



Poems Politics and the Party: The Making and Unmaking of Radical Aesthetics in Bengali Literature

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Abstract

Culture is one of the crucial factors behind the formation and articulation of identities. Overcoming the stereotype of 'base-superstructure' binary the neo-Marxists rightly pointed out the role of culture both as a reflection of the economic base as well as the potential arena of reproducing the ruling economic base through a daily basis meticulous mechanism known as hegemony. In order to challenge the ruling hegemony a counter cultural process is required, which encompasses all the dissenting and marginal voices prevailing in the society. This paper is going to deal with such a counter cultural attempt, which is commonly known as the progressive cultural movement to challenge the ruling hegemony in the context of Bengali literature and culture. The progressive cultural movement in Bengal started as a world-wide response to the war-ridden international political order at that time, when the fascist aggression was in its peak and the scope of democracy was threatened globally. The leading intellectuals like Henry Barbusse and Romain Rolland in Europe started to organize all the intellectuals under a broader democratic and progressive organizational umbrella against destruction of war. Thus, the League against War and Fascism was established and most notably Rabindranath Tagore became its President. Inspired from this ideological aura some of the Indian intellectuals in Britain founded an organization named All India Progressive Writers Association (AIPWA), which gradually expanded its root all over India including Bengal. In Bengal, where the cultural politics was already established in the wake of Swadeshi movement, the new ideological-cultural programme was well accepted among its intelligentsia. In this we context we have to keep in mind the role of the Communist Party in mobilizing the intellectuals, bringing them under a broader ideological platform, both in India as well as in other countries. The movement was committed towards the motto of bringing back people into the literature and culture. The voice of the movement became louder with the formation of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), who declared "People's theatre stars the People". Most notably, this movement introduced the Bengali intelligentsia with the ideological currents of Marxism and on the other hand, Marxism as a narrative became synonymous with the ideals of progressivism. Application of Marxist principles such as dialectics, class struggle and its revolutionary potential became the critical yardstick through which the literature and performance used to be measured as the 'ideal' standard. Thus the authenticity in 'revolutionary' literature provoked myriad questions within the Bengali intelligentsia, which led to serious and critical debates. Debates were triggered off regarding the role of the communist party in the cultural front. Prominent Bengali intellectuals like Manik Bandopadhyay, Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, Bishnu Dey, Samar Sen, Hemanga Biswas, Salil Chowdhury took part in this great debates. This paper will critically focus into the debates among the Bengali intelligentsia and will uphold the nature of the progressive cultural movement and thus concentrates into the limitation of the movement especially its middle-class centrism and critically answer the question whether this performance of resistance was merely an 'elite performance' or not.

“...*Ankora joto non-violent non-co'r dol-o non khushi.*

'Violence er violin' naki ami, biplabi-mon tushi.

'Eta ahinsho', biplabi vabe,

Noy charkar gan kano ga'be?'

Gora-Ram vabe nastik ami, Pati-Ram vabe Confuci! ...” (Nazrul Islam 1925, 70)

Even the disciples of Non-Violence are also not happy.

They think I am the ‘violin of violence’ and propagandize revolutionaries.

Again, the revolutionaries think ‘He is also a non-violent;

Otherwise, why would (he) sing the song of *Charka*?

The Orthodox people perceive me as an atheist, while

Half-orthodox believe me to be a Confucian!

This well-known stanza is from the poem *Amar Kaifiaat* (My Explanation), written by the rebel poet¹ Nazrul Islam, is an outcome of severe conflicts, visible through the wide array of its verses. In the same poem the poet has used two terms ‘*yuga*’ (era) and ‘*hujug*’ (ongoing trend/fashion). It is well accepted among the scholars that the arrival of Nazrul’s political poems hinted towards a new ‘era’ in Bengali literature. Although, the critics labelled it as ‘*hujug*’ or fashion. In order to deal with the debates around the new era in literature, we must have to enter into the heart of this controversy.

