



ARUP KUMAR DUTTA'S NOVEL- THE KAZIRANGA TRAIL, – AS A JUVENILE DETECTIVE NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

Arup Kumar Dutta is a prominent literary figure in English in North East India. He is the first writer who writes juvenile English detective novels from the region. He has achieved many awards- Life Time Achievement Honour by Association of writers and Illustrators for children (2014), Padma Shri by Government of India for children literature in 2014, children book prizes from Children's Book Trust for The Kaziranga Trail which was published in 1978.

In the novel we find child heroes. They are very talented and hard working. They are conscientious and good. They want society to be good and so they take risks in their lives to catch the criminals of various levels. In we find the heroes are Bubul, Dhanai and Jonti who are able to catch the rhino poachers.

In the novel we have seen the role of animals also. In TKT we find Makhani, the elephant who helps the teen heroes to travel through the thick forest.

ABBREVIATION :*I. TKT- The Kaziranga Trail.*

KEYWORDS: *Adventure, teenagers, young -adult, fiction, novels, detective, juvenile, miscreants, criminal.*

In the collection of novels, Adventure Stories of Arup Kumar Dutta there are four detective children's novels-The Kaziranga Trail is the first novel. They are juvenile detective novels or adventure novels where the heroes catch the poachers or criminals. The heroes are teenagers. With the help of elders, they are able to catch some miscreants, unscrupulous people.

Here we find the main characters are only teenagers. They are very ordinary boys but showed their intelligence at the time. In the novel of Arup Kumar Dutta, we find that the characters are real like. They are not those who are hard to imagine. For example, Dhanai, Jonti and Bubul in TKT are like any Assamese boys who live in the village. They are not mere puppets; they are endowed with flesh and blood. The author makes the ordinary boys extraordinary with their insight, intelligence and circumstance. So, the readers accept them without any doubt. Moreover, the author portrays some Police Superintendent, Police Commissioner, and constables who are duty bound, honest and endowed with human qualities.

The novel is truly an enjoyable novel. The tactics are used and explained very nicely. We remember the novels of famous Assamese writer Ranju Hazarika, while we read detective tactics.

Although in all the novels we find juvenile heroes: it does not mean that the elders have little role in the novels. In the novel we find some miscreant adults and opposite to them there are so courageous, duty bound, police officers, constables and some patriotic persons in the novels.

In the novel we find a third person Narrative. We find that the narrator knows all. So, the point of view of the novel is

a third person point of view. The third person point of view is also known as the omniscient point of view. Regarding the point of view, we can see the following lines as guiding lines:

‘...the narrator is free to move at will in time and place, to shift from character to character’...

(Abrahams M.H. and Harpham Geoffrey Galt, A Handbook of Literary Terms, P-234.)

Crime and misdirection of the readers are two striking features of detective novels. In almost every detective novel we find such features. The Oxford Companion to English Literature writes about it in the following words:

"Crime has been a staple of storytelling since its beginnings, misdirection of the reader, leading to striking revelations at a late crisis point, has equally had its special position in fiction." (Brich Dinah, The Oxford Companion to English Literature, p-289.)

In the children novel of Arup Kumar Dutta also we find the above two features. The novel is about the crime of killing rhinos by poachers in a National Park of Assam named Kaziranga National Park. The crime against the killing of the rare animal is continuing in the national park. The author tries to nab the poachers in the novel in a fictional way by some teen heroes. Regarding the second element i.e., the 'misdirection', we find this element in this novel also. For instance, in TKT we find that when Mr. Neog and the rescue party went in search of



Bubul and Jonti who were in the hands of the poachers then they went to the deserted bungalow. The poachers got the time to hide. This is an instance of misdirection.

In the novel "Kaziranga Trail" the author raises one of the burning problems of Assam that is the killing of the rhinos in Kaziranga National Park. The novelist writes the novels so impressively that the readers will enjoy reading. The actions are happening so rapidly that readers will not get bored. They keep on reading in curiosity about what will happen next time. How the teenage heroes will be saved, how they will unfurl the misdeeds of the miscreants-these are the major things of the novels.

In the novel we find about the activities of the poachers, their tricks of killing the rhinos and their nexus with their own country and foreigners-smugglers of horns. The rhino's horn is in great demand in the smuggling market. For which some of the guards, because of the greed of money joined with the poachers and secretly helped them to kill the rhino and some of them are also eventually caught.

The poachers are the expert forest men. They know the characteristics of the wild animals. The rhino always goes straight. Therefore, in the path of the rhino they made a big hole and covered the big ditch with herbs. When the rhino falls there, they cannot go out and the poachers cut the horn off from the rhino. The author describes how a rhino is trapped and what actions are to be done by the poachers.

"The poachers had watched the movements of the rhino for a few days. When they were sure of the path it took, they dug a deep pit near a dung heap and covered it with strips of bamboo, mud and grass. Then they built a shelter for themselves at a safe distance and waited for the animal to fall into the trap." (Dutta Arup Kumar, *The Kaziranga Trail*, P-7)

The poachers are merciless. They cut the horn of the precious animal when it was in a state of no self-defence. As soon as the rhino falls into the pit it cannot come out. When the rhino falls into the pit then they promptly execute their action.

"The rhino fought with all its strength. But the men were experts and soon had the ropes all-round the animal's body.....The leader of the gang moved into action.....He lifted the dao and began to hack away at the animal's snout to remove the horn.....His hands were bloody. On his face was a triumphant, fiendish smile." (Dutta, TKT, P-8)

There are some conscious citizens nearby who always protest such action of the poachers. The whole Assam is against rhino killing except the poachers. Dhanai, Jonti and Bubul are such boys who love the Kaziranga and specially know the value of one horned rhino. When they saw the dead animal the next day, they instantly knew about it.

"The horn is gone. 'Dhanai was grim. 'Poachers! There is no time to lose. We must inform the forest authorities at once.'" (Dutta, TKT, p-11)

They informed the District Forest Officer in charge of wildlife Mr. Neog. Poachers seemed to be more cunning and cautious than the forest guards. Mr Neog could find the reason.

"Unfortunately, that is the only conclusion I can draw from the way the poachers have been operating. We all know that the wages our men get are not too high. Perhaps one of them has been tempted with a big sum of money."

(Dutta, TKT, p-24)

Mr Neog's surmise was true. Mr Phukan, another forest officer, was involved in the killing of rhinos. He got a lucrative sum of money from the poachers and horn traders.

While the boys, Dhanai, Jonti and Bubul roam on the elephant back in the Kaziranga, the readers can visualise the National Park and its deftness. Usually there are many sounds of birds, cricket, grunts of a rhino, roar of a tiger etc. The author presents the plot very naturally. In such a natural scenery poachers kill rhinoceros in Kaziranga.

The rhino killing is a menace to Assam. The government even fails to nab the culprit in most of the cases. It is because there are some people who are like Mr. Phukan, as we find in the novel, gets money from the poachers and secretly allows them to kill one of the endangered animals of the earth. Who are appointed as the protectors of the wonderful animals but they serve as the traitors for some extra money. They sell themselves or sell their conscience. So, there should be vigilance on the guards and the officers also.

There are some honest, duty-bound officers and guards also in the department of forest. For their effort only we get the surviving rhinos. One of such officers is Mr. Neog. Such officers always do their duty and try to save the rhinos even when facing grim circumstances.

1. Thus, we can say that the *Kaziranga Trail* of Arup Kumar Dutta is an interesting juvenile detective or mystery novel. It has all the elements of such a novel. It is a gripping novel where readers are captivated by the narrative swiftness of the author.

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