

## The Portrayal Of Assamese Rural Life In The Story 'Sakha Damodar' By Lakshminandan Bora: A Discussion

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### Abstract:

Assamese fiction, which developed in the pages of Jonaki and Avahan, gained notable popularity in the pages of the Ramdhenu era in the post-war period. Many storytellers established themselves during this era and enriched Assamese literature. Among them is Lakshminandan Bora. There are many different types of short stories in Assamese literature. Lakshminandan Bora, who wrote and produced many literary works during the Ramdhenu period, based most of his short stories on the "accurate portrayal of Assamese rural society." Many stories are written against the background of rural life in Assamese literature. Still, the agrarian society depicted in the short stories of Lakshminandan Bora is full of tangible and realistic experiences. Bora's stories are based on rural life and represent various aspects of society, such as laughter, tears, hopes and disappointments, happiness and sorrow, customs, love, and problems. "Sakha Damodar" is one of the significant short stories explicitly portraying that society. The story is set against the backdrop of Assamese rural life and paints a perfect picture of the rural community. This study attempts to discuss the various aspects of Assamese rural society, such as customs, rituals, and food, and how those are reflected in the story.

Key Words: Social Life, Assamese Society, Portrayal, Literature, Short Story.

### Introduction:

Many writers of the Ramdhenu era wrote short stories that enriched and diversified this aspect of Assamese Literature. "The storytellers of this era opened the doors of their minds to the deep exploration of reality for the first time." (Kalita 21) During this period, Assamese short stories emerged in various forms and took their place in world literature. The storytellers of

the Ramdhenu era were inspired by the prominent storytellers of the Avahan age and innovated in the content and technique of their stories. The newspaper 'Ramdhenu' pioneered the establishment of an independent foundation for short stories, along with articles and poems on various subjects, by closely connecting modern and world literature. (Kalita, 19) There is a clear sense of social consciousness in the works of the writers of Ramdhenu, who enriched the repository of Assamese literature with most of the elements of modern Assamese literature. The sense of social consciousness had been the central theme of Assamese short stories. Naturally, writers of the stories published during the Ramdhenu era did not ignore this theme. (Thakur, 40) The stories written during this era had a close relationship with the society of the time. The writers of this period, who became acutely aware of contemporary society, were indifferent to the romantic consciousness due to the influence of the Great War as their background. (Thakur, 44) As a result, they became socially conscious, and their stories reflect the diversity of rural life. Several storytellers in Ramdhenu have written many notable stories based on rural society. The storytellers of this era tried to translate the experiences of the changing culture of the time and the hopes and disappointments, desires, happiness and sorrow, laughter and tears of the people suffering from the challenges into their stories. Many writers like Jogesh Das, Shilabhadra, Lakshminandan Bora, Mahim Bora, Homen Borgohain, and Bhabendra Nath Saikia have written meaningful stories about the countryside's simple lifestyle and rural life's deteriorating background. They describe beautiful pictures of rural life.

**Objectives of the study:**

The primary objective of this paper is to study how the stories written during the Ramdhenu era reshaped and enriched the Assamese short stories by specifically discussing how Bora's stories portray the Assamese rural society. The primary purpose of this discussion is to give an insight into how various aspects of Assamese rural life are reflected in the story 'Sakha Damodar' by Lakshminandan Bora.

**Importance of the study:**

It is essential to discuss the ever-flowing lifestyle of rural life, how the various changes in modern urban life have brought danger to social life, and the threats to the breakage of rural

society. That is the primary importance of discussing the story of Sakha Damodar.

#### **Method of the Study:**

An analytical method has been employed to study “The Portrayal of Assamese Rural Life in the Story ‘Sakha Damodar’ by Lakshminandan Bora: A Discussion.”

