

Romanticism in Bengali Literature

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ABSTRACT

This comprehensive study deals with romantic elements used in Bengali Literature as well as in English literature by the authors. Result indicates that each writer uses romanticism in different ways following different romantic poets. Love of nature and imagination are the most important parts of romanticism. In the poems of Jibanananda Das, it seems that love for nature and imagination are preferred. In Jashim Uddin's work romantic love through agony of human heart and the suffering of human soul as well as pastoral setting have been preferred interestingly. In case of Rabindranath Tagore it seems that due to the difference between Indian and western social system both the Englishmen and the Indian kept their passion severely under check and the stored intense emotion found an outlet in his romantic poetry. Hence, most of the romantic elements have been used in his writing. In case of English romantic poets, it seems that most of them preferred imagination, love of nature, feeling inquest of truth which are also common in Bengali romantic poets who have occupied a position among all romantic poets of the world.

Key Words: Romanticism, Upanishod, Keats, Madhubala

INTRODUCTION

Romanticism means a movement in art and literature which began roughly around 1798 and lasted until 1837 revolting against the Neoclassicism of the previous centuries. According to the German poet, Friedrich Schlegel it may be pointed out that the term *romanticism* is defined as "literature depicting emotional matter in an imaginative form. Imagination, emotion, and freedom are certainly the focal points of romanticism. The main characteristics of romanticism are subjectivity and an emphasis on individualism; spontaneity; freedom from rules; solitary life rather than life in society, agony of human heart, suffering of human soul and feeling inquest of truth. There is also a belief that imagination is superior to reason and devotion to beauty; love of and worship of nature; and fascination with the past, especially the myths and mysticism of the middle ages. The notable English romantic poets are William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats and notable American romantic poets are Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. The research has been undertaken for the following objectives:

- To find out the romantic elements used in Bengali literature
- To differentiate between romanticism in English and Bengali literature.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The influence of Romanticism continues to this day marked by a focus on the individual, a respect for nature and the primitive, and a celebration of the common man. Due to the effect of Romanticism, there is a huge change in the society that occurred during this period, including the revolutions through countries like France and the United States, ushering in grand experiments in democracy. The poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850), the poet was most closely associated with the Romantic Movement by his lyrics 'Lyrical Ballads' published jointly with Coleridge in 1798 articulating some of the percepts of Romanticism. Wordsworth defined poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and the understanding of the poet as a man speaking to men in the language of common men were the appropriate subject for poetry. There are many examples of Romanticism in literature. In fact, though the beginnings of the movement can be traced

back to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, some romantic poets and writers are popular even now including the British poets, William Wordsworth, Percy Shelley, and John Keats, and the novelist, Mary Shelley, whose masterpiece, *Frankenstein*, is an icon of the Romantic Movement. American writers also played a vital role in the Romantic Movement and the poet, Walt Whitman broke a new ground in American Romantic poetry for his masterful collection, *Leaves of Grass*. Moreover, Romantic essayists like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau are popular for classic works glorying in both the splendors of nature and the miraculous uniqueness of the individual. The American Scholar A.O. Lovejoy opined that the word ‘romantic’ means so many things that, by itself, it means nothing at all. The variety of its actual and possible meanings and connotations reflect the complexity and multiplicity of European romanticism. In *The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal* (1948) F.L. Lucas counted 11,396 definitions of ‘romanticism’. In *Classic, Romantic and Modern* (1961) Barzun cites examples of synonymous usage for romantic which show that it is perhaps the most remarkable example of a term which can mean many things according to personal and individual needs.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted from October 2021 to May 2022 without using any questionnaire. Research is a systematic process and the essential step of a research work is to design the method, which leads the researchers to conduct the dissertation in a proper way. For the present study, the research paper which has been designed in a logical and scientific manner focuses on ‘Romanticism in Bengali Literature’. Different techniques have been taken into account to conduct the research activity to perform the study. All information have been extracted from different books, journals and other sources which have been stated in reference by the researcher himself. Information of different writers have been taken under consideration through the critical appreciation of their works and compared to Bengali writers and poets with English romantic poets. No secondary or primary data have been used but information have been used to work perfectly and analyzed in a proper technique.

