

BRAJENDRA KUMAR BRAHMA'S BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS

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Abstract : Brajendra Kumar Brahma is an eminent Bodo non-fiction writer. Besides non-fiction he writes poetry also. He has publications of many non-fiction writings like essays, literary criticisms, biographical writings, memoirs etc. Biographical writings are also mentionable among his creations. Biographies of noted persons have valuable lessons. The readers can learn many things from them. He has written biographical essays on some noted persons from the Bodo community those who have lots of contributions towards the upliftment of Bodo society. He has portrayed about their life and works of the personalities according to their field of contributions nicely. This paper is the study of biographical essays of Brajendra Kumar Brahma.

Keywords- Bodo non-fiction, biographical essays, noted persons.

INTRODUCTION

Brajendra Kumar Brahma is an eminent writer of Bodo literature. He has written many poems and prose in Bodo literature. He often writes short stories. Modern poetry in Bodo literature began in the second half of twentieth century. Brajendra Kumar Brahma is the pioneer of the trends of modern Bodo poetry. With the publication of *Okhrang Gonggse Nanggou* 'Need of a Sky' (1975) he established modern trends of Bodo poetry. He is also an eminent writer of Bodo non-fictional literature. His writings like essays, literary criticisms, biographical, speeches are scattered in various magazines and periodicals. His collections of some non-fictions include *Thunlai Arw Sansri* 'Literature and Thought' (1986), *Rhaaitimala* 'Garland of Prose' (1992), *Nwjwr Arw Swrji* 'Vision and Creation' (1994), *Thunlai Arw Thunlai* 'Literature and Literature' (2004), *Raithaihala* 'Stock of Prose' (2006), *Thunlai Baidi Baidi* 'Literature and Others' (2009), *Bibungmala* 'Garland of Speeches' (2009), *Saosabfanai Gwdan Swdwmsri* 'Curse Affected New Civilization' (2015) and *Khobam Dwrwdnai Jiu* 'The Rhymes of Life Passing by' (2015).

Brajendra Kumar Brahma, born in 1943, has dedicated his life to Bodo literature. He also shouldered the portfolio of president of Bodo Sahitya Sabha for two consecutive terms. He was honored with *Sameswari Brahma Literary Award* in 1994 and *Praban Borgoyari Literary Award* in 2013 from Bodo Sahitya Sabha, *Muktharam Brahma Literary Award* in 1995 from Bongaigaon District Bodo Sahitya Sabha, *Tagore Literature Award* in 2009 from Sahitya Akademi and Samsung Electronics financed by Korea Govt., *Pramad Chandra Brahma Literary Award* in 2013 from B.T.C. Govt. and *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 2015 from Sahitya Akademi.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study is attempted to give a descriptive analysis on Brajendra Kumar Brahma's biographical essays.

SIGNIFICANCE

Bodo literature is a developing literature. It has rich in oral or folk literature. But its written literature began only in the first part of twentieth century. Bodo literature requires studies from all corners of literary trends. Non-fictions of Bodo literature are also indispensable part of its development. In fact this attempt of study has significance from this corner.

SOURCES

Sources of this study include primary and secondary. Author's published of collections are primary sources and different books of different writers and various magazines are secondary sources in this study.

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Essays in biographical aspects on some personalities are written by Brajendra Kumar Brahma. Following are the some personalities from the Bodo community for whom he has written.

(1) Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma

Brajendra Kumar Brahma has four essays on life and works of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. The books, *Nwjwr Arw Swrji* includes *Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma: Dhwrwmnifrai Rajkhanthisim*, *Thunlai Baidi Baidi* includes *Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma Arw Swlwnghthai* and *Rajkhanthiao Gurudev Kalicharan Brahmani Bihwma*, and *Saosabphanai Gwdan Swdwmsri* includes *Kalicharan – Mech – Brahma – Gurudev*. These essays expose Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma's personalities and his contributions to the Bodo society. Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma was the preacher of 'Brahma' religion and a social reformer of the Bodos. In the first part of twentieth century the Bodos were totally illiterate and hated by other developed communities. They the Bodos were called 'Mlech' or 'Mech' by others and hated. They lived in a disorder society. In that time Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma took birth as a messenger of God among the Bodos and he reformed the Bodo society from all the directions such as religion, social, political, education, economic etc. He preached 'Brahma' religion among the Bodos to make them free from hatred by

others. The essays *Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma: Dhwrwmnifrai Rajkhanthisim* and *Rajkhanthiao Gurudev Kalicharan Brahmani Bihwma* focus on Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma's political contribution to the Bodo society. Through the submission of a memorandum to the Simon Commission at Shillong in 1929 Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma brought some opportunities for the Bodos from the British government. That was the greatest deed done by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. Some necessary demands of memorandum were:

