



SOCIAL REALISM: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

The presentation of social realism is a noteworthy element of social novel. The social novels normally come to light the current burning questions of a society. The readers will find out the artistic quality when a novelist will furnish the tone of realism through the characterization and plot construction. The novels '**Jivanar Bataat**' and '**Seuji Patar Kahini**' written by Dr. Birinchi Kumar Borua (1908-1964) are two well known Assamese social novels. The paper is an endeavor to inquire into the causes of social problems and proper measures to be undertaken.

Keywords: Realism, Characterization, Plot Construction, Problem.

Introduction

Social realism is a special issue of a literary artist who presents the real scenario of a society in fiction. In fact, some special perspectives of society are presented in a realistic way. The social novels normally bring to light the tension of working class and hegemonic control over them, struggle between poor and rich etc. In this regard, the novelist always wants to showcase the inherent individual and social causes of various problems of society which is the special duty of a literary artist. The social novels become more dynamic and interesting when it is interlinked with the caricature of real setting of a work. This type of novel reflects the cultural, economic, political, educational, religious, common folk belief, custom, traditions etc of an era. It has provided more attraction when the novelist presents the trial of social justice and injustice. The novelist always attempts to deliver the judgement through the characters and plot construction skilfully. In short, social criticism is the main theme as well as motivation of a social novelist. **Henry Fielding's Tom Jones', Thomas Hardy 'The Mayor of the Casterbridge' or Tess of the d'Urbervilles.'** '**Jivanar Bataat(1944) and Seuji Patar Kahini(1959)** are two unique Assamese social novels of Birinchi Kumar Borua.

Dr. Birinchi Kumar Borua(1908-64) is the only chief literary figure in the fourth decade of the twentieth century. Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua is one of the celebrated litterateurs in Assam particularly in the twentieth century. He is remembered in Assam for his creative literary works which promote a new spirit in the study of folk culture. Dr. Barua is one of the founders of Guwahati University and a successive professor, administrator, writer, novelist, playwright, historian, linguist, folklorist. The quality of scholarly is found in his diverse creative pursuits. He wrote only two novels which are unique till today. Dr. Birinchi Kumar Borua experiences both the



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rural and urban life practically in his life. In his early life he studied his primary education in a rural area and later on, he taught not only in India but also in abroad in different levels. He has visualized the freedom movement of India led by the various leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jaharlal Nehru, Bal Gangadhar Tilok etc. His vast experiences and realization of contemporary era are the sources of social awareness. In his childhood days Dr. Borua builds a club for reading book in his village. He realizes the social responsibility from his early period of childhood. That is why, he wishes to reform the shortcomings of the Assamese society particularly and it is revealed in his literary works. The present paper is an attempt to explore the various social problems along with marginalized voice and gender disparity.

Objective of the study

The objectives of the proposed study are as follows:

- i) To bring out the various dimensions of social realism and how they are reflected in the study.
- ii) To explore the gender disparity reflected in the study.
- iii) To enquire the ways how the contemporary socio-political scenario affect the marginalized group in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Methodology of the study

In respect of the methodology, the research will be carried out with the help of post colonial theories i.e. qualitative research method. Besides, the analytical or descriptive methodology will be used to study various dimensions of social thought. The fictions of the author will be used for study as primary sources. As for the secondary sources, reference books, journals, online sources, and related articles and thesis will be taken up.

Discussion

The novel '**Jivanar Baatat**(1944) is a social novel and it reveals the story of rural and urban life of Assamese people forged under the imperialism of British. In the novel, the novelist throws light on the various perspectives of social problems through the characters, setting and plot vividly. The novel is the living document not only for the country life but also the urban life during the period of independence of India. The novelist depicts the devastated economic condition of Assam before independence of India. Moreover, it focuses on the steady development for a few decades after independence. People in Assam are fully depended on the agriculture. They don't hope the modern industry and communication. People generally go to and fro by bull cart or walking mostly except a few trains on the whole. In the very beginning of the novel, Krishna Dutta, son of Mouzader Bhuga Dutta has to come from Forkating Railway Station to his own village 'Marangi' by a bull cart. Marangi mouza is located in the remote and rural area in the district of Gulaghat District. Paddy cultivation is the chief food grain not only in the district but also whole Assam. The concept of commercialization in terms of the food grains is not raised in the minds of common people. Market, communication, education are the causes of the slow development. Communication is the best tool for speedy progress. But it is seen the opposite picture of it. The roads of the rural