Bengali Romanticism

Rabindranath Tagore, regarded as the supreme representative of romanticism in Bengali literature was influenced by the western romantic poets maintaining the Eastern characteristic of sensibility. He developed a newer kind of romanticism based on the doctrine of experience which can be compared with the ‘jewel raptures’ of Francois Thomson, dreamy fairyland of W.

B. Yeats, Irish folklore of George Russell and mysticism of William Wordsworth and upanishadic ideals of the Vaishnavism. The most important aspect of romanticism in the early nineteenth century of English literature is a new and intense faith in the imagination. According to Edward Thompson it seems that Rabindranath Tagore is closely affiliated to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Tennyson and Browning in this aspect (E. Thomson, 1948). Tagore’s philosophy on romanticism is different than other English romantic poets due to the difference between Western social system and Indian social system. Tagore believed that in daily social life both Englishmen and Indians kept their passion severely under check and the stored intense emotion found an outlet in his romantic poetry. Hence, Rabindranath and other romantic poets turned away from reason to imagination and intuition because of shifting—from the sophisticated to the primitive, the modern to the medieval, the artificial to the natural ways of feeling and expression. Rabindranath believes that the ordinary word of sense insight is not real and behind this, there is a visible world which can be detained spiritually and not through the senses. He had the visions of the mysterious universe like Blake and Bridge and his search for the Divine life leads him to express the Devotee’s intense experience of pain, passion and joy. His realization of the Devine Life is vividly portrayed through these lines:

I will meet one day the Life within me, the joy that hides in my life, though the days perplex my path with their idle lust. (Tagore, 1937) Rabindranath’s contemplative imagination is compared to Keats discerned truth in beauty which is traced in his lecture on —The Sense of Beauty drawing upon Keats’ —Ode on a Grecian Urn quoting —Beauty is truth, truth is beauty’ (John Keats, 1990). He adds: Upanishads too tell us that—all that is, is manifestation of his joy, His deathlessness. From the speck of dust at our feet to the stars in the heavens—all is a manifestation of truth and beauty, of joy and immortality. (Tagore, 1961)

There are many notable poets and writers in Bengali literature like Jibanananda Das, Jashim Uddin and others. They have portrayed a real picture in the contemporary society. In the past the people could not express their real feeling to a person who was far away from him for which they expressed their opinion through imagination. In *Madhubala* by Jashim Uddin, it seems that it is full of imagination. Agony of human heart and suffering of human soul have been reflected through his writing. ***Madon Kumar and Madhubala*** are the main characters of the poetic-play in which Madan Kumar is the Prince of Ujannagar, son of King Nanda Dhar and Madhubala is the Princess of Kanchonnagar, the king of Madhu Kar living far away (seven oceans and thirteen rivers) each other. A dream and imagination connect them in searching each other. This type of perfect love is not traced in the modern world due to industrialization. The king of Kanchonnagar was childless for which the people did not wish to see the face of the king in the morning due to a proverb that it brings unhappiness for the people. Hearing it, the king called all astrologers and Brahmins to the palace to prophecise that he would get a son or not. He will be kept in a locked room until the good news comes. The day has come and the astrologers started prophesizing about getting son of the king. One of the astrologers said that the king would get a son. The problem is that if the son sees the light of the sun in sixteen years after his birth, he will become mad. The king built underground palace so that the queen may stay there without the light of the sun. Just the day before of completing sixteen years, the queen wanted to see the light of the sun and she came outside the palace when Madon Kumar was in asleep. Suddenly Madon Kumar woke up and left the place and became astonished to see the light of the sun which he had not seen before. The queen violated the prophecy of the astrologer. The prince became mad for which he wanted to go to hunt the deer. The king could understand everything due to violating the prophesize statement. He arranged a troop of soldiers to go for hunting with the prince. After hunting in a day, the prince went to bed for rest at night. Two fairies were moving over the tent and stopped in searching the prince. They felt very pleasure to see the beauty of the prince and they thought that he would be fit for Madhumala; the princess of Kanchonnagar. The fairies took him to the palace of Madhumala and placed him inside the bed of Madhumala. Opening her eyes, Madhumala was excited to see a young beside her. Opening his eye, Madankumar saw the same and they expressed their identity each other. Madon Kumar said:

Ujanonogorete ghor name raja Nabodhorore- Tari putro name Modon Kumarhe.