Even after the fall of Soviet Union the communists still now enjoy popular support in different pockets of developing society. Such as, in Bengal, where a coalition of Left Front enjoyed the control of political power for a total thirty-four years, of which the latter twenty years lie since the fall of the Soviet. This is quite exceptional record as well as surprising in the global history of democracy. Now, the question is what are the factors there behind the constant popular support in these regional pockets, which made them still relevant in these regions, even after such political disaster took place globally? Critically looking on the fact would invite our thought definitely towards the local discourse, which was in a way neglected by the formal communist practices. The conventional Marxists, who advanced the categorization of ‘bourgeoisie’ and ‘proletariat’, systematically overlooked the involvement of different identities surrounding these two broader categories. The role played by these identities differs from

¹ Nazrul Islam is popularly known in Bengal as *Vidrohi Kavi* (the rebel poet).

region to region and creates a unique discourse in terms of that particular space, which consciously or subconsciously reconfigures the grand narrative of Marxism and makes it fit for that particular space. This we may identify as localization of grand-narratives.²

The Middle-Class Identity in Bengal

While discussing in the context of Bengal, we should be aware of the historical role played by the *madhyabitta badralok* or the middle-class gentry section, in the social and the political life of Bengal, which we have shortly discussed in the previous chapter. Although, it becomes necessary to discuss the emergence of this identity from the sociological and anthropological perspectives. In the words of Rajarshi Dasgupta:

The *bhadraloks*, a social group consisting of upper-caste Hindu landed elite, petty landowners, traders and indigent literati, came to constitute the new class of professionals, trained by the English, and with a shared pride in education, a measure of political power, but without much commercial stake. Their growing heterogeneity with time eroded their old exclusivity, and a different description gradually gained currency: the middle class (*madhyabitta/madhyasreni*, although ‘middle classes’ would be more accurate). *Bhadralok* remained the polite appellation, tempered and claimed by multiple shades of *madhyabitta* (Dasgupta 2005, 82).

Dasgupta also largely points out that the practice of the high culture served as a factor or more like a ‘capital’ through which the middle-class use to differentiate themselves from the rest of the society. Therefore, the high cultural practices have an age-old connection with the middle-class section. The other important factor beside this was obviously the western education, which made them distinguished from the others of the society.

Historical Role of Middle-Class in Bengali Art and Culture

Historically speaking, this section was already charged up with the ideal of a soft-core religious nationalism in one hand; some of the others were also influenced by enlightened rationalistic ideas of Derozio and Young Bengal. The middle-class, western educated elites who were attached with the high cultural practices were also concerned with historical developments around the world as well as the western literatures. Through the western mode of education, they became closer to western values like liberty,

² The phrase ‘localization of metanarratives’ means a lengthy process of practice through which a grand ideology is manifested in a certain region, simultaneously with the existing conditions prevailing in that region.

fraternity, equality, rationality. Thus, colonial modernity entered in the political culture of Bengal. The indigenous literati who involved in writing expressed these values through their literatures, which appeared as the harbinger of nationalism. Bankim Chandra is one of the prominent examples of this historical juncture, who was one of the first graduates of the University of Calcutta, and employed in the provincial civil and juridical services under the Government of Bengal. With a remarkable rise in the arena of Bengali literature, with his first novel *Durgeshnandini* (1864), he advanced a literary discourse which was basically a composite of two often contradictory concepts: firstly, the radical ideas of contemporary Europe, rationalism and positivism as influenced by Comte, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, egalitarian principles of Rousseau and Proudhon; and secondly, the purified and revival tradition of Hinduism as the *dharma* of modern man (Chatterjee1986, 59). The contradiction between these two elements has shaped his literary aesthetics in his novels, where he imagined a utopian political community and represents the modern nation-state as mother, by using the religious icons of Hindu *devis*. The mother nation-state was well depicted in his novel *Anandamatha* (1884), which later became the bible for the militant nationalist groups. The nation-state was portrayed in this novel through the iconic representation of *Jagaddhatri* – once wealthy and prosperous nation-state – which was turned into *Kali* – the ruined picture of the nation-state due to the invasion of the aliens and then *Dashavuja Durga* – the future of the nation-state after winning the wealth and honour back from the foreign invaders, in exchange of the valour and sacrifice of life with bravery – an action based on pure devotion to the mother nation-state (Basu2013, 136). Historicity is another element in Bankim’s writing. Novels like *Devi Chowdhurani* (1884), *Sitarama* (1888) and *Krsnacaritra* are product of this particular element, and also loaded with religious semiotics which had a powerful impact on the upcoming generation of intelligentsia, who influenced by this embraced the path of ‘revolutionary terrorism’ and ‘militant nationalism’ (Chatterjee1986, 82).

