

## Assamese Children Literature: An Introductory Study

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### INTRODUCTION :

Among the different branches of literature, children literature is a remarkable one. Literature written in this category for the purpose of the children's well being, helps them to raise their mental health, intellectual, emotional, social and moral feelings. Not just only the children's but a real children's literature touches everyone's heart and gives immense happiness. Composing child's literature is a complicated task. This class of literature exist in different languages all over the world. In our Assamese language too multiple numbers of children literature are composed. While aiming towards the infant mind and mixing the mental intelligence of those kids with their wisdom instinct, imagination and feelings, literature in this category will also find a place on the mind of the infants.

### EVOLUTION OF ASSAMESE CHILDREN LITERATURE :

Keeping an eye on the evolutionary trend of children literature various scholars have classified the Assamese Children Literature. Dr. Neelima Goswami Sharma have shown in her research book titled : "Assamese and Bangla Children Literature : A Comparative Study (1846 to 1947)", that Children Literature can be divided into three parts :

- A) Oral literature
- B) Devotional literature
- C) Modern literature

Another distinguished researcher Dr. Ajanta Ojha had shown in her research book titled : "Assamese Children Literature of Post Independence Period (1948 to 2000)", that Assamese Children literature can be broadly divided into two major parts. And that is :

- (a) the ancient Assam's children literature, (b) the Children literature of the post independence period.

Out of these, she has again shown the children literature of ancient Assam by dividing it into different parts, such as :

- (A) Ancient Assam's Children Literature :
  - (a) Folk literature level children literature
  - (b) Vaishnav Era's children literature
  - (c) Shankar literature of the later period
  - (d) Pre-Independence period children literature

Based on the views of both the above mentioned researchers Assamese children literature can be broadly divided into three major levels :

- (A) Assamese Children Literature of the Oral Era.
- (B) Assamese Children Literature of the Vaishnav Era.
- (C) Assamese Children Literature of the Modern Era.

Assamese children literature of the modern era can be further sub-divided into two parts to facilitate the discussion of Children Literature :

- a) Pre-Independence period Assamese Children Literature
- b) Post Independence period Assamese Children Literature.

- (A) Assamese Children Literature of the Oral Era :

The starting source of literature is the folk literature, that means it underlies within oral

literature. Being a branch of literature, Assamese children literature's beginning was also from oral literature. Early forms of children literature are hidden in various types of folk songs, folk music, lullabies, stories, folk lores, talks etc. of the people of that era. Assamese children literature especially the children's lullabies, rhymes, playing songs (known as "umolageet" in Assamese), etc. depicts the different state of a child. According to Dr. Maheshwar Neog, these children lullabies (known as Dhainaam) and nursery rhymes (known as Umolageet) infuse the divinity, novelty and elegance of childhood.

As for example - "Junbai a ati tora dia  
Ati tora nalage duti tora dia Pat nai sot nai kihotkoi  
dim  
Halodhiya sorai a bao dhan khai Hawodr putek a  
nau meli jai." [Sister moon, give me a star Not one  
star but two star  
No leaf nothing how will I give Yellow bird eats  
bao paddy  
Ferryman's son goes by sailing the boat].

The underlying rhyme and rhythm in these types of songs affect the imagination, fantasies and feelings of the children's in a serious manner.

#### (B) Assamese Children Literature of the Vaishnav Era :

The written tradition of Assamese children literature began with Vaishnav era itself. The thrilling stories of childhood of Krishna and the childlike attitude described in the "Shishu Leela" chapter under the "Kirtan Ghosa" (Uresa-varnana) composed by the great Srimanta Sankardev attracts everyone. In the compositions of Srimanta Shankardev's beloved disciple Madhavdev too, the picture of the fun-filled colourful life of child Krishna has been depicted. Parallel to Shankar Dev and Madhav Dev, two other poets, Ram Saraswati and Sridhar Kandoli have also created children useful compositions. "Bhima Charit" of Ram Saraswati and "Kankhua" (Eareater) of Sridhar Kandoli, both these texts contain some mischievous and funny descriptions of the childhood of Bhima and Shri Krishna. Sridhar Kandoli's "Kankhua" is started somewhat in this way -

" Ghumati Maurae Arae Kanai Hurae Kankhua  
Aahae  
Hokolu Hihur Kan Khai Khai Aahoi Tumr Pasae ".

[ Sleep o my dear Kanai Sleep, Ear eater is coming  
Eating ever child's ear Now comes back of you .]

