



Colonial and Post- Colonial effects in Birinchi Kumar Barua's *Jiwanar Batat*

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Abstract:

In common it is supposed that Colonialism is a term keeping dominate or control one country or a region through cultural imposition, economic domination or any other way. It denotes the word colonialism of any implication of an encounter between peoples or of conquest domination. On the other hand post-colonialism shows social, economic or cultural responses after ended colonial period or rule. We find effect of colonial and postcolonial spirit in the writings of some Assamese writers including Birinchi Kumar Barua. His two novels could not stand out of influence of colonial effects. His famous novel *Jiwanar Batat* is a fine example in this context. The whole plot of the novel constituted on the environments where we recognize much or less changes in our Assamese society having affected with colonial prejudiced. My short study will attempt to focus on colonial and post-colonial allusions in Birinchi Kumar Barua's novel *Jiwanar Batat*.

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Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history. The process of forming a community in the new land necessary meant reforming the communities that existed there already, and involved a wide range of practices including trade, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide enslavement and rebellions. Such practices generated and were shaped by a variety of writings-public and private records, letters, trade documents, government papers, fiction and scientific literature. It might seem that the age of colonialism is over, and because the descendants of once colonized people live everywhere. The whole world is postcolonial. The term post colonialism has been contested on many events. Nobody can abruptly deny importance of decolonization. We cannot use the term post colonialism in one sense. Post colonialism does not exist at the bottom end of hierarchy who are at the economic margins of the nation state so that nothing is post in sense of colonization.

Numbers of Assamese novel composed during the colonial and post-colonial period were socialistic in nature and the novelists were mostly preoccupied with social realism. Prominent reason for this was that our national life was directly influenced by the outcome of the two important events. The Second World War and the struggle for independence against British Colonial rulers. These two events created a long lasting change in our life, and as such the contemporary writers found themselves in an entirely

new world of reality. Before the writers showed the way it was impossible to think that day to day experiences of joy and sorrow of common people and familiar life of the villages could be an excellent subject matter of any important novel. Assam felt the impact of the British colonizer in its socio-economic life and this made the novelists socially conscious and realistic. During the postcolonial period the Assamese literature entered upon a new era of creativity and writers were experimenting with new themes.

Birinchi Kumar Barua was among the Assamese novelists who tried to express real practices through their writings. Barua's two eminent novels *Jiwanar Batat* and *Seuji Patar Kahini* are true example of the novelist's own experiences gathered in his contemporary Assamese society. *Jiwanar Batat* is nothing but the misfortune of sufferings of a very simple Assamese village woman namely Tagar. She was introduced with a young college student namely Kamalakanta from Guwahati. Both Kamalakanta and Tagar met each other for the first time in a marriage ceremony at her locality. Tagar's beauty attracted Kamalakanta and just after first meeting with her, Kamalakanta fell in love. Kamalakanta wore a golden ring to Tagar as an evidence of love against her will. Tagar also fell in love to Kamalakanta but opposed to wear the ring he offered only thinking about their customs and culture of their locality. During that period it was not culture for any Assamese girl wearing a ring from her lover keeping whole society in dark. Giving assurance of marriage between them Kamalakanta left for Guwahati. After complete his degree course Kamalakanta appeared in Civil Service Examination. With the help of Raibahadur Manik Chandra Hazarika, a famous aristocrat of the locality, Kamalakanta was selected for the civil service. Like many other opportunist people of colonial period Raibahadur Manik Chandra Hazarika arranged marriage her daughter Suprabha with Kamalakanta. In this context we may refer that such type of opportunist nature among some Assamese people grew having affected by colonialism. Kamalakanta completely wiped out the name Tagar from his heart getting civil service job. Having no contact with Kamalakanta Tagar's father Rupam Bora arranged her daughter's marriage with a poor weaving master Dharani against her will. She had to suffer a lot at Dharani Master's house due to ill treatment of her mother in law Ahini till her daughter Kamali's birth. In the course of time Dharani Master suffered from Tuberculosis and ultimately died. Tagar was suspected by the villagers having doubt controversial relation with Golap Doctor after her husband's death. Tagar was falsely accused of stealing the ring of Kamalakanta. The novel is ended with reminiscence of Kamalakanta when he discovered the golden ring once wore to Tagar as an evident of first love towards her.

