

Chapter I

CONTEMPORARY BACKGROUND AND JAGADISH GUPTA'S UNIQWENERS

1. "The age of Rabindranath spans over the period between the mid-nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth. The long history of the growth and development of a new philosophy of life based on the right to self-determination culminating in scientific modernism is also the history of Tagore's thoughts and ideas. These rich thoughts and ideas, multi-faceted and multi-phased, breathed into our narrow and circumscribed national life hopes of a new revival."¹

Till the second decade of the twentieth century the writers of Bengal were more or less in a state of intoxication under the irresistible influence of Tagore. Excepting only a few who chose to oppose him, all others, almost to a man, considered Rabindranath as omnipresent as God. They dealt in old, conventional ideas, put them under various guises, and thus tried to please their readers. "If the second half of the nineteenth century can be called the age of Bankimchandra, the first half of the twentieth century can be called the age of Rabindranath."² 'Mānsi', 'Bhāratī', 'Prabāsi' and 'Sahajpetra' were the principal carriers of Tagore's thoughts and ideas. Besides Rabindranath, only Saratchandra was recognised as a great man of letters. These two had much in common in quite some respects, but Saratchandra was comparatively close to the people. The middle-class man and

women and the poor crowded his stories and novels. Remarks Madhusudan Bandyopadhyay : "He is the first common man's writer in Bengali. His popularity curbed even Rabindranath's little, since the Bengali reading public could not feel quite at home with Tagore's immensely bold experimentations and commensurate success. Perhaps, Saratchandra's popularity was also due to his deep sympathy for the victims of society."³

It was at this time that the country's political and economic systems were undergoing changes. A new generation of writers - the successor group - was coming into being. These new men possessed a new outlook on life and the world. Their thoughts and ideas, the characters they created and their styles started defying conventionalism. Even though they shared some of Saratchandra's attitude, they did not like to be his fellow travellers. Saratchandra however, sided with the new writers of the second decade of the 20th century, and answered the harsh criticism directed against them by saying "Is it true that the new writers are pushing the country's literature down the hill? If so, I am to be blamed no less."⁴ Still the new writers did not link themselves over much with him. And their rejection of Rabindranath, a much greater and nobler force, was total. The reason is not far to seek : Rabindranath was chiefly and fundamentally a believer, confident till the end of his life of the ultimate victory of goodness and peace. In his long literary career he had ever felt presence of a nobler, transcendental being.

The new age in its reckless indiscretion branded him as escapist and unmodern. "Rabindranath is not close to the reality. His passion lacks intensity. His art bears no traces of the sorrows and sufferings of life."⁵ Prior to this, Rabindranath had been criticised by the social and religious institutions; he had been accused of being anti-traditional, haughtily modern and disrespectful to Hinduism and the codes of family life. Needless to say, Tagore's concept of 'modernism' found little support from most of his contemporaries and the later writers. His popularity suffered some eclipse in the face of the concerted attempts, in the thirties, to denigrate him. But later when the storm had blown over, Rabindranath was reassessed and his greatness was recognised again. Let us consider three well thought-out and valuable remarks :

(a) "In Bengal there had been no writer before Rabindranath as energetic and as all-embracing as he. The later writers, however much they may boast, could never discover in the world of feeling a path which did not bear his footprints."⁶

(b) " this is how his direct and indirect influence is discernible in the succeeding age. When we see the light, but not the Sun, we know that, even though invisible to us, the Sun must have risen somewhere."⁷

(c) "Tagore's analysis and comments on modernism and contemporaneity had once attracted hostile criticism; but

today we are getting more and more convinced that Tagore had reason on his side."⁸

However in order to understand the age, it is necessary that we keep in mind the following features of the so-called modernism of the new generation of writers :

- (i) disbelief in traditional idealism and transcendentalism,
- (ii) scientific attitude and rationalism, (iii) development of realism, (iv) psychological analysis, (v) study and culture of various (philosophical and political) ideas of the West, (vi) recognition of the importance of the body, (vii) attachment of special importance to the portrayal of the life of the middle-class and lower-class people, (viii) conference of greater importance on the message in the narrative, and (ix) technical experimentation.

These features began to characterise the works of the younger writers. Needless to say Rabindranath and these writers were poles asunder. They were separated from him by age and attitude. They had been born when the 20th century was passing through a variety of complex events. The Russian Revolution took place in 1917; 1921 saw the initiation of the Non-cooperation Movement; the Socialist Movement was launched by M.N. Roy in 1919; in 1928 was founded the Communist Party; the Civil Disobedience Movement started in 1931; in 1921 the Meerut conspiracy case began; between 1931 to 1935 Marxist philosophy and Lenin's military strategy, Freudian psychology, the physical and sexual view of love of Adler, Jung and

Navalock Ellis, and the neo-economic thoughts of Bernard Shaw and the Fabians inspired and excited the educated youth of Bengal.

