
ONESELF AS ANOTHER: THE BENGAL RENAISSANCE THINKER IN A DIALOGUE WITH THE WEST

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Personal peculiarities of Eastern subjects of dialogue with the West are described in the paper based on Paul Ricoeur's conception of "Oneself as Another" ("Soi-même comme un autre") On the example of the Bengal Renaissance thinkers (XIX — early XX century) from new intellectual elite are demonstrated otherness and identity of their personal positions. They are Others both for their own Indian social-cultural surroundings and for Western subjects of inter-cultural dialogue. Otherness along with Indian identity had determined the specific role and works by Bengal thinkers in dialogue with the West.

Key words: Ricoeur, "Oneself as Another", the Bengal Renaissance, problematic thinker, understanding of Other, dialogue with the West.

Cultural dialogue with the West by Eastern countries involved in modernization process can be presented as lively interaction by its thinkers-subjects with Other/Another: Western culture and its representatives. This dialogue has generated in the Eastern countries specific sociocultural processes, which can be conditionally described as national-cultural renaissances. These Eastern subjects of dialogue with the West have been receiving and understanding Other, and they are creators of the renaissance processes in religious, social and cultural spheres. It is necessarily to take into account the personal peculiarities of thinkers-subjects of dialogue with the West for a deeper interpretation of philosophy in Modern Eastern countries. I think, the conception "Soi-même comme un autre" ("Oneself as Another") by Paul Ricoeur is methodologically productive in this sense. It helps to describe the peculiarities of these subjects of dialogue as intellectual action subjects. This action is accomplished with realization and acceptance the responsibility for consequences of both understanding and social practice ensued from one's results. Personality as autonomous persona is capable to free action, which is independent of social group demands and able "to be the author of his own behaviour, i.e. to be sane" [1. P. 16]. This personality is seriously different from personality in traditional society. I propose to depict the subject of dialogue in Indian material, *viz.* on the example of thinkers of the Bengal Renaissance XIX — early XX century. The main subject of dialogue with the West is 'problematic thinker' (M. Buber). After establishing of British colonial rule in Bengal, the Challenge of Western civilization questioned stability and self-regulating existence of traditional society. Problematic thinkers appeared in new Bengal elites, which had intercourse with new power, but both didn't change their sociocultural identity and liberated from rigid group enforcement, traditional norms and notions of their society. These thinkers were formed most active part in new elite (*bhadralok*), which is 'creative minority' (A. Bergson) in epoch of the Bengal Renaissance [2. P. 280].

Bengal problematic thinker puts many questions, and answers to *principally new question* in traditional thinking paradigm *are unacceptable* for him. That's why, he distances evidently or latently from both traditional form of thinking and philosophical schools and answers independently to existential questions. These answers are not perceived as 'right' by traditional thinkers, but ones form the foundation for development of principally new thinking paradigm, in which human personality's value is acknowledged in its connection with the Absolute and other people.

Problematic thinker, on the one hand, is torn down from the traditional society and orthodoxy on the other hand, is not accepted as equal by ruling classes in India. These circumstances form a personality of special type, which has experienced existential solitude, has found the support in faith, have opened and realized own freedom and has been embodying this freedom in philosophical, cultural and social creativity.

Bengal problematic thinker takes a specific position concerning to the society. R. Tagore spoke about it, characterizing 'first Modern India reformers and enlighteners Rammohun Roy (1772—1833) and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (1820—1891): "Both were of Indian people's flesh and blood, but had in the character many European traits, and these traits were not borrowed. Both were true Bengali, had no equal in knowledge of our Motherland's ancient wisdom, both had laid the foundation of education in vernacular language and also, akin to great Europeans, had firm fortitude, philanthropy, followed to principles of truth and good steadily. Another European virtue is deep sense of their own dignity, that manifested in disdain to external imitation of Europeans" [3. P. 65]. The specific of the position is determined by their position as Another (Other) in the new situation, viz. according to their problematicness and addressing to understanding of Others instead of xenophobia. The meaning-creating core is otherness and identity of personal position by Bengal intellectuals, which I refer to the term "Oneself as Another".

