



Muslim Contribution in Assamese Literature

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Abstract. Literature is the mirror of society. It plays a very important role in the socio-cultural part of the society. The purpose of literature has always been entertained and instruct us and it is same in the context of Assamese literature. The selected topic is very much important in the present-day era. The pivotal role played by the great Muslim literature figure of Assam is very much unknown to the common books reading public of Assam. Therefore, my core intention is to bring the focus on the Muslim's contribution to Assamese literature to make it splendid and enormous to the modern-day literature.

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1. Introduction:

From Mafijuddin Ahmed Hazarika to “Char-Chapari Sahitya”, really a majestic journey of Muslims literary figures in the field of Assamese literature. It is really a fascination for me after reading “Pratimar Khanikar” and “Sugandhi Pakhilar Kabi”. It is really an enormous age for us we reading Laxminath Bezbaruah and Haider Ali in the same platform. The Muslims, particularly the Assamese Muslims, are the parts and parcel of the Assamese socio-cultural milieu. Their unfading contributions are manifested in various aspects of Assamese society and its multifaceted culture. The modern Assamese literature has been developed towards prosperity almost in all its aspects after independence according to the need of time.

2. Poetry:

Mafijuddin Ahmad Hazarika (1870-1958), the descendant of Bagh Hazarika, composed the famous poetry book ‘Jyānmālini’ (1896), and ‘Tatva Pārijāt’ which was published posthumously in 1970. A new thought of Islamic Sufism has penetrated into the modern Assamese literature through this poet. Abdus Sattar is an exalted Assamese writer, as a poet he has contributed ‘Kabar’, ‘Svarag’, and ‘Hiyār Bin āru Natun Sur’ in this field. Fatema Khatun’s ‘Ruprekhā’ and ‘Agnirekhā’, M. Ibrahim Ali’s ‘Chāhārā’, Mustafijur Rahman’s ‘Mouchumi’, and Begam Ayesha Siddika’s ‘Nirav Nisār Gān’(2000) etc. are worth-mentioning. Syed Abdul Malik composed a good number of beautiful poems. Amongst them, ‘Bijayee Jouvan’ and ‘Moi Asamiyā’ are the valuable treasures of Assamese poetry literature. Genimat Ali also composed several poems during the period of Bāhi (1910), an Assamese

periodical. Besides these poets, the name of Jamiruddin Ahmed, Md. Saleh Uddin, Eli Ahmed, Kamaluddin, Sharifa Khatun Choudhury, Anower Hussain, Sohrab Ahmed, Khabir Ahmed, Hafiz Ahmed, Lutfā Hunum, Selima Begum etc. can be mentioned with high appreciation. Many of them have got tremendous popularity throughout Assam for their beautiful poems.

Fazlul Karim is a popular lyric poet. He has presented two valuable books of this kind, viz., ‘Mor Priya Geet’ and ‘Swarachita Kabitā Pāth’. He has composed about six thousand songs and many of them have been broadcasted in the All India Radio, sung by many celebrated singers. ‘Jhankār’, a compilation of his songs, has published in two volumes. Tafazzul Ali is a well known lyric poet. His ‘Mandākrāntā’ and ‘Anustup’ are two different volumes of songs. Alimunnisha Piyar’s ‘Sur Nijara’ (1956) is also worth-noting in this respect. Barring this, Hebachat Ullah, Nurul Hoque, Tasadduk Eusuf, Jonab Ali etc. are also contributing in this field with their beautiful songs.

3. Drama:

When the quantity of modern Assamese drama was quite insignificant, at that time, Pajiruddin Ahmed’s historical drama ‘Gulenār’ (1924) and ‘Sindhu Bijay’ (1928) got immense popularity in Assamese drama literature. Abdul Mazid is a popular artist of Assamese theatre and cinema. His ‘Chor’, ‘Banchitā’ and ‘Dhuli-Mākati’ are remarkable contribution to this field. Syed Abdul Malik’s ‘Rajdrohi’ (1956) is a successful full-fledged drama. While, Ilimuddin Dewan’s ‘Dhristatā Kār’, Monirul Hussain’s ‘Ekatār na Sakti’, and Tafazzul Ali’s ‘Nepāti Kenekoi Thāko’ can be mentioned as popular one



act play. As a dramatist and one-act play writer, Ali Haidar has got much popularity. Late Mowazzin Ali was a popular cinema artist of Assam. Besides him, a fairly good number of Assamese Muslim artists have been contributing in the field of Assamese cinema and theatre with their excellent performances.

