



ISSN NO. 2320-5407

Journal Homepage: -www.journalijar.com

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/9013
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/9013>



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ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)
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Journal Homepage: <http://www.journalijar.com>
Journal DOI:10.21474/IJAR01

RESEARCH ARTICLE

ECOLOGICAL CONCERN IN ASSAMESE LITERATURE: AN INTRODUCTION.

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 02 March 2019

Final Accepted: 04 April 2019

Published: May 2019

Key words:-

Ecology, Eco-criticism, Assamese, Literature.

Abstract

The present world is facing eco-disasters and the environment is now at stake. As a consequence ecologically oriented literature pleads for a better understanding of nature and eco-criticism emerged as a revisionist literary movement. Eco-criticism studies the relationship between literature and the physical environment. In Assamese Literature also, a good number of writer deal with eco-critical texts who tries to reflect burning ecological problems like species loss, pollution, global warming, toxicity, deforestation, etc. But the study of Assamese Literature from the eco-critical perspective is rare. Therefore, Eco-critical study of Assamese literature is very relevant and essential. This paper tries to give an overview of ecological text in Assamese Literature.

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Introduction:-

Eco-criticism is a new trend of literary criticism with a profound advocacy function that has influenced teaching and scholarship in the humanities since the late twentieth century. It is a branch of scholarship that considers the meaning of our lives within the board context of the more-than-human world by examining the text. In the Eco-criticism Reader (1996) eco-criticism is defined as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just like feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, eco-criticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. Nowadays, in literary criticism, eco-criticism plays an important role, but in Assamese literary criticism eco-critical study is rare. The literary heritage of the Assamese language can be traced back to the c. 9-10th century in the Charyapada, and Prahlad Charit written by Hem Saraswati in the 13th century was the earliest known poetic work in Assamese Literature. Indian philosophy is rich in ecological thought since Veda which paid equal importance to all living organisms and this eco-critical consciousness was reflected in literature. Early Assamese Literature was not apart from that. And in modern times, a good number of Assamese writer deal with eco-critical texts. That's why Eco-critical study in Assamese literature is very relevant and essential. These texts include both creative writings and non-fiction. This paper focused only the creative writings.

1.1 Aims and objectives of the Study

1. To find out the importance of nature in Assamese Literature.
2. To explore the eco-critical text in the history of Assamese literature.
3. To evaluate the importance and relevance of Eco-critical theory in the context of Assamese Literature.

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Methodology:-

This paper is based on secondary data collected from different sources like research papers, research articles, etc. published in journals, periodicals, books, and internet. The paper is descriptive in nature which is based on the historical method of research and eco-critical perspective.

Ecological concern in Assamese Literature

The history of Assamese Literature may be broadly divided into three Periods: Early Period (950-1300 AD), the Medieval Period (1300-188 AD), and the Modern Period (1826-till date). The Medieval Period may again be split into i) Pre-Sankardeva Period ii) Sankardeva's Period and iii) Post-Sankardeva's Period. From the Literature of Sankardeva's era eco-critical consciousness is found in the history of Assamese literature. Though the main aim and objective of the literature of that time was spreading the Vaishnavite Philosophy, but we also noticed eco-critical consciousness which was attached with that Philosophy. Echoing the Upanishadic world view, Sankardeva's philosophy relates all entities to God. Realization of God in every living being may have a sublime effect on society. It may help to stop the anthropocentric mission responsible for ecological degradation. In one of his Borgeets (also known as the noble song), Sankardeva writes: *yata jīva jangama kīṭa patangama/aga naga Jaga Teri kāyā* (All the movable and motionless creatures are the parts of Your (God's) body). In the Kirtana Sankardeva writes: *kukkura sṛgāla gardavaro ātmān Rama/ jāniyā savāko paḍi karibā pranāma* (The dog, the fox, and donkeys too have God within them and realizing this respect all creations)

