

Reflection of Psychological Naturalism in Homen Borgohain's Novel 'Astarag'

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Abstract: Among all the novelists who has earned popularity by composing a huge amount of novels in modern Assamese literature , Homen Borgohain is exceptional. In his novels new ideas and techniques get beautifully expressed. The modernist ideologies provided a new dimension to his novels. The society-centric element is the main reason behind the popularity of his novels. In the successful novels of Homen Borgohain the diverse realistic expressions of common people of Assam get expressed in an artistic and witty way. He has written many novels. But the nine novels that he wrote almost in each of them ,he directly criticised the social and political system of the society that violently forced common people to destroy their dignity and live their lives in a ugly, poor and troubled manner . The novels also strongly condemned the touching picture of the society where the dignity of human beings were robbed and destroyed. In some of his novels this criticism has depicted the implementation of different conflicts of people's psychological life or their innerworld. In this regard novels like 'Tantrik' , 'Saudor Puteke Nao Meli Jai' , 'Astarag' are exceptional. Homen Borgohain's 'Astarag' is one such sensitive novel which includes physical, psychological and social directions of aging . In general it is very rare to find such novels in Assamese literature. 'Astarag' is a fine creation which is composed with western ideologies and own experiences of the novelist. In this paper the researcher tried to discuss the psychological naturalism of human beings in a descriptive way.

Keywords: Society- centric, humanitarian dignity, aging, psychological, conflict etc.

0.0 . Introduction:

In the Assamese novel literature Homen Borgohain is recognized as a great novelist. From the last century the novels of Homen Borgohain had been published and till now the popularity of his novels did not decline. He discussed the problems of contemporary social lives in his novels. The problems in his novels get started from a remote village of Assam and gradually it includes the values of town cities and artist civilization and finally leaving the background of town and city it comes out to be a problem of common people. Before selecting a topic for the novel, the novelist always undergoes a broad study on that topic and based on that information , the novelist sets the plot of the story. Homen

Borgohain composed many novels which are basically information centric. Among those, novels like 'Subala' (1963) , 'Tantrik'(1967) , 'Kushilov'(1970) , 'Halodhiya Soraye Bao Dhaan Khai' (1973) , 'Timir Tirtho'(1975) , 'PitaPutra '(1975) , 'Astarag'(1986) , 'Motsyogondha '(1987) , 'Saudor Puteke Nao Meli Jai '(1987) etc are exceptional.

Homen Borgohain's 'Astarag' is a satisfactory novel which was written based on western ideologies. The novel is so much rooted to our society and our ideas that it completely loses the essence of western ideologies. Though the subject matter of the novel is naturalism , it primarily focuses on the implementation of the different sides and conflicts of our psychology or

the innerworld. Homen Borgohain tried to picturize the scenario of the villages of Assam, the struggles of people, their simple lifestyles in a compassionate and sympathetic way in his novel 'Astarag'. And he was successful in doing so.

0.1. Purpose of the study:

For a longer period, novelist Homen Borgohain has been able to occupy a greater position in the modern Assamese novel literature. In his novels a studious mind and a sensitive heart gets reflected where the familiar feelings are beautifully expressed in words and it provides sweetness to the novel. The autobiographical elements also go beyond the personal stages and turns in universal posture. As a novelist Homen Borgohain is always unique and idiosyncratic. His novels have some intimate melodies which are very close to heart. Though it cannot be understood, it can be loved. The main purpose of this research paper is to find out the various sides of conflicts of the psychological or the innerworld of a person's life which resulted in naturalism in the novel 'Astarag'.

0.2. Scope and Content of the Study:

To investigate the Psychological naturalism in 'Astarag' the novelist took help of the novel Astarag as its primary content and along with that he also kept other social essays and books as its secondary content.

0.3. Review of the Previous Study:

In many books there is a discussion about Homen Borgohain's novel 'Astarag'. Books like Govinda Prasad Sharma's 'Uponyax' or 'Axomiya Uponyax', Dr. Nagen Thakur's edited book 'Exo Bosoror Axomiya Uponyax', Homen Borgohain's 'Uponyax Somogro -1' are exceptional.

0.4. Method of the Study:

Based on the discussion of the research paper the descriptive method has been used.

1.00. Review of the Main Topic :

The magazine Ramdhenu was considered as the center of the modernist revolution that emerged in Assamese literature. One of the primary writers who supported this revolution was Homen Borgohain. This modernist revolution familiarises the Assamese literature with world literature and their new and great ideas. The novels of Homen Borgohain help the readers to understand the problems of our society as well as it also familiarises the problems of Assam. Along with that the novels also make the readers acquainted with the new and great ideas of the world. According to Borgohain, literature is not a medium of entertainment only. That is why his novels like Kushilov, Timirtirto, Pitaputra, Nixongota, Bixonnota, Astarag etc do not focus on entertaining the readers. Almost in every novel more or less Homen Borgohain discusses issues like loneliness, depression, isolation, meaninglessness of life, solitude, values and fall of faith etc. Though he plots the story in the background of Assam but the problems that he brings into light are not only confined to Assam but it is universal.

Homen Borgohain's 'Astarag' is a very interesting novel. This novel is not a conservative story-teller novel. But like 'Tantrik' this novel is also written to express an intellectual ideology or attitude.

