

Assamese Buranji Literature : A Study

Samutjal Saikia,

Junior Research fellow, Assamese Department, Dibrugarh University, Assam, India
Corresponding Author : Samutjal Saikia

ABSTRACT: The writing Assamese Buranji (History) literature was originated in the medieval Ahom period. Some people in the medieval period started writing Buranjis under the inspiration of The Ahom Kings. The tradition of writing Buranjis were there among the Ahom people from the ancient time and in the Buranjis, they captured the governing system and customs of their states, various wars, experiences, their relationship with other states etc. Some of the Buranjis written by them are Xatxori Axom Buranji, Tungkhungia Buranji, Deodhai Axom Buranji etc. These Buranjis give a picture of the cultural, social, political and economic aspects of Assamese society and hence these are always considered as valuable assets of Assamese literature.

KEYWORDS: Buranji, Assamese, Ahom, Tradition, Literature.

Date of Submission: 15-06-2018

Date of acceptance: 30-06-2018

I. INTRODUCTION

In Assamese language and literature, Buranjis are considered as valuable assets as these capture various informations regarding the political, economic, linguistic and cultural facets of the medieval Assam. Hence, these Buranjis have always been standing as significant creation for the cultural life of Assam. The term Buranji is etimologically derived from Ahom language where it means “A store that teaches the ignorant”. On the other hand, in its general sense, the term Buranji signifies the ancient happenings, events, history etc.

Though the exact time period of writing the Buranjis cannot be pinpointed, but the century in which these are written can be assumed from various sources. The Ahoms used to write Buranjis in their own language before started writing in Assamese. When the first Ahom King Chaolung Sukapha arrived Soumyapith after crossing the Patkai mountains, he ordered the scholars coming with him such as Siring, Mohan Bailung etc. in the following way: “Whoever dies, whom we meet, whatever happens en route, everything has to be written”. Therefore, it can be known that the Ahoms who arrived Assam in the year 1228, started writing Buranji from the thirteenth century. The practice of writing Buranjis in Assamese language started when the Ahoms accepted it as the official language of the royal court. They even established a particular department for writing Buranjis and the chief officer of this department was Borgohain. The Buranjis were written under the guidance of Gondhia Baruah and Gondhia Phukon with the assistance of the writers and these were preserved in Gondhia store house. On the other hand, the writers and the copyist were directed with a person titled Baruah. Through this system, the Ahoms started the tradition of writing the Buranjis.

Regarding the origin of Buranji, Satyandranath Sharma says that the Buranjis were written in Assamese language in the middle of the seventeenth century and the Buranji literature flourished in the eighteenth century. He further says: “The Buranjis written before the seventeenth century were written in Ahom language. Most probably, *Purani Axom Buranji* (Ancient Assam Buranji) published by Hemchandra Goswami and *Bnahgoria Buranji* edited by Dr. Bhuyan were written towards the end of the seventeenth century. However, the Ahom Buranjis were started to be written in Assamese language from the beginning of the eighteenth century.” Up to the reign of Godadhar Singha, the major part of the Buranji of Assam were written in Assamese.

II. CLASSIFICATION OF BURANJI LITERATURE

On the basis of its subject matter, various writers have classified the Buranjis in different categories. The famous writer Lila Gogoi, from his investigation, has divided the Buranjis in the following way:

- (a) Buranji of the pre-Ahokm age
- (b) Buranji of the Ahom age
- (c) Dnatiolia Buranji,
- (d) Buranji of other states
- (e) Katak Buranji,
- (f) Sakalia’s Buranji and
- (g) Sangrung Phukan’s Buranji.

According to him, these Buranjis are significant from three aspects and these are : 1. Buranjis are unique piece of work produced in the modern Indian languages, 2. These are the expression of the language of the common men and the ruling class of the royal court of the Ahom kingdom, 3. It gives a detailed account of the contemporary time.

Another writer Satyanath Sharmadev has divided the Buranjis in two categories: 1. Buranji of the state of Assam or Ahom(by including Purani Axom Buranji, Tungkhungia Buranji, Deodhai Buranji, Satsari Axom Buranji etc.) and 2. Buranji of the neighbouring states or countries(by including the Buranjis of Jayantia, Kachari, Tripura, Padshah etc.)

Dr. Surja Kumar Bhuyan has divided Buranjis in three categories:

1. From the reign of King Bhagadutta to the beginning the Ahom rule (up to 1228): In this category, Bhuyan includes the legends of the pre-Ahom period, various equipments of the ancient literature and the Buranjis, governing system of Kamrup)
2. From the beginning of the Ahom rule or 1228 AD to the decline of their rule or up to the Treaty of Yandabo: This category includes Ancient Assam Buranji, Assam Buranji (found in the house of Sukumar Mahanta), Assam Buranji (edited by Mr. Sarat Kumar Datta), Assam Buranji (Harakanta Baruah Magistrate), Tungkhungia Buranji etc.
3. Buranjis of the neighbouring countries of Assam: This category includes the Buranjis about the neighbouring kingdoms of the Ahoms.

III. SUBJECT MATTER OF BURANJI LITERATURE

In Assamese Buranji literature, the lion's part is the Buranji about the Ahom Kingdom, and the rest is about its neighbouring states. The subject matters that these Buranjis reflect are described below:

1. Buranjis include discussion of the political events of its time and it accurately captures the dates of the important historical events, description of various wars, its strategies, results etc.
2. The life story of the kings, queens, ministers and other people from royal family, direct speech of these people and the description of the dynasties etc. are included in the Buranjis.
3. Buranjis give us a depiction of the various war weapons, documents, designations of the king's palace and so on.
4. The Buranjis about the neighbouring states give us a picture of the various events of those place and the political relationship between the states.

