

HISTORY OF ASSAMESE DRAMA

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Abstract

Like other Society in India, majority of Assamese people are belongs to the middle class families. Member of these families are concious about the own literature and culture. Sankardeva the father of Assamese literature and society maker had a great contribution to Assamese drama. 'Chihno Jatra' was the first drama of Assamese literature. To spread his 'Ek Saran' religion he wrote many dramas as an instrument of it and his followers also followed him. After the decade and time of Sankardeva British come to Assam to rule and they changed the environment of Assam. It changed the political, social and literal structure of Assam. Many Assamese authors wrote ancient, historical and modern dramas. All those dramas are taken as the very great wealth of Assamese literature. Without which Assamese race can not prove their journey of civilizationb in the world platform.

An Introduction to Drama

Drama in a work of literature which delineats life and human activity, Presently various action and dialogue between groups of characters. A drama also known as a play, consists of works of literature written to be performed by actors in front of people. A drama is a serious, intense or well platted story that elicits emotion. The term comes from a Greek word meaning 'action' which is derived from 'to do' or 'to act'. The first dramas to be written for express purpose of being performed were created by Greeks. Many of our Modern drama terms derive from Greek origins. In simple words, a drama is a composition in verse or prose presenting a story in pantomime or dialogue. Drama deals with men. It requires speetators and is addressed to the eye, the ear, and the moral nature. It is a form of literature and of entertainment into which all human emotions and experience may be translated under certain conditions. Drama does not typically contain a narrator and is usually intended for performance. Types of drama include-comedy, Romantic comedy, Tregedy, classical tragedy and tregicomedey. A literary genre that blends aspects of both tragic and comic forms. Most often seen a dramatic literature. In a tragicomedey, the action and subject matter seem to require a tragic ending, but it is avoided by a reversal which leads to a happy ending; sometimes the tragicomedey alternates serious and comic action throughout the play. Elements of Drama are plot, setting, charactes, Dialogue, Theme, Secnery. A dramatic work based on an actual historical event or person a combination of fiction and non-fiction.

Introduction to Ankiya Naat

Ankiya Drama, the first Assamese drama was composed by Sankardeva, the great Vaishnava saint of Assam. Ankiya Naat are a class of an act plays performed in the Assam. Ankiya means 'act' or 'episode' and Naat means 'drama'. These plays were written in an artificial old medieval period poetic Assamese mixed language Brajavali. A particular presentation of an Ankiya Naat is called or Bhaona. It is one of the oldest of its kind. The plays usually combine live instruments and singers, dance and elaborate costumes in production. Like Ramalila and Rasalila of various Indian States, the Ankiya Naat too is Vaishnavite in content of character. The plays of Bhaona are popularly known as Ankiya Naat. The main motto of Ankiya Naat was to attract people to Vaishnava religion. The first Ankiya Naat was 'Chihno Jatra', which was written by Sankardeva. After that he wrote many Ankiya Naats, which are - Kaliya Daman, Patni Prasad, Keli Gopal, Rukmini Haran, Parijaat Haran and Rambijay. After Sankardeva his most favourite follower and pupil Madhava had also written many Ankiya Drama (Naat) like Arjun Bhanjan and some 'Jhumuras' like Surdhora, Pimpora Gusua, Bhujan Bihar, Bhumi Letua etc. The main theme and subject of the Jhumuras which are written by Mahadeva was the childhood of Lord Krishna. After Sankardeva and

Madhavdeva Vaishnava followers of them had written so many 'Ankiya Naat's. Like 'Sitar Patal Probhesh', 'Janmajatra' etc. The characteristics and special things of 'Ankiya Naat's are as follows –

- i) The 'Sutrodhar' explain about the 'Ankiya Naat' from the begging to the last.
- ii) Ankiya Naats were one act play.
- iii) They were written in 'Brajawali' Language.
- iv) There are so many 'sloks' and songs were in the Ankiya naat.
- v) The main subject of the Ankiya Naat were victory of the truth and defeat of liars.

