

A study on Historical Bengali Novels of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay

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Abstract

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894) is often considered India's first successful writer, and in this study takes his writings as a starting point to analyze his influence on the evolution of the Indian historical novel. As soon as they hear the term "historical fiction," most people think of Walter Scott and his works. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay ("Chattopadhyay" in the original Bengali; "Chatterjee" as spelled by the British) was a poet, writer, essayist, and journalist from Bengal. The people of Bengal have a national hymn known as Vande Mataram (or Vande Mataram). He was the first in his family to attend college and the first person in India to get a bachelor's and a law degree from the University of Calcutta. After that, he wrote over seventeen more novels, ranging from literary works to works of romance and history. In an effort to shed light on this topic, this paper An Analysis of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's Classic Bengali Novel

Keywords: Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Bengali, Historical novel

Introduction

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is an alternate spelling of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. In the year 1838, on June 27th, he came into the world. His parents were both born in Naihati, Bengal. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was a poet and a journalist. His father's occupation was that of a tax collector or deputy collector.

Early life and education

The life of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (Indian author), began on June 26/27, 1838, in Naihati, Bengal, India, and ended on April 8, 1894, in Calcutta. His writings were pivotal in establishing a European-influenced school of fiction in India and bringing widespread attention to Bengali prose. One of the first students to graduate from the University of Calcutta, Bankim Chandra was born into a staunchly conservative Brahman household. He attended the two most prominent schools in Calcutta, Hooghly and Presidency. He worked as a deputy magistrate for the Indian government from 1858 to 1891. Bankim Chandra's first poems were published in the 1858 anthology Lalita O Manas, while his later poems were published in the journal Sambad Prabhakar. His ability to write in English did not emerge until much later, and in 1864, the Indian Field serialised his story Rajmohan's Wife. His first work, Durgenandin, stands out from the crowd since he writes in Bengali and his protagonist and his love interest are both Rajputs and Bengalis. Even though it was poorly written, it "took the Bengali heart by storm," as philosopher Debendranath Tagore put it, and it was the forerunner of the Bengali book. A year separated the publication of Kapalkual and Mlin both of which appeared in 1866 and 1869, respectively ¹.

Career

Bankim graduated from law school and then took up his father's position as Deputy Collector. He served the British for nearly 32 years, rising through the ranks to become a Deputy Magistrate before retiring in 1891. He began his career as a poet, following in the footsteps of his idol Ishwarchandra Gupta (whom he had looked up to since he was a kid). He began penning fictional works after realising his linguistic talent. His first published piece was a novella he authored for the sole purpose of entering a contest and winning a cash prize. Due to his failure, he shelved the novella and never got it published. His English novella "Rajmohan's Wife" was his very first published work. Because of the many objections from English-language readers, the author has opted to completely rework the book in Bengali. In 1877, Chandrasekhar was first released to the general public. As opposed to Bankim's earlier works, this one is written in a very different style. In addition, the year when the so-called autobiography "Rajani" was published is noteworthy. Anandamath, Bankim's politically charged work, was published in 1882. The video followed the heroic actions of Hindus who fought against the British. The poem was the impetus for the song Vande Mataram, which is now the national anthem of India. During his lifetime, Bankim wrote and published several works, including Lok Rahasya (1874), Bichitra Prabandha (1876), Kamalakanta (1885), Sitaram (1887), Muchiram Gurer Jivancharita (1886), Krishna Charitra (1886), Dharmatattva (1886), etc.²

His Literally Works

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is responsible for launching the magazine Vangadarshan. Anandamath was a popular topic for articles in this publication. In 1882, books were first made available to the public. The first printing of the book was rapidly depleted, therefore a second one was prepared in anticipation of the book's popularity. There were five different "Anandamath" editions published during Bankim Chandra's lifetime. For me, reading a Bankim

Chandra Chatterjee novel was an experience unlike any other. There was a massive audience for his works in Bengal. The novels were first translated into a number of different Indian languages, each of which had a modest amount of popularity. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay is revered in his native Bengal as a result of his literary legacy. Bankim Chandra pondered the problem of developing an individual style in writing. The word "novel" is commonly used to refer to works of fiction. Where should he start while writing? Bankim Chandra realised that he needed to write the way people actually spoke if he wanted to be understood. This tone permeates everything of his writing. In spite of being extremely literal to the spoken style of his day, his language is intriguing. The standing of the Bengali language has improved because to his writings.

