

URBAN LIFE REFLECTED IN APURBA SARMA'S SHORT STORIES

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0.0 Abstract:

Apurba Sarma, a renowned litterateur from the Ramdhenu era has remarkable contributions to the field of Assamese literature and culture as a short-story writer and as a movie critic. Detachment, loneliness and other tangible and abstract symptoms of modern urban life are reflected in his stories. His published story collections till date are '*Bandhur Pothat Keijonman Deka Manuh*' (1977), '*Suva-Barta*' (1985), '*Baghey Tapur Rati Aru Anyanyo Kahini*' (1995), '*Bipulor Juddha-Xajja Aru Kisuman Kahinir Kahini*' (1996), '*Nagorik*' (2009) and '*Ejon Kobir Mrityu Aru Ejopa Baromohiya Aam*' (2014). His movie related books are- '*Axomiya Chalachitrar Saa-Puhor*' (2001), '*Jyotiprosad as a Filmmaker*' and '*The Lone Ranger in a Forsaken Frontier*' (2012). He was awarded "*Xahityo Academi Bota*" for his book '*Baghey Tapur Rati*' in 2000 and "*Swarnakaml Bota*" in 2002 for '*Axomiya Chalachitrar Saa-Puhor*'.

In the story '*Suva-Barta*', some urban characters have been portrayed whose mentality and exploitation has made the thinking, behavior and way of living of the protagonist Jyotish rebellious. Jyotish is passing his days in sadness neglecting the ocean of responsibilities of life. The hero of Apurba Sarma's story '*Tato Yudhyaa Ydhysya*' has managed problems of his life with the theory of 'logistic', which is based on life stories of some urban people. In this manner how a modern urban life is portrayed by the writer in his short stories will be analyzed in the research paper.

Keywords: City life, Industrialization, short story, social change, Urbanization

0.1 Aim and Methodology:

Urbanization brought a spontaneous change to the thinking process of the people living in urban area and they developed a modern mind rejecting sophisticated concepts or superstitions. After realizing the responsibilities and duties of citizen, mass deviated themselves towards different type of moral values that appeared in the society. These characteristics have been reflected in Apurba Sarma's short stories and we will make an overall discussion on these in this research paper. Information has been collected from several sources in order to prepare the paper. The research paper has been written applying fundamental thinking and by using Descriptive and Analytical methods.

0.2 Urban life:

Urbanization is a process correlated to modern life, in other way it is a social revolution or change. This social revolution can create a significant alteration in geographical diagram, social structure and working of a society. Residents may want to perform works with their own vision which was different from their ancestors' traditional way. With the start of urbanization economic scenario, cultural scenario, political scenario, education policies pick up a rapid and continuous change worldwide. In the period after Second World War these revolutions that had occurred worldwide helped most of politically independent colonial countries to bring changes to their economy and social institutions. Rapid changes also happened in India in the post independence period and gradually the influences were evident in Assam also. Mostly the

residents of urban area of Assam enjoyed the scientific and technical products from the mid of 20th century. On the other hand Assamese rural society could not take the advantage of using mobile communication till last phase of 20th century. With the sequential alteration and for moral purpose different adhered traditions, rules and rituals, culture of past changed. It has been observed that new exploration and modern thinking has a firm hold in the urban area than rural area. Modern education systems are providing new way to acquire knowledge in different fields and implementation of that knowledge helps in bringing changes to a society in positive way. New discoveries and new visions are helping people to live a simple life irrespective of areas (urban or rural).

Industrialization works as the prime component or source in developing a city. It is a fact that people living in rural areas immigrate to cities for employment. Due to industrialization places in rural areas are also transformed to industrial town. The moral relationships between the residents of urban areas developed due to social changes forms a certain kind of urban culture. Social scientists coined this urban culture as 'Urbanism' or urban life. This urban way of living has differences in morality with rural way of living; personal life is preferred over social life. Assam has also developed small-big cities and behavior, thinking and habits of people living in those areas are changed. These changes proposed some new moral theories and acted as contents for literature. We can explore more qualities after going through Apurba Sarma's urban life based stories.

1.0.1 Cities described in Apurba Sarma's stories and its physical description:

Citation of cities in different ways can be observed in Apurba Sarma's stories. Apurba Sarma's storyline explained the physical changes and new way of living in urban areas. Other than various places of Guwahati description of different cities from outside Assam like Dimapur, Kohima, Shillong, Tura, Bomdila can also be found.

