

THE PERIODIZATION OF BORO LITERATURE: RECONSTRUCTING AND REVIEWING

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ABSTRACT

Though Sidney Endle's An Outline Grammar of Kochari pr AIch language and The Kocharies are the premier works of the Boro language yet the creative literature in Boro language came out much latter as a result of the great effort made by the Bora Chatra Sanmilan to uplift the Boro language. The period witnessed so many new developments in the Boro Society, which inspired the refined Boro youths of new generation to undertake some constructive work. It was the time of sanskritization in the traditional Boro society, which brought them within the fold of mainstream with a rising social position and status and with a new outlook. It was also a time when the Boro dialect took the shape of standard language in the hands of the energetic youths of new generation.

Keyword: *Kocharies, Boro language, sanskritization, Boro Chatra Sanmilan.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the great efforts made by the student organization was to adhere to their project of writing creative literatures in Boro language with this aim in view, a periodical magazine (three monthly), *Bihar* was brought with its first issue in 1924 the *Boro Chatra Sanmilan* and Satish Ch. Basmnatary was the Chief editor of the periodical, *Bihar*. In the editorial column of the first issue it was written that the Sanmilan organized a common platform for the exposure of hidden faculties and for representing their talents on the stage, like songs, poems, plays, essays and lectures. And it, surprisingly, inspired the young to write poems, stories, essays, and dramas, etc. in their mother tongue. As a result of this movement some masterpieces of poems, stories and plays were added to the Boro literature.

The development of Boro language and literature has been divided into four distinct periods.

1. The missionary period began from 1884 the publication of Endle's book *An Outline Grammar of Kochari or Mech Language*, up to 1919 the formation of *Boro Chatra Sanmilan*.
2. The *Bihar Muga* or *Bihar* period commenced in 1920, right from the preparation for the publication of the periodical, *Bihar* in 1924 and continued up to the publication of another periodical, known as *Alonghar*.
3. The *Alongher Muga* or *Alonghar* period starts in 1938 with the publication of the periodical *Along bar* and lasted up to 1951.
4. The period, after the formation of the *Boro Sahitya Sabha*, 1952 and onwards is regarded as the modern period of the Boro literature.

Though there is a slight difference among the litterateurs in fixing the dates of these periods, basically they have no contradiction regarding the periodization of the history of Boro literature. Brajendra Kr. Brahma puts very distinct dates for these periods which are as follows- from 1884 to 1918 as missionary period, from 1919 to 1937 as *Bibar* Period, from 1938 to 1951 as *Alongbar* period, and from 1952 onwards is considered to be the moderns age of the Boro literature.(Brahma: 1991:23)

On the growth and development of Boro literature M. R Lahary remarks, “Unlike the world's great literatures that sprang up into existence out of ancient scripture, epics, sagas, sayings, Boro literature grew up out of its sheer force of necessity and spontaneity unaided by any previous ancient lore on literary citadel”(Lahary:1984:32) The early Boro writers were urged by the sociopolitical, cultural, and historical necessity and inspired by the thoughts and ideas of Kalicharan Brahma and they put their creative talents in to writings.

THE BIBAR PERIOD WITH SANSKRITIC IDEAS:

In the *Bihar* age, Boro literature originated through journals, periodicals, souvenirs, seminars, which came out from time to time in simple and clear Boro language, with a spirit of love for their society and emotions. Most of the early writers who contributed piously to the Boro literature were students who were acquainted with western thought, rise of nationalism and consciousness of new horizon. This group of writers was guided by the philosophy of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma whose socio-religious movement aimed at cleansing all injustice and discrimination inflicted on them. So, they envisioned to have a spiritual and enlightened Boro society by wakening the Boro people through their writings, many of their writings had been influence by the Vedic philosophy.

The writers of that period dealt with a few branches of literature poems, songs, essays, stories, drama, etc. The critical literature did not take independent form in that period and the biography was yet to appear in the Boro literature. (Lahary: 1991:31) But, the Boro writers were familiar with these branches of literature in other languages.

