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Anik Mahmud: A poet and a critic

Anik Mahmud is one of the leading poets of Bengali literature in the modern age. He started writing poems in the nineteen seventies and has been writing till today. As a poet Anik Mahmud has contributed a lot to Bengali literature. He has written on a variety of subjects. The diversity of Anik Mahmud's poetry has added multi-dimensions to Bengali poetry. He always speaks of some aspects of humanity. His subjects are generally his age, his society, love, politics, nature and so on. The chief characteristics of his poetry is to transform the common into uncommon. Let us now illustrate the salient features of Anik's poetry.

Anik Mahmud's poetry deals with nature. Indeed, he depicts various aspects of nature accurately. We often observe the actual spirit of the country being reflected in Anik's poems. We cannot but admire Anik's power to render the objects of nature in his poetry in a vivid manner. The significance and the use of Anik's treatment of nature may be debatable but we may assert that Anik's poetry is a living tribute to his capacity for microscopic observation and accurate description. The descriptive power of Anik Mahmud, I think, is a wonderful treatment of his poetry. In his poetry the blue sky, the murmuring brook, the sunlight, the moonshine, the green cornfield are brought into the notice of the readers. What he describes is not a spectacle only, but an entire adventure. Anik Mahmud is a poet because he has an artistic mind, he has a keen perception of nature. Nature appears lively in his artistic presentation of life. To Anik Mahmud man and nature are two inseparable entities. There is a close connection between man and nature. So he, as we see, tries to explain human life in terms of nature. However, Anik is not much interested in Nature for the sake of nature. Unlike Wordsworth, the most

outstanding nature poet, Anik finds sustained power or moral teaching in Nature. Anik is no romantic about Nature like Jibonanondo Das. Nor does he give a mere description of countryside like Jasimuddin or Bondey Ali Mian. He is fully aware of the irrational malice of Nature. So he presents natural objects in which man acts in the course of the real life.

Bangladesh is a land of six seasons. The changes of seasons influence our life in various ways. Anik Mahmud gives a pen-picture of six seasons with their distinguishing characteristics. First comes the summer with the scorching heat of the sun. So the peasants pray to God or *Humdadaya* for rain drops. Poet Anik Mahmud writes :

আমাদের মাঠে ক্ষেতে মাঝে মাঝে নেমে আসে জুয়াড়ি নিষাদ,
মৌসুমীর কালোহাতে কখনো পুড়িয়ে দেয়
খরার আগুনে
ফসলের মিষ্টি মেঠো স্বাদ ।
(একলব্যের ভবিতব্য, বোশেখের প্রার্থনা)

(English Translation)

Sometimes the nature becomes capricious
The scorching heat of the sun damages the crops.
(*Ekolobber Bhobitobbo*, Bosheker Prarthona)

To Anik Mahmud the rainy season comes with its destructive appearance :

হঠাৎ হলো প্রেমের জিহ্বা
বর্ষালি শামুক,
দুঃখ সুখের নীল পাপিয়া
হলো পরান্মুখ ।
(এইসব ভয়াবহ আরতি, ছেদ)

(English Translation)

As a snail in the rains closes its mouth in danger ,
So the bird of love stops singing in sorrows.
(*Eisab Bhojaboho Aroti*, Chhed)

The autumn is distinguished by the fragrance of shewly flower and the pearl like dew drops on the grass. Anik Mahmud writes in his poems :

(১) শরতের শিউলী বনে
পৌষের মিঠেল রোদে
ফাল্গুনের কিশলয়ে
জেগে আছো ধান ধানসিঁড়ির বেহুলা নৃত্য পটীয়সী ।
(একলব্যের ভবিতব্য, অমরাবতীর কিশোরী)

(English Translation)

Behula (which suggests our motherland) still dances on the Dhanshire, in shewly garden, in the sweet sunshine of *Poush* and in the green leaf of *Falgun*.

(*Ekolobber Bhobitobbo*, Amorabotir Kisori)

(২) গিল্লি প্রাতে ফিরনি রোঁধে ডাকলে সূর্য হাসে
হাসির ব্যথার রোদ খেলে যায় শিশির ভেজা ঘাসে,
ঘাসের ডগায় ভাসে,
প্রেমের মুক্তা, হেমের কষ্ট নাশে ।
(*এইসব ভয়াবহ আরতি*, গিল্লি)

(English Translation)

When the housewife cooks ‘firne’ and invites the sun,
the sun light sparkles on the grass like the pearls,
The mistress forgets her desolation in love
(*Eisab Bhoyaboho Aroti*, Ginni)

Late autumn is an important season in Bangladesh. It is generally a harvest season. ‘Nabanno’ is the traditional festival of eternal Bengal which is mainly celebrated in this season. This phenomenon has occurred in Anik’s poems :

