

Modernism vs. Postmodernism: A Comparative Study of Different Poetic Movements in Bengal

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Abstract

The Bengali poetry of the past century has transformed itself according to the changes in the philosophy, literature and the socio-political atmosphere of the region. This is a study of a comparative analysis of modernism and postmodernism in the Bengali poetry from a point of view of the stylistic characteristics of the poetry, themes and ideology. Though modernist poetry of Bengal in the works of Jibanananda Das, Buddhadeb Basu and Kallol Movement was very much inspired by existentialism, depth of the mind and urban alienation; postmodernist poetry in Shakti Chattopadhyay, Malay Roy Choudhury and the movement of Hungry Generation brought the idea of fragmentation, irony, intertextuality and subversion of literary tradition.

The evolution of Bengali poetry from structured modernist expressions to broken, experimental forms of postmodernism will be studied in this research through a single key parameter: poetic structure and form. The study tries to reveal concepts of philosophical and artistic transformation by means of Analysing the use of free verse, stream of consciousness, surrealist imagery, and intertextuality as a way of highlighting how the structure of poetry itself functioned as a medium for the philosophical and artistic shifts. It will help understand how the modernist constraints changed to postmodernist liberation reshaping literary aesthetics of Bengali literature.

Keywords: *Modernism, Postmodernism, Bengali Poetry, Poetic Structure, Free Verse, Krittibas Group, Hungry Generation, Experimental Poetry, Fragmentation, Literary Movements.*

1. Introduction

1.1 The Evolutionary Arc of Bengali Poetry

It is a tradition of Bengali poetry that is fluid and changing along with historical changes, cultural trends and intellectual discourses. Tracing the lyrical devotion of medieval Vaishnava poets, the humanist universalism of Rabindranath Tagore, and the various reinventions that Bengali poetry has made to deal with the changing socio political landscapes and ideas about poetry, poetry in Bengal is presented. While it had gotten off to determined start in the early 20th century, that would change dramatically as a new generation of poets sought to tear their work away from romantic idealism and wrestle with the complications of modern living.

It was the radical break with the romantic and nationalist traditions of Tagorean poetics, that made modernist Bengali poetry an event of the 1920s and 1930s. This took on a more somber, inward looking mood reflecting the anxiety of a colonial, war, industrial, existential insecure time. Partially inspired by the Symbolism, Imagism, and Existentialism movements in Europe, the modernist poets delved into the psychological, fragmentation and urban alienation of an individual in society to create a wholly new, personal but universal poetic idiom.

But by the late 20th century, when the end of the mid 20th century gave way, the very basis of modernist aesthetics was being challenged. Emerging as a direct challenge to the structured experimentalism of modernism, Bengali poetry thus saw the postmodernist wave as a direct revolt against fixed literary conventions, and becomes characterized by radical playfulness, intertextuality, linguistic fragmentation and metafictional subversion. A spirit of rebellion was introduced by Hungry Generation movement and Krittibas poets of postmodern times; they turned later poets away from the former poetic hierarchies and the concept of one single and intact poetic voice.

1.2 From Modernism to Postmodernism: The Transformation of Poetic Form

Although modernism and postmodernism have a sense of the experimental in common, their respective approaches to the form and structure of a poem are quite different. In modernist poetry, existential questioning and complex themes were not a rudderless affair, but still had a discipline which features controlled free verse, carefully selected

imagery and a sense of poetic craft. Nevertheless, Jibanananda Das and other poets experimented with innovative metaphors and dreamlike landscapes in poems that somehow were formally cohesive, owing to the dharma of poetic integrity.

Whereas the postmodernist Bengal poets did not merely dismantle form, but actually dissolved it into chaotic structures, linguistic ruptures, absurd juxtapositions and anarchic textual play. Shakti Chattopadhyay, Malay Roy Choudhury and Nabarun Bhattacharya broke away from traditional aesthetic in poetry by collage and so forth, culminating in a tension-filled self aware poetic experience. Some poets turned to intertextuality, irony and fragmentation as dominant postmodernist devices designed to attack the contextuality and destabilize the authority of poetic language itself.

