



PLOTS, CHILDREN HEROES AND OTHER ELEMENTS IN ARUP KUMAR DUTTA'S *TROUBLE AT KOLONGIJAN*, *THE BLIND WITNESS* AND IN *SMACK*

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ABSTRACT

In this article, plots, heroes and other elements of the three children's novels viz, Trouble At Kolongijan, The Blind Witness and in Smack of Arup Kumar Dutta are discussed. They are discussed individually. The plots are discussed in the beginning and there after the heroes' characteristics are discussed. Some where both are intermingled. And at last others elements which helps to delineate the characters and the stories of the novels are also discussed.

KEY WORDS: Children's Novels, Detective novels, Assam's novels, Flood in Assam etc.

INTRODUCTION

Arup Kumar Dutta is an award winner novelist of Assam. Perhaps, he is the first novelist from this region (NE Region of India). He has written more than 16 children's novels. His novels are praised worldwide. In this article, plots, heroes and other elements of the three children's novels viz, *Trouble At Kolongijan*, *The Blind Witness* and in *Smack* of Arup Kumar Dutta are discussed one by one.

TROUBLE AT KOLONGIJAN

Plot: In the second novel "Trouble at Kolongijan", the writer writes about the flood of Assam and its associate problems and the evil activities of some miscreants during the flood. The novel is about the breaking of the embankment of the river Kolongijan by some miscreants. The hero Moina with the help of his friend Ponakan and maternal uncle Debeshwar could nab the miscreants.

In the *TAK* we find the description of village nearby a river. The fictional river is the true portrait of the rivers of Assam in summer. The breaking of embankment whether by natural agency or by people is a great problem for the people who live near a river. Again, when the author sets the plot of the novel outside Assam then we feel the story of the novel is somewhere nearby Delhi or any other Hindi speaking state of Assam. There are two novels (*The Blind Witness* and *Smack*) where we find the background of the novels are not Assam but outside of Assam. The plots are outside Assam but the readers find the same curiosity of detective novels in the two novels also.

Hero: The hero of the novel is Moina, a teenage boy. His friend Ponakan is also, a teenage boy. The three main characters-Moina his friend Ponakan his maternal uncle Debeshwar along with the villagers fight against the miscreants-Tularam, a moneylender, Mr. Baruah a corrupted contractor and his accomplices. Debeshwar is a young man; Moina is about thirteen years old and his closest friend Ponakan is fourteen-

year-old boy. Although all the characters are involved in the story of the novel yet Moina is more involved. As the second lead role we have to mention the name of Ponakan. Debeshwar's role is also indelible. In the novel the role of police, like Mr Goswami and others also very noteworthy. Mr Goswami is a good police officer and he and Mr Saikia, the Superintendent of Police of that district and their men could help Moina, Ponakan and Debeshwar in the right time and could nab the criminals.

Other Elements: Flood is a natural calamity in Assam. There are many places like Kolongijan in Assam. The fictional place indicates many such places of Assam. The havoc of flood is not described here but hinted.

'He (Debeshwar) was born and brought up in Kolongijan. His parents had died in a flood while he was still a baby.' (Dutta Arup Kumar, *Trouble at Kolongijan* -p 94)

In the novel we see how a dog named Cheekah helped Moina to execute his plan. The dog is a normal village dog but it acted as a trained dog to nab the criminals. Cheekah helped Goswami to catch Baruah, the corrupted and miscreant.

"With a vicious growl Cheekah sprang at Baruah, digging his claws into his flesh." (Dutta, *TAK* p-151)

Then Goswami could arrest him. The role of animals in Arup Kr Dutta's novels is very significant.

Like other English novels written by Assamese writer in the novels also we find many Assamese words which help to delineate the true picture of the plot and the characters. Some words are:

1. *Mama* (uncle),
2. *Kon au, kon au* (who is there)?
3. *Dhor, Dhor*, (catch them) etc.