হেমন্তের রূপোলি শিশির এসে ধুয়ে গেছে পাণ্ডুরিত ঘাসের গালিচা,
এখানে পড়েনি তবু লক্ষ্মীর করুণা, দ্রৌপদীর পদপাত,
জলমগ্ন ধানক্ষেতে বন্যার অশনি থাবা শেষ হয়ে গেছে,
খুশির চিবুক ছুঁয়ে এখনো আসেনি কোনো আগস্তুক
নবান্নের কাকডোরে উপদ্রুত হাতে শূন্য পাত্র কাঁপে....
খরাদন্ধ ফসলের ছাণ উঠে গেছে মহাজনী মজুত খানায় ।
(*একলব্যের ভবিতব্য*, হেমন্তের প্রতি)

(English Translation)

The late spring has set in
yet Lakhmi (Goddess of wealth) has not trodden the cornfield.
The flood has receded
Nabanno has come without the news of mirth and joy.
(*Ekolobber Bhobitobbo*, To Late-autumn)

It is to note that different types of trees, herbs and flowers are the ingredient of Anik Mahmud’s poems. The poet has used them in different contexts. The trees, flowers and herbs like ‘beautiful rose’, ‘the shade of Madhobi’, ‘the buds of Pomegranate’, ‘dry leaf of chhatim’, ‘the tender shoot of bottle gourd plant’, ‘the lilies’ and ‘the Jasmin’ which Anik Mahmud uses in his poems are very much familiar, yet they bear special meaning.

As a poet Anik Mahmud is very much conscious about the environment in which he lives. In the ecological web, not only man but all the elements of environments are also equally important. So the poet uses various kinds of birds, animals, beasts, insects in different contexts. Bio-diversity has been nicely pictured in Anik Mahmud’s poems:

হায় প্রেম! পিঁপড়ের চোখে দেখো অর্বাচীন সৌরঝড়,
শুধুই পারোনি জানি ব্যর্থতার গণ্ডে
দুফোঁটা বিশ্বাস পললের মুখে সেঁটে দিতে...
(*এইসব ভয়াবহ আরতি*, মেয়েটা)

(English Translation)

O love! You can see the solar storm in the eyes of an ant
But you cannot have faith in you for your sake.
(*Eisab Bhoyaboho Aroti*, Meata)

Like all romantic poets, Anik Mahmud loves nature deeply. To Wordsworth, nature is a living reality capable of feeling and thinking; to Shelley nature is a shifting and changeable phenomenon, to Byron nature is wild and stormy. But Anik Mahmud’s attitude towards nature is distinctive. In his poems nature appears as it is with some symbolical meanings.

Anik Mahmud’s poems represent his age, his society and his culture. Actually, the poems epitomize his sweet motherland, its land, its history, achievements, promises, dreams, hopes, aspiration and national heritage. He tends to mirror independent Bangladesh more lively than any other writer. Anik Mahmud is a true patriot. He watches the social and moral decadence of independent Bangladesh and is extremely hurt by the contemporary spectacle of his motherland. Once his country was a British colony. After a prolonged struggle Bangladesh became free from the bondage of the capricious ruler. So the mass movement in 1969. The independence war in 1971, the anti-autocratic movement in 1990-all come very intensely within the purview of Anik Mahmud’s poetry.

Anik Mahmud is a highly conscious poet. He is mentally distressed at the deplorable condition of post-independent Bangladesh. With high hopes and great aspiration, after a nine month bloody war, we got our homeland liberated. But it is, to our utter dismay, we merely got a geographical freedom. The lot of the common people has not yet been changed. They are still the victims to the oppression and exploitation of the ruling power. Economic inequality, political unrest deprivation of the majority, exploitation of the ruling authority, wide spread corruption-all have been nicely mirrored in his poetry, *Eisab Bhoyaboho Aroti* itself indicates the dark aspects of our nations. The poet writes :

শৃগালের চোখ থেকে ধূর্ততার মণিবীজ নিয়ে
ঘাসশুন্ধ খেয়ে ফেলে ভেড়াগুলো কৃষকের মাঠের ফসল,
মাঠ হয় মন্ত্রীপাড়া, ভেড়াদের পদশব্দে রাজপথে জাড়ে মার্সিডিস
লেলিহান জিভগুলো বুলে পড়ে যেনো সব তৃষ্ণার্ত হাতির শুঁড়
শুষে নেয় নদ নদী সাগরের নোনাজল পুঁতিগন্ধ সব,
(এইসব ভয়াবহ আরতি, জৈগুনের ভেড়াগুলো)

The poet deplores the ugliness of modern civilization. His country as if has become the fertile land of all sorts of devilish acts such as terrorism, rape, fraud, murder, oppression. The poet portrays the ugly scenes of anarchy prevailing in the country :

নারকীয় একান্তর সে নামের মহিমা ছিনিয়ে
সহজে বানালো পেশাচিত বধ্যভূমি,
আজো দেখি মধ্যযুগ হায়েনার হিংস্রতায়
ফিরে আসে পুরনো ডেরায়
তীরন্দাজ রক্তোন্মাদ হোলি খেলে জিঘাংসার মন্ততায়
মতিহার নীলাকাশে ওড়ে আজ অশুভ এ্যালবান্ট্রিস
আরো ওড়ে ভাগাড়ের তামাদি টার্গেটে আস্ত সেই
হাসানের ফ্যাসিস্ট শকুন,
(এইসব ভয়াবহ আরতি, শোণিত সাগ্নিক)

