

# Patriotic Writings in English and Bangla Languages in India

## Abstract

This paper attempts to highlight the works of the patriotic, nationalistic and revolutionary writers of India who have written in English and Bangla languages. The main stalwarts of patriotic Indian English Literature are Henry Vivian Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Rabindranath Tagore, M.K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Raja Rao and others.

In Bangla language writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Sharat Chandra Chatterjee, Kazi Nazrul Islam and others were inspiring the readers with patriotic fervour, revolutionary zeal and the quest for freedom against slavery and oppression.

After more than seventy one years of independence the Indians have nearly forgotten the painful struggle for the country's freedom. The writings of the patriotic and revolutionary writers will once again remind us of our duties towards the country and teach us to bravely fight against our enemies both side and outside the nation.

**Keywords:** Patriotism, Nationalism, Humanism, Sthalapurana, Mother India, Kalapani, Transportation, Pariah, Baul-singers, Sepoy Mutiny, Santhal Revolution, Swaraj, Swadeshi.

## Introduction

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was a radical thinker, a true patriot and the founder of the Young Bengal Movement. He was the first nationalist and patriotic poet of modern Indian writing in English. In his poem *To India-My Native Land* he wrote:

*My country! In the days of Glory Past  
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow.  
And worshipped as deity thou wast  
Where is that glory, where is that reverence now?  
Thy eagle pinion is chained down at last  
And grovelling in the lowly art thou.*

(*To India-My Native Land*)

In his poem '*Harp of India*' Derozio celebrates the glorious past and mourns of over its loss due to British subjugation. *Harp* is used as a symbol for Indian poet. The poem ends with a hope that fallen India would soon regain its dignity and sovereignty.

*Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough?...  
Neglected, mute and desolate art thou,  
... but if thy notes divine  
May be by mortal wakened once again,  
Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!*

(*Harp of India*)

Another great poet Michael Madhusudan Dutta who was writing both in English and Bangla was stirring the heart of young Bengal with his patriotic zeal.

*Where are thou, fair freedom!  
Thou once goddess of Ind's sunny clime  
When glory's halo round her brow  
Shone radiant and she rose sublime*

(*King Porus*)

The publication of the novel *Anandmath* in 1882 by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee created a magical and majestic impact on the Indian freedom movement against British slavery. Within only three years of its publication the Indian National Congress was founded and numerous secret revolutionary societies like *Anushilan Samiti* and *Yugantar* became instantly active. Bankim Chandra created a new symbol of Mother India identifying her with Durga, the Goddess of power and strength. He presented three images of mother Goddess symbolizing the past, present



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and the future of India. *Anandmath* became the holy book of the Anti-British revolutionary activists and thousands of them suffered police atrocities and smilingly kissed the gallows with the words *Vande Mataram* on their lips.

Sri Aurobindo hailed *Vande Matram* as a powerful sacred matra which in a single day had converted the whole nation to the religion of patriotism. The arduous and incessant struggle for independence had begun for a great nation which had visualized the vision of the Mother and could never be placed under the feet of the conqueror for long. Sri Aurobindo who was great revolutionary himself passionately appealed to the public to true patriotism and exhorted them to love the motherland and sacrifice every thing to bring about her salvation through his fiery speeches and journalistic articles.

He has beautifully translated the song *Vande Matram* into English:

*I bow to thee, Mother,  
richly watered, richly fruited,  
cool with the winds of the south  
Dark with the crops of the harvests....*

*Thou art knowledge,  
Thou are conduct,  
Thou our heart, thou our soul  
For thou art the life in our body  
Thou art Durga holding her ten weapons of  
ware....*

*(Translated by Sri Aurobindo)*

In his article *Legitimate Patriotism* he asked:

*If it is patriotic for an Englishman to  
say... that their England never did nor shall  
lie at the proud feet of a conqueror why  
should it be unpatriotic and seditious for an  
Indian to give expression to similar  
sentiment.*

*(The Complete works of Sri  
Aurobindo Vol. 6)*

Rabindranath Tagore in his anthology *Swadesh* wrote numerous popular patriotic songs that were inspiring the young Indians to fight for India's freedom. His song *Ekla Chalo* or *Walk alone* continues to be the most popular song after *Jan-Gan-Man* the national anthem. It is the anthem of human courage. It still cheers up all those who are revolting and fighting against injustice and exploitation and against the deadening customs and traditions which crush human dignity.

*If they answer not to thy call walk alone  
If they are afraid and cower mutely facing the  
wall  
... open thy mind and speak out alone...  
If they do not hold up the light  
When the night is troubled with storm...  
with the thunder flame of pain  
Ignite your own heart  
and let it burn alone.*

*(Poems, Rabindranath Tagore: No. 40)*

In his lyric no. 35 in the *Gitanjali* Tagore prayed for the absolute freedom and spiritual emancipation of his country.