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area are very pitiable condition and most of the roads are prepared by earth filling, but not by the modern technology. In rainy season the roads are full of muddy and one cannot go easily. The houses of the villages are built by bamboo and paddy straw. One can see one or two houses made of tin leaves in a village. But the houses of the villages are full of the fruit trees like mango, jackfruit, betel-nut, etc. The animal husbandry in a small size is an another important business in the villages as described in the novel. The novelist also brings out the problem of drinking water in the villages of Assam during the period of Independence. People inhabited in the village depend on the ponds in terms of drinking water. Water of any pond in Assam is not scientifically pure and there is no other means for the same. That is why cholera along with other diseases are easily broken out in the villages. The family of Dharani Master uses the same pond since their former generation. This is the real picture of the living of standard in the rural area till today. Moreover, there is no primary medical facility in the villages even in the later part of the twentieth century. Tagar, the heroine of the novel, is a victim for the same. Through this picture Dr. Borua indicates the status of economic development in Assam during the period of independence and he suggests the people to take proper strategies which are his deep sense of social thought.

In the later part of the novel the novelist tries to highlight the empowerment of women through the character, Dharani Master. Dharani Master, The hero of the novel, is a weaving master who comes to the village Marangi to teach the skill of weaving for the women of the village. He indicates an income source for the unemployed women through the skill. The women accept the opportunity with great enthusiasm. Tagar learns the skill of weaving well and she utilizes it while her hardship days. In the last part of the novel Tagar joints a weaving association for her livelihood which is set up at Roha, Nagaon district under the effect of Dr. Gulap, a Physician and social reformer. Some members of the association sale their cloth in their local market and some clothes are dispatched to Abhoy Ashram, Kolkota, Dandibhandar.etc. This is the output of the weaving association as well as a source of income. Through this activity the novelist tries to rise the awareness of empowerment specially for the rural women. This is the genuine sketch of country life of the poor people to this day.

In the novel 'Jivanar Baatat' the novelist throws light on a few aspects of political turmoil of Assam. The novelist brings out the effects of the Swadeshi and non-corporation movement precisely. Leaving the school and college the students arrange the meeting in the villages due to make awareness of it along with the freedom movement. In the roads of the villages the slogans like 'Bonde Matoram', Bharat Mataki Joy' etc are heard all day and night. The movement of forsaking of foreign goods and burning for the same are started speedily in the villages. These are the effects of the Swadeshi movement which was started in 1905. Picketing is also begun in no time on the front of the opium shop. The feeling of freedom movement encourages the common people to jump in these activities without fear. The village of Dharani is involved in the movement actively. In course of time Dharani Master becomes the leader of picketing as well as the freedom movement in his local area. Under the leadership of Dharani Master the young boys protest against the use of opium and support the freedom movement in the region of Roha. Many volunteers such as Kusha Gogoi, Dhanajoy etc are already arrested on account of picketing. Dharani Master joins in many meetings with the volunteers every day and he becomes more popular day by day. He has been a headache for the police. The police do not catch him easily although they try



many times for the same. At last Tagor along with her daughter are taken to the police station by the police instead of her husband. Dharani Master has to surrender himself to the police and as a result he has to stay two years jail as punishment. The shops are closed for three days in Roha for his honour and patriotism. The degree of protesting is increased in the region day by day. The love for country and public service of Dharani Master inspire the rural people to engage in the freedom movement earnestly. In course of time all volunteers of the area are taken to the jail due to much picketing. Through these incidents the novelist portrays the political scenario in Assam during the period of independence. Besides, it shows his calibre of patriotism for country. The incidents depicted in the novel are well connected to the history of politics in Assam which convey his deep interest in the history of Assam.

In the novel, the novelist articulates the socio cultural scenario of Assamese society during the colonial period. The different components of Assamese society such as folk culture, folklore, traditions, customs & beliefs etc are more or less reflected in the novel. Culture of a society encompasses oral song, proverb, language, dance, drama etc. The traditions and customs are considered as the driving forces of society. Dr. Barua observes and notices minutely the ancient traditions and customs of Assamese society and he criticizes firmly the inappropriate customs, superstitions etc. As a social reformer Dr. Barua endeavors always to promote and preserve some customs which enrich the culture of Assamese society. The setting of the novel is based on the real places of Assam such as Morongi, (Gulaghat District), Roha (Nagaon District), Dibrugarh etc. Traditionally in a rural village a wedding is observed like a festival in which people use to enjoy with the recreational activities even by arranging 'Vaona' also.