The *bhadraloks* who claimed themselves as the successor of Bengali renaissance and distinguished themselves as a separate group based on a cultural lineage since the last decades of the eighteenth century. It can be said that the model of Bengali renaissance, advanced by the *bhadraloks*, put immense emphasis on the attempt of reviving Hindu tradition. These western educated elites though came closure with the emancipatory values like liberty and rationality; they refused to reject the varna system, the cornerstone of Hinduism which is based upon illogical and out-dated assumptions. This issue was depicted in *Gora*, a famous novel written by Rabindranath. However, in the name of

renaissance, which taught us to question ‘the illogical’; the major portion of the *bhadraloks* embraced a conservative attitude. Some exceptional initiatives were obviously there, such as, the initiatives of the Derozians and the *brahma dharma* – a purified religious configuration – which failed to attract the majority support (Chatterji 2018, 177-224).

The political initiatives from the *bhadraloks* gained currency with the establishment of the Congress in 1885, which remained in the hand of those few moderate educated elites for a considerable time. Although, the dovecote of the elites in the congress was dismantled by the advent of Gandhi, who promote the strategy of the strategy of mass politics in the Congress.

Bengal, which was also a site of the militant revolutionary activities, experienced a changing attitude with the initiation of the mass line of politics. Most importantly, it was also influenced by the historical development world-wide: The First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in the aftermath of the war. The later attracted the growing *madhyabitta* intelligentsia.

This made the intelligentsia to come across the Marxist thought. Rabindranath’s *Russiar Chithi* (Letter from Russia), a travelogue about Russia aroused the interest of the post-revolution socialist Soviet Russia among the Bengali intellectuals. Hence, the middle-class gentry section of Bengal, who was suffering an identity crisis in Hindu revivalist militant nationalism and the moderate political practices took shelter under the Marxist and Freudian aesthetics. Sexuality, bodily pleasure, physical love gradually found its place in Bengali literature.

On the other hand, we have seen how the poems of Nazrul at a rudimentary level expressed the Marxian aesthetics through seeking the liberation of the workers and peasants by cursing imperialism and communal interest, which was also an attempt to secularization of the literature.

This was the time, especially around the 30s, when the periodicals played a very distinctive role in the Bengali literary discourses. Rabindranath’s literary venture was challenged at first by a group of the new writers, who use to write in a periodical named *Kallol*, who rejected Rabindranath’s literary forms and seek a *nabayug* (new age) in the arena of Bengali literature. This time frame is known as the *Kallol* age. Among the others, Sudhindranath Dutta (1901-60), Buddhadeb Basu (1908-74), Jibanananda Das (1899-1954), Amiya Chakrabarty (1901-87) and Bishnu Dey (1909-82) were regarded as the *Pandavas* of the Bengali literatures, as they have taken poetics beyond the aura of

Rabindranath. Though, the *Kallol* poets were never claimed themselves as Marxists or socialists (Das 2013, 2), but some of the poets, such as, Bishnu Dey later embraced Marxism.

