

# The Language and Social Life of Mamoni Raisom Goswami's Autobiography 'Adhalekha Dastabez'

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**Abstract**—Mamoni Raisom Goswami is a prominent writer of Assamese literature. This autobiographical essay is a document of the life of Mamoni Raisom Goswami, written in the nineteenth century, and reflects her immense life experiences from childhood to youth. Therefore, the sense of social life is more pronounced in the description of the subject matter in the book. The autobiography is a heartfelt description of the prejudices, hypocrisy, sacrifice and the decline of true humanity in the name of customs and traditions. The author uses the regional language of South Kamrup as well as various local and foreign languages in the language of the autobiography. The clever use of language makes the narrative of the autobiography more interesting. Our discussion attempts to highlight the social life and language used in the 'Adhalekha Dastabez' autobiography.

**Index Terms**—Social life, customs, language, autobiography, Adhalekha Databa.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Literature and society are closely related. They create literature based on their experiences while living in society. Autobiographical literature in Assamese literature is an important part where the image of the author's contemporary society and social life along with the writer's life story are revealed.

The book is divided into four chapters. Such chapters are divided to preserve an order of description. Goswami arranges the events of his life in a certain order. Therefore, the main thread of the flow of events is not lost in the presentation. In other words, an artistic form of the autobiography has been created. Mamoni Raisom Goswami's 'Adhalekha Dastabez' mainly reflects her personal life. Where and when and how he was born, where and in what environment she spent the first part of her adolescence and youth, what books she read, what

were her childhood experiences in her home and surroundings, and how she went on to literature - the memories of such personal things are detailed in this book.

Mamoni Raisom Goswami's 'Adhalekha Dastabez' paints a realistic picture of religious narrowness and contemporary society. The context of the autobiography is the memories of many events in the author's life. Her abundance of descriptions gives her works an extraordinary appearance. The author's autobiography is particularly noteworthy in this regard:

"The stories or experiences of Mamoni Raisom Goswami's 'Adhalekha Dastabez' are her personal life. These events or experiences have also helped Mamoni Raisom to become a writer. The main reason of being an exceptional autobiography in Assamese literature is that the author hasn't hidden anything of her exceptional life though she is an Assamese girl and an Assamese young woman."<sup>1</sup>

## II. SIGNIFICANCE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Humanitarian writer Mamoni Raisom Goswami boldly presents real experience in her autobiography 'Adhalekha Dastabez'. The hypocrisy of society and an orthodox mentality make a woman's life helpless. Many societies in rural areas are still suffering from such a low mentality. Therefore, there is an importance of such studies to raise awareness in this regard.

The objectives of the study entitled "The Social Life and the application of Language of Mamoni Raisom Goswami's autobiography 'Adhalekha Dastabez' are as follows:

- To study the picture of religious traditional society in the autobiography 'Adhalekha Dastabez' by Mamoni Raisom Goswami.
- To examine the superstitions and stereotypes reflected in the autobiography 'Adhalekha Dastabez' by Mamoni Raisom Goswami.
- To discuss the reflection of the Place of women in traditional Satriya society in the autobiography 'Adhalekha Dastabez'.
- Study the application of language in the autobiography 'Adhalekha Dastabez' by Mamoni Raisom Goswami.

### III. METHODS OF THE STUDY

Analytical method is specially applied here. In analytical research, the researcher has to use facts or information already available and analyze these to make critical evaluation of the material. Here we tried to analysis the language, socio-cultural perspective of the autobiography. According to the necessity of the study, it uses a descriptive method also.

### IV. SOURCE OF THE STUDY

The main source of the study is the 'Adhalekha Dastabez' autobiography.

### V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Our discussion mainly studies two aspects: language and society. In social aspects of the study include the Satra's spiritual life, social intellectual thinking, contemporary society and their culture. As part of the linguistic aspects, the use of imagery, expressive sentences, phrases, regional languages to clarify the story objects are all included in the scope of this study.

