CHAPTER VI
MODERNITY IN PERSIAN AND ASSAMESE POETRY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Modernity in Persian and Assamese poetry with special reference to Iraj Mirza, Mohammad Taqi Bahar, Navakanta Barua and Nilamoni Phukan – A comparative study is an important subject of research. It is also equally important why I select two Assamese (Indian) poets and two Iranian (Persian) poets. Because there have been found some similarities both of their ideas and their feelings though they belonged to different categories which has been described in details in the preceding chapters. It is clearly apparent that both Persian and Assamese are totally different language. Dr. Hem Bora, a famous critic in Assamese literature in his “Bhasa Sahitya Etyadi” stated that “Persian the language of Fars is a sweet language of all the ancient languages of the world.”¹ Owing to sweetness of Persian language the Assamese poet did not keep away to smell its fragrance. Jatindra Nath Dowera, the great modern literary figure of Assamese literature had translated the Rubayat of Omar Khayyam, known for his quatrains vibrating with the enigmas of creation,

¹ Bora, Dr. Hem: Vasa, Sahitya Etyadi, Chandra Prakash, Tihu, Ghy-1, 1st edition, 1993, p.25
life and death\textsuperscript{2}, under the title of "Omor Tirtho" in 1926. Besides him the poets like Syed Abdul Malik, Dr. Maheswar Neog, Sader Ali, Raihan Shah, Jamini Sharma and a good number of Assamese poets have translated Persian poetry into Assamese language.

However, we can't ignore the importance of modern Assamese language and literature which have a special role in Indian literature. Modernity came to Assamese literature in perceptible manner in 1889 with the publication of \textit{Jonaki} (moonlight) a monthly journal. This journal not only launched the Romantic Movement in Assamese literature, but also announced the dawn of modernity by a new wave of literary creation. The features of the change have been described by \textit{Sailen Bharali}, a well known write in Assamese literature in the following words: "Exaltation of imagination, worship of nature, adoration of beauty and expression of personal love, revival of interest in folk literature, recreation of medieval lores and legends, profound love of the motherland, and the craze to experiment with New Verse forms and use of language of daily life are some of the distinguishing characteristics of the literature of the period."\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2} Hasan, Prof. Masudul: \textbf{History of Islam} (classical period 571-1258 C.E.) Vol.1 Revised edition, Alfa Publishers & Distributors, Sri Nagar (J&K) 1\textsuperscript{st} edition-1987, p.636.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Bharali, S. Modern Assamese Literature (Article) published in the George, K.M. (Ed.) \textbf{Modern Indian Literature An Anthropology}, Vol.1, Surveys & Poem, New Delhi, p.21
\end{itemize}
Modern Persian poetry is essentially the song of the dawn. The modern development opened new fields of thoughts and widened the sphere of poetry by introducing political (i.e., nation, native land, human right) social (i.e. sentimental sympathy for the suffering and oppressed, for hardship and poverty, for inferior position of woman, polygamous marriages, veil, education backwardness and expression of moral indignation and a call for remedy) and economic themes into it. Besides political and social themes the modern poets have given expression of their personal moods and experiences. They sing of their own hopes and human loves and express their individual sorrow, frustrations and isolation. Contrary to directness of thought and feeling we find subjectivity and self analysis which constitute the dominant feature of modern poetry. Modern Persian poetry shows a remarkable wide range of techniques and themes. They were basically composed with a view to awaken people from their political and social slumber. The New Movement has liberated Persian poetry from the fetters conventionalism and artificiality. The modern poets discover the permanent basis of human understanding, concord and happiness in the fundamental unity of all faiths and in the oneness of the goal of all the higher human

7 Ishaque, M.: Modern Persian Poetry, Calcutta, 1943, p. 179
aspirations. Whatsoever, the modern poetry of Iran has struck a note of harmony of all great thoughts and wisdom of the world.  

Modern Assamese poets alike Persian poets have also focused the social evils, pitiable condition of the labourers and the people in general through their writings. After the attainment of independence the progress of Assamese literature appears to be very rapid. A new generation of poets has come forward with new ideas and techniques. The techniques of the old romantic poetry of the pre-war days has yielded place to modern techniques and approach to life of modern poets considerably differs from that of their predecessors. Modern Assamese poetry is somewhat intellectual although emotion has not been totally divorced. Surrealism, symbolism and imagery and other techniques of modern continental poetry and also sprung verse or verse-libre have been successfully employed to express the new poetic sensibility.