(English Translation)

The sanctity of the holy place Motihar
was polluted by the hellish activities in 1971,
Still we see the genocide by the archers
and watch the albatross and the falcon flying
in the sky of Motihar.
(Eisab Bhoyaboho Aroti, Sonito Sagnik)

Freedom is man's birth right. But the Bengalees could not taste the fruits of independence even after three decades. The freedom fighters are now-a-days neglected and humiliated. On the other hand, the defeated force of the independence war is hatching plot to destroy the sovereignty of our motherland. The patriots are now shedding tears in silence. Those who are in power have no love for motherland and they are busy with plundering national property. Here truth, patriotism, ideology are being reproached and harassed at every step. The poet deplores the fact in his poem, 'Sadhinota' (Freedom). from *Asonnobiroh Bishonnobidoy*.

We can condemn our political leaders for the pitiable condition of our country. The political leaders lack in patriotic zeal. So the soul and spirit of democracy is in danger. The common people of our country are

disillusioned by democracy, independence and exhortations in all respects. The so called democratic state is indeed the ruling party's property. The leaders are involved in all kinds of malpractices, corruption and sin. The party loyalists have a mockery of democracy. Factionalism in political parties, promotion of only ruling party's interest by leaving the common men in lurch-all these are happening under the aegis of socialistic pattern of democracy committed to social and economic welfare of the community. These despicable trends figure fairly in Anik Mahmud's poetry :

The society in which Anik lives is an imbalanced one. There is a gulf of difference between the upper class and the lower class. The state is running in such a pattern that the rich are becoming the richer and the poor the poorer. The majority of our population is living under poverty line. They are still deprived of basic needs like food, shelter, medical facility and education. Even they have to toil for the whole day for their existence but the lion share goes to the money lenders. The poet differentiates between the 'Haves' and the 'Have-nots' in a faithful manner. He can justly estimate the mirth of the 'Haves' and cry of the 'Have-nots'.

The poet is not pessimistic at the gloom situation of the country. Though he sees the skeleton of ugliness, he is very much hopeful about the bright future of his nation. He is aware that without darkness there would be no light, and without evil there would be little possibility of freely choosing good. In the crucial situation of the nation he, like a true leader, advises us to launch a movement against all kinds of evils and odds. In this respect, Anik Mahmud Commemorates some great leader like Rammohon Roy, Issorchandra Bhiddaya Sagar, Sheikh Mozibur Rahman who laid down their lives for the sweet motherland. Sheik Mozib, the founder of independent Bangladesh dreamt a "Sonar Bangla" run by four principles-Democracy, Nationalism, Secularism and Socialism. He writes :

চার স্তম্ভে দেশের সৌধ
নির্মাতা কোন শ্রেষ্ঠ জীব,
বাঙালিদের জাতির পিতা
বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিব ।
(এইসব ভয়াবহ আরতি, বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিব)

(English Translation)

Bangladesh stands on four pillars
Sheik Mazib, The sculptor of Bangladesh
is the father of nation.
(Eisab Bhoyaboho Aroti, Bangobandhu Sheik Mazib)

In fact, the poet is not complacent about man's present situation. Nonetheless he is a patient and persistent seeker of truth, blind neither to

life's ironies nor to its more pleasant aspects. Anik Mahmud is highly optimistic that this dark cloud will be blown away by the fair weather. Indeed the poet dreams of an exploitation and corruption free truly democratic country.

As regards love, Anik Mahmud is a love poet. He has written some love poems which bear special meanings. Like other modern poets. Anik Mahmud sees the frustration in love. To him, love is not purely the unification of two souls rather it is the gratification of bodily need. The poet has defined love as :

ভালোবাসা মানে জীবন জারক
ভুল বুঝে কাঁদা অকারণ,
ভালোবাসা মানে মরণ মসীতে
দুগ্ধিতের লেখা ব্যাকরণ ।

(প্রেম বড় স্বেচ্ছতন্ত্রী, সংজ্ঞা)

(English Translation)

Love is the essence of life
shedding tears for nothing,
Love is the grammar
written by those who have
sacrificed themselves for love.

(Prem Boro Soirotontri, Songa)

The poet's attitude to love is that modern love lacks divine glory. On the contrary, it is rushing towards commercial gain. Love is not for love's sake; it is mercenary more or less. To Anik Mahmud, true love exists only when it comes from both sides. The poet says else where :

ভালোবাসার মূল্য,
প্রেম ব্যতীত আর কিছু এর হয় না সমতুল্য ।

(প্রেম বড় স্বেচ্ছতন্ত্রী, ভালোবাসার মূল্য)

(English Translation)

Love is reciprocal to love
and nothing else is equivalent to love

(Prem Boro Soirotontri Valobasar Mullo)

Actually love comes with a better understanding of self and others. Though love is despotic, man can not live in the society untouched by love. Anik's treatment of love is unique and fresh. His love poems contain the truth of life and beauty of imagination. Perfect love can only be found between man and woman, and in this love humanity can find the strength to grow towards the cherished goal. We do not see in his poetry the rarefied passion of Shelley or the high sensuousness of Keats. He treats love in a very homely way marked with the human sympathy.