(Born in Ujannagar at the palace of King Nabodhor, His son namely Madan Kumar I am.)

Madhumala replied;

Kanchonogorete ghor name raja Madhu Karore, Teri Konya name Madhumalahe.

(Born in Kanchonnagar at the palace of Madhu kor, His daughter namely Madhumala I am.)

They exchanged ring and chain as a token of love which was the love at first sight.. They become asleep again and the fairies separated them and kept in the same place. Waking up, the prince started saying, 'Madhumala, Madhumala, Madhumala'. The prince told that king and the queen that he would go to the kingdom of Madhumala to marry her by showing exchanged ring and chain as a token of love. The queen replied that the people see different things in dream but nothing is true. Madon Kumar replied:

If my dream were false!

Why was my chain changed? If my dream were false!

Why was my ring changed?

None prevented him from going there. Understanding everything, the king ordered the ministers to arrange sea journey where a lot of soldiers would accompany him. In the sea, most of the companions drowned in the sea. Floating in the sea the prince reached in an island where the king received him and gave honour due to the son of a king who was known to him. Madan Kumar informed him that he is trying to search Madhumala. Hearing this the king arranged his marriage with his daughter, Panchakola convincing that the name of his daughter is Madhumala. After marriage, the prince looked at her in honeymoon suits and had identified that she was not real Madumala. Suddenly he left that kingdom by boat and reached the kingdom of

Kanchonnagor.Madhumala also became mad to see Madan Kumar.At last they became united which is the result of true love. It is imaginative and love at first sight which come true through the agony of human heart and suffering of human soul. In every story or poem it seems that the hero and the heroin meet each other at first and become separated. After struggle they become united which is ultimate goal of true love. In this paly it is exceptional because the hero and the heroin meet in a dream through fairies and they became united.

Naksi Kanthar Math or the Embroidered Quilt , an anthology which is written in 1929 by Poet Jasimuddin (1903-1976) is a literally-triumphant Ballad and romantic in nature. There are fourteen plots for which a complete image of a life has been traced there in with immeasurable ingenuity due to the assemblage of all plots. There are two main characters in this ballad which have been barricaded on the porch of love of them. Two protagonists are Rupa (Rural boy) and Saju (Rural girl) who represent a realistic depiction of pictures of usual day life of a person, habitual household day works, expertly personification of rural festivals and celebrations, pastoral quarrel, dispute with land, law suits etc. Its sequence is independent, realistic and poetic. The poet considered the story of Rupa and Saju as a tragedy because two lives sacrificed their lives for the cause of love. The poet stitched the climax, recession and tragedy in every twist of the quilt:—At the night after a long, the villagers,

Heard a song of a flute with the rhythm of fetters. At the dawn, saw on the fence of that grave, A sick stranger lay down in dead with lack of crave. Worn that Naksi Kantha around his body, Still the villagers remember that ballad in sympathy.¶

