

## **Trends Of Assamese Novel Reflecting The Tribal Life Of Assam And Its Neighbouring Areas**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper I am going to discuss an important and the growing trend in Assamese literature, especially in the field of Assamese novel. If we went through the various filed of Assamese literature we can noticed that tribal life of Assam and its neighbouring areas are reflecting there in different ways. In the field of novel, this trend starts with the novel *Miri-Jiyari* (1894) by Rajanikanta Bordoloi. In this novel he portrayed the life of Mishing tribe, one of the main tribes of Assam. After Bordoloi this trend is continuing till today with more and more modern writers taking up representation of different tribal life of Assam its neighbouring states in their works.

**Key Words** Tribal, Novel, Reflecting, Trends, Assamese.

### **1.Introduction**

The Novel as a literary form opened up the possibilities of representing realism, which Ian Walt in his *The Rise of the Novel* characterizes as “formal realism” (Walt, 1957, p.28). Since its emergence in the 17<sup>th</sup> century through the centuries the novel as a literary genre has been in most cases across world literature, a very powerful form of illustrating social reality. If we discuss the literary scenario of Assam, the North-Eastern state of India; we can noticed that that the field of novel is now a wider direction besides other literary fields. The tribal communities hailing from hills and plains of different parts of the state of Assam have a significant contribution towards the Assamese socio-cultural sphere since the time immemorial. Without the tribal socio-cultural elements, it would be difficult to imagine the image of Assamese society. Even, the effect of different tribal languages is observed in shaping the development of the Assamese language and literature. But compared to this phenomenon, volume of literary activities based on tribal life in Assamese language is not that worthy. On the other hand, a plenty of writers belonging to tribal

communities have been playing vibrant roles in the mainstream Assamese literature. Despite all these efforts, the literary sphere based on tribal life is still not well-established.

## 2. The Assamese novels reflecting tribal life

If one tries to find elements of tribal life in Assamese literature, especially in the field of novel, it will clarify that a very few novels are written till date based on tribal life. In this stream of novels, endeavor to portray lifestyle, standard of living, aspirations & ambition, customs, etiquettes, beliefs & rituals, superstitions, festivals and picture of cultural life of a tribe living in a specific area can be observed. As these novels portray the regional life of the communities, they can be also categorized as regional novels.

In the context of reflection of Assamese tribal life in novels, the first name comes in front is '*Miri Jiyari*' published by Rajanikanta Bordoloi in 1894. The story based on the love story of a *Mising* couple living in the banks of the river Subansiri effectively depicts the festivals, worship, integrity with river etc. of the tribe. Many a critic has pointed out that the story of the novel is not of the *Mising* tribe; rather the characters are dressed as *Mising*. However, the effort of the novelist can't be overlooked. The depiction of *Mising* society's customs and festivals can't be ignored at any cost. In the words of Satyendra Nath Sarma *Miri Jiyari* can be termed as a piece of raw gold fetched from the bank of the river Subansiri. (*Asomiya Sahityar Samikhatmak Itibritta*, p-289, 1977)

The next novel reflecting the tribal life is written by Tarunchandra Pamegam in 1944. This novel is also based on the lifestyle of the *Mising* Tribe. The following novel of the same stream was *Bidrohi Nagar Hatot* by Kailash Sarma. However, a few number of novels of the same stream could be traced in between the period such as *Kesha Pator Koponi* by Prafulla Datta Goswami (1952), Navakanta Baruah's *Kapilipariya Sadhu* (1954), *Dawar Aru Nai* by Jogesh Das (1955) and tea tribe based novel *Seujee Pator Kahini* (1959) by Birinchi Kumar Barua are noteworthy. Among these novels, Prafulla Datta Goswami's *Kesha Pator Koponi* reflects the life of the tribal society to some extent.