It was but natural that in such circumstances the young mind should grow painfully restless. The front runners of the new age tried to initiate great changes principally through three magazines - 'Kallol' (1330 B.E.), 'Kālikālan' (1333 B.E.), and 'Pragati' (1334 B.E.). These monthlies had common aims and common writers. Of these 'Kallol' was the most influential. It declared itself to be the first monthly magazine for stories in Bengal.⁹ Its first editor was Dinesh Ranjan Das, and the co-editor was Gokul Chandra Nag. The writers in 'Kallol' were popularly known as 'Kallol Gosthi' or 'Kallol group', and the age is usually known as 'Kallol Yug' or 'Kallol age'. Buddhadev Basu, a distinguished writer of this age wrote : "The principal feature of what is known as the 'Kallol age' was protest. It was chiefly directed against Rabindranath."¹⁰

Rabindranath's influence is all-pervasive in Bengali literature, though, admittedly he owed little to the so-called modern thoughts. The Nobel Prize brought Rabindranath nation-wide recognition. It silenced even his fiercest detractors like Dwijendra Lal and Suresh Chandra Samajpati. Once again Rabindranath became the focus of all attention and the model to be studied and imitated. However, even then, to some people, Rabindranath stood for conventionalism, traditional

values, worn out ideas. They would deride him in their bid to introduce into Bengali literature new thoughts and consciousness. They considered him unacceptable since they did not find in his writings the psychology of sex and the experience of poverty. A different literary trend was set first by Jatindra Nath Sengupta in his intellectually pessimistic poetry, by Mohitlal as he sang of the 'body electric', and by Nazrul in his ardent espousal of the adventurous and rebellious power of youth. Thus began the process of moving away from Rabindranath. The 'Kallol' owes its birth to this. Its revolutionary intent found voice when Achintakumar sang out loud and clear :

"Let the enemies throw numberless darts from behind,
 Let Rabindranath block the road that stretches forward,
 The intense, sharp light I shall light up in my heart
 Shall eclipse the sun of the day. My way lies far ahead."¹¹

This was a war-cry; the 'Kallol' was born in prose.

Let us particularise at this point. Let us concentrate on short story. The short story, if one may say so, 'appeared' in Bengali; it had behind it no history of growth and development. It 'appeared' in all its fulness and glory first in the writings of Rabindranath, though of course, Tagore's contemporaries and later-day writers added to its varieties. This is the view aired by Submar Sen in his introduction to a book.¹²

Mention must be made of two famous literary groups immediately precedent to the 'Age of Kallol'. Both the groups had drawn sustenance from Tagore's encouragement and blessings. Both the groups - the 'Bharati' and the 'Sahajpatra' - had contributed substantially to the Bengali literature of the second and the third decades. Many of the poets of the 'Bharati' group with Monilal Gangopadhyaya as the central figure also wrote short stories and novels. The Bengali short story as 'la Rabindranath found its best expression in the 'Bharati' publications. The best writers all admirers of Rabindranath of 1322 B.E. when the 'Bharati' was jointly edited by Sourindra Mohan Mukhopadhyay and Monilal Gangopadhyay came to be known as the 'Bharati group'. Even Abanindranath, with his unique stories which were, in a way word-paintings, associated himself with this group. The most Tagorean among these writers was Charuchandra Bandyopadhyay. The other notables were Premankur Atarshi, Sourindramohan Mukhopadhyay and Manendra Kumar Roy.

It is true that these writers did not strike any original and unique attitude in their stories. But though not 'rebels' in their artistic creations, they were certainly not conservatives. They did not blindly follow the traditional social and moral faith and ideals. They paid much attention to the individual's aims and aspirations, and did not fight shy of depicting physical desires despite social mandates to the contrary. This was certainly something. Some

of these writers wrote also for 'Kallol'. But as Achintakumar Sengupta said, "though they wrote for Kallol, they did not represent the spirit 'Kallol' stood for."¹³

The first publication of 'Sabujpatra' on the 25th of Baishākh (1321 B.E.) was a significant event for Bengali literature. The principal force behind this publication was Prematha Chaudhuri. Its contributors were chiefly essayists; creative literature was not their major concern. All such writers as Prafulla Kumar Chakravarty, Sureshchandra Chakravarty, Kiren Shankar Roy, Surendranath Tagore, Indira Devi Chaudhurani, Baradacharan Gupta, Atul Chandra Gupta and Bireswar Sen intellectualised literature to a large extent. The name of Dhurjati Prasad Mukhopadhyay should also be added to the list of writers who may be said to have formed the 'Sabujpatra' group. "Dhurjati Prasad has written of this group in one of his letters, though Atul Chandra Gupta was against the use of the word 'group'. Really there never existed any formal group; there had been no formal 'Sabujpatra' group. Prematha Chaudhuri was the very life of 'Sabujpatra'. Other writers used to cluster around. In matters of age education and intellectual abilities they were all inferior to him. They may be said to have formed the 'Prematha Chaudhuri group', but certainly not the 'Sabujpatra group'.¹⁴