Rupnath Brahma and Madaram Brahma ushered in the new era for Boro literature with the publication of a book of Boro poems and songs, in 1923, entitled *Khanthai Methai*. *TheKhanthai Methai* was, jointly, edited by Rupnath Brahma and the Book consisted of six songs and eight poems. The contributors of those poems and songs were Rupnath Brahma, Madaram Brahma, Satish Chandra Basumatary and Surendra Nath Brahma. The work was dedicated to Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma who was very much pleased with their effort and work.

The main theme of these songs and poems were metaphysical philosophy inspiration of learning and zeal for reviving the society in a new situation and they were mostly religious in character. All the writers were educated and they borrowed the style technique and metres from Assamese and Bengali literatures and applied them to their own theme and ideas.

CONTRIBUTORS OF BORO LITERATURE IN BIBAR AGE:

Rupnath Brahma was born in 1992 at Auabari village of Kokrajhar. He passed the matriculation examination in 1920 from Dhubri and took his graduation from Cotton College in 1925. He also passed Law from Calcutta in 1927. As a student he was active worker of the *Boro Chatra Sanmilan* and helped Gurudev in every activity. He was the first among the Boros to use mysticism in Boro poems. His mystic poems are *Iswarni Nam Godoi* (Sweet name of God), *Monhasouyoi* (Beyond reach), *Phishani Dahayao Gabnai* (Crying in the sorrow of Child). All these poems were written in classical style and the main concern was religious thought and mysticism.

Padmashri Madaram Brahma was born in Gunikhata village of Dhubri District of Dhubri district in J 903. In J 923 he passed matriculation examination and went to Cotton College. He became the head master of Harisingha High School in 1932 and was appointed as the officer in the Block Development Board In 1985 he received literary pension from the government of Assam and in 1988 he was awarded Padmashri by the Government of India for his contribution towards society and Boro literature. He died on 6th September 1990.

Boroni Gudi Sibsa Aro Aroj, a collection of his poems is the greatest creation of Madaram Brahma. The poems are mystic in Character. His important poetical works are- *Sor Nong*, *Ayo Ribar*, *Jakhang De Borofor*, *Bongfangao Gakhono Dalai Nangou*, which were published in the *Khantai Methai*. Moderam Brahmas poems are

rh)'thmic and philosophical. (Lahary: 1991:31) Madaram Brahma was also a dramatist and his outstanding works are *Raimali* and *Dimapur Nogor Baikhonda*.

Satish Chandra Basumatary was born in 1901 at Balukmari Village of Kokrajhar district. He passed his matriculation from Dhubri High School in 1919 and joined in Cotton College. But he left the college soon and took part in the freedom movement of Gandhiji against the British power. He became the first editor of *Bibar* magazine. Though basically he was a dramatist he also wrote poems- *Bima Fisa*, *Habab Fongai Godai*, *Ja Habab*, etc. His other works like short stories and essays were written in his penname *Rangdashi Phagli*. As his writings desired to reach the common Boro people he adopted a simple mode of expression yet his idea was strong. Responding to the call of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, he led the *Boro Chatra Sanmilan* as a General Secretary of the organization and in the first session of the *Sanmilan* a drama written by him entitled *Nala Buha* was performed on the stage. His other dramatic works are *Rani Laimuthi*, *Naiphijayoi*, *Bikhani Or* and *Dorson Joholao*, etc. And through his creative works he envisaged for the reclamation of Boro society by dramatic entertainment. Though these dramas were presented on the stage, yet they remained unpublished. (Brahma: 1993:46,48)