Anik Mahmud has written poems not only for the adults but for the children. *Bhor Dupurey* (1997), *Dulki Ghara Chabuk Kora* (1997), *Sial Mamar Kheal* (2006) are his notable books of rhymes. These rhymes are the best source of pleasure for the old and the children alike. "Best words in best order" have been successfully used by Anik Mahmud. He is so much a skilled writer that his rhymes create a sweet sound effect into the ears of the listeners. Some of his rhymes are good lullaby :

কুটুম পাখি গাছের ডালে
নাচছে বেজায় তালে তালে,
হরেক রকম গয়না গলে,
নেচেই কুটুম যাচ্ছে চলে ।

(শেয়াল মামার খেয়াল, বিয়ের আমোদ)

(English Translation)

The little bird dances on the tree,
It puts on different types of ornaments
and it keeps dancing rhythmically
(*Sial Mamar Kheal*, Bier Ayozon)

or

কুটুম পাখি কুটুম পাখি
কোথায় তোমার দেশ,
বুলবুলিদের আজকে আসর
জমবে সেথা বেশ ।
দোয়েল, কোয়েল, বউ কথা কও
হলদে পাখি আর,
নাচবে সবাই এক তালেতে
গলায় পরে হার ।

(শেয়াল মামার খেয়াল, কুটুম পাখি)

(English Translation)

O Kutum, my dear little bird,
where is your homeland?
There will be a dancing concert
where the Bulbuli, Doel, Cuckoo
Boa Katha Kao and other birds will dance together
wearing the necklace.

(*Sial Mamar Kheal*, Kutum Pakhi)

By reading the rhymes of Anik Mahmud a reader must be back to his golden past. These are as though the soothing balm to those who suffer from nostalgia. The green meadows, the blue sky, the vast horizon, the small cottages and the heap of paddy plants are the common spectacle in the rural Bengal which thrill our heart.

In Anik Mahmud's rhymes different seasons like spring, winter, the rains also appear with their respective characteristics. The poet gives a simple but accurate description of different months :

- ১। শীতের আমেজ এলো মাঘ মাস ছেয়ে,
মাটিতে কুয়াশা পড়ে হিম গান গেয়ে।
হরিতকী শটিবনে কুয়াশার ভেলা,
রবির ফসল ছুঁয়ে শীত এলো মেলা।
(শেয়াল মামার খেয়াল, শীত)

(English Translation)

The image of winter is felt during *Maugh*
The cold fog falls on the ground and
the fog floats in the myrobalan garden
With the touch of winter the bumper 'Robi' crops are produced
(*Sial Mamar Kheal, The Winter*)

- ২। ফাগুন এলো দোদুল দুলে
কচি পাতায় আমের বোলে
শিশুর মতো মায়ের কোলে
হরেক পাখির কোলাহলে।
(শেয়াল মামার খেয়াল, ফাগুন এলো)

(English Translation)

Fagun came dancing
on the green leaf and sweet bud in the mango grove
like a child in her mother's lap
with the twittering of birds.
(*Sial Mamar Kheal, Fagun Elo*)

Anik Mahmud has also written long poems. His dramatic poem *Nosto Joshnar Caravan* is the glaring example of a long poem. This poem has been based upon history. It reflects the historical truth. Here we notice that the poet has mingled the historical fact with poetic fancy. Aurangzeb, the greatest emperor of the Moghul empire, arrests his father, Shahjahan, and his sister Zahanara, and kills his brothers only for his thirst for power and greed for crown. Here we notice that the sword on which the word "Alomgir" is inscribed is kept carefully in the museum. The sword is personified as "Gronthic" who is the living witness of Moghul history. Gronthic narrates history to Chorus, symbol of wisdom. The Gronthic has realized that father, mother, brother- all are valueless to the power. Always throne is followed by fraud, cruelty, deprivation or even bloody war. The poet here tends to find out his present age in guise of history. History always repeats itself. So the poet mentions :

কতোবার বর্তমান ঘূর্ণাবর্তে হয়ে যায় ব্যথিত অতীত,
কতোবার অতীতের যুথচারী তক্ষকেরা ফিরে আসে
বর্তমান ক্যারাভানে,
নষ্ট জ্যোৎস্নায় হেঁটে হেঁটে কামিনীর মালা ছিঁড়ে স্থাপদ খেয়ালে,
(নষ্ট জ্যোৎস্নার ক্যারাভান, পৃ. ৭)

(English Translation)

The present is lost in the tragic past
and the past is caught in the whirlpool of the present,
The evil power on the caravan of the present destroys
the peace and harmony.