In any case the writers of 'Sabujpatra' wanted to assert the supremacy of reason over emotion, of control over abundance. They averred that art or literature was without

any social or moral purpose. Literature, they said, was purposeless; it was but the 'lila' (sport) of life. Beauty, they held, was superior to ethics, joy according to them, was superior to purpose. This was the literary philosophy of Prematha Chaudhuri and the writers around him.

Prematha Chaudhuri's distinction lay in his unique personality. "In the field of the short story Prematha Chaudhuri brought novel attitudes and techniques."¹⁵ Drawing inspiration from Western thoughts and ideas, 'Sabujpatra' initiated a new movement in Bengali literature. Prematha Chaudhuri played an important role in this matter. As Shrikumar Bandopadhyay has put it, "he introduced into our world of traditional faith and loyalty an attitude - a' la French - of playful humour and bold, cultured irony. It was he who added a new dimension to our world of slow-moving ideas and gave it an intellectual orientation."¹⁶

Prematha Chaudhuri's influence was felt not only by the young intellectuals close to him, even the rebellious young writers of the 'Kallol' group were drawn towards and attracted by his personality. A rather long quotation might be in order here : "Often some of us would go to his house the 'May Fair'. He was very favourably disposed towards 'Kallol', so we were always accorded a warm welcome. His talented bright face would soften in affection. He said 'Flow is purity; dynamism is strength. It may be turbid at the initial stage. But if motion be there, you shall surely

find out your depth one day'. In silence I took the vow of going on writing till my last day. I owed the courage necessary for such a resolution to his radiant presence. He would say : 'when you write, do not think of any other writer. There is none to stand in your way. Consider yourself alone and unique in the world of letters'. 'There is none to stand in my way' - It was a startling idea.

'No one'

'But Rabindranath.'

'Not even Rabindranath If you keep thinking that Rabindranath is ever there in front of you, how then can you write on your own. In that case you shall become a mere imitator of Rabindranath. Think that your path is clear, that your mind is free, that you alone are the master of your pen.'¹⁷

In a letter written in 1926 B.E. Rabindranath fervently wanted the new writers to contribute to 'Sabujpatra'. "But new writers must come forward. Why don't they come? It shall be an anachronism if we monopolise the 'Sabujpatra'."¹⁸ It was he who strongly advocated individualism in the face of traditional social mechanism in his stories 'Nāldār Ganthi' (Baishākh, 1921 B.E.) and 'Strin Patra' (Shrābhāna, 1921 B.E.) published in the 'Sabujpatra'. This was certainly a modern attitude. Rightly has Gopikanath Roychaudhuri said "He himself inspired the young writers of the 'Kallol' group of the third decade of the 20th century with the idea of intense

individualism and the consequent spirit of rebellion."¹⁹

Shankha Ghose said : " 'Yes, I am obtuse because I am real, because I am flesh, instinct, hunger, a heart that knows of no shame' - This declaration by Sandip or his attempt to equate recognition of nature as real and respectable with modernism moves us towards the progressive days of 'Kallol'."²⁰

Of course, the 'Kallol' group did not want to toe Rabindranath's line. Various post-war developments had disturbed their mental balance. Restless and unsure, they paid scant regard to Rabindranath's well-argued theory of modernism and individualism; on the contrary, they sought emotional satisfaction in following the course of a haughty rebellion Rabindranath was rebuffed : 'Get out of here, you old one'.

Achintyankumar's words come to mind : " 'Kallol' moved away from Rabindranath. It moved into the crowd of the low-born and the neglected, into the home of the middle class, into the hovels of the coalminers, into the slums, on to the pavements, into the areas of the duped and the dumped."²¹