Dramas of Post Sankardeva period in Assamese Literture

Sankardeva had written the Dramas as the way to propoganda for his 'Ek Saran' religion. His many followers and pupils had written so many dramas. The popularity of Ankiya Dramas after Sankardeva had not only touched or influenced the Assamese society but the Royal familys also. We have seen these influences in the 'Tungkhungia' historical book. The Ahom king Rajerhsor Singha, Kamaleshwar Singha, Gourinath Singha, Chandra kanta Singha, Pramatta Singha had allowed to play the Dramas in their place. In the Dramas of Post Sankardeva period the dialogues were taken from Ramayan of Madhav Kandoli, Katha Bhagawat of Bhattadeva, Mahabharat of Ramsaraswati and from the Kritan Dasham of Sankardeva. The main theme in all of the Dramas were the victory of the victors. Sometimes the authors liked to show some tregedy sign in the heroins dialogues. They used as usual songs in the Dramas. As the time flows the authors liked to select the stories of Ramayan, Mahabharat than Bhagawat and Purana. Mostly the dramas were named as 'Haran Kabya', 'Badha Kabya', for example 'Kumar Haran'. Sita Haran, Usha Haran, Subhodra Haran, Jorasondho Bodh, Raban Badh, Putona Badh, Abhimainyu Badh etc. The post Sankardeva period the authors leshly used the Brajawali language in their Dramas. They used many songs as the ways to express the main stories of the Dramas. These Dramas were called a 'Dhura Naat'. Since, the dhura songs are the main instrument of these dramas hance these dramas called as Dhura Naat. There were comedy and attraction in the songs of Dramas Like Sita Haran, Usha Haran. The Dramas helped the followers of the Sankardeva to spread the 'Ek Saran' religion in all over the Assam. The Ahom and Koch kings also time to time help them in the process. The followers established thousands numbers of 'Satras', 'Tools' as a office to the spread of religion. Every new 'Satradhikar' have to write a Drama before sitting in the seat of official head of the 'Satras'. For which Assamese literature had got various dramas as wealth written by various writers. These has a big contribution to strengthen the Assamese culture.

Beginning of Modern Assamese drama

In the time of British dominated Assam the flow of Drama devided into two parts, one were influence by British Modern society, the other was influence by ancient society and belongs to the original Ankiya Naat. In that time kolkata was the only place for the higher education for the Assamese people. The Bengali People were come in the touch of British Society and literature earlier than the Assamese people and it was reflected in the Bengali novels, dramas and other parts of literatures and Assamese students who were went to Kalkata for their higher studies were influce by the progress of the Bengali literature and they wrote many dramas, Novels. Now those literatures are decided as the wealth of Assam and Assamese litereture. The famous author amongs them were Gunabhiram Baruah, Hem Baruah etc. Gunabhiram Baruah was the author of 'Ramnavami'. He had written these in the year of 1857 and it was printed in 1870. It was the first Assamese Social Drama. The main story was the marriage of a widow namely Navami. He was influence by the Bengali writers. It was the first Drama which written on the subject at marriage of widows. Before him no author could not even imagine about widow marriage drama. These drama has various impact in Assamese Society in that time. Hem Baruah had written 'Kania Kritan' in year of 1861, where he explain the bad affects of Kani (The Drugs). In that time the young generation destroyed their lives by using kani as a Drugs. The Drugs Kani brought by the British to explait the Assamese people. Which help them to rule for a long time. Rudra Ram Bordoloi was the author of 'Bangal Bangalani' in the year of 1872. The progress of language systems acts etc. were the results of personal efforts of the authors, but not the efforts of drama movement or other things.

Since the stories of the Epic Broken like Mahabharat and Ramayan and other Purana were known to the general people so we could not find newness in the stories of old Dramas. So lack of these things were fulfilled by the songs and the beauty of the characters. On the other hand the new modern dramas were created with reaction, action and this are the lives of these dramas. The tragedy and comedy both dramas were firstly related to the Greek religious ceremonies and gradually it came out from those impact and got colourful designs in this time. Since conflicts were the main colours of the dramas. It so they were different from the earlier dramas.

