

Travel Literature of Prafulladatta Goswami: An Analytical Study

Dr. Prafulla Kumar Nath
Professor, Dept. of Assamese
Gauhati University

Upen Deka
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Assamese
Chhaygaon College

Abstract:- Travel literature is an inevitable genre of world literature. In Assamese literature too, travel literature enjoys a pivotal role. In 15th century, Saint Shrimanta Sankardeva travelled twice and recorded in Assamese Sarita Puthi (book of Sarita) of 17th century. Tripura Buranji (History of Tripura) written in 18th century is primarily a travelogue. But, those works can't be attributed with the term of travel literature in true sense. Towards the end of 19th century, a few literary articles on travel experience were published. These articles contribute a little to the development of Assamese Travel literature. In true sense, Assamese travel literature gained importance after the Independence of India and slowly but gradually it enlarges its volume. Hem Baruah makes Assamese Travel literature more prolific and flamboyant with his creative genius. Later on, writers like Birinchi Kumar Baruah, Prafulladatta Goswami, Soyod Abdul Malik, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharjyaya, Hemanga Bisawas, Nabakanta Baruah, Dr. Nagen Saikia, Dr. Lakshminandan Borah, Gautam Prasad Baruah enrich Assamese travel literature with their contributions. During the 20th century, Prafulladatta Goswami plays a pivotal role to give shape of Assamese travel literature from modern perspective. This Research Paper tries to shed light on the contributions of Prafulladatta Goswami towards Assamese travel literature.

Keywords:- Prafulladatta Goswami, Assamese Travel Literature, Hem Baruah, 20th Century Scenario.

I. INTRODUCTION

Travel literature is one of the main branches of Assamese Modern literature. The experience, knowledge, refreshment, bitterness associated with travelling is sometime recorded by a travel with literary expression and thus it becomes a part of travel literature (Nath, 329). Hem Baruah says, "In recent time travel literature earns more popularity in comparison to other genres in Assamese literature." (Sarma, 83). The first example of modern Assamese travel literature is found in an article published in Assamese newspaper 'Jonaki' in the year 1890. The name of the article was 'Soumar Bhraman' and the writer was Gunabhiram Baruah (Baruah, *ibid*). from the early part of 20th century Assamese travel literature has emerged as new trait in Assamese literature. In post Independent era, i.e., after 1947, a good number of Assamese writers emerged who focused on writing travelogue apart from other genres

of literature. In 1948, Dr. Birinchi kumar Baruah published 'Switzerland Bhromon'(travel of Switzerland). According to Maheswar Neog, this book paved the way of Modern Assamese travel literature in the 20th century. (Sarma,84) From the sixth decade of 20th century, Assamese Travel literature has expanded its area and volume and it emerged as a separate branch of Assamese literature. In these literary phenomena, the contributions of Prafulladatta Goswami are immense.

Prafulladatta Goswami was born on 18th March, 1919 in a village named Nahira in south Kamrup area of Assam. He was an M.A in English from Presidency College, Kolkata. He was the first Professor in Folklore Research and Study in the history of India. In 1960, Prafulladatta Goswami published his P.hD thesis in a book form. The name of that book is 'Ballads and Tales of Assam'. Before entering to the field of Folklore Research Prafulladatta Goswami was a devoted creative writer from his school life. He says "I don't know when and how I found interest in literature. In my childhood, most probably when I was in sixth standard I translated a Bangla poem into Assamese for the first time. After arriving Guwahati I tried a little bit to pave my way in the world of poetry. With few of my friends I released two or three hand written magazines. When I was reading in 9th standard I tried to write stories in English ". (Nath, 330) Later on, Prafulladatta Goswami emerged as a researcher, novelist, story writer, literary critic, biographer, translator and most importantly a writer of travelogue in Assamese literature.

II. TRAVEL LITERATURE BY PRAFULLADATTA GOSWAMI

As a renowned scholar and research guide Prafulladatta Goswami travelled different countries in many occasions. From his vivid experience in foreign countries, Assamese literature is enriched with four major works in travel literature, viz, 'Bilatot Sat Maah' (seven months in Britain) (1959), 'Xon rupor nohoy xi desh' (the country is not of gold and silver) (1962), 'Prithivir soupaxe epak' (one cycle of the earth) (1968) and 'Mur Rasia bhraman' (My travel of Russia) (1974). The major contributions of Prafulladatta Goswami in Assamese Travel literature are found in the 50's, 60's and 70's of 20th century.

