

# Stream of Consciousness in Buddhadeva Bose's Rat Bhore Brishti: Influences of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce

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## Abstract

Stream of Consciousness is a narrative mode which brings forward numerous thoughts and feelings of a character without maintaining a coherent structure. The term, 'Stream of consciousness' is first found in the book, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), penned by philosopher and psychologist William James. However, May Sinclair, in a literary article, published in *The Egoist* on April 1918, first applied the term stream of consciousness while discussing the novels of Dorothy Richardson. Since then many authors have used this literary device to discover the inner thoughts of the human mind. Amid them, Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf have used it more prominently than others. In Bengali literature, Buddhadeva Bose, according to many critics, for the first time, adeptly manipulated stream of consciousness technique in *Rat Bhore Brishti*. The way Bose applied it to his novel is very similar to the way James Joyce and Virginia Woolf did so in their novels. The article examines how Buddhadeva Bose, directly being influenced by Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, wrote his stream of consciousness novel, *Rat Bhore Brishti*. It will encapsulate that though Bose followed Woolf and Joyce in using the technique in the novel, he brought some remarkable changes in applying so.

**Index terms**— stream of consciousness; role of time; love; sex; marriage; masculinity.

## 1 Introduction

The body is the main component of love-the beginning, the end, everything's the body.

(It Rained All Night by Buddhadeva Bose) Before discussing how Buddhadeva Bose (1908–1974), being influenced by Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, manipulated the literary technique stream of consciousness in *Rat Bhore Brishti* (1967), it requires to focus on what stream of consciousness is and its different facets. The widely used following definition helps us get an elementary notion regarding the technique:

The phrase 'stream of consciousness' refers to an uninterrupted and unhindered collection and occurrence of thoughts and ideas in the conscious mind. In literature, the phrase refers to the flow of these thoughts with reference to a particular character's thinking process. This literary device is usually used in order to provide a narrative in the form of the characters Author: Assistant Professor, Department of English and Modern Languages, Central Women's University, 6 Hatkhola Road, Tikatuly, Dhaka. e-mail: tusar.talukder@gmail.com thoughts instead of using dialogue or description ("Literary Devices," 2010). Though to purport the chaotic flow of human thoughts and impressions psychologist William James first used the term stream of consciousness in his *The Principles of Psychology* in 1890, Stream of consciousness novel as a new literary genre appeared in the realm of English literature in the early part of the nineteenth century. In English literature, three literary figures namely Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf contributed a lot to flourish the genre. In particular, through the publications of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) the term psychological novel or stream of consciousness novel became much familiar to the reader. It is essential to mention that these two novelists prioritized the internal reality of human psychology much more than the external. So, their novels unfold the inner realities of human psychology.

## 2 II.

### 3 Henri Bergson's Theory of Time

Henri Bergson's theory of time has influenced most of the stream of consciousness novelists much. In such novels, time plays a very dominant role. Bergson divided time into two sections-one is inner or psychological time, and the other is clock or mechanical time. Clock time hardly plays any role in the psychological novel. On the other hand, inner time is conceived as a flow, a continuous moving stream and hence the division into past, present, and future as artificial and mechanical. Consequently, psychological time always plays a foremost role in the stream of consciousness novel. In fact, like traditional novels, there is no chronological forward movement in the psychological novel; rather in this type of novel, the characters always go back and forth; the movement is sinuous. A character can go from the present to the past or from the past to the present. In this lineage, David Daiches comments that 'the stream of consciousness technique is a means of escape from the tyranny of the time dimension' (9). In particular, this paper discusses how Buddhadeva Bose, especially being influenced by Virginia Woolf, avoided the clock time and prioritized inner time in his novel.

