



PADMANATH GOHAIN BARUA'S PLAY 'BHOOT NE BHRAM' PORTRAYS ASSAMESE SOCIAL LIFE: A STUDY

Dr. Hari Narayan Kalita

Email: kalitaharinarayan@gmail.com

Article History: Received: 01.06.2023

Revised: 22.06.2023

Accepted: 21.07.2023

Abstract

Padmanath Gohain Barua is one of the prominent figures of the Assamese literary world. The multifaceted creations of Gohain Barua are valuable assets of Assamese literature. The Assamese people, the eternal feelings of the Assamese people, the way of life were always the chief inspiration of his works. It is not possible to survive without literature. Literature is the identity of the nation and the real life of the nation, and by realising this Gohain Barua has made achievements for the Assamese by writing poems, dramas, novels, theoretical books, etc. for the purpose of national development. Gohain Barua has a special place in Assamese literature as an exemplary dramatist. The study and analysis of his plays is very much important for the sake of Assamese literature. Along with Padmanath Gohani barua's historical and mythological plays, he can claim special credit for writing humourous plays. Gohain Barua's humourous play 'Bhoot Ne Bhram' is a notable one. 'Bhoot Ne Bhram' is a reformative humourous play by Gohain Barua. He wrote this play in order to eradicate the evil superstitions of society. It is normal and common for a class of people in a superstition believing society to see ghosts by imagining a shadow for a ghost, and a sudden view of an image as ghosts. In every aspect of the play 'Bhot ne Bhram', which was written with an aim to reform the society, there is depiction of a vivid picture of Assamese social life. This paper aims to discuss how the drama portrays the life of the Assamese society.

Introduction:

Padmanath Gohain Barua is one of the prominent writers who enriched the Assamese literary world with multi-dimensional creativity. Padmanath Gohain Barua's life tale and literary works are diverse. The scope of his creative work in establishing Modern Assamese Literature and his contribution or impact to national life have been far-reaching. Born at the end

of an era of Assamese Language and Literature Gohain Barua's creative outputs were diverse. In the last part of the nineteenth century, the main trend of the

literary schools, especially the Navanyas literature, was Assamese nationalism, that is, the people have a love for the soil and sympathy for humanity. (Bhattacharya, 1) During this period 'Lakhimpuriya' Padmanath Gohain Barua was one of the individuals who tried to bring a new wave of creation to Assamese Language and Literature. (Saikia, 49) From his student life till his later years he had employed himself in the service of Assamese Literature. He had penned different genres of literature "besides books, poems, novels, dramas, farces, religious works "Sri Krishna" and "Gita Sar" came out of his pen. (Goswami, 362) Gohain

Barua gained an especial place through Theatrical Literature among other literary creative works. Gohain Barua's Jayamati, Gadadhar, Lachit Barphukan, historical, Banaraja Pournik and Gauburha, Teton Tamuli and Bhoot Ne Bhram were among the most creative humours of that time. The playwrights were inspired to create humorous plays by the blind-faith and the evil social backdrop.

Objectives of the Study:

In the dramatic achievement of Assamese playwrights the picture of Assamese social life has a significant place. The humorous plays of Gohain Barua are eminent among them. Padmanath Gohain Barua has created a vivid picture of social life in his plays. The main objective of this study is to make a thorough analysis of the social system, rituals and customs of that time through his humorous plays especially his play 'Bhoot ne Bhram'.

Methodology:

How the Assamese society or the image is depicted in the play 'Bhoot ne Bhram' of Padmanath Gohain Barua will be studied mainly through analytical method.

Title of Study:

The subject of the study is titled Padmanath Gohain Barua's play 'Bhoot Ne Bhram' portrays Assamese social life: a study.'

