

## Credits of Syed Abdul Malik in Assamese Novel: A brief discussion

Md. Mohibul Hoque  
A Research Scholar of CMJ University,  
Shillong, Meghalaya, India

*Abstract: Syed Abdul Malik occupies an important position in Assamese novel literature. He composed more than sixty novels that created a brightest chapter in Assamese prose literature. In fact, he made contributions to the field of short stories, dramas, song books, poems etc.; but his credit in novel literature is unique and at par excellence to the parallel merits of an international figure.*

### Introduction:

Syed Abdul Malik was born on January 16, 1919 at the village of *Nahoroni*, Barua Bamungaon in the district of *Golaghat*, Assam. He achieved education from primary level to higher secondary in his home district. He passed B.A. with English Honours from Cotton College, Guwahati in 1941. As poverty affected him, he could not continue his post graduation study, had to join services one after another at various levels right from school master to inspector and Akashbani programmer to college teacher. In the meantime he, according to the suggestion of Dr. Birinch Kumar Barua, passed M.A. in Assamese in 1951 as a private candidate from the Gauhati University and was placed in the second class first. His service in Jaganyath Barua College, Jorhat continued from 1951 – 1976. Having been nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 1976 he made completion of his parliamentary tenure up to 1982. In 1985 he became the director of the Assam Minority Development Council. As a genius at par excellence, he carried out a good number of missions for the sake Assam and Indian government as well. In 1981 he made journey to abroad in England in view of participating in the World Minority Conference; thus he performed pilgrimage to Mecca in 1991. Erstwhile he led the delegation of Indian writers for participating in the activities of Indo-Soviet Cultural Exchange in the year of 1956. He also made representation for India in the Asian Writers Conference in 1956 – 57. In 1963 he enjoyed journey to a good number of countries including Afganistan. His literary life started with his first debut in writing novel namely “*Oloma Gharar Dhuli*” in 1940. In fact, we find in his achievements that he gave a robust stimulation to the field of Assamese literature in various dimensions. He died on December 19, 2000. <sup>(1)</sup>

## Discussion:

Novel is a fictional piece of prose usually written in a narrative style. Novels tell stories, which are typically defined as a series of events described in a sequence. The word 'novel' is an English transliteration of the Italian word 'novella'--used to describe a short, compact, broadly realistic tale popular during the medieval period. In fact, the Italian word has supplied the present generic English term 'novel' in the 18th century.<sup>(2)</sup>

Clara Reeve mentions in *The Progress of Romance* (1785): "The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it is written. The Romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen." Novel is a fictional narrative, distinct "literary" prose, specific media requirements, and a characteristic subject matter that creates circumstantially intimacy<sup>(3)</sup> among people. It arises from the desire to depict and interpret human character and offers entertainment to the readers that help in a deeper perception of life's problems. In fact, novel deals with a human character in a social situation, where man as a social being.<sup>(4)</sup>

The character creation in novel depends on the personality of the novelist. In this connection, it has been observed that Syed Abdul Malik has laid down the perpetual strains on the characters that he designed in his novel. Dr. Satyendranath Sarma indicates in his book "Asamiya Upanyasar Gatidhara" that the self personality of Abdul Malik appears in some of the characters of his novel. It is aware of the fact that the portrayal of mind and thinking of a novelist falls on his creativity; and Abdul Malik finds no alternative except to follow the human intuition.<sup>(5)</sup>

Syed Abdul Malik was one of the most widely known and popular Assamese writers in Assamese literature. His life scintillated with his writing 130 books, including 70 novels during the span of 80 years of his life.<sup>(6)</sup> Beginning his literary career in the early forties he enriched Assamese literature with short stories, novels, poetry and other writings spanning over five decades. In terms of statistics of fictional work, Syed Abdul Malik was unrivalled in the domain of Assamese literature. Towards the growth of Assamese literature Syed Abdul Malik made an extensive contribution particularly in the sphere of the short story and novel, which has been a matter of unparalleled challenge. In fact, he is the foremost among the fiction writers of the pre-world war and post world war period and those who have successfully depicted the problems of man and the society. The advent of Syed Abdul Malik in the realm of Assamese literature brought a new chapter to her pervasive horizon. He

continuously wrote till his death, and his literary activities have made a bridge between the period of the first and the second world wars. <sup>(7)</sup>

