

Assamese Novel: Beginning And Development

Rofikul Islam

Research scholar, Department of Assamese, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam.

Abstract:

There was no any remarkable development was done in the writing of novel in Assamese literature after Second World War. The lack of expectation after the war and the busy mechanical life after the independence has made Assamese novelists realistic and socially responsible. The disappointment of the middle class ideology created a cultured middle class with a self-governing ideology. Economical despair increases our social problems and corruptions that crept in to our social practice. In modern period the writers have turn their attention to the unique social values and attempt to the realistic themes. There are some such kinds of novels as: Jibanar Batat written by Bina Baruah, Seuji Patar Kahini and Nadai are written by Dinanath Sharma. Hitesh Deka also wrote some such kinds of novels as: Ajir Manoh, Mati Kar and Bhara Ghor. In this backdrop Syed Abdul Malik attempted to write his novels and short stories and wrote the largest number of novels and short stories amongst them. His most outstanding novels are: Aghori Atmar Kahini, Surajmukhir Swapna, Adharsila, Dr. Arunabar Asomporna Jivani, Chabi Ghor, Matir Caki etc.

Keywords: Assamese novel, Growth and Development, Syed Abdul Malik, Assamese culture & Society, Assamese literature.

Introduction:

Assamese novel appeared towards the later part of the nineteenth century; some writers emerged and endeavored in this field. They reflected the socio-cultural issues in their writings. Bahire Rang Cang Bihitare kowa Bhaturi of Hem Chandra Baruah and Sudharmar Upakhjan of Padma Devi Phukanani are considered as the best social novels in Assamese. Hem Chandra Baruah depicted Assamese society nicely in his novel so that it has a great important in Assamese literature. Devi Phukanani's novel was based on the maxim that "truth prevails" and "the virtuous comes out victorious". The worth mentioning point is that it is estimable that a woman of 19th century of the Assamese society attempted to write novel.

Syed Abdul Malik is regarded as the most prominent and productive novelist in modern Assamese literature who started writing under a critical circumstances. During that time some other writers also appeared as Mohammad Pear, Premnarayan Dutta and Hitesh Deka who over flooded the realm of Assamese novel with their writings but Malik wrote the largest number of novels and short stories. From that perspective the study of Malik's works in detail have become a necessity to understand the nature and scope of novel and short stories of the period. Besides, the establishment of humanism as a permanent characteristic of the novel of the time is also a major concern of this study. The study of Malik as a humanist in the present day framework is a source of absorbing interest for the people of Assamese language and literature.

Beginning of Assamese Novel and its Gradual development

Assamese novel had come into existence in the end of the nineteenth century by appearance of the western process of education that was started by the British Governance. According to the law of the treaty of Yandabu (1826), Assam came under the British Government and therefore the Western method of education started. The British were completely unknown about the local language, and under the impact of some appointed people from outside the region, Bengali language is introduced by the British as the language of Court, Offices and the medium of instruction of schools and colleges of Assam. In 1836 Assamese language was thrown out from the offices and schools and Bengali language was introduced in its place. It was a dark period for Assamese people while new development in the History of Assamese literature began under the patronage of the American Baptist Missionaries. The missionaries have come to Assam to propagate Christianity. With this purpose, two notable members of the American Baptist mission, Nathan Brown and Oliver T. Cutter came to Assam along with their families. They were followed by Miles Bronson and other Baptist missionaries. The missionaries felt the value of the local language in achieving their goal and tried for its restitution. They were collaborated by some local intellectuals including Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan (1829-59) who had performed important role for sake of Assamese language by writing "A few remarks on the Assamese Language and on vernacular education in Assam" (1855). The missionaries earned the knowledge of the Assamese language and history, They wrote school text books and spread other literary works in Assam. They fought for rebirth of Assamese language by indicating the important regarding the feature and nature of Assamese language. As a result N. Brown published "Grammatical notes on the Assamese Language" in 1839, Miles Brown published "Asamiya aru Engraji Abhidhan" (Assamese English Dictionary 1867) etc. In fact the missionaries gave a new birth to Assamese language and literature. The missionaries established printing press in Sibsagar and published many books and journals for the growth and development of Assamese language and literature. The way of modern Assamese literature was opened by the publication of the missionary journal Orunodai in 1846. Missionary's contributions for the resurgence of the Assamese language can be considered as the beginning of the ground work of the Assamese literature. The contribution of the missionaries encouraged many Assamese writers and their literary output to produce a new

enthusiasm to the Assamese language and literature. The real fact is that, the writers of Orunodai are the pioneers of modern Assamese literature.