The common ideological tie between the 'Sabujpatra' phase and the post-First World War phase of 'Kallol' is to be found in their glorification of youth and in their call to freedom from all that was combined, confined and tradition bound. Buddhadev Basu's words are worth recalling in this context : "I must at this stage, mention Kallol, chronologically the most important literary periodical after Sabujpatra, the

two being similar in results and different in methods. Kallol like Sabujpatra of a decade ago, served as an instrument of a new spirit (in their respective times the new spirit) in literature. But while the latter was well planned and better manned, having been, in the beginning, controlled nearly as much by Rabindranath as Pramatha Chaudhuri, it was more or less an accident that the former became what, in its final phase, it was. Starting as a four-ana-story-magazine, Kallol took a more serious turn through the influence of Gokulchandra Nag, who having written one long novel and a few short stories where talent strove with the latest fashions, died young leaving Kallol to the care of its founder editor Dineshramjan Das an elderly bachelor, pleasant and sociable endowed with a great gift for making friends. This gift, I think was at least partly responsible for Kallol's somewhat sudden ascension, for in about a couple of years from Gokulchandra's death, those of us who were serving our literary nonage in the middle and late twenties had all gathered round Kallol, drawn as much by one another as by the conviviality of DR, as the dear editor liked to be called. While Sabujpatra influenced its contributors, Rabindranath not accepted, Kallol was influenced by its contributors to such an extent as to soon become their mouthpiece, and identified with the spirit of youth, with revolt, and even the revolting."²²

The 'Kallol' writers and their camp followers began their march by opposing Rabindranath. They were troubled with doubts and loss of faith did not really emerge out of

nothing; they had their genesis in the post-war circumstances. We have earlier talked of the background. It needs no telling that drastic changes in the world outside necessarily rock the world of ideas. The young writers robbed of all faith in the traditional values and consequently left with a negative attitude towards life, wanted, in their frequent revolutionary zeal to smash all that was old and ancient. At the same time, their immature romanticism drove them towards an unsound philosophy of pleasure. In other words, they were bold rebels and still victims of romantic illusions.

The stories written by the 'Kallol' group of writers evinced great interest in the life of the socially lowly and examined sex-relations more liberally and objectively than ever before. These reflected the attitudinal change in the contemporary Bengali intelligentsia. The young Bengali writers fell prey to doubts, questionings, frustrations, anger, and loss of faith in the traditionally extolled ideas regarding religion, love, truth and beauty. All this had its basis in the real life situations (the economic depreivity of the lower middle-class, to name one), but it was shaped no less by the immature emotionalism derived from the romantic literature of Europe. All the principal 'Kallol' writers with only the exception of Sailajananda, portrayed urban life in their stories. They drew their inspiration from the stories and novels Scandinavia, Russia, England and France. The short stories of the thirties explored the hitherto unexplored psyche of a man and woman against the background

of an all pervasive degeneration of social, political and economic values. They daringly studied and portrayed sex-relations, much to the dislike of the tradition-bound conservatives. Their depiction of sex urge and sexual behaviour created quite a stir in the society. Of them Naresh Chandra Sengupta formed the avant-garde. Once Sajani Kanta Das wrote to Rabindranath, bemoaning the deterioration of taste in 'modern' literature; he held Nareshchandra principally responsible for that deterioration. Many of the later writers acknowledged Nareshchandra either as their direct or indirect source of inspiration.

2. The most popular among the writers of the 'Kallol' group was the trinity of Achintya, Premendra and Buddhadev. Almost equally famous were Sailajamanda Mukhopadhyay, Manish Ghatak and Prabodh Kumar Sanyal. They were born respectively in 1903, 1904, 1908, 1901 and 1902. That is, each of them was under twenty-two at the time of the first publication of 'Kallol' as a monthly magazine, and they all grew up in an age of crisis and disintegration.

Among the short story writers of the 'Kallol' group Premendra Mitra deserves first mention. His short stories are characterized by their controlled clarity and suggestive economy. He had a unique mastery over technique, and an enviable ability to analyse the psychology of his character. He mirrored in his writings the ills and degeneration of the middle-class and the lower-middle-class societies. "His short

stories are the very treasures of Bengali literature. Few other writers could so feelingly portray - as he did - the sad spectacle of human frustration within the given limits of the short story."²³ He looked at life in the light of reason, he explained it rationally, and this objective attitude added a dimension of special intensity to his stories. He felt and tried to express in his stories and poems the 'angst' of the day as he saw it in multiple contradictions. "The short stories of Premendra Mitra owe their artistic success to his poetic sensitivity, scientific objectivity, sense of sympathy and rational understanding."²⁴

Achintya Kumar Sengupta had a wide range of experience. His earlier stories were typical 'Kallol' stuff; they dealt with despair and fancy. The sense of nothingness which cries against all that is established is often found lacking a hard core of idealism. Achintyakumar used a kind of indeterminable romanticism to fill in the void. The writers of the day were votaries of youth. This youth worship joined hands with sex consciousness a'la' Freud. The lost generation of the age sought and found refuge in the philosophy of lust and physical pleasure.

