

The Influence of English on Bengali Literature

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Abstract

Modern Bengali Literature, i.e. literature that in a broad sense has developed since 1850, is the product of English education, the cultivation of the English language and the study of English literature. The literature before this was largely dominated by religious and feudal ideas. It followed certain set patterns and conventions, which were worked with tiresome repetition as in the Vaishnava Lyric verses and the Mangal Kavyas. There was no want of strong lyrical feeling, or narrative skill. But wit and ingenuity rather than imagination dominated their literary style. Under the influence of the West they have not merely built up an entirely new literature but also carried to other provinces the message of the West. In the last century the largest number of good writers in Bengali belonged to that class which had most been influenced by the West. Michael Madhusudan Datta, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Romeshchandra Datta, Hemchandra Banerjee, Nabinchandra Sen looked up to the West for inspiration. It became inevitable that they should be influenced by Western literature and thought, but their works did not lose in quality on this account.

Introduction:

The influence of English on Bengali literature is most striking. Apart from the debt that individual Bengali writers owe to the West, there have been influences of various natures on the general development of Bengali literature. These influences have appeared in different ways. There has been similarity of characters. There has been indebtedness for themes. There has been suggestion or hint towards characterisation. Some writers have borrowed not only thoughts and method of expression but even the language. Similarity of ideas in the poems of Tagore and D. L. Roy led the poet Satyendranath Datta to launch a severe tirade against Dwijendralal. But the answer to the charge of plagiarism was furnished in a way by Satyendranath himself in the words of Shelley: "It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own., can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the production of those extraordinary intellects." Literary influence does not end with mere similarity of situations, language, and imagery. It furnishes new types

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of literary work. It opens up new lines of thought and brings in new currents and tendencies in literature. It replaces older conceptions by entirely new ideas and gives a new orientation to conventional modes of thinking. Aspects of literature hitherto neglected or ignored receive a new light after contact with newer influences.

Now the issue is how can this tendency to 'looking at the west' can be interpreted? Is it just a colonial-hangover? Or an elitist display of sophistication? Or is it a suicidal tendency of discounting our own tradition?

According to my findings an inevitable culmination of a slow process of cultural exchange that had began in 1857 with the establishment of Calcutta University , transforming Calcutta as the centre of Indian Renaissance and as the British won more and more vital military victories in India and consolidated their colonial power, their regard for oriental culture seemed to decline. Shortly afterwards, in fact, they instituted steps to make the Indians learn English and discover the wealth of Western literature. Following a decision taken by the Governor-General of India in 1837 and the consequent setting-up of numerous colleges and, in 1857, three universities in India on the British pattern, a small but important section of Indians began to study not only English language and literature but even Sanskrit literature through the medium of English. The heyday of Orientalism was by now clearly over, and it had by decree been replaced by a kind of Occidentalism. The discovery of Sanskrit literature may or may not have led to an oriental renaissance in England, but the imposition of English literature in India under the colonial indulgence did soon lead to what several traditional historians acclaimed as “the Bengal Renaissance” and this by itself would have been enough to cause a great impact, to instigate the naïve sensibility of Calcutta Pundits and thus English literature came to us with greater prestige as the literature of our masters. The influence of English literature on Bengali literature may be one of the most extensive and profound influences ever exerted by one literature over another.

Objectives:

With the growth of the spirit of criticism men have come to realize that the world does not consist of themselves alone, nor does man live by himself alone. The external world around man arouses feelings in the human heart. Western influence has widened the subject matter of modern Bengali literature. Under the influence of the west the Bengali writers have enriched their literature. During the 17th century the volume of Bengali literature was tedious, devoid of substance, variety and virility. English literature has given a new dimension to Bengali literature. So the objective of my research is to show how Bengali literature owes to English literature.

Methodology:

This study is multidisciplinary in nature Written on the basis of secondary data which includes the history of English literature and history of Bengali literature. Also primary data has been collected through a questionnaire followed by the survey method. This study is also theoretical in nature, based on review of relevant ideas and practices as evidenced by available literature. Relevant research studies have been reviewed through library work and internet facilities.

