

The Stories of the First Phase of Bimal Kar

Abstract

Bimal Kar was an eminent writer of the Pre-Independence period, though he was properly evaluated after Independence. The stories of Bimal Kar may be divided into six phases. Those are-Introductory phase (1944-1953), First phase (1953-56), second phase (1957-1961), Third phase (1962-1975), Fourth phase (1975-1980), Fifth phase (1980-1990), Sixth phase (1990-1991).

The stories of the Introductory phase differs from those of the other phases. The paper deals with some of the stories, belonging to the First phase. The stories are 'Kachghar', 'Jonaki', 'Dui Bon', 'Udbhid' and 'Palash'. In these stories, the writer not only deals with the material world or the physical attraction between men and women but also upholds the inner self of both painting beautifully and acutely the passion, conflict of emotion between the outer and the inner layers of mind.

Keywords: Bimal Kar, Fifty's Decade, Relation between Men and Women, Reality and Inner Reality, Conflict of Emotion, Implication of Human Mind

Introduction

Bimal Kar appeared in the realm of Bengal short stories before the advent of Independence. Nevertheless he was recognized during the post Independent period. From the beginning to end we can divide and discuss the short stories of Bimal kar in some phases. The phases are-Introductory phase (1944-1953), First phase (1953-1956) second Phase (1957-1961), Third phase (1962-1975) Fourth phase (1975-1980), Fifth phase (1980-1990), Sixth phase (1990-1991). The Introductory phase consists of such stories as Sainik, Ambikanather Mukti to Antare, Indur, Baraf Shaheber Meye upto Manabputra. In the language of the Critique- "upto that period he went on following the flow of the contemporary short stories."¹ But the stories of the following phases have become different from the Introductory phase. That is why it is called the First phase. So also, this First phase comes to an end immediately before the story 'Sudhamaya.' The story 'Sudhamaya' is the turning point, therefore, the second phase starts from 'Sudhamaya.' The discussion here has been confined into some selected stories of the 'First phase' of Bimal Kar though there are much many stories in this phase like 'Atmaja', 'Asvattha' and 'Angurlata' which have been vastly discussed.

Aim of the Study

The paper offers to discuss in details some of Bimal Kar's short-stories, such as- 'Kachghar', 'Jonaki', 'Udhbid', 'Duibon', 'Palash' e.t.c., which belong to earlier period of his writings and have not been well – explored till now.

The First phase is from 1953-1956. In order to understand the First phase, we have to throw light on the social and political atmosphere of the previous age. The terrible second world war started during 1939. Following this, we have a series of incidents, such as- the riot of 1941, the August movement of 1942, the Famine of 1943, More fearful riot in 1946, division of the country in 1947 resulting to the refugee problem. In this backdrop of the fearful and turbulent time a number of Bengali short stories were composed after the Independence. Bimal kar is one of the eminent figures among there short story writers. Immediately after the Independence when this turbulent time became one of the prominent features, that is when materialism stood out prominently, Bimal Kar, at that time searched for the inner world hitherto undiscovered.

In course of discussion first comes the story 'Kachghar'. This was published in 1953. This story consists of a story of a cursed and futile life of a woman. Hiran Sen and his elder sister were enchanted by the external beauty of the kachghar (glass house). Similarly, Hiran, his elder sister and others were charmed by the physical beauty of Shobhana, the nurse of

