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## Ideological Construction In The History Of Bengali Literature: Dinesh Chandra Sen In Focus

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Dinesh Chandra Sen (1866-1939) wrote historical works on Bengali literature. In fact, they are so numerous that it is not possible to analyze them thoroughly in the limited scope of an article. Therefore, I am trying to understand the essence of this discussion from the scope of his representative local book. The first edition of '*Bangabhasha O Sahitya*' was published in 1896. There are also various books of his- '*Bangabhasha Parichoy*', '*Saral Bangla Sahitya*', '*Banglar Purnari*', etc. Dinesh Chandra is not the first historian to write the history of Bengali literature. It is a universally accepted fact that the history of Bengali literature began in India in the mid-nineteenth century as a result of nationalist ideology. But its subsequent history is a bit complicated, because this growing effort to write history was not limited to nationalist consciousness; The interpretation of all the information, decisions, and theories established as a result of this project have been written and controlled in the context of the personal position of the historian, that is, the individual. And the individual's personal position generally determines his ideological construction. As a result of this ideological fluctuation in the history of Bengali literature, the only way to determine the theoretical position of any historian is to weigh the weight of other historians. Because the history of this history writing was not at all short or limited to a few people.

Leaving aside essay writing, the history of Bengali literature in book form began with Ramgati Nyayratnas (1831-1894) '*Bangala Bhasha O Bangala Sahitya Bishayaka Prastab*' in 1872. But for whatever reason, the first attempt or ignorance about the theoretical framework of history writing, although Ramgati's book received the status of the first written history of Bengali literature, it could not give any special shape to the construction of this subject. Dinesh Chandra Sen filled this gap in 1896, exactly 24 years later, through his book '*Bangabhasha O Sahitya*'. The book was first published by Dhaka Chaitanya Press. The financial patron was the then Maharaja of Tripura, Bir Chandra Manikya. I will not go into the discussion of the editions of the book - the first, second, third, fourth, sixth, seventh, eighth and currently the ninth edition of the West Bengal State Book Board (which is divided into two volumes); I just want to say that in every edition of his book, Dinesh Chandra has radically changed, refined and expanded the structure and conclusions of his book. In this regard, he is unique compared to other historians of Bengali literature and is said to possess rare generosity in the edition of his own books. For example, historians like Sukumar Sen (1900-1992) are also steadfast in their established conclusions most of the time; this steadfastness is so strong that people like Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay (?), Enamul Haque (1906-1982), Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad (1869-1953) did not feel the need to correct them even if they found mistakes with logical evidence. Some information is noteworthy in this context. While defining the conditions of the history of literature, Sukumar Sen said in reference to his own history, "The idea that what I have seen is the absolute truth is not at all rare in the scholarly community of our country. That is why they always try to dismiss or ignore protests and suppress them. I have never done that. I have caught my own mistakes myself - no one else... and I have admitted them myself and corrected them. The only reason for that is not my liberal greatness, but my sincerity."<sup>1</sup> How sincere was he in this regard? The title of the introduction to his book '*Islami Bangla Sahitya*' was '*Prothom Prokasher Koifyot*'. In it, he clarified - "It was not possible to talk about Islamic Bangla literature in the first volume of my history of Bengali literature. That error has now been corrected."<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered that when he was writing this book, it was 1951; the Bengalis in East Pakistan were fighting for a national identity in the name of language. It was then, 11 years

