

The influence of English Romantic Poetry upon Assamese Romantic Poets: An Overview

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ABSTRACT :-

The publication of Lyrical Ballads, a joint work by William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge, in 1798 is found to mark the beginning of a new literary movement in the history of English literature, known as 'Romanticism'. The Romantic Age is emphatically an age of poetry. The chief glory of the age lies in the great poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron and Scott. Romanticism in Assamese literature started in 1889 through the publication of the magazine 'Jonaki' from Calcutta. Some of the Assamese students reading in the colleges of Calcutta were influenced by the romantic attitudes of English Romantic poets. Romanticism is a literary conception. It implies certain traits in a literary creation and its distinctiveness lies therein. The main thing that led to the influence of Western literature upon Assamese literature was due to the region of the Britishers and currency of the English language and through that language the Assamese writers became acquainted with various branches of Western literature.

Key Words : *Romanticism, Assamese literature, Western literature, Britishers.*

Introduction :-

Taking the message of liberty and humanity the French Revolution broke out in May, 1789. It propagated a new slogan of liberty, fraternity and equality of the French revolutionists and broke the barrier of sea and thrilled the Progressive youthful minds of England. A new impulse of liberty was born out of the revolution and that was the seed of Romantic literature. Infact, the birth of the new poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, after a barren period of rationality and social criticism in the poetic realm of the eighteenth century appears to indicate a happy and inspiring trend in the beginning of the 19th century. The dominance of poetry is found echoed in Wordsworth's famous saying, "Poetry is the breath and finer Spirit of all knowledge, the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science". Like other literatures, the Western literature's direct influence is also noticed in Assamese literature. Romanticism in Assamese literature started in the year 1889 after the publication of the magazine 'Jonaki'.

Discussion :-

Probably there is no literature in the world that had not been influenced by other literature of the world and there is no high class literati that had not been influenced by the idealism of other literature of the world. In addition to their own ability, the actual poets and literates collect honey from other literature like a humble bee and thus other literature's touch is attached to his literature and make it more richer. A literature that is shaped in such a way becomes somewhat special in its characteristics. Like other literatures, the Western literature's direct influence is also noticed in Assamese literature. The main thing that led to the influence of Western literature upon Assamese literature was due to the reign of the Britishers and currency of the English language and through that language the Assamese writers became acquainted with various branches of Western literature. Among the published materials of Assamese literature in magazines, newspapers, Journals and others, poetry is noteworthy.

The 'Trimurty' (Trinity) of Jonakiyuga-Chandra Kumar Agarwala, Lakshmi Nath Bezbaruah and Hem Chandra Goswami when in Calcutta at student life studied English literature and tried to enrich Assamese literature being influenced by English. These writers brought the Western romantic philosophy and ideology into Assamese literature. The poems published since the Jonakiyuga clearly reveal the romantic spirit. The writings of Chandra Kumar Agarwala and Lakshmi Nath Bezbaruah displayed the symptoms of English Romanticism. Romantic poets seek to wander in the imaginary world keeping aside all chains of bondage. They try to demolish the evils of the society and establish a new society.

'Natun Pranar Na Chakujuri
dipti dhali de tat
Purani Prithibi nakoi chai lao
hey bin akhari mat' (Bin Baragi -L.N. Bezbaruah)

In this context we remember Shelley's ode to the west wind. The sense of optimism is not missed in Assamese Romantic poetry. The trend of imposing extra-ordinary quality on ordinary things and love of Nature is found in Raghunath Chaudhary's poems of birds and Nature. An ordinary bird is a divine messenger that has mixed nectar in the throat for a poet of romantic attitudes.

Love for the past and admiration of past are two main features of the age. National integration and Patriotism are more important for such romantic poets. Even a lying stone or a place of past like Gargaon or Rangpur do remember the glorious past so also make them thoughtful for present pathetic condition. During the freedom movement some patriotic and songs were composed and the inspiration came from English romantic literature. In this context Lakshmi Nath Bezbaruah, Kamalakanta Bhattacharjya, Ambikagiri Roychoudhury, Dimbeswar Neog, Jyotiprasad Agarwala are worth mentioning. The ballad writers of this age had given a special importance to love like the English poets of romantic mode. To them, the earth is moving only for love and the beloved one had gathered all the beauty of the earth in her. The feelings of union and separation of the poets are alive in the heart of the poets. Jatindranath Duwera's love songs seem to be more expressive of separation. Duwera's loneliness and self centred feelings expressed in his poems are saturated with hatred and annoyance to the universe like the poems of Shelley. Though the poet is pessimistic at the present situation he is optimist for the future. The influence of Shelley and Tennyson is seen in the poems of Jatindranath Duwera. Ambikagiri Roychoudhury and Nalinibala Devi's love songs are transformed to the feelings of spirituality. A newness is seen in this age of the writings of Devakanta Baruah and he has dramatic speech imitating Robert Browning where he had searched a sense of the heart—

“Sagar dekhica ? Dekha nai ketiyao ? Moyo dekha nai”

(Have you seen sea ? not seen yet, I have not seen.)

[Sagar Dakhicha— D.K. Baruah]

Like Wordsworth, Chandra Kumar Agarwala also made friendship with nature and has seen immense beauty in simple things. Bezbaruah's patriotic poems like Bin Baragi, Asom Sangeet, O Mor Aponar Desh, Brahmaputra won the hearts of the Assamese people. He had advised the Assamese nation to go forward by the idealism of the glorious past saying, “Assam is once again developing say Joy to mother Assam”. Raghunath Chaudhary tried to make intimacy with Nature's flowers and birds in his poems Keteki, Ketekicharai, Dahikatarata etc. as Wordsworth did in Skylark. Chaudhary's Keteki comes of an imaginary bird state as Wordsworth's Cuckoo. Raghunath Chaudhary's poem Dahikatarata seems to be a Wordsworthian poem as pointed out by eminent Assamese writer Dr. Banikanta Kakati. In Chandra Kumar Agarwala's poem 'Bin Baragi' humanism of Western literature is reflected. The poet has described human characters, damped experiences in his long travel of life like Wordsworth's poem— 'Simon Lee, The old Huntsman'. Hemchandra Goswami's 'Priyatamaloi Chithi' is a successful love lyric. He was probably inspired by Wordsworth's poem preface to the lyrical Ballads. In addition to their self composed poems of romantic age some English poems of romantic style were translated into Assamese language. Bezbaruah's poem Abasesh (the last) is translated from Shelley's poem 'Music when soft voices die'.

Conclusion :—

Some of the leading characteristics of romantic poetry were of imagination, free movement of emotion and worship of beauty. The Assamese romantic poets sought for newness leaving behind the old. What optimistic hope and faith is there in romantic poetry is the outcome of the belief of man's uncoquarable being. For the influence of this belief, life and meaning of the universe and value of it have enforced the mind of the poets. The ideas of the poets in their imaginary thinking are chief and the Philosophy of customary and ideology of religion etc. are secondary. In the romantic poetry of Assamese literature, future optimism is strongly echoed. To understand the Western influence upon Assamese literature, we may state that it is a 'give and take policy' between the eastern and the Western thoughts in Assamese literature. Assamese Romantic literature was the outcome of the influence of English poets like Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron and Tennyson and a humanistic, individualistic poetic mind was shaped for the enrichment of Assamese literature.

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