Ponakan and Moina are the sons of fisher men. They know about the current of the river very much. The lines show it:

"You see the currents are not equally fierce in every part of the river. In fact, between fast currents, there are



stretches of water calm as a baby asleep. We fisher folk have learnt every trick the river has to teach us." (Dutta, *TAK* p-119)

As this novel is also written in the background of Assam so we find the name of many Assamese people in the novel. The characters here are Assamese. Some names are - Ponakan, Debashwar, Goswami etc. Moina is the hero and Ponakan can be a supporting character of the hero.

In the *TAK* we find Moina and his friend Ponakan were courageous boys. They could swim in the river. Their fate was good. The search of Moina in the river by the miscreants is well described. He was hidden in a boat. As if God helped him for his good deed and good motive.

Readers get a reason why the embankment fell down in the summer. The blast in the embankment in the rainy weather is creditable. Such tricks of the contractor can be seen in the real life also. When they get a contract of making embankment, they make it very temporarily and ordinarily. A slight rise of water can break such embankment. Such contractors usually live in good houses and in cities. They always remain safe during the flood. Only the lower strata of people had to suffer.

In the villager a man menace is a money lender. Such money lender is a disguised helpful person. Such a person is Tularam He sucks the blood of the poor villagers as he took high interest of the money he lends. He lends money at the time of flood. So, he involved himself with the breaking of the embankment. The author does not tolerate the injustice. He creates a character that fights with such tainted govt. officials, contractor, engineer, rich *mahajan*, and rich villager. The character is Debeshwar.

THE BLIND WITNESS

Plot: In the novel, *The Blind Witness* also we find a teen hero. Ramu the blind school-going boy was the hero of the novel. His parents are poor workers. Here the plot is outside of Assam. The people are Hindi speaking people. The state is not mentioned. It may be Delhi or any other nearby state of Delhi. Although Ramu is blind he has extraordinary sense and intelligence. He and his friend Sunil are main characters in the novel. The two boys helped the police to nab a murderer and some smugglers in the novel. In the novel we find Mr Gopalan who helped the police and is murdered by the miscreants. The murderers are smugglers of statues and other valuable things. The role of police is good in the novel. Generally, it is seen that the detectives are honest. But here in, *The Blind Witness* we have seen the private detective Mr. Om Prakash was mingled with the culprits. The private detective Mr. Om Prakash is a fraud. In the novel we find that the author makes the blind boy a hero to express the extraordinary qualities of such people.

Hero: In the novel, the readers have the breath-taking experience lest the culprits will be able to catch the teen hero or whether the blind boy Ramu will fall when he has been staying outside of a window in a very narrow balcony while trying to hide him from the miscreants.

Many people think that blindness is a disease. But it is not like that. Blindness is not a disease. By making the blind boy a hero of the juvenile detective novel the author wants to prove it. He wants to tell the readers that how a blind boy may have some extra ordinary qualities. The author writes on blindness like this:

"Blindness was not a disease. It was simply that he was born without one of his senses." (Dutta Arup Kumar, *The Blind Witness* p-164)

Other Elements: It is seen that the disables are not completely disables. They are not able only in one or two matters. Otherwise, they are able like any other normal person. The author makes his blind hero differently capable. He writes about Ramu like this:

"There was something about their voices that aroused Ramu's curiosity. He could read voices as others could read gestures or facial expressions." (Dutta, *TBW* p-158)

The differently able persons always want dignity, love like other persons in the society. They do not want only pity and negligence. But there are some persons in the society who treated such persons as other individuals without showing any pity.

"Mr. Gopalan was one of the few persons, who had behaved normally with Ramu, had encouraged him, taught himself -respect." (Dutta, *TBW* p-165)

Ramu, the blind boy could give witness and statement of Mr. Gopalan's murder in the police station.

