

Some Aspects of Modernity in the poetry of Ajit Barua

Joyanta Deka

Research Scholar , Gauhati University

Abstract:

Ajit Barua (1926-2015) is a major modern Assamese poet. His collection of poetry include *Kichuman Padya Aru Gaan*, *Aru Kichuman Padya aru Gan*, *Brahmaputra Ityadi Podya*, *Gash Premor Podya* etc. Ajit Barua's poetry too is marked by modernity placing him in significant position arena of modernist Assamese Poetry. In his poetry we find different modes of expression like the symbolism, to express deep ideas and feelings, realist way of truly reflecting the reality of the time and society, the impressionistic way to present the unrefined first impression of everything expressing the deep hidden feelings. Ajit Barua's poetry tends to have multiple themes and sometimes a single poem contains multiple themes of modernity.

Key word: Poetry, Modern, Modernity, Ajit Barua, Poem

The nineteenth century may be seen as the apogee of modernity. The ideas born from criticism. Which had a polemical value in the eighteenth century- democracy, the separation of church and state, the end royal privileges, freedom of beliefs, opinions and association- became the principles shared by nearly all the European nations and the United State. The West grew, extended its boundaries, and held fast. But at the end of the last century a deep unease spread through the centers of our civilization, one that includes the birth, apogee, and crisis, may be called the contemporary era. Nevertheless, its duration- it has lasted nearly a century- leads me to doubt that the term is appropriate. Equally inapt are those words that always appear as soon as one speaks on this topic: decadence, decline, sunset. The word crisis, while not inexact, has been weakened by continual use. In the end, whatever name we give it, the period that began at the start of this century is distinguishable from the others by its uncertainty toward the values and ideas that formed modernity (Paz, 62-63). Modernity, put simply, is the period of the new. As the American cultural critic Marshall Berman points out with a good deal of force in his important book *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, it marks a 'maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal': To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world- and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are...it pours us into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air' (Malpas, 46). Another way the term modernism is widely used to identify new and distinctive features of literature and other arts about its subjects, forms, concepts and styles. Many critics agree that modernism involves a deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional basis of literature and culture. The simultaneous appearance of James Joyce's 'Ulysses', T.S Eliot's 'The Wasteland' and Virginia Woolf's 'Jacob's Room' marked the beginning of the modernist innovations. A prominent feature of modernism is the phenomenon

called the “avante- garde”. These writers set out to create new artistic forms and styles and to present different subject matter.

Ajit Barua (1926-2015) is a major modern Assamese poet. His collection of poetry include *Kichuman Padya Aru Gaan*, *Aru Kichuman Padya aru Gan*, *Brahmaputra Ityadi Podya*, *Gash Premor Podya* etc. Ajit Barua’s poetry too is marked by modernity placing him in significant position arena of modernist Assamese Poetry. In his poetry we find different modes of expression like the symbolism, to express deep ideas and feelings, realist way of truly reflecting the reality of the time and society, the impressionistic way to present the unrefined first impression of everything expressing the deep hidden feelings. Ajit Barua’s poetry tends to have multiple themes and sometimes a single poem contains multiple themes of modernity. Ajit Barua has chosen a different mode of expression in his poetry. Poetry unlike traditional poems his poetry finds way of its own. He maintains the social evils of the society in an ironical and satirical manner. Poet Barua employs plentiful of images in his poetry. His Poetry is the poetry of incident and event; and his mode is that of narration and description. Ajit Barua’s style is unique in quality. Line length and formation of stanza of Ajit Barua’s poetry. The poem “Mon Kunwali Samoy” is written in an entirely different kind of stanza and rhythm as compared to his other poem. He has a rich vocabulary; and his choice of words surprises us by the unexpected way he selects words. Combines them into phrases and arranges them to construct the clauses and sentences. It is use of similes and metaphors fills nearest with wonder and admiration. The poem shows the poet’s command over the subject and the capacity to express his ideas in clear and lucid language. There is a grace over his style of writing and there is a certain charm about the manner in which he constructs his lines and stanzas. Ajit Barua’s poetry is of Eliotian image and time oriented. His imagery is always particular, precise, and concrete as well as vivid and realistic:

“kati mahor ata dhoa ratipoa

kowali goli bhahe

ei pua jen atit jiwani

(abosor baosiya)

punar japon kori uthilo. karon

joa bosor ene pua

uthisilo natun hamiai.

thoka nothoka ek palakar dalangot

samoi bandho hoi jai.(?)......(1-9)”

In ‘Jengrai 1963’, The poem Jengrai 1963 by Ajit Barua is a unique combination of conventional language, resonance and allusion (Ahmed,78). In this poem the eye has connotation his quest for peace. He looks for a pair of eye where there is bountiful of happiness. Poet Ajit Barua uses the

metaphor of the river and the music to represent the world of unending happiness which is visible only through that pair of eye. To quote from the poem:-

“andhar hoar alop ageye

ami Subansirit parilo.aru

Subansirir ating panire amar naowar ting dhoalo,(08-10)”