According to Paul Ricoeur, "Oneself as Another suggests from the outset that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other, as we might say in Hegelian terms" [4. P. 3]. In this aspect, everyone thinker of the Bengal Renaissance feels, knows and comprehended his own Self in correlation to his otherness towards natal social surrounding (in difference of selfness towards identity with own *varna*, *jati*, traditional community). Simultaneously, he is Another towards West, Other-Europeans, because he have socialized in Indian sociocultural space, notwithstanding to his European education and/or existential meeting with the West and its culture. Ability to be the Self / the subject is fourth from important spheres of man's abilities to which are foregoing, according to P. Ricoeur: 1) "ability to speak, to enter into conversation with other by language ('I can speak')"; 2) "ability to interfere in the course of events by actions, efforts ('I can act')" and 3) "ability to narrate about his life and consequently, to form his own identity by narration, based on reminiscences ('I can tell about myself')" [1. P. 15—16]. And if first two abilities are in traditional person, third one are developed more in autonomous person, which is capable to reflection. Let us look at how these capabilities appears in thinking and practice of the Bengal creating minority according to P. Ricoeur's "four manners of questioning: Who is speak-

ing? Who is acting? Who is recounting about himself or herself? Who is the moral subject of imputation?" [4. P. 16].

1. Ability to enter into conversation with Others is stipulated some common language, which helps both 'Self' to speak, and 'You' to understand and answer. In Indian traditional society the priority right to speak was imparted elites, especially brahmins as *varna* of bearers of sacred knowledge, language and Sanskrit culture and other twice-born varnas, i.e. learned man. Other groups had right to listen and to make their actions and life according to what was said by elite. It wasn't exclude everyday equal status and hierarchy intercourse by regional (vernacular) language, which have developed to new Indian languages later. The idea of superiority of brahmanism's language and culture had been stipulated negative relation to Other-remote (*mlechchha*) without inclination to understand him, and unwillingness to speak other language.

The question "Who is speaking?" in XIX century colonial Bengal allows to discern orthodox representatives of traditional elites from problematic thinkers-subjects. Latters (but not all) were capable to speak sacred Sanskrit with brahman elites, to speak languages of traditional Muslim culture (Persian and Arabic), to speak Bengali and to speak English, an language of British conquerors. Certain representatives of new Bengal elite (*bhadralok*) were polyglots in European language. So, Michael Madhusudan Dutta knew also Latin, Greek, French, Italian, German.

Knowledge of other European language means the capability to understand Other-remote and it is placed into position of Another for his own community. Bengal intellectual adopts along with foreign language outlandish and strange to traditional consciousness ideas and symbols and translates ones consciously in his own social surroundings. Hostile reaction of orthodoxy towards key figure of the Bengal Renaissance sociocultural process such as Rammohun Roy, Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar, Krishnamohun Banerjea and others; it is additional indicator of 'otherness' of new problematic thinker's person.

Bengal thinkers' ability to dialogue comes from this otherness, among them language otherness. Orthodoxy has not this ability and learns English forcedly, from need of adaptation to new conditions and grounding their exclusive status before new power in India.

The dialogue with the West in its language widens opportunities of understanding, comprehending, adopting and appropriating its ideas, notions and scientific conceptions. A large corpus of the Bengal Renaissance texts was created in English; it is testified to active dialogue with the West, notwithstanding they mostly addressed to Indian audience, than Western one. So, Rammohun Roy addressed to Europeans English versions of his Upanishad and Vedanta-Sutra translations, An Appeals to Christian Public in Defense of 'The Precepts of Jesus' (translated by him from Greek to English), the set of the text-defense his vision of Indian religious tradition, treatise against *sati* rite, an Letter to Amherst in defense of European education in India, an corpus of documents written for the British parliament and others. Or the first Indian English-language poet, Eurasian H.L. V. Derozio sang his Motherland India and admired Western philosophy, culture and history. Journalism and works by Derozio's pupils, theological

works by Krishnamohun Banerjea, articles and speeches by Keshubchandra Sen, early novels and journalism by Bankimchandra Chatterjee (Chattopadhyay), lectures and articles by Swami Vivekananda, philosophical works and poetry by Aurobindo Ghose, speeches, lectures and own translations of verse by Rabindranath Tagore are most general and incomplete list of English texts written in the Bengal Renaissance; in these texts are evidently and latently carries on the dialogue with the West, sometimes turns to sharp discussion, but never last an respect to Other subject of dialogue.

But familiarization of Other's language and reflections in English had turned to powerful stimulus for development of mother tongue. It is evidently in a case of each concrete thinker, how he passed from dialogue with compatriots in mother tongue to dialogue with Europeans and all world in English (as Rammohun Roy or Rabindranath Tagore), or, on the contrary, from addressing to educated compatriots and non-Indian audience he returned to mother tongue and created new Bengal poetry and prose (as Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, partly Swami Vivekananda and Aurobindo Ghose).