Literature Review:

The researchers have reviewed the available literature relating to the topic to identify the research gap. A brief review of literature is given below:

A study was done by Jayanta Kumar Dugupta, Issue date on April, 2012 stated that during the 17th century the volume of Bengali literature was tedious, platitudinous, convention-ridden, and devoid of substance, variety and virility. Contact with English literature has given it essence and diversity, intellectuality and modernity. It has become a fit medium for adult and civilized consciousness. More important than anything else, it has become humanized against the tradition of 'Manasha Mangal', 'Chandi Mangal' etc. The Bengali writers needed no longer live in the darkness and isolation of his native medievalism; he is a citizen of the wider modern world.

Another study was done by J.C.Ghosh, issue date on May, 2011 accounted that the influence of English literature on Bengali literature as having been not only a modernising but indeed a civilising force indicates that he had fully internalised the British colonial claim that their rule in India was a civilising mission and he eulogises the Western influence on Bengali literature.

Another study was done by Subrat Mangaraj issue date on Jun, 2011 points out that Post-war Bengali literature has been much affected by passing fashions and modes. At one time the English 'mataphysicals' twisted and tortured the imagination of younger poets to the point of obscurity. The influence of Eliot and Ezra Pound as also of Baudlarine of France was irresistible on modern poets like Bishnu Dey, Sudhin Dutta and Buddhadeb Bose and Amiya Chakravarty. They sought to make up for their lack of depth by cultivating an esoteric mannerism.

Influences of English on Bengali Literature from different point of view:

A distinctively literary class today occupies in Bengal a prominent position in national life and commands admiration and respect. This literary class comprises within itself various smaller groups and sections with definite literary creeds and ideals. Though they approach literature from different angles of vision, they certainly have no quarrel as to the ultimate goal of literature and its chief function. If literature instead of belonging to the masses has become the concern of the intelligentsia, if instead of being in touch with the classes which do not fall within the category of the intellectuals it has become largely a matter for the educated people, if instead of reflecting the feelings and sentiments of people of humble extraction it speaks for members of the advanced communities, it has, on the other hand, gained in tone, general outlook, ideas and manner of expression, though losing something of its homeliness and native simplicity.

With more Western influence on our life, women are taking a keener interest in literature and a greater share in literary work. Not that we did not teach women before the period of Western influence, but with the progress of education more women are coming to the forefront in life and taking greater burdens and responsibilities upon themselves. Women poets, novelists, and story-writers are making their mark in literature, and in their writings

their own ideas about men, society, and life in general are finding adequate expression. Side by side with what men write there is also the feminine standpoint. To some extent a clash between the two sexes has been showing itself in Bengali literature, and already there are exponents of the militant mood who would not brook any more the masculine domination. But this spirit of revolt is still in a nascent stage.

With the development of literary creeds and ideals the critical spirit has grown up. Criticism, as a rule, was rare in older Bengali literature. The few works that existed, were based upon Sanskrit texts on poetics. Against the rigidities of Sanskritic codes Madhusudan Datta revolted and he used rather disparaging language about writers like the author of the *Sahitya Darpana*. The rigours placed upon dramatic construction chafed Datta and he wrote dramas basing them on the critical canons of the West. It cannot be said that the genuine critical spirit is always to be met with among Bengali critics. Still whatever critical spirit is in evidence in our literature is the outcome mainly of Western influence. Modern criticism does not mean the annotation of texts, or the bringing out of hidden meanings which the writers themselves perhaps never intended, nor is it concerned primarily with rules of grammar, rhetoric, or prosody. It is the function of criticism to appreciate all that is good, beautiful and true in literature. It sets values upon eternal verities amidst temporary fluctuations of taste and opinion. Modern criticism devotes itself more to the inner aspect of literature than to its mere outward form.

Feeling for Nature was almost entirely absent in older Bengali literature. Nature, whenever it was described, was described in a formal and stereotyped way. The outer world made little appeal in literature, so much engrossed it was with the inner aspect of life. The soul was so much steeped in the problems concerning itself that it had no time to think of the outer world. Even if a few imageries were borrowed in poetry from the world of Nature, they were of a rather commonplace type. Bengali poets were fond of speaking about the Kadamba tree, the river Jamuna, the groves on the banks of that river, but beyond these little was mentioned. It was not blindness to the beauties of Nature, but it was failure to understand that Nature had any life. Nature was not understood in the sense in which Shelley or Wordsworth understood it or Tagore understands it. Its 'transcendental' meaning was totally unknown in Bengali literature before the nineteenth century. Today Nature is not merely described. Its beauties are idealised. It appeals to men and women in their joys and sorrows, responds to their feelings. Its harmonies and dissonances echo the varying moods of humanity.