A handful of writers started to express the pain of the marginal people through the periodicals like *Langal*, *Nabashakti*, *Ganabani*, *Bangabani*; but their concept of socialism was still vague. In a periodical called 'Banglar Bani' published a historical account serially on the Russian revolution in 1928. Although, the conceptual vagueness about the ideas of Marxism still remained until the 1931. Since 1931 another periodical named 'Parichay' edited by Sudhindranath Dutta came into existence, centring which a number of middle-class intellectual initiatives took place. The *Parichay* group was although do not composed of a firmly communist ideological background rather, there was people across myriad ideological beliefs. This group centred around the periodical although, went through various evolution, it actually unearthed the middle-class romance with radical literature.

Romanticizing Revolution and the 'Decedent' Middle-Class Self

The romance of the middle-class with the radical literature started in a full-fledged level since the 1935 and culminated into the progressive cultural movement, in the context of an international and domestic historical matrix, which is illustrated in the previous chapter. The Communist Party of India took the hold of the steering of the movement, under the immense initiative of P. C. Joshi, the then general secretary of the party. This movement as said earlier was propelled by several theoretical debates, many of which discussed in the first chapter. However, one of the important theoretical question was: what is 'the people' in 'people's cultural movement? And how can it be represented in the most authentic way? The former question which is answered in the first chapter, is a question of representation, specifically speaking representation of identities. While the latter question is authenticity related question which invited complexities world-wide through a number of debates with and outside the communist parties.

What is more authentic? To maintain the party-line or to rely upon spontaneity? To embrace the tradition or to enhance modernity? In the context of such debates there is both of a hard-line and a soft-line. In the context of India, the debate took place because of the emergence of the first. The debate took place in European as well as the East Asian, South Asian, American Communist parties. It was for the first time emerged in Soviet Russia with the emergence of Zhdanovist credo, or the credo of socialist realism,

with CPSU. Andrey Zhdanov, who was appointed as the secretary of the CPSU central committee, with responsibility for ideology in 1946, was assigned the task by Stalin to reassert political authority over ideological, cultural and scientific activity in the Soviet Union to avoid the war-time *laissez-faire*. (Kelly 1997, 1). According to this credo, the culture based on the socialist realism must need to project ‘positive heroes’ which would inspire the mass; secondly, it argued that the artists would must have to serve in the mass organizations like the common worker; and thirdly, the artists should present the realities straight-forward way without taking resort to the metaphors. This trend also encouraged a debate even in the French Communist Party (PCF), most popularly known as the Garaudy-Aragon debate. Roger Garaudy, who was in charge of the intellectual wing of the party, wrote in an article titled ‘There is No Communist Aesthetic’, he argued in favour of a certain level of autonomy for the communist writers. He was also of the opinion that no principle of guideline should be imposed from the above in the name of ‘socialist realism’, which would intervene into the freedom of the author and the party also should restrict itself from interfering into the autonomy of the author because he thought that art is not emerged mechanically. However, his doctrine of autonomy was challenged within the party by a group of the orthodox cadres led by Louis Aragon, who countered that the responsibility of the cultural front was “to espouse all the ideological and political position of the working class, to defend in all circumstances, the positions of the party... to cultivate in ourselves the love of the party and the spirit of the party in its most conscious form” – this position was adopted formally by the PCF in 1947 (Damodaran 2017, 50).

This debate³ had a great impact on the emerging progressive cultural movement across the world; Bengal was also not an exception from it. The middle-class intellectual endeavour that was in a romance with Marxist cultural adventure was divided on this issue. Bishnu Dey and Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay took the position of Roger Garaudy, advanced that the party cannot encroach the writer’s autonomy in the name of imposing any form of aesthetics. Art does not follow any particular aesthetical line. On the contrary, Nirendranath Roy supported the theoretical position of Louis Aragon. He argued that the value of art must be decided through the means of ideological struggle, and it is the ideological struggle which leads us to perceive a full knowledge of Marxist aesthetics. This debate also bifurcated the Bengal party leaders. Hirendranath

³ Most of the debates provoked by the coinage of Zhdanovist credo in bengali literature are compiled by Dhananjay Das in *Marxbadi Sahitya Bitarka*.