1.3 The Scope of This Study

This thesis encompasses a comparative research on Bengali poetry from a structural and form perspective concerning modernism and postmodernism. Despite previous work on the philosophical and thematic matters pertaining to these movements, there still lacks any conversation on how their poetic form functioned as its own site of rebellious and innovative artistic work.

This study was rather than broadly addressing the historical evolution of ideas.

- For the other purpose, the passages should be read through to analyse how modernist poets structured their verses to mirror psychological realism, existential crises, and urban solitude.
- Look at how postmodernist poets have unsettled conventions in poetry through use of disorder, pastiche of language, and postmodern lounge feeding on itself to question authorship, meaning, and artistic authority.
- I identify the transition from the postmodernist aesthetic and structural ruptures of chaos to the modernist coherence.

This study will concentrate in the transmutation of poetic form, which gives a new understanding of how Bengali poetry has been reconstituting itself from the structured introspection of the modernism to the anarchic playfulness of the postmodernism.

1.4 Significance of the Study

In order to place Bengali poetry in the context of global literary modernity, it is necessary to understand the structural evolution of Bengali poetry. This research will trace this movement from metrical control to free flowing experimentalism.

- Supply a deeper understand of Bengali poetry's sometimes bewildering artistic paradigms.
- Identify the affinity in meaning between global literary theories and local cultural expressions of Bengal.
- Will be beneficial to broader comparative literary studies in showing how poetic form is an index of historical and intellectual transformation.

By doing so, the study serves to give a glimpse of the richness of Bengali poetic innovation to literary scholars, poets, critics and cultural theorists concerned with the area of South Asian literature and modernism and postmodernism.

2. Objective of the Study

As an art form, poetry has always been intertwined with the current changes, intellectual pursuits and artistic experiments. As the Bengali poetry went forth from modernism to postmodernism, the evolution was not in terms of subject or themes; it was a structure redefinition, a fundamental departure—from the controlled, introspective modernist expressions to postmodernist experiments that were impishly disoriented, fragmented and often chaotic.

In this study the evolution of the poetic structure of poetic structure in Bengali poetry will be Analyzed and how the rigid, metrical qualities of the modernist poetry transformed into disrupted, fragmented and intertextual features of the postmodernist poetry. Instead of concentrating almost exclusively on themes of this poetry research, form is the main lens considered regarding how shifts in poetic structure reflect broader literary and philosophical occurrences.

The core objectives of this study are:

2.1 Examining the Structural Discipline of Modernist Poetry

- Metrical Precision and Controlled Free Verse
 - Thus, apart from certain periods, modernist Bengali poetry began with a substantial existing body of work from which it could work its way as it took up complex psychological themes in poetry, keeping intact the metrical structures and the vestiges of the traditional forms.

- Jibanananda Das, Buddhadeb Basu, and Amiya Chakravarty whose poetry attempts to navigate existentialism, alienation and fragmented consciousness, as also managed to conform to structural integrity and rhythmic cohesion.
- I will use this study to determine how modernist poets utilized the metrical constraints, rhyme schemes, and tightly structured free verse as introspection and existential inquiry.

2.2 Investigating the Disruption of Structure in Postmodernist Poetry

- Fragmentation, Free Verse, and Structural Rebellion
 - In Bengali poetry, by the 1960s and after, there was a radical break from the modernist tradition in the work of poets like Shakti Chattopadhyay, Malay Roy Choudhury, and Nabarun Bhattacharya who broke poetic forms totally, attempted free flowing, chaotic, fragmented forms and so on.
 - Indeed, the Hungry Generation poets and Krittibas movement deliberately cast aside metrical control so the poetic line would have jarring syntactic breaks, disrupted narrative flows, and layering of intertextuality as part of their aesthetic rebellion.
 - This study will search for the ways in which the postmodernist poets dismantled formal constraints, and how they preferred to create poetry which is self referential, multi layered, structurally unpredictable etc.