Darendra Basumatary was born in 1902 Godamari Bhaoraguri village and served as a teacher of Primary school in the village. He got three month training about theatrical performance and direction, and on the model of Bengali *Jatra*, which contains five gems of literature, he wrote drama in Boro like *Sukharu Dukharu*, *Nilambar Raja*, etc. He was basically a lyricist and numerous songs and poems. Three songs of Darendra Basumatary became very famous and popular among the Boros, just like National Anthem. His outstanding songs are, *Joholao Jaliya Gothofbr Jong* (we are the brave children of brave ancestor), *Ma lse Mojang Dinoini Horalai* (what a beautiful night), *Jagai Jennai* (beginning). (Lahary: 1991:38,40) Most of his songs are patriotic with some elements of romanticism and they appeared in an appropriate time with a spirit of nationalism.

The other contributors to the literature of Bihar age were Kailash Ch. Brahma, Jaladhar Brahma, Bishnu Charan Basumatary, Jogendra Kochary, Parasu Ram Brahma, and Mani Ram Islary. Most of their poetic creations were characterized by the beauty of nature, joy and festivals and they uphold the spirit of building a great Boro nationality.

Though language and subjects were not sophisticated, their fineness involves both spoken dialects and simple literary language. The main subjects of their literary works were about the injustice in society, social evolution and awareness, metaphysics and mysticism, etc. The vital thought and ideal, which influence the poetic

creation of that time, were the inspiration of new Brahma religion and reformation movement of Kalicharan Brahma. The vision of almighty god and awakening their latent faculty gave birth to a number of poems and other works. It was the beginning of the formation and the development of the Boro literature, in which the spiritual vision of the new refined religion was friend, philosopher and guide for the new generation of that time.

In those days it was not easy to publish a book as because printing press was not easily available and it caused huge expenditure. In 1932 a magazine *Bodosa Bithorai* was edited and brought out by Pramad Ch. Brahma, which were written by hand. In 1937, Pramad Ch. Brahma published a bilingual magazine *Sansri Aro Mushri* in Assamese and Boro language with a great effort. But this magazine was also published one issue only. (Brahma: 1994: 66)

Usually, the *Bibar* magazine used to appear thrice in a year but it is hard to say how many issues were published because a few issues have been discovered so far. The *Bihar* contained the articles of three languages. They are Assamese, Boro and Bengali but only the articles of the Boro language got place in the Boro literature. But very soon this magazine ceased to appear due to lack of regular supply of articles. One of the reasons for irregular supply was that most of the early writers were involved in the socio- religious movement of Kalicharan Brahma and had a little time for literary activities. Hence the growth of literature in the *Ribar* age progressed slowly. Yet those new literary works extended a great help to the socio cultural transition of the Boros and the process of *sanskritization*.

BORO LITERATURE IN ALONGBAR PERIOD AND BORO SOCIETY:

In 1938, first issue of a Boro magazine, the *Alongbar*, was published under the joint editorship of Pramad Ch. Brahma and Khagendra Nath Brahma. The magazine was printed at Calcutta. The whole period from 1938 to 1951 is marked as *the Alongbar* period of Boro literature after the name of the periodical.

In the *Along bar* age, the Boro literature took an independent form and the litterateurs of that generation were the real architects of the Boro literature. By that time the reformation movement of the Boros was about to be accomplished and the Boro society started enjoying the fruits of the movement in that age. There was a tremendous change and progress in the Boro society as compared with the pre-movement Boro society. The number of school and college goers had been increasing considerably and a few Boro achieved higher education in those years. They earned good knowledge in Indian literature but they were also acquainted with the new developments in the western literatures. They were mainly responsible for introducing new trends of writing in

Boro literature, which were found in the literature of other languages. The most remarkable change of Boro literature in *Alongbar* age was a shift from classicalism to Romanticism. (Brahma: 1994: 66)

It is not known exactly how many issues of *Alongbar* has been published and who were the editors of those issues as there was no system of preserving those books. Only some issues have been recovered from some individuals till today. Efforts have been made to recover the rest of the issues, if there is any more. In 1940, Pramad Ch. Brahma edited and published a book known as *Hatharkhi Hala*, which contained the poems and writings of high standard. The contributors of that book were Iswan Mushahary, Ananda Mushahary, Kali Kr. Lahary, Munindra Sumpramari. This book has a great contribution to the Boro literature.

