

Presentation Method and Character Depiction of Assamese Biographical Novels

Aditya Saikia¹, Prajnasree Bhuyan²

^{1,2} Research Scholar, Department of Assamese, Gauhati University

¹adityasaikia305@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Biographical novels have gained special importance in the study of Assamese novel literature. In the novels, to portray every man of flesh and blood; the writer must have established the field of their travels as the basis of the story. With the recent increase in the number of biographical novels in Assamese literature, as a story the reader has come to the forefront of the society regarding most neglected and unseen subjects of social life as whole. In 'Dhanya Naara Tanu Bhal' novel Malik has described the novel in third person as if he knows everything or experiences in real life. The novelist has established Shankardeva as a stronger person in the novel. The 'Ferengadao' novel by Medini Chowdhury does not cover the whole life of Bishnu Rabha. Many other topics related to the main topic have emerged in the essay. The method taken by Chowdhury of presenting the main character Bishnu Rabha for the discussion of Bishnu Prasad Rabha has given him success. It is not an easy task to convey the message of life of a non-stationary travelling person like Bishnu Rabha in a novel. Lakhinandan Borah has written a novel about Madhavdeva's life in extensive form named 'Xehi Gunanidhi'. In the novel, the information about Madhavdeva's life has become very clear and easy to understand to reader.

Keywords

Article Received: 10 August 2020, Revised: 25 October 2020, Accepted: 18 November 2020

Introduction

Biographical novels have gained special importance in the study of Assamese novel literature. To date many novels have been written based on the lives of many talented people. This category of novels has portrayed the socio cultural context of that particular period to the reader. In the novels, to portray every man of flesh and blood, the writer must have established the field of their travels as the basis of the story. These novels have bought the contemporary socio-political, economic, religious and educational aspects more or less close to the reader. With the recent increase in the number of biographical novels in Assamese literature, as a story the reader has come to the forefront of the society regarding most neglected and unseen subjects of social life as whole. Out of these novels 'Dhanya Naara Tanu Bhal' about Shankardeva's biography by Sayed Abdul Malik, 'Xehi Gunanidhi' about Madhavdeva's biography by Lakhinandan Borah and 'Ferengadao' about Bishnu Prasad Rabha by Medini Choudhury have been discussed briefly regarding story presentation method and character depiction.

Methodology

This paper is based on data collected from field study. Also from different sources like research papers, research articles etc. published in journals, periodicals, books and internet.

Aims and Objectives

1. Discussion regarding the creativity of the novelist in creating the novels.
2. Discussion regarding the achievement of the novelist in representing the characters of these great persons in human form.

3. Discussion regarding how the novelist represents the contemporary societies of the time of these great men in biographical novels.

4. How the characters of the great persons are represented by novelist is being described.

5. Discussion regarding fusion of imagination in character creation by the novelist.

6. Discussion regarding how much information has been collected by the novelist from main source and how far he has gone from main source in representing the side characters apart from main character.

Presentation method and character Depiction

Dhanya naara tanu bhal

In 'Dhanya Naara Tanu Bhal' novel Malik has used objective or descriptive method to present the story. After studying the novel's plot, situation, character etc. the writers' narrative point of view can be observed. The writer has described the novel in third person as if he knows everything or experiences in real life. As a descriptive novel, sometimes the narrative subject has a place in the flow of events related to the main subject, which is quite long from the main subject. To describe the presented subject matter by introducing new event or new character in the main subject occasionally is another credit of the writer. Sometimes he uses his own techniques to be consistent with the novel on the subject matter or to present the main subject matter in a beautiful way. The last chapter of the novel has been described in first person unlike the other chapters of the novel which have been described in third person. To reveal the various activities, successes and failures, attainment or naught Malik has taken the advantage of first person to describe it.

In Malik's narrative to represent the subject matter sometimes several relevant subjects have obtained places in the novel. To represent Shankardeva, main character of middle age in context with socio-cultural, political and religious field, lengthy description has got its place in the novel. Again, at the beginning of the third volume the writer has linked description related to Islam religion. In this chapter the writer gives a detailed account of the spread and status of Islam religion in India. These did not help in compiling the story of the novel. Although the historical aspects of social system of that time and Shankardeva are not directly related in the chapter, it is observed that the social system of that time was brought into discussion from comparative point of view.