### 4 Layers of Human Consciousness

Psychologists Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Alfred Adler minutely studied the human mind. Their study reveals that there are layers within layers in the human consciousness. Beneath the conscious, there is the sub-conscious and the unconscious. And the epoch-making revelation is that the past lives on in the subconscious and the unconscious and it brings up to the conscious level through memory and recollection. And the conscious is a small part of human psyche or soul. An analysis of both *Rat Bhore Brishti* and *Mrs. Dalloway* proves the veracity of the previously stated statement. The modern writers like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Buddhadeva Bose invariably tried to deal with love, sex and marriage quite frankly in their stream of conscious novels. For instance, James Joyce successfully dealt with love and sex in his *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Buddhadeva Bose's free and frank treatment of extramarital sex in his *Rat Bhore Brishti* vividly exposes the influence of Joyce on him. Indeed, the preoccupation of the modern novel with sex themes is very much to the theories of psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis.

IV. The Use of Stream of Consciousness in *Rat Bhore Brishti* Banned when it was first published in the Bengali in 1964 on charges of obscenity, *Rat Bhore Brishti* (*It Rained All Night*, 2010) went on to become a best-seller. In this novel, Bose experimented with the technique stream of consciousness. The close reading of the book shows that Bose juxtaposed the style of both James Joyce and Virginia Woolf in case of applying the technique to his novel. However, in doing so, he followed Virginia Woolf much more than James Joyce. In this regard, this article has considered Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as the secondary sources to discuss and evaluate *Rat Bhore Brishti* as a stream of consciousness novel.

*Rat Bhore Brishti* develops with a simple plot describing the thoughts and feelings of two central characters, Nayonangshu and Maloti. The novelist deciphers the suppressed thoughts and impressions of the two characters through the stream of consciousness technique. The novel begins with the self-confession of Maloti exposing that when her husband, one night, goes a few miles away to visit one of his sick aunts, she has had a sexual intercourse with Jayanto, a friend of Nayonngshu. Though Maloti, all the time, tries to legitimize her action consciously, she suffers from an oscillation. She accuses that since Nayanangshu invariably remains so engrossed with books, he becomes incapable of discovering the most important thing of a woman's life: 'how to pacify a woman sexually.' Rather Maloti opines that Jayanto, not much educated like Nayonangshu, not so gentle and tidy like him, proves his masculinity which her husband fails to show. So, she concludes by saying that she does not care if Nayonnagshu becomes able to detect what happened that night. She delivers the idea that to meet the demands of the body is one of the vital ingredients of love. And it is not a sin if a married woman meets those demands staying with a man who is more passionate and manly than her husband. Maloti's following words bring into focus the necessity of sexuality in love:

It was as if a dam had broken-flood-the flood has swept me away, or perhaps gigantic black clouds had been gathering, since morning, motionless-the day had turned dark, darker, like a hazy blue tunnel, suffocatingly hot and humid. Then in the evening the clouds burst with a sudden rumble, pouring down rain, incessantly-squeezing, consuming, tearing my body apart. You did this to me, Jayanto (45).

The words stated above unfold the inner realities of Maloti's mind, which is a vital element of the stream of consciousness novel. The second chapter displays the inner-thoughts of Nayonangshu. He clearly understands what Maloti did last night. After having sex with Jayanto, Maloti even forgets closing the doors. To see Maloti naked, Nayonangshu recollects a bunch of past happenings. He repeatedly tries to convince himself saying that Maloti has done it to meet her body's thirst and this intercourse does not bring any change because Maloti is as she was. In this regard, Nayonangshu mentions:

Our bodies are like chained dogs. The mind leads them around. No one can hinder the mind as it nimbly goes wherever it pleases, but the body, being a clumsy and cumbersome piece of matter, lags behind. Nothing new has happened-it's just that your body has carried out an order from your mind. Maloti, don't fret. To me, it's all the same. Nothing's changed-it just doesn't matter (21). Broadly, the second chapter shows how Nayonangshu's consciousness freely goes backward and forward. At the beginning of the chapter, he starts reminiscing the days of his adolescence when he punches the boobs of two girls without knowing what love is or how it works. In those

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days, love appeared to him as chemistry of two minds, which is also a traditional idea of society. Nayonangshu's revisit to the past purports that he gets enslaved to psychological time rather than mechanical or clock time. To justify Maloti's sexual love for Jayanto he slips into the realities of his past. He describes how much he got disheartened when Kusum, the girl whom he loved most during his university days, was married off because he wanted to have her both platonically and sexually, though he didn't have any physical relationship with her. He also expresses he had a fear of physical love. And his following words bear the proof of it: "We met, we talked. Our hearts would beat a little faster. Our eyes would glimmer. I'd sense a faint scent when she passed by. I'd think of her during rainy afternoons. This was enough. Anything more would have ruined it all" (32).

