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An analytical study on Nabakanta Barua's poem

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Abstract

Nabakanta Barua is a well-known name in the world of Assamese Literature. He started his career as a teacher and ended it as the vice-Principal of prestigious Cotton College, Guwahati. He has written several books of poetry such as 'Eti Duti Egharati Tara', 'He Aranya He Mahanagar' etc. Nabakanta Barua appeared in the 'Jayanti' era and expanded his poetic talent in 'Pachowa' and 'Ramdhenu' eras. He has written a good number of poetry in modern Assamese literature. He served as the President of Assam Sahitya Sabha's Dhing Adhibeshan in 1968 and presided over Assam Sahitya Sabha's Biswanath Chariali Convention in 1990. He had received many awards like 'Assam Prakashan Parishad Award' in 1974 for his Book 'Mur Aru Prithivir'; 'Sahitya Akademy Award' to Assamese writers in 1975 for his novel 'Kakadeutar Hadh', 'Padma Bhushan' in 1976 for Literature and Education, 'Assam Valley Literary Award' in 1993 and 'Kamal Kumari National Award' in 1998. Nabakanta Baruah was popularly known as 'Ekhud Kakaideu'. As 'Seema Dutta' he has written many poems in his early life. He died in 14th July, 2002 at the age of 75 in Guwahati, Assam.

Keywords: Modernism, assamese poetry, influence, city life, human-values

Introduction

Nabakanta Barua belongs to the new generation of poets in Assamese Literature. He writes about city life in which man has to go through an endless process of measurements resulting into nothingness. He is known for the delineation of culture, modernity, human values, and insensitivity of modern people through his poetry. He brings things entailed with social, emotional and philosophical ideas. Though Hem Baruah and Ajit Baruah are regarded as the Pioneers of Modernist poetry of Assam, the most potent modernist voice is heard in the poetry of Nabakanta Barua.

Objective of the Study: The objective of the paper is to highlight the different types of poems of Nabakanta Barua.

Methodology: The methodology adopted here will be analytical and descriptive.

Sources: The paper is mainly based on primary data including his poetry books. Some data are taken from internet, Journals and magazines too.

Poems of Nabakanta Barua: The first poetry book of Nabakanta Baruah is 'He Aranya He Mahanagar'. It was published in 1961. He was a poet throughout his life and left behind many other books of poetry for Assamese Literature. Among them 'Eti Duti Egharati Tara', 'Yati Aru Keitamaan Sketch', 'Samrat', 'Raavan', 'Mur Aru Prithivir' are synonym. He has written some more poetry books like 'Surya Mukhir Angikar', 'Ratnakara Aru Anyanya Kabita', 'Ekhan Swachha Mukhare', 'Mahakabyar Pandulipi', 'Nabakanta Baruar Kabitavali', 'Rati Jilmil Tara Jilmil', 'Dalangat Tamighara' etc. Many of his great poems are translated into English and other Indian Languages.

His famous poem 'He Aranya He Mahanagar' shows a conflict between his sensitive soul and disturbing atmosphere of confused values. The concurrent themes in his poems are a juxtaposition between the images of love (life) and death, the beauty and banality and of hope and anxiety-

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“His poems also express a sense of estrangement from one’s own self. They express a kind of guilt in the author for being ungrateful to the mother earth for all her kindness. It leads to the emergence of the conflict between the beauty of the country (pure nature) and rapidly modernizing in Assamese poetry by depicting a modern society in which he was brought up and schooled.”^[1].

To make Assamese poetry realistic, Nabakanta Barua tried a lot. The sensitive and crowded city life of Calcutta was described in Nabakanta Barua’s early stage poems. One of his poem ‘Measurements’ presents a situation which may be assessed in medical terms. It presents situational imagery and tries to involve readers with its action. The poet has stressed the idea of postponement of so many actions in our life in several years.

‘Ratnakara’ is a significant poem of Nabakanta Barua. Here he elaborates the emptiness and anxiety of modern society.

“In this dark hollow of mine
In the core of corn and God
I can feel the animate vibration of matter
It seems
My voice is matter metamorphosed
Will it not be impregnated by God?” (Ratnakara, Nabakanta Barua)

Although it is possible to view the history of anxiety through a much deeper lens, the late modern period-corresponding the nineteenth and early twentieth century provides a good starting point for thinking about where anxiety stands now. Indeed, a history of anxiety in nineteenth century will look strikingly familiar from the vantage of the twenty-first century. Nabakanta Barua has drawn the anxiety of modern society throughout his many poems.

Human values convey personal conviction; ethics describe the accepted principles and standards of conduct about moral duties and virtues as applied to an organization. Degradation of moral values among young generation is an important contemporary issue in India. As individuals seek success and happiness, without considering how their actions affect others, morality lost. Nabakanta Barua described a society where morality has declined sees a rise in cheating, lying and stealing. He discussed that it loses its sense of unity and purpose, which can lead to division and conflict. Principal human values are the foundation on which professional ethics are built. But now a days youth is adversely diverted through different immoral activities. In several poems of Nabakanta Barua, we can see the decrease of moral values and ethics of today’s generation.

With his firm cultural-root, Barua has rendered a fascinatingly rendered transformation to Modernism associated with the theory and praxis of T.S. Eliot. T.S. Eliot is considered to be one of the 20th century’s greatest poets, as well as a central figure in English-language Modernist Poetry. In the field of poetry it seems that Nabakanta Barua has followed Eliot many of times-

“In spite of difference between Eliot’s Europe and Barua’s Assam, there was a similarity between the two contexts from the point of view of technological advancement, moral degeneration, weariness and an acute consciousness of physical and moral morbidity. Baruah, who has his higher

education in Calcutta, came in contact with the poetry of Bengali masters like Rabindranath Tagore and Jivanananda Das. As a student and Professor of English Literature he has obvious proximity to the modernist poetry of Eliot, the Imagist movement of Pound and the contributions of the French symbolists to the development of modern English poetry. He found in Eliot a suitable idiom to express the complex experience of his contemporary world.”^[2].

From the above mentioned reference and study on different poems of Nabakanta Barua, it is seen that Nabakanta Barua was influenced by poets like Rabindranath Tagore and T.S. Eliot, as well as Khalil Gibran, Maykovosky and Whitman. The modernist flavor that he brought to Assamese poetry was the result of his treatment of urban subjects and his Eliotic use of symbols and images, blending the serious with the light, applying the language of conversation and prose rhythms, and introducing a wide variety of rhythmic patterns. Juxtaposition, irony, comparisons and satires are important elements found in modernist writing. Nabakanta Barua used impressionism and other devices to emphasize the subjectivity of reality and he saw omniscient narration and fixed narrative points of view as providing a false sense of objectivity. Individualism, experimentation, symbolism, absurdity and formalism are the main characteristics of modernism. All these characteristics can be seen in the poems of Nabakanta Barua.

Conclusion

Nabakanta Barua has not blindly followed the western literary greats like T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and French symbolists. As all great poets do, he has assimilated the western influence and has created something really new and different in the post-independence Assamese Literature. There are many signs of modernity in the poems of Nabakanta Barua. His poetry is about urban consciousness, humanity, social thought, love, human values and death consciousness etc. His most-discussed poem ‘Eyat Nadi Aachil’ paints a realistic picture of the decline of modern life be he is also conscious of the future of mankind. In this way, it can be seen that Nabakanta Barua is one of the poets who brought a new perspective to modern poetry.

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