4. Short Story:

Syed Abdul Malik, a shining star in the sky of Assamese literature, was a talented and distinguished story writer. More than five decades he contributed to the Assamese literature in various aspects. His 'Parasmani' (1946), 'Rangā Garhā' (1953), 'Marahā Pāpari' (1954), 'Ejani Natun Chhowāli', 'Sisare Sisare', 'Maram Maram Lāge' (1961), 'Sil āru Sikhā' (1962), 'Asthāyi āru Antarā' (1965) etc. are most popular and immortal story books. In his story, a vivid picture of middle class Assamese society is fairly reflected. As a good short story writer, Imran Shah also has contributed few books to the Assamese literature. His 'Bandi Bhangame Kānde' and 'Piyāmukh Chandā' are two books of this kind. Besides these, Begam Jarjina Ahmed's 'Heroā Din', and 'Kasturi'; Jamiruddin Ahmed's 'Chin Desar Kāhini' and 'Atijar Sādhu', Abdul Quddus 'Hriday Maru', and 'Man Karabi'; Moslemuddin's 'Majār Sādhu', and 'Ratna dvip'; Moreover, Saidul Islam, Khabir Ahmed, Khairul Alam, Lutfur Rahman and many more established and rising story writers have been contributing in this field with their magnificent stories.

5. Novel:

One of the greatest novelists in modern Assamese literature is Syed Abdul Malik who has earned tremendous popularity and good reputation for his invaluable literary achievements. He has presented more than one score of novels, such as 'Rathar Chakari Ghure', 'Banajui', 'Chhabighar' (1958), 'Mātir Chāki' (1959), 'Suruj Mukhir Swapna' (1960), 'Jiyā Jurir Ghāt' (1960), 'Prāchir āru Prāntar' (1968), 'Sipāre Prān Samudra', 'Ruptirhar Zātri', 'Aghari Atmār Kāhini' (1969), 'Sonāli Sutāre Bandhā' (1972), 'Etā Surjya, Dukhan Nadi āru Ekhan Marubhumi' (1972), 'Ekā Bekā Britta' (1974), 'Sarirat Ekurā Jui' (1978), 'Rupābarir Palas' (1980) etc. These novels reflect a clear picture of the middle class modern Assamese society in various aspects. The novel 'Nadir Nām Siyāldah' written by Sirajuddin Ahmed of Chunari is appreciated by all. Md. Piyar is also one of the most popular novelists. A good deal of novels to his credit are- 'Priti Upahār' (1948), 'Sangrām', 'Marahā Pāpari', 'Herowā Swarga', 'Jivan Noir Jāji', 'Jowārar Dhou' etc. In his novels also we find a vivid picture of the life of middle class people of urban society. Alimunnisha Piyar's 'Mājnisā Tarāi Uchupe' is also an absorbing novel. Besides these, Dewan Abdul Hamid's 'Navajāgaran', Abdul Rahim Mustafi's 'Sonāli Sapon', Khabir Ahmed's 'Arakshir Dinlipi', Ayesha Ashraf Ahmed's 'Ejani Pāra Charāir Dinlipi' (2002) and Musebar Rahman's 'Prem Pratighāt' (1993) are also

invaluable contributions to the enduring treasury of Assamese literature.

6. Essay and Criticism:

A fairly good number of Muslim writers have been contributing to enrich this aspect of Assamese literature with their utmost endeavour. At first the name of Abdus Sattar can be mentioned in this regard. 'Asamiyā Sāhityat Bibidh Ālochanā', 'Sāhityikā', 'Sangmisranat Asamiyā Sanskriti' (1965, 1972, 1986), 'Sāhityar Pravāh āru Sampriti Chāneki' are valuable books to his credit. Md. Mahibulla's 'Duniyādāri' is an interesting book of this kind. Firdosh Ali of Sivasagar and Rayhan Shah are two powerful essay writers. The latter has translated some Rubāyats of Omar Khayam into Assamese language. In regards of comparative criticism, Md. Taibulla's 'Unmul Qurān' is a book of highly appreciable. Chand Mohammad Choudhury of Kamrup is a well-known writer who has contributed various articles and essays to Assamese literature. His 'Bibāh Chitra' is an interesting book of this type. Ashraf Ali is a prolific writer who has contributed a good number of articles relating to various contemporary problems of the society. Kutubuddin Ahmed is a good critic of Assamese drama. Elimuddin Dewan's 'Amar Swahid', 'Char Chāparir Jivan Dhārā', 'Itihāsar Bāmāralit Samrāt Duhitā Jāhānārā' and 'Matibhrasta Nawāb Sirāj ne Bikārgrasta Ingrāj' are good articles. Barring these, the name of M. Ibrahim Ali, Kobad Ali, M. Salehuddin, Akela Khatun, Abdul Mannan, Ismail Hussain, Akbar Ahmed, Monirul Hussain, Afjal Hussain, Sajimuddin Ahmed etc. can be mentioned as influential writers who have been contributing their thoughtful articles published in various souvenirs, periodicals and newspapers.

