about the life of the people and environment of Maldeep have been portrayed by the lucid language of the writer. It is learnt from the boy of Maldeep with whom the writer had a talk at Cairo’s world famous Islami University called Azhar University that the word “atithi” (guest) has no synonym in Maldeep, as no foreigners came to Maldeep for a long long time. There was nothing to do but he had sufficient time. The rest of the life could have passed unemployedly. This comment of the writer reminds us a song of Rabindranath. But it is in the opinion of the writer:

“বাকি জীবন কেন, তিনটি মাসও সেখানে কাটাতে পারে না। তার কারণ সেখানে কেনে কাজ করার নেই, সেখানে কাজ না করাতাই হয়ে দাঁড়ানো কাজের কাজ।”  

The writer had a talk with Abul Asfia Nuruddin Mohammad Abdul Karim Siddique on the ship. He was a man of queere nature with queer dress. A chain of pockets was fitted all over the dress. One packet contained one particular thing. Taking out the gold case from the pocket, he handed over the visiting card to the writer from the case. Even sticks of cigarettes were stored in the gold case and a lighter with Jaypur’s minar carved over it. He was miles older than the writer and he was a taciturn. His numberless pockets were packed up with valuable things, but he was travelling by an ordinary tourist class of the ship. why? A volley of questions crowded the headed of the writer:

“আমার মনের ভিতর দিয়ে হড়-মুড় করে এক পল্টন সেপাইয়ের মতো পাঙ্কাশ সার প্রশ্ন চারে গেল।”
This peculiar sort of man is the chief attraction of ‘Jale-Dāngay’. Though in the beginning he remained silent, but ultimately this very man happened to be the team leader.

Travelling did never remain as mere wandering to Mujtaba. He provided all the unknown information for the readers in course of discussion. Every line of the travelogue is laden with immense information of knowledge and wisdom as well as the analysis over the civilization. He enriched his every short sentences with facts and truths:

“...”

Discussing many subjects with Paul and Persy, he told them ‘Giraffi Kahini’ responsible for Indo-china friendship and the reference of poet Hafiz of Iran also came in course of the ‘Kahini’ (Story), moreover, Majbaba also let us know adding a footnote: “Hafiz’s verse where Utkustin Bagula anubad korechhene kushchna moshumadar.” The ‘Gifaff Katrini’ gradually became humorous like a fairytale; and then it comes to our mind that Mujtaba did not forget at all that he was writing something for the children. That historical facts can also be presented in a lucid way and what is a matter of credit, too, is remarkably obvious from the following comments of Majtaba:

“...”

The writer remembered the poem of Rabindranath while his ship was crossing by the Jibuti Port, and the act of European barbarism over Africa.
also came to his mind. The imperialistic power fell upon African Somalee, Naegra, Bantu, Hotentot time and again.

As Mujtaba carried the historical analysis whenever the opportunity came, so also we get the presence of universal modernism, humanism and scientific thoughts in his writer’s self from his many comments. Through these comments he also tried to impart the universal truths among the children.

The writer beautifully delineated the swarms of flies of Jibuti Port. The ship is in motion now. Though everybody somehow got rid of the flies, but all were fatigued due to hot and sultry atmosphere. What the passengers of the ship generally did to kill time in such circumstance was, too, narrated by the writer:

A. To kill time playing at cards (“জাহাজে একটানা ছুকিশ ঘষ্টা তাস খেলেছে এমন ঘষ্টা ও বিলন নয়”)

B. The second party read books and most of them were detective novels.

C. The third party was engaged in ‘adda’ (friendly talk). The chief item of the ‘menu’ of ‘adda’ was vilification and slandering and everything continued in full swing.

But Abul Asfia, a man of peculiar nature, did not belong to this category. He was led by his personal principle.