If the writers of the 'Kallol' group formed a collective entity, they certainly did not lose their individualities in the process. Achintyakumar and Buddhadev were much alike in their worship of Beauty, but they were so very different in their criticism of life. Achintyakumar was drawn towards

Hansen while Buddhadev felt drawn towards Lawrence. Premendra Mitra admitted that both Lawrence and Gorky had sway over his mind. "Today after more than twenty years of authorship, Achintyakumar and Premendra are widely apart. The Norwegian manner (or mannerism) had led the former bounding prancing style, rather hard, but never lacking ardour, while the latter it has left crushed in a sighing, whispering perhaps."²⁵

Principally a poet, Buddhadev also dealt with the mystery and variety of human love in his stories. He remained aware and sensitive till his last day, unaffected and unspoilt even by the greater writers of his age. Even Rabindranath once wrote of him : "My chance introduction into Buddhadev Bose's writings convinced me that he would undoubtedly hold a distinguished position in Bengali literature. The harbingers of the literature of the days to come must accord him the respect that is rightfully his."²⁶ Buddhadev started writing very early in his life with inspiration derived from Tagore. But soon he came under the influence of Freud and Lawrence. Even as a young writer he had attracted both fame and notoriety. His literary life took many turns and expressed itself in a variety of ways. This is why it is difficult to be brief and yet make a comprehensive study of him as a writer.

Manish Ghatak wrote under the pseudonym of 'Jubanāwa'. Sex urge is one of the principal elements his stories deal with. "Jubanāwa's stories in 'Patal-dāngār-Pāncālī' attain

no great artistic heights; there the macabre often plays a significant role; and yet these stories are important as a good many letter-day stories of high artistic merit could draw on them. The famous short story 'Prāgaitihāsik' must have been inspired by the stories in 'Petal-dāngār-Pānchālī'.²⁷

Sailajananda acted like a discoverer in his short stories. Sometimes he would throw light on the unknown reaches of the mind of the people of our unknown world. Sometimes he would portray with genuine affection the neglected life of the 'Santhals' the 'Bauris' and the coal-miners. He also portrayed the rural life in Bengal. But his romantic inclinations often interfered with his sense of reality. As Kaji Abdul Odood has said : "A perusal of Sailajananda's stories on the life of the Santhals makes us think that realism in Bengali literature would have perhaps attained greater maturity if only he had been a little less romantically inclined."²⁸

Manindralal Basu had been associated with the 'Four Arts Club' (1921) which had paved the way for 'Kallol'. Even before 'Kallol' hit the stands, he had got his stories and novels published in the 'Prabāsi'. The sentimental heroes and heroines of his romantic tales could little influence the literature of later times. But his language and descriptive art inspired a good many writers. Dinesh Chandra Das ('Shāretī'), Gokul Chandra Nay ('Prabāsi' and 'Shāretī') and Kaji Nazrul Islam ('Prabāsi', 'Moslem Shāret', 'Itumketa' and

'Bangiya Musalmān Patrikā') should also be bracketted with Monindralal; all of them later became the fountainhead of 'Kallol'.

3. The 'Kallol' group was formed in the thirties of the 20th century by such writers as were associated with 'Kallol', 'Kālikālam', 'Pragati', 'Uttarā' and 'Dhupahāyā'. But these writers were not the only initiators of the new literary movement. Another group of young writers were also at work for the expansion and development of the scope and quality of the short story. Their literary efforts found expression through 'Prabāsi', 'Bhāretbāras', 'Shanibārer chithi', 'Bichitrā' and the 'Ānandabāsar Patrikā'. These writers (of whom Tarashankar and Bibhutibhusan shall be discussed later) artistically explored a good many areas of man's life. Many of them started writing in the thirties, and some of them are active even to-day. It is beyond our scope to discuss in detail the individual characteristics of each of these writers. So let us try to be selective. But before we do that, we must mention the name of Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, a very distinguished short story writer in Bengali. He died in 1932 and so did not really belong to our age. At the touch of his gentle, smiling humour even the minor incidents of life assumed special significance. His fine sense of control and his sure eye for the natural, lent artistic success to his stories. Even his closeness to Rabindranath could not curb his individuality. The writers of the 'Kallol' group could

not quite ward off his influence.

Anandachandrar Roy's (1904) writings are characterised by his keen awareness of life and the soft radiance of his intellectually-informed mind. While writing, he would at times take an oblique stance, Saradindu Bandyopadhyay owed his popularity to his mystery-stories. Sarajumar Roychandhuri (1903) concentrated mainly on the portrayal of village life. His stories highlight the various political and economic problems of the twenties and the thirties.

Manoj Basu (1901) was a romantic. He wrote almost poetically of village life and the political idealism of his time. His success lies mainly in his portrayal of the Southern Bengal in general and of the Sundarbans and the villages of Khulna and Jessore in particular. His sincerity of approach is his principal virtue.