The new modern poetry has attempted to depict or reflects the conditions and predicaments of man, revealing the areas of darkness and tension in modern life and consciousness and the underlying spring of a purpose affirmation and a possible assurance of harmony. Its quality of

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8 Ibid. p. 186-187
inward search and its intense exploratory nature have enabled modern Assamese poetry to step out its confining romantic barriers and to engage itself with the open realities of life.\textsuperscript{11}

The modern Indian writers have basically evinced in naturalism, impressionism, symbolism expressionism etc. The modern literature of the age reveals all the features of western romantic literature. The influence of western poetic literature evoked the romantic and symbolistic trends in Persian poetry. The works of Iranian poets of the present days reflect strong traces of symbolism and romanticism.

However, both Persian and Assamese poets are fully influenced by the Western spirit. For making a realistic evaluation of contemporary literary trends, comparative study of different literature can be of great help in this regard. In the preceding chapters I have already dealt with various aspects of modern Persian and Assamese poetry. Also I have discussed about the treatment of modernity in the poems of Iraj Mirza, Mohd. Taqi Bahar, Navakanta Barua and Nilamoni Phukan. While I was going through the poetry of the above mentioned poets I have seen some similarities in various aspects. In this chapter I have made an attempt to make a comparison among them. It is expected that this work will be able to open new vistas for further study.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
Bahar, who is known by his title Malik ush Shuara (*King of Poets*), composed poems with a view to awakening people from their political and social slumber. He expressed his resentment against war in the poem *Jugd-e-Jang* wherein he said:

\[
\begin{align*}
Kuja ast rojgar soleh o emni \\
Sikofteh morz o bag dilgusai o \\
Kuja ast ahod rasti o mordi \\
Forug ishq o tabash o giaee o
\end{align*}
\]

(Where is the world of peace and safety, its blossoming flower-beds and its attractive gardens? Where is the age of truth and humanity, its light of love, its splendour and radiance?)

Such description is also found in Navakanta Barua’s works. As for example:

\[
\begin{align*}
(Sei Suta Jibikar ahe ahe bijorita \\
Jibonoko merai dhorar tar \\
Loloop Sarpil Goti)
\end{align*}
\]

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13 Raham, Munibur: *Post-Revolution Persian verse* Institute of Islamic Studies, Muslim University, Aligarh, p.33
14 Ibid, p.35
15 Pujari, Dr. Archana: *Asomiya Kabitar Bisar Bishlashan* (Edition), Jyoti Prakashan, Panbazar, Ghy-1, 2006, p.130
(That thread has been mixed with the fibre of livelihood. It too coils up life’s wire, longing for the motion of snake.)

There is a similarity between these two poets – Mohd. Taqi Bahar and Navakanta Barua. Both of them followed the symbolic term to express their feelings. Bahar’s symbolic uses are noteworthy. An example:

\[\text{Bulbul pur basteh ze kunj Qafas dora} \]
\[\text{Nagmah ajadi nuie beshar shera} \]
\[\text{O ze nafs arsh en khaq tudeh ra pur sard kun} \]

(O wing – tied nightingale step forth from your cage and sing the song of the freedom of man. With thy breath, fire the clay of this vast multitude.)\(^{16}\)

Same idea is also found in Navakanta Barua’s writings. For example:

বালিব দৈলেবে গায়ে গছলতা ফুলব সমাধি,
ছঃময়া জিঃঃ এটি বালিয়ে বালিয়ে উবি,
পানীব কাবণে ঘুংবি
কববত নাট হেবায়।\(^{17}\)

(Balir dolere gohre goslata phular Samadhi,

\(^{16}\) Rahman, Munibur: Post-Revolution Persian verse Institute of Islamic Studies, Muslim University, 1956, Aligarh, p.41

Sayamaya Jiya eti Balie Balie Uri
Panir Karone Ghuri
Korobat Bat Herai)
(The stock of sands comprises the leaf of flowers, a visible mantis takes its way above sands in search of water has lost its way somewhere.)

After a thorough study it is clearly apparent that both Bahar and Navakanta Barua had a deep interest towards the beauty of nature and were stunt lover and devotee of nature. It is clearly visible from the writings of Bahar as follows:

(Shunondeh Gul ar kharas angust khost
Guneh bor shunondeh ast bor khar nist)
(If a thorn pricks the finger of one who plucks the rose, the fault is of the plucker’s and not to the thorn.)\(^{18}\)

In similar manner Navakanta Barua has also depicted the naturalistic views in the following way:

তবাব পাপবি খাহি চোতালব দুববি ওগচে
ফুলব পোহবে তাব পদূলিত সজায় দীপালী\(^{19}\)

(Torar Papori Khohi Sotalor Duvari Opose
Phulor Pohore Tar Padulit Sajai Dipalee)
(The court-yards grass is filled up due to the fall of the cluster of stars. The light of flowers makes the garden enlightened.)