In 1940 two note worthy books on poetry *Sonani Mala* and *Phame* of Iswan Mushary were published posthumously and that enriched the Boro literature more than any other else. Iswan Mushary also wrote the first short story in Boro entitled as *Abari*(Brahma: 1994: 68,69).

In 1942, another bilingual magazine, the *Nayak* was published by the Joint effort and editorship of Yogen Hazarika and Mahini Mahan Brahma.

But in 1942, when Gandhiji launched Quit India Movement against the British colony in India, the Boro intellectuals were convinced by the slogan *ek jati ek pran mahan Bharat mata* (one nation one soul, the great mother-India). So during that time, most of the Boro Writers wrote books or articles in Assamese language. As for instance, Rupnath Brahma wrote *Boro Jatir Sank'ihipta Parichay*, 1946; Biren Das Boro wrote *Kachari Jatir ltiBriфта*, 1946; Aniram Basumatary wrote *Koch Kacharies Parichay* and *Kacharir Matribhasa*, 1951.

(Lahary:1991:4) Birendra Narayan Bismith wrote *Kochari Jatir Sanh-hipta Parichay* and Dhuparam Basumatari Boro *Jatir Kinsit Abhas*, etc. During that period the growth of Boro literature slowed down because most of the enlightened Boros had participated in the freedom movement. Their strong feeling, to establish the Boro nationality as a part of the great nation, was reflected in their writings. It was by that time the Boro society came much closer to the main stream Assamese society. When the Boro literary club had its birth in 1952, the Boro literature took a new turn of development.

ARCHITECS OF BORO LITERATURE IN ALONGBAR AGE:

The outstanding and sophisticated authors of the Alongbar age were Promod Chandra Brahma, Iswan Mushahari, Ananda Mushahari, and other prominent contributors were Kali Kumar Lahary, Maniram Sumpramary, Mahini Mahan Brahma, Jagat Basumatary, Brajen Islary and many others.

Pramad Chandra Brahma was born in Godamari village in 1916, passed B.A. from Cotton College in 1937 and he passed M.A. in 1941 from Calcutta. In the same year he was qualified for Assam Civil Service Class II. Mr. Brahma served the state government as Sub Deputy Collector throughout his service life till his retirement in 1971, without promotion due to his indifference to political leaders. Promod Chandra Brahma devoted his whole life for the cause of Boro language and literature in spite of his heavy official duty as a government officer. Since his student days he had been in association with literary works till his death. He edited and brought out literary magazines like *Bodosa Bithorai* 1932, *Sanshri Mushri* 1937 and *Alongbar* from 1938 and *Hathorkhi Hala* in 1940. He was the leading poet, as well as prose writer of that age. He gave a new trend to prose writing in Boro language and his poetic skill is evident from his works, which are characterized by mystic and romantic portrait of nature and some are the criticism of life. Manaranjan Lahary regards him as the greatest poet of his time. (Lahary:1991:46)

Iswan Mushahary was born in Turibari village. After completing matriculation he went to Alahabad for studying at Agriculture College. But while he was in Agriculture College died out of Typhoid fever. Iswan's poetic works during his short span of life have been the unique creation in the literature of Boro language. He brought the romantic movement of Boro poems and critics compare him with John Keats. In the words of M.R. Lahary "Highly romantic in flavour and appeal, expressing at the same time a sense of melancholy, Iswan Mushahary's poetry stands out as per excellence even today being comparable only with John Keats poetry (who also died very young)". (Lahary:1984:12) His poetical creations were brought out in two books, *Phame* and *Sonani Mala* after his death and they were the valuable pieces of work in the development of the Boro literature. His poems *Monabili*, *Badari*, *Hajo*, *Goso Moblit*, are comparable with any work in Indian language. He is also a pioneer of short story in Boro literature. There is originality in the technique of writing and character for portrayal Iswan evinces his skill of short story. *Abari*, the first short story in Boro, published in the first issue of *Hatharkhi Hala* tells a particular event of Abari's life and suddenly concludes the story without much intricate plot. Though Mushahary died very young in 1940, in the peak of his poetical creation his works have made him immortal as Shelley or Keats.

