
Write-Up of
Annual Virgin Literature-Culture Issue of Jagaran 2016

Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman



On 26 July at 5.30 pm was officially released in a homely and congenial atmosphere an annual virgin literature-culture issue of The Jagaran, the first Bengali-language daily of Tripura, guest-edited by Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman, internationally published novelist, poet, editor, critic, translator, folklorist and book-reviewer. The function was presided over by Mr Paritosh Biswas, Editor, The Jagaran. Dr Rabindranath Das Shastri, eminent writer and educationist, who chief-guested the function uncovered a copy of the virgin issue neatly and florally packed by way of releasing the special issue priced at Rupees two hundred. In his address of welcome Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman told of what prompted him into agreeing to guest-editing this special issue and Dr Rabindranath Das Shastri heaped on Paritosh Biswas a plethora of praise for having decided to bring out a special issue of the newspaper to foster and advocate Bengali language and literature. Paritosh Biswas in his presidential speech elaborated upon his decision and thanked the contributors to the special issue present at the function.

The issue opens with the editorial article dealing with the present situation antagonistic to newspapers and the numerous problems that they face every day. He speaks of the Jagaran newspaper which has been published over the last sixty-two years without cease. He concluded his article by saying that the reason why he has brought out the special issue is because this newspaper wants to foster Bengali language and literature which is gradually losing its ground in

the face of the dominance of English. In his short article as the guest-Editor Dr Bhaskar Roy Barman tells of the reason why he has taken on the onerous task of guest-editing the special issue. He says his original thinking vis-à-vis the present situation surrounding the Bengali literature and language accords with the thinking of Paritosh Biswas.. Many eminent scholars in and outside Tripura, many of them of international repute, responded to his invite to contribute their erudite articles that have embellished the virgin issue

Now let us pass on to the article section.

This section begins with an article entitled ‘Happy Birthday to you’ by Dr Prabhas Chandra Dhar. The article lays a particular emphasis on the observance of the birthdays of great men who have changed the world. They are, among others, Shri Ramchandra of the Ramayana, Shri Krishna of the Mahabharata and Jesus Christ. Majority of us have grown habituated to observing the birthdays of such great men, unaware of their intrinsic importance in our life. Dr Dhar has unfurled this intrinsic importance before our eyes.

The second article entitled ‘King Lear-e Banglar Lokakahini (Folktale of Bengal in King Lear) by Bhaskar Roy Barman tells of the influence of a folktale of Bengal on Shakespeare’s play King Lear. This article is the English rendering of part of his English article entitled ‘Folktale in King Lear’ incorporated into ‘Shakespeare: A Reappraisal’ (Vol. 2) edited by Sunita Sinha and Carole Rozzonelli and published in 2015 by Atlantic Publishers and Distributors (P) Ltd., New Delhi. By way of explaining about the influence of the folktale of Bengal Dr Roy Barman says that it is the nature of a folktale to travel from one place to another, from one country to another and take on a new form to cope with the demand of the culture of the country to which it has travelled. But the question is how the folktale I have referred to crossed over to Europe. Dr Roy Barman quotes Rai Saheb Dinesh Chandra Sen to say that they were told and mostly composed by village women in the quietness of shady mango-groves amidst which straw-roofed mud-huts stood and these village women never ventured out of the huts to show their faces to strangers; but these stories got passed on from one hand to another through the mouths. These stories remained written in Bengal itself, till the middle of the 16th century, when only one of them is said to have been recast and written out in a verse form by Fakir Ram Kavibhushana. The rest, as far as we know, were never written till only recent times. But they did travel across to other countries. Since there was no printing press to publicize these tales it was the common people who transmitted them to European men with whom they came into contact and it was the European men who carried them across to their home countries. In this way the folktale of Bengal referred to travelled across to Europe and influenced the play King Lear.