Here it may be reiterated that Syed Abdul Malik is acclaimed with the gigantic stars of Assamese literature, who was really a genius man that he achieved in inborn character. His intelligence started diffusing all around in his writing that puffed up with the literary debut conspicuous even in the period of High school; for first time his story and poetry published in the yearly magazine of “Jeuti” of Jorhat Govt. High School. After his passing I.A. examination, his first novel entitled *Oloma Gharar Dhuli* published in 1940 while he was only 21 years old. His first collection of short stories entitled “Parashmoni” was published in 1945. <sup>(8)</sup>

It is imperative to know that Syed Abdul Malik brought forth whatever position in Assamese literature; till today no Assamese writer could be parallel to his position and distinction of writing so many books, since his credit lies in most of the fields of Assamese Literature. It is really an impossible task to assess the impact and influence of Abdul Malik – the poet, novelist, journalist, editor, essayist, actor, radio artist, comedian, humanist, political and historical commentator, biographer, professor of Assamese, politician, one-time excise sub-inspector, the lovable conversationalist, one-time member of parliament, the globe-trotter, the perpetual joker and the last but not the least the greatest Assamese short story writer with an international reputation. He can be ranked with Thomas Hardy, Kishan Chander or Buddhadev Basu. <sup>(9)</sup> As a matter of fact, He established himself as a distinguished litterateur in Assamese literature. Accordingly he contributed a lot of works to the field of Assamese literature. His credit goes to novel writing at par excellence. He has written more than 67 novels, more than two thousand (2000) short stories, 10 Dramas including 13 Radio-Drama, 3 books of poem collection, 5 books related to music (Sangitalekhya) etc. <sup>(10)</sup>

The production of novels composed by Syed Abdul Malik is historic in the domain of Assamese literature. He thereby finds recognition to be the excellent Assamese novelist, besides his other contributions in Assamese literary genres. In matters of novel, he has got an extensive range for plot-construction and characterization. Since he has unbounded ability of writing. He is the possessor of a sensitive mind to understand the language of human heart. His capability in novel writings visualizes that he has direct experience of practical life and boundless ability of imagination. His novel can create enjoyment that comes from endless downpour of rain in the summer season. It is the consequence of his narrative

technique. The nature of his novels is that while reading his novels readers go away to different world where there is no care for time. <sup>(11)</sup>

Syed Abdul Malik took to fiction writing at an early age. His first novel appeared in installments in the pages of the monthly magazine *Banhi* in 1945-46. It was titled *La Sa Gu* (LCM; lowest common multiple) about which Malik says: “The oppressed, the neglected, the downtrodden people of the world are like the lower support of the Kuber’s treasure box. They are the LCM: the lowest common multiple. In the matter of human rights they are the lowliest.” There is no precise story in the novel. There is a call against social inequalities and racial discrimination. His subsequent novels *Rathar Chakari Ghure* (Wheels of the Chariot Roll); *Kanthahar* (Necklace) and a few others have a common theme -- the pain and suffering of the neglected lot in the society. The author’s Marxist leanings are evident in these works. <sup>(12)</sup>

In Abdul Malik’s fictional works one gets the raw smell of the soil and water of his motherland, Assam, for these have influenced him greatly. Especially Naharani, his place of birth, as well as the Dhansiri River that flows nearby, have greatly influenced Malik’s creative works. In this context, his widely praised novel *Surujmukhir Swapna* (Dream of Sunflower) where the characters are moulded on the ideals of the *Surujmukhi* flower -- whose nature it is to look upward, needs special mention. But after two decades that dream of the novelist was shattered and this expressed itself in his fiction *Swapna Bhanga* (Shattered Dream). For, he found to his distress that Dalim village, situated on the bank of Dhansiri with a Hindu-Muslim population, saw no progress at all even after 20 long years in the field of education, culture, communication, etc.