#### 1.0 Reflection of Social Life in the autobiography "Adhalekha Dastabez"

Mamoni Raisom Goswami, a prominent writer of the Ramdhenu Yug of Assamese Literature, is a master at creating poetic literature based on visual experiences gained from society. The author's intense self-analysis of her personal life is reflected in the characteristics of an autobiography.

#### 1.1 Background of 'Adhalekha Dastabez'

The author's commitment to society is expressed when she talks about her life. The autobiography paints a painful picture of the manifestations of

poverty in social life, antique superstitions, strict rules and regulations of society and many other problems. Especially the lives of Brahmin women who wear widow's clothes under the influence of excluded driving forces. Mamoni Raisom Goswami is Dexterous in delineating the images of realism in society. In her autobiography, she portrays the contemporary religious society and the lives of women exploited in that traditional conservative society. The writer also described vividly the tragic life of women and how they had to spend the life in the conservative society in 'Adhalekha Dastabez'

Besides being characterized the use of regional language of Lower Assam in the autobiography, it is notable to have metaphors, rhetoric, imagery, expressive sentences and poetic sentences.

#### 1.2 reflection of superstitious beliefs in 'Adhalekha Dastabez'

The author beautifully portrays how superstitions and stereotypes of society destroy women's lives in 'Adhalekha Dastabez'. For example-

“bor beya sowarani- nabagrahar egaraki pandite makak sanmukhate kole- aijani sowali biya diyatkoii dutukura kori kati nadit vbhai diyai val habo” (Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 23)

(‘Very bad Horoscope’, a Navagraha scholar told his mother in front of her. "It is better to cut this girl into pieces and throw her into the river than to marry her.)

The autobiography was strongly influenced by religious reforms as well as meaningless superstitions and superstitious beliefs. The autobiography is a clear reflection of prejudice in the name of religion such as:

“bagala devik puja karile sowalijanir papo graho dur hbo, usit sthant bibahu hbo, manashik asantiu dur hbo. Gatike kamakhya dhamar bagala devir pitholoi ni devik bali utsarga kriba lagib.”

(“If you worship Bagala Devi, the girl's sins will be removed, she will get married in the right place and her mental troubles will be removed. Therefore, you have to take her to the shrine of Bagala Devi in kamakhya Dham and offer sacrifices to her. (Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 25)

This speech was of a prominent astrologer. The author rebels against such traditions through her autobiography:

“bagala devir pujar pastu mor biya nahal. Bahudinaloi moi mor kapalat kesha tejor uttap ata

anubhb kari thakile. Kapalkhan pihi thka mor ata abhyasate parinat hol”

(“I didn't get married even after the worship of Bagala Devi. For a long time, I felt the heat of raw blood on my forehead. It became a habit of me to rub my forehead. (Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 26)

The author also describes the superstitions and stereotypes of Brahmin widows in the society. The pain of widowhood that comes into the life of the author after the death of her husband is painful. The author also protested against this such as:

"Once I was with a widow at an auspicious festival at my house in Guwahati when they ate together, I left that meal behind.” (Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 70)

"I did not believe in external strict morality except purity of heart. In my childhood I saw pictures of the lives of several Brahmin widows who lived a difficult life under the bonds of this morality. She became a widow and the other Brahmin women who went to report that day shouted at their daughters to leave.

"Don't touch, don't touch just a widow! Don't touch her!!" (Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 70)

In his autobiography, Goswami accurately describes a terrible life of widowhood, fasting, cruel and unhealthy rituals during widowhood. These rules are completely covered with superstitions. As a result, they are married at a very young age and in case of divorce or widowhood, the woman becomes garbage in the eyes of the society without her husband. The author describes such a realistic picture in her autobiography.

