

A Study On ‘Jiwonor Batot’(an Assamese novel) as a source of Assamology

THOIBI PHUKAN

RESEARCH SCHOLAR

DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY

Abstract : The term Assamology covers a total study of geography, sociology, politics, economics, culture with regard to Assam. It is an Academic branch of studies ranging from the pre-historic period to the modern time. Dr. Maheswar Neog is the pioneer of Assamology. Creative literature written in different periods are one of the source of Assamology. A novel is supposed to be the reflection of society. It is more true in case of a masterpiece like, ‘Jiwonor Batot’. In this paper an attempt is made to bring into focus as to how the socio-economic condition of Assam gets reflected in ‘Jiwonor Batot’ with an attempt to prove the novel as a convincing source of Assamology.

Key words : Assam, Assamology, Socio-economic, society

Introduction :

The term Assamology covers a total study of geography, sociology, politics, economics, culture with regard to Assam. It is an Academic branch of studies ranging from the pre-historic period to the modern time. Assamology can be regarded as an academic discourse to discover as well as to re- establish the historical developments of Assam. Assamology asserts that Assam has historical and cultural heritage of its own like any other part of India and this heritage is based on Assamese language, literature, culture and society. The term Assamology has its origin in the awareness of raising such heritage in a scientific and disciplined way. Dr. (late) Maheswar Neog is the pioneer of Assamology. The ancient Assamese literary works, the scripts of Assam, folk literature, the manuscripts of the ancient books, the archaeological materials, the anthropological studies, creative literature written in different periods are regarded as the source of Assamology.

Literature is said to be the mirror of society. Novel is a powerful branch of literature. Hence, a novel is supposed to be the reflection of society. It is more true in case of a masterpiece like, ‘Jiwonor Batot’. First published in 1944 written by Birinchi Kumar Baruah in the pen-name of Beena Baruah. In this paper an attempt is made to bring into focus as to how the socio-economic condition of Assam gets reflected in ‘Jiwonor Batot’ with an attempt to prove the novel as a convincing source of Assamology.

The significant and necessity of the paper :

Any creative Assamese literature has its importance as a source of Assamology. Novel is a creative literature and as an Assamese novel 'Jiwonor Batot' draws attention to every serious critic and academic of Assamese literature. The novel covers a period from the middle of the nineteenth century to the second world war. So, the novel has a background of almost one hundred years. It was a period of transition from the feudalism to capitalism. The novel deals with various factor relating to the conservative rural society as it has been traced by Dr.Hiren Gohain in 'Axomiya Uponyaxor Goti- Prokriti' published in 'Axomiya Uponyaxor Ekho Bosor' edited by Dr. Shailen Bharali. Dr. Gohain calls this novel an Epic novel because of its socio-economic components.

Objectives of this paper :

The principal objectives of this paper is to establish 'Jiwonor Batot' as a source of Assamology. Simultaneously, the study makes an attempt to prove that the Assamese novel can be a reliable source of Assamology.

Method of this paper :

The analytical method is adopted in this paper.

Scope of this paper :

This paper concentrates on the socio-economic condition of Assam as reflected in 'Jiwonor Batot'. The story characters, dialogues, narratives of the novel are not taken into account. The term socio-economic covers economic, political, social aspects by taking into account the various folk elements cultured by the people of Assam during the given period.

Review of literature :

To study Assamese novel as a source of Assamology is relatively a new phenomenon. In fact, Assamese novel has not yet thoroughly discussed from the point of view of Assamology. Ofcourse Assam sporadic discussions are found where Assamese novel is seen as a picture of society. So far as research work is concerned mention may be made of an unpublished thesis, namely 'Reflection of economic scenario in Assamese novel' 2013 by Ranjan Kumar Phukan. In that thesis focus is given on the economic aspects of Assam while discussing some selected Assamese novels including 'Jiwonor Batot'.

‘Jiwonor Batot’ as a source of Assamology :

First published in 1944, ‘Jiwonor Batot’ is throws ample lights on the socio-economic life of pre-independent Assam. The economic, political, cultural, conventional life of Assam during the period from the middle of the nineteenth century to the second world war find expression in the novel as follows.