after the publication of the first volume of his '*Bangala Sahityer Itihash*' (1940), that he felt the need to search for a comprehensive history of Bengalis. The last chapter of this book, written in 22 chapters, is '*Islami Bangla*'. In it, he states – "From 1839 AD, Bengali replaced Persian in the administration of Bengal. From then on, the import of Arabic-Persian words stopped, and the extraction of little-known Arabic-Persian words began. Bengali prose literature was introduced by Sanskrit-educated people, and the prose writing style was refined by English-educated people. Meanwhile, Muslim writers who knew Persian-Urdu followed the old path. As a result, Islamic Bengali seemed to move away from the language of general literature."<sup>3</sup> And after concluding this moving away from the literature written in Muslim Bengali in 150 pages without any description of its context, the fact-based historian Sukumar Sen said that he did not feel the need to provide a special list of evidence, as it was a supplement or appendix to the first volume of his history of Bengali literature. Concluding a discussion of centuries of Muslim literature in just a 150-page appendix, he recognized the 'mind of the Bengali in the vast land of unbroken history'. Regarding the name of his book, literary scholar Abdul Karim raised a question – "He has written a book about 'Muslim Bengali literature' but has named the book 'Islamic Bengali literature'. First of all, Islam is the name of a religion. Those who follow Islam are called 'Muslims'. When we say 'Islamic Bengali literature', it means 'literature about Islam'. ... Secondly, literature written by Muslims is also Bengali literature and it is certainly a subject of discussion and an indispensable and inseparable part in the history of Bengali literature. Therefore, in writing a book under a separate name, it naturally seems that the principles of '*Chandaloshwapachanastu, Bahirgramat Pratishray*' etc. have been applied. In this, there is enough reason for a Muslim to feel disrespect towards Dr. Sukumar Sen's attitude, but he is not the kind of person to frown upon it. He is so fearless!"<sup>4</sup> Abdul Karim's assumption was correct. Sukumar Sen had that much arrogance. Keeping the intense resentment within himself, in 1973, after a long 22 years, he asked in the second edition of his '*Baktavya*', "I have naturally changed the word 'Islami' to 'Islamic'. I still do not understand what was wrong with it."<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, the questioner Abdul Karim was no longer alive to hear the answer at that time. This is about the unchanging aspect; in terms of changes as well, with each new edition, a different narrative can be found in the writing of the history of Bengali literature. Asitkumar Bandyopadhyay's (1920-2003) book '*Bangla Sahityer Itibritta*' has been revised in all its volumes, at least according to the author. Like all other volumes, his first volume, the second edition, was published in 1963 and its fifth edition came out in 1995. In which the author says – "Something has been changed in every edition."<sup>6</sup> What changes have been made in the three editions in these 32 years? They are as follows:

- 1) Page numbering of the third chapter has been changed from 100-144 to 100-116, subject and explanation unchanged letter by letter.
- 2) Chapter IV pagination has been changed from 116-144 to 117-144.
- 3) Sub-section '*Hinayana and Mahayana*' section of the fifth chapter '*Charyagitika*' is omitted from the title '*O Mahayana*'. However, Mahayana is not only preserved in the discussion within both versions; The analysis is exactly the same as the previous version in this version as well.
- 4) Chapter fifteen is arranged on pages 575-579 in both editions. The sub-section '*Kavindra Parameshwar and Lashkar Paragal Khan*' was indexed to page 589 in the later edition, which should have been 579 with a median of 7 according to pagination. Again, Vijay Pandit's Mahabharata problem has become 585 pages, which was 575 earlier, which should have been 585 with middle number 8 as per pagination. That is, in the case of the first edition, 7 has been mistakenly changed to 8 in the printing error and in the second case, the error has been corrected to 7,8.

These differences i.e. apart from the pagination of the four chapters, the omission of the two words '*O Mahayana*' from the sub-section of the fifth chapter '*Charyagitika*' are the "changes and corrections" made by the author during the 32 years. In contrast, Dinesh Chandra Sen was a very diligent historian.

But even this diligence did not allow him to remain neutral in his speech due to his personal ideology. In fact, this applies not only to Dinesh Chandra, but equally to other historians of Bengali literature. Literature and history are linked by the fact that historians, their personal ideas, cherished reforms, education, environment not only influenced their works; Their respective positions have created a new theoretical framework for the historiography of Bengali literature like other histories. As a result, a fragmented, half-true and sometimes erroneous history of Bengali literature has been written. Even a history of mutual contempt.

We must remember the beginning of the history of Bengali literature in the contemporary form of the 19th-century Calcutta Renaissance. But Bengali literature is not merely the product of the Kolkata Renaissance. Pre-colonial literature clarified the linguistic, historical, ethnic differences between north, south, east and west of Bengal but never revealed the larger spatial and cultural divisions. But later major historians could not think beyond the division. As a result, the literary history of the so-called 'Greater Bengal' by Dinesh Chandra is divided into the literary history of East Bengal and West Bengal. Nowhere in this frame of spatial centrality is the history of Bengali literature in Andaman, Delhi, Assam, Tripura. So perhaps Bengali poet Prabuddhasundar

