

Epilogue

In summing up the foregoing account, it should once again be made apparent that it has not been the intention of the study to be judgmental in claiming a qualitative degree of relevance for any one of the three different trajectories over the others, in the context of the art during the decades of the nineteen-forties and fifties in Bengal. None of the three need to be necessarily viewed as a 'more 'correct' or authentic response to the conditions of times. In fact the three distinct trends represent a sense of the multiple, wherein characteristically different artists responded to a given situation in varied paths exercising varied choices.

And the exercise of these varied choices invariably involves a question of subjectivity as well as a linguistic efficacy that can cross over the topical and the immediate. In fact, in many of the artists who had once been deeply moved to a social-realist language there was a later shift to humanist concerns where the political dictum was no longer overtly apparent. Instead, as in the instance of an artist like Chittaprosad, the optimism and wholesomeness of the forms and the style of his later days were in some ways to him a reassurance of his artistic integrity. It shall be pertinent in this regard to recall what an erstwhile cultural activist, Khaled Chowdhury, had to say later regarding the tradition of the *ganasangeet*. He wrote,

"With the best of intentions, urban lyricists, reaching out to the rural folk, have failed to touch them with their simulated folkism, e.g. when Tagore writes, 'Ay re mora phasal kati, math amader mita...' (O come, let's cut the harvest, the field's our pal...); or when Jyotirindra Maitra, one of the brightest stars of the I.P.T.A. writes: 'Eso dhan kati kastetey di shan,/ kastey moder mita re

bhai, kastej moder jan' (Come, let's cut the grain, and sharpen the sickle,/ The sickle's our pal, brother, the sickle's our life);

We have never heard a peasant sing any of these songs, even when we have pleaded with them 'How can I sing, babu, if it does not come from within me?'"¹

The issue of legacy in the context of the Calcutta Group has been duly valid with respect to artists of the succeeding generation in this urban centre. This simultaneously brings us to pose a parallel question for the practice of art in Santiniketan, where an overall philosophy of life lead to a unified vision of an art-life equation. But this equation too did not remain undisturbed in the fifties, with the institution transforming into a central university and succumbing to a uniformity and homogeneity of universities over the country. Forced into such a negotiation between its original philosophy and conviction and the undeniable/ unavoidable changes that followed, the question of legacy becomes as much valid for Santiniketan.

The quest for a modern language then, necessarily involves the integrity of the assimilation-expression equation, variously approached. Within these approaches and the logical consistency of their rationale lie the clues to the success of viable art-languages.

¹ Khaled Chowdhury, "Questions about Ganasangeet", English transcript by the author of his essay "Lokasangeet Ganasangeet Prasanga", *Sharadiya Pratikshan*, 1400 Bangabda