1.3 Social platform of Women in the ‘Adhlekha Dastabez’:

The autobiography brings to life the picture of the nineteenth century Assamese society. The speaker brings to life the picture of the Assamese society of the nineteenth century. The painful cause of the speaker's heart is described as follows:

“konobai jen kane kane koisil- tomak kone biya koarabo? Tumi atmohatyar chestra kra manuh? Ai premikbor? Sihate tomk kiman duraloi loi jabo? Ai jiban? Aai jibane sakolu tani-ajuri sesot akebre nagoth kriyei alibatt thiyo krai dib” (Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 22)

(“Someone seemed to say in my ear, ‘Who will marry you? You are suicide attempted people? Those girlfriends? How far will they take you? This life? This life will pull everything together and eventually leave you naked on the street.’”)

The autobiography describes how despite being a pure female being and a holder of traditional ideas, she has not stopped living a lonely life amidst the harsh reforms and twists and turns of contemporary society. Such descriptions have given the autobiography the status of a pure autobiography.

In addition, the suffering of the Radheshyamis of Vrindavan, Goswami also describes a picture in her autobiography. such as-

“saru saru khuparijatiya ghar kisumant teuloke din atibahito krisil. Sarahbhagei purbabangr dinajpur rajsahi etydair manuh. Kisumane bhaktibhat gad gad hoi ei sthanaloi ahisil jadiu besivagei paribarik asantit thkibo nuwari brajodhamt ashoi loisil. Sarhbhagr kahini bor nirmom aru jantanadayk asil” (Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 128)

(“They spent their days in small huts. Most of them were from Dinajpur, Rajsahi in East Bengal. Some came to this place in devotion but most took refuge in Brajodham because of family unrest. Most of the stories were cruel and painful.)

1.4 Reflection of social aspects in 'Adhalkha Dastabez':

There is another aspect revealed in the autobiography 'Adhalekha Dastabez' by Mamoni Raisom Goswami. The rich have been oppressing the poor in society since ancient times. In her autobiography, the author defines a realistic picture- how the contractors have deprived the economically lower-class people like labour without rewarding them for their hard work- "On the other hand, the plight of the workers accompanying the 'pitchwalkers' (contractors) in Ganjam in Orissa and Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh became clearer to me day by day. I came to know the daily paid rate was three rupees fifty paise but only two rupees fifty paise was given to the workers. No one could open their mouths. If anyone challenged, the contractor would strip him naked and threaten to fire him from the company.”

In this autobiography another aspect of the reflected society is the heartfelt scenery of exhausted society under the influence of opium. For example-

"Was it only kultur who took opium? At that time, almost all the elephant mahals on the southern bank probably took opium. In 1927, the number of registered opium takers was 98,000. There was no limit to the number of unregistered ears. (Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 79)

The author also described a heart touching picture of the temple community who are suffering from leprosy as follows:

"I used to see a crowd of lepers sitting at the door of the marble temple of Bihari built by Kundal Lal Sah in 1876.

1.5 Male centric mentality reflected in 'Adhalekha Dastabeza':

In his autobiography, Goswami broadly exposes the misdeeds of a class of opportunistic male characters in society. This class of characters who take advantage of the weaknesses of lonely women is described as follows:

'While I was alone in Goalpara, I met some very strange people. These were men. They were looking for opportunities to spend time with lonely women. Introduced as a well-wisher, a male spread some nude pictures on my reading table, at this a hatred came to my mind for all the males' character. Ofcourse, it is foolish to pass comments from one or two instances of this kind.' (Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 92)

Though, it is seen that the society which is reflected in the autobiography is the of Goswami's experience of life. Goswami succeeds in holding different social aspects. Indeed, the expression of social life in the autobiography seems to be the responsibility of Goswami towards society. The echo of the magic of words of compassion is seen to flow in the mirk corner of Goswami's heart. Skilled in painting realistic pictures from her own experience, Goswami presents a stigmatized chapter of society while also establishing a protesting voice. Her motto is to alert the society by mentioning the journey of loneliness in a painful life.