Kar came up with the inimitable line – “Dhaka and Kolkata, from hilly Tripura / Geographically both are West Bengal.”<sup>7</sup> Dinesh Chandra Sen was an exception in this case. His book contains a detailed discussion of ‘*Rajmala*’, the history of the kings of Tripura; Sukumar Sen has expressed doubts about its dating and existence in spite of many evidences. This local pride was so strong that the newspaper ‘*Shanibarar Chithi*’ said about Dinesh Chandra, a man from East Bengal, that Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee (1864-1924) had imported a ‘Bengal clown’<sup>8</sup> into Calcutta University. The history of this predicament is more deeply rooted. ‘*Shanibarar Chithi*’ published a series of essays on Dinesh Chandra Sen from the issue of Paush 1335 (1929 AD). The title of the first one was ‘*Deenbandhu Dinesh*’. It was written about Dinesh Chandra: “There is no doubt that he possesses the courage to adopt the strategy of rising by either crushing a jackfruit on others’ heads or by flattery. However, when those stunned by the blow of a jackfruit will loudly proclaim his glory, to whom will he turn for refuge?”<sup>9</sup> Addendum to ‘*Shanibarar Chithi*’-

a) “There is no end to the achievements of this great man... The *Kartabhaja* troupe of Calcutta University will dance with the dead *Karta*’s dog on his head.”<sup>10</sup>

b) Bankim Chandra insulted Dinesh Chandra, a detailed account of which is found in Dinesh Chandra’s statement. In this regard, it is written in ‘*Shanibarar Chithi*’ – “The scepter of Bengali literature was then in the hands of the people of West Bengal. They used to insult the best writers of East Bengal with a vengeance, and did not show them due respect... Dinesh Chandra’s conversation with Kaliprasanna Ghosh is recorded on page 227, in which you will get some idea of the efforts of the so-called West Bengal writers like Bankim Babu to suppress East Bengal... In any case, the conspiracy (it is a conspiracy! The conspiracy of a lion against a lizard!) failed, but that is a separate history.”<sup>11</sup>

To the critics of West Bengal literature, West Bengal writers are elephants and East Bengal writers are lizards. What a wonderful comparison! But Ramgati Nyayratna, Akshay Chandra Sarkar also spoke about the misbehaviour of Bankim Chandra. Similarly, attacking Abdul Karim, Asitkumar Bandyopadhyay wrote- “The researchers and historians of East Pakistan have found the poetry of Bengali Muslim poets even in the fifteenth century- it is surprising if it is true. The Hindu poets of fifteenth century Bengal also did not progress in writing much literature. In that case, there is reason to be surprised when several poems by converted Muslim poets of Bengal are discovered. What is even more surprising is that earlier, at the initiative of the Bengal government, under the leadership of scholars and researchers such as Haraprasad Shastri, Dinesh Chandra, Nagendranath Bose, and Prachya Vidyamaharnab, numerous manuscripts of ancient poets were being discovered from the rural areas of Bengal, and among them were two or three Muslim poets. But why haven’t the manuscripts of these recently-promoted Muslim poets been discovered? Abdul Karim Saheb was also collecting manuscripts from Chittagong-Tripura-Noakhali at that time. Why didn’t he himself promote the Bengali poetry of the Muslim poets of the fifteenth century? It is also a question of why ancient Muslim poets are emerging in droves only after a country has been divided into two due to political reasons.”<sup>12</sup> His statement was that after Pakistan became a state, 2000 manuscripts were published by Abdul Karim, which is just an attempt to gain religious and political benefits as a Muslim. Yet, as we all know, Abdul Karim became the sole guide of medieval Bengali literature through his tireless work and dedication. He walked that path alone. He did not seek help from anyone; even institutions like the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad and the Asiatic Society were silent on the matter, for some unknown reason it is impossible to say. But Asitkumar did not pay attention to that. Thus, like the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and the subsequent partition in 1947, historians have accepted the division of our written literature into history before the actual geographical division has gained historical status. As much as the history of Bengali literature has been influenced by Kolkata-centric arrogance and, as a side effect, Dhaka-centric local conservative pride, this issue of Hindu-Muslim religious consciousness is even more sensitive. Bengali writers have been identified separately in the history of literature as Hindu writers and Muslim writers. Even the religious consciousness of the individual-historian has changed the chronology of history. What Hindu historians call the ‘Dark Ages’, Muslim writers have logically denied this process of era division and era classification. Dinesh Chandra divided the eras into Hindu era, Buddhist era etc., as a side effect, Ahmad Sharif (1921-1999), Muhammad Shahidullah (1885-1969), Syed Ali Ahsan (1920-2002) etc. wrote a history of Bengali literature to especially identify the contribution of Muslims in Bengali literature. This spatial and religious bigotry is much like Matsyanaya. Dinesh Chandra, who was despised even by Bankim Chandra for being a Bengali and an East Bengali, was responsible for the publication of the manuscripts collected and edited by Abdul Karim, from Calcutta University, without giving him the due status and recognition. In this regard, Abdul Karim’s nephew Ahmed Sharif himself has confirmed this information by testifying to Dinesh Chandra’s letter. Again, in Ahmad Sharif’s ‘*Bangali O Bangla Sahitya*’, the literatures of Mymensingha, Barisal regions did not find a place in the discussion. However, it is true that just as Dinesh Chandra did not write history as a radical Muslim hater, Shahidullah, Ahmad Sharif did not write history that was anti-Hindu. It can be said that historians of both religions were making a planned ‘strategy’. Dinesh Chandra, who was writing about the contribution of