Apurba Sarma described various places of a so called modern city that is compatible with the physical structure of the storyline. Premium education institutes, administrative offices, trade hub, markets, theater hall, rail stations etc are present in those places. Grocery shops, laundries, tailors, commercial hoardings, street lights, sewers, drains etc. are often seen in cities. Author criticizes government for damaged and rough roads, overflowed sewers as a part of election campaigning. The story "Muktir Swapna" included in "Bipulor Juddha-Xajja" proceeds through description of some professional persons like Bihari fisherman, Plumber, Rickshaw puller, Scavenger or junk man, maids etc. Reducing amount of bare land with the increase in population is a characteristic of urbanization. According to the author's observation the city is new and only one-two pieces of bare lands, which is a rare event for a city now days.

In a different story "Gopal Eta Val Lora" in order to describe the city he describes the road to the rickshaw puller Gopal's house-

("—he went looking for Gopal's house in a rickshaw. Leaving the rickshaw in the main road he followed the by lane for a distance along a big wooden house, he walked on an unpaved road from where only one can pass through. A line of single room houses, a half wall parted the room in two and small part is used for cooking, in the other half a bedroom and a bed prepared from bamboo or wood from refugee market according to the capability. There is no allocated space for eating, ground or bed they eat according to their convenience. A loud revolting tube well for a colony of ten houses. Lodgers' have to manage defecation by own." (Page no. 34, Nagorik))

It is hard to find this kind of scene in a village. Because villagers' have river, well, pond as their water source, the sentence "A loud revolting tube well for a colony of ten houses" shows a noisy and aware crowd who are very concern about collecting their share of water, it is as an example of a situation full of people who are ready to fight in some small place in a city. In giving a physical description Apurba Sarma's "Tewlukor Xamasya" story can be mentioned, where he has shown some urban people holding

their rituals of ancestors and living a modern urban life. Which means living in a completely new geographically area they did not give up on their traditions. It is mentioned as follows-

(“...in opposite side there is a small Namghar (Prayer house), where ladies used to pray in the month of Bhado (a month in Assamese calendar). Then it is Nalini an officer's house, then it is Das who has two wives and works in Weaving department and it is Ranger Borgohain's house. After that mixture of people live, population gradually decreases on that side, mess of lower graded government employees on one side of the road, a laundry, small stores of beetle-nut and less significant gatherings.”(Page no.53, Nagorik))

On one side ladies are praying and keeping their traditions alive and on the other side mixture of populations of farming excluded professional people, employees can be observed. In other stories of Apurba Sarma presence different professions' people can be seen. For example in “Mojiyat Tejj”, “Gopal Eta Val Lora” Professor, Junior accountant of Irrigation department, Rickshaw puller; in “Tewlukor Xamasya” Police officer, Supply Inspector, Lawyer, Magistrate, D.S.P., Peon of Civil Hospital, Higher official, Ranger, Junior Engineer of Irrigation Department etc.

Modernization character City is mainly preferred in Apurba Sarma's story. For the purpose of boosting the economy prime focus is given to the industrialization which helps in developing cities. Together with media, medical, communication, development in communication, expanded shops and market, profession or business change can occurred in the minor fields like food culture, wearing, fashion and trends. These types of subjects are reflected in Apurba Sarma's stories.

1.0.2 Urban life, changing mentality of people and their taste:

We need to observe the lifestyle of people living in a city in order to obtain an idea about environment, mental state of urban people, their planning, institutions, different processes of society, culture, levels, dynamism and controls. People prepare themselves according to the changes occurring in the outer physical structure of a city. With the development of cities people immigrate from villages to the cities and pressure situation occurs in sectors like population, business excluding farming, industrialization, government employment and that result in creating some primary and minor signs like increasing future insecurities, doubts, confusions. Rural environment vanishes gradually and joint family structures turn into single family. One of the main characteristics of urban life single family structure is observed in most of Apurba Sarma's stories. With the vision acquired from an organized life structure these people are concerned about education, culture, politics, economics and periphery of the country; emptiness in their minds makes them to face inner conflict despite of being associated in progressive organization or institutions. In the story “Monika Aru Bikram” included in the book “Nagorik” the character of Monika is shown as a highly educated, well cultured happy lady who is associated with some social-reformer organization but in the last part she is shown as an unstable lady dealing with loneliness and depression.