The Missionaries used literature as the best medium for their religious preaching. They knew that there is no alternative way for preaching Christianity among the local people except literature and so they used prose literature to reach their goal. The missionaries established press, published book and journals, compiled dictionary and wrote grammar; in this way they made the way for the modern Assamese literature. It was during this time that Assamese novel grew. The efforts of the missionaries to preach by casting the nobility of Christian religion into the Assamese would lead to the publication of novel. With a view to publicity the ideas of Christian religiosity, Brown endeavored the translation of the John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's progress" and the Assamese version appeared entitled "Yatrikar Yatra", some parts of this were serialized in the Orunodai during 1851. Being over idealistic it could not keep the necessary features of a novel except for its story. But by the "Yatrikar Yatra", novel writing slowly came into vogue in Assamese novel literature.

Some novels were appeared following "Yatrikar-Yatra" like "Elokeshi Bessiyar Visay", "Phulmoni Aru Karuna" by Mrs. Gamey and "kaminikantar Coritra" by Mr. Garney. Elokeshi Bessiyar Visay (1877) narrates the wide experience of young widow girl. The young woman was seduced, lives her first life as a kept woman and then as a prostitute and finally returns to holy life by taking shelter in the Christian religion. The story holds powerful scope of a full-fledged novel.

"Kaminikantar Caritra" (1877) is another novel written by A.K. Gamey at about the same time. The novel based on a couple who are attracted by the Christianity. The pivotal point of this novel is to establish the sovereignty of Christianity and thereby to turn the Hindus to the Christians. Kaminikanta, the hero deserts his faith in Hinduism and embraces Christianity. At the end that the conversion impression has been created that Christianity is not only spiritually ennobled but also economically enriched. In spite of the limitation, kaminikantar Charitra is the first novel where an effort has been made to depict character and depicted Sarala's character indicates a good beginning of Assamese novel. Mrs. Garney also translated Mrs. Muller's original Bengali "Phoolmoni-o-Karuna" in to Assamese entitled "Phoolmoni Aru Koruna", a imaginative story of two native Christian women, The story exhibited centering round "Phoolmoni Aru Koruna" and concluded with the preaching technique of the Christian ideal to make the Christian Religion attractive. Although social themes were adopted for the stories, their utmost aim was to have religious benefit.

At about the same time Hem Chandra Baruah published his famous work "Bahire Rang-Chang Bhitare Kowabhatari" in (1876). Kowabhatari is a satirical story, not a religious work. There is no attempt at any plot construction here. After the publication of Kowa Bhatari, Padmavati Devi Phukanani published "Sudharmar Upakhyan" in 1884. The significance of the novel was to depict the result of religious and non-religious works. The fact that there is no specific use of religious idealism this novel that used in the stories of the missionaries. But artificial events have removed the story from the reality.

In fact Assamese novel developed during the romantic period of Assamese literature. Though particular characteristics of novel were drawn in the stories written by the missionaries before the romantic period, during this period novel was emerged in a specific form of literature. Padmanath Gohai Baruah' (1871-1946) published "Bhanumati" in 1890 and Laksminath Bezbaruah (1868-1938) published "Padum Kuwari" in 1891. These two novels are considered as the key way of modern Assamese novel literature. They are followed by a number of writers including Rajani Kanta Bardoloi (1867-1939) who left major contributions to the development of Assamese novel. All these writers tried to write and develop historical novel as developed by Sir Walter Scott in English and Bankim Chandra in Bengali. Assamese youths who were at Calcutta for higher education were highly inspired by the historical novels of Walter Scott and Bankim Chandra and attempt to develop Assamese literature in such trend. Their motivation mostly came through the journal "Jonaki" published from Calcutta in 1889.

By the direct literary efforts of the educated youths the Jonaki brought to light a powerful literary revolution both in form and subject. It concentrated freely and sensible about the form and subject of the western, especially English literature. The Jonaki has been the most adjusting and modernizing influence in our literature. All the writers of this period wrote novels in historical issues. There are pointed causes for which they wrote novels with historical settings. The first reason is, the writers of said period were highly inspired by the rising subject of nationalism, and tried to inject national feeling into the minds of the readers .Secondly at that time the readers thought of some eventful story whenever novel or a drama was mentioned.

In the last of 19th century some Assamese Students went to Calcutta for higher education. Amongst them Laksminath Bezboroah, Hemchandra Goshwami, Chandra Kumar Agarwala, Padmanath Gohain Boroah, Sattanath Bora, Ramakanta Borokakati were distinguished. These college students consist "Asomiya Basha UnnotiSadini Sobha" a literary association in 1888 A. D. to develop Assamese language and literature, the main purpose of this association was to develop Assamese language and literature. Initially the association published a journal namely 'Jonaki' under the editorship of Chandra Kumar Agarwala. This journal saw the seeds of Rumantism in Asamese literature, which was followed in Western literature. The ethical and moral thoughts and style of Western literature especially English literature were imported to Assamese literature through the journal 'Junaki'. The writers were expressed all parts of the Assamese literature in romantic style through the Jonaki. At all by the influence of Jonaki, Assamese literature got newness and developed slowly. Some novels, poetries were published in the magazine Jonaki.

