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# Poetry as a Medium of Protest: A Case Study of Leftist Movement of Assam

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**Abstract**---Poetry has been a medium of protest for long period of history. Poets have been vocal in protest against social injustices such as communalism, caste hierarchy, and linguistic xenophobia. Assam has been historically a land of admixture of various races. Marxism, a theory that has at many points, challenged established cultural ethos, has a history of success only in homogeneous religious community. How Marxism survived and even formed governments, is a history worth discussing.

**Keywords**---homogeneous, leftist, poetry, protest, religious community.

## Introduction

Dealing culture in a Marxist way is a difficult thing. Many scholars confuse that Marxism embed materialism. the creative side of human being, the part that yields out of human imagination has also been considered as a prime requirement of human survival. Thus Marx and Engels goes on saying , 'The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism-that of Feuerbach included-is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively' 1. The history of culture begins with the inception of human being on this earth. Every work they do can be termed as culture. Maxim Gorky describes this way, 'The history of human labor and creativity is far more interesting and significant than the history of man; man dies before reaching the age of one hundred, whilst his works live through centuries 2.

## Result and Discussion

Mohan Krisna Misra says that birds does not come to desert to sing, rather she flies to the forest.<sup>3</sup> This fact signifies the higher esteem that holds in Marxist mind regarding nature. Dialectical materialism holds important to the view that peaceful co-existence with nature can result in a sustainable development. The

geographical setting of Assam is such that most people live and eke out by the forest. Geography determines culture of a land, thus Marxism adapts its social policy accordingly. Misra reminds Marxist of the importance of forest and nourishes a culture that is eco friendly.

Subhash Saha is of the opinion that the history of struggle of the workers can be seen in the smoke that industries emit.<sup>4</sup> Industrial revolution is a 16th -17th century phenomenon that brought radical change to all production economy. In Assam, industrial class was under the British capitalist and was counted as one of the largest industrial class, during the colonial period. Leftist like Saha brought their stories to the light. It was poetry that attracted mostly to the common people because of its beautiful design of arrangement. The story of industrial class remained un-changed under the rule of native bourgeoisie class.

Nalinidhar Bhattacharya thinks that youth is in the hope that one day revolution will come and will free everyone from every kind of slavery.<sup>5</sup> Marxist, across the world has tried to attract the young age group to play a key role in every sphere of activity. In Assam, where neither capitalism nor feudalism persists, it only yields a mix culture, where a kind of anarchy rules. Assamese youth finds thus a resolute ground to stand as such. Many scholars, however is of the opinion that all artists are anarchist to some degree. Marxist like Bhattacharya writes the story of anarchist Assamese youth in their poems. Hiren Bhattacharya opposed Hemang Biswas on his criticism of poems of Hem Barua as mere romanticism.<sup>6</sup> Pseudo Marxist have a tendency to regard matter above human spirit. Any treatment of humans as a spirit soul has been termed as a deviation from Marxist viewpoint. But that has not been the case. Marx himself and other Marxist revolutionaries have termed culture as something that comes out of sensuous human activity.

Nabakanta Barua introduces psycho analytical approach to Assamese poetry and thus can be termed as one of the few Marxist who tried to change the status quo in modern Assamese poetry.<sup>7</sup> The importance given to human mental set up by the poets of Assam found new vistas in the hands of Marxist. There exists a mental ground where physical activity does not count. Sociologists have analyzed that human imaginary sociology can be independent of physical being, thus demands separate attention. Marxism has also designed itself as a cultural formation that can fulfill the intellectual thirst. That's why Marxist wrote both subaltern topic and bourgeoisie topic. Hiren Bhattacharya depicts the pain of the peasants that resonates in the songs of the birds.<sup>8</sup> Until the 19th century Assam was in the feudal grip. The modern capitalist penetrated slowly started taking over the feudal culture and replaced it with capitalist one. The forest has been replaced by the concrete buildings. What peasant was left is the bondage of imperial raj. The culture of lost world finds mention in the writing of poets and they share the urge towards modernism with Marxist viewpoint

Keshab Mahanta depicts the rural life of 20th Assam in the poem 'Aghunar Kuwoli'.<sup>9</sup> Rural Assam has many stories to tell. Mahanta metaphorically depicts how Assamese girls are busy in the paddy field during the month of Aghun. The mist of aghun disturbs the passer by. The face of poet's lover gets blurred due to the mist. All this beautiful scenario reminds the reader of their lovely experience

of rural areas. Nature similarly inspires every Marxist. Fundamentals of dialectical materialism disregards the existence of any super natural force and believes in only nature. Pollution in nature is a threat to bio-diversity. Creativeness of artist like Mahanta helped the leftist movement to influence the minds of common folks.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya shows his emotions towards Bishnu Prasad Rabha in the poem 'Bishnu Rabha Atia Kiman Rati'.<sup>10</sup> The poet praises the revolutionary zeal of Rabha for breaking the shekels of bondages by the peasants of Assam. Rabha declared Indian independence as a hoax, he termed it as a transformation from white capitalist to the black one. Rabha professes that to attain that goal of socialism people have to take arms in their hands . The idea of class-less society is what the theme of Ram Gogoi's 'Itihas'.<sup>11</sup> In Ram Gogoi's poem, 'Moi Prithibir Kobi' <sup>12</sup> states that people should be happy in this world and should not think of other world. The essence of Ram Gogoi's poem is his love towards his motherland Assam.being a patriot is also in the ideological umbrella of Marxism, Lenin of Russia can be a example.

Nalinidhar Bhattacharya talks about 'scientific consciousness' in the poem 'Tstehar'<sup>13</sup>. Scientific thinking begins with ushering in of capitalism and beginning of industrialization. The socialist stage of society begins with the end of capitalism. So it is a no irony that Marx and other Marxist like Bhattacharya talks more capitalism than socialism. It is a poetic paradox. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya glorifies the battle of Saraighat in the poem 'Janata'.<sup>14</sup> The history of Assam must be make known to the peoples in other parts. It has a revolutionary past. This is the revolutionary zeal drives Marxist party to succeed , and is not mere unfolding of events. Otherwise Marxist parties have a poor record in heterogeneous ethnic identity. Nabakanta Barua describes the conflict between forest and urban life in the poem 'He Aranya,He Mahanagar'.<sup>15</sup> Barua was profound in describing the dichotomy between urban and forest life. Barua mentions about Khalil Zibran and what zibran has to say about variation in mode of living in the poem 'Nagarot Vekulir Gan'.<sup>16</sup> Barua used the various forms of expression in the poems,Toka, being one of them. <sup>17</sup> What Barua tried to project that is the conflict between two elements and the result was quite beautiful.

Hari Borkotoki pays tribute to Jyotiprasad Agarwala in a poem.<sup>18</sup> Agarwala, despite being his ancestral home in Rajasthan, mingled with Assamese culture. Marxist across the world encourages inter-ethnic marriages. Abani Chakravorty in a poem Kobi Aru Kobitar Karone expresses his will to change the status quo and reach a stage of civilization where creative potential get unleashed <sup>19</sup>. Similarly Marx have also termed labor as the most self conscious activity and thus creative.

## **Conclusion**

Poetry tells the story of the poet. Various poets in Assam whom I have mentioned shares concern for the economically weaker section. Meanwhile, whether elitism of the bourgeoisie class attracted the left is also the question to be researched. Poetry should be no exception in that case.

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