

Modern Resistance Poetry in Bangla: A Critical Review

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Abstract: Thanks to a bunch of massive movements in the Bangla-speaking region of the Asian sub-continent, i.e. Bangladesh and the Paschim Bangla of India, modern Bangla literature of this region has been enriched with resistance poetry. Resistance literature is the literature of organized resistance movements and national liberation struggles. Very few nations had to fight for rights and liberation, and have very rich resistance literature. There were several resistance movements in this region in the last century. The Liberation War of Bangladesh was the biggest of them and triggered the most remarkable resistance literature, a large number of which is poetry. This movement was so immense both in magnitude and emotional impact that it has been motivating new literature till today. Movements namely the Swadeshi Andolon, the Tebhaga Andolon, the Language Movement and the Movement of the 80's played no less role in inspiring poetic resistance. This paper critically reviews the major parts of the entire arena of modern resistance poetry written in Bangla in the said Bangla-speaking region. The poetry of resistance that centers the mentioned events has different political and emotional orientations. Poets have their own beliefs and ideologies that are reflected in their creations very clearly. This paper accommodates all possible orientations and beliefs.

Keywords: Resistance, modern, literature, poetry, Bangla, protest

1. Introduction

“Resist much, obey little” (Whitman, n. d.). We have to resist, even though resistance is not expected to bring any overnight changes in the society. Resistance, however, is expected to be there to stop or at least irritate the rise of tyranny. In the world canvas, the strokes of resistance came up in the forms of processions and poems, fights and fantasies. Resistance through poetic expressions took place in many instances the world over. Bangla poetry has been bestowed with poems that can very well be termed as “modern” and having “resistance” nature. How far modern Bangalee poets contributed to the accumulated resistance against oppressions and irregularities that took place in the region from time to time is a pertinent question. Findings say, modern Bengalee poets have always been there with their rhetoric weapons. They have always fought against tyrannical rule and social nuisance. They have shaped up the Bangalee taste and temperament. We may need to explore the treasure to know more about the roles of modern Bangla poetry in the movements.

2. Resistance Literature Defined

Resistance literature is the chapter of literary works that are created in a specific geographical area in a historic moment as an accumulated movement or struggle of liberation. Barbara

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Harlow, a scholar on resistance literature clarified the definition of resistance literature in an interview:

I actually think that my definition of resistance literature is that it is a very site and history specific literature. Resistance literature was written in the context of organized resistance movements and national liberation struggles. There are no more national liberation struggles. There are no more organized resistance movements. There is no more resistance literature. There are other kinds of literature, just as there are other kinds of struggles. But that one is over, as a literature it is closed. (Harlow, 1998)

Modern Bangla poetry of resistance is exactly so - “history” and “site” specific and now closed. The history is the history of organized resistance movements such as the Swadeshi Andolon, the Tevaga Andolon the Language Movement, the Bangladesh Liberation War and the Mass Movement of 80s and the site is the Bangla-speaking region consisting of Bangladesh and Poshchim Bangla of India. There are no more significant movements in the region and there is no more significant creation of resistance literature.

3. Modern Bangla Poetry: the scope of the Study

The concept of modern poetry that emerged during the early years of the 20th century is a genre of poetry that represents the modern time growing out of poetic tradition. Wallace Stevens in his poem *Of Modern Poetry* gives precise definition of modern poetry. He says modern poetry ‘has to be living, to learn the speech of the place’. He again says, ‘It has to face the men of the time and to meet the women of the time.’ Modern poetry, according to Steven, ‘has to think about war’ and ‘it has to find what will suffice.’ Modern poetry will ‘construct a new stage’ he added. (Stevens, 1942)

Matt Shedd has a generalization on the Modernist poets. He said:

“Modernist poets, broadly defined, have their fairshare of apocalyptic views concerning modernity, i.e. T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* Ezra Pound’s *Hugh Sawlyn Mawberry*, and W.B. Yeats *Second Coming*.” (Shedd, 2011)

There is every possibility of messing up between modern and post-modern poetry. How does modern poetry differ from the postmodern? According to Amit Bhattacharya postmodernism has “a liberation from the dogmas of authority – the authority of the self, of the text, and of the narrative (Bhattacharya, 2011). Postmodern poetry will have intense narratives, as Jerom McGann termed the postmodern poetry as emerging “during the past twenty years” and being “more narrativized” than the Language Poetry, which is a chapter of postmodern poetry (McGann, 1991).