RELATIONSHIP OF LITERATURE AND SOCIETY:

The relationship between literature and society is intimate and inseparable. Society is reflected in literature as our reflection is reflected in the mirror. Social progress is almost impossible without literature. Literature is the foundation of society. Pradyot Sen Gupta says - "Creative literary entity and social entity are constantly adaptive." (Bhatt, 100) Talking about the relationship between society and literature, Acharya Manoranjan Shastri says that - "The transformation of the form and nature of

the society, from time to time, occurs as a result of various internal and external conflicts among human in the flow of worldly evolution. Literature is the hunger of words that manifests itself. The relationship between literature and society is very close and inseparable. Literature is the fulfilment of society's essence and society is grounded in literature." (Shastri, 42) In reality, literature and society are two sides of the same coin. One is incomplete without the other. "Literature finds its element in society, society is the foundation of literature, besides literature controls the society and guides it to the right path." (Sharma Doloï, 16) Therefore, the writings of all the writers of the world are seen to reflect the story of the country or nation of that writer as well as the natural, social, economic, religious, and cultural aspects of the world, so that the national characteristics of that particular literature are visible. These characteristics are reflected in various fields of literature such as poems, stories, novels, biographies etc. For example, the famous poets of the world, Shakespeare, Walter Scott, Tolstoy, and the famous poets of India, Kalidasa, Valmiki, Bhavabhuti, have beautifully depicted their own society. In addition, Assamese poet Madhav Kandali, Mahapurush Srimanta Shankardeva, the original works of Madhavadeva have portrayed beautiful images of Assamese society. In Madhav Kandali's Ramayana, we can get a beautiful account of the life of the Assamese people in the fourteenth century, the religious feelings of the Assamese people, various festivals and events common in the Assamese society. Similarly, the early works of Shankardeva and Madhavadeva have beautifully depicted various aspects of the Assamese society. All the writers of modern Assamese literature have painted the picture of the Assamese society based on these works. Dramatization of Assamese social life by all the dramatists

of Assamese literature has gained a special place. Padmanath Gohain Barua's dramatic achievements are also eminent in this area.

Theme of the play 'Bhoot Ne Bhram':

'Bhoot Ne Bhram' is one of Gohain Barua's important reformatory humorous plays. Whatever stories about ghosts are circulated in reality, Gohain Barua has shown us the fake ghost game through this play. These ghosts are not real ghosts, rather the namesake for the delusional fear for ghosts among people. The main content of the play is – in order to eradicate the blind faith that is in vogue among Assamese people about ghost, certain educated youths gathered and established an organisation called the Samaj Sanskar Samiti where among the members Bhootnath Barua was elected as the President and Muktinath Phukan as the Secretary. One day, two hungry and thirsty plowmen were going after completing their field work. One fisherman called them and they thought him as ghost and proceeded before him. Another day, a naughty cow-keeper shocked and almost killed a female vendor at the street side under a tree by showing his own shadow. One evening two members of the Samaj Sanskar Society were frightened by imagining ghosts at the embankment of the river Moridikhau. Those who were propagating against blind faith of ghost in the villages were themselves got afraid of imaginary ghosts. The superstitious society sees ghosts in the shadowy idols and believes in false ideas. This is the main content of the play.

"Bhoot Ne Bhram" is a purposeful drama. The drama has been created to spread the belief among villagers that the belief in the ghosts is irrational and delusional. Dramatic scenes have no relation to actions, and there is no attempt at character development. The dramatic value of the play is wasted by the extreme reformatory motive." (Sharma, 308)

Although this no female

character play is purposeful and propagandist-oriented, the playwright himself has said that-

"This writer has a desire to include a play with the portrayal of satirical images of ghosts, in the temple of Assamese drama, in order to cleanse the ghost-believing, superstitious age-old minds of the general Assamese people, especially the uneducated people, and eventually 'Bhoot ne Bhram' came into existence. It is true that the writer's age may not be eligible for a humorous play but his efforts will be worthwhile if the illusions of the society would at least slightly reduce. (Gohain Barua, Joymoti, 40)