Mukhopadhyay, Arun Mitra and Chinmohan Seehanobis. On the other side, Radharaman Mitra, Gopal Halder, Saroj Dutta and Mangalacharan Chattopadhyay (Das 2013, 39-40).

Despite the above-mentioned debate, the question of authenticity in progressive literature is much older in Bengali literature. The first debate regarding the authentic progressive literature held between Samar Sen and Saroj Dutta. The former person in one of his essays, titled as 'In Defence of the Decedents' argued that, firstly, the progression which is blocked in capitalism, will flow in the same manner in socialism, secondly, the capitalism is decedent and therefore, it is not possible to cultivate the absolute beauty here. The decedent literature is the only genuine literature, which bears its revolutionary potentiality within its decadence (Das 2013, 11) Saroj Dutta vehemently criticised this view as formalism, decedent, reactionary; he argued that only the progressive and 'positive' part of the decadence should be presented in the art, and the rest part should be rejected (Damodaran 2017, 44). The urban middle-class intellectuals carried forward the discourse of the progressive cultural movement in different offshoots of literature and art, and thus, a new form of culture, both in terms of form and content has been created.

Although, the self-critics were not only limited into ideological terrain; it was also extended to the critique of self-class position. The frustration of the *madhyabitta* life was visible in the verses of the poets like Samar Sen and others. Samar Sen, who was influenced by the 'decedent' literature of T. S. Elliot, never submitted himself before the Church, as Elliot did. Although, in his poetic verses, there was the presence of a decedent middle class, which is because of the profound effect of Sudhindranath Dutta, on him. Sudhindranath's pessimistic aesthetics, morbidity and bitterness of the *madhyabitta* life, touched Samar Sen deeply. Sudhindranath wrote:

Mrityu, kebol mrityui dhruba sokha
Jatana, shudhui jatana suchirosathee... (Dutta 1960)
 Death, and death is the constant companion
 Misery, only misery is the eternal...

In Samar Sen's verses,

Norom mansostupe goveer chinho enke
Noboborsher nagarik chole gelo riktopothe,
Bondhya nareer andhakaare prithibee ke rekhe... (Sen 2014)
 Drawing deep imprint on the soft flesh
 The citizen in the new year left in vacant,
 Abandoning the earth in the opaque of infertile woman...

However, the pessimism is itself the product of the on-going political and social life, where the middle class was attacked from different level and multiple layers. It is partly because of the impediments created by the outer world and partly because of the limitations of its own thinking. Samar Sen's use of decadence has been symbolically displayed through imageries of animals and the depiction of sexual and physical filth and frustrations, which was repugnant according to many party higher leadership.

It is because of the decedent middle-class aesthetics, the theatre faced too delay to introduce the progressive performance that the other mediums of art, and embraced the performances which stems from a reactionary moribund feudalism. When the other offshoots of the art and literature embraced the forms of progressive literature, the professional commercial theatre remained aloof from it. The theatre of Bengal still relied on the systematic mythological stories, monotonous historical events and some negligible problems in the life of the upper echelon of the society. Around the end of the 40s, when the stormy blow of the progressive cultural movement has already marked a revolutionary episode in the literature and art, the theatrical world was still painting glossy pictures of the *madhyabitta* life (Roy 2009, 52). Instead of portraying the picture of decadence, the commercial theatre was playing dramas based on nationalist emotions, individual-centric emotions, and liquid religious sentiments which is full of highly melodramatic actions and no progressive outcomes. The contemporary historical instability and crisis in both of the social and political life of the people were not represented in the theatre, as a result of which people were largely becoming confused and disappointed (Roy 2009, 52). In this context, *Nabanna* (1944) a play in the backdrop of famine, written by Bijan Bhattacharya under the production of IPTA, played an important role of watershed which distinctively started a new genre in theatre, keeping 'people' at the centre. Beside *Nabanna* there were several other plays which were staged since 1943, such as, *Laboratory*, *Jabanbandi*, *Aagun* which enriched the new genre of theatre. Because of their overwhelming popularity these plays were staged several times outside of Bengal, among which *Nabanna* enjoyed extra ordinary remarks.

