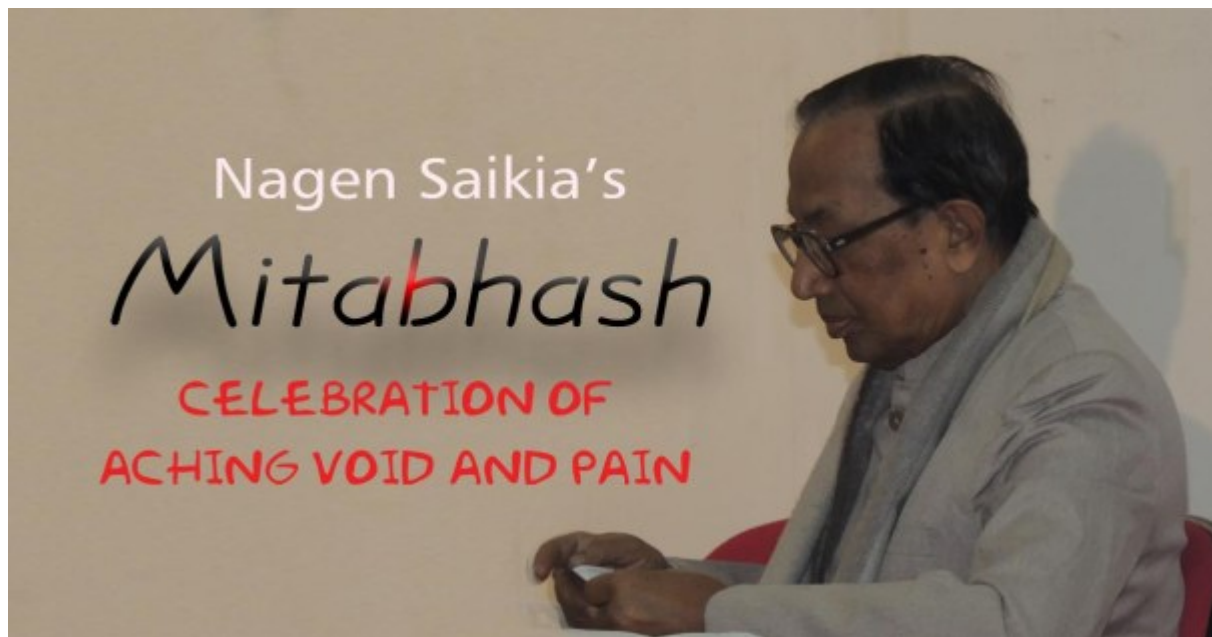


Nagen Saikia's Mitabhash: Celebration of Aching Void and Pain

Dr. Gitali Saikia



1. In Which form You Come

In which form you come, I don't know. I know not how many days you take to transform. Sometimes you come in the form of a beautiful woman, sometimes in the form of a man, sometimes in sounds, sometimes in melody; and sometimes you appear in lines. Oh ! How sad, sweet and sensuous, calm and bright you are! I always recognise you in whatever shape you appear ! While you come you always bring dazzling light of the eyes and music of the heart. So, I become crazy to set your altar in my heart and worship you. I feel you — only you — in the sound of the wind, in lightning — I feel you— I see only you. I can't touch you, but I absorb in you— .

Thus, I am looking for you— inside and outside me.

2. This Flower

This flower never blooms twice. Never it will bloom with its beauty — with its honey, colour and fragrance. When it goes, it goes forever. So, I try to keep it in my bosom. I am pricked by time's infallible arrows. Green has gone, I am growing yellow —

where do I keep —?

Where do I keep my blossom?

3. Here at This Place

Here at this very place was kept a scintilla. A fire was lit — mist, dew and darkness went away and stood in a circle. They merged with the land of thick infinite gloom, cold and mist. Picking up the fallen leaves I lit the fire. No leaves left. Pulling the moments from the breast of the past I made the fire. Moments are tugged one after another and piled on the fire. Giving warmth for a while the fire put out — I lit the fire again — mist, cold and gloom came forward, seized the flame — being a charcoal it was lying there. For the charcoal I would make a sepulchre.

What is said by the creator of Mita-bhash?

“What is Mita-bhash? — This question often comes to my mind, although I myself have given this name. I have not found another suitable term to present my expressions to the readers. These are nothing but the expressions of my feelings of love and attraction created on the backdrop of unlimited void. So, a Mita-bhash is not a poem, not a sketch of a short story or not an expression of philosophical thoughts. Of course, someone may find some seeds of them in Mita-bhash. Eminent (Jnanpith winner) Assamese poet, Nilamoni Phukan once read and made a comment, “This is a new thing. Some are capable of creating speculation, joy and sadness. Some are nearer to poems. Some are glittering like precious stones.” Renowned novelist Phanindra Nath Devachoudhury has welcomed it as a new literary genre. Eminent poet Nabakanta Barua asked, “Is not Mita-bhash the corollary of your vast experience?” Some other persons also comment that this is a new genre. Some enthusiastic youngsters try their hands in writing Mita-bhashes. Distinguished writer, journalist Homen Borgohain commented that while he was editing ‘*Sutradhar*’, a few writers sent some Mita-bhashes to publish there. Such endeavour may give a hint that this composition cannot be classified under any convention — poem, prose-poem, philosophical saying, and can be marked as a new genre. But what did I consider it for what, when I first started writing? At first I didn’t want to give it a name. Some basic questions about human life have been disturbing me. The knowledge of indifferent self of Brahma may give birth to an ascetic in me, but it cannot end up the helplessness and incapability of men imprisoned within the boundary of birth and death. Its sky is filled with the pain of heart-rending cry. What is true is this overwhelming agony. At such a background, I tried to sketch all the feelings come at different times and realized that this cannot be classified under any convention. So, I gave a name, Mita-bhash — short expression, it has a thrifty nature, devoid of elaboration in presenting human feelings.