Basu (1963) defines modern poetry. He says that, modern Bangla poetry is not a thing that can be identified easily by a single sign and Bangla poems can be about rebellion, resistance, doubt, tiredness, exploration etc. He specified some characteristics of modern Bangla poetry as the “emergence of wonderment, life’s happiness, universally stanch feelings, hope, despair and so on (Basu, 1963).

To draw an outline between Modern and Post-modern Bangla poetry is not an easy task. Hungryalist Movementv poets such as Malay Roychoudhury, Samir Roychoudhury, Shakti

Chattopadhyay and Debi Roy break the tradition of poetic concept and adopt an avant-garde style. If we label Jibanananda Das as a modern poet, Hungryalist poets can, then, be stickered as post-modern.

4. Resistance Poetry in the Colonial Period

The most significant movement of the colonial period was the Swadeshi Andolon that was aimed at drumming up against decision of splitting Bengal into pieces. Rabindranath Tagore, as a pivotal figure of the Swadeshi Andolon, has written a bunch of resistance verses to support the agitation. The verses sung as patriotic songs then and now, are intensely nationalistic and soberly resistant in nature. Rabindranath, like other Swadeshis, opposed the idea of splitting Bengal into pieces in 1905. His verses contributed in revoking the decision of splitting the Bengal in 1911. In one of the verses the poet suggests us to struggle on our own for the country, if nobody is there to accompany:

“If they answer not to thy call walk alone,
If they are afraid and cower mutely facing the wall,
O thou of evil luck,
Open thy mind and speak out alone” (Tagore, n.d.)

In another verse he directly addresses the country in the tone of a dedicated son of the soil and expresses his patriotism to arouse the same feeling among the countrymen to strengthen the movement:

O mother, I’ve eaten and taken much out of your hands -
But, I don’t know what I’ve given you!
My life is an wastage in farce,
I spent my life indoors -
You gave me powers in vain (Tagore, 2014, p.244)

Tagore encourages the fellow countrymen to be free of fears of predicted hazards. He uses motivational tone in the first person in this verse to empower the people:

I won’t be afraid.
O my brothers, I won’t die before death every day.
To row the boat, strong winds will face,
So I won’t drop the row and cry (Tagore, 2014 p. 246)

In the resistance verses of the Swadeshi Movement Rabindranath frequently used the words “mother” to mean the country and ‘brother” to mean the fellow countrymen. He used the tone of appeals to the countrymen for a move for the country. He says:

We have gathered at mother’s call.
How long do brothers, the sons of a same home, stay apart (Tagore, 2014, p. 247)

Rajanikanta Sen, a lyricist and poet of the Swadeshi Andolon, has a popular verse. The song used to be sung here and there at the time and inspired the movement (Ahmed, 2015).

O brother, accept with respect the coarse cloth given by the mother
As the poor mother has no better (Ahmed, 2015)

Probably the most daunting of all the resistance poems that ever appeared in Bangla literature is *Bidrohi* (The Rebel) by Kazi Nazrul Islam. Written in 1920 in the backdrop of colonial oppression, the poem is a masterpiece of resistance. In the poem we see a vigorously powerful protest against the then military rulers. This is the very poem that gave Nazrul a title “Rebel Poet” and he appeared as a scary force against the British colonialism in India. While analyzing the essence of the poem, Syed Manzoorul Islam termed Nazrul as a Swadeshi. He mentioned-

The *Bidrohi* of Nazrul's poem is the eternal crusader against injustice, falsehood and oppression: he is the defender of the poor and the powerless, of the marginalized masses of rural Bengal/India. And on the level of action, the *Bidrohi* is a Swadeshi -- a patriot -- fighting to end the British Raj. (Islam, S.M. 2010).

A soldier in his early life, Nazrul shows his motivationally commanding power in this poem. He is calling for a revolution powered of the vigorous and valiant youth. He says, the youth should feel that they have power to resist, power to be destructive to the evil, power to make changes in the society. Nazrul wants the valiant fighter to be so courageous and proud that even the mighty Himalayas bow down to him. He wants the hero to have guts to say and feel,

“I am the cruel axe of Parsurama
I shall kill warriors
And bring peace and harmony in the universe!
I shall uproot this miserable earth effortlessly and with ease,
And create a new universe of joy and peace” (Islam, n.d.)

