



# THE REFLECTION OF MIDDLE CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NOVEL OF BIRINCHI KUMAR BARUAH'S "JIVANAR BAATAT": A DISCUSSION

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**Abstract:** In the case of Assamese novel, Birinchi Kumar Baruah's novel *Jivanar Baatat* can be called a milestone. The rise of the new middle class in Assam under British rule at that time and an overall reflection of contemporary rural society portrays through this novel. Moreover pictures of the Indian Independence Movement have appeared in there. This novel which reflects an almost all aspects of Assamese social life, has been described by critics as the first epic novel in Assamese literature.

**Keywords:** Assamese novel, middle class consciousness, British rule, Women in Assamese society.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Assamese novel is a literary works of the modern Assamese literature which has been influenced by Western literature. The history of Assamese novel started back in 1891 with the publication of *Bhanumati* written by Padmanath Gohainbaruah. But before the *Bhanumati* one of the serial publication in *Jonaki* magazine back in 1890-91 *Padumkonwari* (as a book published 1904) written by the pioneers of Assamese literature Lakshminath Bezbaruah is the first Assamese novel from the side of composing. However the ascent journey of Assamese novel has been enriched by the works of Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Padmanath Gohainbaruah, Rajanikanta Bordoloi, Dandinath Kalita, Doibachandra Talukdar, Dinanath Sarma, Birinchi K. Baruah, Mohammad piyar and others. Moreover Birinchi Kumar Baruah successfully implementing the reality based modern Assamese novel with his great did in *Jivanar Baatat* (1945) and *Seuji Pator Kahini* (1958). As a novelist Baruah understood the difficult situation of the society in colonial period with his depth thinking and a clear of vision. There was no advantageous circumstances about any literary work in the basic colonial period and time of second world war (1939). At that critical time Birinchi Kumar Baruah's novel *Jivanar Baatat* can be called a milestone in Assamese literature. This novel aims to reflect an almost all aspects of Assamese social life under the British rule and at the time of Indian Independence Movement. has been described by critics as the first epic novel in Assamese literature. In Assam under British rule with newly rising middle class family an overall reflection of contemporary rural society portrays has been described by critics as the first epic novel in Assamese literature. So this paper tries to find out the description of the economic division of Assamese social life in the time of under British rule with the economic division and try to make an importance of this novel in not only Assamese literature but also Indian historical pandemic.

## II. METHODOLOGY:

The methodology followed in this paper is descriptive and analytical. Resources are collected from library and implemented with proper analysis to conduct a fruitful study on the relevant topic.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The novel of Birinchi Kumar Baruah's *Jivanar Baatat* starts with a folk song:

“Kam sorair ronga thut,  
Tate dile digho lfut,  
Pitadeu, Pitadeu,  
Duroloi nidibi muk”.

In this folk song the red lips of Purple Moorhen in the real sense symbolises the traditional vermilion worn by married Indian women along the part of their hair. This line also indicates the pain of sending a girl away from home after marriage. Because of his connection with the folk culture and its song, the starting of Birinchi Kumar Baruah's novel we can say it is very general. In some places he has put many folk songs in the novel. Through the starting song we can get an idea about the situation of marriage and pain related to it vividly described. The novel was published in 1944 and many critics illustrated the novel as a novel of social consciousness, the perception about reality, the educational journey. Banikanta Kakoty said that through the novel's pictures and its description it felt like now I have got to know more about Assam. (Bharali 46)