Four novels had written in the last decade of nineteenth century which were regarded as the pioneers of Assamese novel. These four novels are respectively: Bhanumati (1890), Padom Kunwari (1891), Lahari (1892) and Miri Jiori (1894). Bhanumati (1890) and Lahari (1892) were written by Padmanath Gohai Baruah. Both novels have written on the back ground of the Ahom period. Though novels did not base on historical issues, neither novel deals with any history. The first novel Bhanumati is set against the back-ground of the Moamaria Rebellion during the Ahom

role. The main theme of the novel is love affairs of Charu Ghohai and Bahanumati. Baruah's second novel Lahari is set on the back ground of Brumes invasion. "Padom Kunwari" written by Laxminath Bezburuah (1868-1938), the theme of the novels is the love affairs of Padum kunwari and Surya kumar and "Miri jiori" written by Rajanikanta Bordolio, the social novel of Bordoloi is a love tragedy.

Rajanikanta Bardaloi made his contributions to historical novels also while he wrote seven historical novels. "Manomati" (1900) is the first historical novel of Bardaloi is written against the background of the down fall of Ahom role and the third Burmese attack on Assam, the novel deals with the love story of Laksmi Kanta and Manomati. "Dandua Droh" (1909) is the second historical novel of Bordoloi, the novel sets in the peasant revolt of 1880 against the Ahom Governor-general. Bordoli's rest of the historical novels are respectively: Rangili (1925), Radha-Rukmini (1925), Nirmal Bhakat (1926), Tamreshwarir Mandir (1926) and Rahdai Ligiri (1930). All of these historical novels were written in some dark historical background related to Burmese invasions and Moamoria Revolt. The story of the novels deals with the love affairs connected with the historical events. Sequence of events making and character study are the main things of Bordoloi's technique; so it is not surprising, Bordoloi has improved the standard of Assamese historical novels.

Hiteswar Barbaruah has written the famous novel entitled "Malita" in 1914. The novel has written on the disputes of between the Ahom and Kachari King. The novel also deals with the love affairs of Abhoy and Malita who faced many hindrance in the journey of love because of their ethnic difference. Following the Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet Barbaruah designed several scenes. Due to enmity between the Ahoms and Kacharies their love has been obstructed. There were some other historical novels appeared in that period as "Citra Darshan" written by Hari Narayan Datta Baruah in 1933, "Fool" written by Dandinath Kalita in 1908 and "Panipath" written by Sarat Chandra Goswami. All these three novels were written in historical settings and the main plots are based on the love affairs of some young men and women.

In the early stage most of the novels were written in historical issues, but there were some novelists in that period who attempt to write in social themes. That period was the period of "Indian National Movement" led by M.K. Gandhi; so the writers of that period were highly inspired by the principles and ideal of Gandhiji and endeavored to bring about social reform through their novels. Dandinath Kalita and Daiva Chandra Talukdar both of them wrote novels in social events. Daiva Chandra Talukdar's social novels are: Apurna, Dhunwali-Kkunwali, Agneogiri, Bidrohi, Adarsapath and Duniya.

The improvement of Assamese novels was limited and it did not reach to zenith till World War II. In the modern period of Assamese novels, old style has gone up and several new trends and tendencies are welcomed. In modern period the writers have turn their attention to the unique social values and attempt to the realistic themes. There are some such kinds of novels as: Jibanar Batat written by Bina Baruah, Seuji Patar Kahini and Nadai are written by Dinanath Sharma. Hitesh

Deka also wrote some such kinds of novels as: Ajir Manoh, Mati Kar and Bhara Ghor. Chandra Kanta Gogoi's "Sonar Nangal", Adyanath Sharma's "Jivanor Tini Adhaya". Govinda Mahanta's "Krisakar Nati". All these outstanding novels are based on social themes. Jogesh Das, the prolific novelist of modern period, has written three famous novels as: "Davar aru Nai" (clouds no more), Sahari pai and Jonakir Joi, on ethics and human behaviors.

Some psychological novels appeared during the modern period and have made technical depiction and realistic value in human hearts. These novels are Prafulla Datta Goswami's "Keca patar Kapani", Radika Mohan Goswami's "Chaknaiya" (The vortex) and Ba-Marata (The whirlwind), Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya's "Rajpathe Ringiyai" and "Ai" (Mother), Syed Abdul Malik's Rathar Cakari Ghure, Chabi Ghor and Surajmukhir Swapna. In all of these novels the writers go through psychological treatment.