The pastoral setting and their true love from childhood continuing through estrangement, conflict, and revulsion have been illustrated to enrich the theme in this ballad. This is an enhanced legendary illustration of the older one. Its style has been arranged by the old ballad in spite of revision done linguistically through extension of up to date and standard story, psychological analysis, illustration and extension of the characters which have been followed. Surging the style of Rural Ballads a bit, the theme has so far been prolonged being transformed into the social background. I think that the nature of their love proves two characteristics of romanticism like agony of human heart and suffering of human soul. Rupai , a young peasant , falls in love with a girl named Saju in his neighboring village and they married each other. The peasants of another village did not look into the matter of their love easily but they attended at the marriage ceremony. Due to cutting crops of Rupai's land there was a quarrel between Rupai's group and others who forcedly cut the crops. After a quarrel and fight with some peasants because of cutting paddy , one was murdered. A case was filed against Rupai and his groups. Rupai leaves home and flees far away. Saju, the young wife becomes alone and waits every day for her husband who will return to her but not return.Saju's mother told everybody in search of Rupai because the case was dismissed. Waiting for a long time, she becomes hopeless and tired and all her hope becomes falls. In this way the days were passing,Saju could not find out the problem to solve properly. Many days pass and Saju begins to prepare a Nakshi Kantha (an embroidered quilt). In that Nakshi Kantha she types (writes) all the (sad) incidents and tragedies. Saju expressed her love for Rupai through embroidering in quilt which was kept to show the sign of love for each other. Having seen the embroidered cult, Saju's return would bring happiness and they will become united each other. Time passes on its own way and Rupa does not return. She requests her mother to put the Nakshi Kantha on her grave before her death and at the end Saju dies. Her mother fulfilled her daughter's wish doing accordingly for which the name of the field becomes Nakshi Kanthar Math.In the morning Rupai returns and could not bear the suffering of Saju's death after which Rupai also died and his dead body was found around the grave which is a tragic end.

Before Saju's return it is romantic in nature due to showing love each other and they were in romantic mood before their marriage. Due to death of Rupai and Saju, it becomes tragedy because their love was not fulfilled. In addition, dramatically accumulation in terms of describing the story, endeavor to the cause of exposure of characters and to clunk the phase of emotion of the male and female and that has been done successfully. Above all, the ballad is dynamic, simple and enriched by ornate language. On the other hand this is also romantic due to because of its nature. It is also a kind source of entertainment for the rural people in the dark face of Rupa.Even now in a gathering a story teller narrates the story in a poetic mood surrounded by the people at night which is a source of amusement.

Jibanananda Das: Jibanananda, a poet and educationist, tried to capture Rabindranath Tagore's poetic influence. Western modernism and the intellectual outlook of the Bengali middle class inspired him to write about the realities of the urban life's self even drawing upon the rural traditions of Bengal. Jibanananda's early poems reflect some influences of Kazi Nazrul Islam, Satyendranath Dutta and Mohitlal Majumder but he removes outrun these influences to become a towering figure in Bangla poetry. Sharing Rabindranath's deep feeling for nature, he eloquently portrayed the beauty of rural Bengal in Rupasi Bangla to earn the appellation of Rupasi Banglar Kavi (Poet of Beautiful Bengal). He also portrayed distressed humanity as well as the depression, frustration, and loneliness of modern urban life in his poems.. His Dhusar Pandulipi represents the unique expression of his creative mind in which his poetic imagination has painted a superb picture of the environment around him letting nature assume a stature much bigger and more alive. It is through his own perception and creativity that he could come out of all the influences of his time. At the core of his poetry there lies a pristine pain, life decays and changes, everything ending in death. Jibanananda's poems of rural Bengal played an important role in the political and cultural perspective of Bangladesh. His poem inspired a pride in Bengali nationhood, especially in the 1960s and during the war of liberation in 1971. He is considered as one of the greatest romantic poets of Bengali literature for his outstanding contribution to Bengali literature through his writing '**BANALATA SEN**'. This poem is given below:

For thousands of years I roamed the paths of this earth, From waters round Sri Lanka, in dead of night, to seas up the Malabar Coast. Much have I wandered. I was there in the gray world of Ashoka And of Bimbisara, pressed on through darkness to the city of Vidarbha. I am a weary heart surrounded by life's frothy ocean.

To me she gave a moment's peace—Banalata Sen from Natore. Her hair was like an ancient darkling night in Vidisha, Her face, the craftsmanship of Sravasti. As the helmsman when, His rudder broken, far out upon the sea adrift, Sees the grass-green land of a cinnamon isle, just so Through the darkness I saw her. Said she, "Where have you been so long?" And raised her bird's-nest-like eyes—Banalata Sen from Natore.

