



VILLAGE LIFE AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND IN LAKSHMI NANDAN BORA'S WORKS

(A study with reference to Lakshmi Nandan Bora's short stories and the novel
Ganga Silonir Pakhi)

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Abstract

Lakshmi Nandan Bora was one of the most prominent writer of Ramdhenu era in Assamese Literature. While talking about rural life and its acute depiction in Assamese Literature the most popular name that comes to our mind is Lakshmi Nandan Bora. He has not only focused on the rural setup for creating a familiar background for common people in Assamese society but also focused on how social and cultural changes can affect common people's lives. Depiction of village life and its people are the centre of Bora's works. The author very beautifully portrays the social, political, cultural and economical rural life in his short stories such as 'Bhaona', 'Nisina Maram', 'Anuprabha', among others. Apart from his short stories his novels are also filled with his village centric description. For instance, *Ganga Silonir Pakhi* is a notable work of Bora which not only set against a rural background but also provides detail accounts about economical and political effect on village people after Independence. In this study we will try to analyse and will also try to have a descriptive discussion on Lakshmi Nandan Bora's depiction of village life and its socio-cultural background in his works with reference to some of his short stories and his novel *Ganga Silonir Pakhi*.

Keywords: Rural life, common people, socio-cultural, economical.

Introduction

Lakshmi Nandan Bora was one of the most prominent writer of Ramdhenu era in Assamese Literature. He was born in 1932 at Kujidah village in Nagaon district to Pheturam Bora and Phuleswari. Bora spend his childhood in his village. The rural setup of village and the knowledge that he had gathered from village life impacted his literary career throughout his life. The cultural and social backdrop of village made a great impact in his mind, which eventually transferred to his works. Moreover we can also notice some traces of Vaishnavite culture in his works, as he had spend thirty years of his life in Majuli, enfolded by Eksarana tradition of Vaishnavism. He started his literary career with his first short story 'Bhaona', which was published in the Assamese magazine *Ramdhenu* in 1954. *Ganga Silonir Pakhi* and *Kayakalpa* are his most notable works. His *Ganga Silonir Pakhi* has been translated into several Indian languages. By using the story of this novel Padum Barua even made a film under the same name in 1976. In 1988 for his *Patal Bhairavi* Lakshmi Nandan Bora won the Sahitya Akademi Award. Lakshmi Nandan Bora was also honoured with Padma Shri in 2015.

If we talk about Lakshmi Nandan Bora's literary work, the most common thing that we will notice is the depiction of village life in his works. Lakshmi Nandan Bora, who was mostly known for his short stories, focused mostly on ordinary life of village folk. If we go through his works we'll see the portrayal of rural background and ordinary lives not only in his short stories but also in his novels, among which *Ganga Silonir Pakhi* (1963), *Nishar Purabi* (1962), and *Matir Meghor Sanh* (1970) are prominent. It is not like that the village life and village setup are the only aspects of Bora's novel. He was equally conscious about the social and political scenario of his time. *Patal Bhairavi* (1965), *Uttar Purush* (1970) and *Dohan Dulari* (1971) are among his more socially and politically conscious novel. In other words we can say that the central theme of his literary works is the socio-cultural background of village life.

Village Life and its socio-cultural background in Lakshmi Nandan Bora's short stories.

Village life and Lakshmi Nandan Bora are like the two sides of the same coin. Almost all of his short stories are set against the backdrop of village. Everything related to rural life from customs and principles to the happiness and sorrows, relationships, the beauty of common people and common life, find its way into Bora's stories. And we can say that it is because of Bora's acute portrayal of common life in his works, which made him popular among readers. Besides this the politically and socially conscious side of Bora shows us how the changes that has occurred during the post Independence era affected people's life through his works. In some of his short stories he tried to introduce the village life and its tradition and culture which was about to devoured by the modern or Western culture. Though all of his works are related to village background but most notably his short stories are famous for his depiction of rural background and culture. One of his short stories which set against a rural background is 'Sakha Damodor'. Bora gives a special touch to the story with his beautiful description of the rural culture. And he also describes how the animal 'Cow' plays a very important part in the Assamese rural culture and also in the lives of folk people of Assamese society. The Cow centric Assamese rural life is the main centre of the story, around which the narrative revolves. From the means of their livelihood to the ways of daily life of village folk are dependable on cattle. Bora, in a very effective way, draws the picture of Bihu festival and its importance on Assamese culture. In one sentence we can say that Bora filled every nook and corner of the story with the touch of village life of Assam. Another most important aspects of modern society upon which Bora reflects in this story is how our increasing needs and financial inability to fulfill those needs made, or we can say forced, some village people to leave their ordinary ways of living (i.e farming, herding) and engage in some more guaranteed paying services. In 'Sakha Damodor', Mukut, the protagonist forced by his needs and economic crisis, sold out his cattles, stop farming and started

working as a peon. Later he started regretting his decision and also started missing his earlier life. Earlier he was independent doing farming and other activities of ordinary village life but now he feels like stuck in a never ending cycle. His present work as a peon take him far away from nature oriented village life and the peace that one can have by coexisting with rural nature.