Amongst all the novelists, Syed Abdul Malik is considered the most distinguished, who made significant contributions in the development of Assamese literature. He left a major contribution in the field of novel and occupied a unique position. Undoubtedly, the novel in Assamese reached its zenith on the hand of Abdul Malik. He wrote about 67 (sixty Seven) novels and most of his novels are related to the problems of poor and middle class people. His novels are full with the problems of every type of people. His most outstanding novels are: Aghori Atmar Kahini, Surajmukhir Swapna, Adharsila, Dr. Arunabar Asomporna Jivani, Chabi Ghor, Matir Caki etc. Four novels had written in the last decade of nineteenth century which was regarded as the pioneers of Assamese novel. These four novels are respectively: Bhanumati (1890), Padom Kunwari (1891), Lahari (1892) and Miri Jiori (1894). Bhanumati (1890) and Lahari (1892) were written by Padmanath Gohai Baruah. Both novels have written on the back ground of the Ahom period. Though novels did not base on historical issues, neither novel deals with any history.

Rajanikanta Bardaloi made his contributions to historical novels also while he wrote seven historical novels. "Manomati" (1900) the first historical novel of Bardaloi is written against the background of the down fall of Ahom role and the third Burmese attack on Assam, the novel deals with the love story of Laksmi Kanta and Manomati. "Dandua Droh" (1909) is the second historical novel of Bordoloi, the novel sets in the peasant revolt of 1880 against the Ahom Governor-general. Bordoli's rest of the historical novels are respectively: Rangili (1925), Radha-Rukmini (1925), Nirmal Bhakat (1926), Tamreshwarir Mandir (1926) and Rahdai Ligiri (1930). All of these historical novels were written in some dark historical background related to Burmese invasions and Moamoria Revolt.

Hiteswar Barbaruah has written the famous novel entitled "Malita" in 1914. The novel has written on the disputes of between the Ahom and Kachari King. There were some other historical novels appeared in that period as "Citra Darshan" written by Hari Narayan Datta Baruah in 1933, "Fool" written by Dandinath Kalita in 1908 and "Panipath" written by Sarat Chandra Goswami. All these three novels were written in historical settings and the main plots are based on the love affairs of some young men and women.

In the early stage most of the novels were written in historical issues, but there were some novelists in that period who attempt to write in social themes. That period was the period of “Indian National Movement” led by M. K. Gandhi; so the writers of that period were highly inspired by the principles and ideal of Gandhiji and endeavored to bring about social reform through their novels. Dandinath Kalita and Daiva Chandra Talukdar both of them wrote novels in social events. Daiva Chandra Talukdar’s social novels are: Apurna, Dhunwali-Kkunwali, Agneogiri, Bidrohi, Adarsapath and Duniya.

The novel “Jiwanar Batat” (On the way of life, 1945) by Bina Barua is considered the first social novel in Assamese literature. The novel deals with a real picture of various issues of the social life of Assam. The novel focuses a real picture of Assamese rural society. His second novel “Seuji Patar Kahini” (The story of the green leaves, 1959) is also based on tea garden society. The novel is written on the background of tea garden workers and their lives with a humanistic appeal. The theme of the both novel centers round the sufferings and misfortunes, success and failures of the common people and society. Bina Borua beautifully depicted all the events of everyday life with a romantic style in his novels.

Conclusion:

The Assamese novels are in fact issue of big attention for Assamese culture and society. The common themes of the Assamese novels are the pain and suffering of the neglected people, social inequalities and gender discrimination in the society. Through the novels the writers depicted love, sympathy, moral values, humanity, emotions and feelings towards the man and woman. The clear picture of the rural society is also a major component of his artistic composition. Almost all novelists generally deals with romantic love and his powerful passion and sensation play a significant role in painting romantic characters. They tried to show the enticement with simple picture by the simple pleasure and grief of common men and women. Particularly their imageries are wonderful for growing love among youngsters. Their rhythmical and elegant style led the reader ahead without any logic of limitation. They have accomplished extensive success in the description of both character and situation and made a momentous contribution to the Assamese novel literature.

References:

1. Barpujari, H. K., Political History o f Assam, Vol.1, 1826-1919, Government of Assam, Dispur, Gauhati, 1977.
2. Barua, B.K., History o f Modern Assamese Literature, Bina Library, Guwahati, Assam, 1995.
3. Barua, N., Agakatha, Aksar Arpan, ed. Hajarika, Hemen Chandra, 1999.
4. Baruah, P. Gohain, Asamar Buranji, Third Edition, Guwahati, 2004.
5. Bhattacharya, P. kumar, Rabindranath A'ru Asamiya Chutigalpa, Banalata, Guwahati, 1994.

6. Bhattacharya, P. C., Asamar Janajati, Kiran Prakashan, Dhemaji, 2008.
7. Bora, N., Ma'likar Sisu Sa'hitya, in ed. Hajarika, Hemen Chandra, Students' Stores, Guwahati, 1999.
8. Borgohain, K., Malika Cutigalpa, Students stores, Guwahati, 2003.