The Buranji literature show a kind of distinguishing feature in terms of the language and manner of composition and some of them are mentioned below:

1. The language used for writing Buranji is basically oral prose language, but instances of writing Buranjis in verse are also seen such as Axom Padya Buranji(Verse Buranji of Assam) Darrang Rajbankhawali etc.
2. From the manner of writing, Buranjis are divided in four categories:
 - a. Ahom script and Ahom language
 - b. Ahom script and Assamese language
 - c. Assamese script and Assamese language
 - d. Assamese script and Ahom language
3. The language of Buranjis do not show any kind of artificiality as these are written in the language actually used by the people in their conversation. But it doesn't make the Language of Buranji dry and it is rightly pointed out by Suraj Kumar Bhuyan: "The language of Buranji is not like dry bone-skin, rather, there is a reflection of emotions and feelings in it."
4. To make the subject matters depicted in Buranjis lucid and gripping, proverbs and figures of speech are included in its language.

The sentences containing the sharp mental emotions in Buranjis are written in the following way: "Moi matir gor bandhim khohibo, kothor gar bandhim posibo, moi kothar gar bandhi disu pran pori bhugi hobo."(Deodhai Axom Buranji), " Nao tol jabo, xil upongibo, kua boga hoba luit ujai boba tebe amar Kabul saribek"(Deodhai Buranji), " Beji holehe botia, mora holehe Sali, gajantar mukuta manic palexe pali"(Deodhai Buranji) etc.

On the other hand, some of the proverbs used in Buranjis are: "Ake dhangote dutakoi bagh kot thake?(Purani Axom Buranji), Hatrur tez borhai thoboloi bhal nuhe (Axom Buranji), Tita gosor agu tita, gurio tita, (Satsori Axom Buranji), Induror mukhot kahani hastidanta goje? Pithi dile hasti parbataku nedeki, Barphukanor horirti jene huna, mukkhoni huwarar thena, Hija xakot lun dibo nukhuje etc.

5. Due to their participation in wars, the Ahoms were acquainted with the Muslims and had a good relationship with them. They even learnt the Muslim languages and hence, in the Buranjis such as Padshyah, Satsori Axom Buranji etc. Arabi and Persian words are used. For instance: "Atepase Buragohain Dangoriai subadar ata aru jamadar duta rakhi kisuman hanyak sipahi dhorone hikai bujai lole. Bhaleman din dhoru judhar niyam xikai uthara kumpani sipahi toiar korile. Aru dangoriai sipahiburok pathor , kolai hilo, kiris, khar- muna, kurta, tupi, kumarbandha, deomoni, dambaru, dhal aru tenga pindhiboloi dile, aru jibure xikale hiburak bata praxad diyale"
6. As the Buranjis contain the depiction of various dynasties, so these Buranjis possess the characteristics of the genealogy literature written in the Xatria society.
7. The name of the writers cannot be found in the Buranjis. Hence, Maheswar Neog says: " In this case, these Buranjis written in prose show similarity with Katha Charit"
8. The mention of incidents, dates, years, speech, place etc. in the Buranjis are based on accuracy and there is no place for imagination in it. Moreover, Buranjis are bereft of any personal bias which gives these an empirical quality and this empirical quality is a very significant characteristic of Buranjis.

IV. CONCLUSION

So, it can be seen that the Buranjis written in the time of the Ahom rule are significant from various aspects. Some institutions such as Kamrup Investigation Committee, Buranji and Archeology Department etc. find out many Buranjis written in the medieval period and take the task of preserving it. Up to contemporary period, approximately one hundred and fifty Buranjis are rescued. Many prominent literary figures such as Hemchandra Goswami, Surjakumar Bhnya, Lila Gogoi, Sarat Kumar Datta, etc. have edited some of the Buranjis and published it. Many Buranjis were destroyed by natural disasters, insects, invasion of Burmese etc. But the Buranjis rescued up to the present time are proved very instrumental in providing information about the medieval period. It is worth mentioning here that among the modern Indian languages, it is the Assamese language in which Buranjis are first written and prominent figures Anondoram Dhekial Phukon, G.A. Griarson etc. have commented on this. Here we can mention the comment given by G.A. Griarson: "The Assamese are justly proud of their national literature. In no department have they been more successful than in a branch of study in which India, as a rule, is curiously deficient....The historical works or Buranjis, as they are styled by the Assamese, are numerous and voluminous. A knowledge of Buranjis was an indispensable qualification to an Assamese gentleman." Hence, we can conclude by calling the Buranjis as valuable assets of Assamese culture.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Sarma, Satyendranath : *Asamiya Sahityar Samikhyatmak Itibitra*, 10th edition, 2011
- [2]. Neog, Maheswar : *Asamiya Sahityar Ruprekha*, 11th edition, 2010
- [3]. Sarma, Banikanta (ed.) : *Asamiya Sahityar Buranji : Tritiya Khanda* (History of Assamese Literature, Vol. III), first edition, 2017
- [4]. Goswami, Ashok Kumar (ed.) : *Viswakos* (Encyclopaedia of Assamese, Vol. IV), first edition, 2003

Samutjal Saikia." Assamese Bujanji Literature : A Study." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)* 7.06 (2018): 54-56.