'Banshi' (Balachand Mukhopadhyay) (1898) had an altogether different attitude. He wanted to know and understand the secret working of the human mind in order that he could grasp life in its totality. In his stories he would build up the perspective with as few words as possible; he would choose a small slice of life; he would introduce strange characters or situations; and he would bring everything to a surprisingly dramatic, because unexpected conclusion. At times, he would assume a sharply satirical tone.

In the same period of time another powerful group of writers started moving in the opposite direction. To oppose the 'Kallol' group was its principal objective. The writers of the 'Shanibāser chithi', which first came out as a weekly (1924) and then turned into a monthly (1927), displayed in their stories a sharply biting sense of humour.

Rabindranath Maitra (1896-1935) enhanced the glory of this group. His stories, which came out in the 'Prabāsi' and other magazines, were realistic in as much as they were based on his direct knowledge of the political, economic, social and moral issues of the day. He vividly portrayed the life of the aborigines in the Northern Bengal. His satirical stories unfailingly hit the mark.

The central figures of this decade were Sajani Kanta Das (1910-1962) and Parimal Goswami (1899); both excelled in satirical compositions. Though of a different mould, 'Pra-Nā-Bi' or Prematha Nath Bishi also wrote excellent satirical and humorous stories. Bibhatibhuvan Mukhopadhyay on the other hand, mainly wrote such stories as exuded a soft, gentle sense of humour.

The Indian life in the late thirties was inspired with the desire to resist and resolve the political and economic problems of the time. The degeneration effected by the first phase of the Second World War badly shook the consciousness of the people and a new way of life began to be looked for. About this time Rabindranath started writing

stories of a different nature 'Badrin', 'Mucalmānir Galpa', etc. had little in common with 'Tinsangi'. With this as its background, the forties found its principal literary figures, among others, in Subodh Ghosh (1901) and Narayan Gangopadhyay (1918). The Second World War moved Narayan Gangopadhyay, the short story writer, into various artistic perceptions. Subodh Ghosh brought to bear upon his stories his deep economic and social awareness, his sharp sense of realism and his unerring views of life. The publication of his short story, 'Fossil' was a remarkable event in Bengali literature. He exposed the pretensions, self-deceptions, hauteur and egotism, cowardice and meanness, and lowly opportunism of the middle class in his writings. He criticised bitterly, from the very start, the vacillating mental make-up of the said class. Much of the credit that goes to Manik Bandyopadhyay for his ability to analyse the mind of the middle class should also go to Subodh Ghosh. Both were, in this respect, fellow travellers.

4. It was in this period that Sibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay and Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay entered the literary scene. Both were eminent short story writers of the post-Rabindranath and the post-Saratchandra days, and both wrote of village life for they had never lost their link with the countryside. In that they were different from the young writers of the 'Kallol' group who had drawn inspiration from the literature of the West and had, in their frustration and pain, initiated pessimistic literary movement. "Though Tarashankar first got

published in *Kallol*,"²⁹ he never identified himself with it. The attitude of doubt and vacillation of the 'Kallol' group was never to be his. He had unshakable faith in man and in positive values. As an artist, he was a votary of life. His stories are picture-galleries of various people belonging to all the strata of the society. But, of course, in his passionate concern for what was good he never turned a blind eye to life's many evils. As Jagadish Bhattacharyya has put it, "if Tarashankar's short stories unveil the eternal human values, they also record the virtues and vices of the contemporary life."³⁰

Bibhutibhusan also had great faith in the positive humanistic values of the rural society. He wrote of the life of the ordinary village people. His stories were remarkable in that they came out of his intimate knowledge of the man, of their conditions and of their natural surroundings. "The source of Bibhutibhusan's lies in his sense of identification with nature. No other Bengali writer in prose or poetry has felt so vividly the intimate relation between man and nature."³¹ He penetrated the surface of ordinariness and discovered the presence of a gentler and fuller life he remains unrivalled in the world of Bengali literature.

An honest and sympathetic writer, Tarashankar knew well the men and women on whom he modelled his characters. He was a realist, but not in the Western sense of the term; he never ignored the spiritual tradition of India. While

indicating the various influences on his life, he said : "The other influence came from what may be called religious faith, spiritualism or ethical concern. I feel deep down in my heart the presence of a mysterious order, and I have a painful yearning for this order in the human heart."³²

Thus Tarashankar on the one hand and Bibhutibhusan on the other gave voice to the cry of freedom from the Post-World War restlessness and pessimism and the attitude of sarcasm which had pervaded Bengali literature in the 'Kallol' age.