Ananda Mushahary was born in 1912, at Takimari village. He was regarded as one of the great prose writers of Alongbar age, though he quite a few in number. His three prose works, Boroni Rao, Aglani Bathra and Noni Maidang were the master pieces of that time where he handles the topic very skillfully and he critically discusses about the condition of the Boro language, literature and the attitude of the Boro people of those days. In his work Noni Maidang he critically analyses and points out some demerits in the nature of the women. He was also a great critic of literature.

Kali Kumar Lahary was born in Kajigaon village in 1916 and was a follower of Kalicharan Brahma. He played a great role in preaching Brahma religion and produced his well-known work *Kriya Darpan* on that religion. He was a dramatist, a lyricist, and a poet. But none of his drama has been published even today except they were performed in the stages. His important books on poetry are *Khanthai Bihung*, *Khanthai Bijab*, *Doito Khanthaini Lo*, *Logo Khanthaini Bihung*, *Agju*. He wrote poems in classical style with romantic or satirical tone. As a poet he can be placed just after Pramad Chandra Brahma and Iswan Mushahary, but he is noted for his own style of writing and technique. (Lahary:1991:48,50)

Jagat Basumatary was a poet of nature and he produced poems on seasonal festivals and various objects of nature.

Brajen Islary in his poems expressed the beauty of his beloved, aspiration and frustration of youth with beautiful words. (Lahary:1991:46)

One of the most distinguished contributors of the *Along bar* period was Mahini Mahan Brahma, who was also a scholar of the Boro folk tradition. He edited and brought out the *Nayak* Magazine in 1941-42. As a research scholar of the department of Tribal Culture and Folklore he collected then folk songs and folk tales of Boros, which was published by the Gauhati University. He also wrote several essays and stories in Boro language representing Boro culture and society. Besides him other contributors of the literature in the *Alongbar* age were Manirarn Sumpramari, Kitish Brahma, Khagendra Nath Brahma, etc. (Brahma: 1991:23)

But even today many works are found in the form of manuscript, which never reach press to get a place in Boro literature. Some scholars of the present age like Brajendra Kumar Brahma, Dr Mangalsing Hajowary have been making hectic effort to recover all those unpublished works of the by gone years and to bring them to light. Even some published works of earlier time are disappearing due to lack provision of systematic preservation.

Some individuals have preserved them but one drawback is that an interested person can preserve only his lifetime.

IMPACT ON SOCIETY:

The literary creation of that period fulfilled the various needs of the Boro society by creating various cultural contents. The new enlightened group of the Boros laid a new foundation of elite society and they could widen and develop the Boro culture by cultural contact and exchange with other developed *communities* of India which lessen the cultural, social and economic distance between them and fellow countrymen. It made the common people conscious about the overall socio-economic and political situation of the state and it gave rise to national feeling. Many new people with their creative talents and higher education established a new honourable position in the society. Being the first generation of educated section they were honoured by the common people more than any other else and it enabled them to spread their ideas to common people. And as a consequence an intellectual middle class came into being in Boro community, who always looked towards advance Hindu communities as a model, for all round development. Thus the Boro society began to take a new turn of development in the days to come.

The change in the society and the literary creation of this period ultimately led to the formation to the *Boro Sahitya Sabha* in 1952, for the development of the Boro language and Literature, which ultimately led the Boros to go in search of their identity in the national level.

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