7. Islamic Literature:

A fairly good number of Muslim writers have been enriched the Assamese literature with their valuable Islamic books. At the very beginning the name of Md. Keramat Ali can proudly be mentioned. He has written more than one score of such books. Of course, most of them are small in size. The books to his credit are- 'Akanir Korānar Galpa', 'Ādhunik Zug-Jigyāsār Islāmi Jowāb' (2 vols), 'Asamiyā Niyāmul Korān', Biswa Nabir Mirāj', 'Biswar Pavitratam Tinitā Masjid', 'Chāri Imāmar Jivani', 'Hazarat Mohāammad', 'Hādichar Path' (2000), 'Pirar Dargāh āru Muslim Samāj', 'Priya Nabir Dowā', 'Purus Mohilār Islām āru Nāmāj Sikhā', 'Ramzānar Rojā āru Iyār Tātparya', 'Sandeher Domojāt Islām', and 'Tabligi Chhay Uchhul'. Syeda Sakina Ashraf has presented more than one dozen of books of different kinds to the Assamese literature. Amongst them, 'Hādichar Galpa' (1968), 'Darud Sharifār Fajilat' (1978, 1994), 'Bayānul Āmol' (1982, 1992), 'Haji-Kathā' (1998), 'Divine Path' (1997), 'Mahāsatyar Ālokpāt' and 'Brāhman Pariyālar Tattāvadhānat ek Aitihāsik Masjid' are worth mentioning.



Najruddin Ahmed's 'Asamiyā Moulad Sharif' is a useful book, where the life, achievements and the greatness of Prophet Hazarat Mohammad is vividly described. Highlighting the Islam and religious life, a comprehensive introduction has been given by Dr. Muhibul Hoque in his 'Islāmi Jivan' (3 vols). Dr. Danis Mohammmad also has presented the 'Sāntir Nijarā', a book of the same type. Md. Akram has analysed the Quranic philosophy scientifically, and has thrown a new light to the Assamese literature through his book 'Ājir Zug āru Korān'. 'Asamiyā Zikir āru Jāri' (1952) edited by Syed Abdul Malik, and 'Asamiyā Zikir-Jāri Sār'(1990) collected and edited by S.M. Hussain, are two outstanding contributions to the Assamese literature. Abdul Hekim's 'Ved āru Korān', N. Zaman's 'Dharma Vigyān āru Zukti' (1982), Saleh Kazim's 'Sufi Sāheb' (1950), Jeibunnisha's 'Kobhedis' and 'Hajar Kāhini' are undoubtedly the valuable treasure of the Assamese literature. In addition to these, Mirja Atifur Rahman Beg, Alhaj Motiur Rahman and a good quantum of Muslim writers have been contributing their valuable books and articles to increase the number and quality of the Assamese Islamic literature.

8. Biography:

The first biography of the Prophet Hazarat Mohammad in Assamese language was written in the same name by Fajjuddin Ahmed. This book incorporates a magnificent elucidation of Quranic teachings. Two more books to his credit are-'Hazarat Amar Fāruk' and 'Ābu Bakkar Siddik' maintain the same standard of the author. Mirja Abdur Rahman Beg's 'Islām Jeuti' is a remarkable book of this kind. 'Adarsa Nabi' and 'Hazarat Āzān Pir' (1972), of Muhibul Hussain are two fine biographical books. Nawab Danis Mohammad's 'Bibi Fātimā', Sader Ali's 'Islām Rabi' (a biography of Hazarat Mohammad), and 'Nabi Charitra' written by Mekibuzzan Ahmed of Jorhat, are remarkable books of this kind. Abdus Sattar's 'Bāhādur Gāonburhār Jivani', 'Gāndhijir Jivan Kathā', 'Dr. Zakir Hussain', 'Pandit Pravar Krishnakānta Sandikoi' and 'Biswanabi āru Islām' are perhaps more sufficient to introduce him as an influential Assamese writer. Syeda Sakina Ashraf's 'Hazarat Barpir' (1992), 'Sastha Satir Ākhyān' (1994), and 'Biswanabi Charit' (1996) are the unfading treasure of this line. Abdul Majid Khan's 'Amār Indhirā Gāndhi', and 'Anukaraniya Jivan Chayan' are two books of this type. Najar Ali's 'Mor Jivanar Kichhu Kathā' (1967) and Mahammad Taibulla's 'Kārāgār Chithi' also apt to be mentioned in this respect.

