

Why I write?

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When I think about why I write, I am reminded of the first things I used to write when I was young. There was a tremendous desire to see my name printed in the beginning of a publication. But then again, I had started editing a handwritten journal from the ninth standard itself. By the time I was in the ninth and the tenth standards, there was also a deep wish to get something published in the school magazine. In the ninth standard, I edited *Nabajyoti*, the annual journal of the Tangala High School. Along with my prose, a few of my poems were also published in *Nabajyoti*. It was an exciting moment for me. Around that time, in 1979, without having a clear perspective about the objectives of the movement to preserve our identity and for the expulsion of foreign nationals, I became a part, a mere participant in a collective consciousness and that became a reason for me to write poems about the love of the land. Bereft of poetic qualities, I myself published those poems in a collection called *Asomi* and along with my friend Pranab Bora, used to sell those ourselves in the ninth standard. Just like the Minerva bird that starts flapping its wings as soon as the evening approaches, now when I am reminded of those times, it also comes to my mind that around the same time an imaginative perspective was taking shape. I liked spending time alone, but those opportunities were rare. I went out to play football, cricket and volleyball with my friends and that was enough to distract me from my reveries. I started developing a sport loving mentality and consequently, I also wanted to be a part of peer groups. My love for sports came to an end because I had to prepare for the HSLC examination in the tenth standard. After passing the HSCL examination I came to study in Cotton College in 1982. Cotton College already had a very creative environment. My friends and fellow students were able to keep my mind lively and sensitive through their creativity. The desire to write poems about the movement was slowly fading away. Even though I used to write those poems with

intense emotions, they were not able to express much poetic qualities. When I was a student at Cotton College (1982- 87) I used to write poems and send them to various newspapers and magazines of Assam and most of them were published. Those poems inclined towards social responsibility and it was felt that creative arts and poetry should be directed towards social welfare. In the first year of PU I came close to Nilomoni Phukan Sir and I used to visit him at his residence often. But I had not yet realized that writing poetry was a serious thing. Because of my commitments towards my classes and examinations, I did not have enough time to exercising in poetry with an open mind. When I started studying Assamese literature in Gauhati University (1989- 91), specially towards the end of post-graduation, studying courses on modern Assamese poetry and modern English poetry gave me a new lens towards understanding of modern poetry. But unfortunately, I did not write a single poem during my post-graduation. In this time, I was engaged solely in my studies.

In 1992 I joined Diphu Government College as a lecturer. I was at peace with an open mind and an open environment. The tranquil beauty continually stimulated my eager mind. I started voraciously reading famous Bengali poets like Jibannanda Das, Sankha Ghosh, Shakti Chattopadhyay. I also started reading the poems of Yeats, Eliot and Ted Hughes, even though I may not have understood them well. I began developing an aesthetic sense about poetry. To say that I developed this sense by solely reading poetry would not be very accurate. Essays written by Sudhindranath Datta, Abu Sayed Ayub, Jibanananda Das etc. pioneer Bengali intellectuals also helped me a lot in this regard. This kind of learning continued till 1997. I started to feel that my poems should carry suggestive meaning. I started pursuing poetry seriously since 1992. I had no desire for name and fame. I just wanted to write good poetry, and how far I have accomplished this, I cannot say.

In 1998 I officially started pursuing a PhD degree in modern poetry. But I had already started reading a few books in 1997. The study of modern poetic thought gave me a lot of clarity in modern poetry. Between 1998 and 2004, though writing poetry was not my first priority, a few poems did turn up as a by product. Some of those poems were collected and published in two collections titled *Mur Dhuar Major Sorai Tu* (2001) and *Boroxun: Romantikaru Antiromantic* (2008). Ever since I started my research, my poetry started showing the influence of my studies. My thinking started showing greater presence in my poetry. In the year 2000 a compendium of my poems *Xukleshwarot Ful Kinute* was published and that began a new era of poetic series for me.

When I try to answer why I write, a few more things come to mind. Till the publication of the first two collections of my poems it did not occur to me that my poems needed a kind of sprain. But with the publication of *Boroxun: Romantikaru Antiromantic* it became apparent that this effort may have turned to reality in some of the poems. In essence, since then I have developed my own style of writing poetry to hold on to the significance of my own poetic diction. With the of *Xukleshwarot Ful Kinute* I took care that the themes of my previous poems were not repeated. After that two more collections of my poems *Drishyantar*(2018) and *Raj Haan or KonthotKihorJaloshyed* (2021), I resolved not to repeat myself.

Some of the poems of the last collection have been influenced by Jean Paul Sartre's *What is Literature* where he wrote about writing for starving people. Similarly, my poems are 'formation

in words' of my experiences. Some words, some books, may have emotionally affected me and to express those emotions I have written poems, have given importance to unite the emotions, and have tried to bring a certain level of maturity to the language. These are the various reasons and objectives why I write poetry. I try my best to impartially represent personal experiences.

I would also kindly like to add one more thing while I try to answer why I write. I am always mindful of the need to enrich modern Assamese poetry. I try my very best to do that. Sometimes I may succeed in this to a certain extent and sometimes perhaps not. The impulse to write because I wanted to get published that existed in my early years is no longer a motive, and indeed, it cannot always be so. I try to write something new every time. I write poetry to convert my dreams into reality on the basis of studying various books and various experiences. However, I have always privileged intense emotion. Therefore, the answer to why I write has always evolved and now I can say that I have a fairly stable answer for it.

Translated by Jyotishman Kalita

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