Lullabies presented in this manner shows the picture of initial statement of fear and doubt in between mother and son duo.

#### (C) Assamese Children Literature of the Modern Era :

In the modern era itself, Assamese children literature has been able to illuminate itself in a dominant form. A vast amount of literature has been created in this era. For the convenience of discussion, the literature of this era has been divided into two main parts -

(a) Pre-Independence period Children Literature ( From Orunodoi Publication to Independence time period ) :

In the establishment of the reputation of the modern Assamese language literature, the contribution of the Assamese Magazine, Orunodoi's dialogues and writings is

praiseworthy. In the same way, in the field of creation of modern Assamese children literature, the contribution of Orunodoi magazine is equally important because this magazine has given a lot of importance to the creation of useful stories for the infants. Anando Ram Dhekial Phukan's, "Axomiya Lorar Mitra" (Assamese Child's Friend, 1849) is mainly a child useful moral policy education scripture. This book was published in Orunodoi for months and months. It has been seen that this book provides much importance over the character formations of children. This book has contributed significantly to the development of modern Assamese prose.

Apart from Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan, the Christian people of Orunodoi era have also composed some of the children useful modern textbooks, Bible scriptures, calculation texts etc. and have contributed in the increment of the prosperity of the Assamese children literature making it a rich literature. Apart from Christian writers, some Assamese writers like Lambodhar Bora, Baldev Mahanta, Vishnu Priya Devi, etc. had written some useful books for children. These texts have helped in producing research of modern Assamese children literature.

Just as the modern Assamese language, literature of the Junaki era had also developed in the same way as the Assamese children literature was developed in that era itself. At the same time, various children useful story books or narrations, biographies, translational books, poems, magazines, etc. was composed. It is described below -

(a) Description of stories :

'Sahityarathi Rasraj Lakshminath Bezbarua' expanded the circumference of Assamese children literature. Only after achieving the status of children literature, he created folk tales like "Kokadeuta Aaru Nati Lora" ("Grandfather and Grandson"), "Burhi Aair Xadhu" (Old grandmother's stories), "Junuka", etc. To know pure Assamese, the stories of Bezbarua are necessary not only for childrens but also for the elderly peoples. Apart from Bezbarua, there are some notable stories written in this period, like the "Xadhukotha" (Story) of Vishnupriya Devi, "Xadhukothar Julunga" (Story Bag, 1909) of Bharati, "Axomiya Xadhukotha" (Assamese story, 1929) of Sharad

Chandra Goswami, etc. Apart from this, on the basis of stories like Mahabharata, Ramayana, Puran, etc. some useful narrations have also been composed. Some narratives of that type are - Borpujari's "Mahabharatar Rohghoda" and "Mahabharatar Mou Bisoni", Mitraddev Mahanta's "Mou Mahabharata" (1925), Harendra Nath Sharma's "Sabitri", "Naladmayanti" (1925), etc.

(b) Translation of the books :

The Translational books have played an important role in the development of Assamese children literature. Translation of lots of important and useful children literatures from abroad is done in Assamese language too. Among them all, the most notable translated books are - Benudhar Sharma's "Robinson Crusoe", Gunabhiram Barua's "Dadair Poja", etc.

(c) Biographical literature :

The children useful biographical books composed by different child litterateur has also enriched the wealth of Assamese children literature. Some biographical books of Junaki era are - Mahadev Sharma's "Buddha" and "Mohammed", Sarveshwar Kotoki's "Hemchandra Borua" and "Satyanath", Surya Kumar Bhuyan's "Gopal Krishna Gokhale" and "Anundoram Borooah", Harendra Nath Sharma's "Juwan Dak Aabitri" and "Nal Damayanti", Kamleshwar Caliha's "Vishwa Rokhik Lakshminath Bezbaruah", Binanda Chandra Barua's "Lorar Bezbaruah", etc.

(d) Poem texts :

Poems have surrounded most of the Assamese children literature. Starting from Orunodoi to Junaki era, Awahan and others too have also published innumerable useful children poems in various magazines. Phanindra Nath Gogoi has composed various poems using beautiful and sweet words. Durga Prasad Majinder Barua's "Uzu Kabita" ("Easy poem"), "Phool aru Lora" ("Flower and Children") poems were published during this time itself. Apart from this, Ananda Chandra Agarwala, Jyoti Prasad and others had

composed various child novels at the same time.