9. Children Literature:

In the field of Children literature also the Assamese Muslims are not lagging behind, and many of them have earned good reputation. First of all, the name of Abdus Sattar can be mentioned. His 'Navajyoti', 'Sādhur Sarāi', 'Akani Akani Powālmani' and 'Agni Parikshā' are noteworthy contribution to this field of Assamese

literature. Kamaluddin Ahmed's 'Mallikā'; Ashanuddin Ahmed's 'Niti Sapon'(1912); Suleiman Khan's 'Kavitā Puthi'; Jamiruddin Ahmed's 'Minār', and Syeda Sakina Ashraf's 'Sisur Hazarat Mohammad'(1989) are remarkable books of this kind. Besides these, 'Kāchijon', a children magazine edited by M. Ibrahim Ali in 1969, have got an important place in the history of Assamese children literature. The name of Harunar Rashid and Eli Ahmed also can be noted in this regard.

10. Translated Literature:

Harunar Rashid has presented a good number of books of this kind. Such as- 'Ratna Dvip', 'Tom Khurār Jupuri', 'Banabir Tārjan', 'Oliver Twist', 'Three Masketeers', 'Henry Fourth' and 'Good Earth' are can proudly be mentioned. These books are translated from the English literature in a lucid literary style. Ataur Rahman has translated the whole Qur'an into Assamese in different volumes. Md. Sader Ali also has translated the entire Qur'an into Assamese with the title 'Pavitra Korān'. The book 'Kimiyaē chā ādat' written by Imam Gazzali (1058-1111) on the basis of Quranic philosophy, is translated concisely and vividly into Assamese by Kefayat Ullah with the title 'Paramārtha Darpan', while the first part of the same book is also rendered into Assamese by Abdus Sattar with the title 'Soubhāgya Parasmani'. Syeda Sakina Ashraf's 'Mānav Jivan', (1979), Alimunnisha Piyar's 'Rāmdhenu', Abul Leis' 'Tom Choyār' (1961), Mohammad Piyar's 'Hāifen' (1961), Sakil Zamal's 'Mānuhar Kramavikāsar Kāhini', Toufic Barua's 'Sonāli Jakhālā', and Tasadduk Ahmed's 'Mānav Adhikār', Rayhan Shah's 'Bilupta Jagat' (The Lost World) etc. can be mentioned with much appreciation.

11. Travellouge:

During the holy journey to Mecca in order to perform Hajj, several Muslim writers of Assam registered their memorable experience in the form of books in Assamese. Amongst them, 'Hajar Kāhini' of Dr. Nurul Huda, and 'Hajj Zātrir Dāyeri' of Nawab Danis Mohammad is worthmentioning. 'Bidesat Dudinmān' is an interesting book written by Abdus Sattar, where the life of the people of Afghanistan is fairly reflected. Ataur Rahman's 'Bhārat Bhramilo' is another book of this type, having beautiful description of the travelling throughout India. Mustafijur Rahman's 'Tusār Marur Prānta' is also remarkable in this regard.