The novel *Jiwanar Batat* attractively reproduced the real scenario of our Assamese society in the post-colonial period. In the post-colonial period the middle class people held the opportunist nature. That is very clear for the character of Kamalakanta. Only for his magistrate job he married Suprabha without thinking about Tagar whom he loved once and consented to marry her. Through the characters of the novels the novelist focused the village life of common people, the landscape of countryside and nature of middle class people usually formed after colonial influence in our Indian society. By the realistic imagination the novelist Birinchi Kumar Barua presented the society and characters as he noticed in his contemporary society. The social system manners and customs, passion and prejudices, aims and aspirations of postcolonial Assamese society are reflected in the novel *Jiwanar Batat*. It reminds us famous English critic Hudson's comments on novel "A novel is really great only when it lays its foundations broad and deep in things which most constantly and seriously appeal to us in the struggle, and fortunes of our common humanity." The characters of Birinchi Kumar Barua's *Jiwanar Batat* are resplendent in reality and dynamism though the plot of the novel is loose in form. Regarding the novel the Assamese famous scholar Dr. Maheswar Neog explained in this way, "It was before 1948 that there appeared *Jiwanar Batat*, one of the greatest, if not greatest, contributions to the Assamese novel, a novel in which the scenes are as dynamic as they are in the stream

of consciousness, even though the plot itself is not very powerful in the novel” with the several external conflict the novelist Barua has illustrated eternal conflict also between our neglected rural and modern urban societies having colonial influence from Western culture. These were presented with the help of the hero Kamalakanta and the heroine Tagar and other characters in the novel.

In Assam a specific urban society came to be built only after Independence. The condition of the few existing towns were improved and the urban environment spread. The establishment of industries and the increase of trade and commerce turned the attention of the people towards the town. The number of educated middle class increased due to the spread of education. With the development of the urban way of life individuality began to assert itself and thus the requisite atmosphere created for the Assamese novel. On the other hand the hardships experienced by people due to economic crisis made them realistic. The freedom which they attained after a long struggle was confined a political life alone and there was no basic change in the capitalistic system of society. The condition of the people *became* even more miserable than before. The socio-economic evils generated by the war seriously affected the social life. A number of problems arose immediately after independence and economic condition of the people further down-warded. Various problems arising from economic inequality and social injustice made people conscious of the existing social condition. This consciousness has helped in the growth of social novel. In this context we may refer about eminent Assamese critic, Sailen Bharali’s comment, “The growths of towns, the development of trade and commerce and emergence of educated middle class have contributed to its popularity. The output has increased, the scope and technique have developed and new tendencies have been revealed. With the attainment of independence new thoughts and ideas came in.” The post-colonial Assamese novel with innovations in form and theme has witnessed a deep and extensive development.

The pictorial depiction of common man, a sympathetic view towards rural life and efforts to establish socialistic realism-these appear to be the vital subject matter of the post-colonial Assamese novels. The efforts to bring out the latent truth from man’s mind and to analyze the complex human personalities have led to interesting experiments in technique and character-study. The new trend of novel with social problems was initiated by Birinchi Kumar Barua. Based on the conflict between the highest and the lowest class of society and composed against the background of rural life Birinchi Kumar Barua’s *Jiwanar Batat* is the first and the most successful product of post-colonial Assamese novel. In this novel, for the first time, Birinchi Kumar Barua coming out of the old romantic sagas represents a realistic and psycho analytic theme. He turns his eyes to those who are neglected by society and tries to assess their unique social value. The novel, noted for its illuminating character study in rural background, lucid expression, realistic situation and humanistic appeal reveals all the features of Assamese social life. After Birinchi Kumar Barua other Assamese novelists also attempted to reflect various problems of the contemporary society in their novels.

In conclusion we notice that Assam felt the impact of the British colonizer in its socio-economic life and this made the novelist socially conscious and more realistic. This becomes apparent in the new socialistic outlook of the novelists. The post colonial novelists turned away from the existing historical trend and made an effort to acquaint themselves with the various problems facing the society. They attempted to interpret in a realistic way the numerous problems which made the life of the common people miserable. The problem of poverty and social injustice and the sufferings of lower middle class due to economic hardships attracted their attention. They took up the problems including those of the rural life and peasantry for treatment in their novels including those of the rural lives and peasantry for treatment in their novels. The effects of colonialism upon social life the evils of modern urban life and other socio-psychological

problem became their favourite subjects. During the post colonial period the Assamese literature entered upon a new era of creativity and writers were experimenting with new themes. Most of the contemporary novels replicate the current happenings, thoughts and ideas of mass people. Among the Assamese post-colonial novelist Birinchi Kumar Barua was famous for expressing real experiences through his novels. That's why *Jiwanar Batat* could not stay out of impact from range of colonial or post- colonial effect. Not only his novels but the short stories composed by Barua were also grounded on real contemporary society having colonial or post-colonial themes.

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