

Mythological Novel *Bideh Nandini* (2009): A discussion

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Abstract

Mythological novel is a new trend in novel writings where stories and characters are reinterpreted from different point of views. The novelist conveys their point views, ideologies through the stories that have been created. Assamese novel also cultivates such trend of novel writing on mythology. Dr Malini is one of the novelists that has contributed to the field Assamese Mythological novel. *Jagyaseni* (2008), *Bideh Nandini* (2008), *Kashikanya Amba* (2010), *Mandodari* (2012), *Rishikanya* (2014), *Urbashi* (2014), *Shakuntala* (2016) are her remarkable mythological novels. Although, there are almost 50 novels in Assamese literature written in this trend, no elaborate study is to be found on them. The objective of the paper is to have a study of the novel *Bideh Nandini*.

Key words- Assamese novel, mythology, Dr. Malini, Sita, Ramayana.

Introduction

Modern Assamese literature grew with the influence of Western literature. Assamese novel is not exception of it. Since the beginning, novel has been written in different trends such as historical, social, autobiographical, science, biographical, mythological etc. The mythological novel has not been flourished yet. The novels written on the characters, issues of the Ramayana, Mohabharata, Purana etc are called mythological novel. Such novels can be divided into four parts– (1) Based on the Ramayana (2) Based on the Mohabharata (3) Based on *Puranas* and (4) Miscellaneous. Regarding the mythological novel, the novelist only adopts the essence from myth and usually the psychological and rationalist aspects are emphasised in them.

Dr. Malini is one of the novelists who has contributed to the field Assamese Mythological novel. *Jagyaseni* (2008), *Bideh Nandini* (2008), *Kashikanya Amba* (2010), *Mandodari* (2012), *Rishikanya* (2014),

Urbashi (2014), *Shakuntala*(2016) are her remarkable mythological novels. *Bideh Nandini* is written on Ramayana where the story of Sita has been narrated effectively.

Objective

Although, there are almost 50 novels written in this trend, no elaborate study is to be found. Of course, there are a few articles scattered in one or two journals written by the critic like Ananda Barmudoi, Arabindra Rajkhuwa, Bimal Majumdar. Moreover, Arabindra Rajkhuwa and Govinda Prasad Sarmah offered their opinion regarding it. No study has been done yet on the selected novel of the study. Therefore, attempt has been made to have a study on the novel *Bideh Nandini*

Scope and Mythology

The seven recognised mythological novel written by Dr. Malini are *Jagyaseni* (2008), *Bideh Nandini* (2008), *Kashikanya Amba*, *Mandodari* (2012), *Rishikanya* (2014), *Urbashi* (2014), *Shakuntala* (2016). It is impossible to bring all the seven into this discussion. The scope of the study is limited only to the *Bideh Nandini*. The subject matter, characterization, theme etc would have been discussed in this paper.

Analytical method has been used in this paper. Descriptive and comparative discussion will be inevitable in certain context.

Subject Matter

Bideh Nandini is a Ramayana base novel where the life of Sita is recreated. It is the second novel by Dr. Malini in which protesting mind of Sita has been reflected. The novel consists of 208 pages with 42 chapters. The novelist skips certain part of Ramayana while writing this novel and adopts the necessary portions. It starts with the Swayamvar of Sita and end with the entry of Sita into the Hell. The novelist excludes some major incidents of the Ramayana such as the stories of Bhagiratha and Ganga, birth of Ram-Laxman, Ashwamadh Jagya, death of Lakshman etc. as the novel is entirely on life of Sita.

The novelist emphasises on the psycho-analysis of the character Sita keeping the incidents of Ramayana unchanged. Sita has been presented as a modern woman with her thinking and feelings. Many changes would be problematic on the part of novelist as it already pre-constructed character. Sita have been

known as an enduring woman. Therefore, too many changes in the characterization might be unacceptable for the readers.

Injustice to woman is shown by the novelist through the character of Sita. The character Sita exposes the position of woman in the contemporary society. Considering woman as material, throwing the wife for self-interests are reflected through the incidents associated to Sita. Even Sita gets ready to accompany Ram to the forest. She could have stayed in the castle if she wished. But she needs to suffer in the forest for being a dedicated wife and it is Ram who banished such as chaste-woman in her pregnancy without any proper reason.

The pivotal figure of the novel has been portrayed as a protesting one. Even if Sita suffers from crucible and banishment, she raises her voice against the values of society whenever she gets opportunity- *“ei Brahmin hakalei kut kathar mul. Jiman nari bidweshi slok, niyom-kanun ase hokolu bur eulukei prabatan kora. Bridhya bayakhat biya korai gabhoru patniburok sambhablibo nuwari hamasta nari jatir babe kothur niti-niyom udhar korile”* (The Brahmins are the evil of all. The rules, values, rituals for woman were fixed by them for being unable to control their young wives.)

Sita does not even spare Laxman. Sita turns unstable after hearing her banishment from Laxman. Out of rage, she questions Lakshman- *“ki karanat moi nirbashita? Moi dushi holu kenekoi. Muk uddhar koribo nuwaratu tumalukore homorthota nahay ne? Tumalukar oparagatar karanei moi ebasor kal Ravanr raijyat thakibo logia hua nai ne? Tumaluk dui bhaye Suparnakhak jukai tair nak kan kati nizej hotruta armbha kori bipad sopai lua nasila ne? Khar, Dukhan adi Rakshakak bodh nakara hole ene ghatana ghatilheten? Aru huna, moi Ravana r logot polai jua nasilu. Muk horon he korisil. Tumar bor kokaere ei kothabur pahori muk nirbashon diar kotha vabibo parile kenkeoi?”* (Why have I been banished? How can I be guilty? Is not it your inability for being failure to save me? Did I not need to stay in region of Ravana for your inability? Did not you create your enmity cutting the nose and ears of Suparnakha? If you had not kill the Rakshash like Dur, Dushan, would these incidents have been happened? And listen, I did not elope with Ravana I was abducted. How can your brother banishing me forgetting these?)