In the novel, a humanitarian and others aspects of the materialistic perspective flows between the stories. In the story, starting from Shankardeva's educational life to the time of his great death has been described. During this period, Shankardeva's education in Mahendra Kandali's Tol, Xirumoni Bhuyan's rankings, marriages, pilgrimage, Namghar (Prayer House), establishment, introduction of theatrical performances by Sinhajatra, making of different lyrics-verses and Shastras, Tembuwani dam by Radhika Shanti, marriage of Manu, fury of Ahom king and victory of Shankardeva by self-support, Ahom king's elephant keeper and King's wrath, the killing of Hari Jowai (Son-in-law), abandoning of Ahom kingdom by Shankardeva and entering Koch Kingdom etc. are included in the novel. But the most unique and remarkable aspects of Shankardeva's life i.e. reunion of Shankar-Madhav has not been described as it should be. The novel is not just about the life of Shankardeva, but also describes extensively about the history of Assam at that time, Ahom dynasty, the Assam invasion of Mughal, the Assam invasion of Bakhtiyar Khilji and the invasion of Kamrupa by Nachiruddin due to which the biography of the great person has been faded out in some places. The scope of the novel is wide and extensive. Shaakta, Buddhism, Islam and philosophy, the importance of Sufism and their similarities with Eksarana Naam dharma (literally: Shelter in one religion) have been widely described" (Gariyasi, Twenty-Five years, Nineth issue, June, 2006). Asomot Dharmaguru Xokolok Kendra Kori Roshit Upanyaxar Swarup, Dr. Rubi Borah, Page: 15-20.)

In 'Dhanya Naara Tanu Bhal' novel, the novelist has established Shankardeva as a stronger person. The novelist has avoided Charit Puthi or the miracle described traditionally. In some cases, some of the events, contents or characters relevant to the society have been deemed unnecessary by the author and they were ruled out of the novel. In parallel, however the fictional character is set for the sake of the novel's flow. In the novel, Malik portrays Shankardeva as a human child and from his student hood he has been shown as the one who has deep thinking capability, great physical strength, intelligence, sharp memory power and thus leads the main character in a practical way.

In case of character creation, it can be observed that many of the events associated with Shankardeva are not presented directly, but through some fictional characters. The fictional male characters included in the novel are Dehiram, Shivaram, Kanpai, Noram, Bhudhar, Golok etc. and female fictional characters included in the novel are Aaisena,

Xonpahi, Jetuki, Rohila, Burhi, Rupahi, Konmaina etc. In many cases, the novelist portrayed the story in a new way from the events mentioned in Charit Puthi by presenting them with fictional characters. As soon as the character of Shankardeva is presented, the novelist gives a sociological explanation also by publishing the events related to Shankardeva.

Ferengadao

'Ferengadao' is a descriptive novel about the life of Bishnu Rabha written by Medini Chowdhury. The novel does not cover the whole life of Bishnu Rabha. Many other topics related to the main topic have emerged in the essay. The political arena of Rabha's life has been given more importance. Although it has a place in the novel about his early life or the time of learning life etc., the issues presented are not clearly visible. As a descriptive novel, only the political life of Rabha and the society of that time as well as the picture of the revolutionary communist movement in Assam are very clear. In the novel the way life, religion, economy etc. of the rural society of Assam of that time along with cultural field is presented in parallel.

Chowdhury has taken a fairly descriptive form to portray Bishnu Rabha's character. Passing the nomadic life by Rabha in Assam's Sadiya to Dhuburi like different places for the movement has been described extensively in the novel. Through Bishnu Rabha, who spent every day and night with the various castes and tribes of Assam, the cultural aspects of those communities are being expressed by the novelist. It is true that Rabha's cultural life is not easy to be discussed or presented by small spheres of life.

Rabha was a man of socialist ideology. When the situation of people of Assam was very deplorable and they were worried about their next meal, in such a time Rabha showed hope for peace and prosperity. At that time, when there was a cry for food and clothing, in that time Rabha's ideology was source of hope among the common people.

The picture of the common peasantry of Assam has also been blossomed beautifully. Chowdhury has taken a descriptive method to present the tragic scenes of life of common villagers living amid mud and water.

The method taken by Chowdhury of presenting the main character Bishnu Rabha for the discussion of Bishnu Prasad Rabha has given him success. It is not an easy task to convey the message of life of a non-stationary travelling person like Bishnu Rabha in a novel. It is because Rabha was one of the main political scholars, a man of communist ideology, a culturalist, a social activist, a key figure in anti-government protests. Keeping Rabha in a certain character in a novel is a not an easy task as he travels Assam from end to end spending day and night alone. Although, the national epoch maker of the twentieth century sacrificed his whole life for the people, he did not gain any general recognition. But the multi-talented person gets his due respect towards the end of his life and only after his death.

Rabha lived his life in dark and isolation from the society after experiencing pain and anguish in this material world. Chowdhury has very sincerely presented the importance of Rabha's personality in the novel. The main protagonist has been referred to as the normal natural male.

In the novel *Along with Bishnu Rabha*, a widow of Hindu Brahmin family living in the foot hills of Kamakhya hill named Anupama is described in parallel. This lady was also a woman of infinite talent. Anupama, talented woman of the society who has awakened nationalism. Chowdhury has beautifully portrayed the incomparable character of courage and patience to free individual from the bondage and illusion of society. Anupama was a supporter of Rabha's artistic struggling life.

Loknath Barua was another fellow traveller in Rabha's struggling life. Barua was revolutionary soldier of the communist movement. Barua's outspoken and fearless voice echoes through the novel. Barua had the capability of awakening people by his speech and various slogans of struggling life.