Indira Chattopadhyay in her article ‘Kalidaser Shakuntala: Kichhu Samskrara O Anubader Katha’ discusses in detail Kalidas’s great dramatic work Shakuntala. This article throws a new light on this dramatic work In course of the discussion Dr Chattopadhyay informs the readers that it was Sir William Jones who brought this great dramatic work to the notice of the world and started translating it into English and finished translating it on 17 August 1789. Ramlochan, his teacher, assisted him in translating the work. Dr Chattopadhyay gives us an extra bonus by

saying that Sir William Jones translated it first into Latin, then into English. This research-enriched article will make the inquisitive readers be interested in the works of Kalidas, not much explored still today. He is no less important as a dramatist than Shakespeare. Kalidas is gradually coming out of the womb of oblivion to reassert himself as the pride of India actually he is.

Bartaman Prekshite Rabindranath by Prof Dr Mohit K. Ray is a republication of the article earlier published in the special Sunday supplement of 6 May 2012 to the Dainik Statesman on the 'Bichitra' Page. This article is really pleasant reading, as it analyses Tagore in completely a new light. What distinguishes this article from other articles written on Tagore is the emphasis laid on the synthesis of humanism and science-based realism. He never lived in a ivory tower. He was aware that the West became highly developed because of the spread of education and he did not shut his eyes to the necessity and importance of science. Tagore believed and practised the theory that the soul is created in the dance of creation so he tried for the development of handicraft. Handicraft excites the artisans to a dance of creation on the one hand and helps them to earn their living on the other.

Narayan Bhattacharya in his article 'Kavi Madhusudan – Jeevan–O–Srijan Pratibha' deals in detail with the life and work of Michael Madhusudan Dutt from a historical perspective This article begins with a vivid description of the literary atmosphere that Bengal was steeped in from the beginning of the nineteenth century. In fact the new awakening made itself felt vividly in the second part of the nineteenth century, Michael Madhududan was the offspring of the first new awakening of the nineteenth century. This article in depth analyses and examines the life and work of Michael Madhusudan Dutt, nurtured in the new awakening.

In the article entitled 'Sri Aurobinder Savitri' Aju Muknopadhyaya treats of Sri Aurobindo's epic poem 'Savitri' based upon the Mahabharata legend 'Savitri and Satyavan',

Since Aju Mukhopadhyay deals in depth with 'Sabitri' as a great poem and analyxes the text of the epic poem and the preliminaries to its writing I think it is worthwhile to discuss from outside the contents of the article another important aspect that is myth. The format of the article does not allow this aspect to be dealt with in detail, though.

This epic poem, as we all know, is the modernization of the Savitri-Satyavan legend enshrined in the Mahabharata. This is the story of how Savitri, daughter of Ashwapathy, king of Madra, snatches back the soul of Satyavan from the hand of Yama, God of Death. The moment she has conquered death, she ceases to be the princess in flesh and blood and is transformed into the manifestation of the Grace of the Supreme embodied in her to lead humanity through trials and tribulations to the victory over the forces of Darkness and Death. Savitri herself achieved victory by facing the King of death at the time when he came down to take the soul of Satyavan. 'It is by the extension of her protection, of her own Infinity and immortality, that she saved Satyavan from the God of Death

The central myth in Aurobindo's Savitri, the myth of freedom, based upon the dialectical struggle between the worlds of appearance and reality, matter and spirit, evil and good, and death

and divine life, presses home the evolutionary value of human life and points up, as well, the quest of the soul for the state of being to be realized through an intuitive process of self-discovery and awareness of the infinite. It aims to ascend from the inconsistent state to the wakeful state through spiritual journey up the stairs of the world, the manifold planes of existence, the states of becoming, thus to experience complete identity with substantive reality and the totality of being through inward expansion and synthesis. This Indian and romantic view of the soul's ability to experience infinitude and to attain liberty from the deterministic order of lower nature inaugurates the core of Savitri. In fact Sri Aurobindo's imagination foreglances the idea of earth being a humankind's ideal home, where one's soul, by eschewing its egotistical selfhood in order to completely surrender itself to universal consciousness. Savitri, stretches symbolically from the primordial cosmic void forward through earth's darkness and struggles to the highest realms of supra-mental spiritual existence, shining along its way on every important concern of man. It demonstrates Sri Aurobindo's conception of epic in particular and of poem in general.