(*Nasto Josnar Caravan, p.7*)

Therefore envy, revengefulness, attack, aggression, greed for power- all these are not only the elements of the past, but also they prevail in the modern time. The dramatic poem *Nosto Jotshnar Caravan* is divided into five acts- *Spondon, Sondipon, Unmochon, Poribeshon* and *Bilokhon*. Here each act focuses on the actual events of history where different characters appear with their own characteristics. The poet delineates these characters in such a way that we see them with our own eyes. The action and reaction of historical figures like Shahjahan, Jahanara, Darasiko, Aurangzeb, Shaestha Khan, Danishmond Khan are presented through Gronthic and Chorus. Anik Mahmud is quite novel in writing this dramatic poem by intruding "Gronthic and Chorus", though it is moulded in the tradition of Greek drama. In his poem "Nostho Joshnar Caravan" Anik Mahmud proclaims, "Power is not permanent". The throne of a monarch must be turned into dust. The consequences of the abuses of power are repentance and death. The absolute cruelty and fraud of Aurangzeb is manifested in his speech :

বিশ্বাসী নজর বেগ বুঝে নাও শাহি ফরমান।
আজ রাতে আনা চাই শত্রুদ্রাতা দারার মস্তক,
খাজাপুরা প্রাসাদের রন্ধ কক্ষ থেকে প্রথমে সরিয়ে নিবে
শত্রুপুত্র শিপির শিকোককে, তারপর শত্রুর মস্তক
বিচিহ্ন করবে নিশীথের দ্বিতীয় প্রহরে;
আজ আমার রাত্রির প্রার্থনায় যুক্ত হবে সাম্রাজ্যের
রাহুমুক্তি জনতা কল্যাণ! তার আগে স্বচক্ষে দেখতে চাই
কাফেরের শির শত্রুর বিনাশ!
(নষ্ট জ্যোৎস্নার ক্যারাভান, পৃ. ৩৭)

(English Translation)

O faithful Nazor Beg, carry out the royal order,
I want the head of my enemy brother Darasiko this night
First take away Shipir Siko from the prison of Khazapura palace ,

then behead Darasiko at the dead of night.
Tonight I'll pray to save the country
from the curse of my enemy, and bring about
welfare for the people.
But I want to see the head of the enemy before my prayer.
(*Nasto Josnar Caravan, p.37*)

But in the falling action, we notice the tragic end of Auranzeb. His repentance is :

এসো অন্ধকার! এসো সন্ধ্যানীল আলোর গোধূলি
জীবনের জয়গাথা একটি চরম সত্যে লিপিবদ্ধ হয়;
মানুষ এসেছে যেইখান থেকে সেইখানে তার অনিবার্য ফেরা
হে পুত্র-কন্যারা, বিদায়! বিদায়!
(*নষ্ট জ্যোৎস্নার ক্যারাবান, পৃ.৫১*)

(English Translation)
Darkness, come down! twilight come down.
The triumphal song of life is written in absolute truth,
Man returns to his ultimate goal
from where he comes.
Adieu, adieu! O my dear children.
(*Nasto Josnar Caravan, p.51*)

Not only of Auranzeb's but the repentance of his descendants also proves that power is transitory and every man must be duly rewarded. Through the speech of Bahadur Shah II and Mirja Mughal Anik Mahmud shows "Poetic Justice". Bahadur Shah II addresses Gronthic that he is the great grandson of the great grandson of Aurangzeb. He adds that he has done penance for the Sipoy revolution at Rangoon where he is sent to exile. Gronthic's reply reflects the eternal truth :

শুনতে চাইনা আর হে মোগল উত্তরাধিকার!
অবিম্শ্যকারী মানুষের ক্ষমতার ধার
চাঙ্গা করে মধুবন ব্যক্তি স্বার্থ যশ খ্যাতি ভোগ লালসার,
শুভবোধে যুগে যুগে কালিমায় ঘিরেছে আঁধার,
ভাতৃত্ব-পিতৃত্ব দূরে ঠেলে
তবুও মানুষ বুকে ধরে অনিত্য সংসার ।
(*নষ্ট জ্যোৎস্নার ক্যারাবান, পৃ.৫৩*)

(English Translation)
I'll not hear no more, O Moghul descendant,
The indiscreet people always greed for
pelf and power, fame and enjoyment,
and they contaminate the good by evil

breaking the bond of fatherhood and brotherhood.
Yet man survives in this world.
(*Nasto Josnar Caravan, p.53*)

Here Anik Mahmud's message is that there might be conflict between good and evil, between the oppressor and the oppressed, between the higher and the lower. But good must triumph over evil. This world is full of odds and adversities, yet our life must proceed on its eternal caravan singing a song.