(a) Economic aspects :

Right from the very beginning of the story ‘Jiwonor Batot’ the economic condition of Assam gets reflected in the description of yhe character of ‘Mauzadar’ of Marangi. The relation between the land lord and the tenants, the exploitation of the rich on the poor, are narrated in this novel. ‘Mauzadar’ is the representative feudal system. He is the all in all in rural agricultural economy. At the same time government officers, the judicial employees are representations of the urban aristocratic society. During the British rule the Assamese society was governed by the feudal lords in village and the bureaucrats in town all these characters are found in ‘Jiwonor Batot’. The struggling life of the poor peasants of Marangi in Golaghat is focussed in this novel. By reading this novel a reader can easily understand the rural economy of Assam in the nineteenth century when there was no market economy. On the other hand, there is a description of the growing urban life in Dibrugarh which centers round the character of a clerk in the judicial court. The co-existence of the feudalism and capitalism during the British Raj is shown in this novel. The rural agricultural society was gradually interested in capitalistic occupations like the Clerks, mandal, layers, munsifs, chirostadar, and the likes. The interest of the Assamese people to such bureaucratic jobs signal the gradual transformation of society. Through the character of ‘Rai Bahadur Manik Hazarika ‘ the novelist brings to light the smuggling of opium. The nexus between the smugglers and the government officers are exposed in this novel. Again the novel shows the misery of the local weavers and farmers who fell in the ‘debt-trap’ of the outsider businessman. The impact of the growing tea economy on the Assamese people is also narrated in this novel.

(b) Political aspects :

The decaying Ahom rule, the conflict between the ethnic people of Assam, the non-cooperation movement lead by Mahatma Gandhi are the major political issues dealt by the novelist of ‘Jiwonor Batot’. Marangi is a politically alive place since the Ahom role to the British Raj and this Marangi is the background of novel ‘Jiwonor Batot’.

The novel brings into focus the conflicts between freedom fighters and the British government in general and the resistance of the Congress volunteers against the use of opium in particular. The imprisonment of the freedom fighters could not prevent the on going non-violent movement of

Assam against the British. The novel shows the indomitable spirit of the Assamese people here and there.

The novel also brings to light the problems of the Assamese peasants who reeled under the heavy taxation imposed by the British.

(c) The social custom :

The novel deals with the various social customs of the Assamese people. The novel narrates the Assamese marriage system in detail. Moreover the novel brings to light the rituals related to the funerals. The novel also deals with the folk-belief and the folk medicinal treatment. Again the novelist refers to a good number of proverbs which reflect the various aspects of social life. Reference is made to the social caste system through such proverbs.

Conclusion :

The various aspects of economic, political and social life of Assam find expression in the novel 'Jiwonor Batot' which covers a long period of almost hundred years from the middle of nineteenth century to second world war of twentieth century. From the above discussion we see that

- The novel portrays the socio-economic system prevailing in that given period with special reference to three historical places of Assam, namely, Marangi, Dibrugarg and Raha.
- The novel narrates the agricultural system of Assam during that given period with special reference to paddy, Jute, Cane, cereal cultivations and the growing tea cultivations.
- The non-violent Freedom movement finds an adequate space in the novel.
- The novel deals with the affects of the use of opium and the resistance movement of the Assamese freedom fighters against opium.
- The novel brings to light the misery of the Assamese peasants and the weavers against the back-drop of the exploitation of the British colonial rulers.
- The novel traces the transition of the Assamese society from the age old feudal system to capitalism.
- The novel throws its light on the impact of the outsiders on the socio-economic life of Assam with special reference to Rajasthani businessman the bureaucrats and the Moimonsingia cultivators.

- The novel focuses on the growing tea cultivations and its impact on the socio-economic life.
- The novel highlights on the exploitation of the local feudal lords on the British colonial rulers.
- The novel traces the gradual urbanization in Assam with with special reference to Dibrugarh.
- The novel deals with the social customs and rituals of the pre-independent Assam.
- The novel shows the nexus between the British colonial rulers and the feudal lords.
- The novel deals with a good number of Assamese proverb which reflects the social system of Assam.

As such the novel 'Jiwonor Batot' can be used as a reliable source for the academic discipline of Assamology. In fact 'Jiwonor Batot' has paved the way for taking Assamese novel as a source of Assamology. It sets an example to be followed by other Assamese novelist to deal with local socio-economic life of Assam.

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