

Development of Assamese Children's Literature

Dr. Mridusmita Borah

Assistant Professor, Department of Assamese, Jagannath Barooah College,
Jorhat, Assam, India

Abstract

1.Purpose of the study: The world of Assamese Children's Literature is replete with various remarkable works. No in- depth study of this genre of literature has been carried out so far. So, the purpose of the study is to discuss the birth and the trend of development of Assamese Children's Literature

2.Methodology:The historical and the analytical methods are used in this article.

3.Main findings : From the study, it has been inferred that even before the birth of the written literature in Assam, various Folksongs and Folktales meant for the children were prevailing in our society. From the 15th century to the present time, the Children's Literature is being written and Assam is far ahead in this field. Noteworthy that the Child Literature Award of the Sahitya Academy for the year 2019 has been conferred on Swamim Nasrin for her book "Mili, Amiya aru ekhon Nodi".

4.Application: Through this study ,one will be able to know different stages of development of the children's literature in Assam.It will also help in in the research on the children's Literature.

5.Novelty:This study has been carried out by dint of own efforts. The information furnished here has been taken from the history of Assamese Literature.

Keywords: Children's Literature, Assamese,

LITERATURE REVIEW :

Various articles and books are published in Assam on Children's Literature. Some of the books that had been done before includes-Santanu Tamuli's ' Asomiya Sisu Sahityar Samikha', Upendra Borkotoki's 'Asomiya sisu Sahityar sankhipta Itihas', Pratapjyoti Bora's ' kramabikashat Asomiya Sisu Sahitya aru Sisu Sahityar Granthaponji', Satyendranath Sarma's ' Asomiya Sahityar Samikhatmak Itibritta', Hemanta kumar Sarma's, ' Asomiya Sahityat Dristipat'. These books and articles were studied for preparing this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Concept of Children's Literature

A child is the manifestation of a growing entity. The mind of a child that grows up by making fun and frolic is filled up with sacredness. Thus the child that grows up by iota and iota moves on from the inactive state to the self-dependent state overcoming various stages and changes on the way. This growing trend of a child is governed by the social as well as familial factors. The children are generally not at all aware of the concepts like true false, good-bad etc. and in order to help them proceed with the prevailing Age, it is necessary to write the children's literature on the basis of their behavioral patterns, intelligence and knowledge acquisition capacity.

The entire gamut of writings that centers on the children and helps in the development of their intelligence is called the Children's Literature. The birds and animals, ghostly figures, kings and princes and so on come alive in the stories that conform to the psychology of the children. Similarly, the use of the eye-catching pictures related to the subject-matters of the stories makes the children's literature attractive to the children. The poems, tales, stories and anecdotes which are written in good standard to the interest of the children taking this period of their life into account form the vary basis of the children's literature. But it is not so easy to write the children's literature. In the words of Maeterlinck, writing children's literature is tantamount to the lifting up of the Mount Olympus in one hand.(88888) .It means that just as it is not at all easy to lift up a big mountain in one hand, so also it is not easy to write children's literature.

So, there is always an attraction in a child's mind towards everything in the realm of nature. The curiosity to know the unknown and the eagerness to comprehend the incomprehensible make the children restless as well as bewildered at the same time. They make their parents and elders almost sick by asking them questions repeatedly. In view of this fact, it is very necessary to create useful literature in order to pave the way for their mental, intellectual, social as well as moral development. In this regard, the following points must be taken into account:

1. The language of the books should be very easy and simple.
2. The pictures in the books need to be colorful and eye-catching.
3. There should be colorful pictures on the cover pages of the books.
4. The child characters should get prominence in the child-centric literature.

In terms of purpose of the Children's Literature, the renowned literature Satyendranath Sarma wrote

“ To help in the mental development of a Child, to foster the good qualities like kindness, love, sympathy and so on , to increase inquisitiveness, to elevate from the self-centric stage to the stage of social thinking, to create discipline, to help in becoming self-dependent from the state of dependence, to develop the sense of beauty, to plant the seeds of good citizenship and to give the ideas of moral and natural theories as per the age should be the sole purpose and ideal of children’s Literature. (Sarma, 2012)

So, to contribute towards the social development by developing all the aspects creative, emotional, mental and performing of the children and by making those rational in thinking should also be the purpose of children’s literature.