Both Md. Taqi Bahar and Navakanta Barua witnessed the various problems of their society from near. They observed the deplorable condition of the people of the society and expressed their anxiety through their writings. In this regard Bahar’s notion is pinpoint:

(Ek chand ma ra gom rahnamun shud
Jan yar Gan gost dil gorq khun shud)
(For a time sorrow was our guide, our soul became the companion of grief and hearts were drowned in blood.)

Same idea is also discernible in Navakanta Barua’s writings:

पृथ्वीवीर प्रथमा नाबीये बिटिफुल खोपात पिरिले
सेई फूल बीह मेटेकाब
सेईबाबे पृथ्वीवीर सौदर्यवर्ग पुजारीये मार्थो पाय

बिहब दंशन।

(Prithivir Prothoma Narie jitiphool khopat pindhile
Sei phool Bih Metekar
Sei Babe Prithivir Sondorjor Pujarie Matho Pai
Bihar dorson)
(The first lady of the world which flower has been put in her braided hair, that flower is the water-hyacinth, so the worshipper of beauty gets in this world the bite of Venom.)

Rahman, Munibur: Post-Revolution Persian verse Institute of Islamic Studies, Muslim University, 1956, Aligarh, p.27.
Both of them were socially conscious. They could not tolerate the problems of the dependence and as such they were supporters of freedom movement. Both of them dealt with the burning problems of the contemporary society. The poems which were written to raise the feelings of the masses in respect of prevailing social and political issues vividly reflect the spirit of the period. It is worth to mention here that Bahar strongly condemned the privileged classes and their dishonest treatment of the common people. It began thus:

(Kist ānkos ke ze bedad khawas asts  
Khalas dad aj dost Khawas  
(Which is the person who is free from the tyranny of the elite! I seek justice against the elite!)

Like Bahar, Navakanta Barua\(^\text{22}\) has also watched the high profile classes through his powerful imagination and their behaviour towards common people. As a humanist poet, Mr. Barua expresses his view against that heartless people throughout the following extracts:

\[\text{দুপজ্ব এই মৃত্যু নীরব বীভৎসতা}  
\text{প্রাপ্তাহার বন্ধব!}  
\text{বরক্তি আক পলাভী আক ইয়াঠাণুষ ইতিহাস}\]

(Death of this midday is the silence of loathsome, and is life’s harbour, the history of Boxer, Plassey and Yandabu.)

They were equally conscious about the premonition of the approaching end, they believe that everyone will go from this world to that world. Bahar says:

(Aj mulk adob haqm gujaran hameh roftond
Su bar safor band yaran hameh roftond)
(From the realm of literature the judges have all gone. Arise, prepare for the journey, the friends have all gone).

Navakanta Barua followed the same path and says:

বাহিবব এদ্ধাবেও মোহ ভয় নোখেরায়
মই জানো
মোহ দৈনিন মৃত্যু ২৪

(Bahiror Andherou mok voi nokhuai
Moi janu
Mor doinondin mritttu)

(Darkness of outside do not make me fear I know, everyday is my death.)

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24 Ibid p.116
Now let's turn a quick look of Iraj Mirza and Nilamoni Phukan's viewpoints. Iraj Mirza is noted for the simplicity of his poetic diction. In his verses he uses the common man adopts while expressing his feelings and ideas. Through him poetic language has become rich in many expressions. For example:

(Tu aj mon jor khawhi mon ze tu jor
Sheh monot dast baeed ek digar ra)
(You are in search for constraint from me while I am in search of gold from you, what should have difference with each other.)\(^{25}\)

Nilamoni Phukan is also not lagging behind to uses the common main adopts while expressing his feeling, but his symbolic uses in this regard is remarkable. As for example:

(Edin ratin haspatalor pora
Nirudesh hoisil
Kon asil teo
Dekhiboli kene asil)\(^{26}\)


(One day in the mid night from the hospital, he has been missing, Who was he? How was his appearance?)

Iraj Mirza composed numerous beautiful verses on the theme of maternal love with a deep feeling in simple and tender poetic language. The poem ‘mother’ reflects such types of idea. For example:

\[(Guind mora shu jad madar
Pastan Be dohan girofton amokht)\]

(They say when my mother gave birth me she taught me how to suck her breast.)