Historical Drama in Assamese literature

The Assamese Historical Dramas were born in the first decade of 19th century. Most probably 'Jay Mati' Drama written by 'Padmanath Gohain Baruah' was the 1st Historical Drama in Assamese literature. It was Published in year of 1900. In the year of 1901 Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and Radhanath Phukan had combinedly written another Drama with the same name Jay mati. It was performed by many actors of Assam. But surprisingly this drama never printed out and destroyed. The historical dramas were written by the authors with the inspiration of love to the own country and raised. And also respect to the heroes of own raised and country in the main cause of inspiration for the author. For example in the time of Queen Elizabeth in England there were many historical dramas were born or written by many authors. The Respect to revolution of the Society and the patriotic sentiment for own history were the main reason for the creation of Historical Dramas. The dependence under the British was also a reason to create patriotic sentiments in the heart of authors and the result of which they wrote so many popular historical Dramas. Assam always remain as independent in the old days and the authors feel pain for those days and these pain also was a reason of creation of historical Dramas. Historical Dramas were the sign of incidence of the old days. No author can change the historical original story but they can include colours to it so that it can attract the hearts of General people. There are no reflection about social and personal life of the heroes in this history but the author can fillup the gap with colours as he likes. There is no any dead line that for the authors that they can not include a imaginary sub plot with the original to history or principal plot. For example Jaymati, Belimar, Godadhori, Sadhoni, Lachit Borphukan, Chakradhaj Singha, Mulagabhoru, Mugal Bijay, Badan Borphukan were most beautiful signs of historical dramas.

Imaginary Dramas in Assamese literature

There are some types of dramas which could not be included in the three types of dramas – Ancient, historical and social dramas. The new one is called as Romantic drama or imaginary drama. For example Sonit Kuwari, Noga Kuwar etc. These dramas are very similar to other dramas but there are certain love stories that we can see in that dramas. The plot or sub plot of these Romantic dramas can be taken from ancient, historical or from any imaginary story. The action of a person and last result of that said action may be the platform of that dramas. We can divide the imaginary dramas into two parts - One is incident dominated part and other one is feelings dominated part. We can divide the feelings dominated part into two sub parts one is symbolical part and other one is allegorical part 'Karengor Ligiri' is the example of incident dominated drama. Jyoti Prasad Agarwala was the author of these drama. This drama made the first way and has given light in this field. The imaginary dramas can give us and the readers mental peace. The dialogues and the languages of the dialogues has a vast impact in the drama. We can see natural beauty and love in the Imaginary drama. Love of Past and history is also seen in imaginary drama.

Mobile Theatre in Assam

In Assamese society mobile theatre is very popular now. They travel all over the Assam. Through the mobile theatre thousands of family is earning their daily bread and butter, Mobile theatre is very known to all Assamese people. Mobile theatre groups travel from place to place with their cast, singers, musicians, dancer and crew, often carrying tents and seating with them. The Kohinoor Opera was the first mobile theatre group of Assam, founded by Natyacharya Brajanath Sarma, in 1930. Kohinoor Opera performed dramas, attracting thousands of spectators. Achyut Lahkar is known as the father of Mobile theatre. The owner of 'Netaraj Cine theatre' was Achyut Lahkar. The Dramas of Nataraj cine production was very popular during the early years, Lahkar took mobile

theatre out side of Assam. Mobile theatre is a new form of Assamese drama. Kohinur, Rajtilok, Srimanta Sankardeva, Brindaban, Surodevi are very popular mobile theatre of Assam.

Absurd Drama in Assamese Literature

After the 2nd world war the concept of absurd drama entered into India. In the decade of seventy this concept entered in Assam. We have seen the reflection of this concept in the drama of Arun Sharma namely 'Ahar' in 1971. Before this drama the readers seen a little light of this concept in the drama of 'Sri Nibaran Bhattacharya' in 1967. The drama Ahar has the almost features of absurd drama. The main feature of the absurd drama has the less relation with story and dialogue and with the situation. Absurd dramas has a special character that its act and scene are not devided in he story of the drama. Sometimes songs are used for the expression of story in the Absurd drama. In Assamese literature the audience have seen the absurd dramas like Ahar, Mrigotrisha of Basanta Saikia, in 1973 and Manuh in 1977, Asur in 1977 of the same writer. In absurd drama there may be a character who explain the story of the drama from the beginning to end. Absurd dramas are critical. The story gives a message to the society, so it is less popular among the grassroad level audience. Only the intellectual part of the society has interest in it.

Conclusion

Assamese Drama has huge impact on Assamese society. It helps to change the mind of Assamese people. Firstly, through drama Sankardeva spread the necessity and the beauty of 'Ek Saram' religion. Through drama we can also teach the illeterate person. The Drama is design for repretation by actors who impersonate the characters of its stories, Drama imitates by action and speech. The structural features of the drama have to be examine and explain. The Drama when it reaches in the form of print is not sense self contain. It implies every where the co-operation of element. In our day to day lives drama gives us mental relief. In the creation of modern Assamese Society drama had big part and contribution. The Dramas are wealth of Assamese literature. The Assamese literature will be always grateful to all the play write who gave was many Assamese dramas.

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