The third chapter opens with the satisfaction Maloti has got from the physical contact with Jayanto. Then she dwells on the days of her youth including her first meeting with Nayonangshu, the love-making days between the two, the beginning days of her married life, the first introduction to Jayanto, her husband's necessary advice to be an independent woman and so on. The above lines denote the flow of her consciousness waving backward and forward and psychological time controls her consciousness rather than clock time. But she wonders thinking that Nayonangshu, who in the early days of conjugal life always rebuked her for not joining his friends while discussing different issues, himself turns a different type of man only due to her fascination towards Jayanto. If we profoundly think of the arguments of Maloti, we must confess Maloti is right in making her arguments. These arguments stem out of the conscious mind of Maloti. The closing of the novel shows that Maloti and Nayonangshu lead their life as usual though the inner realities of their minds invariably haunt them. Also, the ending gives us a strong message that human beings cannot fully wipe out their inner realities, derived from the conscious mind and dominated by psychological time. The novel, in the end, shows us how both Nayonangshu and Maloti try to lead their life as it has been but the inner realities, sometimes, revisit them. In this regard, the narrator of the novel comments: "then you and Maloti will slowly grow old-like countless millions everywhere-sightless, mindless, ignorant-like them you will live year after year after year. But know this for sure: a snapped wire can never be made whole again, you shall never recapture that lost melody-you shall just exist, grow old with one who does not love you, one whom you will have forgotten to love. But what difference does it make, tell me-love's not really important. It's the husband-wife relationship that is. What matters is life, and we must live it" (137).

In this phase of the paper, it needs to discuss the use of Stream of Consciousness in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to analyze Rat Bhore Brishti as a stream of consciousness or psychological novel. It is important to note that Buddhadeva Bose followed the ways of the aforesaid authors in case of using the stream of consciousness technique in his novel. Virginia Woolf always tried to bring some changes in characterization and plot construction in writing novels. And she adopted the technique stream of consciousness to do so. She had experimented much with the technique in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Therefore, the critics consider this as her first successful stream of consciousness novel. The novel begins with some thoughts and impressions of Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway, an upper-class housewife playing the role of the protagonist of the novel. In fact, the novel covers one full day of Mrs. Dalloway's life from morning to evening, but this time-frame is not considerable because the flow of the stream of consciousness of Mrs. Dalloway takes us to her inner realities of mind which completely avoid mechanical time; rather psychological time invariably dominates her as we have seen in Rat Bhore Brishti that psychological time always dominates the thoughts of both Nayonangshu and Maloti. The very beginning of *Mrs. Dalloway* shows Clarissa Dalloway taking preparations for her party which she will host in the evening. She goes out for buying flowers for the party. The beauty of nature of that very morning fascinates her much. All at once, her mind goes backward. She starts recollecting the past moments of her life. She remembers that before her matrimony once Peter Walsh, an old suitor, proposed her and she refused. Those past days haunt her for a moment. She also recollects why she refused Peter and preferred Richard Dalloway to marry. She explains if she married Peter, she might not enjoy the independence which she enjoys now after she marries Richard. She utters that though Peter's love is bit sentimental, it is still impossible to erase so from her mind. Likewise, Sally, another friend of hers, would love her much. Woolf writes about Clarissa's feelings for Sally: "Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally" (40). Furthermore, she has lived thirty years with Richard, her husband peacefully; however, she fails to remember any unforgettable moment which she has had with him. In this regard, we can mention A. D. Moody's comment: "There is no unforgettable kiss, as with Sally, and no fierce quarrel, as with Peter, between Clarissa and Richard" (7). In this regard, we can compare Maloti's thoughts with those of Mrs. Dalloway. In the third chapter, while recollecting Jayanto's inevitable love for her, Maloti mentions: I want to be flattered, worshipped. I want devotion. I want to see myself as larger than I am? What can I do? How am I at fault? How can I reject someone who is madly in love with me? Why should such strength be expected from me alone? I am human, I am a woman. I have a body of flesh and blood (99).