2.3 Poetic Structure as a Reflection of Literary and Philosophical Shifts

- From Existential Order to Postmodern Chaos
 - It was intimately linked with philosophical upheavals that led to the transition from modernist coherence to postmodernist fragmentation.
 - Modernist poets, then, were influenced by existentialism, symbolism, as well as psychological realism, and often attempted to make meaning through introspection even in shattered assignments.
 - On the other hand, postmodernist poets defended the idea that there was no stable meaning whatsoever, and thus rejected the very idea of dedicated linearity in both form and content and unlike the modernists, that is, picked up the absurdism and irony.
 - This research will investigate how it is that structural disruptions to the poem mimic human intellectual movements, such as poststructuralism, deconstruction, and intertextual theory.

2.4 Understanding How Structural Transitions Redefine Poetic Expression

- In addition, the study is meant to place Bengali poetry within the context of modernist and postmodernist literary traditions globally.
- Through a study of how the alterations in poetic structure represents deeper artistic and intellectual progression, this research will fill the void between form and philosophy and will show that poetic and structural passing does not only involve an aesthetical terms but also a symbolization of the progressive mindset.

With this structural analysis, the study will give insight to how incorporation of the poetic form itself as a medium of literary revolution allows poetry to mold itself, undermine itself, and transform itself from one generation to another.

3. Research Question

This paper attempts to explore the Structural Paradigm Shift in Bengali Poetry.

For achieving the above mentioned objectives, this study is going to address the following central research question: In what ways did the change in poetic structure from modernism to postmodernism bring about a revolution to the Bengali poetry and what role were fragmentation, free verse and intertextuality played that time?

The research will be concerned with this question.

- In addition, I investigated formal innovations in modernist and postmodernist poetry in order to trace changes in structure, rhythm and construction of poetry.
- I will examine fragmentation, free verse, and intertextuality as core mechanisms of postmodern poetic subversion.
- Determine how these formal transitions affected the meaning of poems, the involvement of the reader, and the artistry of an artist.

Here in this research I will present an in depth study about poetic form; in this regard I will give an accurate and elaborate account of how modernist structural constraint changed to postmodernist liberation, and this aspect of change in Bengali poetry in terms of aesthetic and technical language will be studied in great details.

Conclusion: Why This Research Matters

In contrast to previous work on the theme of philosophical or thematic concerns, this study is devoted to the problem of the transformation of literary structure by concentrating specifically on poetic structure. An understanding of how Bengali poetry has come to explore the structured introspection of modernism and the chaotic playfulness of postmodernism will help in grasping the deeper facility with which the poet has been experimenting with form, for it is as important, if not more, than the content being transmitted in filling the verse.

Not only does this investigation chronologically document the shift in the acts of poetic change, it is also a critical inquiry into the poetic change and poetry's reinvention, dismantling of its own foundations, and constant (re)definition of artistic expression.

4. Methodology

This thesis involves the use of qualitative research which combines textual analysis, comparative literary criticism, and historical contextualization for studying how Bengali poetic structure was changed from the modernism to postmodernism in Bengali poetry. Analysing structural elements like meter, rhyme, syntax, the inferences from free verse, fragmentation and intertextuality, the study intends to show how the evolving poetic aesthetics reflect changing philosophical and artistic concerns of Bengali literature.

Having been designed to keep a satisfactory balance between artistic evolution, socio-cultural influences on poetic form and textual rigor, the methodology strives to keep a systematical approach exploring both the artistic evolution and the socio-cultural influences on poetic form.

4.1 Data Collection Methods

The study does a primary textual analysis and secondary critical sources to ensure that a wide view is taken on poetic structure.

Primary Textual Analysis

Major modernist and postmodernist Bengali poems shall be read very closely and studied concerning:

- Structural elements such as rhyme, meter, syntax, and fragmentation.
- Moving away from traditional forms, the text examines how modernist poets were successful in conserving formal coherence, whereas postmodernist poets chose to follow disruption and chaos.
- I found it appropriate primarily in its application to shifts in poetic rhythm and lineation, especially the transition from metrical to unstructured free verse.