Many researchers have done so many researches on this particular novel. So it is again my privilege to work a research on it and to give a new perspective to it. In the novel *Jivanar Baatat* the author shows two different types of social pictures – one, the civilization and the towns that was being made up during British rule and another one is the day to day rural life. In the novel there is mostly seen the clash between the rural life style and the modern middle class life. Here, Tagar, novel's heroine portrays the rural life style and Kamalakanta is the portrayal of urban life. The nature of the novel *Jivanar Baatat* is very traditional. The author vividly describes the novel from starting to end and he beautifully carries the characters inner emotions throughout the whole novel. However, the author gives more importance to the character of Tagar rather than Kamalakanta and she has portrayed in many instances and event of the novel. Author Birinchi Kumar Baruah so beautifully describes the Assamese rural life as well as the life style of modern urban life. To take into consideration of rural life style in the novel Krishna Kumar Mishra compares the novel with the novel of T.S Eliot's *Adam Bede*. (1859)

In the pages of *Jivanar Baatat* there is a reflection of rural life style and at the same time, it also reflects the thought process of middle class social life. In the starting of the novel it is seen that Kamalakanta has come to attend the wedding of his friend Krishnadutta's sister Aiedeu at the residence of landlord Bhogdutta in Morongi. In the village, he has encountered with young Tagar and the author very smoothly portrays Kamalakanta's emotional unbalance and his willing to put ring in Tagar's hand. But Tagar maintains self respected her dignity in spite of her rural upbringing in this course of event. Kamalakanta's vulnerability and his engagement with Tagar changed her for life. It makes her a woman from a childlike girl.

The Second World War gave rise to a new middle class. The shallow aristocracy, the selfishness, greedy, the corrupted thought process of this new middle class have beautifully described throughout the novel. Kamalakanta, Suvadra, Mohikanta, Raibahadur Manik Hazarika, Inspector Madhob Mahanta etc. we get a reflection of urban middle class social life. Through the character of Kamalakanta we get a portrayal of middle class thought process after completing his graduation and his willingness to become a civil servant by the influence of Raibahadur Manik Hazarika. Raibahadur Manik Hazarika is novice rich through his opium business. At that people of Assam see this business as a bad profession. But Raibahadur's wealth through his opium business people got a vivid picture of the nature of shallow Assamese middle class society.

“It is said that when people get fortunate with the abundance of wealth; fame, class, money flows at the same time like a mother and a son. Raibahadur Manik Hazarika became famous among people through his membership in municipality, local board and in the council. (Baruah 30)

Raibahadur is very well known about the situation that first class graduate Kamalakanta will get a good position as a S.D.C; if not a civil servant without the help of anyone. But he is always unable to express it in front of Kamalakanta and he does, that it will uncover his shallow aristocracy. On the one hand it is an uneducated wealthy man, and on the other he is pleased that educated Kamalakanta has to come and beg for a job.

Moreover, Kamalakanta's father is a small lower division assistant with a sharp mind. He is very well aware that if Kamalakanta's marriage will take place with Raibahadur Manik Hazarika's daughter Suvadra rather than with simple rural girl Tagar; then along with Kamalakanta, the life of their family will grow financially. If in doing so, Tagar lost his dignity then he will not mind at all. Through the reflection of Mohikanta, we get a clear picture of selfish Assamese middle class person.

Though the character of Kamalakanta looks like a hero in the novel but if we observe closely we do not find any special quality to call him a hero in the novel. Rather we can only see a middle class person of greed, selfishness, coward and a person lacking his morality. Due to his overflowing emotion he promised Tagar not to manipulate her but his love for money and power he could not stand in his own words and never did he try. He does not ever care to forget Tagar because of his love for money and his dream to become a son-in-law of eminent Raibahadur Manik Hazarika. After getting his ring that he has once given to Tagar; then only he gets nostalgic for his past memories with her. Hiren Gohain compares this incident of the novel with the famous book *Abhigyanam Sakuntalam*.

#### IV. CONCLUSION:

There is a difference between what middle class think and what they act. It is very clearly reflected in the character of Kamalakanta. Moreover, the assimilation and losing one's own culture and identity in the hands of Britishers is clearly reflected in the novel *Jivanar Baatat*. It is even seen in modern Assamese society also. And at the same time it is said that the novel also reflects the social reality of an Assamese middle class society with purity.

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