Muslims, wrote in his book- “After the progress of Muslim influence, the stars of Hindu happiness and comfort are drowning in the borders of distant lands; the language of Hindu’s misfortune and Muslim’s good fortune in Bangladesh is proof; Hindu’s ‘gaon’, Muslim’s ‘sahar’; when the Hindu’s ‘sashya’ is cut and put in the service of the Muslim, then it is ‘fasl’,... if a Hindu commits a crime, the ‘qazi’ gives ‘meyad’, apart from this ‘badsah’, ‘umrah’,... all Muslim words; Muslim words like ‘zami’, ‘taluk’, ‘muluk’,... the word ‘hujur’ indicating lordship, all these words entered every house in Bengal and marked the Hindu language as a Yavana.”<sup>13</sup> Needless to say, the word ‘Yavana’ was a slur even in those days. And the historian’s attitude towards Muslims is very clear from the quote. But Dinesh Chandra kept a column ‘Muslim Vaishnava Poets’ and discussed them extensively in his literary history. Most of them are not named in Sukumar Sen’s history as well as Ali Ahsan’s planned history of anti-Hindu Bengali literature. In the same tone, Asitkumar talks about the Muslim rule of the seventeenth century – “Especially the strict accounting of revenue did not enter the Mughal mind. Therefore, from the end of the seventeenth century onwards, it is seen that some Hindus had obtained jobs in the administration and revenue departments of Dhaka and Murshidabad, sowing the seeds of a middle-class society of employees.”<sup>14</sup> He had a great objection about the intelligence of the Muslims.

Self-contradiction in the analysis of one’s own decisions and the decisions of others has been one of the most important methods of writing the history of Bengali literature since the nineteenth century. However, all historians of Bengali literature agreed on one or two issues. That is, in the analysis and perspective discussion of the literary works of the opposite gender and the lower castes. While recording the history of the treatment of the opposite gender and women’s literature, it was not possible for these thinkers to avoid the all-encompassing ideology of gender discrimination.

In the context of the discussion of the ‘Idanintankal’ in Pandit Ramgati Nyayratna’s ‘Bangala Bhasha O Bangala Sahitya Bishayak Prastab’, it can be seen that at the time of writing the second edition of Nyayratna’s book, at least 196 works/books were present in Bengali literature as contributions by women writers; in addition, there were numerous works printed in various newspapers.

However, in the appendix of his book (probably the appendix was added in the third edition) only the names of nine writers were mentioned with a clarification, “excessive details were not given.”<sup>15</sup> – As a result of this unnecessary exclusion, Krishnakamini Dasi did not get a place with her first Bengali poetry collection, ‘Chittavilasini’, and Rasasundari Devi (1809-1899) with her autobiography, ‘Amar Jiban’ (1868) a first by a woman, was left out. From what position does this exclusion occur in Ramgati’s book? Why? On 18th Paush 1285, Ramgati writes in his diary, “I have developed a certain belief that if a widow has wealth in her hands, her character is tainted... For this reason, I don’t want to write a paper for a company that costs a lot of money.”<sup>16</sup> This comment is in the context of giving property to his wife. Alongside this mental framework, also lies his tendency to write a history of literature.