In the poem certain symbols like buffalo and a pair of eyes are used to express his desire for free world. Poet concept of free world is nothing but the freedom from the bitter experiences of social life that birds him to in vicious cycle. Ajit Barua’s another poem ‘Mon dia Nadi’; is filled with the symbol of struggle. He says that river has vibrate of life like that of his heart beating:

“mon dia nadir dakhin parot ji jaroni

tar kashe kashe amar tulashi jahar kheti

sarioh ful, halodhia tora

pathak, jone aponak val pale buli

apuni bhulote bhabile teo tat nathake.(6-10)”

Similarly, in the poem “Pathakoli bidai sambhakhn” uses the symbol of the poem burning to represent the image of his heart reflecting as a mirror to the poetry. It is clearly visible in the fourth stanza of the poem where he says that his heart burns in his own heart like the burning of the lonely life, the peaceful moments and many ages. The heart of the poetry burns with the burning of his heart:

“karon sabdor lagat juddhat moi harisu

kaida kari katha koar

sayar sayabajit

moi harisu (8-11)”

Ajit Barua’s exquisite use of imagery is seen in his poetry “Dukhar kabita”. In this poem the water symbolizes sadness. The poet’s mind is drenched with sadness:

“sokasabha ghorial

naor tingat jibilake baha dighal sakulo pelaba

juktie lag nopoa dighal kari

opore akash tale sale pani

akathi kathar naor para

khedere dekho aru sei saku

ji hal mukuta agi (12-18)”

He offers before the readers the ideas about the poem. The symbol of city in the poem “Abanti Nagar” is a unique one. The middle age city (Abanti nagar) has come to surface with a modern. In the city signifies lost beauty and real city is destroying morality. The imagery is integral to the idea and even if the imagery seems incidental, it serves to heighten the surrounding:

“abanti nagarat

moi panir talot khuj karhisilo.

lahe lahe.

bhomorar gunjarat mukhar panir tal

manthar mor aha-joa

mor hridpinda dhepa dholar dore (4-9)”

Ajit Baruah’s poetry is connected with realism. Poet’s imagery is not fantastic and not being commonplace. It tends to be realistic and original. His poetry “Chandratu nedekhi” he speaks about the reality and absence of peace and happiness hurts the poet:

“chandratu nedekhi kintu

Patal meghar oporedi buja jai

chandratu kot ase (3-5)”

The delineation of mind like awareness to reality, sadness and overpowering it finds manifestation in poem ‘Prabanchak Lekhak Nakal Nayak’. He is confused whether he desires sadness or longs for it unnecessarily. Through his other poem “Baduli Oloma Rati” he expresses the undeniable fact that in search of modern society have destroyed nature and created. In the poem ‘Baduli Oloma Rati’ we encounter the man who destroys nature and makes an adverse portion of it. Ajit Barua’s poem “Bandhu pathak, Mor Sahodar” is filled with realism. There is a touch of his personal life and personal love for his readers and brother:

“bandhu pathak, mor sahodar

mor lekhar majote apuni mok bisarak.

kintu aponi mok napai.(6-8)”

Ajit Barua’s poem, “sowani amar gaonkhani” (2) . when we probe the surface of the poem is pregnant with suggestiveness we get its real idea which prompted the poet. In this poem it is quite difficult to justify whether poet heart is a reflection of his poetry or the poetry reflecting poet’s heart. Poet has a deep feeling of love for his village and thus he expresses it by using varied images:

“bahar pabto kalam surire falote hilo fute bahu masor petat.

logote narikalar shah. tangal aru telua nahabo, bisonir doi, nalia
 dharar. karon eskeldalor bhatou-pakhi mor nasyarandar ananda.sakur
 sfuran. hridoy malam (9-12)

Through the use of the image of the cloud in the poem “Sristi Olatar Katha”, Poet expresses his imagination for freedom of happiness. Ajit Barua in his poetry expresses deep and hidden feelings lying in his heart. The feeling of love hidden in his heart is reflected in poetry “Ata premor padya”. This love is for the metaphysical believe.

Many poems are the beautiful picture of nature ranges from the village life of Assam and the mighty Brahmaputra River. He has described the process of modernity in a phase manner a forest turning to a village. The village is heading towards a city, with physical existence like mall, bank, offices etc. Though of course the world has proceeded towards metropolitan the humanity is decreasing among the people. The effect of urbanization too could not escape from poet Ajit Barua. In his poem expresses irony that the more people are becoming urbanized the more the people are becoming inhuman. Modern society have created their own misfortune by creating things that are a threat to the human world directly or indirectly.

Eminent literary critic Professor Ranjit Kumar Deba Goswami said, ‘Ajit Barua breaks away from traditional literary style and instead embraces expression of Assamese language of upper and lower Assam both.’ Ajit Barua contribution to the field of modern poetry is very substantial, weighty and valuable. His diction, skill, rhymes, exquisite images and his disciplined handling of the language make him one of the significant poets of modern Assamese poetry. The images of the external materials as well as the internal feelings have been skillfully handled Ajit Barua poems. He arranges the words in such a manner as to convey the ideas effectively but also to create an impression of stylistic excellence on the readers.

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