A writer of great originality and skill, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. His compositions, written in Bengali, the language of his origin, draw heavily on the lyrical traditions of Sanskrit. Bengali needed to be updated long before the time of the Great Rabindra Nath Tagore so that it could serve future generations. Because of his efforts, Bengali is now the most frequently spoken language in India, surpassing English. The transfer of

classical Sanskrit poetry to Bengali reached a pinnacle with his compositions. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay was the master of writing passionate love stories, and no one has ever done it better. Chatterjee's renown is unrivalled among Bengali writers. Numerous works of his have been translated into practically all of India's official languages.³

Historical Novel

Bankim's creations, almost without exception, have a historical foundation. To be more specific, Harprasad Shastri's comment should be singled out for attention. When asked what he wanted to study in college, Bankim said, "Since he was a passionate reader of history, he wanted more than anything to become a great historian." Despite beginning a historical report while he was relatively young, Bangadarshan never finished it. However, it would be missing the mark to simply attribute this incident to Bankim's egotism. Historical books like these were influential in shaping the political and social landscapes of their times. In order to fight back against colonialism in the nineteenth century, the colonized had to develop their own counter colonial narrative, which would establish the notion that the colonized have their own history and foster a sense of national pride. Bankim wrote this story to foster solidarity among the freed nations. Professor of history Vipin Chandra has made the following observation.

However, Bankimchandra, the historian, doesn't only write to teach us about the past. They had emerged as a major force in government. Colonial persecution caused permanent damage, and nobody helped the victims. But it was vital in illustrating how uninformed the country was in Bankimchandra works aren't just for textbooks, though. They were significant in political events and the progress of a big cause. It did little to ease the suffering of people living under Colonial authority or hasten their demise. Notwithstanding, it was helpful in revealing the country's gullibility.⁴

BankimPuraskar

Bankim Puraskar was created in 1975 to recognize Chatterjee's contributions to the field. This yearly event is the state of West Bengal's highest literary honour for works written in Bengali. For the Department of Information and Cultural Affairs, the Paschim Banga Bangla academy is responsible for managing the Bankim Puraskar. "Anandamath" is unquestionably Chatterjee's claim to fame, and one of the great works of Indian and Bengali literature. The author of this book is an activist for greater Indian nationalism, hence it might be classified as a political text. Despite his extensive education and familiarity with eastern traditions and philosophy, Chatterjee was a staunch opponent of the British government. His previous efforts are no longer relevant if you're planning a remake or other innovative project.⁵

Objective

To study Historical Bengali Novels of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.

Literature Review

(Mahila and Mahavidyapith, 2015)⁶ Bankimchandra Chatterjee, widely recognised as India's (and unquestionably Bengal's) first significant author, is discussed in light of his work *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864). Bankim's love of narrative and literal metaphor in explaining his convictions makes it no surprise that he played an important role in the creation of Indian patriotism. In the expositions he wrote for *Indu Prakash* before Bankim's death in 1894, Sri Aurobindo provided such an explanation, arguing that what Bankim was trying to construct was "a language, a script, and a country." Despite Bankim's boosting of star British proclamations in the second issue of 1883, Anandamath's (1882) inspiration of generations of Indian political revolutionaries remained undiminished. Conservatives and liberals of varying ages found common ground in this song, which was both a hymn for the nation and a call to arms before soldiers entered battle. Though Anandamath's professed patriotism is typically associated with a later period in Bankim's career, I propose that it may be traced back to *Rajmohan's Wife*. The reason for this is that Bankim's ultimate purpose was not only to write about this notion; rather, he sought to really establish a country out of the literature he and others had produced.

