

Popular Bengali Novel: Theoretical Aspects and Relevance

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Abstract

About popularity, we cherish some primary misconceptions related to market. Like the word 'commercial', there is another current word 'cheap popularity', when someone purchases something with self-earned money, it reflects the difference of taste, mentality and environment, depicting a similarity within that group. Thus popularity is neither very easy nor inevitably cheap. Books, especially 'novels', being the object of such popularity, invites discussion.

Qualitative difference between popular and serious literature is reflected in the thought of Bankimchandra, along with the socio-economic condition related to this. From the 'Popular Literature of Bengal' (1870) to 'Battala Sahitya', popularity gained weight.

Our discussion aimed at formulating a generic idea of 'popular novel' from a 'popular literature' in the twentieth century Bengali literature; in the next phase the publication of the magazine 'Desh' (20th November, 1933) with commercial strategy. There, the assimilation of intellectualism and publication – generic evolution of popular novels and different theoretical schools will be discussed.

Keywords: Popular Culture, Popular Literature, Pulp Fiction, Dime Novel, Market, Publication, Culture Industry, Best Seller, People

Introduction

"I used to write but entertaining people is not the religion of my pen, so people have a greater share of the ink in the colors that they always have. There are a lot of rumors about me; eventually, words are not beneficial, nor even pleasant."

Rabindranath wrote this at the beginning of his short story 'Bostami'. People become entertained when something amuses them. Needless to say, literature became popular with the amuse quality of this genre. In the nineteenth century, Bengali literature appeared with various elements of amusement. Literature was grabbed by the chapbooks (choti boi, in local parlance). It is only in this century that a new set of novels appears, with Sketch and experiments, which was institutionalized in the hands of Bankimchandra. In the era of Bengali poetry and drama, the novel itself became a popular genre. Readers of 'Banga Darshan' started reading the series of Bengali novels.

On the other hand, besides these unique creations of Bankim, there were Damodar Mukhopadhyay's 'Mrinmayee' (sequel of Bankimchandra's 'Kapalkundala'), 'Nawab-Nandini' and the mystery of Panchakari Dey or the story like 'Hemlata-Ratikanta'.

According to which, Bankim wrote, "A popular literature for Bengal" (1870 AD). In "Battala Literature", it has the prominence of popularity. Dimensional distinctions were made between popular literature and serious literature. The word 'popularity' is associated with the word 'cheap' or 'marketable'. But no one was particularly worried about its time and socio-economic perspective.

'Popular Novels' - The exact origin of this phrase cannot be stated at any particular date. However, its establishment depends on establishing the company, commercialization and publishing as a profitable company. That is, "novels designed to be sold to those readers with being informed of the needs of a particular readership can be called popular or 'popular' novel."¹

But there are also variations and differences. In many cases, the novel has gained popularity without any specific project or aim. The common people have bought and read it with their share of income.

When reviewing the word 'popular' or 'popular' in a contextual connection, the central unit that can be found is 'Mass' or 'Mob' or 'Throng'.



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That is, which is the favorite of the people, has become popular, thus it can be called 'Popular Literature'. Before understanding the conceptual context of this popular literature, it is necessary to first clarify that we refer to the Mass or the people as the 'unit' of 'Popularity'. Thus, if one considers popular literature as folklore, then it should be considered as a great mistake. 'Popular literature' is completely different from the genre what we refer to as folk literature. In either case, mass or people are one of the most important things, but in principle they are different.