The poet wants the young hero to be “Orpheus’s flute” and “bring earth-quakes on this world”. Nazrul’s valiant youth is “insane”. The youth would “tear all bonds, all rules and regulations” and he should not “care for any laws”. The youth is like “Chengis” and “don't bow to anyone else” other than himself. The rebel will stop only “When the cry of the oppressed will no more resonate in the air.” (Islam, n.d.).

Here is all-powerful ‘I’ as Whitman has in his *Song of Myself*. (Whitman, 1996). However Nazrul revolts against the rule and Whitman celebrates the human body. Nazrul’s “I” is so daring and scary while Whitman’s “I” is sober and soothing.

In the poem *Karar Oi Louhokopat* (That Iron Gate of the Prison) the poet again motivates the youth to show their vigor to break everything that stops them or hypnotize them. He says:

Break that iron gate of the prison,
And rob that blood-stained chain,
And that dead alter stone,
Hey youth the stormy. (Islam, 1982, p. 114)

He wants the youth to break the iron gate of the prison that held them, the blood-stained chains that captivate them and the stones of the alters that hypnotize them. The poet expects the youth to blow their vicious flutes and hoist their flags of destruction to break everything and make the motherland free. Nazrul’s expressions in these two poems remind us of Walt Whitmans following lines from the poem *Pioneers ! O Pioneers*:

“O you youths, western youths,
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,

Plain I see you, western youths, see you tramping with the foremost,
Pioneers! O pioneers!” (Whitman, 2002, p. 192)

Whitman commands the youth to gather their weapons and proceed because the future generations depend on them to pave the way. The poet praises the courage of the young men who played key role in settling the war of the western part of America. Here Whitman is supporting the popular American phrase “Go West, young man” (Greely, 1865) popularized by Horace Greeley, the American author and newspaper editor, that encourages the American expansion towards the west. Nazrul’s expectations from the youth are of the same kind as those of Whitman and Horace Greeley. In Nazrul’s *Ogrothik* (The Pioneers) we have the same tone like *Pioneers ! O Pioneers* by Whitman. In *Ogrothik* Nazrul says,

Hit with your sharpened arrows divine!
Where are your hammers ?
Where are your crowbars?
O pioneer soldiers !
March fast. (Islam, 2017, p 315).

In *Pioneers ! O Pioneers* Whitman inspires the pioneers to have the same scary weapons to fight for the country:

“COME my tan-faced children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
Pioneers! O pioneers!” (Whitman, 2002. p.192)

5. The Tevaga Andolon and Marxist Ideology in Bangla Poetry

Known as an ambassador of Marxism, Sukanta Bhattacharya articulates the demand of the Tevaga Andolon in a number of poems. The movement was initiated to save the peasants from the tyranny of the Jamindars and strengthen their (peasants) rights on the crops they grow. Sukanta, being the peasants’ side, in *Charampatra* (The Ultimatum) says, numerous peasants joined him to serve an ultimatum “written in blood” to the oppressors and the Ultimatum mentions that they “want to be free now and here”. The poet, on behalf of the working class, is threatening the oppressors saying that they are no longer ready to obey their tyrannical rule (Bhattacharya, (2004, p.288). Bhattacharya attacks the elite in the poem *Chil* (The Kite). He compares a dead kite with a fallen ruler whom everyone was once scared of. The kite is now found dead on the street and all the little creatures are free to move and everyone is safe to carry food. This is how he criticizes the oppressions of reckless rulers who used to deprive the poor (Bhattacharya, 2004, p.35) The way Bhattacharya criticizes the kite-like bigness of the predators has a similarity with Auden’s depiction of Adolf Hitler in *Epitaph on a Tyrant*. About Hitler he says, “Perfection, of a kind, was what he was after”. The oppressor was “greatly interested in armies and fleets” (Auden, 1940). Sukanta resists oppression against the poor farmers in the poem *Convoy*. According to him, there is and there was oppression against the poor farmers. He links-up the convoy of his time with that of the past. The tyrants used to deploy convoys “Plying the roads of the time with smoking cannons raised”. The past rulers used to rule “Defying the people who need to protect the crops”. Bhattacharya can clearly see that the convoy of the oppressed peasants of history are “coming forward crossing the forests, the hills, the seas and the time” to protest against the repression (Bhattacharya, 2004, p.51) Here Sukanto has the tone of P.