(ISHA TIRKEY, 2019)⁷In spite of the fact that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1834-94) is often categorised as a nationalist, he is most recognised for his writings and speeches. The study's overarching purpose is to shed light on his thoughts on nationalism and patriotism. His ideas helped shape the evolution of the Swadeshi movement, and their impact may still be seen today. Consider the historical and cultural milieu in which he composed these words and, through the power of his imagination, transformed Earth into a sacred being. His works not only helped establish his fame, but also provided a forum in which he could voice his beliefs uninhibited by the conservative British society of the time. I analyse Bankim's writings and the secondary literature written on him via the theoretical lens of textual exegesis in order to sketch out his swadeshchinta (nationalist thought). Bankim's political philosophy cantered on a firm belief in national loyalty. Based on the spiritual ideals he discovered in Hinduism, his philosophy evolved. Bankim did this because he believes it is important for Indians to be proud of their history and culture and to demonstrate to the rest of the world that India is technologically superior than the West. He was speaking out in favour of national and individual pride.

(Bindu Rani, 2019)⁸ India's creative output in English increased after the nation obtained independence from the British, mostly due to the colonial era's impact. Multiple languages, not simply English, are used in India's literary canon. It would be a mistake to dismiss as just regional the literature written in any of India's many other languages. The number of novels written in languages other than English that have been translated into the English language has increased in recent years. Many of these show the diversity of our subcontinent's weather and cultural traditions. Fifty years after the British left India, Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World* raises major doubts about her truthfulness in light of the continued existence of the political extremism, religious bigotry, and terrorism she describes. The novel's conflict is inspired by the political upheaval in Bengal after the British division of the country in 1905. This research lends credence to

the idea that *The Home and the World* is a successful political novel, the message of which sums up the complex tragedy of Tagore's day and our own.

Methodology

As this is an article about literature, the observation method was used extensively. The article's sources were collated and analysed to formulate research hypotheses and guide the project's direction. Since Bankimchandra Chatterjee is a writer from Bengal, a collection of critical comments written on him in Bangla was gathered, despite the fact that there weren't very many of them to begin with. Several prominent teachers of Bangla and English literature were also questioned for this purpose, with questions pertaining to the two authors whose writing styles were assessed. Any comments or criticisms that were relevant to the English texts were compiled and taken into account.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay Novels & Stories

There are fourteen (14) Bengali books and by Bankimchandra Chatterjee.

1. **Durgesh Nandhini (1862 – 1864):-** This is the first Bengali novel written way back in 1865. The fact that this is the first modern novel in India makes it a special reading. *Durgesh Nandini* does not disappoint at all even 140 years after it was first published ¹⁰.
2. **Kapalkundala (1866):-** Published in late 1866, '*Kapalakundala*' is a love-story in the background of horrific tantric practices which had been dogging Bengal societies during the medieval period ¹¹.
3. **Mrinalini (1869):-** *Mrinalini* is a third novel of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. This Novel is based on the Love and Romance. The popularity of this novel made Late Bankim Sir famous to write Love and Romance based novel ¹².
4. **Vishabriksha (1873):-** *Vishabriksha* is a 1873 novel of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. *Vishabriksha* or *Vishabriksho* is set in Bankim Chandra's own time. Nagendra gives refuge to a young widow Kundanandini in his own house, who is orphaned after the death of her father. There are other characters like Kamalamani, Nagendra's sister, Taracharan who is desirous of Kundanandini, etc. ¹³.
5. **Indira (1873):-** Teens and kids in Bangladesh love Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's fiction, and *Indira* is one of his best works. In 1873, this book was published.
6. **Jugalanguriya (1874):-** *Jugalanguriya* is a short novel by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee written in 1887 ¹⁴.
7. **Chandrashekar (1875):-** *Chandrashekar* begins with such a sweet childhood love on the banks of the river Bhagirathi. Pratap and Shaibalini love each other very much. But fearing that their love would not be fulfilled, the two went to commit suicide by drowning in the river. ¹⁵
8. **Radharani (1877- 1881):-** *Radharani* is one of great fiction books. The book was published in 1886.
9. **Rajani (1877):-** Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote his famous novel '*Rajani*' in 1877. We have already seen a few films based on this novel. Now, Bappa Bandopadhyay comes with another film adaptation but his story focuses on a different perspective. ¹⁶