At day's end, like hush of dew Comes evening. A hawk wipes the scent of sunlight from its wings. When earth's colors fade and some pale design is sketched, Then glimmering fireflies paint in the story.

All birds come home, all rivers, all of life's tasks finished.

Only darkness remains, as I sit there face to face with Banalata Sen. (Translated from the original Bengali by Amitabha Mukerjee)

There are three stanzas in this poem and each comprises six lines composed in the Bengali metrical pattern Aksherbritta or Poyar. Banalata Sen., a female character as being from town of Natore, a town in Bangladesh, referred to by name in the last line of each of its three stanzas is also the title of the poem. The poem is self-narrated by an unnamed traveller.

In the first stanza the traveller narrates looking her after wandering upon the earth over thousands of years. The narrator has been roaming the earth to find out her for a thousand years

.It is described as a long journey from the Ceylonese waters to the Malayan seas in night's darkness. During his journey he has tracked the fading gray world of Bimbisara and Ashoka in course of his wanderings. He added that he had gone further, to the forgotten city of Vidharbha. At last he expresses himself as now being a weary soul though the ocean of life around continues to foam and adds that in the meanwhile he had a few soothing moments with Natore's Banalata Sen.

In the second stanza the traveller describes Banalata Sen comparing her hair with the dark night of long-lost Vidisha and her face with the fine sculpture of Sravasti. Then the traveller recollects the past when he saw her in the shadow. It may be compared like a sailor whose ship was wrecked and sank in a faraway sea spotting verdant land among barren islands. In the first encounter Banalata Sen, raising her comforting eyes, inquires of him, —Where had you been lost all these days?!

In the third stanza the traveller returns from geography and history and recalls Banalata Sen with emotion which is the most important part of romanticism.. He says that when at the day's end evening crawls in like the

sound of dews and the kite shakes off the smell of sun from its wings; and, then, when all colours take lost from the world except for the flicker of the hovering fireflies as all birds come home and rivers destination, a time comes when all transactions of the day are done. Then nothing remains but darkness when the traveller would like to sit face-to-face with Banalata Sen and share with her his ballad of stories John Keats is considered as one of the best romantic poets in the second romantic poet generation whose style is romantic and suggestive in nature dealing with the realities of life, love for ordinary objects into beautiful nature and the agony of human heart. At the age of 19 and being a medical student at Guy's Hospital, he published the first poem in 1814. He was inspired by the works of Lord Byron and Leigh Hunt which led him to explore other styles of poetry, including poetic meter and other forms of expression.

In spite of political or social comment used by other romantic poets, Keats' work is pure in its nature and aims at expressing the true experiences of individuals which made him one of the most popular English poets in the nineteenth century. Using supernatural element is the most important part of romanticism which is present in Keats's poem 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and the fairy charms a knight into falling in love. The prince's heart is attracted by this beautiful lady for which he falls in love with her and this poem is filled with beautiful images and vivid language.

In case of romance there is a deep affinity for beauty in his poems which have a great way to awaken the creative faculties of readers. A good writer identifies with this type of poetry and uses it in his own creative writing for which his poems express a strong connection to the human spirit. In terms of aesthetics, his style of poetry seeks to evoke a complete individual's experience and aims to express the individual's life as a complete whole. There's no moral or social significance to the poems written by other romantic poets, and their poems are pure in spirit. His emphasis on the theme of love is another notable feature of his poetry and the subject of the poem's title is the subject of love. The special feature is that its protagonist is a girl, not a boy.

It is a common phenomenon that every romantic poet always presents a mysterious, distant, or enigmatic place which is also important to consider the setting of the poem. A poem may be a simple description of love having a mystical experience of the writer's feelings. In addition to the subject, Keats' poems deal about the nature of the person for which he was the most popular romantic poet in his day.