B. Shelley as the later in *Song to the Men of England* takes the farmers' side who "plough for the lords" and the lords "lay" them "low". He protests the situation when "the rich robes" on the farmers (Shelley, 2002, p.316)

Bishnu Dey, another Marxist poet, in his poem *Shat Bhai Champa* "expresses the desire for national freedom, its supreme urgency and the selfless sufferings" of the freedom-fighters (Sen, 1966). "*Jol Dao (Water my Roots)* was written on the background of growing problems of homeless refugees from East Pakistan". It also presents "communal conflicts", "recurrent misdeeds and blunders of the ruling power and administration" (Sen, 1966). In the poem *Moubhog* the poet sympathizes with the peasants who were at the center of the Tevaga Movement. At the same time he promotes liberal view of religion. (Dey, 2014, P.50) In his *Ghorshouar* (Horse Rider) he is looking for the valiant ones who will make the colonized India free from British rule. He inspires the hero by referring to the historic heroism to "break the timid door whimsically" and come forward to free India. He asks:

Where are you, the Horse Rider, the Conqueror?
Hold your spears high,
Why are you afraid ?
Why do you forget the courage of the heros ? (Dey, 2014, P.14)

Salil Chowdhury's verses inspired the Tevaga Andolon in tunes. His lines were sung throughout Bengal to gear up the movement. In his verses he calls the peasants to get united to save their basic necessity, their rights on the paddy they grow. He says:

Come on protect your paddy
Sharpen your sickles.
We risk our lives,
We risk our dignity,
We shall no longer forgo the paddy.
Our paddy harvested in blood is our soul. (Chowdhury S. as sited in Rozario, 2009)

6. Poetry of the Language Movement

The unique event that sowed the seeds of freedom of Bangladesh decades before the War is the Language Movement of 1952. The Language Movement poetry has enriched the Bangla literature treasure with pearls and jewels. In the poem *I am not Here to Cry, I am Here to Demand Execution*, known as the first poem of the Language Movement, Mahbub Ul Alam Chowdhury says-

Under the Krishnachura that faces the sky
Innumerable stains of blood are glowing
Like the sparks of fire,
But I am not here to cry. (Chowdhury, 2016, p. 24)

Then he adds, he has the demand of execution of "those who killed innumerable brothers and sisters without any rationale." The poet is vindictive, not mournful. His arrival at the bloody spot is not for crying. The demand is for a judgment and that has to be by "hanging" and nothing else. Afterwards, Bangalees habitually started uttering "Fashi Chai" as part of protests against all kinds of oppressions. In protest of destroying the Shahid Minar by Pakistani oppressors, Alauddin Al Azad wrote the poem *Smritistomvo* (The Monument) that was published in the

collection of Language Movement works called *Ekushey February* edited by Hasan Hafizur Rahman. The poet is not scared even though “They have broken the brick-built monument”. He asks his comrades, “But why afraid, my friends?” and inspires them, “Look, we, as many as four crore families are standing still. (Azad, A. A., 1987, P.25) This inspiration is like Shelley’s “Ye are many - they are few” in *The Mask of Anarchy*. (Shelley, 2002, P.316)

Hasan Hafizur Rahman in *Omor Ekushey* (The Immortal Twenty First of February) is deeply sad to recall the names of the martyrs of the Language Movement. He has new expressions of sadness:

Salam, Rafiquddin, Zabbar – the sad bunch of names;
This line of names now tears the heart like spears;
Before we are ready to part. (Rahman, H. H., 2017, p.39)