The brilliant talent of Syed Abdul Malik produced nearly 70 novels, which are really matter of great concern for Assamese society and her culture. Here we may remember few of which as follows: *Aghari Atmar Kahini* (Tale of Nomadic Souls), *Adharxila* (Foundation Stone); *Doctor Arunabhor Asampurna Jivani* (Dr Arunabh’s unfinished biography); *Kavitar Naam Labha* (Lava is the name of the poem), *Pran Samudra* (Ocean of Life); *Trisul* (Trident), *Dukhan Nadi aru Ekhon Marubhumi* (Two Rivers and a Desert) and others, Syed Abdul Malik enriched the Assamese biographical novel. His two novels *Rup Tirhar Yatri* (1963-65) and *Dhanya Nara Tanu Bhal* (1987) are based on the lives of *Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla* and *Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva* respectively.

A novel is a picture and reflection of human life; human feelings and emotions find place in the novels of Syed Abdul Malik, about which Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma

remarks as follows: “The central subject of Malik’s novel is love -- human love. But the love is largely born of romance. Love finds expression in his novels in a variety of form and colour.” The writer’s social consciousness and his revolutionary urge can be seen clearly in his novels.

Facets of urban life and the most undiluted village life come alive in his writings, which also reflect the emotion and feelings of men and women of various social strata -- the eternal relationship between man and woman, nature’s ethereal beauty and man’s sexual as well as bodily urges, etc.

It needs mention that novels are based on a distinct theme of story that brought to portrayal of characters. In this case, we find the large variety and type of characters introduced through the stories is another hallmark of Malik’s literary achievement. As Prof. Hem Barua puts it, Syed Abdul Malik is ‘an inspiring creator of character’. His characters are drawn from all spheres of the society and all walks of life. They are artists, criminals, politicians, bureaucrats, teachers, students, poor peasants, rich merchants, prostitutes, saints, beggars, social workers and so on. However, they are all life-like, robust and sweet. Each one presents itself as a true representative of the class. Many of the characters are highly sensitive as in *Jeesu Christar Chabi* (Portrait of Jesus Christ) or *Maram* (Love). In *Kathfula* (Mushroom) Malik has created one of the finest women characters found in contemporary Assamese literature.

Syed Abdul Malik whatever he portrayed as a style that is his own presentation: it is simply captivating. The abruptness of the introduction immediately fascinates the reader. Sometimes it takes the reader to pre-history. His style of expression and the flow are unique and the narration vividly colourful. However, sometimes when brevity would have been a better option, he tends to be elaborate. Yet, because of his style, one does not get quite bored even by the relatively long narrations. His artistry is again evident in the peculiar manner in which he concludes a story. The curtain drops abruptly and unexpectedly. The reader is not prepared mentally to close the story. The story lingers in his mind like the song of Wordsworth’s solitary reaper.

It is imperative to know that whatever the themes are brought in the stories of Syed Abdul Malik - are predominantly romantic, a large number of his stories, particularly in the post-war period, revolve round socio-economic problems. But in both the types there is the touch of reality. He does not overplay sex except in *Bibhatsa Bedana* (Obscene Pain)

which led to a spate of objection and criticism. Natural human emotions find an equally natural expression in his stories. <sup>(13)</sup>

It has been noticed that sex life and sex problems have been the central point in some of the modern Assamese novels. The sexual desires and sex partners are getting more places in the novel than the sex problems. While sex issues can not be discarded from life, it has been inherently attached to the themes of Syed Abdul Malik's novel as well; but his exposure has not broken the limit of decency in the civil society. <sup>(14)</sup>

Syed Abdul Malik may be warmly estimated that his novels are novels of plot, while plot is conducted by actions of characters. It is not true that all of his novels are of great success but most of them are enjoyed by the readers. The verbosity of his style and overcrowding of characters are noticed in his novels as well. Though he was more interested with the middle class people yet sometimes poor, oppressed and deprived people also present themselves in his novels. <sup>(15)</sup>

#### Conclusion:

The readers of Malik's novels are bound to recognize his caliber that he brought forth in the contents thereof. It reveals from his literary works that the socio-political fables are chiefly fallacious. His novels and short stories are praiseworthy works which are full of art in the realm of literature. His novels have given a thorough picture on the Assamese Milieus from ancient to contemporary day to day life. The author is always guided by a belief in Assamese community and greatness, from time to time shaken to its foundations by tumultuous history, the corruption of thought and disaster. In his writings there is a staunch belief in moral right and a constant seeking for Assamese identity behind the weft of illusion and reality.

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