"I, a witness!' Ramu exclaimed, as if quite puzzled. 'I don't even have eyes, sa'ab. A blind witness, indeed!'" (Dutta, *TBW* p-231)

But the police are able to nab the culprits with the help of Ramu and Sunil. When Ramu does excellent job of nabbing the culprits with the help of the police then he is welcomed and felicitated by the Head Master of the school. It helps the school going readers to imagine that Ramu is like them. This makes them easy to imagine the story of the novel and assume themselves as common people with heroes' qualities.

Ramu's sense organs are very strong. "He could read voices as others could read gestures or facial expressions" (Dutta, *TBW*-p-158). He could perceive the surroundings of him without the least difficulty. Although he could not see he could judge the persons who are good and who are bad. He knew that Mr. Gopalan was a good person. He was killed some miscreants. He could recognise who killed him. It seemed a strange thing that a blind boy can be a witness. But there was no other way. The reason is that there was no one when Gopalan was dead. Ramu's friend Sunil helps him a lot. The author shows the tie of friendship through the novel. They are real friends. They can do anything for the sake of their friend's life.

Ramu went to a detective's house also. But unlike the honest police in the novel, the detective proves himself a tainted person he has links with the precious statue smugglers. So, he did not want to take the case of Gopalan seriously.

The police supported Ramu and his friend Sunil very much. They were given protection and encouragement to nab the



miscreants. They could nab the murderers who are a gang of criminals who steal and smuggle antiques like Buddhist manuscript from Arunachal Pradesh, artefacts from Mohenjodaro and many others. The course of action for the boys is not so easy. They follow the criminals by crossing many hurdles which the readers enjoy while reading the novel.

SMACK

Plot and Hero: Like the other novels of the author here also we find the hero is a teen boy whose name is Gulu. Gulu's full name is Gulshan; he is a serving boy in a hotel. He eventually witnesses a murder of a man named Imdad who was a police informer of drugs peddlers. Before his death he sends secret information to a police superintendent through Gulu. In this way he entered into the secret world as an informer to the police. His friend is also a teen boy about fourteen years old, who helps him with his mission to catch the criminals. His name is Ravi. In the novel, Gulu and Ravi get the information of drug peddlers by risking their lives and finally could be able to get them arrested. We find here how interestingly the author presents the social evil of the drug trafficking business. Author's teen heroes are responsible, conscientious and very intelligent. They see many instances when people after drug use become ill. Gulu thinks, "What kind of evil things drugs must be, to turn a twenty-five-year-old youth into an old man of fifty!" (Dutta, *Smack* 292).

When the readers read the novel, they might be curious to know the meaning of the word, 'Smack'. The author describes the meaning very clearly. It's related to drugs. Drugs are too costly:

"So, our ingenuous drug pedlars have evolved a cheaper variety in their so-called laboratories. It is called smack."(Dutta, *Smack* 284).

Other Elements: In *Smack* we find many Hindi words. It is because the characters of the novels are Hindi speaking people. Some Hindi phrases and sentences which are used in the novel are very easy and usually used in the conversation. Yet, the author gives the meaning of some of them may be for the readers who do not know Hindi.

They are:

1. *Kuch Khana to do*- Give me something to eat.
2. *Thana*-Police station.
3. *Arrey Dost*- Hey friend etc.
4. *Bachcha*-Child.

Significantly while the author writes novels on the background of Assam then he uses the name of Assamese people. But when he writes the novels on imaginary Hindi speaking state, he uses the name of Hindi speaking people as they are used in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar or Delhi like state. Some such names are -KaKa, Gulu, Mr.Maival, Mr.Nangia, Ravi, Kumar etc.

CONCLUSION

In all the three novels the child heroes are round characters. Others are supporting characters or minor characters. The circumstances are important in novels. The river embankment breakers, the drugs peddlers and the statue peddlers are also important characters but they are not heroes they are the villain. Others elements like the language of the states, names of

characters, characteristics of the characters are also have significant roles in the delineation of the stories of the novels.

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