To what extent did Dinesh Chandra follow his predecessors? Up to the time of his writing, notable women in Bengali literature were Khana, Madhavi Dasi, Rami, Anandamayi, Chandrabati, Akabai, Jaggeswari, etc. - although there is strong disagreement among historians of Bengali literature about their writings and existence, these women writers demand mention, proper discussion, and dignity. However, if we discuss Dinesh Chandra’s heterosexual ideology in a logical manner, we will see that what Dinesh Sen said in the first edition of his ‘Bangabhasha O Sahitya’- “The simple and unpretentious beauty of rural lalanagan”<sup>17</sup> - this traditional Indian societal concept of women controlled all his thoughts about women in all his works in the nationalist atmosphere of that time. Therefore, the writers have found a place of respect in his discussion; But the social and ideological marginalization that more or less affected women’s lives and literature, we did not find in the writings of historian Dinesh Chandra Sen the touch and appreciation of the values. Proper assessment demands not only empathy, but also competition. We can only blame Dinesh Sen for this lack of truthfulness. It can be said that he spoke about the women of ancient Hindu and Muslim families in his history ‘before the influence of English’. For those whose lives are cut short by the touch of the countryside, who have not been touched by the wave of women’s education, there is a small section in his book called ‘Women’s Education’. Moreover, in the appendix, can’t the reader expect a short table on the names of women writers in the modern century or the prevalence of them from a dedicated and hardworking historian like Dinesh Chandra Sen? Apparently, Dinesh Sen did not feel that importance. The idea of women was absolutely traditional for him. This is, of course, part of the nationalist project, to imagine women as the goddesses of the home, hidden away in the house, away from everything outside. Some comments from Dinesh Chandra:

a) (Regarding Malanchamala) “Unlike modern literature, there is no attempt to express love verbally in this. Feminine restraint is evident in every word spoken by the women - in every effort, in every sacrifice, the love of Palli-Lakshmi is distributing endless pleasure - but that love story is not inflated in vain by undue verbosity.”<sup>18</sup>

b) "If you don't know how much penance this woman underwent to maintain self-control in the pursuit of love, how will the reader understand the value of looking at the Swami's face and taking the dust from his feet?"<sup>19</sup>

c) "Even though they did not go to the forest with their husbands, Bengali women have dedicated their lives to their husbands like moths at their crematoriums with a smile on their faces."<sup>20</sup>

Naturally, there is no story of a woman becoming a woman here. During the period when Vidyasagar (1820-1891) was fighting for the abolition of sati-immolation and the introduction of widow marriage, the historian Dinesh Chandra was honouring these ideals. Dinesh Chandra reviewed Rasasundari Devi's '*Amar Jiban*' in '*Prabasi*' magazine. There, he felt Rasasundari's writings to be the writings of a 'shameful' and 'timid'<sup>21</sup> woman. According to him, "We request that the women of our time view the images of ancient women in the book with utmost care... Outside we are insulted, humiliated, and ostracized, where is the place for us to stand apart from the home? What were the housewives of Bengali homes like, we can proudly unveil this image to the world as an example."<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Muhammad Shahidullah asked on behalf of the women of house, but in a slightly different way. His statement was "We have to remember that the purpose of women's education is not to educate the women in the education suitable for men and prepare them for big and small jobs. It will not benefit the society at all. We want to educate women so that they become ideal wives, housewife and mother."<sup>23</sup> It may seem that how can these minds think like this? No, not only them, but Rabindranath (1861-1941) himself wrote about his cousin Swarnakumari Devi (1855-1932) to Rani Chanda (1912-1967), "It must be admitted that men and women are built differently in every way. Men's brain, and strength is much stronger. Suppose, if I were my cousin, could I have reached the same place as myself? Even if we leave the obstacles of the world, a girl's brain cannot work so much."<sup>24</sup> This rise of patriarchy was strong in society and literature. The history of Bengali literature was no exception. Although the first phase of this history writing is a nationalistic preventive project, the second phase is in many ways aggressive and futuristic. Historian Asitkumar Bandyopadhyay writes about Swarnakumari Devi's work, "Awareness of the limits of one's power depends on the artist's judgment. Perhaps due to age-related laxity, his fine judgment had become somewhat blunt."<sup>25</sup> He did not even refrain from calling Swarnakumari '*Bhimratiprapta*'<sup>26</sup>. Naturally, he was the one to praise Swarnakumari, writing: "Why didn't she emerge as a warrior like Pandita Ramabai or the suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst against men. This is a question that the leaders of the '*Strilinganirman*' movement might naturally ask, but Swarnakumari was the daughter of an aristocratic family and the wife of a high-ranking official, renowned for her knowledge and art. She could not, or did not want to be de-classed."<sup>27</sup> Surprisingly, in 2003, the historian of Bengali literature believed that the idea of women becoming women, the *ism*, was hateful, and made women classless and socially disrespectful. Sukumar Sen in no exception. In 1958, as a reason for including Nurennacha Khatun in the discussion, he states that "despite their hesitation and timidity, some Muslim writers were no less powerful, (compared to contemporary Hindu writers) I am demonstrating this by discussing the work of a novelist."<sup>28</sup> The division is humiliating on both gender and merit criteria. If we exclude male authors, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-) died in 1932. By that time, she had written – "We have become accustomed to slavery for a long time. Men have gradually enslaved our minds. ... What a great degradation. They have gradually become our husbands from land lords, householders. Now we are prisoners of society."<sup>29</sup> The first volume of Sukumar Sen's '*Bangala Sahityer Itibritto*' was first published in 1940, eight years after Rokeya's death; But Rokeya is not discussed even in his fifth volume, only mentioned. Sukumar Sen called the writing style of Jyotirmayi Devi (1894-1988) '*chokha*', but what is the above quote an example of? The question arises, is it because of shyness, timidity or *chokha* that writings by women has been excluded from Bengali literature?