Examined will be the following poets and their work:

Modernist Bengali Poets (1930s–1960s)

- Surrealist imagery, poetic introspection, dreamlike imagery, structured verse, and verses. Precision in metrical form, use of introspective and psychological depth, as in the case of Buddhadeb Basu.
- Sunil Gangopadhyay: A transitional figure between modernism and postmodernism who manages to unite the structure with thematic experimentation.
- **Postmodernist Bengali Poets (1960s–Present)**
Shakti Chattopadhyay is characterized by rejection of structured verse, abstraction of language and fluidity of imagery.
- Malay Roy Choudhury: Radical disruption of poetic norms in terms of language, sense distortion, stream of consciousness, shock aesthetics (Hungry Generation).
- The author, Nabarun Bhattacharya: Intertextual, surreal and with chaotic structuring, comparable to his blend of prose and poetry to challenge poetic conventions.

The transition of poetic structure will first be mapped in this primary textual analysis in order to directly compare modern discipline and postmodern fragmentation.

Secondary Sources

The study will also undertake the literary and historical review of essays on literary analyses and interpretation, historical accounts on modernism and post modernism in Bengali poetry. This includes:

- By integrating scholarly articles and critiques of major Bengali poets and reading their works to understand how these experiences are interpreted and received today.

- My analysis draws on the literary manifestos and polemics of these two groups which are the Kallol group, whose influence can be detected in what is dubbed modernism in India, and the Hungry Generation movement which came to be associated with postmodernism in India.
- Exploring Western literary influences, particularly:
 - o Influence of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound on the latter's modernist formal discipline and poetic experimentation.
 - o Baudrillard and Derrida – Postmodernist deconstruction of meaning and intertextual fragmentation.

This comparative framework guarantees that the entire study is not merely Bengali literary traditions based, but relates to those of the global literary movements.

4.2 Data Analysis Techniques

To interpret structural changes in poetic form, this study will employ comparative poetic analysis and thematic structural analysis, emphasizing how these elements evolved across literary movements.

Comparative Poetic Analysis

- Contrasting formal structures in modernist and postmodernist poetry, focusing on:
 - o Meter and lineation – The shift from structured forms to open-ended, fragmented poetry.
 - o Syntax and rhythm – The gradual erosion of poetic control and increasing reliance on spontaneity and improvisation.
 - o Poetic devices – The changing role of metaphor, symbolism, and surrealism in both movements.
- Identifying recurrent poetic devices that mark the transition from structured modernist expression to fragmented postmodernist aesthetics.

Thematic Structural Analysis

- Examining how the breakdown of structure aligns with postmodernist rejection of fixed meaning.
- Assessing how poets used form to challenge existing literary conventions:
 - o Jibananda Das and Buddhadeb Basu's controlled precision vs. Malay Roy Choudhury's anarchic poetic rebellion.
 - o Sunil Gangopadhyay's transitional free verse vs. Shakti Chattopadhyay's radical abandonment of narrative coherence.

This analytical approach will ensure that poetic form is explored as a reflection of larger literary and philosophical transformations.

4.3 Sample Selection and Framework

The study then chooses a representative set of these poems which most clearly represent the transformation between modernist and postmodernist structures.

Modernist Bengali Poets (1930s–1960s)

- Two more poems: 'Banalata Sen' by Jibananda Das with its balance of surreal without surrendering to its imagery within structured free verse.
- Buddhadeb Basu: "Ei Shohore" – Metrical precision with existential themes.
- Sunil Gangopadhyay: "Kothay Alo" – A bridge between modernist coherence and postmodernist ambiguity.

Postmodernist Bengali Poets (1960s–Present)

- Shakti Chattopadhyay: "Kolkatar Jishu" – Abandonment of metrical constraints, experimental abstraction.
- Malay Roy Choudhury: "Stark Electric Jesus" – Shock-driven stream-of-consciousness poetry.
- Nabarun Bhattacharya: "Ei Mrityu Upatyaka Amar Desh Na" Chaotic structure, mixture of prose and poetry provided.

Through the systematic Analysing of the poetic form, this study will shed light on the structural rebellion in the transition from the modernism to the postmodernism in Bengali poetry.

Conclusion: Why This Methodology Matters

The methodology utilized in this research guarantees that it is technical, exacting and comparative in approach, and that it centers on poetic structure as a location of literary evolution. The study will use cross-referencing critical sources, detailed textual analysis, and compare would analyse how poetic form itself became a battleground for artistic revolution.