Likewise the feeling for Man has undergone a change. No doubt in all Indian literature the sanctity of human life has always been upheld. Yet it so happened that birth in a particular caste or community gave person superiority over another. Such distinctions did much to widen the gulf between man and man, so much so that millions of human beings are still regarded as untouchables for no fault of their own. For a time Vaishnavism cemented differences of birth. But again things became as they were before. That men belong to one vast fraternity, that there is no fundamental difference between men of different races, that the stamp of rank does not give a person precedence over others—these ideas are partially the effects of Western culture. Of course, in ancient India, mere wealth did not give a person a high place in society. The emperor in purple bowed before the ascetic in loin-cloth. Plain

living and high thinking characterised older Indian life. The greatest minds lived far away from the busy haunts of men or the hum of cities. Modern industrial life has placed money-value upon man, though equality and fraternity are preached by political thinkers. Herein lies the paradox of modern life.

The sentiment of patriotism and nationalism in Bengali literature is one of the effects of Western influence. Except on rare occasions, in older Bengali writers there is not the slightest trace of the feeling of nationalism or love for one's own country. It is in the literature of the British period that these sentiments are being expressed strongly. One reason of the silence of older Bengali writers on questions of patriotism seems to lie in the fact that, in the period previous to that of Western influence, the people of Bengal did not regard their rulers as aliens. Therefore they were untouched by anything akin to nationalism or patriotism. Political consciousness has grown up with the march of time. Politics as enunciated in theoretical works and politics as practised by men of affairs in real life, may be two different things. But in the domain of literature the ideas and aspirations that take shape in the brain of the poet and dramatist are embodied in marvelous works conveying to all ages a message. The *Prometheus Unbound* of Shelley may be cumbersome as a stage performance but the feelings that it evokes are irrepressible. The golden days dreamt of by the poet have yet to come, but that the poem has added to human hopes is beyond dispute.

Western influence has widened the subject-matter of modern Bengali literature. In the past Bengali literature was concerned mostly with some religious cults which advocated the worship of particular deities. The main theme of literary works was the worship of a god or goddess, and interwoven with it was the story of devotees receiving boons and favours. In Kavi Kankan's *Chandi*, Srimanta's fortunes rise and fall as the favours of the goddess increase or decrease. In the *Manasamangal* all misfortunes of the merchant Chand disappear when he begins the worship of the goddess Manasa. In Bharatchandra's *Annadamangal* the goddess has her own favourites and the whole poem has a religious background. The religious element plays a more important part in these poems than the human interest, and the human characters are wholly subordinated to the divine beings. Their lives and actions are regulated by divine wrath and pleasure. No varied treatment of character was possible and nothing very original could be depicted. In many poems the characters were similarly drawn. Imitativeness introduced monotony and most writers were content to confine themselves to what their predecessors had done and to get the materials from some common source. Boldness of conception, originality in outlook, novelty in characterisation, skilful handlings of complex situations were rare literary qualities among older writers. The standard of taste of the public was not always high and a poor standard often produced mediocre literature. The vastness of the subject-matter of literature has introduced exuberance of fancy, complexity of emotions, and heightened imaginativeness. Technique has become simplified. The highest thoughts are clothed in lucid language. There is no over-ornamentation. Variety has replaced uniformity. The personality of the writer for which there was so little place in older Bengali literature, finds today an adequate expression. The note of subjectivity which is a marked feature of the literature of the West has led to the replacement of the classic strains of older Indian literature by personal lyrics in modern Bengali.

Notable among the various types of literary composition introduced under the influence of the West are the novel, the short story as distinguished from the fairy or folk-tale, the sonnet, the ode, the elegy, the parody, the satire, the essay, etc. But most important of all has been the foundation of a prose literature. The Bengali prose that existed before the period of Western influence, was a conglomeration of Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Urdu words and it had no proper style worth the name. The making of Bengali prose has mainly been the work of writers nurtured in the school of Western thought. Indeed it is sometimes complained of that much of modern Bengali prose reads like translation of English. 'English-smacking Bengali' is often a term of reproach. Towards the simplicity of style and raising it to purity, sweetness, suggestiveness, force, and precision, and purging it of obscurity, heaviness and all unnecessary rhetorical flourishes, Western influence has done much.