When Majtaba was telling the readers about the public life on the ship, then followed the important news. What was the news? It is as follows:

"জাহাজ সুয়েজ বন্দরে পৌছনোর পর চুকরে সুয়েজ খালে। খালটি একশ মাইল লম্বা। দু’ পাড়ে মরক্কুরির বালু বলে জাহাজকে এগার হয় ঘষ্টা। পাঁচ মাইল বেগে। তাহলে লাগেল প্রায় কুড়ি-হাইশ ঘষ্টা। খালের এমুখে সুয়েজ বন্দর, ও-মুখে সৈয়দ বন্দর। আমরা যদি সুয়েজ বন্দরে নেমে ট্রেন ধরে কাইলে চলে যাই এবং পিরামিড দেখে সেখান থেকে ট্রেন ধরে সৈয়দ বন্দরে পৌছই, তবে আপনাদের আপন জাহাজই আবার ধরতে পারব।" 56
Here finishes the ‘Jale’ (water) part and begins the ‘Daŋgay’ (land) part. The journey with the desire of visiting the Pyramids under the care of Abul Asfia began. Even at the time of disembarking the launch at Suez Canal, he informed in his instinctive style that the word ‘Bombate’ has come from Portugese word ‘Bomba’ or ‘Bomb’ here and there.

The writer recorded a lot of experiences such as facing the trouble for health certificate after disembarking at the port, failed to catch the train, journey towards the desert by taxy, reaching Cairo at 11 PM, description of the restaurants of Cairo. Not only the journey-related experiences, but also numberless memories, stories, different subjects got assimilated by the strokes of the writer’s pen.

The writer introduced with the world-famous Pyramids in the 18th chapter. Here he perfectly used the facts and dates and years. The writer wrote about the pyramids almost extensively. The writer interestingly presented the description of the city of Cairo, realisation of seeing the Pyramid in moonlit night and about the people living in the vicinity of the Pyramids. And at last came the topic of millenium old Azhar University. In this way, with many a tit bit the writer completed ‘Jale-Dâŋgay’. Of course, the story ended with the writer’s planning of visiting Cairo.

Though ‘Jale-Dâŋgay’ was mainly written for the children, yet Mujtaba was present in it with all his talents and calibre. And the writer did never slip from A to Z from his own style of narration. But since the writing happened to be an autobiographical one, so we mark some changes in the series of events of the writer’s life. For instance though the story of ‘Jale-Dâŋgay’ relates to the year 1929, yet the writer has cited his memories associated with his days
in Bangalore, and that was just for the sake of the story.

However, what was commented about the book after its publication is fit to be mentioned this moment.

"...because the book was written for the sake of the story. Whatever was commented about the book after its publication is fit to be mentioned now.

"...because the book was written for the sake of the story. Whatever was commented about the book after its publication is fit to be mentioned now.

116

The story is finished in a smaller limit. The writer went on foot to enjoy the natural beauty of Raine closely, and for
which he had to maintain a bohemian lifestyle to some extent. Mujtaba’s landlady guided him.

Mujtaba wrote a brief introduction on the vagabonds of the world at the beginning for the reader while he himself intended to be a vagabond. Then he wrote:

“The time the Raine flows the house of the peasant turns into a garden. The world of nature of the Raine is a social affair and an investigation to be as it is. If you look at it, it is on the edge of the world, in the background of the world, and in the background of the world. Mariyana and her grandmother, Termer and his wife, the pear-seller, Kyete-Auto and many other personalities of multifaceted natures have been all over the writing of the writer. One of the salient features of ‘Bhabaghure’ is that the life and the nature that stand on the banks of Raine got conglomerated into oneness.

The writer crossed and crossed on foot and the picture of the German rural life on either sides of the Raine also bewitched the eyes of the writer. The man whom the writer met after half an hour’s walk was Termer. After taking for a while for acquaintance, he candidly told the tale of weal and woe of his own life to a travelling foreign tramp, and even he talked about his termagant wife and then he heaved a long and deep sigh. But when Mujtaba himself met the wife of Termer, then a different horizon of that German complex unfolded. The writer felt the cries of the heart of the wife of Termer who was
childless and lonely. The writer realized thoroughly and deeply as why that very couple was pauper and lonely in spite of having everything:

"...এখন আমার মনে হল, দু'জনকের ডিজারা ডালের সুন্দরী আছে যখন, কিন্তু একজনকে ডালের সুন্দরী আছে যখন, আর একজনকে সুন্দরী আছে যখন। এ মেয়ে শাহী গাঁজী তুমি বলিব। স্বামী বাচ্চা নিয়ে নিজেকে ধরিয়ে চায়, আর গুলিকে টেরে ইয়ার-দোড়ের ছাড় না পাচজনের পাঁচ রকমের সুখ-দুঃখের কথা না-শুনলে, না-লালে, তার মনে হয় তার জীবনটা যেন সর্বক্ষণ অসম্পূর্ণ রয়ে গেল।" 

Another interesting character of 'Bhabaghure' is Mariyana. She drew the attention of the writer from amongst a group of children that was on the main road of the village—a fair-complexioned and good-looking fairy like girl of 10/12 year old. She took the writer, a tramp, to her home. She got three members of her family. The girl herself, her grandmother and their indolent Karl—these are the three members. The writer gathered a lot of experiences visiting her home. The German rural food stuff, village life, etiquette and even the tiny materials used in the German rural kitchen room, arrangements in the kitchen room did never escape the notice of the writer. So, the writer frankly expressed his opinion:

"...এই গ্রামাঞ্চলে ঘোরাধুরির ফলে মানুষের জীবনধারা সবশেষে যে জ্ঞান অর্জন করেছি, শহরের বহু ঘোরাধুরির, বাড়ি-ভেঙে গাঁজীর পাঁচ পাঁচির হয়ে তার সেবিক বিবিক হয়নি।" 

Mariya had no mother. Sometimes she used to go to the graveyard along with her grandmother to meet her mother. Hearing this, tears came in the eyes of the writer. This reminded the poet Rabindranath’s poem “Māke Aāmār Pāre Nā Mone” and even the memory of his own mother came to his mind. Moreover, the writer remembered Hyen’s poem “Mātār Uddeśe’ in translation by Satyen Dutta. In this way, the tales of the lives and persons mingled with the writer’s description of his journey.
Torrential rains came down while the writer was working across the road. Being soaked with the torrential rains, the writer was seeking refuge in a house. But it was not actually a residential building rather a pub-cum-house. Here the writer met Kyete Krisnar of excellent nature and character. The writer felt and understood every moment of Kyete’s struggle of life, pains and deprivations, his mind just within a short spell of his acquaintance with her, or, Kyete herself touched the heart of the writer and readers. As she gave shelter to a helpless travelling friend, and consoled with hircane and nursing so she looked after the customers with all the responsibilities. She was the helmsman of the family and tolerated everything for the sake of her mother and sister. She was a woman of indomitable courage; but she could even love anyone. Her heart was filled up with every richness. The vision of life of Auto took a new turn as soon as he got approached Kyete with the offer of love. As he crossed the limit of his addiction for wine while he was working as an apprentice, so he, too, religiously orthodox coming in contact of a clergyman. On the one hand, Kyete’s responsibility of upholding family trade and maintaining the livelihood, and on the other hand, the clarion call of Auto for the preaching of religious faiths— she was as if warped by two different principles. In such situation there was the advent of the writer. Kyete played a German folksong on her piano for the writer at the parting time. The writer presented the original song with its Bengali translation for us.

It seems to use in the conclusion of ‘Bhabaghure’ that the truth of life happens to be superior on the pretext of travelling, and as a result the tale appears to be unending despite being over. Actually, Mujtaba didn’t wind up the tale. At the end of the writing, it was declared that “First Part is finished”,
but the second part failed to be materialised. Mujtaba wrote to Dipankar Basu, the son of the grandson of Rajshekhar Basu, when the first part was published:

"’আর্চ-ভব্যুর’ আরো একটু পরে বেরবে। দুটো চারটে উটকে লিখে নি। একবার ঐ দেখে মজলে লবজান। আসলে উচিত ‘ভব্যুর’ দেশে ও ‘পঞ্জত্ত্ব’ আনন্দবাজার রবিবাসরীনীতে লেখা।" 62

We mark some sort of oscillations in the mind of Mujtaba over the finishing part of the writing while it was being published serially. Mujtaba himself informed Dipankar Basu of it:

"সুপার ট্যাপিঙে নিয়ে বিপদে পড়েছি। তার প্রধান কাজ ছিল, নিজকে পরোপকারের সে জনপদবাসীদের দেহরক্ষণ করতে করতে এগোতে।—সেটা লিখি কি প্রকাশ।" 63

So, the finishing part of ‘Bhabaghure’ remained unwritten for even.