Although, whether *Nabanna* was the perfect manifestation of the socialist realism or not, was debated among the party leader and intellectuals. Prodyot Guha in his pseudo name Prakash Roy, wrote an essay named *Bangla Pragati Sahityer Atmasamalochana*, where he criticised *Nabanna* from the socialist realistic principle. Influenced by Soviet cultural policy under Andrey Zhdanov, he argued that the farmer in *Nabanna* dies but does not even think to fight! The play makes the audience to cry but not makes them

outrageous in anger. It does not attack the British, the creator of the famine; rather it treats the black marketers, women-traders as villain, who are no one but the offshoots of the main crisis. In the annexure in this play, it shows a remedy of this problem in collective firming, which is also vague and devoid of class struggle (Das 2013, 95). Another author Sajal Chowdhuri, contemporary secretary of IPTA in Bengal, wrote an essay in his pseudo name Mrityunjay Adhikari, named *Gananatya Sangathan* in the annexure of first volume and first number of *Loknatya*, where he argued that the dramas of the new genre were getting into the trap of commercialism. It was more and more influenced by formalist tendencies, staged in commercial halls rather than in the villages, among the peasants (Das 2013, 315). As a result, it got appreciations from the urban middle-class but remain distant from the exploited marginal people, for whom actually it was made. The use of complex ‘forms’ and techniques made it undemocratic for the poor villages that do not have access to this social capital. Most importantly, he argues that only using the imageries of peasants and workers in the content cannot construct an authentic radical popular art, in order to be so, the ‘form’ used in it should must be inclusive in nature (Das 2013, 71-79). Therefore, Nabanna remains as a perfect instance of revolutionary fantasy of the middle-class.

Conclusion: Declassification, Self-critique and the Middle-Class

The huge middle-class endeavour however romanticized with the radical popular art also appealed for declassification from the class-self of the artist. Rajarshi Dasgupta rightly points out:

On the surface, the purpose of these exercises was to bridge the two cultures: that of the urban *bhadralok* and the popular, folk culture of the *chhotolok* (low born/underclass). As Marxist intellectual Gopal Haldar (1947 [1944]) explained: ‘[The] task was to break the isolation in “Bhadra” culture and to join it with the masses, and to enrich popular culture with the truth and bearing of a more advanced age’ (translation by Rajarshi Dasgupta).

At a deeper level, the challenge for Marxist poets was to bring together the popular national culture and the bohemian aesthetic. The real task was to script the individual play of transgression – asymmetrically aligned to the middle classes – into an inclusive chorus of collective transformation

under the symmetric leadership of the Communist Party (Dasgupta 2005, 84).

It was not true only for the poets, rather true for all the *avant garde* artists. In doing to the middle-class artist have abolished the bourgeoisie metaphorism and iconography, they framed the marginal into an inclusive class identity but many times they have fallen into the trap of middle-class formalism which ultimately put a bar, and cannot bridge the gap between them and the common mass. Therefore, although the performance depicts ‘the people’ as a subject in their content, it remained unable to break the thin wall of ‘social capital’ between the author and the subject. It is the reason that is why the individual fantasy with the revolution was much more within the artists rather than the spirit of class struggle, which becomes clear from Sukanta’s verses. Unlike the other poets, Sukanta, the poet of teenage, composed blood boiling poems with naive syntax and optimistic radical rhythm which is actually a flag bearer of the legacy of Nazrul Islam. His poems unleashed ruthless attack on the bourgeoisie metaphoric construction. He wrote:

*Proyojan nei, kobitar snigdhata,
Kobita tomay dilam ajke chhuti
Kshudhar rajye prithibee-godyomoy;
Purnima-chnaad jano jhalsano ruti...* (Bhattacharya 1998, 70)
No need for the serenity of a poem;
Poetry, I give you a break today
Everything becomes prose in the hungry regime;
The full moon becomes like scorched ‘Ruti’.