Of course, this trend is contemporary. Ramakrishna Maitra praised Manomohini Dasi's work, saying, "What kind of language can one expect from an untouchable prostitute?"<sup>30</sup> The history of Bengali literature has also been scarred by this patriarchal obsession. Especially in the 19th and 20th century, when the Bengali intellectuals in Bengali social life, under the influence of nationalism, were advocating the traditional traditions of women as a shield for the struggle of the colonial Indians against the British power, then the position of women was abused in the name of worship.

It may seem like this attack may have been intense because of heterosexual scope. No, this attack or bias did not stop in any area, regardless of race or colour. In fact, history always speaks of upper classes in all countries. The history of Bengali literature is no exception. Histories of the Hindutva upper caste were written by Asitkumar Banerjee, Sukumar Sen, Syed Ali Ahsan, and to a large extent by Dinesh Chandra Sen. Only Ahmad Sharif was an exception. Dinesh Sen, who wrote stories about the chastity of Mahua, Malua, Malanchamala of the village, spoke about the creation of national literature in the light of nationalism; I am mentioning two incidents of his personal life from his autobiography. Dinesh Chandra was sad because his eldest daughter got married in a low caste. How tolerant was Dinesh Chandra about lower castes, different castes? Dinesh Chandra was going to Suapur with his mother on a boat. They were accompanied by Namasudras and Muslim boatmen.

Dinesh Chandra's mother washed one of the plates they were eating from, as there were no banana leaves on the boat, and gave it to him. Even at his mother's plea, he did not eat from that plate. His mother cursed him that one day he would have to eat on a Muslim's plate. He writes that he doesn't want to say whether it all happened out of his sight, if it did, it was because of his mother's curse - he had no hand in it. In other words, eating the rice of a lower cast, a Muslim, is considered wrong. Not only subconsciously, but also consciously it appears that almost all historians are victims of this racist tendency.

However, it must be mentioned that in the second edition of his book in 1901, Dinesh Chandra was the first to use the word 'Dalit' to refer to the downtrodden, oppressed lower castes while describing the character of *Kalketu*, long before the term 'Dalit' was coined; yet it is not recognized anywhere even today. It was he who wrote the book on '*Bangla Sahitye Musalmaner Abadan*'.

Neither he nor any other historian discussed the history and literary trends of the lower castes, the lower classes in their mainstream history writings; even folk literature was not discussed in the classical histories of Bengali literature, which were almost exclusively written by the Brahmins. The only exception in this regard was Muhammad Shahidullah.