(“Things she used to consider as a routine or rule of the society to live in before is now something very important and sure for her. Different duties of the club she used to do forcibly are now she believes as her responsibilities and performs with excitement. But often she feels lonely despite of family responsibilities with Prashant and the abstinent moments she spent with Moumi-Buwali. She feels an uncertain distance. Inexpressible isolation.” (Page no.158, Nagorik))

After coming from village and being self employed, surrounded by family, practicing daily work out, a lady who enjoyed clubs and parties still facing urban life problem of loneliness and disconnection. In the calculation of gain and loss, crisis happiness of life can never be seen among the ladies from the rural areas. It can be understood from the storyline of “Monika and Betal” that after knowing about the distances in the relationship with urban lady Monika and her husband from Betal, Bikramaditya got tensed for her lady

comparing herself with Monika. In this manner every plot, moments and mental reaction get change quickly.

In a story of Apurba Sarma “Ondhokaror Alap” it can be seen that the main character faces isolation and disconnection after passing his days in an urban society full of technology. He also mentioned about involvement, excitement and responsibilities of new generation upon whose future of the nation depend, he also discussed about the processes upcoming students, youth have taken as flag bearer of development. Steps taken by the college students to save small amount of bus fare can build a corrupt mentality for future. Professor named Habibar in an intelligent speech delivered to new generation students projecting them as probable stars and key of development to inspire them and make them enthusiastic. But is in complete doubt that they will not involve in corruption in future. It can be seen that to fulfill some distorted goals youth involve themselves in some unpleasant competition. But failure pushes them towards depression, hopelessness and loneliness. After running in those competitions some character like Biman constantly tries to explore life goals. Middle class people’s materialistic depression can create an environment of personal disappointment and that is shown in the character Biman of “Ondhokaror Alap” and Police officer of “Ninad”. He memorizes good experience of life happily but living in a highly systematic, collided area in the tow he feels disconnected. Despite of being a busy officer he often takes the help of wine to run away from loneliness. He starts to live in a fantasy world to cope up with the surrounded world. Again slowly it is becoming normal for common people to be self centric. An organized life structure is gradually vanishing in rural areas like cities. People are busy in fulfilling their daily need, like mentioned in the story “Xoisor Botor” after demises of husband Padmeswar and dumb son no stood by Muhila’s family, which means characteristics of urban life penetrate to the rural areas. Muhila worked hard for living. People pulled back their helping hand from Muhila and her two unfortunate daughters. According to the author all the situation and environment was normal outside Muhila’s house. Life of an insignificant dumb could not affect the people and it was baseless for them. People can become wider or freedom-seeker after seeing this type rude and technical life structure like cities. In reference to the above story it can be said that a helpless widow sacrificed herself to village’s clerk easily and tolerated everything but her neighbor Ilachi supported her deed without complaining.

(“What else you can do? How much you will tolerate?....But be careful. If you got defame.....you are already facing problems.” (Page no.34, Baghey Tapur Rati))

But Muhila was much more stable than Ilachi’s perception; she was free from conservative thinking, fear, insecurity and humiliations. Thus she opposed Ilachi-

(“People will not insult me sister? But I am bored of fame. I have enjoyed that a lot. Now let take insults.” (Page no.34, Baghey Tapur Rati))

In this conversation of two ladies modern rebellion thinking is reflected. Baloram from the story “Haladhar” and Jyotish from “Tato Yudhyaa Ydhysya”, Biman from “Ondhokaror Alap”, Dijen or Manee of “Bahiroloi Juwa Bat” can be treated as the example for people living in village with modern minds; their mentalities are undoubtedly related to some moral characteristics of a logical, complicated, self-centered and luxurious society. In the story “Sandhiramor Rajneeti” some characters full of fears, insecurities, and uncertainties are shown. Media person and teacher is an opportunist and concern only about his promotion and personal gain and he is ready to ignore his old friend Sandhiram thinking that he comes for some favors. In this manner Apurba Sarma observed during his writing how doubts created an emotionless urban relationship. In the story “Gopal Eta Val Lora” author doubted that Parama Kalita cordially addressed the Rickshaw puller for his hidden profit.

Rather than creating traditional story Apurba Sarma described the taste and trends of a city with logical and minute description. The higher official of Police in “Ninand”, expressed his life events upon some inside and outside incidents of office through anger, boredom, depression, intolerance and all these expressed his mental state. Habituated to loneliness the character often lighted up a cigarette, walked like a drunken man he shouted for his servant and took a bear from the fridge. According to their choice they started studying Bengali magazine, The Indian Police Journal, FBIL Enforcement Bulletin, More Penguin Science Fiction, Science Peter etc. In free time he wrote the article “Three Dimensional Attack” and published in souvenir of Eleventh All India Police Meet in Hyderabad. People in the cities get excited for economics, politics, literature, science, defense, creativity of various part of the world before the rural people. And they take an active part in expressing their opinion through media.