The literary work on travelogue by Prafulladatta Goswami, 'Bilatot Saat Maah' was published in 1959. The book was published by Lawyer's Book Stall. Goswami spent seven months in England in the year 1958. In the preface Prafulladatta Goswami remarks, 'I try to give a glimpse of the education system, culture and social system of England from my experience in England while I spent seven months there.' (Bhattacharjya,145) In the second edition, Prafulladatta Goswami added some new information and revised some previous information and gave a new title as 'Xun rupor Nohoy Xi desh'. This second edition was published in 1962. There are all total 15 chapters in this book. The first chapter sheds light on the geographical and physical structure of London. His language is lucid and simple. His visual description easily catches the attention of the readers. The second chapter of the book highlights on the life style of the British people. The writer also shares his colorful experience with different people from different parts of the world who came to London for different purposes. He proves his concern for Indianness as most of the students go to London prefers western culture to Indian culture and languages. The third chapter is all about his journey to different parts of England and his vivid experience in Universities like Cambridge. His keen observation on religious advocacy in the Institutions is very striking. He remarks, "Universities like Cambridge, Oxford are established under the direct influence of Christianity, so Church in those places is very important structure or house" (Goswami, 1) Referring to Assam Prafulladatta Goswami says that AuniAati Satra in Assam can do the same thing by laying the foundation stone of an University. In his opinion, this practice would make the religious structure of Assam stronger. The fourth chapter of the book focuses on the education system of England. He even discusses on the idea of Public school and how it could be implemented in country like India. The next chapter of the book is concentrated on the British women and their life style. Each of the fifteen chapters of this book comes up with new aspect of human life and customs of English people. He provides his own interpretations and tries to relate in context of Assam and Assamese people.

Prafulladatta Goswami's another work on travel literature 'Prithibir soupaxe epak' was first published in 1968. This book was published by New Book Stall, Guwahati. This book narrates the writer's journey to United States of America and Japan. This book is comprised of ten chapters. Nine chapters are devoted to his journey and experience in United States of America while one chapter is dedicated to his journey to Japan. One striking feature of this book is that the writer minutely observes the behavior of foreigners towards the Indians. He refers one incident. During his visit to United States of America there was a famine in Orissa, India. The foreigners considered the writer a poor Indian who came to a rich country like America to collect fund for the famine affected Indians. Prafulladatta Goswami also sheds light on the practice of racial discriminations by the white Americans to the native black Americans. In another chapter he writes analyses the vast difference lays between American education system and Indian education system. In a different chapter Prafulladatta

Goswami discusses about the hollowness of so called western culture and how the American are losing family happiness frequently. He also narrates the aloof life of most of the elderly Americans. He points out that Indian culture knows to give respect and show sympathy to the elderly people. But, that practice is entertained less in America. The ninth chapter of this book narrates the experience of the author in Japan. He vividly describes the geographical features of Japan as well as the culture of Japanese people. He remarks that the Japanese are devoted fighters for their cast, culture and country.

'Mur Rasia bhraman' is another contribution by Prafulladatta Goswami to Assamese Travel literature. This book was first published in 1974. There are seven chapters in this book. Prafulladatta Goswami writes about his experience of his journey to Russia. The writer seems poetic while narrating his flight to Russia. He says, " It's 12 o'clock now. I ate something. I am feeling good. The aeroplane is flying over 31000 feet of sea level. I can't see my earth beneath us. But, the world of God is spread surrounding me." (Goswami, 451) The writer enthusiastically describes the Revolution of Russia and Lenin. In one chapter Prafulladatta Goswami writes about the Russian famous writers like Tolstoy. The writer also highly praises the social cum cultural ethics prevalent among the Russians. From his observation the writer remarks that the Russians like and admire Indians. He highly praises the young Russian boys who are very friendly in nature. He also observes that some Russians know how to speak in Hindi and Bangla language.

III. REMARKS AND CONCLUSION

Each of the books by Prafulladatta Goswami on travel literature is a result of his journey to a foreign country. He highlights some special incidents and try to arouse humour and wit out of his description. As an academician, a disciplined attitude is seen in his observation on the culture and human behavior pattern in a foreign land. His sense of humour is evident in almost all the pages of his travelogue. Basanta Kumar Bhattacharyya remarks on the works of Prafulladatta Goswami on travel literature, "It is observed that the subject matters of Dr. Goswami's travelogue are lucid, simple and at the same time refreshing. His description is very informative but at the same time comic and interesting. Dr. Goswami is a matured and controlled writer in use of diction. He hardly uses ornamental language in his description. The diction he uses depicts the simplicity of the author." (Bhattacharyya, 146)

Prafulladatta Goswami never exaggerates anything and he is not in the league of misinterpreting any information in his writing. His scholastic wisdom and belongingness to Assam and India are evident enough in different pages of his travel literature. His standard language and literary genius lead his travel literature to the epitome of Assamese Travel literature in particular and Assamese literature in general.

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