

Assamese Prison Writing Based on Assam Movement

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Abstract:

Prison Writing or Prison Literature is newly introduced genre in Indian Literature. The relation between jail and literature were created in India at the time of freedom movement against British rule. But all the writings of the prisoners were not included in Prison Writing at that time.

When a writer writes something based on his jail experience in jail, focusing on the internal and external subject and when these things reflects in the authors writing, then it is called prison writing. In this paper I want to study the Assamese Prison Writing, which was written based on Assam Movement (1979-1985).

Keywords: Assam Movement, Prison Writing, jail, illegal migration

0.0 Preface

0.1 Introduction:

The Prison Writing includes the term prison and literature or the writing. When a writer writes something based on in his experiences in Jail, focusing on the internal and external subjects and when these things reflects in the Authors writing, then it is called as Prison Writing. In the book, *Sahitya O Sanskritir Tirthasangame*, Srikumar Bandupadhyai mentioned that when the sources of the Prison Writing are the jail experiences, then that is called as Prison Writing. If an author or a poet writes any literature or a poem after retirement or jail time, which does not involves his experiences in jail - whose relation with jail only depicts spatial involvement rather than intimacy, where his life in jail has not been reflected, those literatures cannot be included in Prison Writing. Moreover literature related to terrorist, which is otherwise independent, but are indefinite and revolves around anxiousness and thorny life are also not included in Prison Writing.¹

Prison Writing is newly introduced trends in Indian literature. The relation between jail and literature were created in India at the time of freedom movement against the British rule. But all the writings of the prisoners were not included in Prison Writing at that time. In the book *Prison Writing in India* K. Satchidanandan mentioned four major events of prison experiences. The first was pre-1947 anti-colonial struggle, the second was the communist uprising chiefly during the fifties of the last century, the third the period of emergency in 1975-1977 and the fourth, the Maoist uprising of the late sixties and early seventies.² He accepted those events as the trends of the Indian prison writings. Notable point is that the series of the

Indian writing of above mentioned trends were something different from Assamese Prison Writing. Based on his opinion, we can divide the trends of Assamese Prison Writings as mentioned below-

- (a) The prison writing of the Pre-Independence or the freedom movement period.
- (b) The prison writing during the period of emergency.
- (c) The prison writing at the time of Assam movement.
- (d) The prison writing based on ULFA and
- (e) Others: Include people arrested for personal reasons, prison writing which were written by jail related persons.

In the proposed seminar paper, I would like to give a simple introduction of 4th trend of above mentioned prison writing, which was written based on Assam movement.

0.2 Objective and Significance

The main objective of the paper is-

- To introduce the prison writing which was written at the time of Assam movement.

0.3 Methodology

For the study of the seminar paper, I am using descriptive method. Moreover for description, I am using analytic method also.

1.0 Main Discussion

Three prison writings were written during the Assam movement period. These were *Louha Pinjor* by Kesavananda Dev Goswami (October, 1980), *Dustor Karagar* by Lakshminandan Borah (1981) and *Kararuddha Jiwanar Bakruddha Kahini* by Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharyya (1984). If we look at the time when these books were published, we will come to know that, these books were written at the time of Assam Movement. Therefore, by studying these books one can get a clear idea about the earlier times of the movement. Hence the introduction of these books have been put forward by sorting it according to the time of its publication.

1.1 *Louha Pinjor*:

This book was written based on forty(40) days of prisoner's life, i.e. from 20th April to 30th May, 1980. It can be seen that the book was written at the early stage of the movement. In this book, writer described the situation of Assam movement or the expulsion of alien movement and various incidents of the movement in a sequential manner. The writer was also jailed by National Security Act.

The writer Kesavananda Dev Goswami described the stories serially from Dibrugarh jail and Jorhat jail to Bhagalpur jail of Bihar. He also introduced about the Bihar's social system parallel to social lives of Assamese people.

In the book *Louha Pinjor*, the writer has described thirteen chapters each with different titles. Starting from the first chapter in a sequential manner, they are Pristhobhumi, Somar Tinisir, Udgiron, Duwar Dhora, Anussed Putashal, Agyatbash, Par Kora Raghunath, Bichitra Birjyo, Bhogadhul, Dahar Dahmat, Pratyaworton and Bhagil Nihol. From the title of different chapters, the writers statements can be predicted which are expressed in different parts/ chapters of the published book. Notable point is that, like different other prison writings, by putting forward the description of book in the form of a diary, presentation of a particular subject with a specific title was observed. Moreover the 'epilogue' and letters sent by Dulal Mipun from Dibrugarh to the writer contained information about the movement and the additional part of the letter also mentioned about the introduction of some other people who were jailed as a result of movement.