- i. Allotment of separate category for the Bodos in Census Report,
- ii. Provision of reservation for tribal in Assembly and Local Board,
- iii. Formation of a sub-division either at Kokrajhar or Haltugaon,
- iv. To make Goalpara district a part of Assam without making it as a part of Bengal, and
- v. Formation of Bodo Regiment.

All demands of the memorandum were accepted and granted by the Commission instead of the demand of 'Formation of Bodo Regiment'. There is Gurkha Regiment under Indian government since that time. Many Bodo youths were engaged in that regiment in that time. So Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma demanded that the Bodos had also a separate regiment. Like Goalpara district Kachar district of Dimasas was also to be bifurcated and to be included in Bengal then. That policy was also protested by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. '*Brahma Company*' a platform was set up by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma to develop the business of the Bodos. Gurudev's '*Brahma Company*' helped the poor businessmen of the Bodos.

The essay *Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma Arw Swlwngthai* is mainly based on Gurudev's contribution to the Bodo society in respect of imparting and awareness of education. Bodo society was backward and downtrodden society because of illiterate. So to say all the Bodos were illiterate in that time. They did not know the value of education. So Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma tried to bring awareness upon education among the Bodos. And he explained them why education was needed to develop their society and community. There were no schools or educational institutions in the Bodo inhabited areas. Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma made possible about the solution of these issues on discussing with the then British government. Many schools were set up in the advice of Gurudev in the Bodo inhabited areas. Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma discussed with A. J. Laine, Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara district, taking education matter.

Lack of educational institutions in the area the result of which peoples were become illiterate. On searching the solutions of those problems Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma approached to A. J. Laine, the Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara district at Dhubri and deeply discussed with him about the educational problems of the Bodos. On knowing those problems of the Bodos Laine advised Gurudev to submit a memorandum relating to the problems to the Chief Commissioner Archdale Earle. He did according to advice. Gurudev deeply discussed with Earle about the educational problems of the Bodos on submitting a memorandum during Earle's Dhubri visit. Laine also supported on discussions. Chief Commissioner Earle understood about the educational problems of the Bodos and granted for an M. E. School and a Weaving and Carpentry School at Tipkai.

Kalicharan – Mech – Brahma – Gurudev is also an essay on Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma's life and works. In this essay Brajendra Kumar Brahma has discussed his life and works classifying into religion, education, economic, social and politics. Finally he has described how Kalicharan a simple person became a Gurudev from a Mech. Once upon a time he was Kalicharan Mech. Later he became Kalicharan Brahma. Lastly he became Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, a Guru of the Bodos.

(2) Fwrlang Babaji

Fwrlang Babaji was a priest of Roumari Jyoti Ashram. He was a disciple of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. One essay by Brajendra Kumar Brahma is found on Fwrlang Babaji's life and works. This article is *Mefal – Nepal – Fwrlang Babaji* which incorporates in *Saosabfanai Gwdan Swdwsri*. Fwrlang Babaji was the founder of '*Roumari Jyoti Ashram*'. He was not only a priest, but a social activist too. His name was Mefal in his childhood because he looked like a Nepali. Later his home tutor Kshitibhushan Brahma renamed him as 'Nepal'. Fwrlang Babaji was born in 1874 at Roumari village. His father's name was Habtha Boro and mother's name was Fadri Boro. He was the fourth child of Habtha and Fadri. Fwrlang Babaji had no formal education because there were no schools in that time. But he learned informal education from a home tutor. Fwrlang Babaji had deep interest in religion. He took the religion '*Brahma*' from Kalicharan Brahma Junior of Simbargaon and became a disciple of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. Fwrlang Babaji was interested in social reformation along with religion. The resolutions proposed at the mass conference in the interest of reformation of Bodo society which was held at Fwrlang Babaji's Roumari Jyoti Ashram are mentionable. Representatives from different parts of Assam and West Bengal participated at this conference.