5. "The Bengali short story, as published in 'Kallol' not only took in all the earlier achievements of the genre in matters of plot-construction and characterisation, but wanted even to 'eclipse' them. It held up the promise of arresting the whole of life in life's cross-sections and of artistically building unified sensibility through a dramatic beginning and a sudden, unerring conclusion."³³ This remark is rather prejudicial. Certainly, some three or four short-story writers of the post-Kallol age played a more important role than the writers of the 'Kallol' group. These writers were really exceptional. There had been another exceptional writer, Jagdish Gupta - the man who was one of the 'Kallol' movement. He was the first successful writer of the post Rabindranath age. He was distinctly different from the others from the very beginning. No prejudice or emotionalism could ever tarnish his mind. He objectively analysed the social life

and presented it artistically.

The 'Kallol' group's principal artistic concerns were sex-life and poverty. Jagadish Gupta, however did not allow any emotionalism to overtake those concerns. He created a new and distinctive tradition in the world of the Bengali short-story - a tradition later to be followed and enriched by the famous writer Manik Bandyopadhyay. "Jagadish Gupta portrayed with artistic objectivity the dark circle of life, the inner maze of fraudulent desires, and the world wide manifestations of Satanism. Undoubtedly he paved the way for Manik (Prabodh Kumar) Bandyopadhyay."³⁴

Jagadish Gupta was the seniormost among the writers of the 'Kallol' group. Said Achintyakumar : "There came another one in that age of degeneration - Jagadish Gupta was his name. He was a writer of distinction, so energetic, so full of vitality. He was a little senior in age, but no less bright and warm than his younger colleagues."³⁵

Jagadish Gupta's first original story 'Paying Guest', was published in the 'Bijali' on the 29th of Falgun, 1331 B.E. The Kartik issue (1332 B.E.) of the same magazine published his second story 'Pallishmashān'. So his appearance as a writer was contemporaneous with that of 'Kallol' and 'Kālikalam'. In the very first year of its publication (1333 B.E.) 'Kālikalam' brought out nine stories by Jagadish Gupta. Those stories had their genesis in an intense spirit of doubt. Jagadish wanted to root out and crush age-old

faiths and beliefs. He had apparently much in common with the younger writers, but his mental maturity was what lent him distinction. From the very beginning he shocked his readers and critics. Naturally, he failed to achieve popularity. His stories told of the helplessness and defeat of man exuded an attitude shorn of all illusions, and portrayed the triumph of cruel Fate. The general readers refused to accept all this. He freed the Bengali short story of the romantic sentimentalism of the 'Kallol group', showed that the world was a dry parched land, a land without hope, ever ridden by Fate, where man suffering helplessly, ever groan.

Naturalism appeared in his stories dealing with the criss-cross of light and shade in the human mind. This made him Manik Bandyopadhyay's true predecessor in literature. The attitude displayed by Jagadish Gupta was also displayed by Manik Bandyopadhyay in a controlled artistic manner. But Manik ultimately toed the Marxist path in his search for escape from the intense suffering and agony of life.

Both Jagadish Gupta and Manik Bandyopadhyay did away with emotionalism. Both of them portrayed objectively the dark arenas of life and life's inner maze. Both were aware of Fate's cruel role and diabolical powers. Both knew of the part played by man's surroundings, and both wanted to analyse these scientifically. Though they had their mutual differences, their remarkable similarity marked them out as a

distinctly separate group. None of the two belonged to the 'Kallol group'. "Worthy of mention is the new-comer Jagadish Gupta. I do not remember ever having seen him visit the office of Kallol."³⁶ Achintyaskumar also said : "Jagadish Gupta had never visited the office of Kallol."³⁷

If literature forsakes the life of the middle-class and becomes concerned only with the life of the ordinary poor people, it is likely to turn lopsided. The writer can very well consider the life of the labourers, workers and peasants as the real thing, but if he does not have any genuine quest for life, his art will surely become deadwood. Literature becomes 'inverted romance' when it finds reality only in poverty and frustration. Jagadish and Manik realised it too well. They were different from the Kallol group of writers, because they did not share the latter's typically middle-class anti-romanticism, and did have a much deeper and more comprehensive understanding of reality.

Both Jagadish Gupta and Manik Bandyopadhyay ran counter to the spirit of 'Kallol'. But each had his own distinction. Jagadish was a bitter pessimist. He was ever aware of the presence of a cruel, mysterious power causing human failure and frustration. His doubts moved him into hopelessness and grief. The characters of his stories and novels symbolise disillusionment and pain. Manik Bandyopadhyay, on the other hand, found wish fulfilment via Marxism. Manik's stories analyse the society and trace the

social evolution, but the stories written by Jagadish betray no such tendencies. 'Manik Bandyopadhyay's stories are not about Fate; they are a protest against social injustice.'³⁸ But both Jagadish and Manik shared the realization that human values were not guided by selfish sentimentalism. Both agreed that these values could cave in under social and economic pressure. Unlike Saratchandra, they did not glorify the individual man. They knew that man's desire to survive was instinctive, though Jagadish realised the meaninglessness of this desire in the face of the immensity and terror of a blind force. That is why, in his stories, 'Makhan' is ultimately forced into universal darkness, 'Maya' has to accept alienation, and 'Ghanaprabha' cannot but turn insane; no light relieves their gloom. Men like 'Shibapriya' and 'Krishnakanta' remain grovelling in a horrid cave.