Sikandar Abu Jafar considers the Shahid Minar as an “accumulated protest that has suddenly been frozen to build a monument” that he found in the last turning of the road of the History in his poem called *Ekushey February*. (Zafor, 2017, p.101) Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury wrote the Shahid Day song *Can I let go the twenty first of February*, which was published in the very first collection of literary works of the Language Movement called *Ekushey Februray*, edited by Hasan Hafizur Rahman. Treated like a second national anthem of Bangladesh, the song lyric symbolizes the true Bengali feelings of the sacrifice of the language movement. Bangalees will never forget the Shahid Day, the day when protesters were killed for demanding the right for speaking in Bangla, the mother tongue, and that is what is the essence of the verses. (Chowdhury, 2016, p.44)

Abu Zafar Obaidullah in his poem *Kono Ek Makey* (To Some Mother) tells the story of a martyr whose mother finds a letter in his pocket and cries while reading that after his death. The son, obsessed with the affection of a typical Bangalee mother, in his letter asks his mother if it is possible to allow them abolish Bangla as a language:

O Mother, they say,
They will snatch the words of all,
And will not allow me lie on your lap
And listen to you telling stories.
How is it possible, mother? (Obaidullah, 2016, p.45)

Pakistani rulers finally gave in to the demand and Bangla was in place. The 21st of February, the Shahid Day is International Mother Language Day now.

7. Poetry Centering Bangladesh Liberation

The War of Bangladesh Liberation was the most emotional event for Bangladesh, which is why the biggest collection of Bangla resistance poetry belongs to this subject. As a result of the sentiment, the creations were also the most spontaneous. In the poem *Asader Shirt* (Asad’s Shirt) Shamsur Rahman exaggerates the blood-stained shirt of Asad, a student activist, whose death during the movement of 1969 triggered a great protest against the military rule. He eulogizes the shirt and says that the shirt-

...leaving the shadow of the Dalim tree
 And mother's sunny yard
 Is now flying in the big streets of the city. (Rahman, 2018, p.70)

The implied significance of the blood-stained shirt is no less glorified than a flag at the time when even the national flag of Bangladesh did not come to existence. *Tomakey Paoar Jonno Hey Swadhinata* (For the Sake of Having You, O Freedom) is a journal of the sacrifices that Bangalees made to achieve the Freedom. Shamsur Rahman personifies freedom and asks numerous questions to him. He asks how many things more they shall have to lose to achieve freedom of Bangladesh. The poet laments:

For the sake of having you, O Freedom !
 How many times more shall we float in the Ganges of blood?
 How many times more shall we undergo devastating burns? (Rahman, 2018, p.70)

The poet glorifies the sacrifice of the people of Bangladesh as Whitman did in the poem *To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire*. Whitman asks, "Did we think victory great?" and he himself answers in the affirmative and says,

"So it is—but now it seems to me,
 when it cannot be help'd
 that defeat is great." (Whitman, 2002, p.311)

To glorify the sacrifice of the revolutionaries he adds, "that death and dismay are great". The fact that freedom is hard-earned has been depicted here by both the poets. Shamsur Rahman ends the poem with a bold demand: "You have to come in this Bangal, O freedom !" Rahman's craving for freedom is like Lord Byron's desire for the freedom of *The Isles of Greece*. He "dream'd that Greece might still be free". He is sad for the martyrs and for "the heroic bosom" that beats no more and optimistic at the same time that the struggle can bring it. (Byron, 1996. P.629).

In the poem *Guerrilla* Shamsur Rahman, out of curiosity and affection, asks the guerilla fighters, "What do you look like?". The poet never saw the guerilla fighters, but he is worried about them as the enemy "spies and soldiers are wandering in search of the guerilla fighters". Some of the guerrillas are his "brothers" and some of them are "sons" and all of them are "grief-relievers".⁴² In *Swadhinata Tumi* (O Freedom) he personifies freedom with numerous metaphors. He meaningfully links up freedom with the Language Movement, as the later inspired the former decades ago. The poet says:

Freedom, you are the bright assembly of Ekush in the Shahid Minar,
 Freedom, you are the flag-procession
 With harsh slogan. (Rahman, 2018, p.80)

Syed Shamsul Haq in his poem *Oboruddho Shohorey Choturtho Mash* (The Fourth Month in the Confined City) depicts the Dhaka city that only has "sound of the soldiers' walking". In Dhaka city during the War -

Nobody speaks
 Nobody produces any sound
 In fact lips have nothing to do except bursting out in panic (Haq, 2016, p.169)