The Bodos had a bad name as they were called excessive rice beer producer and drunker. Nevertheless they had a bad name. Producing and drinking of excessive rice beer was also one of the main reasons of having backwardness of the society. As per the folk belief of the Bodos there is a custom of offering rice beer to the god and goddesses at the festivals like Kherai and Garja. It is the part of folk culture. But over drinking is bad. A resolution was taken to eradicate this bad habit. Pig farming is also a habit of the Bodos. There was needless to say when somebody made a pig farming neat and clean or scientifically taking business motive. But the Bodos had unhygienic pig farming. This unhygienic environment caused diseases. That is why a resolution was taken to stop pig farming. Having seen the Shop keepers of other castes behaving bad manners upon Bodo women and trying to make illicit relationship with them a resolution was taken to prohibit the Bodo women to go to the market. This prohibition had been succeeding for several years. In that time forced- marriage had been practicing in the Bodo society which was become like a disease of the community. It drew the picture of disordering systems of the society. Other castes condemned this illegal practice of the society and called them uncivilized. That is why a resolution was proposed to stop this illegal practice discussing deeply in the conference.

The most mentionable event in the life of Fwrlang Babaji was the debating between Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma and him in the religious conference held at Roumari Jyoti Ashram. A debate took place between them taking the topic of Bodo musical instruments – traditional Bodo musical instruments like *kham*, *sifung*, *serja*, *jotha* and *jabkhring* should be used or not in the worshipping God. According to Gurudev use of these musical instruments are obstacles of worshipping God. That is why these musical instruments should be abandoned. On the other hand, according to Babaji these musical instruments are the indispensable part of Bodo culture; this culture identifies the Bodos and will identify them. To abandon those cultures are as same as like dead.

Fwrlang Babaji did for 'Brahma' religion and Bodo society as a whole. As his personalities grew, he became Fwrlang Babaji from Nepal or Mefal. So to say he was the great personality from the Bodo society who did for his religion and society.

(3) Bodofa Upendranath Brahma

Two essays of the author on the life and works of great personality Bodofa Upendranath Brahma are found. These two essays – *Simang Jaoliya Bodofa Upendranath Brahma* incorporates in *Thunlai Baidi Baidi* and *Boro Thunlaiyao Bodofa Upendranath Brahmami Bihwma* incorporates in *Raithaihalala*. These essays are based on Bodofa Upendranath Brahma's literary writings. Through the writings of Bodofa Upendranath Brahma his views and ideologies are found. The author has described about the Bodofa Upendranath Brahma's literary contribution to the Bodo literature in the article *Boro Thunlaiyao Bodofa Upendranath Brahmami Bihwma*. It should not be forgotten that Bodofa Upendranath Brahma wrote articles aiming to circulate his revolutionary motives, not written to become a litterateur. Importance of such types of articles was there in that time. His poetry having lyrical characteristics is mentionable. Anyway, although there are no such mentionable literary values in the articles of Bodofa there are great historical values. The age of the Bodofa was important part of the revolutions of demanding separate state of the Bodos or Plains Tribals.

Bodofa Upendranath Brahma wrote on science as a science student. He wrote on science in the magazine 'Orkhi' third and sixth issues – *Jiua Bobeyao Thayw ?* (Where the life belongs to?) and *Okhrangma Eba Mulugma* (The Space or Universe) respectively. In 1978 Bodofa Upendranath Brahma wrote *Bigianni Sayao Gwrlwi Nwjwr* (General View on Science) in fourth issue *Bidangstri* magazine edited by himself. In 1983 he wrote *Gwmwthao Mulug* (Wonderful World) in second issue *Songgali* magazine edited by Nabin Wary.

Bodofa's mentionable themes of writings are on Bodoland movement. Almost all of the writings are based on views and ideologies of Bodo movement. An article in English *On the Way to Mass Revolution* was published in the souvenir *Bwhwilang* which was brought out in the 19th conference of All Bodo Students' Union in 1987. In this article the writer introduced the Bodos as aboriginal and a distinct community of Assam. The Bodos are discriminated by others in respect of language, literature, culture etc. To rescue the Bodos from this trap a vigorous movement of separate state is necessary. Bodofa Upendranath Brahma was optimistic about this movement – "..... after the darkness dawn shall come surely, surely. Victory shall come to us....." Another article *Violation of Human Rights Against the Bodos* was written condemning the violation of human rights by the Assam government during the movement of separate state Bodoland. This article was published in the souvenir *Birkhang* which was brought out in the 20th conference of All Bodo Students' Union.