In the similar vein, Dinesh Dash enunciates “*Chander shatak aj nahe to, e yuger chand holo kaste...*” which means, “This is not the epoch of the moon, the sickle is the moon today...” (Translated by Rajarshi Dasgupta). What we have seen in the verses of both of the poets, are iconoclasm of moon often, depicted by bourgeoisie metaphoric uses as the symbol of love and romance, and reconstructing it with a new meaning, meaning closed to socialistic ideals.

The romanticism becomes more evident in Sukanta’s hagiographic verse of Lenin, where Lenin becomes an icon of resistance against all evils:

*Biplab spondito buke, mone
Hoy aami e Lenin...* (Bhattacharya 1998, 38)
With the revolutionary heart-throbs,
I feel myself like Lenin.

Later Subhash Mukhopadhyay, another poet from middle class origin, carried forward the legacy of Sukanta. About whom Joy Goswami argues that he was the poet who for the first time started the tradition of ‘anti-poetics’ in Bengali literature. Like Sukanta and unlike Samar Sen he carried forward the optimistic attitude toward devolution. In his verses, the tendency of romanticism with revolution becomes obvious.

*Michhile dekhechhilam ekta mukh,
Mushtheeboddho ekta shanito haat
Aakashar dike nikshipto,
Bisrosto koyekti keshagro
Aaguner shikhar moto haoway kompomaan...* (Mukhopadhyay 1968)
(I) saw a face in the procession,
A sharpened fist
Thrown into the sky,
A few hairs in disarray
Trembling in the air like flames of fire.

Subhash Mukhopadhyay seems to be class conscious; therefore, he extends class-solidarity in his poem, maybe because he could able to imagine the gap between the petty-bourgeoisie intellectuals and the proletariats, who works in fields. In his verses, he found them as well by seeking and ultimate declassification. He writes,

*Ami jeno amar kolom ta
Tractorer pashe
Namiye rekhe bolte pari-
Ei, amar chhuti-
Vaai amake ektu aagun dao...* (Mukhopadhyay 1968)
Wish I could my pen
Put down next to the tractor
And say-
Now, I free-
Brother, give me some fire.

The metaphorical use of the words like ‘pen’ and ‘tractor’ has deep inherent meanings. ‘Pen’ here represents the *madhyabitta* intellectual identity, while on the other hand, ‘tractor’ denotes the working-class identity, basically the peasants. Subhas Mukhopadhyay through his verses thus acknowledges the responsibility of the intellectuals towards the oppressed, which Gramsci reminds in his theoretical formulation

on the ‘organic intellectuals’⁴. However, bridging the gap between the ‘pen’ and the ‘tractor’ proved to be a challenging task in the history of civilization. This gap ultimately made the socialist culture a distant dream. In the poetical verses of Birendra Chattopadhyay:

Onek dure maatir desh, swopner chashira

Sekhane beej bone,

Valobaasar sishura gaan gay...

Onek dure... (Chottopadhay 2000, 27)

Far away is the land of soil, the farmers of dreams

Sow seeds there,

The loving children sing there...

Far away.

⁴ The concept of organic intellectual was developed by Antonio Gramsci on the contrary to the concept of traditional intellectual. Traditional intellectuals are those intellectuals in the civil society who originates from the residuals of the previous mode of production and remains aloof from the class identity but keeps nexus with the ruling bloc. The organic intellectuals on the other side found in the political parties, who influence the moral-political terrain of the dominated class to produce consent.

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