Sayed Shamsul Haq, same as Shmasur Rahman, has a poem by the name *Guerrilla*. In the pattern poem which has the shape of a fighter with a gun, Haq says that the guerrilla fighters-

Tiptoe in the nature of South Vitenam

Combodia

Bangladesh

Angola

And Mozambic.. (Haq, 2016, p.172)

..when the villages of the countries are stranded due to the wars. He means that the guerrillas are wherever they are required for revolution purposes. He means to say, the guerrilla fights are for all and they are of all the oppressed people the world over. The poet owns the guerrilla fighters saying they are “the second body of us”. “ Here the revolutionaries are eulogized in the same way as Alfred Tennyson did in his poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. The poem sounds-

“Half a league, half a league,

Half a league onward,

All in the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.” (Tennyson, 2002, p.307)

Tennyson tells the story of a brigade of 600 soldiers who rode on horseback and entered “half a league” (about one and a half miles) into “valley of death” during the Battle of Balaclava on 25 October 1854, in the Crimean War.

In *Mukti o Shwadhinotar Saat e March* (The 7th March, A Day of Liberty and Independence) Syed Shamsul Haq presents the significance of the speech of Skeikh Mujibur Rahman popularly known as the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh on the 7th of March in 1971. The poet says he hears the words ‘salvation’ and ‘freedom’ within himself almost every day long after the speech was rendered. He says-

Still in the thunder voice of the genius

The two words I hear everyday are – salvation and freedom. (Haq, 2013, p.91)

Haq’s poem of praise has a similarity with Robert Burn’s poem *Inscription for an Altar of Independence* which he wrote in support of Patrick Heron’s election campaign and for Heron whom he admired for his independent mind. He says-

“Thou of an independent mind, With soul resolv’d, with soul resign’d;

Prepar’d Power’s proudest frown to brave,” (Burns, 1975)

In the poem called *Tomakey Ovibadon Bangladesh* Syed Shamsul Haq expresses “Felicitations to Bangladesh” as she -

..came back among the anvil and hammer,

Whose sparks are making the darkness blaze. (Haq, 2017, p.35)

Bangladesh was deprived of the sweetness of music, the fantasy of poetry, the beauty of nature, and the liberty of movement due to the War, but all these things are back now when the Independence is achieved. Bangladesh looks all right again since her workers are back to work, rivers are flowing, boats are running, babies are playing, fishermen are catching fish, rebel poets are composing poems, musicians are playing the traditional instruments, and countrymen are walking on the land with confidence again.

Bangla Chharo (Leave Bangla) by Sikandar Abu Zafar is a great piece of direct words of resistance. The poet is desperate for freedom of Bangladesh, and insists on the Pakistan rulers' leaving the land instantly as he is no longer ready to see the rage of the "blood-red eyes" of the rulers and their "knives that are ready to cut" the throats of the countrymen.⁶⁸ In *Sangarm Cholbei*, that has been sung as a song as well during the War days, he says, the people who are being dishonored and oppressed by the ruler will not stop pretesting against tyranny. He owns the struggle and says-

Our struggle will go on,
People's struggle will go on. (Zafar, 2017, p.155)

Helal Hafiz, in *Nishiddho Shompadokio* (The Forbidden Editorial) written on the eve of the Liberation War, encourages the youth to take part in the movements for country. He says-

He who is in his youth, is in the right age to take part in the procession.
He who is in his youth is in the right age to take part in the war. (Hafiz, 1991, p.9)

In his 1981 poem *Ami Kingbodontir Kotha Bolchi* (I am speaking of a Legend) Abu Zafar Obaidullah says that those who does not listen poems will remain slaves and will be deprived of "the right of the horizon". He speaks of the "love" that causes "death of a pregnant sister", "death of a mother" and disappearance of the golden sons. That love symbolizes the War of Independence. To him the words of "independence" are resistance poems as colorful as a china rose. (Obaidullah, 2019, p.55)

In *Khokoner Sunglass* Humayn Azad tells the story of the young Bangbandhu who was popularly called "Khokon" or "Khoka", who used to wear a sunglass in his early age to protect from the sun and dust and later threw away the sunglass to dedicate him for the country. Azad expresses his sorrow over the blood-stained places and water bodies in the country during the War-