Kailash Sarma penned the *Bidrohi Nagar Hatot* in the year 1958 based on the life of the Naga Hills. This is the first ever Assamese novel based on Naga tribal life. The struggle for liberation of the Naga Land in the post-independence period is the base of this novel. Instead of covering the overall life of the Naga community, the novel attempts to draw some of the incidents of a youth Kandarpa with some Naga strugglers. *Onami Naginee* and *Dalimir Sopon* are the following novels by the same writer written in the years 1963 and 1972 respectively. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharjya's *Iyarungam* published in the year 1960 based on the *Tangkhum Naga* life. This novel describes the fallout of the World War-II on the Naga social and economic life and further development of Naga nationalism among them. In *Yaruingam* we find the socio-economic and political changes among the Nagas as a result of Second World War, which happened just before India's Independence.

Spread of Christianity and modern education brought gradual changes in the traditional social system of the tribal societies, particularly in North-East India.

In 1960, Lummer Dai, the tribal novelist made his entry to the stream of Assamese tribal novel. Hailing from Arunachal, Lummer Dai wrote the novel *PaharorSileSile*(1961) on the tribal canvas. Further he contributes to the Assamese literature with his several novels based on *Adi* life. Some of his noteworthy works are *PrithibirHahi*(1963), *Mon Aru Mon* (1968), *KoinarMulyo* (1982) etc. All his novels are centered on the socio-cultural life and issues of the tribes of Arunachal. In the year 1965, PashupatiBharadwaj wrote the novel *SimsangorDutiPaar*, based on the Garo socio-cultural life. But the novel concentrates more on describing the barbaric incidents during partition. Novelist Swarna Bora wrote another novel based on the tribal life namely *SimchangNodirHahi*(1987) in which through the protagonist Deb Choudhury, a young doctor from the plains, the socio-cultural norms of the Garo community, their beliefs, rituals are portrayed flawlessly. Open minded youth of the plains is shown to an attitude for adapting to the life of the hills.

The life of the Khasi people is brought to the Assamese novel through the novel *U-khun-Jongapenned* by Amulya Baruah in the year 1973. The novel starts with minute depiction of the child psychology of a Khasi child namely Wanlam, through his enthusiasm regarding an egg of a hen. The novel goes on to flawlessly portray the duties performed by the Khasi women, their hard work, their festivals, and dance & songs etc.

For the first time, interpretation of Karbi life can be observed in Assamese novel *PuwateEjakDhanesh* published in the year 1977. Presence of a wide-encompassing subjects like the mesmerizing beauty of the green hills of Karbi-Anglong, life of the Karbi people, their beliefs & superstitions, aspirations & ambitions, history and future make this novel rich in content. The changes taking place in the Karbi community during the era of pre-independence is well- interpreted in the second Assamese novel *RongmilirHahiput* to paper by Rong Bong Terang in the year 1981. In the words of the writer, the novel is an effort to bring together the Karbi socio-cultural history. The novel strives to interpret the social transformation, conflict among the old and the new generation and the attitude of the people of the plains towards Karbi people in the pre-independent era. Jadav Phukan has written two novels centered around the life of the Karbi community namely *Mekkri*(1982) and *KengwotKachedong* (1989). Another novel on Karbi community written by Paramananda Rajbongshi titled *UnmilirPrithibi*(1992), *though being small*, successfully portrays the changes through the effects of advent of modern education and civilization.

With the first novel based on Mising community- *Miri Jiyori*; the trend is further carried forth by novels such as *SomajorSeshotSeema*(1944)by Tarun Chandra Pamegam, *Mising Koneng*(1967) by Bishnuprashed Rabha, *Oiyao*(1987) by Bhaben Chandra Pegu, *Pohprir*(1989) by Ganesh Pegu, *KumdangLrichab*(1990) by Dimbeswar Bora, *SubanshiritRelorUki*(1990) by Swarna Bora, *Mibu*(1992) by Indreswar Pegu, *Mikchijili* (1993) by Jatin Mipun, *ProthomKukurarDaak*(1997) by Bogaram Nath, *GhateGhateManuh*(1996) by Anil Phukan, *Korha Noir Artonaad* (2000) by Srabanti Pegu etc.