Anik Mahmud is also a composer of many songs. He is a permanent composer of Bangladesh Betar. '*Maddobee Rater Gan*' is a collection of songs by Anik Mahmud. Around 150 songs have been placed in this book. These are of a variety of songs. Nature, modernity, or frustration in love are the main concerns of Anik Mamud songs. In his treatment of love. Anik is highly romantic. He treats nature with love and admiration. The poet writes :

এই রাত এই
জোছনার হাসি
জোনাকির আলো নিয়ে
দেখোনা করছে কতো
ভালোবাসাবাসি,
(*মাধবী রাতের গান*)

(English Translation)
Look; behold!
The night and the light of the moon
love each other in the flickering of fire-fly.
(*Madhobee Rater Gan,*)

Or
হৃদয়ে আমার
যতো সুর আছে
ততো সুর বাজে
তোমারই কাছে
তাইতো স্মৃতিতে
তোমাকে পেয়েছি॥
(*মাধবী রাতের গান*)

(English Translation)
I have got you in my memory,
The tune in my heart sounds as much as
it sounds in your heart.
(*Madhobee Rater Gan,*)

Anik Mahmud tends to find peace and happiness in love. But his songs are not "triumphal Chant" or "Chorus Hymeneal". His songs are full of

poignant pain. The songs dealing with poignancy in lost love are sweeter than others. Shelley in his famous poem, “To a Skylark” says, “Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought”. Anik Mahmud songs are sweet because there seems an undertone of sorrows and sufferings in them. Through his songs Anik Mahmud describes the life of man on earth. To him human life is subject to recurrent spells of frustration and pain. Our earthly joys are temporary and fade away into nothingness. Disappointments and sorrows embitter our lives. Nevertheless we always seek for beauty and pleasure; for pleasure and pain are part of our mortal destiny. The poet says :

বুকে রাখলাম বুকের বাঁশি
 মুখে কথার কলি,
 মনে দিলাম মনোবেড়ি
 কণ্ঠে গীতালি,
 তবু তুমি ভেঙ্গে দিলে
 সুখের আয়োজন ॥
 (মাধবী রাতের গান)

(English Translation)
 I keep a flute in my heart
 and shower words from mouth
 and my heart keeps your heart in chain,
 and I sing for thee,
 Yet you disrupt my blissful arrangement.
 (Madhobe Rater Gan,)

As for language, Anik Mahmud is unique. His language is simple but words are uncommon and often complex. The choice of words has made his poetry a work of literary excellence. His poetry demonstrates simple use of poetic devices such as simile, metaphor, hyperbole, alliteration, irony, symbol, personification and so on. Through poetic devices he shows his poetry with a consistent pattern and an organic vision. His poetry in *to to* contains and shows the poet’s endless struggle for accuracy and perfection of rhyme, repetition, meter and stanza structure.

Metaphor :

- (১) গিন্নি ছিলো আস্ত যেন বিন্নি ধানের খই (গিন্নি)
 (English Translation)
 The housewife was as if the dry rice of ‘binni’. (Ginni)
- (২) দক্ষিণের পদ্মপীত ডাকোটা অরণ্যে,
 এইখানে এই গুঞ্চধারী ফেরা যেনো কুশলী গৃধিনী (শৃগাল)
 (English Translation)
 This mustached is as if a tactful jackal. (The Jackal)

Simile : ইয়াগোর মতো কারো প্রেমে বাধা দিয়ে নাটক করেছে । (কবির এলিজি)
 (English Translation)
 Like Yago he has hindered love and produced a play. (An Elegy of the Poet.)

Hyperbole :

ভোরের শিশির মেখে যেতে চাই বানপ্রস্থে,
 (English Translation)
 I would like to embrace death
 administering morning dew drops on my body.
 (মানববল্লভ কতোটা সময় নেবে আর)

Personification :

সায়াহে গোখুলি কাঁদে (জন্মতার একাত্তর সালে)
 (English Translation)
 The twilight cries in the evening (Born in 1971).

Anik Mahmud has also used different types of foreign words. We notice a profound use of Arabic, Persian, English words which have coloured his poetry, and at the same time enriched the vocabulary of our mother tongue. In fact, Anik Mahmud’s poetry shows the traits of simplicity and directness. His language is full of ornamentation. The beauty of words, aptness of phrases, the striking similes and metaphors, the richness of verses, brilliance of symbol and imagery, the felicities of language-all these exhibit Anik Mahmud’s superb rhetoric skill in his field.

Anik Mahmud is a poet as well as a critic. As a critic he also ranks high. He has written several books of criticism on different aspects of Bengali literature. His outstanding books of criticism are *Bangla Kothasahitay Shawkat Osman*, *Adhunik Bangla Kabbey Sammobadi Chetona*, *Alor Duti Asaduzzaman*, *Josimuddiner Kabbey Bisoyboichetra O Shilporup* etc. These books must play important roles in enriching Bengali literature. *Bangla Kothasahitay Shawkat Osman* is the M. Phil. thesis of Anik Mahmud. In his thesis Anik Mahmud focuses on the life and works of Shawkat Osman. Here Anik makes a hair split analysis of the works of Shawkat Osman. Anik Mahmud argues that Shawkat is a progressive writer whom religious dogma or fanaticism could never touch. His native village, his childhood memories are the main ingredients of the works of Shawkat Osman. Several remarkable incidents such as arms house lost in 1930, formation of cabinet in 1937, the Lahor resolution in 1940, the famine in 1943, the riot in 1946 and the division of Indian sub-continent in 1947, have a great influence on Shawkat Osman’s writing. *Kritodaser Hasi*, *Jonon Nekry Oronno*, *Pancho* are the most famous books of Shawkat Osman where socio-economic-cultural condition is faithfully mirrored. Shawkat Osman in his writing shows how money and power uproot the social values. Anik’s analysis is

that Shawkat Osman was greatly influenced by the post industrial civilization. In this respect Anik's evaluation is noteworthy :

Man's condition, both internal and external, changed due to the effect of industrial revolution and French revolution. The industrial civilization sow the seeds of individualism and materialism in human hearts. So man now believes in scientific explanation and has become sceptic.