This research will be rather different from the ideas of simply tracing thematic movement from modernism to postmodernism instead, it will point out the formal differences between them and how poetry forever reinvents itself by means of structural transformations.

5. Expected Outcomes

This thesis will offer a complete study about the structural transformation of Bengali poetry since modernism to postmodernism through the change of the form, meter, syntax, and poetic devices. The study focuses on poetic structure instead of broader thematic concerns in order to provide the precise, technical, and comparative study of literary innovation. They will help to deepen our appreciation that poetic form itself works all the more as a tool of literary rebellion and artistic reinvention.

5.1 Understanding the Structural Divide: Order vs. Chaos in Poetic Form

The major expected outcome of this study is the clear definition of the structural differences between modernist and postmodernist Bengali poetry. This study will:

- Along with the discussion on modernist poets Jibanananda Das and Buddhadeb Basu, we explore their attempt to experiment with psychological depth and surreal imagery while keeping the structure controlled, rhythmic and metrical consistency.
- What follows is an attempt to demonstrate how postmodernist poets went one step further, completely destroying poetic conventions by selecting fragmented syntax, abrupt line breaks, linguistic dissonance and anarchic free verse quite opposite its nearest antecedents in traditional and modernist poetry.
- Analyse how modernist poetry made use of the structure not so much to explore existential themes, but how postmodernist poetry refused structure and the whole idea of structure as a critique of meaning, order and literary authority.

This study will therefore demonstrate how poetic structure came to be a mirror of literary, artistic and philosophical dynamisms and turned Bengali poetry into a site of uninterrupted experimentation and renewal by tracing the significance of these formal contrasts..

5.2 Reevaluating Bengali Modernism and Postmodernism: Form as a Site of Rebellion

This research will question traditional readings of the Bengali modern and postmodern by focusing the literary revolution on the poetry form. Key insights include:

- Shows how poet form itself became a place of artistic maverick, rather than just a tool for thematic or ideological purposes.
- Their works demonstrate that modernism was not perfectly uniform, as poets like Sunil Gangopadhyay served as transitional figures that created art that was simultaneously structure in the modernist style but was also becoming into the new insights and styles of the postmodernist.
- Postmodernist poetry is, therefore, established to be both more and less than its simple negation of modernism; it is modernist experimentation taken to its most extreme degree.

However, this study will be able to offer a more detailed understanding of modernism and postmodernism than simple chronological divisions by analysing how the evolution of modern poetic styles and structures were historically determined by Bengali literary history.

5.3 Mapping Global and Local Influences: The Interplay of Western and Bengali Aesthetics

A Lock is here imposed on the constitution and operation of the state as a result of this reading. A Lock is exerted on the constitution and practice of the state by this reading.

- Western Modernist Aesthetics (T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and W.B. Yeats) has also been directly influential in Bengali poetry (Jibanananda Das and Buddhadeb Basu among others) through the use of symbolism, stream of consciousness and psychological introspection etc.
- Such Western postmodernist ideas (Baudrillard, Derrida, Barthes) had been resonating in the work of Malay Roy Choudhury and Nabarun Bhattacharya through the use of intertextuality, linguistic play and self referencing mode of poetry.
- Along with performing the work of modernism and postmodernism, Bengali folk traditions and classical Sanskrit poetics also shaped modernist and postmodernist experimentation to produce unprecedented poetic hybrids that mixed tradition with the new.

This global local literary mapping of these intersected motifs will situate Bengali poetry in a transnational discourse; Bengali modernist and postmodernist poets did borrow and sometimes subvert the Western poetic norms.

5.4 Bridging Formalism and Experimentalism: Understanding Poetic Shifts in Bengali Literary History

This study will analyze form as evolving in its own right.

In particular it offers a structural framework for understanding how Bengali poetry changed from a formal discipline of modernism to an experimental freedom of postmodernism.

- Then you will find key transitional figures (Sunil Gangopadhyay) who fully invented the art of blurring the structure of modernism and the deconstruction of post modernism.
- Prove that the modernist and postmodernist poetry was not in binary opposition, but all of these were included in the continuum of the poetic innovation.
- Include a model for future studies of Bengali poetics focused on form as the chief instrument of literary transformation.