(e) Child Magazine :

During the pre - independence period, a few useful magazines were published. The magazine "Lora Bandhu" (1888, Child friend) edited by Karunaviram Boruah's is the very first Assamese child magazine. The magazine had to be closed as soon as two or three articles came out. Nevertheless, the "Lora Bandhu" made a distinct contribution in the field of Assamese children literature. Apart from the "Lora Bandhu", there are some other child magazines composed at this time - Hemchandra Goswami's "Okon" (1916), Raghunath Choudhary's "Moina" (1923), Mahadev Sharma's "Arun" (1926), Dinanath Sharma's "Parijat" (1945), etc.

In addition to this literature, during this period a few child useful fiction books, plays, science books, etc. were also composed. Among the fiction books Hariprasad Baruah's "Moina" (1926), Benudhar Sharma's "Moromr Kareng"(1925), etc. are remarkable. In the field of drama Padmadhar Chaliha's funny drama "Kene Mojja" (How Funny, 1928), Kamakhya Nath Thakur's "Banpani" (Flood), etc. are prominent. It was during this period that the first children's science book was written in Assamese language. The book written by Mohini Kumar Verma was titled "Vigyanr Xadhu" (Science Story).

(f) Post-independence periods Assamese children literature :

Since the time of post-independence period, this category of litterateur has given special importance. Many of the earlier children literature was not written with purpose to the children's, yet the children's have accepted them all as having a similar experience. In the language of Pandit Dr. Maheshwar Neog, "Active care of telling different stories or fiction for infants is a special symptom of the war period." (Assamese literatures layout, page - 337).

Particularly during the pre-independence period, the children litterateur group was confined among poems, storytelling, translational stories, biographical literature, some child magazines but Assamese child literature in the post independence era had elaborately illuminated through poetry, stories, translation literature, biography, Xadhukotha, folk lores, fiction, novels, drama, science literature, thriller story, travel

story, children magazines, etc. Below the subject of child literature, composed during the post-independence period, is mentioned briefly :

(A) Poetic literature :

In the "Junaki" era, many composers or writers of children poems composed poetry for children's during the war period, i.e. the post independence era. Some of the such poets are - Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Atul Chandra Hazarika, Mitra Dev Mahanta, etc. Jyoti Prasad Agarwala awakens the child's creative mind with "Kampuror Hopun" (Kampur's dream), "Okonir Hopun" (Little one's dream), "Okonmani Suwali" (Little girl), etc. Atul Chandra Hazarika in his poems, "Maniki Modhuri" (1949), "Runuk Junuk" (1953), "Rongmohol" (1949) "Faehujali" (1974), etc. has included the child's favourite subjects. Other writers such as Bikhoy Chandra Vishwasi, Ananta Deb Sharma, Jagyeshwar Sharma, etc., wrote poetry to the mind of the children's and won their hearts.

Not only through the numbers but also from the direction of quality the Assamese children literature promoters Nabakanta Barua, Dr. Nirmal Prabha Bordoloi, Gagan Chandra Adhikari have been able to occupy their prestigious place in Assamese children literature. Nabakanta Barua's "Mur Kitap" (My Book), "Umola Gharor Puthi" (Playhouse Book), Dr. Nirmal Prabha Bordoloi's "Axomiya Umola Geet" (Assamese Playsong), "Xuwodi Maat" (Sweet Voice), Gagan Chandra Adhikari's "Tokat Ekota Hatee" (An elephant in a rupee), "Rodali Ae Rod Aekon De" (O Sunshine give little shine), "Aakharar Geet" (Words Song), etc. poetry books have been composed. Apart from this, many child litterateur like Eli Ahmed, Anish Uj Jaman etc. are promoting children useful poetry books.

(B) Story Narration Books :

In the post independence era many books of stories have been composed. Some of the stories worth mentioning in between them are - Benudhar Sharma's "Latumoni",



Prasannalal Choudhary's "Amar Dekhor Xadhu" (Our Countries Story); "Mousak", Dr. LilaGogoi's "Punakonor Hopun" (Infants dream), "Rongmonor Kotha" (Rongmon's Talks), Anupam Konwar's "Xadhu" (Story), Dimbeswar Caliha's "Xiyal Pandit" (Fox Saint), Joykanta Gandhiar's "Allauddinor Asorit Saki" (Allauddin's Mistery Lamp), Jugal Lochan Das's "Oghaitong Ghitilair Oghoton", Eli Ahmed's "Torakul", etc. Apart from this, the story of foreign countries and the stories of world famous literature has brought prosperity to Assamese children literature. Gauri Kanta Handique's "Russ Dekhor Xadhu" (story of Russia country), Profulla Boruah's "Greece Dekhor Xadhu" (story of Greece country), Jamiruddin's "Chin Dekhor Xadhu" (story of China country), Nirupama Phukan's "Nepalor Xadhu" (story of Nepal), Dr. Joyshree Goswami Mahanta's "Biswar Srestho Xadhu" (World's best story), Pronita Devi's "Man Dekhor Xadhu" (story of Man country), etc. stories books are trying to give a taste of foreign literature.