#### **Content Discussion:**

Lakshminandan Bora was born in 1932 in Hatichong, Nagaon district. He started writing stories for Ramdhenu magazine, mainly on rural life in Assam. His stories reflect the realistic aspects of rural social life. Many stories written by Lakshminandan Bora paint an accurate and compelling picture of rural society in Assam. Bora’s notable stories include Hemantar Hime Dhowa, Erabarir Leseri, Bhauna, and Sakha Damodar. The stories are straightforward, and rural life’s happiness, sorrow, hope, and aspirations are fluent. His most notable work is Sakha Damodar. The main plot of the story ‘Sakha Damodar’ is as follows:

The story of Sakha Damodar expresses the attachment of a very ordinary farmer like Mukut to his land and cows. The short story describes how much a farmer can love the agricultural life. The main character of the story, Mukut, is an ordinary farmer. He lives on land, water, and cows. Mukut, who entered the marital life with Bhanu, has two young children. He led a happy familial life with them. However, destiny seemed to want to take everything away from him. After suffering a significant loss in agriculture, he felt Goddess Lakshmi had stopped blessing him. He was almost unable to support his wife and children. Moreover, his cows had also given up on him and were left desperate for a handful of food. At one time, Mukut was proud of his progress. After the setback, he introspected that it is wrong to be too proud and terrible to think he will always have the same fortune. One moment, he had everything, and the next, he was on the verge of losing everything. Their house collapsed in the wind, and the rice he grew was insufficient to eat. No one was offering him to cultivate on their agricultural land. Keeping a pair of cows and cows at home to cultivate on just his two bighas of land was pointless. After thinking about everything, he decided to sell the pair of cows and thought of rebuilding his dilapidated hut with the money he got from it. After selling the pair of cows, he found himself a job as a guard in the hospital for twenty-five rupees. Earlier, this

salary was like the dirt on his hands. However, this money is now his only source of livelihood. Instead of making his heart festive, Bihu is filling his with negative thoughts this time. Mukut became very irritable and had no answers to Bhanu's questions. They used to clean the barn, gather dry fern plants to burn them up and collect hay on days before Bihu. In his free time, he used to make new jute ropes for his cows, but he could not do that anymore after joining the job. He now expresses all his sorrow and anger to his wife.

Mukut's younger brother-in-law, who worked in the military, was supposed to come to his sister's house during Bihu. Excited about her brother's arrival, Bhanu forgot all her sorrows and prepared everything for her brother. Mukut too, who had no pleasure in celebrating Bihu, decides to stay at home for his love for his younger brother-in-law. However, their guest never arrived. Mukut thought that everyone now despised him as he was poor. Meanwhile, he missed his cows, 'Bor Ronga and 'Saru Ronga.' There are no cows in his house on the day of Goru Bihu (the first day of Bihu when the cows are worshipped). The two young children insisted that they be brought cows. They have got the Makhhati leaves. However, how could Mukut explain his sorrows to his kids? After thinking about everything, he fell into bed, crying that only God would save him from these sufferings. Suddenly he was startled. There was a sound of cows entering the yard. He could not believe his ears. It was a Bihu miracle. The cows came and stopped in the middle of the yard. He jumped out of bed and saw Bor Ronga and Saru Ronga waiting in the yard. There was no limit to Mukut's joy. He thought that they were God-sent gifts to him. Mukut ran, brought the Makhhati leaves the boy had got, and put it on them. He fed them pitha and other traditional Assamese sweets and caressed them with love. Mani and Phani stood awestruck by the pleasant surprise. Perhaps those were the cows they had asked their father to bring. The cows shook their heads frequently to express their satisfaction with the hospitality of the guests. They did not want to leave, but Mukut and Bhanu prayed and sent them away. They both shed tears as he led them to the end of the yard. Nevertheless, those were not tears of sorrow. Those were tears of happiness. Mukut thought that if he quit his job as a hospital guard and worked for the moneylender, he would get to stay close to Bor Ronga and Saru Ronga.

**Depiction of Assamese rural life in "Sakha Damodar:**

The relationship between literature and society is close and inseparable. Society is reflected in literature as our image is reflected in a mirror. With society, literature, and literature, the progress of society is almost possible. "Literature draws its resources from society. Society is the basis of literature, while literature controls and guides it on the right path." (Sarmadloi 16) Therefore, the works of all the world writers reflect the story of the literary country or nation and the natural, social, economic, religious, cultural, etc. aspects along with the central theme to a greater or lesser extent. Many writers of modern Assamese literature have also painted a picture of Assamese society in their works.

Lakshminandan Bora is particularly adept at painting realistic pictures of the Assamese rural society. Sakha Damodar is also like a mirror of rural life. The storyteller paints an accurate picture of the Assamese agrarian society very convincingly. The story's protagonist, Mukut, accurately portrays various aspects of rural society.

