



BHABENDRANATH SAIKIA'S 'JIBAN – BRITTO' A STUDY

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ABSTRACT: *Jiban – Britto* is the autobiography of well-known Assamese writer Bhabendra Nath Saikia. In his autobiography, he has told us about his early life in Nagaon, his college life in cotton college, University life in Kolkata, life as a researcher in England, occupational life and his career as a dramatist using occasional humour. He also criticises the government in his autobiography.

Key words : childhood, youth, film, punctuality, struggle.

I. INTRODUCTION :

Bhabendranath Saikia is often regarded by most as the most versatile personality in the history of Assamese literature after Jyotiprasad Agarwala. He is not only a famous novelist and short story writer, but also a successful dramatist, film director, actor and a scriptwriter. He has significantly contributed to Assamese literature through his three novels – Aatankar Xexot (1952), Antareep (1986) and Ramyabhumi (1992). He also wrote several short story collections, namely Prahari (1963), Vrindavan (1965), Gahbar (1969), Xendur (1971), Srinkhal (1975), Bhabendranath Saikiar sreshtha Galpa : Panchasar Dashak (1976), Taranga (1979), Ei Bandarar Abeli (1988), Aakash (1988), Upakantha (1992) and Sandhya Bhraman (1998). These short story collections have, in total, 88 short stories (many short – stories were repeated more than once). He also wrote three books meant for children, namely Maramar Deuta (1991), Xanto-Xisto-hrishto-pushto- mahadushta (1996) and Tomalokar val Houk (1998). He also had many award-winning films such as – Sandhyaraag, Agnishan, Anirban, Kolahal, Itihaas etc. He also has few autographies, namely Jiban Britta, Mor Shaishav, mor Kaishor and Jiban Rekha. He also edited Prantik and Safura, two popular Assamese magazines in his lifetime. He won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1976 for his short story collection Sringkhal. He was awarded the honorary Padma Shri award in 2001 for his significant contribution to Assamese literature and cultural world. After his death, the Assam Government honoured him by naming a road in Guwahati after him (Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia Road) and the Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia library at the Srimanta Sankardev Kalakhetra at Guwahati. He also worked as the chairman of Railway service commission (Guwahati) from 1979 to 1981. In his student life, he completed his B.Sc in physics from cotton college (under Gauhati University in 1952) and his Msc. From presidency college in 1955-1966. He completed his Ph.D. degree from Imperial college of Science and Technology under London University in 1968. Thus, both in his student, literary and professional life, saikia was a brilliant person, a perfect combination of literature and Science. In this study, we have covered the school life, college life, occupational career and artistic life that Bhabendra Nath Saikia has portrayed in his autobiography *Jiban Britto*.

OBJECTIVES :

- To study the significant incidents that shaped saikia into a shining star of Assam.
- To understand the importance of childhood in one's life.
- To take inspiration from the punctuality of Saikia.
- To learn how to divide time for pursuing our profession as well as fulfilling our passion.

II. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY :

A descriptive method has been adopted in the analysis of the study. Quotation, reference, bibliography etc. have been prepared following the journal guidelines. Research has been carried through the help of library research.

STUDY RANGE :

This research paper have covered the school life, college life, occupational career and artistic life that Bhabendra Nath Saikia has portrayed in his autobiography *Jiban Britto*.

ANALYSIS :

Saikia's autobiography, *Jiban-Britto* ('life-circle'), was first published in 44 consecutive editions of 'Prantik', the Assamese fortnightly magazine which was edited by Saikia. He started writing this book in December, 1997, while he was in Houston in the United States. He completed the book on November, 1999.

Saikia compares his life to a circle, where every point of the geometric figure is equally important and each dot has equal contribution in forming the circle. He started the book with his childhood, which was spent on the Nagaon district of village. The very first memory of his childhood was seeing himself riding the end of the 'Dheki' (the Assamese traditional pedal used to pound or clean rice) while his mother pounded the wheat with her foot. Saikia was born in the Faujdari Patti region of Nagaon district of Assam. He mentions in the book, how he spent his childhood like every other rural children flying kites, playing with his friends, singing Bengali songs and fishing. He described the importance of childhood is often undervalued by many people who tend to think of it as an ordinary stage of life, where there is tremendous waste of time in playing and gossiping. But Saikia indirectly tells us how his early childhood had a deep influence in his novels and short-stories. He also described the peculiar characteristics of his village-neighbours. Thus, we get a clear picture of the simple and innocent life style of the village people of Assam, which has now disappeared. Though Saikia's family was poor and their house lacked basic needs of life, still religious and spiritualistic, as Saikia's father regularly sang verses from the Holy Naam-Ghosha, Kirtan and the Bargeets. Poverty did not overcome their morality, ethics and righteousness. His father, Bidur Chandra Saikia, could have easily forced his children into becoming beggars, but he did not. He valued education more than anything. Bidur Saikia even said "If needed, I will beg in order to educate you." Saikia read all the books of 'Mohan Series' by Sashadhar Dutta when he was in sixth standard. He wrote his first poem of his life "Tauniya lokar Dhunpes" (The 'Style' of Urban youths) and his first short-story 'Path Nirupam' (choosing the way) which were published in his school magazine 'Uday'. Thus, Saikia laid the foundation of his successful writing career in his childhood itself.

Saikia passed his matriculation examination from Nagaon Govt. High School in 1948 with a first division and 'Letter' marks in three subjects (in Sanskrit, Geography and Science). He wrote his first novel, *Aatankar Xexot*, when he was only sixteen years old in 1952.