2. Ability to interfere in the course of events by actions and efforts also depended from "who is acting". In traditional society the right to interfere (or, by Ricoeur's words, the right "to lay his own path in physical world") [1. P. 15] was appropriated by brahmans, who had determined limits of acting and sacred rules of life for themselves and all varnas. Finally, the special social system is completed in which action by individuals is predictable and under control [See: 5. P. 24]. In colonial Bengal, people had appeared, which acted initiatively at their own free will without religious norms' and elite's sanction for that, i.e. ceased both to operate predictably and to fear the impact of social control. But if an initiative in economical (co-operation with the British in commerce etc.), political and legal (consulting in legal sphere and administrative office in East-India Company), educational (teaching Europeans to Sanskrit) spheres and even proposal on developing European education in India were quite acceptable to traditional consciousness, being a way of adaptation to changing reality, any initiative in thinking about religious theme and interpreting social relations, rules and common precepts, moreover in attempt to change rules and to reform any sphere of traditional society immediately born strong negative reaction by orthodoxy.

Branmanical status of Rammohun Roy did not defend him from attacks by traditional learned brahmans. It was made him odious figure in the eyes of orthodox elite notwithstanding set of victories in learned debates, troublemaker and 'the father of Modern India'. Moreover, intellectual occupations and social activity by non-brahman *jatis* representatives (first of all *kayastha*, or scribes) were inadmissible for orthodoxy. Therefore, answer to the question "Who is acting?" is representatives of high-status varnas and *jatis*, who are capable to spontaneous activity independently from traditional norms and prescribed status — first of all, owing to heterodox critical thinking and developed sense of their own responsibility for others.

A special quality of acting person is bravery. Objecting oneself and his own position and actions against all community and united social control system demanded serious fortitude in a situation in which general circle of supporters of new models

both thinking and acting is small. Objecting oneself person evidently declares his own otherness; at the same time traditional brahman refers to tradition and authority both sacred texts and social stratum, defending beforehand from lower strata critics. So, Rammohun Roy is brahman, who objected himself to all brahman strata. He said, that brahmans defended idolatry for its own prosperity and enrichment, they were main begetters of “that decay of learning and virtue, which... may be at present observed. For wherever respectability is confined to birth only, acquisition of knowledge, and to practice of morality, in that country, must rapidly decline” [6. Vol. I. P. 15]. The notion about exclusive right to say about the proper and just for all other varnas is typical for any brahman; and, it might seem, Rammohun Roy acted as man socialized in brahmanical ideology. But he was *other* brahman, because none orthodox brahman would come into question and discuss the ideas and themes monopolized by his varna, moreover to address literally to all society, free disseminate his treatises and to address to *mlechchha* (Europeans) about any social questions.

There were many *other* brahmans among problematic thinkers of the epoch. Tagore family from Jorasanko destroyed the brahmans stereotypes of behaviour from generation to generation and had become famous for many distinguished creators of culture and reformers. Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Bankimchandra Chatterji, Sivanath Sastri, Surendranath Banerjea and others proposed innovations in different spheres of thinking and practice. In the contrast to orthodox brahmans, *other* brahmans explain constantly to all, *what* and *why* they are acting and why their arguments and words must be listened and examined. “...One can hardly inform anyone else about what one does without saving at the same time why one is doing it, — said P. Ricoeur. — Describing is beginning to explain, and explaining more is describing better” [4. P. 63]. Like them, other *kayastha* explains what and why must be changed in society. Discovery of Other and realizing self as Another made their to explanation and dialogue with Other, who *would say also*.

Two vectors arise from this explanation in dialogue with the West. Firstly, each Bengal thinker is unusually receptive to Western information about its culture, Christianity, science, social institutes, history and he familiarizes it critically. This vector can be called “Journey to the West” [7. P. 66; 8], it is intellectual, spiritual and real transference to Western culture space for understanding and dialogue with it. Secondly, every Bengal problematic thinker explains persistently to the West the dignities of Indian spiritual tradition, culture and social life, peculiarities of her history and life of her people, notwithstanding his critical relation to Indian social reality, so this explanation becomes vindication of India. This vector can be called by J. Nehru’s term “Discovery of India”. Two aforesaid vectors mutually complemented each other in attempt by Bengal reformers to find paths to modern world for Indians.