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the hospital. As the glassroom of the operation theatre before thirty years contains the witness of pain, unhappiness, birth and death- so also in the beauty of Shobhana, there is the pathetic history of her life. The beauty of this history is drawn not with brush but with cotton, not with colour but with blood. Therefore, both the glassroom and Shobhana attract the character of Hiran of the story. 'As if somebody attracts him. What is there? Glassroom? Shobhana? Perhaps both. Both are the objects of wonder to him. Both are the things of Joy.' That is, only the beauty of Shobhana and Kanchghar had deeply wondered Hiran. We are informed in the story that this glassroom was previously an operation theatre. Actually, an operation theatre is the centre of birth and death, that is creation and destruction. This is a significant stage of life since the play of birth and death occurs here simultaneously. This Kanchghar is the witness of the love of Hiran and Shobhana, so also the same Kanchghar is the witness of the destruction of their love. Once Hiran had refused Shobhana having seen some anomaly in her body. The story also suggests that like the glassroom the love of Shobhana and Hiran also is momentary. Similarly like the glassroom the physical beauty of Shobhana had attracted Hiran and his elder sister. For example, the elder sister of Hiran, says to Shobhana that 'the physical beauty is like ashes- Only real is affection and love. You have both of there.' Again, Hiran says 'She looks beautiful. She has washed her tiredness of the day with soap and water. With an orange saree around her, the loose knot of hair has come down up to the shoulder. On the forehead, there is a dot of kumkum. The eyes seem to be more deluded' Apart from this, it is known from Shobhana that before this, Wherever she has worked, the young people were enchanted by her beauty and many have written letters to her. Still, why does Shobhana want to be, alone? Is it only the excess of tiresome love of men towards her? Or like this lonesome pathos of the empty glassroom, some hidden pain is concealed inside Shobhana. The pain which is destroying her day by day and she has constantly fled away. The ceaseless Mental Agony in Shobhana, the primary character of the story, the pathetic cry of her helpless life become evident from her behaviour and talks. In fact man lives with hope, which teaches him to dream. That hope, which provides one the main thing to live, when eroded then his life becomes aimless like a navigator of a boat of which the sail has been scattered. The rest of the life remains only floating. Since thirteen to fourteen years of her age Shobhana had known that her life had no value. In the house, on the walls, tables, beds, in the eyes of her elder brothers, even in those of her mother and sister in laws-everywhere she has seen the negative attitude for which Shobhana herself the negative attitude for which Shobhana herself was not responsible. Disbelief and hate- these were the hatred of Shobhana towards herself in another form. Even knowing her own physical obstacle, she thought that someday or other she would get the love of somebody.

Love is a different thing. No Physical inability can be its obstractional. But theory remains only in

writing. The practical life is very complicated and tough. There every path is covered with darkness and secret lanes. There everything is weighed in terms of loss and gain. Therefore, when Hiran came to know about her physical obstacle, within a moment his deep love and romanticism collapsed to the dust. Here Hiran's love was momentary like the glass house. His love and attraction was only towards her physical beauty. It was in fact the beauty of her physic that had deluded Hiran. He had never understood or tried to understand her inner words. He had never tried to know about the likings of Shobhana. Therefore as soon as he became aware of the physical anomaly of Shobhana, his love Crumbled and was lost like the house of the Cards- Which has been symbolized by the destruction of the brittle glassroom in the story.

The next story is 'Jonaki'. It has been described through the narration of Memories of Parimal. We come across Samuel amongst other friends and experiences of some incidents in the missionary college stamped on the memories of Parimal. A special meaning and experiences come out of the different incidents and characters of life which help to make a man matured. Not only that, from such experiences man reaches to the spiritual feeling of the philosophy of life, which becomes the viaticum of his life. That Samuel, Whom Parimal had seen as young, enthusiastic and full of life, after a time that vast experience of the realization of life by Samuel had as if brought a total meaningfulness in the life of Parimal.

In the words and narrations of Parimal, we see 'in Samuels' Character there are as many good and bad qualities, he would express them as soon as he could-either through his words or through his works. In the playground he was a prominent player but in the games of life he was totally unsuccessful. He was deprived of affection, love, emotion and attachment. He grew up in the hostel. Nevertheless, Aruna Halder, whom he had loved had a deplorable character and the debauchery of Amiya Das, the professor of the college had deeply affected him. There is a class of people in the society who cover their loathsome character behind the mask of pretention. Even in the change of time and situation, they do not change character, only the position is changed. Still a class of people undergo suffering of the bad effects of the character of the aforesaid class. Such dilapidated wasted characters of the society cause morbidity and deadly wounds to the pure honest and brave characters of people like brave Samuel. There be in the society these hated beasts in the form of man always waits for the prey for the fulfillment of his physical hunger. In the story 'Jonaki', we find just this character in Amiya Das, the professor of the missionary college. In his frailty illusion was caught the mother of Samuel and his only one love- 'my mother was also fascinated to see the thirty two years' Amiya Das. Let Aruna also forget, let her forget'.