There is a spirit of progress and advancement. Writers in previous ages did not have the courage to rise above certain conventions and certain hackneyed situations. It would have been unseemly, had a writer of the Vaishnava period thought of Radha in the same light as Bankimchandra could think of his heroines, because Radha was the symbol of something divine. An eighteenth-century Bengali writer could not have the faintest idea that there could be women as we find in the novels of Rabindranath or Saratchandra. A love intrigue like the Vidyasundar story in the hands of Bharatchandra could not rise above the vulgar description of a court-scandal. Many of our modern heroines would be shameless hussies according to the literary tenets of the past. Vaishnava writers could not think of love as anything more than the yearning of the human soul for the divine. But love as the affection of one human soul for another, love as the call of one spirit to another kindred spirit, love as the means of uniting human hearts were ideas somewhat foreign to older Bengali writers. The Sakta conception of love as found in the songs of men like Ramprasad was love as maternal solicitude for her children. The treatment of human love is to some extent noticed in the songs of Sridhar Kathak, Ram Basu, and Nidhu Babu. But beyond certain aspects of love such as 'separation' (viraha) and 'union' (milan) the imagination of these poets did not soar. There is no place in their love-poems for those complex emotions which characterise the love-poems of Tagore.

Practical influences of English on Bengali literature

Iswar Gupta (1812-1859) and Rangalal Bandyopadhyay (1826-1887) [is an unmistakable echo from Moore's 'Life without freedom'] were the first conscious admirer of western literary style and versification.

At that time Hindu College became the centre of European Humanism and Michael Madhusudan Dutt denied his own root openly in order to be included in the Western Literary canon. But his 'Captive Lady' in imitation of Milton's 'Paradise Lost' proved to be a miserable failure perhaps making him realize that the dream of being 'another Milton' would remain a dream and finally 'the prodigal returns home' and gave the static Bengali literature a cosmopolitan look. In 'Brajangana Kabya' as in Shakespeare's 'Dark Lady Sonnets' Michael robs off the spiritual romanticization and upholds the eternal human impulse which defies ethics and morals.

In Paradise Lost Milton, to some extent, subverts the Biblical tradition by making Satan the gorgeous hero

'What though the field be lost?
All is not lost—the unconquerable will.
And study of revenge, immoral hate,
And courage never to submit or yield.
And what is else not to be overcome?'

Dutta's 1861 epic 'Meghnad Badh Kavya' was inspired by Milton's Paradise Lost and depicted the heroism of Ravana's son Meghnad and portrayed Ramchandra as a crooked figure full of intrigue.

In imitation of the Occidental Masters he introduced 'Amitrakshar Chhanda' (Blank Verse); Chaturdash Podi Kobita (Sonnet)—in fact 'Sharmistha' (spelt as Sermista in English) was Madhusudan's first attempt at blank verse in Bengali literature.

The epitaph of Madhusudan bears a distinct echo of Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard'---

"Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God. "

Our amazement knows no bound when we learn the frail Sanskrit Pundit from Birsingha composed 'Bhrantibilas' which shows strong affinity with Shakespeare's 'The Comedy of Errors'.

The dream world of the vagabond in Bankim Chandra's 'Kamalakanter Daptar' is inspired by 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater' of De Quincey. His historical novels remind us of Walter Scott. His Kapal Kundala is modeled on Miranda of Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. Biharilal Chakrabarty, 'the morning singing bird of Bengali literature' consciously imitates the poets of Romantic Revival of 1798. Let's compare Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' with these lines—

"Sudden, thy shadow fell on me
I shrieked, and clasped my hand in ecstasy!"

মন যেন মজিতেছে অমৃত সাগরে
দেহ যেন ফাটিতেছে নবাবেগ ভরে ।

Dwijendra Lal Roy, when in England became inspired by the patriotic lyrics of Scott and Burns and his famous 'যেদিন সুনীল জলধি হইতে

is a literal translation of 'Rule Britannia' by James Thomson, Published 1763—

"When Britain first, at Heaven's command
Arose from out the azure main;
This was the charter of the land,

And guardian angels sang this strain:

"Rule, Britannia! rule the waves:

"Britons never will be slaves."