According to the demand of the subject matter a broad discussion and longer conversations were included in the novel. Though the novel flows with a specific story, the main subject matter of the novel is aging, death and salvation. This problem is universal and eternal. Nobody can obstruct the incapability of aging or old age but with proper care and hospitality one can protect them from disgrace and depression. In recent days people prefer smaller families so it has become a tough job to take care of the elderly members of the family and as a result the old people suffer from it. Borgohain discussed the different aspects of this problem like domestic, social,

psychological etc based on father- son relationship .

The disability, helplessness and mercy of inspiring and life abundant old age of the father , made his son, Dilip hurt and enraged. Dilip couldn't resist his crying when he saw his father spending painful days in anticipation of death. Dilip felt difficult to accept the irresistible agony of the last condition of life. When he wanted to take his father with him , his father told-

" I have the capability to accept the trouble of aging ; but I do not have the strength to tolerate the separation from my home and my very own village. "

Amidst the pure love and care of the people , familiar conditions especially in rustic rural society one may not have the fear of aging and death but even among the very own family members who adopt modern values an old person can feel lonely. Loneliness unsurprisingly acts in their minds. His days pass between a psychological conflict. He thinks that for modern city people old age is a sin. So he is not comfortable with his grandson and daughter in law and thus becomes desperate for his rustic people and the mesmerizing sights of the village. He also becomes desperate to return to his home. The most horrible thing in aging is not death or physical pain but insult and disrespect. The act of sleeping in his own excrete with bare body and finding himself naked in front of his son and daughter-in-law after regaining sense make Dilip's father mentally discomfort and uneasy. Seeing the decay of the human body and insult of the dignity of humanity , Dilip suffers from mental instability and to get rid of this conflict he discusses it with his friends. Dilip is shocked at his father's condition -

" One day I will grow old and my condition will also become like this at the end. Alas! life. "

Watching the unhealthy senile condition of his father , Dilip becomes rebellious -

" Why are the consequences of life so miserable?

Is this painful aging not a huge satire for the dignity of humanity?

In this novel a conflict between the limitations of human beings in naturalism and sense of huge freedom in existentialism rises in the mind of Dilip and he concentrates on naturalism by denying the sense of existentialism. Considering the human body as a part of nature, believing the human body getting meld in soil after death , not imposing any kind of significance in the human body more than nature is a notion of naturalism. There is no such concept of differences between body and soul in naturalism so no question arises regarding imposing significance to human soul. Even the condition of an orchid or a bird is also not considered as different from human beings. So Dilip thinks- ' How amazingly nature plays like from the same soil the bizarre self revelation of lives occur ; sometimes from the same soil it comes out as a tiny grass and sometimes as an adorable woman ; sometimes he comes out as a venomous snake ; sometimes as Socrates or Gautam Buddha . After death a venomous snake and Gautam Buddha; a sacred fig tree and Cleopatra; a hawk- cuckoo and Beethoven everyone will turn into a load of soil only. ' (p. 73)

Familiar with the ideas of modern society the way Dilip becomes naturalistic after experiencing his father's condition and suffers from emotional conflict because of people's higher notions and perceptions , in the same way his father who was truly devoted to God turned naturalistic after experiencing the cruelty of aging -

' Whatever names one may call with but there is no doubt in my mind that this Universe is only a revelation of an utmost power. Again the experiences of life have taught me that there is no meaning to worship that power as our father or saviour. You worship it or not but that power will continuously do their work at its own will. ' (p. 96)

Along with the concept of naturalism that grows under Dilip's mind in the novel, the idea of naturalism is also found in the mind of Dr. Sharma too. The revolt that Dilip has in his mind about life will not be easy for him to remove. "What is the meaning of life which has such painful and horrible consequences?" As answer to this question, Dr Sharma pointed out the mistakes of Dilip and told that because he considered every human being as superior to birds- animals; plants-trees so all these queries wails in his heart- 'how much a person may be witty and intelligent but in comparison to the eternal and mysterious wisdom of nature the knowledge of human beings are dime and insignificant. To understand the significance of the meaning of life we need to follow the rules of nature. One such rule is death. Without death, life will be an endless nightmare."

After that Dr Sharma again told, "If you agree with me that life without death will turn into a diabolic horror then you also have to accept that to welcome death it is important to have aging." (p.114)

At the end Dilip is convinced with Dr Sharma's naturalistic view and accepts his father's condition. He feels the necessity of engaging himself in taking care of his father after realizing the fact that one can try their best in making it possible to die peacefully even after being suffered from the miserable conditions of old age.

Conclusion : In Homen Borgohain's novel 'Astarag' the problems that arise because of the differences between generations and pain of aging due to modern society's family setup are discussed. In the novel the identity of the old man is in danger as the human relationships are changing and cannot turn it around. The old man who feels lonely after being accompanied by people finds out a new identity from the memory that is not yet lost. He feels an imaginative familiarity with nature after being isolated from human beings. Basically by arising the problem

of aging in the novel the conflict which is created by the loneliness in the mind of Dilip's father and the emotional conflict that is continuously acting in Dilip's mind because of the various concerns about his father's condition, leads to the notion of naturalism. In the novel there is a beautiful reflection of psychological naturalism. Therefore it can be considered as a successful novel.

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