D. Musāphir:

‘Musaphir’ was published in book-form in 1971. The finishing part of this book is the first part of ‘Bidesē’. The first part of ‘Musāphir’ was serially published in the ‘Ananda Bāzār Patrika’ from 13 November 1958. It came to an end with the publication of its 16th instalment. The last part being entitled as ‘Bidesē’ began appearing in ‘Pancatantra’ column of the weekly ‘Deś’ from 30th January 1971.

‘Musāphir’ has actually three parts: a. Musāphir b. Tretā c. Dwapar. Of course, Mujtaba wrote the part ‘Tretā’ before ‘Dwapar’. It is in his own words as follows:

"… ’মোহ্যা’ যুগটি আমি লিখেছি (’মোহ্যার’ পরে)। কেন, সেটা যারা তাপসী অহল্যার কাহিনী পড়েছেন তারাই জানেন) হাসপাতালে।” 64

The subject matter of ‘Musaphir’ may be divided as follows:

a. Mujtaba went on a tour to England in 1958 for three weeks. The first
part of ‘Musāphir’, bears this very narration.

b. The next subject is Germany. Mujtaba for the first time went to Germany for study. The mention of those memories is here to some extent. Besides, the exchange of and relation of Indo-German cultures and the practice of Indology got importance in it.

c. In the part ‘Treta’, the writer delineated the fragmented pictures of his autobiographical sketch.

d. The extreme part of ‘Musāphir’ is the first part of ‘Bideše’. Mujtaba recorded the accounts of his journey to Germany in 1970 in this very part entitled ‘Dwapar’.

Chandidas Chattopadhyay wrote in his introduction to ‘Musāphir’:

“‘Musāphir’-এর কাহিনী শুরু হয়েছে ইংরেজদের দেশ ইংল্যান্ডকে নিয়ে। তিনি ইংল্যান্ডে গিয়েছিলেন তিনিই বলে পারে। ইতিমধ্যে দুই তৃতীয় মহাযুদ্ধ আগবাক বোমা দিয়ে শেষ হয়েছে। ইংল্যান্ডের ধরনধারণ—চালচলন সব পালটে গিয়েছে। লেখকের সে দেশের আধুনিক আচার-আচরণ আহ্ত করেছে—গাথা দিয়েছে।

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...যুদ্ধ-বিধ্বস্ত মহাযুদ্ধ যুগের এমন চিত্র আহ্ন কাহিনীর মধ্য দিয়ে একমাত্র সৈয়দ মুজতবা আলিহী লিখতে পারতেন।” 65

The lapse of thirty years as mentioned in the initial phase of ‘Musaphir’ forced Mujtaba to study Europe from a new angle. The total way of life and the sense of values had gone under a change. Dress, food, way of life—new waves of taste began sweeping everywhere. If someone looked down through the windows of the hotel, it would be tough for him to differentiate between a boy and a girl. Thirty years ago the girls did not visit either restaurant or hotel for dinner, but after the ebbing of thirty years, the girls visiting the ‘Bar’ sipped their beer easily.

The shifting wind of the British life and the critical lines on the Britishers
as well as the positive sides of the Britishers have been discussed. The writer gave the threadbare description appreciating the British Museum Library with great cagerness. So, he wrote of his bewitchment before boarding the plane.

The instinctive literary style of Mujtaba is thoroughly present even in 'Musāphir'. Speaking a lot of about this or that, he came back to main point and remarked: 'মূল কথায় ফিরে যাই' . The presence of varieties in the subject-matter are new and perfect. The topics like the tale of an old woman of a small bar adjacent to Kensilton Church, the reference of Eliot, the references of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Trotsky, the problem of food and clothing in England in the post-war period, sometimes the references of eating and translations, the character of the English etc. all are coming in a disorder way, nevertheless, it has the capacity of attracting the readers equally. Now and then the writer even spoke of his own life an writings. In course of this autobiographical narration, Mujtaba expressed some ideas about travelling and the writer of the travelogue such as:

"বৈশ্ব ভাব লোক দেশভ্রমণে যায় নুতন কিছু দেখবার জন্য। এবং গিয়ে সেখানেই জল, সেই যায়। আবার অনেক লোক বিদেশ গিয়ে সঙ্গে সঙ্গে দেশের সঙ্গে দেশে যায়। প্যারিস গিয়ে খবর নেয়, সেখানে অপন দেশের কেউ আছে কি না। তাকে খুঁজে বের করে খুধায়, 'রাইস-কারি কোথায় পাওয়া যায়?'