William Wordsworth (7 April 1770–23 April 1850), an English Romantic poet along with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, are the pioneer of the Romantic Age in English literature for their joint publication, *Lyrical Ballads*, in 1798. He was brought up in rural England and as a young man he got the opportunity to travel throughout Europe, which had just emerged from its feudal system under Napoleon's rule. Upon his returning home, he began to write poems which criticized the political and social conditions of his time. His best-known work "The Lake District", is a collection of fourteen poems written at the time of his living in North West England.

Simplicity and directness are the main characteristics of his poetry in which he gave importance to express his feeling rather than elaborating it through extensive vocabulary or complex syntax. One of his most famous lines is:

"Nature! Nature! Thou art forever singing thy song. Of joy and grief, love and pain; Thou canst not tell where one ends and another begins.

"Wordsworth's collaborative work with his friend and fellow-poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge proved to be a landmark in the history of English Literature.

According to Wordsworth it may be pointed that the subject of poetry should be the 'humble and rustic life' and language should be simple depth. The subject of poetry, for Wordsworth was common, familiar, ordinary, mundane and rustic and he did not intend to make poetry dull rather emphasizing on common subjects treated in poetry with a 'coloring of imagination'. This romantic obsession with the faculty of imagination was also reiterated by the fellow Wordsworth had attempted an experiment in the *Lyrical Ballads*. He had evacuated the conventional rule of poetic style which was considered best-suited for poetry using the real language of men. This was very close to the kind of language real men used to converse with

each other., Wordsworth became the first significant voice of literary romanticism in England declaring poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling recollected from tranquility. His poetry was intended to communicate to the human emotions and poetic theory is also significant due to poetry flowed spontaneously from the poet. This is similar to the idea of another Romantic poet, John Keats, who wrote that "If poetry comes not as naturally as leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all." Pleasure was central to the Romantic movement and the primary aim of poetry was to please the reader. As a matter of fact, Wordsworth noted that a poet was bound by 'the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human'.

PB Shelley (1792-1822) , second generation of the Romantic poet became a key member of a circle of visionary poets and writers including Lord Byron, John Keats, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Peacock and his second wife, Mary Shelley, who is known for classic poems like —Ozymandias

—Ode to the West Wind, —The Cloud and others. Mysticism is the most important feature of his writing and he explores the realm of in-existent beings rationally and its manifestation on human mind. —Hymn to Intellectual Beauty indicates the shadow of —unseen power which moves and —floats though unseen among us manifesting upon the physical object of nature. He considers it as a Spirit of Beauty which means its manifestation on human mind making any individual omnipotent and extremely powerful.

Satire is one of the important aspects of Shelley's writing and his satire is directed against the political tyranny and rulers of the then time. Shelley's imagination is different from other Shelley a revolutionary poet derives much influences from the French Revolution which destroyed the old setup of order and brought a new order to the society. His poem—Ode to the West Wind indicates the destruction of old ideas to emerge a seed of new ideas. He compares old ideas with —leaves dead and pleads the West Wind to drive away —like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing. He speaks about emerging new ideas where —the winged seeds are preserved like a —corpse until —the spring shall blow resulting of the harbingers of change.

Romantic elements of subjectivity is present in his poem—Ode to the West Wind. Shelley, a victim of mob torment and a bully expresses his own personal emotions in the statement A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed him and —I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed. These lines indicate his sufferings and pains throughout his life and pleads the West Wind to use him as a —lyre and swept away his old self to a new life stating —be thou me, Impetuous one!

CONCLUSION

It may be concluded here by saying that both Bengali and other romantic poets follow the same elements of romanticism in different ways. It not only has been used in romantic movement but also in different ages by different writers and poets. Though William Wordsworth is the pioneer of romantic movement through his joint publication Preface to Lyrical Ballads, it is also found in Shakespeare's work. John Keats, PB Shelley are the followers of William Wordsworth and its influence spreads through American poets and writers. The elements of romanticism vary from poets to poets due to social and cultural situation of a particular country and area. Time also should be taken under consideration. Social and Cultural system is changed through the passes of time for which people's thoughts and feelings may be changed due to scientific development. In Bengali romantic poems or other works, it seems that agony of human heart, suffering of human soul have been mainly used by the writers rather than imagination.

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