Similarly, when Ram asked Sita to promise her virginity in the time of bringing back to palace, Sita outraged, “*Satrugghna, moi kar usarot hapat lom? Heijon swamir usarat? Jijan swamiye hapatar arthoi buji napai? Agniparikha hoi juar pasatu patnik handeh kariboloi nerile, heijon swamir usarat?*”

Muk kua Satrugghna kunjan purukhar usarat moi hapat lom? Hei kapurusor usarat? Jijane nirbashanar karan darshabo lage buli palai phurisol? phuriboloi niyar solere habit eri ahiloloi bhayekok nirdesh disil? Tene ejon kapurushor usarat?”

Satrugghna, kar babe hapat lom? Mur hantanar heijon pitrir babe jijane garbhate hantanak nirbashan dile? Jijan pritiye hantan bhumistha hal ne nahal taku khabar nakarile? Jijane hantan bhumistha holeu bhiksha kori jiban nirbah kariboloi habit eri ahilol? Heijan purukhak hamasta jagate bhagawan buli bhabibo pare, moi kintu tene byaktik manavar sarit shtan diboloiu ahudha paisu.”

(Satrugghna, with whom I would make my promise? This husband who does not even realize the meaning of promise? The husband who does not even stop doubting his wife even after crucible? Tell me Satrugghna with whom I would make my promise? With this coward who escaped in the fear of showing the reasons of my banishment? Who ordered his brother to leave me in the forest telling it as walk? With such a coward? Satrugghna, for whom I would promise? For this father who banishes his children when they were in womb? Who did not bother to know the birth of his children? Would I promise with the father who left his children to starve in the forest? The world can consider this man god, but I find it difficult to call him even human being.)

Bravery of Sita throws light to the reality of the society. Dr Malini prepared a new portrayal of the character Sita in *Bideh Nadini*. The novel brings out a new Sita who is revolutionary and kind of feminist instead of a chaste woman as she was in the Ramayana.

Among the male characters, Ram, Laxman are the major who have attained the status of god in the epic. The image of the two brothers is similar in the novel too. But they are brought to the level of human beings with the errors of common people in the novel. They have been criticised for various decisions associated to the life of Sita.

The novelist makes Ram and Laxman engage in almost all the events and incidents from Swayambar to Sita’s entry to the Hell and analyses them from a rationalist point of view. In the novel, the readers also

have a new presentation of Ram and Laxman along with Sita. The dialogues of Sita render Ram as a selfish and narcissistic figure. For example- *“muhutote moi upolobdhi korislu je Ramchandra is a selfish king. Teuk lage matro jagatpati habaloi. Teu ekhon rastra nirman koribo khujise jot prajai teuor akal gunhe gabo”* (At the moment I realized Ram as a selfish king who desires to be the king of the world. He wants an empire where he would only be praised by the subjects)

Similarly, cruelty, injustice etc are expressed through the crucible and banishment of Sita. Even Ram exiled his pregnant wife Sita being afraid of infamy. The novelist makes the mythical characters real.

Laxman is a mechanistic figure without any personality and feeling who is being controlled by other. Apart from obeying the orders of Ram, he has nothing to mind for his parents, wife and also for injustice. At the time of Sita's exile, Laxman confessed, *“hey matri, hai devi, muk eku nuhudhibo. Moi apunar proshnor uttor diboloi oparog.”* (Oh mother, don't ask me anything. I cannot answer you). It exposes Laxman a man without any conscience. He is unable to judge whether he should leave pregnant Sita in the forest or not.

Valmiki, Sumantra, Bashista, Satrugna, Dasaratha are some of the male characters of the novels who do not have significant role apart from Valmiki. They are included just for the sake of the story.

Some of the prevailing values and stereotypes to be found in the novel are-

“pitrigrihot swami tyag kora kanyar ador nai, lagile heikhon rojar ghorei houk ba khori bharir ghorei houk” (Divorced woman has no value in her parent's home, be it king's palace or common man's hut)

“bohut manuhe sarthor khatirothe atmiyota gorhe. Ramchandra jogotpoti nhoi ejon hadharon manuh hua hole mur pitrie hoitu teur khobor loboloi nahil heten” (Many people build kinship for self interest. If Ram were a common man, my father would not have come to appraise)

When Sita was in exile, Janak visited his son-in-law to share his (Ram) grief but did not inquire about his (Janak) daughter for once, she was obliged to think it that people makes relations for benefits.

The novelist utilizes flashback as narrative techniques in the novel. When Ram banished pregnant Sita after restoring her from Lanka, Ashyamath Jagya was organised after twelve years. Ram invited Valmiki to it and Valmiki accepts Ram's invitation thinking about the welfare of Lava and Kusha. The novelist narrates the story like an autobiography of Sita. The first person narration through the voice of Sita makes the text similar to an autobiographical novel.

The diction of the novel is very apt to the character of Sita. The narration of novel is also restraint that stiffness has no place on any occasion. Even characterizations and dialogues are appropriate to the scenes. The psychology of the characters is expressed through the appropriate and touching dialogues.

The novelist stirs her opinions through the character of Sita. She criticises the societal values through the character of Sita. The novelist conveys that calm, tolerant woman like Sita can also be revolutionary if they are tortured.

Although, the kernel story has been adopted from mythology, the novelist analyses the story from psychological stand point. She interprets the story from the point of view of modern age. Many Sitas are to be found in the every corners of the world. Even if the story of Sita was ancient, the novelist imparts a modern touch.

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