1.0.3 Negative aspects of urban life:

It is observed that some negative morals of urban life are corruption, unemployment, shortcut for earning money etc; results of changes that happened for uplifting the nation and tribes are experienced by the rich, autocrats and powerful people of the society. Opportunist took corruption as tool for their convenience. After the movement common people started living a normal life as before. Becoming a minister or MLA, getting a job or contract and acquiring farm-land, car-house-property becomes an invisible trend or competition in urban area. Along with this Apurba Sarma also mentioned about different corrupted fields. It is seen that in the story “Bipulor Juddha-Xajja” brother-in-law of a forest ranger killed a deer and carried to home in his jeep and then organized a feast with neighbors’ which was illegal but did not hesitate. It is noticeable that the ranger spoke in support his brother-in-law-

(“Leave it, working in forest department can’t you eat deer meat for once? Many times it is supplied to Ministers’ house.” (Page no. 16, Bipulor Juddha-Xajja Aru Kisuman Kahinir Kahini))

Corruptions that are common in cities are gradually expanding to the villages. In the story “Haladhar” Maghi Mahajan(Banker) found some ways to fulfill his narrow intensions and by deceiving a poor honest man like Someswar, he stole desired plough from Baloram’s house. On the other hand Someswar received a small amount of money from Mahajan for using his bullock cart and still he had to support him in stealing the plough harming to Baloram for some unknown reason. Different incidents of dishonesty happened in “Sandhiramor Rajneeti”. With help of politician a biased journalist arranged a job for him in a school in the city and then he acquired government land and house, which was not enough for him and at last he tried for the post of School Inspector. Conversely one of his neighbors lifted the pen of journalism to unhide the corrupt incidents. Again, he assured Sandhiram thinking him useful for forth coming election. Hypocrite and opportunist journalist was shown as a group of corrupted urban people.

Again in the story “Osamajik”it was shown that Inspector Tarun Hajarika who came from an unknown village had dreamt of earning money from Police Case, dead body and truck release. Like Tarun Hajarika from “Osamajik”, Junior Accountant of Irrigation department Parama Kalita and his colleague looked other ways to earn apart from their salaries and other benefits. Many of them tried to take the advantage from one LOC in the office-

(“ In opposite to an allotment of 10-15 lakhs there is an unbelievable amount of rupees 2-3 lakhs sanctioned. Contractors are given 20-30 thousands in return to their massive amount. A bill of larger amount is passed to specific contractors closely related to the minister and with their grace Parama kalita and his colleague can fill up their wallet and light up their face for few days.” (Page no.32, Nagorik))

They loved to call this profit of dishonesty as low expenses and high income. In similar way in the story “Tewlukor Xamasya” Nabin kalita got suspension for scandal in monetary transaction in the office. But that did not change their mentality. He helped his son in starting a PCO business, he earned self satisfaction thinking that he was able to help his son with the money from his never ending volt just because he neglected the criticism and knew to walk along with time to have an extra way of income.

Apart from the above topics Apurba Sarma in his stories mentioned one of the prime issues unemployment of urban area. An alternative of farming youth (mostly lower middle class) of the urban area work under cinema hall, rail station, stadium, market etc. as their income source. In the story “Tato Yudhyaa Ydhysya” Apurba Sarma mentioned about Kishor black market, dairy business, wood-picker even prostitution.

Again, the English mixed language urban people predominantly use can also be treated as a characteristic of urban life. In the story “Bipular Juddha Xajja” Swahir is a journalist. In his gesture some characteristics related to urban life can be observed.

(“ In India, understand, there will be two groups at last, in one side people’s friends and in the other side all the communist. That’s the final polarization, mark my words.”(Page no.18, Bipular Juddha-Xajja Aru Kisuman Kahinir Kahini))

This journalist is honest, he concerned about nation’s future and a representative of people habituate with urban life.

2.00 Conclusion:

People entered to a disciplined workplace due to the comfortable or luxurious urban life, expansion of single family structure, food habits according to their taste, attire, industrialization and ambitions. People in urban areas are quiet excited in accepting new features then the people in rural areas. A person with a traditional conservation free modern mind reflects qualities of an urban life and Apurba Sarma presented that urban life through some special characters. Since literature is considered as a mirror to the society, thus it is important to study new changes, moral values of urban life, behavior, merits and demerits upon which positive and negative aspects of urban life is reflected. Probably due to the fact that he is a cinema critic, Apurba Sarma expressed urban life in his stories cinematically.

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