

Some Trends and Tendencies in Present Assamese Poetry

By Ananda Bormudoi

One striking feature in the present literary scene in Assam is the presence of more than one thousand young practitioners of verse in the field. The number brightens our hopes and makes us optimistic and sanguine about the future of Assamese poetry. The number need not be intimidating. We legitimately expect the poets to be people at the finest point of awareness of time, people more aware than most other people. But the matter does not end there. Some young poets have been writing poems with fresh insights into situations and events of life and society with novelty in their use of language. They have added to the great tradition of modern Assamese poetry. Most of the young poets who have not acquainted themselves with the tradition of modernist poetry as a whole and Assamese poetry in particular have been writing poetry which is a celebration of man's relationship with nature in his day to day life. This nature is not the nature of the Romantics which revealed the glory of God. Their poetry is a spontaneous response to the day to day social and political events. These poets have written verses which are simple and delightful. Their readership is not very large but they have kept creativity alive among themselves in their own way. Some trends and tendencies have, however, invited the attention of the readers. The trends might belittle poetry in the long run.

Young people have a love for novelty and there is nothing unnatural about it. Some young Assamese poets who want to invite the attention of their readers with novelty have made poetry unnecessarily difficult for the readers. Assamese poetry in the fifties of the twentieth century was also difficult and there was a time when the poets far outnumbered the readers. Even then those poets were difficult with a difference. They were well read people and what they did, they did consciously and deliberately. The readers enjoyed the difficult poems when they could puzzle out meaning. The young poets who are difficult today have simply made their poems unintelligible. Some of their readers, who are also poets, have felt the need of doing something to check this tendency of the poets who try not to communicate to their readers.

This group named '*Kavita Adhyayan Got*' (Poetry Study Group) feels that unnecessary difficulty in poetry deprives readers of poetic pleasure. It frighten away readers. The poets may again outnumber the readers. Poetry, alienated from life and reality, may become irrelevant. To check these trends and tendencies, the study group has brought out a manifesto along with a collection of poems written by eleven poets. The collection begins with the poems of Harekrishna Deka who has now been writing delightful and thought provoking poems in simple language.

The objectives of the group are clearly stated in the manifesto. The language of poetry, as far as possible, should be the language of day to day conversation. To take poetry to the wider reading public thoughts and emotions should be structured around a story line, even if skeletal. Economy must be exercised in the use of words. Poetry should address the basic issues of society. In poetic

techniques, the poets should pay more attention to irony and satire. The poets should be aware of the rhythm and music of words. To take poetry back to the people, it should be made suitable for performance.

Harekrishna Deka's poem is written in the language of ordinary discourse and readers can interpret it on their own. But the poem is not a simple and forceful statement of a well known situation or event in life. The speaker in the poem does not face the mirror image because the image is a mirage. He emphasizes the difference rather than likeness. He realizes himself in others and that is important for him. He can read in the eyes of the others a wide range of emotions and feelings like love, tolerance, indifference, criticism, scorn and hatred. In the eyes of the others the speaker is not one but many. A rise in the number of the hating eyes will lead to a symbolic death but he is not going to compromise with the ideals which he is determined to live up to. If he does, it will be a death for him. The poem can be analyzed in the light of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis.

Anubhav Tulasi's poem has three images which apparently forbid making love and appreciating aesthetic values when a crisis strikes the nation and language. But the dramatic situations are ironic equivalents of a statement that love and aesthetic values cannot be set aside when a crisis strikes. What the poem conveys has a resonance far beyond the immediate context. Pranay Phukan who has already used episodes from the Mahabharata in his poems to read meaning of our life has re-interpreted some characters and episodes of the Ramayana in the poem included in this collection. Rajib Borah's poem is on a sense of futility. It is a question of power and possession. The speaker in the poem is aware of possessing nothing. He is a writer but the words do not belong to him alone. Binod Chandra Borah's poem is a delightful description of a boatman sailing and singing down the river. The poet is drawing on folk culture. Kalyan Bhuyan's poem is a satire on corruption and squalor. The story of the naked king has been twisted to his advantage. A government employee forced by the circumstances to indulge in corruption goes mad and strips himself naked in an imaginary court in session. Pranjit Bora's poem is an exploration of what a poem is all about. He advances his arguments in terms of symbols and images. Rashmirekha Borah is a poet with a fine awareness of life and society. Her poem included in this collection is on the gap between expectations and realizations that makes the general condition of life unhappy. There is an uncertainty of modern life as an undertone of the poem. Prakalpa Ranjan Bhagawati uses a passage from Nicanor Parra's 'Manifesto' as an epigraph in his poem and defines what poetry is for this generation. The poem is written in simple language to communicate to all possible readers what might be the vital contours of poetry. Boidya Bright Buragohain delightfully delineates the mother-son relationship with an undertone of seriousness. The son seems to break away and the mother wants to be possessive. Kazi Neel explores the different shades of meaning in the word 'ghor' (house) and the poem ends up in tragic strains as the house is buried under the sand. All the poems are written with a desire to take poetry to the common people.

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