Discussion

Development of Assamese Children literature

Before going into discussion about the development of Assamese Children’s Literature, it is necessary to shed some light on the development of Indian Children Literature.

The Panchatantra was written in India about 2000 years ago from now. In this significant book, the knowledge about economics, sociology, morality and familial life was imparted and its veracity and relevance must be acknowledged even in this Age of science and technology. In view of the children’s attraction towards tales and stories and their curiosity about the behaviors of animals and birds, the animals were selected as characters in these books and the children were acquainted with the vast environment of nature.

According to German scholar Benfile , “all European tales have their origin in Indian tales “(Sarma, 2015).Aesop’s Tales- is such type of Tales. The first edition of Aesop’s Tales was published in the 10th century. William Caxton published its English translation in the 15th century.

If we go through the history of Assamese Children’s literature ,we find – though there was no such genre as children’s literature in the ancient Assamese literature, yet the works like ‘Bhimcharit’, ‘Kaankhowa’, Sisulila’ and so on provided amusement not only to the children but also to the elders . Through these books, the anecdotes and stories circulated among the youngsters and elders and the children had been able to make themselves familiar with the great moral or religious ideals.

The beginning of Assamese Children Literature can be traced back to the age- old oral literature. The oral literature centers around the children and it contains numerous songs and tales. They include ‘ Dhainaam’(lullaby),Omolageet(nursery rhymes) and tales also. At first the nursery rhymes and lullabies had cast a magical spell on the children. The simple language ,

homely illustrations , inclusion of supernatural elements and poetic quality form the vary structure of such songs which create intense feeling in the children's minds, thereby transporting them to an unknown realm. The mothers and the nursemaids sing the lullabies in order to console the children, as these songs when sung pacify the children's minds and they feel compelled to listen to the songs with rapt attention. In this present Age of science and technology, the songs like ' Rodali ye rod de', 'O ful, O ful', 'Junbai e tora eti diya' 'Amare moina xuba e' and so on are not generally sung but such melodious songs have always their originality. Nowadays all efforts are made to acquaint the children with the real world outside and to teach them how to observe and analyse everything around them logically as well as rationally.

But it must be mentioned that even in the ancient illiterate society the children were imparted technical education so that they could adapt themselves to the environmental situation. The children's tendency to ask questions after the singing of the lullabies and their curious nature lead them to the stage of creativity.

In the Vaishnava era, it was Sridhar Kandali who wrote children's literature .According to Kandali's famous book "Kaankhowa" Yoshoda, the mother of chil Krishna, sang this song while trying to make him sleep by creating fear in him about Kaankhowa.

Likewise the childhood of Krishna has been depicted vary realistically in Madhavdeva's "Borgeet", "Chordhora", "Pimpora gusuwa", (Jhumura – A type of play), Sankardevas "Prahlad Charit" of Kirtana Ghosa, "Sisuleela" and so on.

But these book cannot be said to be children's Literature in the true sense of the term. Noteworthy that Ramsaraswati, another renowned poer of this particular era, gives a beautiful description of the childhood of the five Pandavasin his worked entitled "Bhincharit". Though the character of Bhima gets prominence here ,yet this book is not corporate in the genre of children's Literature.

Regarding the lullabies, we can put forward the remarks of three eminent scholars of Assamese Literature.

In the words of Dr. Prafulla Dutta Goswami, " Softness and strange imaginations are the symptoms of these songs" (Borkotoky, 2002)

According to Dr. Satyendranath Sarma, "The moon, the Sun and the stars communicate with the children here, there emerges three thoughters-in-law even before the birth of the brother "moruwa full"(an imaginary flower) blooms on the head of the fox, the Moon gives the child the needle to sewbags, the frog prevents the blooming of flowers, thus sticking to its grandfather's profession and the sparrow, braving the elements, cuts betelnuts in the marriage

ceremony of the tailless fox. These things though incoherent to the elders, come alive in the minds of the innocent children. It is because their world is a dream world, a world of illusions- where there is nothing called incoherent. In the incoherence created by the tone and sound lies the unparalleled beauty of these songs which are written in conformity with the minds of the imaginative and credulous children" (Sarma, 2015). According to Dr. Maheswar Neog, "the divinity, novelty and sweetness of childhood are embedded in the lullabies and in the songs of childhood. (Sarma, 2015)