His another story 'Nisina Maram' also made its appearance with a rural setup. In this story Bora gives us a picture of the beautiful structure of village household in Assam. The picture of rural household of Assam with its yard become alive in front of us with the magical touch of Lakshmi Nandan Bora's language. The picture of poverty stricken village life and the common people's beautiful way of looking at life is also depicted by the author in his story 'Monote Marahi Jai'. Here he shows us how even though grew up in a destitute family people have the desire, within them, to live a beautiful life. The narrator of the story shows how despite the bad economic condition of a rural family they tried to keep their household neat and clean and with such a good care. From the outward structure of their house we can get a glimpse of their poverty stricken life but the girl of the house is like the actual gem living inside the house, who took good care of the house and made it a home. Another village centric story, 'Manbirikhor Khoj' gives us the beautiful picture of pure and unconditional love among village people. Similarly Bora's 'Sanmohon' also portrays an alluring view of prepossessing rural beauties. The story revolves around the 'Dikhow' river and Bora with his magical touch of words presents a delightful visual imagery of Dikhow and its bright water in front of readers. Besides focusing on rural setup and life Lakshmi Nandan Bora is also conscious about the prevailing class division, superstition, customs and tradition of villages. Some of his short stories are based on the theme of rebellion against the illogical customs and traditions of village society. For example his short story 'Gopon Godhuli' reveals in front of us the attitude of a society towards a widow. Widows are tend to face many difficulties and exploitation due to some illogical customs of rural society. Through the character of 'Anuprabha', the protagonist of this story, Bora brings forth the overall picture of widowhood and its effects on women's lives.

Being born and brought up at Kujidah village of Nagaon Bora had the Vaishnavite cultural impact upon him through out his childhood which later transferred to his works as well. Bora's first short story 'Bhaona', where he merged Vaishnavite culture with village culture, is the perfect example of the Vaishnavite impact upon the author. His 'Debotar Byadhi' and 'Guruparba' express the deteriorating condition of Vaishnavite religion. Lakshmi Nandan Bora, who was equally conscious about the economic, political and social factor of society, depicted the changes that occurred with the changing time because of some political and economical factors in these two stories very effectively.

Village Life and its socio-cultural background in *Ganga Silonir Pakhi*.

Apart from his short stories some of his novels are also set against rural background. The village culture and the lives of people on the bank of Sonai is vividly portrayed by Lakshmi Nandan Bora in his famous novel *Ganga Silonir Pakhi* which was published in 1963. Bora's creativity while describing the lives of common people on the bank of Sonai gives the novel a magical touch. The fact that Bora was born and grew up at Kujidah, which is on the bank of Sonai river, helps him in expressing the happiness and sufferings of village people so deeply. *Ganga Silonir Pakhi* is the perfect example of such acquaintance of Bora with village life and culture. Basanti, Dhananjay, Bhogram, Mathura, Tarulata, Bhagirath are the main characters of the novel through which he describes the story of a small village somewhere near Nagaon. The novel begins with the central character, Basanti, who is a young girl late in her teens and she is growing up to be a very beautiful women. We can see her nuances of growing up in a traditional and conventional Assamese village household, away from materialistic view of life. Basically, through the character of Basanti and Tarulata the novelist tried to portray an image about the lives on riverside. It is Bora's most famous novel which has received a profound critical acclaim because of its majestic view

of life. The novel is not only set against a village background and its people but we can also have a socio-political conscious view of the novelist by going through the novel. The story of the novel takes place in a post Independence time. It talks about the situation and changes that took place in people's lives immediately after Independence. Bora very beautifully woven the discourse of development into the fabric of the text and we also found how individual lives had been affected, who were otherwise living a very peaceful, happy and satisfied life with their cultural values and customs.

After Independence there was a massive infrastructure development across the whole country, including the development of roads, which made transportation easy even to a remote place like Basanti's village. Though on the surface level it was a very good thing, but if we look into the deeper level we will see how such kind of development affected village people, which is presented by Bora in this particular novel. We can see how some Marowari businessmen from town come to their village, as now transportation to their village become very easy, and snatches away Basanti's brother Bhogram's source of livelihood. This novel is also significant for Bora's acute consciousness about superficial political ideologies. The novelist tried to show how some political leader and their superficial ideologies can create breach among the simple minded village people. For example the two friend Dhananjay and Bhogram separated basically because both of them are the supporter of different political parties and have different political ideologies. The picture of the dark world of politics and its effects on people (how from a simple village person Bhogram became a corrupt person) is very successfully portrayed by the novelist through the character Bhogram.

Conclusion

Lakshmi Nandan Bora owned not only a mind which was familiar with the minute details of village and its surroundings but also a mind which was politically, socially and culturally conscious. And his works like *Patal Bhairabi*, *Uttar Purush* and *Dhon Dulari* proved this combination perfectly. One of the main characteristics of his village centric novels and short stories is the description of the journey of life and the culture that people carry with them. Another important fact is Bora's use of language to express his sense of life, which perfectly suits the subject matter of his works.

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