The 'Popular Novel' is considered a unique terminology in the world of Literary Terms, "A loose term of novel which has wide readership, it often carries slightly pejorative connotations. which suggest a middle or low-brow 'audience' and imply that such a novel may not possess much literary merit."²

Now the question may arise, why is the popular novel took place as a terminology from popular literature? It can be said that the novel in Bengali literature is an art form created in the nineteenth century where the complexities of the time have sought to give the artist the structural appearance of this kind. The thrill of story-telling in prose or story-telling is the thrill of an adventure or an exciting and interesting gesture, which is somehow the result of media and is difficult to express in another genre. Therefore, from the point of 'Popularity', the novel also has a distinct terminological significance. That is, the popular novel is a 'literary group' and popularity is a 'social situation'. There is a particular section of society that has some demands from the novel. It is based on their interests, education, economic affordability, social status - the feeling of that demand is created. The popular novelist is trying to understand, who is their 'target audience'? Of course the language he writes has a larger population or that speaking social person. The character-building effort of the novel is seen in terms of their values and moral standing. Above all, the pulse of the society is well understood by a popular novelist.

So, thinking of the 'average' mentality of the 'public' there is a " 'Fun, feisty, fast reads' for 'the reader on the go' "³-type novel which is considered to the special section 'popular novel' undoubtedly. This kind of novel can be called, "Popular narratives play a vital role in mediating social change, informing their audience of new currents and allowing the reader to insert him-or herself into new scenarios in a way that can be related to her or his own experience. Its engagement in the present, in now-time, means that the political nature of popular fiction is never in doubt."⁴

But this is not the end, despite all the popular material being gathered, the reader did not accept the novel. Once again, the novel, which is not popular in material harmony, has also been added to the 'best seller' list; such a remark is not rare.

The market, marketing strategies, advertising and various economic trends are active behind the popularity of literature. All these things collectively govern the notion of popularity. Theme of the novel,

mindset of the society and marketing strategies - when these three areas come together in a positive role; then that novel become popular. It may not be a 'popular novel' in terms of meaning, but the popularity of such a novel is indisputable.

It is not possible to make such a clear division between the popular novel and the pure novel. But the idea of 'popularity' in the novel has come from a certain decade. This is because the thought behind the idea of bringing the literary field from the field of education to market is all about book business of the native Bengalee. The linkage of this trade with the book market, which is central to the literature of Battala, is trivial.

First, the book business of Battala was not an addendum to that sense.

Second, print-publishing-advertising has never become so clearly a part of public life. They will begin to consciously participate in the book business in the context of the twentieth century.

We want to identify a particular area of Bengali book-industry from the thirties of twentieth century. We also wanted to discuss the context of the popularity of those novels wrote on or after that time mentioned here. Before going into this context in the thirties, an analysis of the outline before thirties prior popularity from Bankim's novel, is very important.

The novel is called 'a middle class genre'⁵, remembering the indisputable contribution of 'The reading public' to the introduction of the novel in colonial India and in critic's words, "... respectable forms of literature and scholarship, but it was not, strictly speaking, a popular literary form."⁶ That is, no sense of popularity has been active in the world of novel until that time.

Although the emergence of Sharatchandra in the twentieth century and the emergence as a first 'full-time writer', he made a point of popularity, but his theoretical presentation was not there yet. In the post-Kollal period, Vibhutibhushan is a radical direction in Bandyopadhyay's novel 'Pather Panchali' (1929 AD).

In the thirties, America saw the Great Depression, unemployment, the leaders' rigidity and the daily plight of people. In this frustrating situation of people, 'Pulp Fiction' is gaining popularity. The term 'pulp fiction' comes from 'pulpwood'. In the Oxford Dictionary, which means 'soft mass of wood fibers, used for making paper' - that is, inexpensive, yellow paper, mystery printed in grained paper, adventure, story of western cowboy. The so-called 'civilized' population of America that created the uprising; its predecessor is 'Dime novel'. This 'dime novel' originated in the nineteenth century. In general, this resurgence in America's socioeconomic context was inescapable. An image like Robinhood had become necessary to rid them of that cruel reality.

Probably, Bengal has an integral connection with this American context. In the thirties, when American 'Dime Novel' or 'Pulpwood Fiction' was resurfaced in the United States, it penetrated into Bengali literature. 'Series literature' enters the market of Bengali books; through Sashadhar Dutta's 'Dasyu Mohan'. Soon an idea of popularity came into being in the publishing world of Bengali books. 'Dasyu Mohan'

- type series of literature immediately started popping up Saratchandra in popularity!