Adhunik Bangla Kabby Sammobadi Chetona is the Ph. D. dissertation of Anik Mahmud. Any research needs voracious study, analysis, perseverance, field work and the like. *Adhunik Bangla Kabby Sammobadi Chetona* is the reflection of Anik's thoughts and hard work. Socialistic idea has been reflected in his book. Here Anik focuses on Hegel's Philosophy that social change is always dialectical. This socialistic idea is reinforced when Karl Marx's "Communist Manifesto" was published. The Russian Revolution in 1917 also had a tremendous effect on social change. And this change adds a new dimension to art and literature of the world.

This book is divided into seven chapters each chapter containing so many theories and information. The first chapter deals with a long discussion on the theoretical background of 'communism'. This explanation extends from primitive communism to Marx-Engle's communism. The second chapter deals with the political and cultural perspective of communism in Bengal. There was an upheaval of Marxian communist theory in the Indian sub-continent. So socialistic movement was rampant against the British colonial oppression. The third chapter highlights the different aspects of poetry of the communist poets. Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bishnu Dey, Somor Sen, Suvash Mukhupaddaya, Suekanto and others belong to this class. Nazrul is completely non-communal and anti-colonialism. His fiery protest against the colonial rule is :

এদেশ ছাড়বি কিনা বল
নইলে কিলের চোটে হাড় করবো জল ।
(English Translation)
Quit this land at once
Or I'll melt your body into water by blows.

So Anik Mahmud's evaluation about Nazrul is that Nazrul is a "Scientific communist". Anik's assessment about Rabindranath Tagore is quite logical and intuitive. He comments, "Rabindranath's thoughts about communism does not correspond to that of Marx. Tagore's communist theory is liberal and humanitarian". As such he stress the theory of co-operation than socialistic theory of Marx, Engles and Lenin.

As to Bishnu Dey, he is a skilled artist of communist theory. Socialist idea has been nicely presented in Dey's poetry. So Anik Mahmud regards Dey as

"Komal Gandhar of Communism" Bishnu Dey nourishes the theory of 'dialectical materialism' which becomes manifested in his works. Anik says that though Bishnu Dey is highly influenced by T.S. Eliot, yet as a poet Dey retains his originality. Somor Sen and Suvas Mukhopaddaya are always committed to communism. Theirs are dedicated Souls for communism. These two poets themselves proclaim, "Romantic poets are not they, but Marxists". Therefore Anik Mahmud calls them "Two travellers on the path of socialistic movement". Finally, Anik Mahmud's assessment of Sukanto is very fine and argumentative. Sukanto is the bumming runner of class consciousness. Sukanto voiced against the Fascism. His inflammatory speech like "রাত্রির বৃন্ত থেকে ছিড়ে আনো ফুটন্ত সকাল" (Bring about a sunny morning from the womb of night), "হে সূর্য শীতের সূর্য ...আলো আর উত্তাপ দিও রাস্তার ধারের ঐ উলঙ্গ ছেলেটাকে" (O sun, the sun of winter, bestow light upon the naked boy in the street.), "বিপ্লব স্পন্দিত বুকে মনে হয় আমিই লেনিন" (With the spirit of revolution, I think myself a Lenin) stress the spirit and strength of a nation.

In fact, *Adhunik Bangla Kabby Sammobadi Chetona* is a great achievement of Anik Mahmud. Anik Mahmud has duly paid tribute to those poets who are the champions of the socialistic movement. So this book adds a new dimension to the Bengali Literary criticism.

Alor Duti Asaduzzaman is a book on the life and works of poet Asaduzzaman. The poet Asaduzzaman is the teacher as well as the colleague of Anik Mahmud. Asaduzzaman, the professor of Bengali Department of Rajshahi University, was a hard-working personality. He was gentle, amiable and cordial to his colleagues as well as to his students. Poet Asaduzzaman bears a good moral character which has been compared by Anik Mahmud as 'ray of light'. The morals of Asaduzzaman enlightened the students and the people around him. Anik Mahmud regards him 'a shy brier'. A freedom fighter, Asaduzzaman is always progressive and humanitarian in his thoughts and action. He was a staunch fan of Robindranath Tagore as well as Jibonanda Das. He found a great pleasure in reading the works of Tagore and Jibonanda Das, and his profound love for these two poets sprang from the inner fountain of his thoughts. Anik Mahmud's analysis of the political career of Asaduzzaman is very highly encouraging.