His famous satiric epic 'আশাঢ়ে' was a confessed indebtedness to 'Ingoldsby Legends'.

Ra bindranath Tagore himself acknowledged how the "spirit of Europe" had awakened and "dazzled" him when he was an adolescent, and that the "impetuosity of [...] passion" of a romantic poet like Byron in particular had "moved our veiled heart-bride in the seclusion of her corner". It is no denying that his intense hatred for the British Colonizers could not divert him from his attraction to British poetry. His 'Sandhysangeet' is motivated by Baudelaire's 'Evening Twilight'; his 'Shishu' is Blake's 'Songs of Innocence's echo, his 'Ekakini' is shadowed by Wordsworth's 'The Solitary Reaper'.

Andrew Chenier inspired tagore :

"The world has delights, the muses have songs

I wish not to perish too soon...."

Manashi' is inspired by Browning's dramatization of inner psychological interplay in his 'Dramatic Monologues'.

is the essence of romanticism .Shelley urges in similar vein-

"O! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!

I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!"

In Robert Frost's 'After Apple Picking' we find the trace of essential incompleteness of life

"But I am done with apple-picking now.

Essence of winter sleep is on the night,

The scent of apples: I am drowsing off."

He strongly adheres to Hardy "In Time of Breaking of the Nations". Perhaps his significant interview with Einstein coloured his consciousness of 'Relativism' reflected in the poem.

In his later poetry is reflected the devotional urge of John Donne in "Batter my heart, three person'd God ".

'Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you

As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;

That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee,'and bend

Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new'.

Prof. Taraknath Sen acknowledged that "a good art of the impetusmust have come from his knowledge of 19th century English poetry."

The death of Tagore created a void in Literature which turned the poets more to the West. In 'Aranyak' Bibhuti Bhushan's adoration of the tribal king and his intricate proximity with mystic nature remind us of Wordsworth's "The World is Too Much With Us"—

"-----I'd rather be

A pagan suckled in a creed outgrown,--

So might I ..."

Sharat Chandra is Bengal's Dickens in his interplay of humour and pathos, simple lucid style,

average characterization and poetic justice at the end.

His 'Srikanta' a veiled autobiography, we suspect, resembles 'David Copperfield'.

In 'Sleep and poetry' Keats wrote 'the subject of poetry should be the 'agonies, the strife/of human hearts', the 'Young Turk' Sukanta wrote—

In "Hyperion" Keats wrote

‘...much comfort will I give

If ye will take that comfort in its truth’

Sukumar Roy, the "Jerome K. Jerome" of Bengal started the convention of non-sense rhyme'.

Let us compare—

"Hey diddle, diddle,

The cat and the fiddle.

The cow jumped over the moon.

The little dog laughed to see such fun,

And the dish ran away with the spoon," with "Abol-Tabol"—

আবোল তাবোল --- সুকুমার রায়

আয়রে ভোলা খেয়াল-খোলা

স্বপনদোলা নাচিয়ে আয়,

আয়রে পাগল আবোল তাবোল

মত্ত মাদল বাজিয়ে আয়।

আয় যেখানে ক্ষ্যাপার গানে

নাইকো মানে নাইকো সুর,

আয়রে যেখায় উধাও হাওয়ায়

মন ভেসে যায় কোন সুদূর।

আয় ক্ষ্যাপা-মন ঘুচিয়ে বাঁধন

জাগিয়ে নাচন তাধিন্ ধিন্,

আয় বেয়াড়া সৃষ্টিছাড়া

নিয়মহারা হিসাবহীন।

আজগুবি চাল বেঠিক বেতাল

মাতবি মাতাল রপ্তে---

আয়রে তবে ভুলের ভবে

অসম্ভবের ছন্দেতে।

These poems are sure to remind us the anonymous ‘non-sense rhyme’-

"One fine day in the middle of the night,

Two dead boys got up to fight.

Back-to-back they faced each other,

Drew their swords and shot each other.

A deaf policeman heard the noise,

And rushed to save the two dead boys.