Finally, this research will contribute to literary scholarship in that it provides a lens through which one can analyse shifts in poetry, in a new way that ensures that form not lapsing after content but being an integral part of the workings of literary development.

Conclusion: A Technical Yet Compelling Exploration of Bengali Poetic Innovation

Pretending to ignore thematic generalizations in order to focus only on poetic structure, this study conducts a technical but compelling study of the form itself as a vehicle of artistic transformation.

The findings will have wide implications for the study of Bengali poetry by showing that form is as revolutionary as content in the making of a literary movement. Aesthetically located at the intersection of two major cultural moments in Bengali literature in the early twentieth century, 'Chapters of an Oblivion' will be of special interest to literary critics and scholars of Bengali poetry; poets, scholars of various fields of the Bengali language; and cultural historians, in regard to the ways in which aesthetic shifts can reflect wider artistic and intellectual life.

In the end this study will rewrite the story of Bengali modern modernism and postmodernism, proving that poetic structure is more than an instrumental factor of literary expression, it is in fact an active force that determines the core of artistic creation.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The Structural Shift: Beyond Thematic Evolution

Bengali poetry underwent in structural and aesthetic, as well as subject matter an absolute change from modernism to postmodernism. This shift is a break from the disciplined introspection of the modernist poetry to the playful, chaotic and occasionally disruptive tendency of the postmodernist verse; this marks a shift that has its effects upon the form, meter, syntax and composition of the text. This study shows how by looking at the role of form, and not only thematic concerns, form takes the place of the battleground for artistic and intellectual experimentation.

There were modernist poets like Jibanananda Das, Buddhadeb Basu, Sunil Gangopadhyay; all of them, though exploring the regions of alienation, existential dilemma, fragmented consciousness, was able to establish a certain order and metrical integrity. Unlike this postmodernist poets, such as Hungry Generation and Krittibas poets consciously erode literary conventions and hence, adopted breaking line, free verse, intertextual disruption, and unexpected syntactical disturbances. These are not a stylistic innovation to be sure; they are not simply cosmetic changes to what has come before, but indicate the larger intellectual climate in which they are operating (poststructuralism, deconstruction, the rejection of grand literary narratives, etc.).

6.2 Poetic Form as a Reflection of Literary Disruptions

This study attempts to reveal how Bengali poetry reconfigured itself in the most radical way in response to socio-cultural, philosophical and artistic upheavals, in particular by a dissection of poetic structure, fragmentation and inter-textuality. The findings suggest that:

- Metaphor, symbolism and structured free verse helped modernist Bengali poets, however, to deal with human condition that riddled the human being with existential doubt just to make life coherent.
- However, postmodernist poets fully rejected stability and embraced instead linguistic anarchy, collage technique, and irony, in the process of challenging authorship and authority.
- Previous uses of poetic fragmentation served as a tool of resistance, but this time it was a symbol of dissolution of fixed identities, historical meta narratives and rigid literary hierarchies.

Thus this research focuses on the shift from modernism to postmodernism as a phenomenon that can be best understood not only philosophically or culturally but in terms of formal experimentation of poetic form — as poetic form in this case becomes a medium of rebellion and invention itself.

6.3 Contribution to Literary Scholarship and Experimental Aesthetics

This study contributes to a broader understanding of poetic modernity by:

- Bridging the gap between modernist and postmodernist poetics, situating Bengali poetry within the larger global trajectory of literary experimentation.
- Demonstrating that poetic movements are not just stylistic choices but deeply embedded within cultural and philosophical discourses.
- Providing a framework for Analysing structural disruptions in poetry, offering a technical and comparative approach that can be applied to future literary studies.
- Challenging conventional interpretations of Bengali modernism and postmodernism, emphasizing that their distinctions lie not only in ideology but in form and execution.

By focusing on poetic architecture rather than broad thematic explorations, this research offers a refined, technical, and compelling analysis of how poetic structure itself becomes a site of artistic consciousness and cultural transformation.

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