The writer gave some opinion about the circumstances of Assam movement and the problems of the migration in the beginning of the Book *Louha Pinjor*. Notably, before describing his jail stories which started from 20th April, 1980, he discussed about the various issues of the Assam movement. He discussed about how a large number of Moimonshingia Muslim people from Bangladesh migrated to Assam. The 'Grow more food scheme', adopted by Moulana Sayed Sir Md. Saddulah Ministry, announced allotment of lands to Muslim immigrants and it cleared another way to bring them to Assam. The author noted that, except Gopinath Bordoloi, every other Chief Ministers supported this activity. Moreover due to the support from local Assamese officials and Land munsif, these activities became easy.³

In the book *Louha Pinjor* the author discussed about the migration of Bengalis and the linguistic and communal problems of both Assamese speakers and Bengali speakers as a result of this migration. He also criticized the Bengali speaking peoples, who strongly loved their language and decided to keep themselves going only with their own language.⁴

The author discussed various conflicts between the Assamese speaking people and Bengali speaking people of Nahorkatia, Duliajan areas. At first the author wasn't involved in the movement, but later he became the president of 'Thaluwa Swartharakhya Samitee', and was involved in the movement. The author has made an attempt to explore the character of communal conflict by explaining various instances such as burning down the houses of bengali community by their own people and defaming the Assamese people, the newspapers published from erstwhile Calcutta describing the purpose of the alien expulsion movement in a wrong way, imposing wrong notion about the character of this movement by stating that many people associated with it were practicing foul means and harm caused by the secret agents etc.

The author started to describe his jail life's experiences from fifth chapter, 'Anussed Putashal'. He mentioned six reasons for being jailed. The first reason was that as a president of 'Thaluwa Swartharakhya Samitee', he took the decision not to give the land patta in Dibrugarh area to Non-Assamese people, secondly with the secretary of 'Thaluwa Swartharakhya Samitee', Dhiren Borthakur, stopped bringing newspapers, thirdly he criticized the torture by police and Military and accused the government officers. The forth reason was that he helped to create communal violence by his lecture in the public gathering at Kehang Tea Estate , fifthly he and vice-president of 'Thaluwa Swartharakhya Samitee', were involving in

public picketing held in Dibrugarh. The sixth reason was his involvement in public strike which spread in whole of Assam from 3rd April to 10th April.⁵ Notably the author also described how the actual explanation for the six reasons can be done.

The author was jailed in Dibrugarh and Jorhat and in the last session he has also described his experiences in the Bhagalpur jail. He introduced with simple description of his day to day life, and described how the jail life led to development of his narrow mentality.

1.2 *Dustor Karagar*

It may be said that the book, *Dustor Karagar* (1981) by Lakshminandan Borah is a part of his autobiography. Mentionable that the story of this book is included in his autobiography *Kal Balukat Khuj*. But before publishing the autobiography, the book *Dustor Karagar* was published. In this book the author serially explains his day to day experiences which he got in the jail system. The book was written at the early stage of the movement, where he tried to express the internal and external circumstances of the jail and the real picture of the jailor, prisoners, which were associated with the jail system.

The main subjects that were included in the book, *Dustor Karagar* were the pictures of corruptions in the jail system, the scenario of current social system, the description of the character interested in jail, the impressions of the prisoners' mentality, pictures of colonial and post-colonial jail environment, reflection of education systems etc.

The author described the experiences of his forty days jail period from 25th January to 5th March. In the beginning of the book, he expressed grief because he didn't know the reason, why he was arrested in National Security Act, and said-

I don't know why I have been arrested! What kind of deception is this? We really live in a country, where the pot doesn't have a cap and cows don't have cowboys.⁶

As a result of alien expulsion demands and movement of 1979, the Government announced the order to arrest many people for the purpose of security in the country. That is why many innocent people also got punished. According to the author, there are some doubts in the law of a country if someone gets arrested without any specific reasons being stated. In fact, through this book, few impressions of current anarchic conditions of Assam as well as Indian Political fields can be observed.

In this book the author also wrote about the good facilities for the security prisoners of both Dibrugarh and Jorhat jail. About the Jorhat jail he wrote:

There are good facilities to keep the prisoners here. Within the walls, there is a small house of few yards in the east. Within a small distance, there are two long houses in the west.⁷

In this book, the author described about prisoners and the socio-economic reasons behind their description. He also expressed the stories about the tea garden labors, small cutpurse boys very elegantly. He also described the tendency of small cutpurse boys towards. According to the author, being homeless,

absence of relatives, living in slum areas or on railway platforms etc. were much tougher for the small boys than to work inside the jail. Hence it is seen they get more attracted towards the jail. He mentioned that-

They feel like to coming to jail more often during the winters, because they find it very difficult sleeping in the platforms, verandas or the slum areas in the shivering cold. So, they come to jail after doing small crimes because while sleeping they get three blankets and get free food. They don't have to struggle.⁸

This book was written just in forty days jail period. Even though the book was written in a few days, but he could clearly reflect the evident concepts related to the jail. He also presented every subjects related to the jail system in a very generalized and easy way.