- 10. Krishna kanter Will (1878)**-Bankim Chandra Chatterjee has been written Krishnakanter will and first published on 1878 (Bhadra,1285 in Bengali calander). Krishnakanter will written by Chandra Chattopadhyay. Bengali Bengali nationalism in contemporary cultural history of the wind bankimchandra poured all the energy of his literary writings, his mananasanjatarasai Bengali literature showed the light of modernity.¹⁷
- 11. Rajsimha (1893)**:-The 'Rajsimha' of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay is a Bengali historical novel. It is a saga of Rajput valor, vigor and chivalry. The time is around 1670s. Aurangzeb rules the Moghul empire. At his feet is the entire Indian sub-continent. All the Rajput kings has followed suit.¹⁸
- 12. Anandamatha (1882)**:-Anandamath is a Bengali novel written and published in 1882 by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. It is inspired by and set in the background of the late 18th-century Sannyasi Revolt, and is considered to be one of the most important novels in the history of Bengali and Indian literature.¹⁹
- 13. Devi Chowdhurani (1884)**:-The characters of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's legendary novel 'Devi Chaudhurani' are not mere fictional, but they rather consider them as historical personalities who not only appeared in Bankim Chandra's novel but had their footsteps in the real world too.²⁰
- 14. Kamalakanta (1885)**:- Kamalakanter Daptar features both humorous and serious sketches (From the Desk of Kamalakanta, 1875; extended as Kamalakanta, 1885). In many ways, Bankim Chandra's treatment of Kamalakanta's corrosive political undertones surpasses De Quincey's Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, even though it shares some similarities.²¹

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay will be remembered as a master storyteller who left an indelible mark on the literary canon. He was well-known in the writing world and served as an inspiration to many. His works have been adapted into several movies and plays. His stories have endured the passage of time, and many readers still enjoy them today, despite having been written almost 150 years ago. We are changed in some way because of our encounters with his stories' characters.

This anthology features film versions of writings by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay

- **Kapalkundala-**
- **Durgesh Nandini-**
- **Anandamath-**
- **Rajani-**
- **Krishnakanter Will**
- **Devi Chaudhurani**

Conclusion

Bankim Chatterjee was an incredible master of romance and a brilliant author. Only Chatterjee, among all Bengali writers, has received such widespread acclaim so quickly. Almost every Indian language now has a translation of one of his books. It's not easy to argue that an eighteenth-century novel by an Indian author is

just as important today as it was then. Bankim was the first significant Indian novelist, the first notable Indian writer of historical fiction, and the first prominent Indian cultural personality to grapple with the multifarious notion of citizenship. As a writer in the same genre as Walter Scott, Bankim borrows and adapts elements of Scott's work. There has not been extensive research comparing Bankim to other Asian authors of the nineteenth century or to European authors writing at the same time on the effects of colonialism on their own countries. It could be helpful to have English translations of additional critical publications by Bankim's contemporaries that were originally published in Bengali or other Indian languages. Critiques of Bankim's works published now are written by scholars schooled in western literary ideas; nonetheless, the responses of Indian intellectuals active at the time of his death provide valuable insight into his work. As an added bonus, readers who lack access to Indian languages may benefit from translations of recent critical works on Bankim.

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