Apart from stories of abroad, books of tribal stories have also made Assamese children literature rich. During this time many story books are being promoted.

#### (C) Science literature :

Few numbers of useful science books for children's have been written in Assamese children literature. It was only in the "Junaki" era that the first children useful science not righteous texts started. Even after the introduction of the children useful science righteous texts, the infant useful science righteous text was not developed in this era. Apart from one or two science texts, a wide number of such types of texts are not seen in this era. It was only during the post independence era that science righteous children literature was able to benefit development. The science righteous books written at this time are - Bijoy Krishna Sharma's "Tulokhir Tolae Mrego Pohu Sorae" (The deer grazes down the Tulsi plant), "Bitu - Bigu aru Poribeh" (Bitu -Bigu and Environment), Jogeshwar Hatibaruah's "Xokti Xonkot aru Xouraxokti" (Power Crisis and Solar Power), Shantanu Tamuli's prodigal science fiction child novel "Mohakakhor Taroka" (Stars of the universe) and "Electronic Naamor Loratu" (The boy named Electronic), Dr. Dinesh Chandra

Goswami's "Tritonor Abhiyan" (Triton's Mission), novelist Debendra Nath Acharya's "Hatipoti Sikimiki", "Ramdhenu kar Dhenu ?" (Rainbow is whose bow?), Bandita Phukan's "Kunae Kenekoi Kam Korae?" (Who works how?), etc. are different types of scientific books. Apart from this, a large number of literature are engaged in contributing to the literature of this category.

#### (D) Novel literature :

The role of children novelist groups in strengthening the field of Assamese children literature is remarkable. Some very useful novels were written during the post independence era. Among them "Xiyali Palegoi Ratanpur" (Fox reached Ratanpur), Jugen Sharma's "Huruj Utha Dekhor Pinae" (Towards the land of rising Sun), "Ati Jun Jak Jak Tora" (One moon and lots of stars), Atul Chandra Hazarika's "Jalkonwari" (Mermaid), etc. novels were able to gain a lot of praise and interest among the children's. Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia's "Moromor Deuta" novel had conquered every children's mind. Apart from this, there are other notable novels - Syed Abdul Malik's "Akhon Xunuwali Duwar" (One golden door, 1979), Shashi Sharma's "Mur Dekh Manuhor Dekh" (My country people's country, 1974), Laxminath Phukan's "Bapukon" (1987), Homen Borgohain's "Saudor Puteke Nau Meli Jay" (Ferryman's son goes by sailing the boat, 1987), Dharmeswar Kotoki's "Xopun Konwar" (Dream Prince), Sojanya Mayi Bhattacharjya's "Bondhu" (Friend), Geeta Upadhyay's "Ma Moi First Holu" (Mother I stood first), Bandita Phukan's "Akhon Circus Ahisil" (One circus came), "Xuntir Keidinman" (Dear ones few days), Arupa Patangia Kalita's "Kaitot Keteki" (Brainfever bird in the thorn) etc. are main.

#### (E) Theatrical literature :

Some numbers of children play has been composed in Assamese literature. The majority of these plays are musical plays. Moti Prasad Agarwala of Parvati Prasad Bairwa, a 38-year-old football fan of Muktinath Bordoloi's "Bhakta Prahlad", Kirtinath Hazarika's "Futukar Fen", Parvati Prasad Barua's "Xunor Xeleng", Jyoti Prasad Agarwala's "Neemati Koina" (Speechless queen), etc. drama's are providing joy in the

children's mind. Nabakanta Barua had composed "Moi Tuni a Tun Tunalu", "Gulap aru Beli Phool" (Rose and Sunflower), "Monot Porar Hok", etc. songs and drama's for children's. Apart from this Nirmal Prabha Bordoloi, Anil Saikia, Tukhprabha Kalita, etc. too had composed many more drama's.

