

Profile of a literateur

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Mr. Abul Mansur Ahmed was simultaneously a literateur, a journalist, a politician and a thinker of repute of our time. There may have been greater literateurs, better known journalists or more famous politicians but there have probably been none other than Abul Mansur who personified better all the above mentioned qualities in such a manner. To Abul Mansur literature always meant literature of life and life for him meant life of the people. He had never been an arm-chair literateur who shied away from joining the people in the streets. Neither has he been a political activist who did not understand the tremendous importance of arts and literature in the fulfilment of the political ambition of a nation. One of his fundamental beliefs in life was that literature cannot be separated. This he tried to exemplify in his own person. For him literature, journalism and politics were the vehicles which he employed to gain the democratic cultural and economic right of the people. Born on September 3, 1898 (Bangla 19th Bhadra, 1305), in the village of Dhanikhola under Mymensingh district, Abul Mansur grew up in the tradition of Puthi literature. When he was a school student his first writing was published in the monthly "Al Islam". Within the next two years quite a few of his writings were published in the same magazine. When in the intermediate class, Abul Mansur started writing regularly in the monthly literary magazine "Sagor". This same magazine later published his bold satires such as Huzur Kebla, Naeb-e-Nabi, Leader-e-Qaum, Go Deutaka Dish, Scientific Business etc which established him as the unquestioned satirist of his time.

He has written everything from children story book, artful political and social satires full scale novels, political articles, family planning Quranic teachings and even "punthe".

Following is a brief chronological list of his publications 1) Mussalmani Katha—1924, 2) "Naya Para" (4 volume) — 1934, 3) "Alma" — 1935, 4) "Food Conference" — 1944, 5) "Chhotoder Kasasul Ambiya" (2 volumes) — 1952, 6) "Sattya Mitthya" — 1953, 7) Galverer Safar Nama — 1956, 8) Jibon Khudha — 1956, 9) Asman Parda — 1957, 10) Bangladesher culture — 1967, (11) Paribar Parikalpana — 1967, 12) Amar Dekha Rainitr Panchash Bachar — 1969, 13) Ab-e-Hayet — 1969, 14) Sher-e-Bangla theka Bangabandhu — 1972, 15) End of a Betrayal (English) — 1974, 16) Quran Aer Nasihat — 1975.

Abul Mansur's latest book was his autobiography "Atma Katha". Completed in 1973, the book could not be launched till March 1979. Covering a total of 480 pages, the "Atma Katha" presents a fascinating picture of the time and society within which Abul Mansur lived.

The book is divided into seven parts. Parts four, five and six cover his literary and journalistic life of which the first two are solely devoted to his literary activities.

Throughout his literary traditions of Bangla speaking Muslims into the main stream of Bangla literature. In the context of a sovereign and independent Bangladesh he term his fight as the struggle to establish the cultural identity of a sovereign and independent people.

Following are a few extracts from his autobiography.

"To my judgement literature means literature that reflects life. And life means so-

cial and collective life, life of the general masses. The language of such a literature must necessarily mean the language of the masses. When the idea of the partition was not even conceived, I requested, in an article entitled "Literature of the Slaves" written in 1922, the contemporary literatures not to plant rose gardens by destroying nice fields. I demanded that we should desist from creating a literature for a class and should instead create literature for the masses. I would like to mention here that source of all literature is the people. People cannot be conceived of in isolation. They belong to a society, a geographic entity, a nation, a state.

"On my return from Calcutta in 1950 I was disappointed by the lack of enthusiasm on the part of literatures of East Bengal to develop their own distinctive literary tradition. What I observed was an opposite trend. There was, of course, a political reason for such a trend. All political leaders of Pakistan including Quaid-e-Azam launched a campaign against Bengali language and in favour of Urdu such a campaign created an obvious resentment among the intelligentsia and the student community of the then East Bengal.

"I took active part in the language movement. Through the columns and editorials in Ittehad, I gave strong support to the language movement. But I could not transform the language movement into a movement to gain the cultural and literary identity of the new nation."

Abul Mansur Ahmed is no more. For more than half a century he watched the political scene in this country as also in the sub-continent. But the literary genius of Abul Mansur, especially his inimitable penchant for satire, will be remembered forever by the lovers of literature.