

Nildarpan : The play of Mass-Rising and True Patriotism

Dr. Achinta Kumar Banerjee*

[**Abstract:** This Paper seeks to analyze Dinabandhu Mitra's 'Nildarpan' that exerted tremendous influence on its readers as well as spectators to form a solid basis of anti-colonial feeling and native resistance. The play clearly captured the suffering and pain of the indigo planters who were systematically oppressed by the white British officers. The play played a major role to strengthen the Indian mass against the British and ushered in a new language in theatre that showed that resistant voices could never be throttled. 'Nildarpan' transcends the barrier of time and space as it teaches us to stand up against social and political injustice and economic exploitation. It gave rise to nationalist self of Indian.]

Keywords: Anti-colonial, Native resistance, indigo planters, social and political injustice, economic exploitation, nationalist self.

The first phase of Bengali drama was mainly written on kings, zamindars and some social problems like widow remarriage, child marriage, polygamy, the practice of Kaulinya and so on. Most of the playwrights only wanted money and reward. There was no inner urge to pen down plays. Many social evils, superstition, unfulfilled desire of young widows, their frustration and happiness often became the subject matter of Bengali plays. It is to be noted that some plays were written based on mythological stories. Harachandra Ghosh, Taracharan Sikdar, G.C. Gupta, Umeshchandra Mitra, Samuel Pirbox and even western influenced Madhusudan Dutta centred around these limited subject matters. As we are taking about 1860, the play 'Krishnakumari' was yet to come out. During this time readers and spectators of Bengali drama witnessed radical changes in the history and evolution of Bengali drama in the hand of Dinabandhu Mitra. He came out with 'Nildarpan' and captured the tale of the oppressed and introduced mass consciousness. He gave a new language of theatre where common mass can unite and rise against social injustice.

*Associate Professor, Dept. of Bengali University Of Gourbanga, Malda, W.B.

Among the plays of the initial phase of Bengali drama the most famous play was 'Nildarpan'. In this play Dinabandhu Mitra wrote on a sense of nationalism and patriotism. He wanted the Indian cotton farmers to form a resistant consciousness and unite and to go against the foreign colonial matters who forced Indian farmers to cultivate according to the wishes of the British matters. It is really a matter of surprise that the play easily communicated the multifaceted socio political thought of the author to the common mass. Readers of the play wonder how an ordinary news titled 'Chaar-Dadan' became inextricably interlinked with the freedom struggle of India and inspired mass movement.

As an employee of the post office, Dinabandhu Mitra visited several corners of several villages of Bengal and composed the play 'Nildarpan' (1860) from the churnings of his own experiences of watching the then socio cultural reality. Since its inception, the play is highly popular. In 'Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Bangasamaj' Shibnath Shastri discussed how the play was popular and ushered in radical changes in the mind of the Bengalees. He clearly said "We did not know that a book can take the society by storm on such a level. They did not know who has written 'Nildarpan' but scenes of 'Moynani lo Soi', 'Nil Genjecho Koi' were acted in their dwelling places." (Translation Mine) 'Nildarpan' is a faithful picture of not only the British time but also of the modern world.

The play stirred the entire country after its publication in 1860 from Bangala Bazar Press from Dhaka. At that time people who did not think of the miserable condition of the indigo planters expressed their grievances against the British officers after watching the play. They did not support the exploitation of the farmers. As the content was grafted in the form of play, it could be easily staged and in pre-independence era some enthusiastic Bengali men staged the play from Bengal to Mumbai and some other parts of India. The play created a consciousness against the foreign merchants which exerted tremendous influence in the freedom struggle of India. Before the establishment of Indian National congress in 1885, this play became a canon that could ignite Indian minds with the flame of patriotism and instill a language of protest. Dr. Asit Kumar Bandyopadhyay said:

One cannot defect sepoy mutiny as the true nationalist movement. Rather Indigo Revolt made the educated Bengalees angry with the English. The farmers had a spirit of resistance and there was no sense of communalism. Date to communal narrowness Wahabi and Faraji movements failed in Bangladesh. Proper nationalist movement started with Indigo Revolt—which simultaneously talked about struggle

and non-cooperation which later on became Non-Cooperation movement under the leadership of Gandhiji. (Translation Mine)

People from different sections joined the Indigo Revolt and they united against the power of British colonizers and went for a mass revolution against their exploitation.