Bodofa edited the magazine *Bidangstri*. Editorial of a magazine is the important part of editor. Bodofa Upendranath Brahma used to write about the Bodo issues in his editorials. In the editorial of fourth issue of *Bidangstri* in 1978 he wrote about the problems of Bodo language and literature. Bodo literature is still in its childhood. No sufficient writings in the genre like prose, poetry, drama, biography etc. in Bodo literature. No news magazines in Bodo. According to Bodofa Upendranath Brahma survival of the Bodo community depends on its language and literature. He wrote "*The Bodo language and literature are the only key to the existence and survival of Bodo community. Our language and culture are only the means of our identity.*"

Bodofa wrote short story and poetry also. In 1985, in the fifth issue of *Songgali* edited by Nabin Wary, Bodofa Upendranath Brahma's a short story namely *Iyunni Mijing* was published. In this short story, he dreamed about his destination, the Bodoland. He dreamed that the demand of Bodoland, a state of plains tribal of Assam, was succeeded after the hard struggle and bloodshed. The poems *Ang Boro* and *Jangkhrikhang* are also written by Bodofa Upendranath Brahma. How he loves his Bodo community and Bodo nation, and being a Bodo what responsibility he has upon his own Bodo nation are explained through the poem *Ang Boro*. It reveals his Bodo sentiment. In the poem *Jangkhrikhang* there is revolutionary tone in it. This poem invites the Bodo youths to participate with heart and soul in the Bodoland movement.

Another essay of the author is *Simang Jaoliya Bodofa Upendranath Brahma*. Here Brajendra Kumar Brahma, the author, has discussed about a lot of dreams of Bodofa Upendranath Brahma. Bodofa had a lot of dreams in his life about his destination, the Bodoland. Most mentionable dream of Bodofa is included in his short story *Iyunni Mijing* which short story has been already mentioned above. What he dreamed about his Bodoland movement is clearly depicted in the story *Iyunni Mijing*.

(4) Bishnu Rabha

Bishnu Rabha was a great man of Assam. During the independence movement of India Bishnu Rabha participated with his heart and soul. He was also a great personality from Bodo community. He was a communist and follower of Karl Marx and Lenin. The author has introduced Bishnu Rabha with two identities – revolutionist and artist in the essay *Bigrayari Mohorgiri Bishnu Rabha* 'Revolutionist Artist Bishnu Rabha' which incorporates in the collection *Saosabfanai Gwdan Swdwmstri*. In political and social sciences, communism is the philosophical, social, political, and economic ideology and movement whose ultimate goal is the establishment of the communist society, which is a socioeconomic order structured upon the common ownership of the means of production and the absence of social classes, money and the state. Bishnu Rabha was the strong supporter of communism. His life was closely associated with common people of the country and common people also loved him.

On the other hand, the author has introduced Bishnu Rabha as a talented artist. He was - a singer, a lyrist, a music composer, a dancer, a painter and an actor respectively. He was a good dancer of 'Tandava'. He was awarded the title 'Kalaguru' by

Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan at Varanashi for his mesmerizing 'Tandava' dance of Lord Shiva. Even famous dancer Uday Shankara was fascinated by this dance and learnt the same from Bishnu Rabha.

(5) Bineswar Brahma

Two essays of the author on life and works of Bineswar Brahma are – *Hangkhw Jengna Arw Bineswar Brahma* 'Script Issue and Bineswar Brahma' and *Bigrayari Jujisula Bineswar Brahma* 'Bineswar Brahma the Rebel' which are included in *Saosabfanai Gwdan Swdwmsri*. Bineswar Brahma was an able leader of the Bodos and a real social worker. He was a president of Bodo Sahitya Sabha from 1996 to 2000. In the essay *Hangkhw Jengna Arw Bineswar Brahma* the author has described about the life of Bineswar Brahma relating to script issue. He became a victim of Bodo script issue and shot dead by some miscreants at his home in Guwahati. He became a martyr for Bodo script. When Bodo medium was introduced in the primary school in 1963 the Bodos accepted Assamese script for their writing of language. After a long eleven years of use of Assamese script they wanted to change their script to Roman for making easy, because they meant it has minimum number of 26 alphabets, no clustering systems, easy to write etc. They rebelled for demanding Roman script with Assam government in 1974. But they got no responses from Assam government. Finally, they approached to central government and according to the suggestion of central government they accepted Devanagiri script for their writing in 1975. But the hungry of Roman script remained like an untreatable disease for some Bodos. After long years of use of Devanagiri script the demand of Roman script arose once again among the Bodos. Frequently change of the scripts is not an easy task. Finally they accepted Devanagiri script for permanent use after the discussing in the convention of Bodo Sahitya Sabha at Simbargaon in 2000. This decision was taken in the democratic way that is through the majority supports of delegates of the convention. But Bineswar Brahma as a president of Bodo Sahitya Sabha was victimized and became a scapegoat for this decision. He was shot dead by miscreants.