There was a story about it. In April 1992, along with one third of MPs I too was one to take retirement from Rajya Sabha. Parliamentary Committee has asked us to prepare four items for the farewell meeting: world famous Ravi Sankar’s Sitar, release of an album of a renowned artist, M.F. Hussain, Bekal Utsahi’s recitation and my speech. I had to pen down the short speech before the commencement of the programme. Instead of a speech I translated six of my Mita-bhashes into English and I named them ‘Short Expression’. The committee published it nicely as a pamphlet. The then Vice-President (later on he became the President of India) Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma presided over the session. There the then Deputy Speaker, Dr. Najma Haptulla commented, “Dr. Saikia has made me feel sad.” Next day Prime Minister Rao, while talking with me and Rajmohan Gandhi, said, “Your poems are very touching, Dr. Saikia.” Another audience said, “Everybody felt sorrow and sadness.” Noted scientist ex-Mp Prof. MGK Menon remarked, “I found it highly sensitive and asking very basic questions of a deep philosophical nature.” All these comments were beyond my expectation. In February, 1992, in the ‘*Natun Dainik*’ (Sahitya Sabha Issue) Mita-bhash first got published with my note. I am grateful to eminent writer Chandra Prasad Saikia, who was the then editor of the ‘*Natun Dainik*’. Besides that, Mita-bhashes were published in ‘*Sutradhar*’, ‘*Saptah Darpan*’, ‘*Asom Bani*’, ‘*Ajir Batori*’, ‘*Mejankari*’ and ‘*Prantik*’. I am thankful to all of them.

I do not know whether the words are able to bear the feelings of my heart. Some says—— it can. Some says—— there is pain, only pain is revealed in Mita-bhash. Composing almost three hundred mitabhashes I feel—— what will be our final gain except pain and suffering? I conclude it with another Mita-bhash —— “While I am writing, I dip the pen in my heart; so, tears dribble from the nib of my pen.” Thus Dr. Saikia says.

Why It is New

Mita-bhash is marked by some features for which it can claim that it is quite new and experimental in Assamese literature. It is imbued with deep philosophy of life though in a very compact form. Its structure is in-between poetry and prose-poetry. Moreover, the newness that Mita-bhash brought is a source of ecstasy for the reader. A Mita-bhash comprises short poetic lines; the pithy sentences are condensed with philosophical questions and pragmatic thoughts. Mita-bhash brilliantly represents eternal solitude, unending desire, agony and unavoidable end of life. Profound feelings of sadness, pain, loneliness, void, love, helplessness, inability, and above all, limitation and ephemeral nature of human life get revealed. The writer pours his ‘full heart’ in Mita-bhash. It is really a wonderful and unique creation that touches the reader with its elegance and spontaneity of style. The style is somewhat conversational. The speaker addresses someone to pour out his heavy heart.

The metaphoric style of Mitabhash which is marked by thriftiness of language is quite arresting. A Mitabhash is condensed with thought. It is full of metaphors, similes, personifications and symbols. Most of the time the writer uses phrases or incomplete sentences full of meaning. The structure itself leaves some spaces for the readers. The flamboyant and vivid creation of imageries as well as the extra-ordinary working out of imagination and experience arrest the attention of the critics and readers. Moreover, Mita-bhashes contain some features of metaphysical poetry. Emotion and reasons are perfectly blended. The feelings of sorrow and agony, pleasure and pain, love and hatred, life and death and subtle experiences are depersonalized. The abstract things or concepts are personified. The month of ‘Ahin’, ‘green’, ‘red’, ‘yellow’, flower, bird, hope, love, despair are personified in Mita-bhash.

The creator of Mita-bhash is questing for knowledge about the mystery of life and death. The persistent echoing of void created by the ambience of love, endless agony and suffering of human life, exaltation of hope, dream and desire are skilfully drawn within the gamut of normal human perception.

Read also **Nagen Saikia’s Mitabhash**

What Shelley says in “To a Skylark” is really significant, “Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts”. The exquisite expression of the feelings of void attached with sadness and agony, and the question about the mystery of life make Mita-bhash philosophical. Dr. Saikia raises a number of philosophical questions about life, love and living.

Prof. M.G.K. Menon’s comment is noteworthy, “I found it highly sensitive and asking very basic questions of a deep philosophical nature.” The writer himself once said, “ While I write I dip my pen in my heart. So tears drip through the nib of my pen.” Mita-bhash, indeed, resonates everybody’s heart and feelings. The reading of Mita-bhash is really an unforgettable experience.

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