At that time, the modern urban life came to an end in Assam and towards the end of the British rule, the first Assamese language magazine "Auronodoi" was published in 1957. This magazine which was taken out under the aegis of the Christian Missionaries, was published in the fifth decade of the 19th century. The Christian Missionary had written textbooks as well as story books which were quite useful to the children. Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan's "Asomiya Lorar Mitra" and "Bibalar Sadhu", "Africar konwar", "Maura Suali", "Eagleor banh", and so on written by Braun, Bronson and Cattar and other Missionaries were the writing on the first stage.

Among the writers of the Jonaki Era (1889-1940), it was Lakshminath Bezbaruah who wrote a number of interesting books, realizing the needs of children's literature. His "Kokadeuta Aaru Natilora" "Burhiaair Sadhu", "Junuka" and so on were his remarkable contributions. The love and deception between birds-animals and human beings are found in the stories of Junuka which are written in both prose and verse. Likewise, the picture of Assamese social life of that times finds its reflection in the stories which are included in "Sadhukothar Kuki", and "Jonbiri". In the story title "Mukti" by Bezbaruah, we have the glimpses of child psychology and the conflict between parents and their sons. Lombodar Bora, Ratneswar Mahanta, Durga Prasad Mazinder Baruah and Benudhar Rajkhowa wrote various books which are still useful to the children.

At that time Padmanath Gohain Baruah concentrated on writing children's literature. During the time itself, Bishnupriya Devi's "Sadhukotha" and Kumudeswar Borthakur's "Sadhur Bharal" enriched the treasure house of Assamese Children's literature.

In the Jonaki Era, a number of works of Children's literature were written taking the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Purans and other such ancient literature as the base. Some of the prominent writers who wrote Children's literature on the basis of these great books were Mahadev Sarma, Mitradev Mahanta, Harendra Nath Sarma, Harinarayan Dutta Baruah and so on. In this particular field, Atul Chandra Hazarika's "Katha Kirtan" and Harinarayan Duttabaruah's "Sisu Mahabharata" are still occupying a special place in the realm of Assamese Children's literature.

The translated version of a good number of books of English literature have been published and they are quite useful to the children. The Assamese versions like Benudhar Sarma's "Robinson Crusoe" and Gyanadhiram Baruah's "Dodair Poja" have been published.

Some other remarkable storybooks of Assamese Children's Literature are Benudhar Sarma's "Latumoni", Prafulla Dutta Goswami's "Bilati Hoja", Lila Gogoi's "Ponakonar Sapun" and so on.

The child poetry not only attracts the minds of the children but also casts great impact on their soft minds. In this regard, the poems like Jyotiprasad Agrawal's "Kolphur Sopun", Akonmani Suali Akonmani lora, Raghunath Chaudhari's "Amar Gaon" and "Iswar", Nabin Chandra Bordoloi's "Sishur Hanhi" and so on are quite interesting.

So, it is obvious that if stories are written in keeping with the mental state of the children, they can easily be attracted as well as influenced.

Different Categories of Assamese Children's Literature

The mental world of children is such a world where there is no grammar, no logic, where they remember the yellow birds eating rice when they keep asking for stars from the moon. While telling others about the eating of rice the father-in-law's son goes from one place to another in his boat, again when the boat tosses in the river, they remember beating the "Doba" (a large cattle drum). In this world, the vixen reaches Ratanpur in the twinkling of an eye, the heron gets drenched while going to attend a function. All these come alive in the stories related to the children's mental world.

The oral literature is the main source of Children's Literature. The stories that a man hears from his mother even before he learns to read introduce him to literature for the first time. A child gets the opportunity to peep into the diverse world of literature through "Burhiaair Sadhu", "Ningni Bhaoriar Sadhu" and so on.