The series brings the revolution in book business, through sexuality, colorful cover and attractiveness, which profound effect hit the 'mere' artistry and the strategy of conscious popularity was added to the novel.

The first business magazine 'Desh' was published on 26 November of 1933. From that period division appeared among the Bengali middle class readers. On the one hand there was a flow Dhurjotiprasad's 'Antoshila' and on the other the genre of anointing 'Desh'. It was built in 1930 to 1940 decades at a rapid pace. In fact, before the 'Desh' magazine, not only 'Bharatvarsha', 'Bichitra', 'Pravasi' (Rabindranath's 'Shesher Kobita'), but also 'Bangadarshan' have published many novels that have gained popularity. Significantly, in the tradition of world music, 'popular music' is suggested at this time instead of classical music. The unprecedented global engagement is the beginning of our proposal. But in the tumultuous thirties, the inevitability of a popular novel in the face of the trauma of society and the state, above all, a business project - appeared in the 'Desh'. This magazine introduces a strange 'popular sophisticate culture' in the middle class Bengali drawing room of interest. Naturally, the evolution of popular novels from 1930 to 1970 will be accompanied by a broad historical timeline, as well as decades-long trends and literature reviews. In the same way, we can note its proposals in the series of events after thirties, as well as the events associated with the novel in the post-independence phase.

First, the post-independence population growth and the rise of the governmental activities in education. As a result, there is a tendency to create ethical popular novels for the first or second generation educated readers under the education system.

Second, the paper crisis in the post-World War II India. The world of publishing, including the 'Dew Part', has ushered in a new tradition. And his upbringing shows an attempt to commercialize the novel as part of popular literature.

Third, exploring the editor's minimalist charm for luxury women in the indoor mall with a working woman.

Fourth, the regular annual publishing of 'Festival' number, which is actually called 'Sharadiya' number of a magazine.

Fifth, the development and establishment of the film world in the fifties also has a tendency to create popular genre novels. The emergence of some talented actor actresses is able to satisfy the desire in the film rather than in the literature.

The creation of popular novels meant to provide this with material. The success of Shankar's 'Chowrangji', 'Seemabodha', 'Jana Aranya' has been historicized by Bimal Mitra's 'Saheb Bibi Golam', 'Kori Diye Killam'. Even Tarashankar's novel has been transformed into a screenplay with the creation of 'Satapadi', 'Bicharak', 'Bipasha' in the film world. So don't hesitate to say,

"For the cinematic story, the direct evidence of sitting in front of real-time heroes of the prominent film world also fits into the secrets of many popular fiction creators."⁷

That is, with the social, cultural, economic and literary realm of West Bengal, the politics of the publishing world, marketing strategies all determine the genre and dynamics of popular novels.

The popular novel 'Projapati' was published by Samaresh Basu. In seventies, eighties and nineties of twentieth century some novels have become very popular though they have classical genre, such as 'Sei Somoy', 'Purba Pashchimi' by Sunil Gangopadhyay; 'Ghunpoka', 'Jau Pakhi', 'Durbin' by Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay; 'Aleek Manisha', 'Mayamridanga' by Syed Mustafa Siraj; 'Nilkantho Pakhir Khone' by Atin Bandyopadhyay; 'Tistaparer Britantto' by Debesh Roy; 'Keyapatar Nouka' by Prafulla Roy. From then onwards the genre of popularity began to consciously change its mind. In the Bengali publishing world, such a huge amount of commercialization, competition increased, that the popularity of populism began to increase with increasing pressure. In this 1967 Narayan Debnath started to collaborate with another popularly known in the series, Sawapankumar. The drawings of Narayan Debnath and the publishing house Dev Sahitya Kutir, popularly known in the series. All great action scenes, including the new cover and pictures, stir the reader in awe. Deepak Chatterjee of Swapnakumar witnesses a fascinating experience in the memoir of the popular novelists who grew up in the fifties to eighties. The diverse crime cycle of the Bengali daily in the fifties and sixties made the Bengali readers exciting, entertaining attitude towards literature. In the previous decades, the reader's understanding of literature with preconceptions was completely divided into two categories. The genre of populism, that is, the genre of popularization, has become increasingly main stream and the field of intellectual practice continues to fall behind.