Rama Kundu in her article "Kheyal Sroter' Neye: Sukumar Ray" deals with Sukumar Ray and his nonsense verse, the area not frequently touched. Sukumar Ray inherited the talent of his father Upendrakishore Ray Choudhury. Dr Kundu, before proceeding to deal with the works of Sukumar Ray, written in nonsense verse, elucidates the meaning of the word 'nonsense' so as to help the readers to comprehend the inherent laughter in the delineation of his character. I advise the reader of Sukumar Ray's works to bear in mind that pure laughter spurts of his own accord out of the behaviour of his character; Sukumar Ray has not forced laughter upon the reader by manoeuvring the situation. The situation creates itself to match up to the character's behaviour. Dr Kundu alludes to the dictionary meaning to say that nonsense is absurd or meaningless word. She says that when it is used successfully it becomes more meaningful, it becomes the language of madness, the language of lawlessness, meaninglessness, dream and playfulness.

Jaybrata De's article entitled 'Adarsha Hindu Hotel – Swatantra Path', dealing with Sri Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyaya's novel 'Adarsha Hindu Hotel', is oriented to a long-time research.

Jagdish Gan-Choudhury in his article entitled 'Dhire Bahe Gomati Nadi', Gomati Nadi, the Gomati river having been flowing westwards slowly most of the year and swiftly in rainy season since time immemorial, informs the reader that the capital of Tripura was moved from the Barak Valley to the Gomati Valley towards the end of the thirteenth century. Then Dr Gan-Choudhury sets out to narrate the history of political, social and religious situations obtaining in the monarchic rule.

A.K. Sheram in his article entitled 'Jananeta Hijam Irabat Singh : Tar Barnamay Jibaner Ek Barnil Adhyay' discusses in detail Hojam Irabat Singh who pioneered in the new awakening of the Manipuri people. He put the Manipuri people on a strong pedestal. Mr Sheram takes the reader deep into the multifaceted life of Hijam Irabat Singh. I should like to mention the women revolt that occurred on 12 December 1939. The Manipuri women revolted at the exportation of rice from Manipur by some dishonest business men, leaving the Manipuri people hungry, and

gheraoed the British Political agents, demanding stopping of the exportation. This ensued a direct confrontation with the Assam Rifles, resulting in the injuries of many women. Hijam Irabat had already been established as undisputed leader. He was not in Manipur at that time. On returning to Manipur a few days later he supported the cause of the revolt and gave the movement a political overtone. This led to his arrest and he was sentenced to a three-year term. This incident gives the reader an inkling of the multifaceted characteristics of Hijam Irabat's life.

This article was presented as a paper at seminar held on 30 September 2015 at Agartala by Manipuri Sahitya Parishad in commemoration of the birthday of Hijam Irabat Singh.

Biplab Chakraborty in his article 'Prabashi Bangalir Bhasa' describes in lucid language the lifestyle of the Bengalis living in foreign countries and the language they use. This article is really interesting reading.

Subhas Jana in his article 'Lalaner Manush Tattwa' talks in detail about the teaching of Lalan Phakir. His teaching glorifies man and places him above god above god.

In his research-oriented article entitled 'Santhali Kabitar Sonali Rekha' Biplab Maji elaborately discusses the literature of the Santhals in the background of Indian literature in general and the Santhali poetry in particular.

There is an autobiographical element in the article 'M. Abdur Rahman and Nazrul Paribar' by Abdur Rab Khan. In this article Rab Khan tells of how he got acquainted with M. Abdur Rahman, a great man of letters and introduced through him to the family of the patriotic poet Nazrul Islam.

'10 Sadar Street: Charulatar Mastanir' is a travel writing. His reminiscing, when he visited Kolkata, revolves round 10 Sadar Street and it is riveted on Tagore and his family.

In his article 'Tripurar Sahitye Byabga-O-Hasyaras' Bhaskar Roy Barman discusses satire (Byanga) and humour (Hasyaras) in the light of the internationally accepted interpretation of the terms as in the following.