...the whole Bangal is blood-stained.
Bodies of innocent Bangalees are floating in the rivers
Where once ducks used to drift. (Azad, 2012, p.56)

In another poem *Muktibahinir Jonne* (For the Freedom-fighters) the poet eulogizes the freedom fighters. He says they can defeat the enemies like magicians-

Enemy's concrete bunkers are demolished all on a sudden
When you step in the spot.
The city of Dhaka, the unbreakable dens of the enemies fail like an illusion
When you touch the trigger. (Azad, 2012, p.154)

8. Post-Liberation Trauma in Bangladesh Expressed in Poetry

Some poets express their worries over the post-liberation situation of the country. They, for their boldness, will fall in resistance category. Rafiq Azad wrote his famous poem *Bhat Dey Haramjada* (Give Me Some Food, Bastard) during the famine that took place in Bangladesh in 1974 shortly after the liberation. The name of the poem says it all. The poet, in the tone of a hungry person, says he has no demand of luxury houses, or latest-model cars or any mistress, but some food is all he badly needs. He says, the hunger is being felt "Like the draught that burns

the corn-field in the month of Chaitra.” The hungry person gradually becomes impatient. He says he “shall do nothing lawfully” and is ready to eat up everything the map of the country. Here the word ‘map’ has a greater dimension than merely a sketch of the land. The hungry person is now so dangerous that he can upset the geography of the country. (Azad, 2007, p.103)

Rudro Mohammad Shahidullah in his poem *Concentration Camp* gives a narrative of a protester’s death in the hand of the oppressors. The protester, who demanded the right for food, was taken to a concentration camp and was tortured. The poet depicts-

Two pairs of gumboots black and cruel
Came over his chest
Because he talked about the pains of the stomach,
About hunger. (Shahidullah. 2019, p.126)

Rudro has same kind of resistance in the poem *Batashey Lasher Gondho* (The Wind has a Smell of Dead Bodies). He shows his grievance against the situation of the freedom-fighters after the liberation of Bangladesh. The smell of dead bodies is still in the air, the soil is still blood-stained. The fighters who gambled their lives for the sake of the country are cursed now. He is presenting a time when-

Those who,
Touching the forehead of the blood-stained soil
Once cherished a great hope,
Are seeking pleasure in the sap of forbidden darkness today,
Living in the caves of dark nights,
And loving the cages devoid of lights. (Shahidullah. 2019, p.19)

Rudro symbolizes the freedom as an unwanted birth by a shaky and ashamed mother. He is worried about the future of the flag that was achieved through a bloody war: “The flag of the nation has been grabbed by the old vultures.” This is a hopeless picture resembling the picture that is drawn in the poem *The Shield Of Achilles* by W. H. Auden. The poet drew the hopelessness of Thetis, the mother of Achilles of Greek Mythology. She hoped to see the picture of olive trees and vines and marble cities and ships on windy seas carved on the shields of Achilles, but Hephaestus, the Greek blacksmith of gods has decorated the shield otherwise. He drew the picture of “an artificial wilderness” and a deserted life of the contemporary wasteland without anything to eat or a shelter (Auden, 1998, p.198) Rudro’s depiction of “raped woman screaming” and being scared of a “bloody time” has a similarity with the landscape drawn on the shield of Achilles where “girls are raped” and “two boys knife a third”.

In *Kotha Chilo Shubinoy* (I have something to Tell You, Shubinoy) Rudro introduces himself in front of Shubinoy, a friend of his, as the young man who is “still fighting against hunger, death and pain against inequality and racism.” He said he is the young man who “took part in the fight for freedom with weapons in hands” and “still fighting against hunger, death and agony” though the country is now independent. (Shahidullah .2019, p.205)

Nirmalendu Goon’s poem *Shwadhinata Ei Shobodo Kivabe Amader Holo* (How the Word Freedom Became Ours) is about the historic speech of Bangagandu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the 7th of March 1971. The poet describes how the ocean of people awaits the arrival of the great

leader on that day and how poetically he spoke in the great gathering. In the poem he criticizes the post-liberation situation of rivalry when -

There are poets against poets, grounds against grounds,
Afternoons against afternoons,
Garden against Garden,
March against March.... (Goon, 2016, p.87)