Samuel loved Aruna with all his heart. when he saw the utmost disaster of his own love by Amiya Das in the chandan lake, he had no other option than tears- 'as if a painful breath came out from his deep

sensitivity and spread around'. At the end of the story it is seen that Amiya Das, Aruna Halder and Samuel are the inhabitants of the different spheres of the two worlds in the same romantic surroundings. On the one hand there is an ugly history and on the other the grave of love with its utmost futility. On the one hand there is Samuel at the top of purity and sensitivity and on the other in the wonderful romantic atmosphere of the Chandan lake Amiya Das and Aruna Halder are sitting hand in hand. Only what is lost is the valuable yet the weak love of Samuel. The two different situations and the aspects of the different characters have become very significant in this background of the story. The same Samuel who could play once his flute from the core of his heart, the same tune of the flute cries painfully in this sur-romantic atmosphere. Samuel learns the new tune of life- which does not belong to the dirty and the rotten society, but to another world-another universe.

Another story of this first phase is 'Dui Bon'. Nirupama and Anupama, respectively eighteen and sixteen of age were of immediate succession. They divide their garments, ornaments and even shoes within themselves in their rather poverty-stricken household, consisting of their mother, father and a brother. There is nothing of their own that they do not share with each other. Even that Nira is attracted towards Bilu and that Anu likes Ashoke is not hidden from one another. For this reason Anu helps her elder sister in writing letters to Biluda and Nira helps Anu to find opportunity to meet Ashoke. There is a very good understanding between the sisters. There was never any misunderstanding between them. But in such a bondage of love. A deep psychology of these two ladies has been evident against an incident. In front of the groom's family each of the sisters tries to prove her worth. It is evident from their activities though not from their words. The words which have not even come to their mind have come out. Anupama says to her elder sister quite grudgingly, 'you know so many works including music.' That is, perhaps Anupama is thinking that the groom's family may select her elder sister. This grudge is another name for jealousy. Where there is so much of love and friendship for her elder sister, there this envy actually signifies the envy of a woman (Nari). Here Anu does not seem to be the sister of Nirupama, The deep jealousy of a woman's mind has found expression in her. On the other hand it is seen that because of having dark complexion, Nirupama thinks that the groom's family may select her sister who is of fair complexion. That is why she applied whitex to make her complexion fairer hiding it from her sister. When Anu asked her, she became embarrassed and said- 'O, don't say. It is but to become a joker. I thought that mother will be scolding me when she will come to know.' Infact it was not done out of the fear for scolding of her mother. She had done it out of her longing and desire of a woman's heart. Again when Niru asked for the earrings of Anu, she tactfully avoided to give it to her elder sister. Again it is seen that Nirupama takes off her Dhakai Saree from the person of Anu by grumbling for it. In this turmoil both the sisters become fevicious. A competitive mentality was growing up between the

two sisters. For the first time Anu understood 'her elder sister was a devil. Alright, she will also see winter does not go off within one season.' The anger, aversion and grudge of the younger sister towards the elder imply that in reality they were two women. The complicated secrets and jealousy of a woman's mind are nakedly coming out. After all these when they lay together side by side, both were ashamed. Nirupama had given her Dhakai Saree to Anupama for ever. Anupama has also submitted her orange saree to her elder sister and the two sisters slept intimately as before. Still, the incident that took place following the differences between them will ever be eroded. This is the wonder of the author as well as of us. This is the story of woman's psychology. The desire, hope and longing lying at the core of the women's heart becomes sharp during the blow of the incidents. The writer has protected through the two sisters the conflicts, despairs and longings that continuously occur in the women's mind.