Satire derived from Latin Satira, a later form of satura which means 'medley' and is elliptical for lanx satura, a full dish, a hotchpotch. Quintilian (Marcus Fabius Quintilianus), a great Roman rhetorician, used the term to refer to that kind of poem which was written by Lucilius, a poem written in hexameter, a verse of six metrical feet consisting in its typical form of five dactyls and a trochee, on various themes; a poem with the tone of the work of Lucilius and Horace. In fact satire arose as a specific verse form in Latin Literature, practised by Horace, Juvenal and Persius. It has no real counterpart in Greek literature, but later the term widened its meaning to include works that were satirical in tone but not in form. At some stage a confusion arose between the Greek satyros and satura and this confusion led to the word being written satyra and then, in English satyr. The Elizabethan writers, misled as they found themselves by the etymology, thought of it to have derived from the Greek satyr, woodland demon. In 1605 the French Huguenot scholar, Isaac Casaulon finally cleared the situation. The word, so to say, had no connexion whatsoever with satyr. Another form of satire, in prose with verse interludes, or

simply in prose, was alleged to be invented by the Greek cynic Menippus, whose works are lost. This form of satire is called the Menippean satire or sometimes called Varronian satire after the name of the Latin writer Varro, whose works are also lost. Swift's Gulliver's Travels and Carroll's Alice in Wonderland which figure in this discussion are classed as Menippean satires. This kind of satire sounds new to many readers and even a few writers and this necessitates a brief expatiation on this term. Menippean satire is a kind of satire aimed at pedants, bigots, rapacious professional people and other persons or institutions which perceives the world from a single framework or act habitually from an occupational rather than a social orientation. The focus stands placed on intellectual limitations and mental attitudes. Typical ingredients include rambling narratives (or in short form, a Dialogue or Colloquy); unusual settings; displays of erudition' and long Digressions. Menippean satire in prose also revived with Erasmus and others in the humanist period and continues through Swift and Voltaire to Thomas Love Peacock who revived the use of verse interludes; thence to Aldous Huxley and others in the present day. But before long, satire changed its meaning. It now comes to mean, Not two specific genres or subgenres of narrative, but a tone of antagonism between the writer and the material which is likely to be found in any genre. Satire in this sense is a type of irony enshrined in comic context, in contrast to tragic irony; it is more militant in tone than the irony which depends upon the suppression of all attitudes of commitment or engagement on the part of the writer. Direct satire, that is, personal or individualized attack is certainly found in literature, but belongs to the pamphlet wars in religion and politics that falls outside the orbit of literature.

The term humour derives from Latin humor 'moisture' (and hence humid) and found itself used in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance period – in the tradition of Hippocratic pathology and physiology – to denote the four humours of the body. The four humours depended upon four fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. The commingling of these four humours determines a person's disposition, character, mind, morality and temperament. Spirits or vapours released by the humours affected the brain, and hence a person's behaviour. According to the predominant humour a man was sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric or melancholy. Vestigially, the theory of humours continues to exist in such expression as: 'ill-humoured', 'good-humoured', 'black with rage', 'in a black mood', 'yellow with jealousy', 'green with envy', 'red with remorse', and so forth. The theory of humours wielded a considerable influence on writers, when they took to creating characters. Dramatists capitalized upon this theory of imbalance that occurred between the bodily fluids to devise characters. Comedy of humours, a form of comedy which became fashionable at the end of the 16th century and early in the 17th, developed characters who stood dominated by a particular mood, inclination or peculiarity. Ben Jonson was supposedly the first to successfully popularize this theory in 'Every Man in his Humour (1598). This play, almost certainly the first play, was created on the theory of personality and ruling passion.

Bibhu Bhattacharya discusses in a historical perspective the development of the play of Tripura and its performance on the stage in his article 'Tripuray Natak Agragaman', It reveals a clear picture of different phases of the dramatic movement.

What distinguishes this issue is the film script 'Swapna' contributed by Debashis Mandal.

The issue ended with a book-review.

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