

## **Reflection of Assamese Folk Culture in Debendranath Acharya's novel *Anya Yug Anya Purush***

**(Social folk-customs, Material Culture and Folk performing art)**

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### **(ABSTRACT)**

The name of a momentary genius of Assamese literature was Debendranath Acharya. He had great contribution in all directions of Assamese literature like poetry, drama, novel, story, article etc. Through his first and best novel 'Anya Yug Anya Purush', he was able to get an important place in the Assamese literature world. 'Anya Yug Anya Purush' is a totally social novel. The main background of the novel is 'Gorokhiya Dol Anchal' near Jorhat district. All the social, cultural, political, economical and industrial changes that have taken place in 'Gorokhiya Dol Anchal' from the time of the arrival of East-India company to first World war are described in the novel. The present study analyses the folk-cultural scenarios found in the novel 'Anya Yug Anya Purush'.

Key word – Anya Yug Anya Purush, Folk culture, Tradition, Belief, Festival.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 ANYA YUG ANYA PURUSH : AN INTRODUCTION**

'Anya Yug Anya Purush' was the first novel of Debendranath Acharya. The novel was first published in 1970. The novel is completely social. The novel mainly reflects the life-style, tradition, believes, faith, rules and rites of a village which has been raving from Assam since pre-independence time. The author explained in the novel about the fate and ups and downs of 'Gorokhiya Dol Anchal' in twentieth century. The author mainly described about this particular area, but the environment and scenario represent overall Assam.

There is no any central story in the novel 'Anya Yug Anya Purush'. Through the narration of some simple and short stories, a story teller named 'Beng Belestar' furthers the story of the novel. He was the witness of all incident of twentieth century. The arrival of East-India company brought a lot of changes in the social life of Assam. The author describes the events of Mahatma Gandhi's Swaraj movement, 'Azad Hind Fauz' build by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose etc through the storyteller 'Beng Belestar'. The writer reflects all the Industries build in the pre-independence time of Assam- train industry, tea industry, oil industry, ship industry etc. In short we can tell that this novel describes how

a village slowly turned into a town, how the simple life of the villages became complicated after the arrival of East-India company, by the impact of British people.

## 1.2 FOLK-CULTURE : A SHORT INTRODUCTION

Folk culture refers small-scale social groups with similar tradition, belief, roles and rites, faith etc. They have their own specific customs, language, dress, music, dance etc. By example, the folk-culture of Assam are 'Bihu dance' and 'Mekhela-sador'.

Folk-culture has mainly four genres. Those four types of folk-culture has it's own parts. These are-

- 1) **Oral Folklore** : Folk Prose Narrative, Narrative folk-poetry, Folk epic, Proverbs, sayings, maxims etc, Riddles and Folk speech.
- 2) **Social folk customs** : Festivals and celebrations, Recreations and games, Folk medicine and Folk religion.
- 3) **Material Culture** : Folk crafts, Folk art, Folk architecture, Folk costume, Folk and cookery.
- 4) **Folk performing art** : Folk drama, Folk music and Folk dance.

The present study mainly analyze the folk culture specially social folk customs, material culture and folk performing art which reflects in the novel by the author.

## II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

The main objective of the research are-

- To search out the parts of folk culture described in the novel.
- To find out how the author depict folk cultural significance in the novel.
- To analyze the various folk beliefs, traditions of Assamese people described in the novel by the author.

## III. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The study mainly based on primary data. Primary data includes chosen works of the author. The secondary data includes articles, journals and internet sources etc.

## IV. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 Social folk customs:

Social folk custom includes rules and regulations, procedures, practices of a society. Tradition and beliefs are also relate with it. Some sources relate with social folk customs are festivals, games, folk religion, folk medicine etc. There is a brief description of belief and folk medicine described in the novel is given below—

#### a) Beliefs relate with Bihu festival

There are so many popular beliefs we can found among Assamese people relate with their national festival '*Bohaag bihu*'. In the particular day of the festival, people smell some leaves called '*Elaijabori*'. They believe that it can cure the disease of suddenly bleeding from nose. In the day of '*Goru bihu*', Assamese people apply *jetuka* in their hands and believe that by applying *jetuka*, the taste of the blood become bitter and hence snakes can't bite people. It can also cure skin problems and disease relate with nails. Those are some important beliefs described by the author in the novel '*Anya Yug Anya Purush*'.