This, the playwright himself declared that he composed this play to eradicate the superstitions of the society. Atulchandra Hajarika commented about the play - "This female character-lacking play is purposeful and propagandist, that's why it has less effect as a drama and literature". (Gohain Barua, Teton Tamuli, 21) Gohain Barua's three humorous plays perfectly match the village life and characters' speech, movements, and rituals. In his depiction of the faults, beliefs and false beliefs, superstitions and evils of village life, he is not harsh, rather he presents everything in a humorous way. **'Bhoot Ne**

Bhram' is a drama about social life:

Padmanath Gohain Barua is one of the eminent dramatists of the 'Jonaki' era. Gohain Barua reflected various images of the society of that time in his plays. A simple picture of Assamese social life can be seen in his humorous dramas. "Gohain Barua's dramas have perfectly depicted the speech, movement, mannerisms of rustic characters." (Sharma, 307)

The third humorous play of Gohain Barua is 'Bhoot Ne Bhram'. The main subject of the play "Bhoot Ne Bhram" is Assamese society and ghost-illusion. In which the

superstitions of the Assamese society and a vivid picture of the rural social system of the time can be seen. A beautiful picture of the uneducated common village society which is fully consumed by superstition in the beginning of the drama is presented. For example –

Jalowa (fisherman): The main one, brother. The water-ghost, baak. Oh its teeth and nose. It is coming after me. (Shocks)

Halowa (plowman): Is it? He is coming as a spell. My body feels something bizarre. What to do? Where to go? Where to flee now? (He hugs the fisherman throwing his plow.)

Jalowa (fisherman): True, brother, water-ghosts are allusive. He appears suddenly and disappears suddenly. Who knows he might be attached in my body. Something like twilight. (Both started shivering in each other's arms) (First Act, First Scene) This conversation of the fisherman and the plowman gives a glimpse of the beliefs about ghosts in the Assamese society in that time and also in present time. In Assamese society if it is believed that someone is possessed by evil spirit, he is treated by a "bej". Even many people are seen hiding inside the house, fearing ghosts. A beautiful image of this is reflected in the dialogues of the character 'Muktinath'. Mukti: Ah! Our society has collapsed due to blind faith. Ignorance is the underlying cause of disease. Ghost is just a delusion of the mind. "Bej," in order to take out ghost, put chilli in the nose of patients. Many are afraid of ghosts and close the door thus blocking the fresh air. Instead of medicine some traditional ways are used to treat. Superstition has become human nature. The mind becomes unstable and this instability makes uneducated people to see ghosts in place of shadow and to get frightened. Today, those two people have found proof of their folly. Well, let's see what can be done. We will have to free our uneducated society from blind

faith. (First Act, First Scene) Widows in Assamese folk society have to survive among various struggles. This picture is shown in the play "Bhoot Ne Bhram". As shown in the play, the old woman vendor lives by selling vegetables.

Pohari (vendor): Eh, what to get, what to bring, son. Being a despair widow, I have nothing, I have to collect these vegetables (fern, taro, lemon etc) from other's deserted field. Thus, I have to live. Living only to suffer like this. Yama also doesn't come for us, son. (Second Act, First Scene)

The picture of the economic distress of the Assamese rural society is depicted through the character of Pohari. In Assamese society, Saturday, Tuesday, dawn, afternoon etc. are not considered as auspicious days or auspicious times. People believe that in these times ghost or other evil spirits appear. For example, this can be seen in the drama. - "Today is Saturday and it is evening time. This is the time of ghosts wander."

Through the words of various characters along with three opium eaters, the rural society's simple way of speaking is revealed in the play.

Second Opium Eater: (smoking a 'tikira' in flame) When devotee is satisfied, deity is satisfied. It is said that devotee should be worshipped- This is a catchphrase, do you know?

1st Opium Eater: (smoking a 'tikira' and bumping it on the ground) Why not? Devotees are for the deities and deities are for the devotees.