Dinesh Chandra may not have done anything to break the tradition in the history of Bengali literature and the culture of criticism. But there is no other historian as honest as him, at least in the field of writing the history of Bengali literature, within the tradition. Avoiding the political context, he concludes his historiography from the pre-colonial period with 'The Beginning of Innovation', but his written history is completely silent on the innovation of modern literature. He who wrote so much, could he not write the history of his contemporary time if he wanted? Or was this part of a plan? Although his history in rural East Bengal was illusory, by the standards of a West Bengal citizen of that time, he knew where to stop his pen. Dinesh Chandra, who described the beauty of the beautiful language of *Vaishnava Padavali*, the ancient Bengali literature, in the fifth edition of his book, Dinesh Chandra protested against the imposition of the English language. His clear statement was, "Mr. Meckley changed the course of Bengali education at an inauspicious time... We have to study all the subjects of the world from Arithmetic to Phonology in English. ... English education is not only for our affairs, but to establish unity with the various countries of India in the present situation. It is essential for us to learn this language. But where practical knowledge can be applied, do we really need to innocently learn the English pronunciation, English laughter, English manners, the details of English history, all exactly like the Englishmen? Isn't that too much? Soon, we will have to create a new vocabulary in Bengal again."<sup>31</sup> Students of Bengali literature and Bengalis know how important this protest is for Bengalis, the second language and second linguistic group in India, not only in the 20th century but also in today's context.

Even then, standing in opposition to Hindi, Bengali speakers may have to move forward with such protests and plans in their own country. Be it spatial, linguistic, colonial, any kind of aggression, Dinesh Chandra was not aggressive but staunchly opposed to it. Sukumar Sen claimed to write an objective history of Bengali literature instead of '*thor bari khara*' ancient Bengali literature; however, the history he wrote repeatedly became a subjective one, and he even divided the era into the 'Rabindra period'. There may be affection for Rabindranath, this is natural for all Bengalis, but it is not right to portray that era in the history of literature, the ups and downs, the events, just by naming it after the person Rabindranath. No matter how great a person may be, they are not above the era and environment; rather, the thoughts of the era shape and nurture their literary life.

Dinesh Chandra had no such claim; But he was more honest than Western historiographers, Sukumar Sen-even from rest of the historians. In this regard, the errors in his writing are very few. Another such historian is Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay. If we do not mention him, the explanation of the ideological narrative of the history of Bengali literature remains incomplete. His method of writing history is entirely evidence-based, it is indicative of a more scientific and unbiased mind that is not only an analysis of data, but more scholarly and intellectual than any other history. As a result, even though Ahmad Sharif is as informative as 'no records no history' method, his analysis is very brief and concise. First of all, he rejected the method of historical narration. He discussed some special problems of ancient and medieval Bengali literature, which are impossible to debate, due to lack of information in the history of Bengali literature, sometimes distortion of information, sometimes differences of historians. Naturally he had to clarify about other historians. For example, in a discussion about Sukumar Sen, he attacks Sukumar Sen as 'Sukumar's research'<sup>32</sup>, accusing him of conjectural conclusions. In fact, bias towards a particular issue, such as entrenching ideology, can also cloud decisions on the other hand. Academic transparency is therefore a prerequisite for the researcher. Maybe the matter is very odd; But like all literary criticism its absence has haunted history. However, many times, despite of ideological scholarships, the history-writers of Bengali literature could not give any theoretical departure in their works.

Finally, Dinesh Chandra criticized the Western approach to the historiography of Indian and Bengali literature and said – "Those who read Ten, Downton and are inclined to criticize the Bengali language, they will remember



one thing; there is a difference between Bilati Lily and Deshi Padma, Jasmine and Jui; that difference is also reflected in national literature.”<sup>33</sup> The historians of Bengali literature were able to discover this distinction in the context of writing the history of literature in the context of national literature, social, cultural and political life of Bengali, but could not take any theoretical position with respect to ‘Padma’ or ‘Jui’. The politics of written history of Dalit, women, and centralization has been changed and influenced by different contexts at different times. History written by Dinesh Chandra is no exception in most cases. However, to stand firm in one’s position, which is sometimes dogmatic; We see in Dinesh Chandra Sen’s historiography an honest attempt to construct facts and theories despite the ideological stagnation and shape them into history. In the future, this feeling influenced but a neutral position of historiography will be seen in the history of Bengali literature so that literature and history will produce a balanced report; Until then, perhaps Dinesh Chandra’s ‘*Bangabhasha O Sahitya*’ will remain a self-commentary on Bengali life for the above reasons.

## I. FOOTNOTES

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