Manik Bandyopadhyay, as has already been said, discovered the light of life even in this sinister surrounding. With clinical objectivity he picked up curious phenomena and subjected them to through intellectual scrutiny in order to answer such questions as "what does man want to have?" and "where does human success lie?" He was certainly influenced by Marxism, but his art did not turn 'propagandist'. In that lies his greatness.

Jagadish Gupta from the very start of his literary career, paved his own way. He did not form part of the sudden and sneering movement against Rabindranath and

Saratchandra; he had deeper things to look for. His philosophy of life was his very own; it was unique, owing nothing to others. We must look for his greatness there.

REFERENCES

1. Desh - Rabindra Janna Shatabarso Sankhā, 1368 B.E.
'Introduction'
2. Asit Kumar Bandyopadhyay - Bānglā Sāhityer Sampurna
Itibritta, p. 651
3. Madhusudan Bandyopadhyay - Shrikānte Sharatchandra, p. 10
4. Sāhitye Art O Dumiti, 1331 B.E.
5. Buddhadev Basu - Sāhitya-charchā, p. 118
6. Sudhindranāth Datta - Kulāy O Kālpurush, p. 8
7. Santosh Kumar Ghosh - Rabir Kar, p. 45
8. Asit Kumar Bandyopadhyay - Rabindranāth O Ādhunikatār
Swrup, 'Bānglā Sāhitye Ādhunikatā', p. 45
9. 'Bangabāni', Chaitra Issue, 1330 B.E. (Kallol's
advertisement)
10. Buddhadev Basu - Sāhitye Charchā, p. 126
11. Achintya Kumar Sengupta - Kallol Jug (4th Ed.), p. 90
12. Sarej Mohan Mitra - Chotogalper Bichitra Kathā,
'Introduction', p. v
13. Achintya Kumar Sengupta - Kallol Jug (4th Ed.), p. 152 .
14. Atul Chandra Gupta - 'Desh' Sāhitya Sankhyā, 1362 B.E.
p. 23
15. Shrish Chandre Das - Sāhitye Sandarshan, p. 166
16. Shrikumar Bandyopadhyay - Banga Sāhitye Upanyāser Dhārā,
p. 390

17. Achintya Kumar Sengupta - Kallol Jug (4th Ed.), pp. 50-51
18. Rabindra Rachanāvali, (Jama Satabārshiki Sankalan), 5th Part, Letter no. 78
19. Gopikanath Roy Chaudhuri - Dui Biswajuddher Madhyakālin Bānglā Kathā Sāhitya, p. 201
20. Shankha Ghosh - Nirmān O Bristi, p. 10
21. Achintya Kumar Sengupta - Kallol Jug, p. 51
22. Buddhadev Basu - An Acre of Green Grass, Papyrus Reprint Series II, pp. 79-80
23. Asit Kumar Bandyopadhyay - Ādhunik Bānglā Sāhityer Samṣhṛpta Itibritta, p. 310
24. Birendra Datta - Bānglā Chatogalpa : Prasanga O Prakaran, p. 86
25. Buddhadev Basu - An Acre of Green Grass, p. 89
26. Bichitrā, Kārtik Issue 1338 B.E. - 'Nabin Kabi' Rabindranath Tagore
27. Nareyan Chaudhuri - Uttar Barat Bānglā Upanyās, pp. 5-6
28. Kazi Abdul Odud - Uttarkāl O Saratchandra, pp. 74-75
29. Achintya Kumar Sengupta - Kallol Jug, p. 188
30. Tārāshankarer Galpaguccha, vol. 2, 'Introduction'
31. Humayun Kabir - The Bengali Novel, p. 105
32. Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay - Āmār Kāler Kathā (2nd Ed.), p. 67
33. Jibendra Sinha Roy - Kalloler Kāl, p. 176

34. Arun Kumar Mukhopadhyay - Kāler Puttalikā, p. 430
35. Achintya Kumar Sengupta - Kallol Jug, p. 159
36. Diganta (Part I) - 'Kalloler Din', p. 112
37. Achintya Kumar Sengupta - Kallol Jug, p. 159
38. Jalārka, (1398 B.E.) Shrāben-Chaitra issue, Subir Roy
Chaudhuri, 'Sādrishyer Sandhāne, Rati O
Birati : Ke Bāchey Ke Bāche'.