The author has portrayed Bineswar Brahma as a lover of his own Bodo nation in the essay *Bigrayari Jujisula Bineswar Brahma* 'Bineswar Brahma the Rebel'. The author has tried to establish Bineswar Brahma as a nation lover through the reading of his poems. The poems *Bathou Bwrai* 'Supreme God of the Bodos', *Mansi* 'Human Being', *Bhumka* 'Bhumka is a name of village where rape victims by Indian Army are there during Bodoland movement', *Fungkha* 'Source' and *Siyal* 'Fox' reveal that how the Bodos are discriminated and dominated by others which turns the Bodos into rebels. Through these poems Bineswar Brahma is recognized as a real lover of Bodo nation.

(6) Sabha Brahma

Another biographical essay of the author is *Sabha Brahma: Gilubalu Somainani Jwnwmgiri* 'Sabha Brahma: The Creator of Terrible Beauty' which is included in the *Thunlai Baidi Baidi*. Sabha Brahma is the great artist and sculptor of Assam who is recognized by only few intellectuals of Assam. Homen Borgohain, a philosopher, a journalist and an intellectual of Assam recognized Sabha Brahma as the great artist ever born in Assam and gave nomination for Padmabhushan or Padmashri Award on behave of him. He saw the great values of Sabha Brahma's oil paintings. How Sabha Brahma, being a great artist of the age, has been neglected by the learned Assamese society reveals through the essay *Sabha Brahma: Gilubalu Somainani Jwnwmgiri*. However, Sabha Brahma is well known all over India and abroad. Eminent French art critic Dr. Charles Fabric once said, "Mr. Brahma is interesting, original and able". Once a famous art critic from Kolkata said about the creations of Sabha Brahma, "I've come on seeing 'Terrible beauty' of Yeats with my own eyes. No doubt, he is a great artist of India at present".

(7) Bihuram Boro

Bihuram Boro: Angni Bisombiyao Mwblibgase 'Bihuram Boro: In My Glance' is another biographical essay of the author. Bihuram Boro was a General Secretary of Bodo Sahitya Sabha. He was also shot dead by miscreants during his tenure. The author is very much worry about the existing of unnecessary killing tradition of their able leaders among the Bodos. And also he is worry that the Bodos have no tradition of keeping historical records, the result of which they are losing their identities. The author has added a story of a tribe from Bolivia. Memorizing of dead persons is a taboo of that tribe even the dead is a learned person. For this reason they are losing their racial properties and they become about to eliminate as a tribe. The histories of ancestors are the sources of inspiration, encouragement and identity for the young generation. The same is happened to the Bodos also.

Bihuram Boro is also about to forgotten by the Bodos even he, once upon a time, was a General Secretary of Bodo Sahitya Sabha and had lots of contributions to the Bodo literature and Bodo society. Bihuram Boro was a great litterateur also. The epic poetry *Gibi Bithai* is an immortal creation by him. The book *Asarba* is also a mentionable.

FINDINGS

1. Brevity of texts is the style of the author.
2. Simple in language, description in logical fragmentations and paragraphs of texts are another worthy of attention.
3. The essays are according to the interest of author. These are not complete biographies of the personalities. However, a complete biography must have a large volume to its success.
4. The personalities to whom the author has interest are great personalities from the Bodo society who contributed a lot to the development of downtrodden Bodo society.
5. There are great literary values in the essays of the author.

CONCLUSION

A biographical work is a detailed description of a person's life. It involves more than just the basic facts like education, work, relationships, and death; it portrays a person's experience of these life events. But Brajendra Kumar Brahma's biographical essays

are not detailed description about the lives of personalities. Some parts of their life events are described in the essays in brief. Although in brief description important parts of their life events are portrayed in the essays which gives the lessons to the readers.

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