3. Ability to narrate about his own life and consequently, to form his own identity appears in way of different autobiographical narratives by Bengal thinkers. These narratives are evidently denoted that *unique person* tells about herself. Autobiographical narrative was motivated by wish both to explain his own ideas and actions and to be understood by Others. This indicates developed personal reflections and desire

to tell on his own Self to social surroundings. There is living synthesis both knowledge of “Oneself as Another” and Dialogue by “Self” with Other people. Autobiographies and other memoirs appeared in that developed form in Indian culture only in XIX century, though genesis of the autobiographical genre is referred to late Middle Ages.

Traditional person had not developed self-consciousness and reflection, because desire to tell about herself appeared so late. So, autobiographical literature had developed in India only in XVII—XVIII centuries. Person as “Subject of dealing” (M.M. Bakhtin) came out to foreground in Bengal autobiographical narratives of XIX — early XX centuries. The same narrate about himself is free act by man which conscious his own dignity, respects himself and others, appreciates his own actions and takes responsibilities of his acts and all it happened around them. Telling about themselves Bengalis wished to change actual situation in spiritual, social, cultural and political aspects of life.

The first attempt of ‘narrative about himself’ was “Autobiographical letter” by Ram-mohun Roy, but conventionally, because it authenticity is questioned. But the first large narration “Atmajivani” (“My Life”) had written in Bengali by Devendranath Tagore (1818—1905) [9]. He narrates about his own religious experience, reflections on belief and knowledge of God, criticizes actual condition of Hinduism, in which rites and idolatry make to forget true One God and high ethics, and he also dreams about of renaissance of all India, her unity in the spirit and high morals. Events of author’s life is more background, than main line of the narration. At the same time, Devendranath Tagore tells about his own reformist activity in the Brahma Samaj and *explains* all his steps and solutions, which he offered to his adherents in belief sphere. He combines brahman’s persuasion in rightness of his path with explanation of necessities of spiritual changes in life; but neither change he impose his surroundings. Devendranath prefers to set an personal example of righteous life and to wait the changing of consciousness of people from within. Deep respect to Other, who thanks and lives differently, is characteristically for his dialogue. His “Autobiography” is narration by person more and more conscious of his own otherness and finding himself as Another in his own social surroundings.

Many coryphaei tells about himself anyway. Keshubchundra Sen kept a diary in journey in England, politician Bepinchundra Pal had written “Autobiography”, Surendranath Banerjea — a memoir “A Nation in Making”, Aurobindo Ghose had created autobiographical outlines, Rabindranath Tagore had written “Reminiscences”. Those thinkers, who did not write likewise books always referred to his life experiences of important episodes of it in their works and speeches (so did Swami Vivekananda). Besides they had written memoirs or biographies of contemporaries. This is absolutely unlike to traditional eulogies of mythologized heroes.

Reflection and narration about self is sign of personal identity of Bengal thinkers, which is opposite to collective identity but exists in the context of realizing self as Indian, the inhabitant of India. It is also sign of accepting for own self the role of subject of dialogue with the West and their own country. That’s why, Bengalis wished to tell about

India, its people, heritage, culture, history, to discuss modern theme of social and political life. This stories/narratives were results of understanding-and-discovery of their own country and, in this means, is a part of narrative about oneself, because Bengal thinker creates certain image of India, which appears in his consciousness as result of life experience, intellectual work in selected sphere and emotions. On the one hand, this image presents in the course of dialogue with the West, and on the other hand, rendered to Indian audience for creating source in inspiration and wishing to change social life to good. Moreover, narrative about India becomes sociocultural text by Bengal thinkers, which tells about people of the Bengal Renaissance, its society and culture, which develops both dialogue with the West and accepting-and-questioning of his achievements and heritage, but these one cannot exists without interaction with the West.

4. Ability to be the Self / the subject, i.e. personally responsible for his actions is depended on three aforesaid capabilities of Bengal problematical thinkers. Ability to tell encourages to turn to language of Other for interaction and understanding. Ability to act independently and freely to turn for Other with explanation of action and wishing of answer both permits to offer different initiatives in all spheres of social life. According to Ricoeur, “Initiative... is an intervention of the agent of action in the course of the world, an intervention which effectively causes changes in the world.” [4. P. 109]. In difference of traditional elite, acting for supporting of existing life orders, Bengal thinkers considered and offered their initiatives to change aforesaid order both by revival of lost high values and norms and accepting new. It is main, they offer to realize and understand the importance of changes. These two abilities come Bengal thinkers in situation of Anothers, in which combines both group and regional culture identity and otherness — both outward in relation to ‘innovator’ and inward consciousness ‘Oneself as Another’.