After the publication of 'Nildarpan' both Hindus and Muslims voiced their protest against the British. Dr. Asit Kumar Bandyopadhyay said: "In Bengal, Nadia, Khulna, Jashohar and Chhabish Pargana Hindu and Muslim Indigo planters revolted against the British. During this time people from both Hindu and Muslim community not only declared revolution against the British but also became strongly united to protect the nation. In this context, we can think of the portrayal of the character of Torap. Kshetramoni, the daughter of Sadhucharan is pregnant and the crooked White Saheb expresses his lust for her. Rogue Saheb has captured her with the aid of Padimoyrani and brought her in his room. When Kshetramoni comes to know her real intention, she wants to protect her own dignity and her baby in her womb. Let us quote a few lines from the play to bring out the sexual exploitation of the British:

Kshetra: O Saheb, you are my father, you are my father. Please leave me. Send me to my home with Padi aunty. The night is dark and I cannot go alone – (Pulling hands) O Saheb you are my father, O Saheb you are my father. If you hold my hand, you will lose the caste leave me, you are my father.

Rogue: I wish to be the father of your baby, you cannot distract me with any word. Come to my bed, otherwise I shall break your belly with a kick.

Kshetra: My baby will die, Saheb, my baby will die – I am pregnant.
Rogue: If I don't make you naked, you will never shed your coyness. (Translation Mine)

When Kshetramoni is trying her best to protect her chastity in vain and her condition is miserable due to the hit of the Saheb, suddenly Torap comes there like a hero and rescue her by breaking the window. Though Kshetra is not a daughter of Muslim community, he has come to protect and rescue her even at the cost of his own life. He could not save Kshetra from the cruel hand of the Saheb. But his position of empathy for Sadhucharan and his family and the family of Golok Bosu stirs our mind. Perhaps there can be no other example to prove the harmony and love and the Hindus and the Muslims shared for each other. At that time many British men raped, violated and tortured many village women. Rev. long rightly pointed out:

There is no question that the occasional occurrences of outrages (as women) is a general belief of the natives and tends to make indigo-planting odious. I have been acquainted of late years with various facts relating to outrages. From the responsibility and integrity of my informants, I find it morally impossible to disbelieve.

Though the play 'Nildarpan' centres around the family of Golok Basu, it is not really a particular family oriented play. When the Indigo cultivators revolted against the Indigo Sahebs, almost 60 lakh farmers and common men joined the revolution. Through people started to show grievances against the British before the publication of 'Nildarpan', it is true that the play proved the voice of dissent when the poor Indians got exploited under the grace of British tyranny. This play also introduced realism in Bengali drama. Here we see the playwright did not live in ivory tower, but came down to the poor's mud houses to understand and depict the grim realities of life.

Any form of protest, revolution and renaissance has a pre history of negligence, exploitation and torture of common mass for a long time. The revolt that we see in 'Nildarpan' is brought by indigo planters who had live under wretched condition. Bishnucharan Biswas and Digambar Biswas from Jashohar first rose against the British and led the revolution. Subsequently there was a change in leadership with the arrival of Sekhai Sardar, Baidyanath Sardar, Biswanath Sardar and so on. We can see references to these in newspapers like the 'Hindu Patriot', the 'Amritabazar' etc.

The play seems to be relevant even today. Its relevance becomes easily understandable as humanity is strangled today and the entire world is gripped by terrorism, hyper-nationalism, fundamentalism and separatism. The play can teach how to protect against torture, exploitation and blood-shed.

Referance: –

1. NIL DARPAN or The Indigo Planting Mirror BY-A NATIVE
2. Dinabandhu Mitrer Nildarpan Edited By Dr. Ashutosh Bhattacharya
3. Bangla Natoker Itihas By Dr. Ajit Kumar Ghosh
4. Dinabandhu Mitrer Nildarpan Edited By Bhawani Gopal Sanyal
5. Nildarpan Edited By-Dr.Shuddhasattwa Basu and Jotindra Sengupta