Same feelings are also noticed in Nilamnoi Phukan’s writings. He also believed the gravity of the children for a mother. For example:

\[केभल ल‘बा-घोरलीबीबे
चकुपानी मटी
झलाय सझाब जोनाकी।\]

\[(Kewal lora-sowalibore
Sakupani mochi
Jolai Sandhar jonaki)\]

(Only the childrens, wipe their tears and light the evening fire flies.)

Though they belonged to the different periods but their ideas and feelings sometime run equally for the time being. Iraj Mirza, though not a romantic poet but romantic feelings peeps in his works. For example:

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(Tajeh gul atoshe moskbuie
Sasteh ze sabnom be somon dost o rue)
(In the garden the musk-scented red rose had just washed itself with
dew.)

Same expression is also found in Nilamoni Phukan’s writings.
Throughout his poetry, “Toponit teo mok khedi phurishil”, (she’d been
pursuing me even in my sleep) he has described the romantic feelings.
The following extracts began thus:

ওঠ দুখনত আছেন দৈ
পানী বাঙা হোরা দুখন নে২৮

(Oth dukhonot asene boi
Pani ranga howa dukhon noi)
(Are the twin streams with reddened waters flowing in her lips?)

Iraj Mirza maintains a strict discipline. He is fully aware of his
death. Being conscious by nature, he expressed his sorrow on the death of
Aminus Sultan, a famous Persian king, during the time of Anglo-Russian
agreement. He says:

(Aj suleh mian gurbh o mos
Borbad rud dokan baqal)
(The grocer’s shop will be despoil owing to the agreement between the
mice and cat.)

28 Ibid p.119
In the similar manner Nilamoni Phukan has also nicely depicted an incident of a banana seller who finally met his death on his way back. The following line may be quoted:

\[
\text{প্রতিটো মূহর্তই এড়োঁ তেজ}
\]
\[
\text{প্রতিটো মূহর্তই এপাচি সেদুবীয়া কল।}^{29}
\]

\[
\text{(Protito muhortoi adonga tez)
Protito muhortoi apache senduria kol)}
\]

(Each moment is a puddle of blood, each moment is a basketful of red banana.)

There is a striking similarity between these two poets – Iraj Mirza and Nilamoni Phukan. Both they imitate the European words and expression especially French, Japanese and Chinese. Iraj Mirza used some words like club and hotel in his writings. Whereas Nilamoni Phukan has deeply studied the stated languages and their meanings and translated some Japanese and Chinese poem into Assamese language. It is understood from the study that the western influences have effected upon their writings.

Both of them were socially conscious. They witnessed various social problems of their society and reflect the corruption prevailing in their society of those days. Iraj wanted to have a social change and fought

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for the upliftment of the common people specially the women. As he said:

(Amod Aj Khanah Berun Seer Forus
Kujeh Seer Pur Aj ab Bedus)

(He came out from house for selling milk (but find) milk pot is full of water).

Nilamoni Phukan has also maintained the balance and depicted the deplorable condition of the people who has been suffering for a long time and says:

কপালতে তোব লুকাই আছে
পুরা গঞ্জুলীব বেলি
(Kopalote tor lukai aase
Puwa gadhulir beli)

(It has been hiding in your forehead the sun of snowy-evening).

Mention has already been made that Iraj Mirza advocated directly for the right of women. He made no distinction between man and woman. He burst forth impatiently:

(Mogor jon dor mian ma besor nist
Mogor dor jon tomiz khir o sor nist)

(Are women not human being amongst us or is there in women no power of distinction between good and evil?)
On the other hand, Nilamoni Phukan has described the interior idea of a woman like this:

ন- কী মেলা কল্পাতখনব পর্যা
নির্বাচন দেব টোপাটোপে
আচার্যাবরো পরিচিতি ।

*(No koi mela kolpatkhonor pora
Nioror dore topatope
Andharbor porisil)*

(The newly bloom from banana leaf the darkness has fallen like the drop of dew.)

There is however, dissimilarities between these two poets. Iraj Mirza is noted for the simplicity of his poetic diction. He always uses common man adopts simple language while expressing his feelings and ideas. Whereas Nilamoni Phukan’s diction is full of symbol. Besides, the images are used in large scale in Phukan’s poem. His poems are marked with complexity with the influence of Japanese and French Poetry.

It is clear from the above discussion that the poets mention above some common points. All of them have similarities in some aspects while there prevails some dissimilarity in their writings. For this they are not to be blamed because time and circumstances have led them to treat the subjects.

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