(F) Translation literature :

Since the post independence period, numbers of useful translated books have started increasing. Thaneswar Hazarika's "Din - Dukhi" (Miserable), Rohini Kanta Barua's "Pomilir Poriyal" (Pomilir's family), Dr. Mahendra Bora's "Gulliveror Vraman" (Gulliver's Travels), "Dawn Quicktour", etc. are remarkable translated books. "Tom Saya" of Abdul Nashik, who is famous as child literature, Arup Kumar Dutta's "Kajhirvar Abhijan" (Kajhirvar's Mission), "Rahasyajanak Khujor Hondhanot" (In search of the secret footsteps) texts have gained large popularity. Dinesh Chandra Goswami, Nirupama Borgohain, Jayanta Madhav Borah, Haripriya Barukiyal Borgohain, etc. has translated many child useful texts from India and abroad into Assamese and made Assamese children translation literature famous.

(G) Biographical literature :

Like the pre-independence period, in this time too, numerous biographical literature or texts have been composed based on the life of knowledgeable saints. Among them - Binanda Chandra Barua's "Maharaj Naranarayan", Harendra Sharma's "Shivaji" (1950), "Ashok" (1958), "Samay Balir Khujbur" (Time dust footsteps), Pawan Nath Sharma's "Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan" (1963), Dr. Leela Gogoi's "Lorar Lachit", etc. Many biographies have also been written about Shankardev Madhavdev, like Dr. Jugendra Narayan Bhuyan's "Kikhuror Sankardev" (Teenager Sankardev), Dr. Sanjeeb Borkakati's "Okonir Sankardev" (Little one's Sankardev), Sashi Sharma's "Amar Madhavdev" (Our Madhavdev), Dr. Lakshmi Nandan Bora's "Mohapurukh Madhavdev" etc. are remarkable. In this way, many other writers have been writing useful children's literature from various people's life stories.

(H) Adventurous Stories :

During the war period or the post independence period, many children useful thriller stories were composed as because exciting or adventurous

stories attracts the children's quickly. Stories like this provide mental satisfaction to the children's. Such exciting stories composed in Assamese language can be divided as original and translational. There are some exciting texts in Assamese language which are worth mentioning - like "Rongmonor Pawan Konwar", "Harunar Rasidor", "Banbir Tarzan", Din Tamuli's "Udayachal Series", etc.

A large number of books of this type have also been translated from English language to Assamese language - like Mark Twain's famous adventurous novel "Huckleberry Finn" have been translated to Assamese language by Bandita Phukan, also Jules Verne's "Around the World in Eighty Days" have been translated to Assamese by Mahendra Boro and Rama Thakur in eighty days with the title "Axi Dinot Prithibi Vraman". "Frankenstein" Paraphrased by Dinesh Baishya is an excellent thriller story.

(I) Child Magazine :

In the post independence era, numbers children useful magazines were published. "Xofura" edited by Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia and "Mouchak" edited by Shantanu Tamuli are two classic magazines of Assamese children literature. Apart from these two magazines, there are also some numerical magazines available, written during this period - like "Kachijun" (Half-moon), "Deepak" (Lamp), "Junbai" (" (" (Moon), Preeti Barua edited "Akash" (Sky), Binanda Barua edited "Rodali", Arun Bhagwati "Rongmela", Gagan Chandra Adhikari's "Junak", Sushil Goswami's "Mukuta", Pranab Kumar Barman's "Rongmon", Ranju Hazarika's "Pokhi", Jayanta Biswa Sarma edited "Baro - Uthoro" (12 - 18), etc. magazines have achieved success in providing intellectual knowledge, pure Assamese language education, etc.

Apart from all this during this period some useful travel stories have also been composed. There are some travel stories like this, composed especially for the children's - Mahendra Nath Borah's "Bidekhor Botor", Dr. Tultul Bora's "Heuwenchangar

Dekhot", Jugprobha Borah's "Dak Pokhilir Rohghora", Rothindra Nath Goswami's "Bidekhi Bondhur Dekhot", etc.

#### Conclusion :

In this way, Assamese children literature has evolved gradually from the oral level to the present stage. At present, literature in this category has given a hand in all fields. Basically, even though the literature is composed according to the usefulness of children's, but all the creations are not able to affect the soft mind of the infants because composing children literature is a difficult task. Literature will have to create literature of this category only by acquiring the language of the infant mind, only then it will be fruitful or else it will be useless in attracting the mind of the children's. In many of the child resources of Assamese children literature various defects are also found. Literary people can awaken this attraction in the infant mind only by giving importance in this direction.

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