Kanaklata is known as Rabha's second wife in the novel. By growing up in a struggling environment her mind also become fighter. She met Rabha after giving her foot in the movement. She was attracted by the personality that was formed towards Rabha after she met him.

Chowdhury has beautifully portrayed Rabha's life as the root of all characters in the novel. It has also been successful as biographical novel.

Xehigunanidhi

Lakhinandan Borah has written a novel about Madhavdeva's life in extensive form named 'Xehi Gunanidhi'. The presentation of the novel by Borah is descriptive. Life cycle of Madhavdeva has been described in third person point of view by Borah. To present the story, the early life of Madhavdeva and his ancestors are described based on 'Gurucharit Katha'. Borah has described the novel from research point of view which in turn shows the character's attention-perception, the philosophy of life fully along with the main subject matters. Borah's collection of information from 'Charit Puthi', written in the background of middle ages along with different contemporary sources gives eloquent description. By giving the narrative description and keeping the different subject matters in line with the main theme of the story, Madhavdeva's character and the image of social system of that time have also emerged. Borah has taken separate measures to express human perspective of society as a real picture in the novel. Among the characters and by explaining social life line, Borah's discussion gives a specific perspective. Several times like an informative and devoted historian, he puts up the information. Giving informative description in between, main subject matter has become more understandable to the reader.

Madhavdeva was a man of many qualities. Borah has taken the name from these versatile qualities for presenting him. This is because, Borah has mentioned about Madhava in Nandimukh. Again in Borgeet created by Madhavdeva in Bhatiyali melody to explain Lord Krishna, this kind of word has been used-

"Koto punye Labhilo Gunere Nidhi Shyam I

Bansiya Nileko Nikorun Bidhi Baam II

Shyam Kanu Sine Mora Narahe Jivan I

Ha Shyam Bulite Aakul Kore Mon II"

(Harinarayan Dutta Baruah (Ed.): Borgeet, page. 232)

In the novel 'Xehi Gunanidhi', the information about Madhavdeva's life has become very clear and easy to

understand to reader. Borah has collected information from various sources for the presentation of Madhava's character. The novel is based on the social, cultural, political, economic and religious aspects of the society of that time. In front of the reader, he has tried to preserve the serious image of a human being as oppose to the ordinary human character. Although Madhava is a commoner, however he has not been portrayed as a normal child from infancy. In all respect novelists shows him as a higher level thinker, stronger person, having higher work ethics than any other peer child. Charit Puthi or any other sources gives detail explanation about Madhava's educational life but gives limited explanation about Harisinga Borah's effort for him. But Borah has attracted the reader's attention by giving extensive explanation about Harisinga Borah's effort in giving formal education to Madhava and giving less importance to the other areas mentioned above. Borah has probably implemented this theme to make Madhava's character more sophisticated and trustworthy.

Lakhinandan Borah has linked more than one fifty characters for presentation in the novel. The characters obtained from 'Charit Puthi' are directly linked to the novel. Borah has taken information from history or any other contemporary sources of the time for the purpose of presenting some of the main characters or in harmony with Madhava. In case of male and female characters, Borah has taken almost all from the main source. In the meantime, to present the characters; Borah has used his own technique in case of names and other areas. Borah has linked some fictional characters with main characters in such a way that these characters cannot be presumed as fictitious. It is because; they become alive in masterly hands of Borah.

Conclusion

There is a certain place of biographical novels in the field of Assamese novel literature. The discussed novels were based on the life of Shankardeva, Madhavdeva and, Bishnu Rabha. By narrating the lives of these great Assamese persons, it is being tried to introduce them to Assamese folk life. In the novels, along with the discussion regarding representation of the contemporary societies of that time, how the characters of the great persons are represented by novelist is being described.

References

- [1] Chowdhury, Medini : Ferengadao, Third Publication, Bidya Mahal, Guwahati, 2004 published.
- [2] Borah, Lakhinandan : Xehi Gunanidhi, Second Edition, Jyoti Prakashan, Guwahati, 2010 published.
- [3] Malik, Sayed Abdul : Dhanya Naara Tanu Bhal, Third Edition, Student Stores, Guwahati, 1998 published.

- [4] Kalita,Niranjan : Axomiya Jibonibhittik Upanyax Eti Bishlexonatmok Adhyaon, Bani Mandir, Guwahati, 2009 published.
- [5] Gogoi, Lila : Axomiya Lokaxahityor Ruprekha, First Publication,Banalata, Dibrugarh, 2007 published.
- [6] Gohain, Hiren : Axomiya Jatiyo Jibonot Mohapuruxiya Porompora, Guwahati Lawyer's Book Stall, 1978 published.
- [7] Thakur,Nagen(Ed.) : Exo Bosoror Axomiya Upanyax, Guwahati, Jyoti Prakashan, 2000 published.