

NOTE

## Poetry and Politics

Biswajit Chattopadhyay writes :

The journey of a man is never-ending but insignificant without a goal or purpose—the 20-year-old who travelled through the bye-lanes of Calcutta knew very little of Marx, Einstein or Kafka. He ran for dear life through the fringes of north Calcutta only to avoid detention or arrest—so he thought. He had thought of himself as a revolutionary like Che. He loved maths for the marks he got. He loves poetry because it gave him enough space and indulgence. Still he was running, his bloodstream flooded with adrenalin. He chanted the names of Chairman Mao, Lenin and Marx. True, he had a red book in his side pocket and secretly kept a few copies of *Deshabrati* at his desk. The Calcutta police under the leadership of Mr Ray and Mr Sen were least bothered by him and rightly so. But the poet in him was perturbed—the medical student spent sleepless nights writing angry, agitated lines knowing very little about class or quality. One of those poems got published in *Uttosuri* and he received a hint of admiration from a person no other than great Buddhadeb Bose of Kabita Bhaban, the then abode of Bengali poetry.

His poem ‘Friendship Undefined’ reads—

*...What friendship is this?*

*When the hands for vigorous shake after cordial meeting reach*

*below the belt with deadly intent*

*What*

*friendship is this*

*that sprouts plants of envy-flower*

*thorns pierce hands*

*still you show your smiling teeth*

*White House is busy with human right*

*Gorbachov turns up late to say, sorry*

*sans the confined concept of Glasnost*

*Friends, comrades, countrymen are you ready to join the march?*

The young men of Bengal wrote poetry and fought at barricades. The poetry may have been frothy and the fight quixotry. But it was better by far than molesting women or bashing children in front of policemen grinning in complicity. □□□