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood in rural society. People in villages provide their daily meals through agriculture alone. The livelihood of the villagers is farmland and cattle. They live on that land, water, and cows. The character of Mukut reflects that. They enjoy farming the land with their beloved cows. The storyteller says, "The earthly here means the soil. We, farmers, worship the soil." This sentence paints a beautiful picture of agricultural rural life.

Rongali Bihu is the absolute favourite festival of any Assamese. There are many different types of Bihu celebrations in Assam. Assamese people have been celebrating Rongali Bihu with hue and grandeur since immemorial. The story 'Sakha Damodar' is also a realistic picture of the hardships and sufferings of the rural people in the name of celebrating this longed-for Bihu due to financial poverty, which is shown in the following way:

"There are three days left until Chatar Bihu. It is no Bihu in his heart, just poison. Despite being a workaholic, she had no luck weaving new clothes for Bihu. Giving a Bihuwan (Bihu gift) to the husband is very special. This time, she will have to give something old from the box. Mukut could not provide her with the raw materials required for weaving this time."

The festive atmosphere of Bihu brings joy to the Assamese heart. The rural Assamese try to welcome Bihu by any

means. They celebrate their beloved Bihu together in joy and sorrow. This celebration reflects the pure nature of rural life.

The women of the Assamese rural society are easy-going, simple, and devoted to their husbands. Bhanu, one of the female characters in the 'Sakha Damodar' story, is no exception. Bhanu shares the sorrows and joys of her husband, Mukut. Her best characteristics are her devotion to her husband and adherence to her duty. It is the symbol of women in rural society. Bhanu has no objections or complaints. She does not care what she eats or wears. She keeps doing all the housework regularly. Bhanu has never expressed what she wants or needs. She always wants to make Mukut happy as her husband. This is one of the pictures of rural society told through the story.

In Assamese rural life, the cow is considered a god. For farmers, cows are like gods. Therefore, the Assamese thought of cows as household members along with animals. He also loved the cows, the only source of Mukut's farming. The story describes:

"My dears, I have bought you hopes and aspirations that you would feed us... Mukut took the cows and said, do you understand Bhanu? This one has three teeth. This one has two teeth. I have named the three-toothed 'Bor Ronga' and the two-toothed 'Saru Ronga.' I have brought them from a faraway market. I do not know how far they walked to the market. Now give them some fodder and water."

However, due to his financial situation, he had to sell his only resource, the pair of cows. He did not find any peace in selling his cows. Mukut and Bhanu struggled to accept the reality that they could not bathe their cows on the day of Goru Bihu. When their beloved 'Bor Ronga' and 'Saru Ronga' came to their house in the evening, Mukut and Bhanu were overjoyed. They worshiped a God they could not see in their minds. They treated the cows like guests. In Assamese rural society, guests are compared to the incarnation of Damodar. The storyteller paints a vivid picture of it. This is often seen in agrarian Assamese society. The story states:

"There are guests at this poor man's house, Bhanu. They are Bor Ronga and Saru Ronga. Bihu guests this time are exact incarnations of Damodar."

The story also reflects the realism of rural society in terms of various household words, proverbs, etc., in the conversation. such as-

“Baputa said one day, “Hey, Mukut, who is happy in Bharat? Earlier, Saruman spoke up, saying that it is a powerful question. King Yudhisthira told Bak that he who has no debt or disease can eat a handful of vegetables and sleep peacefully is happy.”

The story mentions it again.

“People will come up with something lowly. If Bhanu hears it, she will tie a pot around her neck and die of drowning.”

In addition, the storyteller uses various verses from Hari Nam Ghosa, folk songs, and domestic rigor to portray the story of ‘Sakha Damodar’ with a fluent picture of rural Assamese society.

#### **Conclusion:**

The story of Sakha Damodar is not only a vivid picture of the Assamese rural society, but he also describes the social and economic aspects of the agriculturally dependent people of the rural society through the story. The story describes how economically backward people suffer at every stage. The story is about the Assamese rural society’s customs, rituals, and food habits. The storyteller beautifully portrays the cultural aspects of folk society, customs, and the discourse of rural communities through the Bihu celebrations. Using metaphors, local dialects, and proverbs gives the story a particular dimension. The story is one of the best stories set against the backdrop of an agricultural villager, which has made itself a notable presence in the history of Assamese Literature.

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