His college life started when he admitted himself to Cotton College in the Science stream in 1950. He stayed in the hostel, and wrote several short-stories, including 'Shantir Bukur Dhumuha' (published in *Aabahana* magazine), and award-winning articles including 'Nalini Kabyar Xur.' He eventually passed H.S. 2nd year examination with a first division. He passed his B.Sc in Physics from Cotton College with a second class. He left Assam to study in Presidency College of Calcutta where he stayed in postgraduate hostel on 1/A Maharani Swarnamayi Road, with Lakshminandan Borah (who is now a famous writer). Meanwhile, he acted in the film 'Sati Beula' at Kolkata, in which the music was produced by Bhupen Hazarika. His father died when Saikia was studying in Kolkata. Saikia faced monetary problems in Kolkata, which he solved by translating a Bengali book 'Garhasthya Homeopathic Chikitsa' into Assamese. The years at Calcutta were very important in Saikia's life, as his literary career accelerated at a rapid rate. He wrote several plays and short-stories which were published in *Aabahana* and other popular newspapers and magazines.

After he completed his M.Sc. in Calcutta, he returned to Assam and was appointed a lecturer of the Physics Department in Sivasagar College. In this post, his literary career fully blossomed, as several plays of his such as *Bhonga Deukar Saa* were staged. He also got an opportunity to attain a Ph.D. degree in England under a scholarship of the Indian Government. His friends Bhupati Deka, Guruprasad Baruah and Chandra Phukan, to name a few, helped him in monetary problems for his educational trip to England. He did his research under Dr. Harry Willman, in the Imperial College of Science and Technology under the London University. The title of his research thesis was - "The structure, aggregation and melting of metal and other fumes condensed from Vapour." The research took place in the laboratory named Applied Digital Chemistry Laboratory. In England, he stayed at the room No.26A at 63 Chepstow Place. Saikia described his experiences in literary style through his short-story collection 'Ei Bandar Abeli' (1988). While in England, he visited Shakespeare's house at Stratford-on-Avon. He also caught glances of Sir Winston Churchill, Aizewhawa, Macmillan and Naga revolutionary leader Mizo. During this time, he wrote several short-stories such as 'Prahari', 'Laajlage', 'Bandixaal', 'Vrindavan', 'Ramdhenu' etc. He completed his Ph.D. thesis and gave his Viva-voce on 22 December, 1961. Saikia himself stated in his book, "I completed my work in Ph.D. thesis in exactly 2 years 2 months 21 days. I feel enjoyment when I notice the dramatism in these numbers." He returned to India through sea ways in ship, which also coincidentally took 22 days.

He was appointed as a lecturer in Gauhati University in 1961 and eventually became a reader in 1964. He married Priti Hazarika on 20 november, 1965. He was appointed the chairman of the University Coordination committee for production of Textbooks in the Regional languages, Gauhati University. This committee had the important responsibility to translate the college textbooks into the Assamese language. The cover of the textbooks were illustrated by Benu mishra. The other members of this committee were Dr. Bhagaban Chandra lahkar, Ikramuddin Saikia, Dilip kumar Baruah, Dr. Venkatrao etc. Saikia efficiently worked as the chairman and was successful in the translation of the textbooks. During this time, he entered the film world through his films such as 'Sandhyaraag' and 'Agnisnaan', and created a new era in the film universe of Assam His films won several awards.

- (1) 'Sandhya rag' won the Rajat Kamal award in 1978.
- (2) 'Anirban' won the Rajat Kamal award in 1981.
- (3) 'Agnisnaan' won the Rajat Kamal award in 1985.
- (4) 'Kolahal' won the Rajat Kamal award in 1988.
- (5) 'Sarothe' won the Rajat Kamal award in 1992.
- (6) 'Avartan' won the Rajat Kamal award in 1994.
- (7) 'Itihaas' won the Rajat Kamal award in 1996.

He was also appointed as the chairman of the Railway service commission (Guwahati). He referred to these years as 'the worst part of his occupational life.' He was angered to see corruption overflowing in the commission. He wrote several articles in 'Prantik', stating the unethical activities taking place inside the government and also criticizing the political leaders. Due to his revolting character, the government released him from the post through a letter in 1981.

The last chapter of the book deals with the 90's decade. Saikia was diagnosed with prostate cancer and was admitted in the MD Anderson cancer centre. His strength decreased rapidly and a versatile soul departed from the earth on 13th August, 2003, leaving behind three novels, numerous short-stories and seven award-winning films to the Assamese people.

Saikia cleverly ended the book with the very first part of the autobiography he was riding the 'dheki' as if sitting in a horse, while his mother pounded the wheat.

III. FINDINGS :

By the careful analysis of Bhabendra Nath Saikia's autobiography '*Jiban-Britto*', we find that behind Bhabendra Nath Saikia's academic and literary success, there were many other people who helped and supported him. We also find how important time was for Saikia. Besides his job as a lecturer, he also took out time to write short-stories and novels and direct films that won national awards. We also find that Saikia was a very straightforward person and did not hesitate to express his disappointment towards the government.

IV. CONCLUSION :

'*Jiban Britto*' is the autobiography of noted dramatist, film director and writer, Bhabendra Nath Saikia. The writer has honestly written all the incidents of his life in the book in a neutral manner. He mentioned all the people who helped him in his journey of life. He also did not ignore the people of his village, who played a major part in his childhood life. Saikia was very honest to himself and to the reader while saying that "almost all the significant incidents of my life has taken place dramatically!" He also did not hesitate in clearly stating his dislike for the unfair functioning of the government and blames it for the rising corruption in the country.

REFERENCE :

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