## Remarking An Analisation

*Where the mind is without fear and the head  
is held high;*

*Where knowledge is free,  
Where the world has not been broken up into  
fragments by narrow domestic walls;  
Where words come out from the depth of  
truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms  
towards perfection;  
... Into that heaven of freedom my father, Let  
my country awake!*

*(Gitanjali: No. 35)*

In his novel *Gora*, Gourmohan an anglo-Indian brought up is an orthodox Hindu Brahmin family is the mouthpiece of Tagore's nationalism and internationalism. When Gora who considered himself to be a pure Hindu Brahmin came to know that actually he was an Anglo-Indian Christian orphan who was lovingly brought up by Anandamayi, he visualized Mother India in his foster mother Anandamayi:

*Mother, you are my mother...  
you have no caste, you make  
no distinctions and have no  
hatred. It is you who are India.*

*(Gora)*

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Father of the Nation was a prolific writer. *The Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule*, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, *Non-violent Resistance*, *All Men are Brothers* are some of his most important English works besides the thousands of speeches and articles in *Young India*, *Harijan* and *Indian Opinion*. Gandhiji propagated the message of truth, peace, non-violence and satyagraha, According to him patriotism was not different from humanism. In his article in *Young India* he wrote:

*For me patriotism is the same as humanity. I  
am patriotic because I am human. I will not  
hurt England or Germany... a patriot is so  
much the less patriot if he is a luke-warm  
humanitarian.*

*(Young India, 16-3-1921, Pg-81)*

*Our nationalism can be of no peril to other  
nations in as much as we will exploit none,  
just as we will allow none to exploit us.*

*(Young India, 16-4-1931, Pg 79)*

Our first prime minister and the architect of the nation Jawaharlal Nehru had a magnificent command over the English language. His patriotic and nationalistic ideals are enshrined in his books like *The Discovery of India*, *Glimpses of World History* and his autobiography *Towards Freedom*.

The ideals of Indian struggle for independence and the patriotic zeal of the people are beautifully highlighted in K.S. Venkataramni's novels like *Murugan*, *The Tiller*, published in 1927 and *Kandan*, *The Patriot* published in 1932. Raja Rao in his famous novel *Kanthapura*, has depicted the non-violent mass movement against the British rule which was ruthlessly crushed by the British army. It is the saga of the brave Indian villagers who sacrificed everything for their country's liberation is narrated in the form of a *Sthalapurana* by the village grand mother Achakka.

*While policemen beat the crowd this side  
and that side and groans and moans and  
cries and shouts and coughs and oaths and  
kicks are heard, while there is heard  
'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai....*

(Kanthapura)

The speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda were electrifying the youth of the nation with the current of patriotism and humanism. He exhorted the Indians to be bold, brave, courageous and to proudly proclaim:

*I am an Indian – every Indian is my brother...  
The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute  
Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian  
is my brother... The soil of India is my  
highest heaven, the welfare of India is my  
highest, welfare. O Goddess of strength ....  
make me a Man.*

(Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda  
Vol.-IV, pg. 480)

Kazi Nazrul Islam, the most renowned and powerful poet of Bengal was composing poems which may be compared to the eruptions of Volcanic lava. His poem *Bidrohi (rebel)* struck terror at the hearts of the British rulers. The fire and fervour of the original masterpiece can never be recreated in translation but an attempt has been made by Kabir Choudhry:

*Say Valient,  
Say high and erect is my head...  
Piercing the earth and the heavens  
Pushing through Almighty's sacred seat have  
I risen  
I, the perennial wonder of mother earth!  
I am the rebel eternal....*

(Bidrohi: Translated by Kabir Choudhry)

In his poem *A Prisoner in Port Blair* Nazrul Islam describes the fate of the revolutionaries who were sentenced to *Kalapani* or oversea transportation in the notorious Cellular Jail in Andaman and Nicobar Island.

*Across seven oceans and thirteen rivers lie  
ruthless Andamans!  
Where a lovely lily looks pale at the touch of  
a thorny hunter  
Where a lotus with a hundred petal is torn  
into a thousand pieces by the stroke of a  
tyrant  
Where there are people paid to tear off the  
strings of the lyres...*

*From there comes the message of liberation  
through the wireless sitar.*

(Translation by Abdul Hakim)

The Baul singers who were the traditional folk singers of Bengal fearlessly sang against the British tyranny. They immortalized the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and the Santhal Rebellion of 1855 led by Birsa Munda in their songs, the sacrifice of Khudiram Bose, the youngest revolutionary to kiss the gallows was passionately narrated by the Baul singers. The song in which Khudiram bids the last farewell to his mother and his wish to be reborn again to fight for the country's liberty brings tears to the eyes of millions of listeners even today.

## Remarking An Analisation

*O mother bid me farewell now, for I will come  
back again*

*I will smilingly kiss the gallows and the  
Indians will see me wearing the rope for  
hanging.*

(Ekbar biday dao ma: self translated)

### Objective of the Study

The objective of this paper is to arouse the feelings of patriotism and the spirit of national unity among the Indians in the backdrop of the terrorist attack in Pulwama and threat of imminent war with Pakistan. It aims to instill courage, herosim and the zeal to sacrifice for the nation in particular and the entire humanity at large. It tries to glean the best treasures of the patriotic literature of English and Bangla and thereby enrich the canon of literature through translation.

### Review of Literature

Very few works have been published in English about the patriotic literature in English and Bangla languages. There is a journal article on Nationalism Colonialism and Indian English Literature by P.P. Ravendran in volume no. 39 of the journal Indian Literature. There are books on the patriotic writings of M.K. Gandhi by Richard Attinborough and others but a complete and detailed work on all the patriotic writers in English and Bangla languages is still awaited.

### Conclusion

Thus the Indian English and Bangla writers played a very important role in arousing the country from its deep slumber. Nationalist and patriotic strains were audible in all the vernacular India languages, while Munshi Premchand was composing the *Soghe Vatan* in Hindi Sharat Chandra Chatterjee *Pather Dabi* a novel on the theme of revolution. It was instantly banned by the British and all its copies were seized by the police. The burning spirit of freedom from foreign slavery, the bloody struggle against British exploitation, the sufferings of the rebels, the agony and pain of police torture, imprisonment, transportation and death sentence are recorded in the works of the patriotic writers. Reading their works through translation becomes all the more important as the country is torn apart by caste distinctions, religious hatred, linguistic bickerings and the threat of terrorist attacks and insurgent activities by Pakistan.

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