It was the 19th century in which modern Assam came into being and the period of Modern Assamese Literature is started. The first Assamese Magazine *Orunudo* (1846) plays a great role in establishing the pillar of Modern Assamese Literature and it was *Jonaki* (1889), the Literary Magazine of the Calcutta group of the Assamese student, which launched the epoch-making Romantic Movement in Assamese Literature. In romantic literature, the presence of nature was noteworthy, especially in Poetry. Nagen Saikia writes: These Poems carried to the realm of Assamese Literature the message of love for men and nature; a sense of longing for the pastoral scene; and a glorification of the mother country along with her distant past. Besides, certain human feelings were invested in the world of Nature. Chandrakumar Agarwala's *Ban-Kuwari*, *Niyar*, *Jal-Kuwari*, etc; *Bezboroa's Bhrām*, *Priyatamar Sandarjya*, *Hemchandra Goswami's Puwa* are some of the sterling examples of in this regard. The beauty of man and nature also became the most inspiring subject matter for the poets. Thus the 'extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility' made room in Assamese poetry in the pages of the *Jonaki*. Though the reflection of the beauty of nature in literature cannot be described as eco-critical concern but yet there are some similarities that validate the claim that eco-criticism is the reappraisal of romanticism in a broader sense. In English literature, the rudiments of eco-criticism are found in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Southey, Clare and many other poets of the romantic age and in Assamese Literature the name of Chandrakumar Agarwala, Lashminath Bezboroa, Raghunath Choudhury are noteworthy.

After Independence Assamese poets like Nabakata Baruah, Harekrishna Deka, Hiren Bhattacharya, Nilim Kumar, Jiban Narah, Kushal Dutta, Pranay Phukan, Bijay Sankar Barman, Kamal Kumar Tanti, etc. give focused on the environmental issues and pervaded apposite remarks on the issues related to human nature and its impact on the physical environment. In his poems *Eyat Nodi Asil* (There was a River) and *Krmasha* (Gradually) Nabakanta Baruah reflects how river turns into desert gradually. These poems represent environmental and mental degradation in modern times. Nilim Kumar portrayed both the bright and bleak sides of the development of science and technology on human lives in his poems like *Oxygen Cylinder*. In the Short-Story of Ramdhenu Era, specially *Mahim Bora*, *Saurabh Kumar Chaliha*, *Homen Borgohain*, *Bhabendranath Saikia*, *Apurba Sarma*, *Arupa Patangia Kalita*, *Bipul Khataniar*, *Rashmirekha Borah* tries to reflect the contemporary environmental problems and man-nature relationship through their story. In the context of eco-critical perspective in Assamese Literature, *Mahim Borah's Ekhan Nodir Mrityu* (Death of a River) is a remarkable story. The story is about a weir in Kalang River which flows through Nagaon town. The writer reflects the environmental problems emerged as a consequence of the unexpected weir and how general people suffer because of the vested interest of so-called modern people. *Saurabh Kumar Chaliha's Marudyan* (Oasis) is one noteworthy example where he imagines a green plain of beauty where there are no problems of frightened modern times. In his story *Baghe Tapur Rati* (Night of Tiger reserve) *Apurba Kumar Sarma* reflects the beauty of tiger reserve and challenges created by human towards the life of the reserve.

As like the English Literature, In Assamese also the eco-critical perspective is strongly practiced in Novel. In present times, a good number of Assamese Novelist writes Novel on the basis of eco-critical perspective cautiously. In his novel, *Xukula hatir khuj* (2012) *Prabhat Goswami* draws attention towards human and elephant conflict. He

also reflects the problems of the indigenous community of Assam in this Novel. Rummyang(2016) by Gobin kumar Khound is a novel based on the life of 'Forest man of India', Jadav Payeng where he shows how over the course of several decades, the forest man has planted and tended trees on a sandbar of the river Brahmaputra turning it into a forest reserve. Chorai chuburi (2016) by Pankaj Gobinda Medhi is a novel on conservation of forest and ecotourism. In her novel Eyat Ekhan Aranya Asil(2018) Anuradha Sarma Pujari discovers herself in between the conflict of human, nature, and city-life. This novel is based in the backdrop of eviction in Amchang Reserve, Guwahati.

Conclusion:-

From the above discussions, it has been adroitly clear that a good number of Assamese writer deal with eco-critical texts who tries to reflect the relationship between man and nature through their writings. In Modern Assamese literature, in all genre, there is a lot of eco-critically concern text who makes eco-criticism very relevant in the context of Assamese Literature.

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