In the subsequent time, the stories which are the main assets of the oral literature, have been given special dignity in their written form. The credit for this goes to the renowned spearhead of Assamese literature Lakshminath Bezbaruah. In his "Burhiaair Sadhu", Bezbaruah gave a special position and new decorative patterns to those stories which are passing down orally from one generation to another. Some of them are Bezbaruah's own creations.

Jyotiprasad Agarwala's "Sontir Abhimaan", Bezbaruah's "Bakhor", Sarat Chandra Goswami's "Asomia Sadhukotha" and so on. Have undoubtedly strengthened the treasure house of Assamese Children's Literature.

The child magazines are playing a pivotal role in expanding the scope of children's Literature. Likewise, the child segments in the Newspapers are also contributing a lot in this regard.

The children's Literature is very simple and delightful. The trifling things which fascinate the children and conquer their minds are generally published in the Children's Literature. Numerous things which originate in the minds of the children stay fresh and pristine here.. As a variety of joyful as well as wonderful feelings of the children's mind get published here, the child readers can obtain enough amusement.

Noteworthy that the contributions of the child magazines such as "Safura"(1983), "Mouchaque"(1984),"Kishor"(1991) are very precious. It can be said that the magazines like "Gyandeeep","Avisker", and "Bigyan Jeuti" which have been published mainly to impart education, are able to influence the psychology of the adolescents.

Conclusion

The Children's Literature is enriched by the simple narrative style, common beliefs and lives, humor and other such elements. Though it is written keeping in view the amusement of the children, it also reflects the responsibility towards the formation of children's good character. The effort to impart necessary and ideal knowledge to the children with the help of the stories that were recreated with new expressive style from the fabulous tales prevailing in our ancient society, taking birds, animals and trees as characters, was seen in Bezbaruah's Children's Literature.

It is generally seen that the Children's Literature ensures the formation of children's character through entertainment.

In almost all the countries in the world, the children's character is found to be universal. The same immaturity, sulkiness and inclination towards fun and frolics are seen among them all over the world.

The kind of Literature that is written with a view to developing Children's intelligence and taste is called the Children's Literature. The Children's mind is imaginative. They move in a self-created world. There is no impact of time there, nothing like possible- impossible, no difference between old and young, even the trees speak and the dolls also keep sulking and get offended. So, it is not so easy to go into such a mental world and create literature. Yet we must bow to the contributions made by the Assamese writers towards the Children's Literature.

The great Assamese writers- Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Bhabendranath saikia and Nabakanta Baruah have been the most prolific contributors to the Assamese Children's Literature

A child is an invaluable asset to the human society. It will be an irreparable loss to the society if the Children's Literature is not given importance, thinking that it is meant for the children

only. So, it is very necessary to create the best kind of Children's Literature for the well-being of the society as well as the country.

Children get attracted only towards those things which conform to their taste. So, it becomes imperative for a writer to give importance to the taste of the children while selecting topics for the Children's Literature.. In this regard, the writer have also to keep in view various stages of mental development of the children. It is because the attractions of the children very depending on their stages of mental development. In view of this fact , the subjects that can fulfill the demands separately in different stages of mental development are suitable for the children's literature. Noteworthy that as the age increases, children's imagination becomes vivid and their intelligence also becomes sharp. So, in view of this , the selection of subject-matters which can give good direction to the children's future lives and to which they can feel wholeheartedly attached, enriches the children's Literature.

Now-a-days , in this age of mechanization , the development of children's literature is found to be quite slow. But how many good books in terms of quality have been published is a point to be noted . It is very essential to create and discuss Children's Literature in order to build up a healthy and strong society.

REFERENCE

Tamuli, santanu(2010) , Asomiya Sisu Sahityar Samikha,Mouchaque Prakasan, Jorhat

Borkotoky, Upendra(2002), Asomiya Sisu Sqahityar Sankhipta Itihas, Students Stores, Guwahati

Borah, Pratapjyoti (2011), Kramabikashat Asomiya Sisu sahitya aru Sisu Sahityar Granthaponji, Surabhi Publishing house, Jorhat.

Sarma, Satyendranath(2015), Asomiya Sahityar Samikhatmak Itibritta, Saumar Prakash, Rihabari, Guwahati

Sarma, Hemanta Kumar(2012), Asomiya Sahityat Dristipat, Beena Library, Guwahati