12. Miscellaneous:

Abdus Sattar's 'Prasanga Kosh' is a valuable book where a vivid discussion of religion, literature and culture is incorporated. Syeda Sakina Ashraf's 'Nagaland' (1973) is a beautiful book written in a lucid literary style about the people of Nagaland. Her 'Fakiri Chikitsā' (1979), a treatise on folk medicinal treatment is to be noted with appreciation. 'Asamar Bidesi Samasyā' is a small book

written by Md. Keramat Ali, about the foreign national problems of Assam. Abdus Sattar's (ed.) 'Saptam Dasakar Asamiyā Bhāsā Sāhityar Itibritta' (1978), and Tafazzul Ali's (ed.) 'Madhyabingsa Satikār Asamiyā Sāhitya' (1974), are two valuable books relating to the history of Assamese literature. Haidar Hussain's 'Prānkumbhar Pāre Pāre' (2004) is a beautiful book, where an autobiographical picture of his life is vividly reflected in a lucid manner. Different items of cooking system including the Mughalai method, is embodied in the book-'Tripti Bhojan' written by Begam Fanowara Hazarika. Such book is found to be rare in Assamese literature and this book and its cooking items are widely popular in the Assamese urban society.

Apart from this, Muslim contribution to the Assamese Journals, Magazines, Newspapers and other Periodicals also can never be ignored. In support of this fact, Tafazzul Ali's (ed.) 'Sangrām' etc. can be cited as example. 'Āzān', a weekly, monthly and quarterly magazine of Ilimuddin Dewan, 'Ankur' (1977), edited by A. Zaman from Goalpara, 'Muzāhid' edited by Kefayat Ullah, 'Sikshā Pradip' (1972), a half yearly magazine edited by Nur Hasan from Goalpara, and 'Jana-Jivan' (1987), published by Abdul Mannan from Guwahati, etc. also apt to be noted in this regard. 'Prachārak' a monthly magazine was published by Mirja Beg (editor) from Dibrugarh in the early part of the twentieth century is of much significant. Besides these, the 'Saptāhik Khabar' (2003) edited by Syed Robiul Hoque, published from Goalpara, 'Jamiyat', a weekly newspaper, edited by A.J. Bagibi, published from Hojai, 'Hedāyat' a monthly Islamic magazine, edited and published by Md. Keramat Ali from Dakshingaon, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, are also worth-mentioning with much appreciation. Although these newspapers, periodicals and magazines have been published in different times from different parts of Assam, some of them continued for several years, while a few of them could not survive long. However, a fairly good number of them are still functioning with great enthusiasm.

13. Conclusion:

In the light of the above discussion, it appears that besides the Islamic influence on the early and modern Assamese literature, the Muslims of Assam have been playing a vital and significant role in the development of Assamese literature right from the time of later medieval period. Amongst the poets of this period, the name of Chand Shai, Azan Fakir, Maznudil Fakir etc. can proudly be mentioned. In the early stage of modern Assamese literature Mafijuddin Ahmad Hazarika's contribution is remarkable in many ways. He is popularly known as 'Gyānmālinir Kavi', and was the President of 'Asam Sāhitya Sabhā' in 1929. During the modern and post-modern periods, the contribution of the Assamese Muslims in various aspects of Assamese literature is indeed more significant. Many of them have been honoured by the Assam Government with the literary pension. For instance,

the name of Mafijuddin Ahmad Hazarika, Syed Abdul Malik, Abdus Sattar, Mohammad Piyar, Md. Sader Ali, Syeda Sakina Ashraf etc. can be mentioned. It should be noted with appreciation that Syed Abdul Malik is one of the glittering jewels of the contemporary Assamese literature. His unfading literary achievements can reasonably be designated as 'Magnum Opus' in the golden treasury of Assamese literature. In fact, he was one of the Assamese litterateurs of versatile talent. He achieved the Sahitya Academy Award from Delhi in 1972, and also honored as the President of 'Asam Sāhitya Sabhā' in 1977 at Abhayapuri session. He is popularly known as 'Kathā Kavi' in the Assamese literature. Moreover, at present, a substantial number of Assamese Muslim writers including poets, novelists, dramatists, short story writer and many more have been contributing with their utmost endeavour and creative capability.

It should be noted here that in regards of the verbal art or oral literature of Assam, the Islamic influence as well as the outstanding contribution of the Muslims can never be forgotten. As noted earlier, the Zikirs and Jāris are the unique contribution of the Muslims to the Assamese literature. Barring this, in the Assamese oral narratives such as- folk tales, legends, ballads, proverbs, riddles, and different types of folksongs like-marriage songs, Ghazals, Qāwāli, Cherādhek, Lokageets, Mohoho songs, Haidar ghāzīr geet, songs of boat-race, nursery rhymes etc. also the profound influence of the Muslims is noticeable. Of course, the Zikirs, Jāris, Ghazals, Qāwāli, Cherādhek, Haidar ghāzīr geet etc., are exclusive to the Muslims only.

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