In *Shwadhinata, Ulongo Kishor* (Freedom, the Naked Boy) Goon personifies freedom who is a newborn and wishes his sound growth and a long life. He is critical of the post-liberation situation and says, nakedness is not freedom, sorrow is not freedom, and hunger is not freedom. (Goon, 2016, p.28)

Syed Shamsul Haq in his poem, *Ekoda Ek Desh Chilo* (Once There was a Country) protests the post-liberation condition of Bangladesh where the freedom-fighters are neglected and the Rajakars (betrayers) are being honored. The poet resists the hopeless state of the patriots when their “garlands” of victory becomes “chains” and “Rajakars write their names” in the pages of history (Haq, 2016, p.382). In another poem *Marcher Gaan* (The song of March) the poet feels the urge of going back to March, which indicates the dire necessity of another War. He is inspiring the comrades by saying “Let’s go to streets” as “The history is calling again”. (Haq, 2017, p.355)

In his book of rhymes called *Paltaner Chhara* (The Rhymes of Paltan) Abu Saleh expresses his resistance against the obstacles of freedom of speech. He says, “by shedding blood we have got a freedom”, which we “cannot touch or feel” (Saleh, 1987, p.7) Saleh’s feeling that the people of Bangladesh do not have a freedom in true sense resembles Shelly’s reminder that people of England do not have a true freedom in the poem *The Mask of Anarchy*. As per Shelley, people look free, but they are not. He urged the people saying,

“Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you” (Shelley, 2002, p.316)

9. The Mass Movement of the 80s

I would rather call it a two-lined poem that has no title. It sounds, “Free Democracy, Down with Autocracy.” (The Dhaka Tribune, 2019). Noor Hossain, a die-hard protester, wrote the lines on his body to take part in the movement against the autocracy of H. M Ershad in the 80s. The protester was killed by the ruler-supported police. Shamsur Rahman protests the killing in the poem *Buk tar Bangladesher Hridoy* (His Chest is the Heart of Bangladesh). He says Bangladesh bleeds in the way Noor Hossain does when shot by the autocratic ruler on the street of Dhaka:

Bangladesh laments like a deer of a burnt forest
She bleeds and bleeds. (Rahman, 2018, p.223)

Rudro Mohammad Shahidulla in his poem *Nur Hossainer Rakte Lekha* names the movement as “written in Nur Hossains blood”. He forbids the cuckoo bird to sing as “thousands of people are paying back the debt of the Freedom in blood” (Shahidullah, 2019, p.244) Lutfor Rahman Riton, in his poem *Buletbiddho Gonotontro* (Bullet-torn Democracy) draws the picture of the day 10th November of 1987, the day of protest and procession known as Noor Hossain Day. He asks in wonder about Noor Hossain the courageous hero, “Who is the boy?” He describes the day:

The democracy is bullet-torn the pitched roads are red
 The city is crazy on the tenth of November
 Dhaka becomes flooded by aggrieved people
 A large procession rushes at Purana Paltan. (Riton, 2010)

He says, the procession is unstoppable and it will be more belligerent when resisted by the tyrants. According to the poet, rulers can stop the procession by no means, as they could not, during the historic movements of 1952, 1969 and 1971.

10. Conclusion

Resistance poetry enriched Bangla literature and impacted Banglae taste and temperament. As literature of an emotional nation, Bangla resistance poetry is an outburst of lamentation, sorrows, anger, protests, rebellion, love and patriotism. 200 years of British tyranny, followed by 24 years of Pakistani autocracy, taught the nation valuable lessons. Bangla resistance poems very clearly depict Bangalees' resistance nature that matured with the passage of time and their dealing with deprivations. To address the question of contribution of resistance poetry in re-gaining Bangalees' rights, it can be said that Bangla modern poetry of resistance contributed a lot to the struggles. All the pertinent struggles had happy ends. The decision of splitting Bengal rolled back; the peasants ultimately established their rights on two-thirds of their crops; Bangla-speaking people secured their rights to speak in Bangla; Bangladesh became independent and in the nearest past autocracy of H. M Ershad failed. If not it is the modern Bangla resistance poetry that brought the victories, the victories are indebted to modern Bangla resistance poetry to a great extent.

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