Second Opium Eater: (releasing smoke both from his mouth and nose) Exactly, Friend. That is why I say evil spirits are bad.

3rd Opium Eater: What did you say? Evil spirits are bad? Don't speak such thing. Don't be ingratitudes. (Third Act, First Scene).

One can get a glimpse of the popular folk

language of that time in such words. Various sayings, proverbs etc represent the vernacular speech. The use of folk idioms in the play 'Bhoot ne Bhram' can be noticed.

The playwright has achieved special success in the dramatization of various pictures along with the portrayal of contemporary social life with various images. Gohain Barua has vividly brought out the picture of the primitive agricultural society, the picture of the society consumed by blind faiths, the picture of the superstitious society, the sad picture of the economic evil of man, in his narrative, which are able to gain a prominent place in the play 'Bhoot Ne Bhram'.

Gohain Barua, in the play, has taken the picture of the Assamese society of that time. Rural customs, superstitions, folk tales, catchphrases, idioms etc are used to depict the social picture of that time. In addition to the

characters of the drama, the playwright has tried to highlight the character traits of various people in the contemporary society.

Conclusion:

The last period of the 20th century was particularly significant in the Assamese literary world. The western thought and ideas have influenced Assamese literature for which a new literary environment emerged. At the end of the 19th century, a new pan-Indian consciousness was emerging due to the fusion of Western civilization and culture with the ancient Indian thought, ideals and values. The Assamese educated youths, strengthened by this pan-Indian spirit, tried to establish various directions of Assamese national life. Gohain Barua was also inspired in this way. Eventually, like Bezbarua, Gohain Barua also inspired to create new trends in literature in order to establish Assamese nationhood and

literature. Gohain Barua attempted to make the society self-aware through the creation of literature. As a result, he took drama as one of the most important forms of literature. Therefore, in order to recollect Assam's past glories among people he wrote historical plays, to bring out the mythological stories to the public he wrote mythical dramas and to explore and remove the evils of society, folk-beliefs, superstitions, he wrote humorous plays.

Gohain Barua has observed the society of that time from different directions, and represented the corruption, superstition and the reality of various socio-economic pictures of that society in his humorous plays 'Gaon Burha, 'Teton Tamuli' and 'Bhoot ne Bhram'.

Gohain Barua's 'Bhoot ne Bhram' has been written taking social reform as the basic theme for play. He wrote this play for the sake of removing the evil system of society believing in ghost and other superstitions. The representation of the rural life and the way of speaking has given a wonderful form to the play.

Bibliography:

- Borah, Randweep (ed). Gohain Barua Srishti aru Chinta. Dibrugarh: Dibrugarh University, 2013. printed
- Bhatta, Bhaskar. Sahitya Malika. Guwahati: Ak Bak, 2011. Printed
- Bhattacharya, Harichanda. Asomiya Sahityar Jeelingani. Guwahati: Lawyers Bookstall, 2013. printed
- Gohain Barua, Padmanath. Gohain Barua Rachanawali. Guwahati: Assam Publication Council, 2003. printed
- Mahant, Laxmikanta. Asomiya Sahityar Adhyayan. Dibrugarh Banalata, 1991.

printed printed

Neog, Maheshwar. Asomiya Sahityar
Ruprekha. Guwahati: Chandra
Prakash, 2000. Saikia,
Chandraprasad (ed.).
Padmanath Gohani Barua

Publication Council, 2007. printed

Sharma Doloi, Harinath. Sahitya
Prabesh. Barpeta: Padmapriya
Library, 1997.

printed

Sharma, Satyendra Nath. Asomiya
Sahityar Samikhyatmak Eetibritta.
Guwahati:

Soumar Prakash, 2009. printed
Guwahati: Assam

—Asomiya Natya Sahitya. Guwahati:
Souma Prakash, 2005. printed
Shastri, Manoranjan.

Sahitya Darshan. Nalbari: Journal
Emporium, 2002. printed