The guests are invited to the wedding ceremony by giving betel-nut which is still a tradition in the Assamese society. Hum pura biya is arranged for the wedding ceremony of Bhagadatta's daughter which is also an ancient tradition of Assamese society. Some other traditions and customs are observed strictly in respect of the rituals of wedding ceremony. The bride traditionally has to abide by fasting for three days which is observed by the daughter of mouzader Bhagadatta. The proper time for marriage between bride and groom is generally fixed by the Astrologer which is expressed in the marriage ceremony of the daughter Bhagadutta. It is one of the popular prevailing customs of the Assamese society. Ring ceremony is considered as a vital part of marriage ceremony of Assamese society which is also a famous tradition. The ring put on by someone to a girl is a serious custom which is reflected through the character Tagar. The following sentences of Tagar express:

'Tagor screams covering shame of eye with the corner of the chador, "Why have you destroyed me?" (Trans)

Bihu geet is the most popular folk song in the Assamese society. It is portrayed in the novel when Dharani and Tagar have arrived at the village as new bride and groom. The young boys halted the cart and they starts singing bihu song and dance with joy. Many other traditions and customs in terms of marriage ceremony are exposed in the novel when Dharani and Tagar have arrived at their home as new bride and groom.



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The novelist throws light on skillfully the various sociological perspectives in the novel during the period of independence. Casteism is also an important factor in respect of the ancient tradition. Casteism plays an important role in terms of the marriage ceremony particularly in the Assamese society. This is a major issue of Assamese society which is criticized well in the novel by Dr. Borua. The marriage between high caste and low caste is not fixed and arranged by the concerned community. In the novel Dharani master is belonged to high caste and Tagar is belonged to the low caste. The marriage between Dharani and Tagar is not morally accepted by the relatives of Dharani's family. The following sentences of the character Sunad reveal it:

“Your son has not done the work well. The punishment will be imposed on you along with your son by the society” (Trans).

The novelist portrays artistically religious perspectives of society in the novel. Hinduism is the major religion in Assam, but Assamese people observe a set of peculiar rules in terms of religion. At the time of serious illness of Ahini Sunod reads loudly a few lines of religious scriptures so that Ahini can listen to it and feels like eternal peace. Besides, water of Ganga and a religious food i.e. ‘Panchamit’ are arranged to offer her as per the religious rites. All are the religious beliefs of the Assamese community. Another religious rite of Assamese people is the redemption from the sin named ‘Puhkar’ which is the religious custom in respect of the expired person. It is exposed in the novel through the death of Ahini. All are the religious superstitions of Assamese people. The novelist here criticizes the Assamese people for supporting such superstitions in connection with religion and in this regard, he urges to spread the modern education in Assam.

The novelist also focuses on the issues of patriarchal society and gender discrimination in the novel. These sensitive issues are available in Assamese society till today, but it is diminished to some extent. In the novel, Tagar, the heroine of the novel, is described as a victim from these social systems. In the very beginning of the novel, Bapuram Bora arranges the marriage of Tagar with Dharani without taking her consent. Bapuram Bora is her father and he has the right to take any serious decision as per the patriarchal society. The character like Tagar and any other common girl living in the Assamese society is not provided the equal right. Dr. Borua gives the message clearly to perish such societal hurdles for better livelihood of mankind through this character.

The novel ‘**Seuji Pator Kahini (1959)**’ written by Rashna Barua pseudonym of Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua is one of the most celebrated Assamese novels in the decade of fifties of the twentieth century. In the novel the novelist highlights the tea garden society along with a rural village. The novelist reveals skillfully the various social issues along with gender disparity and the problems of marginalized group. In the very beginning of the novel Nareswar goes out from the village wherein he physically visualized the arrogance, disdain, proud of uneducated people of orthodox families. He experiences a bitter environment of old orthodox village. Later on, Nareswar arrives at the tea garden eventually and he has been appointed as a boy or house keeper. The novelist tries to draw the real picture of tea garden society through the character Sonia, the heroine of the novel. Today, in literary term, they are regarded as marginalized group or subaltern people. People of tea garden originally came



from the states like Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and the British engaged them to work in the tea garden at first. They are not provided the equal rights and other facilities. They are not sound politically or economically till today. Sonia, the heroine of the novel, is an illegitimate girl and she is a good specimen of victim done by a British person. She is brought up by the clergyman, Androjo and later on, she went to live in the house of Lakhu. Sonia knows the real story of her own life well and that is why, she herself expresses her hatred and agony against the culprit of her family. The novelist exhibits her strong protest through her regretful dialogue against the oppression of the former manager, but she does not physically harm or attack anyone. Maltreatment and injustice to the labourers of the tea garden made by the British individual is normally a serious crime, but due to the marginalized group they are not able to gain justice and other facilities etc. In short, any tea garden of Assam is full of problems such as unhealthy inhabitation, drinking water, education, health etc which are still the burning questions.

Conclusion:

The novels 'Jivanar Bataat' and 'Seuji Pator Kahini' focus on two different society along with some current issues. In the both two novels the novelist is able to draw some social problems through the plot construction and characterization. For example, Tagor and Sonia are presented as the real figures of two different societies.

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