YeiseDorjeeThongshi, with his novels written on the prime Arunachali tribes like *Cherdukpenand Monpa*, has enriched the stream. His novels written till date are *Lingjhik* (1983), *Sonom*(1981), *MounoUthMukhorHriday*(2001), *Shob Kota Manuh*(2004), *Mising* (2008).

*OjantirMoh*(1987) is the novel based on the life of the Arunachal's Tagin tribe written by BirojanandaChoudhury. Issues related to prevalent customs among the Tagin tribe like joint family system, polygamy, women's recognized economic independence, child marriage, etc. are raised in the novel.

The only novel on Bodo tribe written in Assamese language is Umakanta Sarma's *Bharanda Pakshir Jak* (1992). The novelist encompasses a varied range of issues concerning the Bodo people including the consequences due to loosed integrity of the Assamese people, emergence of ethnicity among the young generation of the Bodo community, conflict of old and newer perspective in their social life, ambiguous activities of pro-transformational forces, illegal land acquisition by immigrants etc. The novel also gives a picture of the Bodo social and cultural scenario. The novel mainly deals with the Bodo youth population who tried to bring changes in the society.

Novels based on Rabha tribal life are *JanongJinong*(1990) by Rajen Pam, *NodirnaamDudhnoi*(1997) by Khagen Rabha and *DudhnoirBedona*(1997) by Swarna Bora. The story of the novel *JanongJinong*of Rajen Pam is based on the failure of love of a young couple. Through the development, the writer gives a picture of socio-cultural life of the Rabha people, their rural agrarian life, folk culture and traditions, dance & music, marriage, worship etc.

Novels with fundamental inputs from the life of the Dimasa tribe are *Gajaudisha* (1984) by Nagendranath Baruah and *DiyungNodirGeet*(1985) written by Swarna Bora. It gives an account of the hardship of the life of the Dimasa people living in the hills of North Kachar. Various traditions of the tribal life of the Dimasa, prevalent religious beliefs, superstitions, food habits and other socio-cultural elements can be traced in this novel. On the other hand, the novel *DiyungNodirGeet*seems to aim at portraying a picture of integrity and unity among the communities living in the plains and hills and among Hindu and Muslims.

### 3. Conclusion

Further, the following novelists have contributed a lot to reinforce this trend - Dipak Kumar Barkakati with his novel *Dikton*(1998) written on the Mizo people, the principal tribe of Mizoram is the only novel written on this tribe. In this novel novelist portrays the works of the extremist group namely Mizo National Front (MNF), for their independent Mizoram. The novel written on the Tiwa tribe is Swarna Bora's *KilingNodirPaar* (2001). Likewise, the only novel written on the Galong tribe is TirthaPhukan's *Ai-peDulangka*. Dhruvajyoti Bora wrote the novel titled *Seemantor Sur* based on the several tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh in the year 1996. The two novels written on the life of the Tangsa tribe of Arunachal Pradesh are *LongkaiThaknang*(2003) written by KengsamKenglam and *PatkaiPaharorSeujiyaToluwat*(2004) by WangsamJongsam. One of the Assam's

prominent tribe Deori has been portrayed in the only novel written by Dhanada Devi, which is *O' AieEbachhi* (2011). Recently, Ajit Singner has written a novel titled *Longri Ataman* (2014) based on the efforts for carving out of the district Karbi-Anglong from the Mikir hills which comprehensively been covered in the novel.

There is a constant flow of interaction and dialogue among tribal and non-tribal people in different parts of Assam having most of the time a life of co-existence. This has led to many creative writers, more particularly novelists who have taken up tribal life and plot of their literary constructs. The trend started with the *Miri-Jiyari* (1894) by RajaniKanta Bordoloi and is continuing till today with more and more modern writers taking up representation of tribal life in their works.

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