Among the stories of the First phase, 'Udhbhid' is another psychological story. Purnendubikash is the professor of Botany in Raja Pradeep Narayan College. Queen Subarnasundari had donated her garden house for the college. Purnendu fell in love with her step daughter princess Chandra. But love has two forms- somebody keeps his love within himself. Some other speaks it out. Purnendu Bikash was a languid man. He could not express his love in front of everybody. Queen Subarnasundari and all others took him as a vegetable. The queen said that Purnendu does not have any sense or awareness, he does not know how to respond and react. That is, he is as weak as a vegetable. He does not have any animality. He has no beastly strength or power. A man without strength is useless in the world. Maybe, that is why the queen has tactfully managed Chandra's marriage to somewhere else. In spite of having deep love for Chandra, Purnendu did not believe in snatching her away forcibly. Therefore, he did not get Chandra as his life partner. Therefore, in spite of everybody calling him a plant, he was not so. On the day of Chandra's wedding, he had deeply embraced a nude female figure on the bank of the lake. He kissed on the lip of that stone image. He has fulfilled his longings of his subconscious mind by embracing the stone image; and here is the proof that he is not a plant but a man of flesh and blood. In his mind also there are love, emotion, feeling, longing and craving lying deeply. He also reacts and responds. The psychology of man like Purnendubikash has been clearly and beautifully depicted in the story.

The undiscovered inner world is deeply hidden in the mind Ratikanta, has been depicted in the story Palash. In the story Ratikanta is found as an active and responsible figure. Simultaneously he is romantic by birth. Ratikanta smoothes the wounds of the hidden lanes of his mind as far as practicable. Therefore, in spite of the divided inner world of his mind, outside he is an ordinary, complete man. The inner mind of harmless and innocent Ratikanta is sharply divided by his mental conflict; in spite of this hidden stream of blood it is not possible to detect it

from his outer expression. Infact man becomes a slave of habits in the limited surroundings of the society. Silently he disposes his duty. In many cases it is either done unknowingly or against his will. Sometimes the monotony of the same life style which is against his own creation and contradictory to the social life, becomes an acting. Consequently a subtle breakline takes place in the core of the mind, which may not be seen from outside. Sometimes man cannot realize from the profound activities of his mental states, what he actually wants or what is his aim of life. Sometimes again, he can hardly establish it within the limited socio-household activities. So long as he can not assimilate the inner state of mind with life, he cannot stop the secret stream pathetic cry of his life that he had led. Then, the outer life of a man, his existence, execution of duties, that is his life becomes divided into two due to the conflict of the outer and the inner self and he becomes self contradictory. Mind is divided into groups and thus begins a turmoil. As a result, behind the stability of life is created a crivas; and many times unknowingly that crivas turns into big cracks. It is seen that Ratikanta in the story, has set a mirror on a piece of wood by making himself a carpenmter, but the mirror seems a bit to be yellowish. There are subtle cracks also in the glass. It is seen here that though Ratikanta makes the mirror by himself, that is not clear and it consists of a few cracks also. The social life of man is somewhat like the mirror. Made by Ratikanta. The successful life is different from leading day to day life. The positive feelings do not always remain existing in the daily life. As a result that life becomes a fragmented. Therefore, Ratikanta has said to Uma, his life- 'Not eight, but two'. When Ratikanta opened his mind- 'Uma stretched her legs and felt comfortable'. Actually Uma did not feel relaxed only by stretching her legs but knowing about her permanent existence in Ratikanta's mind. It is because Uma knows that the mutual existence of both Uma and Ratikanta in their minds, though factual will never be materialized, for it was impossible. Few years back the regociation of marriage between Uma and Ratikanta was broken. Ratikanta got married to Umas' elder sister Binu. Even though the relationship between Uma and Ratikanta did not materialized, the seed of it was sowed in both their minds. Its root was always alive and sensitive in the mind of Uma. That root though deeply entered in the mind of Ratikanta could not always be felt by him due to the pressure of external affairs. Therefore Uma says to Ratikanta- 'You have not replied even one fourth of my letters that I had written to you and Ratikanta replied- 'Uma, I cannot write good letters... it does not mean that I did not remember you'. Is it merely a relaxed conversation between the brother in law and the sister in law! Or, is it the attempt to placate a beloved, an eternal woman by an eternal man.

