

**Kunal Chattopadhyay**

Jadavpur University

*India*

## **Attempting a Socialist Realist Recasting of the Bangla Literary Historiography: The Discussions Generated in the late 1940s**

In 1947 the Second Congress of the Communist Party of India (CPI) dumped the previous General Secretary, P.C. Joshi, and opted a left line promoted by the Communist International, but with domestic requirements as argued by Bandyopadhyay. One of the Political Bureau (Politburo) members, Bhawani Sen, wrote in the Bangla periodical *Marxbadi*, as did Pradyot Guha, a well – known party activist, both writing under different pseudonyms. Guha’s article in *Marxbadi* No. 4 generated a big debate concerning progress and reaction in literary historiography. Both *Parichay*, the most important cultural magazine with strong CPI influence, and other periodicals pitched in. This was a vast debate, and in this paper, my aim is to focus on one core area – the attempt to question the concept of a ‘Bengal Renaissance’, and the idea that it consisted of a collectively progressive trend. In doing this, however, it is possible to find sweeping generalizations that need much questioning. Thus, there is an uncritical acceptance of the myth about Deenabandhu Mitra’s *Neel Darpan* as a staunch supporter of peasant revolts, while drawing a straight line from Ram Mohan Roy, through Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, to Rabindranath Thakur, as opponents of progress and real reform. Winding through this entire debate was an attempt to relate the conception of a two – stage theory of revolution with the discussions over what was progressive in literature and culture, in other words, the idea that because the ‘bourgeois democratic revolution’ had not been completed, it was allegedly ‘Trotskyism’ to link progressivism to only the proletariat and the communist party. This paper will look briefly at these as well, and examine the actual views of Trotsky, contrasting that to the different interpretations of Zhdanov that motivated most of the participants.