So, we find that both Maloti and Clarissa repeatedly slide into their past in case of describing good memories of their life. They cannot dwell on their present moments. It indicates that psychological time dominates their life more than the clock time.

On the contrary, James Joyce, while manipulating the stream of consciousness technique in his novel, put more emphasis on the importance of the idea of epiphany than the role of time. We have found that Bose also gave much thought to the idea of epiphany in his novel. But before discussing it, we need to understand how Joyce manipulated the idea in his novel. Epiphany has a relevant presence in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young*

Man, in fact, many critics strongly consider it as an essential part of Joyce's aesthetic thoughts. Although there are many interpretations about the meaning of this term, we can associate it, in Joyce works, with a sudden revelation, a moment when an ordinary object is perceived in a way that reveals an unfathomable significance. The end of *Stephen Hero* (1904), an unfinished draft of the autobiographical novel written by James Joyce, addresses the meaning of this term and its relevance to his writing. In it, Stephen Dedalus states that the function of writing is 'to record epiphanies with extreme care.' In the same passage, he defines the epiphany as 'a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself' (6). So, Joyce believed that it is important to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they are the most delicate and evanescent of moments. For example, Stephen Dedalus, the protagonist of this semiautobiographical novel, engages himself in a journey to discover his inner self. He questions Irish conventions and detects the core problems engulfing Catholicism. He knows very well that the traditional society will not accept his notions. However, when he discovers that life has other meanings beyond religion, he seeks independence. He realizes that there are two paths open before him: one is religion, and the other is art. The following revelation unveils his rejection of priesthood and his self-search in the world of art:

I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it calls itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile and cunning (208).

The lines indicate Dedalus's moments of epiphany. He realizes that as an artist he needs freedom and only art can give him so. Likewise, Buddhadeva Bose unfolds the moments of epiphany both in *Maloti* and *Nayonangshu* encounter. *Maloti*'s following words bring into focus her ultimate realization about love and marriage: Do you want me to tell you that I don't love Angshu—not any longer—and that I love Jayanto? No, all that love business is just a piece of fiction, a fabrication of people like Angshu, an idea, a figment of the imagination, an ideal, perhaps, which no one is able to approach but everyone talks volubly about in order to hide their failures (86).

On the other hand, when *Nayonangshu* discovers that love involves both body and mind and even body plays the pivotal role in love, he says: "Love is organic, alive. Love is sexual. Love without the body is nothing" (43). The utterance expresses his realization about love and its functions. So, we can say that Bose has successfully applied the idea of epiphany to this novel.

V.

## 5 Conclusion

*Rat Bhore Brishti* is an unforgettable novel of desire, adultery, jealousy, and love. And to amplify these universal themes, Buddhadeva Bose brilliantly used the stream of consciousness technique in the novel. Though he took the idea of psychological or inner time from Virginia Woolf and the idea of epiphany from James Joyce, he applied those to the novel in his way. He, manipulating the components of the technique, tried much to present us with a number of aspects of love and marriage. On the whole, this paper has unveiled Bose's contribution to the use of stream of consciousness technique in Bengali literature. Furthermore, Bose's storytelling has added a dimension to the technique. Throughout the novel, he used first person point of view deciphering the inner thoughts of the characters while both Joyce and Woolf, in their novels, frequently shifted from one viewpoint to the other. However, in the final chapter, Bose, to some extent, used third person point of view to add the narrator's comments. Overall, as a full-fledged modernist writer and as an influential exponent of modernism, Buddhadeva Bose has played a very significant role in popularizing the stream of consciousness technique in Bengali literature.

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