Even in his daughter Ratikanta had seen the image of her aunty, not of her mother Binu. Here also the inner self of Ratikanta has revealed the supressed lair of mind. Ratikanta said 'this girl also will be as spirited as her aunty. Look at the features of this child, with the puffy cheeks and lines on the forehead.

Though the statement was about the daughter of Ratikanta, it is easily understandable that Ratikanta is conscious of the physic and beauty of her aunty. In connection with the statement of Ratikanta, the short answer of Uma is also meaningful. Uma says- 'the face of her aunty is not that insignificant. My niece will not be outcast for that, here Uma indirectly implies her pride regarding her beauty. This statement also implies that. Uma knows that the heart of Ratikanta is the permanent seat of Uma's beauty. Moreover the last few words of Ratikanta's statement are also suggestive. Ratikanta says- 'this is true, but it does not seem that the result will be palatable'. That is Ratikanta gives consent to the fact that Uma, along with establishing her beauty, establishes her existence also. But its result is unknown and dangerous has also been implied. Again, just before going to the office Ratikanta goes out- 'Not totally out side but infront of the door he stoops to put on his shoes. Uma also has come out and stood infront along with Binu- here two entities of Ratikanta's mind can be observed-he has bowed down infront of Binu and Uma- that is he could not stand erect. Infact inside the door there is the undiscovered inner world of Ratikanta's mind. Ratikanta is outside the door-still inside the door of his mind Binu and Uma stood side by side. Ratikanta has been compelled to bow down due to the conflict between the two images that exist in the secret room in the mind of Ratikanta. Infact, on the one hand there is the faith, love, sense of value and honesty, for which Ratikanta has not even to think anything- he is committed to such a wife. Though Ratikanta does not love her from the core of his heart, still Binu with her entire existence has compelled to honour her. Binu is always strolling in another corner of Ratikanta's mind. Therefore Binu did not appear anywhere between the totally private conversation between Uma and Ratikanta in an outing to Palashbon, though forcibly Ratikanta had brought Binu in their conversation. In the outer household life, Binu and Ratikanta knew each other but Binu has never kept any information about the inner mind of Ratikanta. Therefore, the household of Ratikanta and Binu has been confined to the execution of behaviour in the relationship of cause and effect, and Ratikanta also did not keep any space in his regular and habitual life. Binu also did not keep any information of the secret room of her husband's mind. Therefore, in Ratikanta's mind Binus path is not transparent but dark. It is true that in any relationship the concern of the mind is a serious factor. No relationship against the will of the mind becomes truly balanced. There comes down many intricacies of life. Here all the three lives are deeply wonded.

On the otherhand, restlessness, reclesness and wildness- characteristics of a woman is seen in Uma. Ratikanta has been attracted by these qualities because Binu is only a housewife. Among the mind of her husband and the house hold she had chosen the later one. Her activities are confined within the household. Uma is just the opposite to her elder sister. She is not confined within the limits of regular life. Ratikanta rediscovered Uma after going for an outing to Palashban. Ratikanta was enchanted by the

restlessness, Passion and open nit and humour of Uma. Ratikanta was repentant because he could not connect this lady with his own life. Like the untied hair of Uma, her life has also become roving. She could not offer her responsibility to any other man. Uma's life also has become meaningless like the dried beetle juice on the lips. There is that dryness under the pupils of her eyes. Actually, this dryness pertains to Uma's life. The mirror of her dream has been shattered into pices in front of her out the other hand, Ratikanta's life has been deeply wounded. Though not in daily life, still Uma and Ratikanta, out of their deep feelings dwell in the same place. There, each of them know each other thoroughly... 'Still both of them can feel that like this calm atmosphere one is spread over and mingled up in others mind.' Binu is totally different here. She loves only the household. Binu is a good housewife, caring but could not become the object for love of Ratikanta.