Poet Asaduzzaman was exceptional so far as his literary career is concerned. He had a wonderful gift of the gab. The audience could not but be charmed by his excellent eloquence. In any literary conference- large or small- poet Asaduzzaman exhibited his presence of mind through his wise comments and criticism on different topics. In this respect, Anik Mahmud's analysis of Asaduzzaman's literary career is based upon information. Anik

says, ‘Asaduzzaman is not only a great poet but also a good story writer.’ In fact, *Alor Duti Asaduzzaman* is a good criticism by Anik Mahmud on the ideology and achievement of poet Asaduzzaman.

Jasimuddin Kavve Bisaybaichitra O Shilparup is a nice criticism of the themes and techniques in Jasimuddin’s poetry by Anik Mahmud. This book mainly highlights the poetic thoughts and achievements of poet Jasimuddin. The salient features of Jasimuddin’s poetry have been pointed out in this book. The most important factors of Jasimuddin’s poetry such as nature, folk life, folk culture, public consciousness, love and romanticism, humdrum of city life, nationalism and independence war, rhetoric and prosody-all have been minutely discussed, analysed and evaluated by Anik Mahmud.

Jasimuddin is the most outstanding rural poet in Bengali literature. The rustic setting and rural life are so nicely painted that it is rarely found in the works of other rural poets. Anik Mahmud says that Jasimuddin presents the life of common mass in an uncommon manner. In this respect, he refers to the comments of Achinto Kumer Sen Gupta on Jasimuddin’s presentation of country life : “Jasimuddin is the poet who first looks into the life of the peasants, the fishermen, the dairy men, farm workers. Jasimuddin’s ordinary portrayal of the rural life has become universal and perennial; for it is not artificial but natural, which touches the heart of the people”. Anik Mahmud quotes from some of Jasimuddin’s poems such as “Krisan”, “Matir Kanna”, “Dhan Khet”, etc which reflect the harsh reality of folk life. Jasimuddin delineates the miserable socio-economic condition of the poor rustic people and at the same time he gives a way out to improve their lot. So rightly says Anik Mahmud, “Jasimuddin is the poet of soil and man”. Though Jasimuddin is regarded as the rural poet, the charms of city life do not escape his eyes. He also writes poems on urban life. The artificiality, prosperity and grandeur of city life have been presented in Jasimuddin’s poetry. The poet is in his intoxication that our eternal folk culture might get extinct because of the impact of modern civilisation. So the poet suggests his mother in his book *Mago Jalaey Rakhis Alo* to form a bridge between the rural culture and urban culture. The poet writes:

রঙের রঙের সূতোর মেলিয়া ঝাঁপি
সূক্ষ্ম করিয়া আঁক মা যতনে
কোন সুখ স্মৃতি, কোনো দুঃখগীতি,
কুড়িয়েছিস যা সারাটি জনম ব্যাপি ।
তাহার উপরে লহরে লহরে
বিগতকালে কলাকৌশল আনি,
এ যুগে সে যুগে সেতুবন্ধন দিস মা যতনে টানি ।

(English Translation)

O Mother, sew the sweet memories and sorrowful songs
with colourful threads which you have collected
during your whole life,
Then bind the techniques of traditions with it.
Thus a bridge will be formed between past and present.

But city life as portrayed in Jasimuddin’s poetry is not as much panoramic as the rural life. Hence Anik Mahmud’s evaluation is appreciable when he says, “Jasimuddin is the artist of rural life but the commentator on urban life”.

Anik Mahmud also focuses on Jasimuddin’s love for freedom fighters. Jasimuddin’s poems praise the fallen in the independence war. In this connection, Anik Mahmud quotes from some of Jasimuddin’s poems. Apart from this, Anik Mahmud has done a comparative study between Jasimuddin and his contemporary rural poets in Bengali literature. Here he has shown that Jasimuddin is the best because Jasimuddin possesses a divine gift of poetic excellence. Really speaking, Anik’s criticism of Jasimuddin’s poetry is an excellent work which adds a new dimension to Bengali literature.

Anik Mahmud is a simple, charming poet. He is a poet of soil and man. His poetry deals with the universal themes of life, love and death. Anik sings of man’s strength and weakness with equal fervour. He is a poet who has something to offer to the readers of various levels of understanding. His poetry is the ‘voice of modern age’; for his poetry presents the joys and sorrows, doubts and faiths, frustration and desolation of the modern time. He carefully and powerfully reflects the emotions, ideals and thoughts of a land that surrounds him. As a critic, Anik Mahmud has also gained popularity. His criticism enriches and colours Bengali literature.

I highly delight that a Souvenir entitled **Suborno Somidh** is going to be published on the occasion of the 50th birth anniversary of poet Anik Mahmud. The renowned writers of Bangladesh and West Bengal have written on the life and works of Anik Mahmud. I wish the poet a long life.

[From *Suborno Somidh* : Anik Mahmud Panchashat Jayanti Sangbordhana Grantha (Golden Jubilee Achievements: A Book of Felicitations to Anik Mahmud on his fiftieth Birth Anniversary) Edited By Dr. Shahid Iqbal, Rajshahi, 2008, PP.667-683]