This combination is demonstrated well in works by Rammohun Roy. He said on his brahman origins in traits ‘A Present to believers of One God’: “I... having been born amongst them, have learnt the language and got those injunctions by heart, and this nation (brahmins) having confidence in such divine injunctions cannot give them up although they have been subjected to many troubles and persecutions and were threatened to be put to death by the followers of Islam” [6. Vol. IV. P. 954]. Rammohun did not accepted outward estimation of himself even from benevolent circles: “In none of my writing, nor in any verbal discussion, have I ever pretended to reform or to discover the doctrines of the unity God, nor have I ever assumed the title of reformer or discoverer...” [6. Vol. I. P. 90]. At the same time he believed, that he did an important work: “...A day will arrive, when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice — perhaps acknowledged with gratitude” [6. Vol. I. P. 6].

Realizing oneself as Another by representatives of new elite in Bengal as response to appearance of Other in Indian sociocultural space was combined with realizing of necessary of this Other for oneself. Rabindranath Tagore had given best expression of that state of consciousness: “The same fact of our existence is confirmed by that all exists — also, and ‘I am’, which is in me, crosses borders of its own termination, when it grasp itself deeply in ‘You are’. That crossing of extremity causes joy,

which brings the beautiful, love and greatness, Renunciation, and the more degree, self-sacrifice, are evidences of knowing of infinity” [3. P. 63]. ‘Oneself as Another’ Bengal thinker lives and acts as new prophet, who translates his own knowledge from deeps of experiences and reflections and want to be heard.

According to Ricoeur, each Bengal thinker can be called “moral subject of imputation”, which somehow or other appears in intellectual and social spheres. He takes the personal responsibility for his own interpretation of spiritual tradition, values and norms of the Indian culture, course and meanings of Indian history, modern state of society and for determination both ends and ways of development in new conditions. Derozians, brahmoists and neo-Hindu thinkers and public men of national-independence movement in early XX century are working that. At the same time Bengal thinker is practitioner in religious reformation sphere, acting almost alone against common stereotypes and traditional norms of society. He also is enlightener, who moves forward modern scientific knowledge and European culture heritage, to minds of his compatriots. He is defender of rights and politician, who familiarize constitutional norms of acting in defending of rights and freedoms of colonized people. He is creator of Modern Indian culture, its literature in English and vernacular, new language in art and new styles in music.

All this activity is addressed to all country and doing for India with consciousness of the full responsibility for the process and results. But besides origins from dialogue with the West, this activity is sign for it about dignity of Indian people, culture, about efforts for development of society, and because is the continuation of dialogue.

Thus, the Bengal Renaissance thinker’s otherness along with Indian identity described on the base of Ricoeur’s conception, helps to interpret his specific role and actions in dialogue with the West. Firstly, Bengal thinker acts as autonomous personality in Western mode, but socialized in Indian surroundings, that’s why he run dialogue with the West on an equal footing. Secondly, broad opportunities of Other’s understanding are provided by capacity to speak on one of Western languages. Thirdly, Bengal thinker discoveries and knows her own country and opens her dignities along with dialogue with the West. Fourthly, Bengal thinker takes the initiative and responsibility for own thinking and reformist and cultural activity, and for more deep understanding both the West and India. That’s why, dialogue with the West is continued in dialogue with India.

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Я-САМ КАК ДРУГОЙ: МЫСЛИТЕЛЬ БЕНГАЛЬСКОГО РЕНЕССАНСА В ДИАЛОГЕ С ЗАПАДОМ

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В статье на основе концепции Поля Рикёра «Я-сам как Другой» (“*Soi-même comme un autre*”) описаны личностные особенности восточных субъектов диалога с Западом. На примере новых интеллектуалов Индии — мыслителей эпохи Бенгальского Возрождения (XIX — первая треть XX в.) показана другость и идентичность их личной позиции. Они Другие как для собственного индийского социокультурного окружения, так и для западных субъектов межкультурного диалога. Другость вместе с индийской идентичностью определяет специфическую роль бенгальских мыслителей и особенности их трудов, созданных в диалоге с Западом.

Ключевые слова: Рикёр, «Я-сам как Другой», Бенгальское Возрождение, проблематичный мыслитель, понимание Другого, диалог с Западом.