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কিছু হয়তো তথ্য পরিবর্তন করেন। সেটা যদি রসরূপে প্রকাশিত হয়, তবে আরো ভালো।

কিন্তু রস নেই এবং তরুণরী যদি সে তথ্য কারো কানে কানে না লাগে তবে সেটা বলে কি লাভ

আমি ঠিক বুঝতে পারি নে।'" 66

The chapter ‘Treta’ of ‘Musāphir’ is actually an assemblage of many facts regarding by the writer’s personal life. The writer tried to frame up many pieces of pictures of the memories of his life after forty years. A series of flashbacks is prominent in the whole chapter. The writer planned to write of
his first visit to Germany in this youthful days, student life in Berlin, the rise of Hitler etc, but Mujtaba failed to translate it into reality. By this time the writer had already narrated the incident of his unemployed life in Kolkata near about of 1944, the start of journalistic career etc. Of course, the references of modern art-literature, sublimity of books as well as many other varieties including principles and facts have appeared uninterruptedly. This part does not seem to be important in assessing the travelogue of Mujtaba Ali.

Here it is necessary to mention that, as the first of ‘Bidese’ is nothing but the repetition of the last part of ‘Musâphir’, so the discussion of the entire ‘Bidese’ can be placed on the same track. In fact, the last chapter of ‘Bidese’ can be considered as the continuation of ‘Musâphir’.

However, the most remarkable part of ‘Musâphir’ is that one where Mujtaba has beautifully discussed the mutual relationship between India and Germany and the cultural and literary exchanges between the two countries.

He wrote:

“মাত্র একটি দেশ ভারতবর্ষ সম্বন্ধে কখনও তার ভক্তিশীল হারায়নি। সে-দেশ জর্মনি। আমাদের কবি মধুপুর্ণ একঁশ বছর পূর্বে লড়নে ধারাকালীন জর্মনপতিত গণধ্রুবতার সঙ্গে দেখা করতে যান।”

We came to know from the writings of Mujtaba that though the English initially started the culture and study of Indology, but gradually it started in an extensive way in France and Germany:

“র্মনপতিত প্রেগেলই সর্বপ্রথম এর্চার ব্যাপকতা এবং কীভাবে এতে অগ্রসর হতে হয় তার কর্মসূচী তার পুনৃক্ত ‘মায়ার ডিঃপ্রের তার কর্মসূচী’ (‘জাতীয় ভাষা ও মনী’), ১৮০৮ হিজিরাতে প্রকাশ করেন। ...১৮১৮ হিজিরাতে জমানির বন্ব বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে প্রথম সংস্কৃত অধ্যাপকের পদ সৃষ্টি হয় এবং সে কর্মে নিযোজিত হন পূর্বোক্তিত এ ক্ষেত্রে প্রেগেলের মাতা ইলেম প্রেগেল।”

In this way Mujtaba mentioned the contribution to Benfai, Maxmuller,
Vedar, Bullar and other German scholars to Indology. We come to know from Mujtaba that Haricharan Bandyopadhyay, writer of ‘Bangiya Sabdakoś’ (Bengali Vocabulary) repeatedly took help from Sanskrit-German Dictionary by Boutlink and Rout. The Germans were able to call Rabindranath their own due to their perpetual regards for India.

Mujtaba visited Germany for the last time in the preceeding year, that is in 1970, from the year of the publication of ‘Musāphir’. The purpose of this very journey was to meet the friends and acquaintances in the fag end of his life.