2.0 Application of language in 'Adhalekha Dastabez': The language used by Mamoni Raisom Goswami in her autobiography 'Adhalekha Dastabez' is based on diverse and distinct expressions. The author uses regional languages, especially the language of South Kamrup, to clarify the subject matter and metaphors, rhetoric, expressive sentences, etc. to make the description more interesting and touching. In fact, it is through language that literature takes on a life-giving form.

2.1 Regional Languages:

She uses regional language to describe the customs prevalent in rural society. For example – Maichana Gau pau dhui ahisane? Bharit seimakha dekho pok (Adhalekha p. 83)

(... Maichena, have you bathed? I see those packs on your feet.)

"nusubi nusubi! Gus heloi gus gahair bapu aru maichana ahibi nusubi!" ( Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 76) (Don't touch, don't touch! Leave way, Gahai's Bapu and Maichena have come, don't touch!)

The statement uses the regional language of lower Assam. Such used of this language makes the subject of the statement clear.

2.2 Application of expressions and imagery:

The autobiography is characterized by a skillful use of expression and imagery language. As for example -

Katodin par hol dighal darire saite jisur mukhar sobi ankaar? Kotdin par hol rang tulika aru ijel doliyai peluwar. Tothapiu sabiye abhibhuta kre." (Adhalekha Dastabez, p. 16)

(... how long has it been since I painted the face of Jesus with a long beard? How long has it been since I threw away my paint-brush and easel. Still, the picture impresses.)

2.3 Rhetorical Language:

Mamoni Roysom Goswami uses metaphor to enhance the narrative in her autobiography. Describing the natural beauty of Shillong, she says, "utar dore loga takola paharbor thmthmkoi jen bohi asil" (p. 19) (. the camel-like mountains seemed to sit still.)

2.4 Poetic Language:

The poetic beauty of Goswami's every works makes subject matter sweet to here; the poetic explanation of beautiful life has attracted the reading public. For example:

"konobai jen kane kane kosisil- tomak kone biya koarabo? Tumi atmohatyar chestra kra manuh? Ai premikbor? Sihate tomk kiman duraloi loi jabo? Ai jiban? Aai jibane sakolu tani-ajuri sesot akebre nagoth kriyei alibatt thiyo krai dib"

("Someone seemed to say in my ear--"Who will marry you? You're a suicide attempter? These lovers? How far will you be taken by them? This life? This life will pull everything together and eventually leave you naked on the street.") (p. 22)

2.5 technique of uses words:

There is a lot of use of English words as well as various regional indigenous words in 'Adhalekha Dastabez' by Mamoni Raisom Goswami.

English words: unit, badminton, convoy, tavern, manager, driver.

Regional indigenous words: Mukcha (gamocho), Atah (scream), Patha (goat), Bhatibela (evening), Peck (mud).

It is seen that the use of language by Mamoni Raisom Goswami reveals the essence of her autobiography and the description becomes clear and vivid, therefore she can be called a master in the use of language.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The creation of Mamoni Raisom Goswami in the history of Assamese Autobiography Literature is a notable autobiography. It is based on her personal experiences and tells the story of a woman's life filled with the painful pain of breaking her dreams and hopes. Goswami's 'Adhalekha Dastabez' is a meaningful autobiography because of her skillful use of language in presenting such a realistic picture of social life.

## VII. FINDINGS

The discussion of the Language and the Social Life of Mamoni Raisom Goswami's Autobiography 'Adhalekha Dastabez' concludes with several points. The findings of the study are:

- The autobiography expresses the traditional customs of the society towards widows that are very strict.
- Brahmin women who observe widowhood vows live a skeletal life under the influence of superstition and customs, which is a very touching picture.
- Goswami's use of regional language and strategic use of language in describing the content of the autobiography makes the content of the autobiography bright and lively. Therefore, 'Adhalekha Dastabez' can be described as a meaningful work of Mamoni Raisom Goswami.
- The autobiography also shows that the same life is buried by the hypocrisy prevalent in the name of tradition.

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