1.3 *Kararuddha Jiwanar Bakruddha Kahini*

In this book, the author Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharyya expresses the jail experiences. Additionally the book includes the national as well as regional thoughts, communal problems and clashes, current scenarios of political and socio-economic systems of India and Assam, the reality of Assam movement, the works of the Assam police administration, the prison system of Assam and India and lots of subjects. This book was published in 1984 and he mentioned that it was a jail diary. Regarding the overall concept included in this book, the author said that-

I hope that the reader will surmise how numerous small Hitler in every stage of our social systems, political and administrative systems are making our social lives and democratic lifestyle poisonous.⁹

So from the above comment, we can guess an insight into the contents of the book. From 29th January, 1981 to 28th January, 1982, for a period of seven months in a year, the author spent his entire time being alone and has included the conversations that he had with himself in this book.

In the preamble of this book, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya said-

Until and unless someone is proved guilty and offender in front of the law, it is wrong to give him punishment, this is the theory of Justice. But when we read or listen about these stories, then we see that many prisoners have to suffer and live unlawfully and many of innocents get justice very lately.¹⁰

The characters of the prisoner or the physical and social circumstances are found in these stories. In this way we also find the real current scenarios of the jail system. Moreover Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya mentioned in the preamble again-

Every arrest stories are not only related to the law, politics also play a major role in these things. By reading this book, the politics associated with arresting become very much clear.¹¹

In this way stories behind the involvement of politics and administration in arresting the author and being a scapegoat of personal dissimulation with political circumstances behind the arresting of the author, has been covered in various parts of the book.

In this book the writer described very minutely about the current political systems and also presented some internal matters of Assam police administration directly or indirectly. The author was arrested under

National Security Act and was brought to Ranchi without any notice. Notable point was that, at that time physically he was not in a good condition.

Even though the author was doing the constitutional duties ordered by government in regards to alien expulsion, who were illegally trying to settle in Assam, the author became a scapegoat of incitement of the Home department along with some of his police colleagues and 3 to 4 ministers of the current government and got arrested. The author mentioned that-

“... today I became scapegoat of the sectional communal politics for protesting for many years against the hedonist deceitful rules of the government.¹²

Notable point is that the prisoners under the National Security Act, got good facilities to live, but the author was deprived from these facilities and he had to live in a very lower class lifestyle in comparison to the other prisoners. He said that Government of Assam had permitted for expense of eight rupees in a day for the author, but Government of Bihar expensed eleven rupees in a day for one general prisoner.¹³

The author faced many troubles regarding food inside the jail. He wrote-

After having lunch, there is no option other than taking salt along with the food while having dinner. So I was compelled to avoid having dinner. Sometimes I feel very hungry at night, and in order to make both my ends meet, I started having lunch at 4 P.M. since 7th February, 1981.¹⁴

Moreover, as mentioned by the author above, besides the miserable lifestyle that he had inside the jail, he also suffered from high pressure, but he was deprived from having the minimal treatment that was required. Apart from describing the experiences of mental and physical suffering that the author faced during his time being in jail and the book also describes about the contemporary furore political circumstances in authors own point of view. Not only the author's life became extensive in this book, but it also reflected the ruthless jail life experiences and many issues of the past-present-future of the prisoners.

2.0 Conclusion

After doing a thorough study of titled topic titled as, “Assamese Prison Writing based on Assam movement,” we got the following findings:

- Three books were written based on Assam movement, and these are *Louha Pinjar* (1980) by Kesavananda Dev Goswami, *Dustor Karagar* (1981) by Lakshminandan Borah and *Kararuddha Jivanar Bakruddha Kahini* (1984) by Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharyya. If we look into the time at which these books were written, then we can see that, the books being mentioned above were written at the early stages of the movement. So it can be said that in these books the early situations of the movement were published.
- In the books, *Louha Pinjar* by Kesavananda Dev Goswami and *Kararuddha Jivanar Bakruddha Kahini* by Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharyya, the circumstances of the Assam movement were reflected,

while in the other book, *Dustor Karagar* by Lakshminandan Borah, expression of various unusual circumstances of the jail can be observed.

- Kesavananda Dev Goswami and Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharyya tried to show various movement centric thoughts. Explanation about various subjects of the problem, created as a result of alien migration has been clearly reflected in the book.
- Apart from expression of movement centric discussion in the above mentioned prison writing, experiences inside the jail and various systems of the jail has also been reflected through these books. Therefore, it can be said that, the books published under the circumstances of Assam Movement, apart from containing the characteristics of prison writings, it also includes contemporary situations or circumstances which has been clearly expressed.

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