He started from Dumdum at 9 PM and reached Rome after a journey of fifteen and a half hours. His destination was Germany. Mujtaba decided to reach Kallon Germany changing the flight at Jurikh of Switzerland. He would have to wait for about three hours for Kallon bound flight from Jurikh. Being charmed at the conversation with the writer, a businessman named Ande Daunpo invited the writer to Geneva offering the proposal of free journey. In the words of the writer:

“ইহ সঙ্গে, এমনকি ইয়োরোপেও, সেই বাঙালিরে আবু হোসেনও আছে যারা রাত্রার অতিথির সমানে রাঁধিয়ে থাকে। ... একা একা খেতে পারে না।”

The writer was always in a recollective mood in this stage of life. The older he became, the more obvious the memories were. The writer paid a visit to the house of his girl-friend Mudendorf after forty years, he remembered the story of Godesborg, and the swiss girl friend Freedi Bawman whom the writer met in Baroda, and his unexpected meeting with the blue-eye Lott at the bus stand. In this way the writer is again and again unfolding the leaves of his life of the bygone days.
Veeihelm Willy is worthy to be remembered as a character in the travelogue ‘Bideshe’. Mujtaba was familiar with Willy since 1930. Willy was a housekeeper at the University of Bonn. The heard the tragic catastrophe of Willy from Lott. That Willy who was: ‘পতিতদের সেবক, পুদ্ধক সরস্কারের একনিষ্ঠ সাধক’! Mujtaba considered the self sacrifice of Willy like the death of Arabic scholar Bahar-Uljaheer. The American bombs set the building of Oriental Seminary on fire. In spite of his wife’s negation, while he was rescuing the books and manuscripts from that very burning library, the whole building collapsed on him. Such tragic death of Willy is narrated by Mujtaba in the following way:

“পুদ্ধক সহমরণে সমাধি লাভ করলে—এর চেয়ে স্মরণীয় শেষক্ষুদ্র আর কি হতে পারে।”

Moreover Mujtaba added in the footnote:

"বঙ্গীয় শবকোষের লেখক ঈশ্বর হরিচরণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ও এই পত্তিতে কাজ করতেন। তার পাঞ্জুলিপির এক ক্ষুদ্র অংশ তিনি তার কাচা ঘরে রেখে বিদ্যালয়ে পড়াতে যান। যে আরও লাগতে তিনি অর্থেয় উইলির মত জলন্ত গুহে প্রবেশ করতে গিয়ে বাধা পান। হরিচরণের প্রতি নির্ভর—অস্ত উপরের দুই বিশ্বে—সাধন ছিলেন। তার পরলোকগতি অজিজ বা উইলির মত হয়নি। তিনি অম্ব হয়ে যান।"
Notes

   c. Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay, Sanjibchandra: Jiban O Sahitya, 1395 BS.
8. Sanjibchandra Chattopadhyay, Pālāmau, 1st edn, 1351 BS, p.5-6.
9. Ibid. p.35.
10. Rabindranath Tagore, Europe-Prabasir Patra, p.11.
15. Sagarmay Ghose, Sampādaker Baithake, 2nd edn, 1376 BS, p.82-83.
18. Ibid. p.25.
20. Ibid. p.47.
21. Ibid. p.63-64.
22. Ibid. p.92.
23. Ibid. p.118.
27. Ibid. p.175.
33. Ibid. p.253.
34. Ibid. p.263.
35. Ibid. p.266.
36. Ibid. p.269.
37. Ibid. p.295.
38. Ibid. p.312.
44. Hirendranath Datta, *Banglā Prabanda Sahitya*, 1st edn, 1399 BS, p.54.
46. Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay, “Deśe-Bidesē”, Visva-Bharati Patrika, Kartik-
Paus 1356 BS.


48. Ibid. "Granthaparicay".

49. Ibid. "Utsargapatra" p.2.


52. Ibid. p.15.

53. Ibid. p.18.

54. Ibid. p.21.

55. Ibid. p.24.

56. Ibid. p.36.


60. Ibid. p.193.

61. Ibid. p.172.


63. Ibid. p.319.

64. Musāphir, 1st edn. 1971, p.137.


67. Ibid. p.78.

68. Ibid. p.80.

69. Ibid. p.169.


71. Ibid. p.224.