Easily 'Breezy Novel', 'Chick lit', 'Crick lit', 'Neo-Mythological', 'Science Fiction' or 'Graphic Novel' - which is clinging in popular literature, especially the 'Popular Novel', is infiltrates into the Bengali popular genre. The names of the novels that came up in the thirties of the twentieth century reached the core of popularity through their style of writing. All of those novels have been 'Best Sellers' at some point, and some novels are unique in quality. Some are reminiscent of one of his novels, while on the other hand many of the reputable authors are buying autographs. That is, the author's name is in some cases a 'brand!' Gajendrakumar Mitra, Ashapurala Devi, Jarasandha, Bimal Mitra, Narendranath Mitra, Pratibha Bose, Ramapada Chowdhury, Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay - an example of popularity. On the other hand, Ashutosh Mukhopadhyay, Phalguni Mukherjee, Nimai Bhattacharya, Shaktipada Rajguru, Shankar are other popular figures. The main criteria are sex, prohibited content, advertising, cinematography, award-winning, textbook inclusion criteria.

So first of all, in the popular literary sense, this concept can be disputed. For an example, Maxim Gorky's 'Mother' is the best-selling novel yet. On the other hand Gabriel Garcia Marx's 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' is equally popular and classy. Bengali literature also combines this classical genre and popularity. About the populism of novel Pabitra Sarkar said,

"The narrative structure is an important element in the novel, and the idea of 'what the story stands for' to the general reader ultimately determines the novel's popularity."⁸

After all, there is no simplified formula. Society, economy, public interest (demand creates public interest or public interest creates demand? that is also a big question), organizations, debates, celebrity personalities can bring popularity to any literature. But at the same time, it is up to the author to decide whether it will be absorbed in the womb of epoch or not. That is why 'Chowrangji', which is published in 1962, has printed the 111th copy up to 2012. The film 'Shajahan Regency' has been made in the current year 2019, despite the remarkable construction of Pinaki Bhushan Mukherjee's 'Chowrangji' in 1968.

Cinema is bringing people back to classics. Various dimension of the popularity is being created. The genre of Bengali popular novels is becoming increasingly relevant in the institutional field. In fact, from a branch of the nineteenth century to the continuation of the popular novel in the print media of the 21st century, the genre of Bengali novel now constitutes the main direction of the novel.

Aim of the Study

It's a common practice that we are much more into those novels that deal political, historical aspects of the society, or with impressive detective stories or novels based on regional prospects and the list continues. But the one which is completely different, less explored and remained incognito is 'Popular Novel'. In fact, the different types genre mentioned above can be one type of popular novel but the concept regarding a particular type concerning 'popular novel' is not crystal clear. Actually, the very existence of this term in thirties of twentieth century makes the former argument much more stronger. Nonetheless, this term and the genre itself was accepted later, though providing no theoretical basis. This paper is about a short but concrete briefing about the theoretical aspects and relevance of popular novels

Conclusion

To conclude it has been observed throughout the decades that advertisement has played a significant role in the advancement and progress of the popular novel. Moreover, the same is

noticed unequivocally in the field of cinemas and comic series. So, the question arises now, is it the publishing houses who get to decide the taste appetite of the readers or is it the demands of those readers which decides the taste of the novel. Actually these two factors reveals an nascent relationship of the novel.

To put an end to it, we must conceive popular novel as an indistinguishable part of the literary values along with the contemporary sociological aspects.

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