A paralyzed donkey walking by,

Kicked the copper in the eye,

Sent him through a rubber wall,
 Into a dry ditch and drowned them all.
 (If you don't believe this lie is true,
 Ask the blind man -- he saw it too!) "

Bishnu Dey's
 reminds us of Eliot's Prufrock sterility of mind
 "Time for you and time for me,
 And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
 And for a hundred visions and revisions,
 Before the taking of a toast and tea."

Jibananada Das, the English Professor of English of Kharagpur College combined within him Keatsian sensuousness with Wordsworthian mysticism. Compare—

with Yeats' 'Sailing to Byzantium' –
 "And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
 To the holy city of Byzantium."
 He lamented that

which is a strong reminder of Wordsworthian phraseology in 'Tintern Abbey'– burthen of the mystery,/In which the heavy and the weary weight/ Of all this unintelligible world'. Annada Shankar Roy perfected the Bengali Juvenile literature with rhyme and a heart touching message.

Just remember—
 "Solomon Grundy,
 Born on Monday,
 Christened on Tuesday,
 Married on Wednesday,
 Took ill on Thursday,
 Worse on Friday,
 Died on Saturday,
 Buried on Sunday:
 This is the end
 Of Solomon Grundy."

Is not the underlying tragic tone in both the poems perceptible?

Does Byomkesh Bakshi with his intellectual weapon and friend Ajeet not remind us of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson?

His 'Jhinder Bondi' is a borrowing of 'The Prisoner of Zenda', an adventure novel by Anthony Hope, published in 1894. If we consider cinema and drama as the poetic exuberance in the wider sense, then see how Henrik Ibsen's play 'An Enemy of the People' motivated Satyajit Roy in 'Ganashatru' or Utpal Dutta's 'Tiner Toloar' is partially based on Bernard Shaw's 'Pygmalion'; Badal Sircar's "Evang Indrajit" follows Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot', Actor, director and playwright, Ramaprasad Banik who just left us virtually spellbound the audience in 'Putul Khela', an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's 'A Doll's House', directed by Sambhu Mitra.

Not prolonging this boring discussion just end with the modern face of Bengali Literature Sunil Gangopadhyay and Taslima nasrin—

Now compare with it with 'The Song of Wandering Aengus' by W.B. Yeats:

"Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done
The silver apples of the moon,

The golden apples of the sun". His 'Neera' poems had strong resemblance of Maud Gonne poem of W.B. Yeats.

Taslima Nasrin is the Virginia Woolf of Bengal upholding 'feminism'.

Rudyard Kipling in his once commented that "OH, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet". But he also acknowledged that "But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth," But literature knows no bounds . Writers enrich and themselves enriched with cultural trans- migration. 150 years ago, the prophet of Jorashanko rightly sums up this spirit---

The world is too small now; so let's fly in'

Findings:

Western influence has widened the subject-matter of modern Bengali literature. The influence of English literature on Bengali literature as having been not only a modernizing but indeed a civilizing force. Bengali literature has been partially denationalized in the course of its contact with the West. That such a situation should arise was inevitable. A discrimination was not always possible. Under the pressure of circumstances limits are sometimes forgotten; there is an encroachment on forbidden ground, and the sense of balance is lost. The westernisation of Bengali literature could not be avoided during times when influences were so strongly working and impressions were so vivid. To rise above the tide of Westernism was well nigh an impossibility. Occidentalism in thought led to an *occidentalism* in literature. With the marvelous spirit of adaptability that is a characteristic gift of the people of Bengal, they have assimilated Western influence in a manner which has led to the steady development of Bengali literature. So I think that Bengali literature is indebted much to English literature.

Conclusion:

The conflict between Western liberalism and Hindu orthodoxy had a two-fold effect. In poetry it developed satire in the hands of Hemchandra and Dwijendralal and their followers like Indranath Banerjee. It also had a powerful effect on the evolution of social comedy; the influence of Sheridan and Goldsmith is noticeable in the sentimental comedies of Rabindranath and the social comedies of Amritalal and Girish Chandra. Jotirindranath Tagore's drama bore the distinct stamp of French comedians like Moliere. It also imparted to prose a vigour and a robust quality, Promotho Choudhury and his disciples brought

something of Gallic wit and Shavian paradox into Bengali prose. The influence of the West had done its job; it had enlivened Indian literature with ideas and enriched it with new thoughts. It seems we are now on the threshold of a new age where the genius of the people will speak out in clear, loud and unborrowed language.



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