The flower of Uma's life blossomed only for a day. She could touch the dream with the hand, visualized it with her eyes and could feel it with her heart. But immediately after coming from Palashbon, that newly blossomed, momentary flower lost its colour, beauty and fragrance. 'Like the fading light of the evening, this dream of her life was but momentary. In bright sunlight, the Palash flowers, which was so red has faded and the red colour has lost its lustre'. That is, while returning from Palashbon, the tinge of loving colour of Uma has faded away. Therefore, Uma handed over the faded Palash flowers to Ratikanta who says 'those will be appropriate in my hand.' This statement of Ratikanta is equally Painful and morbid. Therefore, on the one hand his dream world, which bloomed even momentarily that became faded within the limited sphere of his household; on the one hand his mind, love and likings, on the other the rules, regulations and duties of the household- within these two pressures, the situation of Ratikanta's mind and life has become somewhat like the faded Palash flowers. He has to survive with this divided mind and existence. He has to fight with himself, with his existence as well as with his household. This undiscovered inner self of Ratikanta was unknown and dark to his own self. That was gradually revealed by the appearance of Uma. It may not be the fact that Uma had no place in Ratikanta's mind. May be it was dormant, that has been awakened with the advent of Uma. Again it may become dormant with the return of Uma. It is evident from Uma's words- 'On my return to Kolkata, the two picces will be connected once again- is not it, my brother-in-law...'. In reality the bud of love in the mind of Ratikanta will be suppressed by the duties and responsibilities of the household. But in the core of his mind, the secret stream of love will go on flowing. Neither Binu nor Uma may be able to realize it, perhaps not even Ratikanta himself.

Conclusion

In the first phase of short stories, written by Bimal Kar, it is seen that a class of men's attraction towards women, primarily depend on the physical beauty, he does not feel the mind of the woman. Any physical disability takes off the beloved woman from a man. That is, everywhere real love is absent (Kachghar). Again, in some stories it is seen that

inspite of the whole hearted love from the man, the lady has forsaken him for another man. Inside the mind of a man, the continuous flow of feelings can hardly be understood from outside. In course of incidents, sometimes the inner feelings cruelly come outside (Jonaki). Even in the depth of the mind, the feelings of jealousy towards each other of own sisters are hidden in their minds. Such subtle complicated psychology of the women sometimes become manifested due to some blow of incidents (Dui Bon). No one, who seems to be a plant or Neak, from outside, is not infact without any emotion. Every human being consists of affection, love and desire, may be in a dormant state. Even though he can not express his love, but his longings becomes manifest when he embraces and kisses a naked stone image of a woman (udbhid). Even if, in some people there is deep feeling of love in the depth of their minds, they have to forget it under the pressure of the real world. Nevertheless, his love awakes within a moment and consequently collapses within a moment also. This unknown world of the inner mind is revealed to the readers. Therefore we can say that in the stories of the first phase, we can visualize the individual mind. In this chapter, there are stories like 'Atmaja', 'Angurlata', 'Ashwattha' etc North mentioning, where the human mind is the first consideration to the writer. Time and again, these stories have come up with the main consideration of human mind to the writer. These stories have been discussed again and again by the critiques; but the stories like 'Kachghar', 'Jonaki', 'Udhbid', 'Dui Bon,' 'Palash' have not been discussed in that manner. Therefore, in our essay out of the stories of the first phase, these five (mentioned above), have been selected for discussion.

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