#### b) Folk medicine:

In the pre-independence day of Assam, folk medicine means incantations. We can assume by this novel that incantations are very popular in the '*Mayeng*' area of Nagaon. People called the '*Tantrik*' if someone was ill in those days. For example-

"Nadu uja ahil, sakar bej ahil, bihlongonire jarile, bhute pale buli tel hani houka dhalile, bih jolokiya vangi juit di hungale, gaat hani dile. Gemtaye kerepoke nakarile." (*Anya Yug Anya Purush*, p.68)

(Nadu tantrik came, Sakar tantrik came, cause by embryophyte, applied oil thinking about the ghosts attacked him, put some ghosts silly on fire, applied in his body too. But Gemtai didn't move at all.)

### 4.2 Material Culture:

Material culture includes the life style of people, art and architecture, clothes and cosmetics, cooking food etc. There are so many description in the novel relate with material culture. We specially focused on residence and cosmetics.

#### a) Residence

The residence of Assamese people and the system of building house is straightly relate to folk culture. A picture of little strawhouses are reflect in our mind if we think about the villagers of Assamese. Their house aren't built by any mason. They built their homes by their suitability and capacity with the help of neighbour. Whether big or small, there are so many rooms for individual activities. Those are- "*Charaghar, Barghar, Horughar, Maaralghar, Huwanighar, Buloni chara, Paakghar, Dhekihaal, Taathaal, Guhaalighar, Bharalghar, Kirtanghar*" etc. The author mentioned about those in the essential paragraphs in the novel.

#### b) Cosmetics:

Some traditional cosmetics of Assamese people are- *Junbiri, Dhulbiri, Koriya, Thuriya, Golpata* etc. They are made by gold or silver. After the arrival of British in Assam, people notice so many differences in their cosmetics also. The British export the golden cosmetics to their land and import some duplicate jewellery. The Assamese people were so dumb in that time. They charmed by those fake cosmetics so much. For example-

“Etiya cumpaniye heibur salan di hekh korile, Falat hunar buta diya kanat pindha kariya ejuru dekhkhanat dekhboloi naikia hol. Ajikali jihe saksakiya kaanfuli ulal. Rasakihatar akou heiburerehe gaa jurai.” (Anya Yug Anya Purush, p.4)

(Now, British company exported them all. Hence, we can rarely found a golden earring in this country. They import some sparkling earrings. Our dumb coquette feel excited and happy by those cosmetics.)

#### 4.3 Folk performing art:

The most important part of folk performing art are- folk song, folk dance, folk instrument etc. The author described about the bihu dance, songs that sing in bihu, instrument that play in this festival. Example-

“Malaai ujai ‘*Grihasthat mangalar orthe haribol*’ buli dhulat haat diye – seu bojaai. Kandeve ‘*Deutar padulit*’ ghosha dhare.” (Anya Yug Anya Purush, p.53)

(Molaai uja started to play the dhol by praying ‘*Grihasthar mangalar orthe haribol*’ and then stated to play the beats. Kandeve sings the ghosha named ‘*Deutar padulit*’.)

“Nasaniye dhol pepar sewe sewe hatat kahi ghurai naase, mukhat maatir saki aru murat haahkoni loi nase.” (Anya Yug Anya Purush, p.53)

(Female dancers are starting to dance on those beats. They kept dishes in their hands and follow the beats beautifully.)

“Naai hunhat, tahani asil Kolakhuwa aru Haabiyal gaonr barhusari, pasutakoi *dhol*, barochoidhyota *pepa*, *toka-takarir* lelh-jukh naai.” (Anya Yug Anya Purush, p.53)

(No sweethearts, there are Barhuchari in the village of Kolakhuwa and Haabiyal then when number of instruments are five *dhol*, twelve-fourteen *pepa* and many more *toka-tokori* etc that time.)

## V. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we may conclude that-

- We can found a community of pre-independence time in the novel. The Assamese folklore was so pure then. We can easily presume the difference of Assamese folk-culture then and now.
- The novel is full of every element of Assamese Folk culture folk beliefs, folk medicine, material culture, folk dance, folk music, folk instruments etc.
- In short, the novel is the wealth of Assamese folk culture.

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