

# **Chapter 5**

## **CONCLUSION**

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With the gradual rise of ethnic assertion at the social and political scene in the country in the general and in Assam and the North-East in particular critical and creative writings also find increasing representation of ethnicity and issues relating to ethnic societies and situations. Researchers and creative writers from various ethnic communities of the region have taken a cue from this resurgent milieu and took to writing under various genres including poetry and fiction (Mishra 2010: Introduction). Through poetry and short stories written in various languages like Assamese, Bodo, Manipuri, Bishnupriya, Khasi, Mizo and in English (or translated to English) are larger in number in this respect, considerable number of fictional narratives in Assamese as has been referred to in Chapter III (Also, Bharaili 2009: 8) and Manipuri (Singh 1995: 37) depicting ethnic life and ethnic resurgence have been written by authors both from inside and outside the respective communities. The novels under discussion in the thesis were written in various periods of social and political history during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Chapter III). These novels are by an enlarge, products of some of the critical moments confronted by the communities in question. And the critical periods have been referred to in discussion on the novels (Chapter IV). The novels reflecting upon the life of the communities, though bear authorial voices and views, provide comprehensive accounts of the gradual changes taking place in each of the communities. While Bhattacharya in the *Iyaruigam* negotiated with the struggle for freedom and sovereignty launched by a section of youths in the Hills of Manipur, the advent of Christianity and resulted changes that it has brought to the community, the author's presence is also intermittently felt in the novel. It oscillates between an empathy for peace and progress of the community and the violent situation through which the life of the Hill people is

passing (Bhattacharya 2003: 50). With their abiding concerns for the communities from which they come the novels of Terang and Mipun on the other hand, shed light on their respective societies with reference to their pleasure and pain, sorrows and sufferings, and also political strains undercurrent in them (Terang 2011: 191, Mipun 1993: 124). Issues of social harmony and the need for peace and progress are common concerns poignantly voiced in all these novels.

It may be borne in mind that the 'tribes' in all these novels come under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India (Chapter I, Introduction). Yet they are deprived of much of the constitutionally guaranteed right and privileges even after years of India gaining independence. The violence that erupted shaking the traditional set up of these societies are taken as referral points by Bhattacharya and Sarma. The novels in question have gone deep in interrogating the core issues like deprivation and anguish against the state more particularly among the youths. A close reading of the issues raised in the novels takes the readers into the hearts of these communities and creates an empathy towards whatever have been recorded.

The novels written by Terang and Mipun as insiders have gained wider appeal as they have been ingrained in those societies from birth and grew with them. They have also shed light on some inner issues faced by their communities which often do not come to the fore as seen from outside, as can be felt in the *Rangmilir Hanhi* and the *Mikchijili*. Both these two novels have extensively referred to folklore material from the Karbi and the Mising lives including language expressions from respective languages. About the influence of this in the *Rangmilir Hanhi*, Jitanjali Barpujari writes:

“The novelist has superb command over Assamese and Karbi, and his use of Karbi words, songs etc. with annotations, has not decreased the artistic beauty of the novel.” (Barpujari 1999: 197)

Though these tribes live in the same geographical belts, they have individual characteristics and cherish different world views emerging from respective cultures about life. The novelists have tried their best to retain those individualities.

Once a part of the undivided Assam, many of the areas with tribal habitation psychologically started drifting away from Assam over decades. They became individual states in course of time through the mediation of the Government of India. Separatist attitudes have sprung among them, resulting in a decrease of their population using Assamese as a language for creative writing. Once they used to study in Assamese medium. Nowadays children go to English medium schools, and as such, there is little scope to learn Assamese creative writing.

It is remarkable that the non-tribal writers under discussion had been in those localities for long periods. They had the rare opportunity to interact closely with communities. In recent times, a good number of Assamese have been in those areas for service and livelihood. This provides enough scope to creative minds for writing novels (or other forms of literary writings) about their encounters and experiences.

Moreover, the modern education after Independence has helped to accelerate the pace of progress in the life of many of the tribes. The accumulative effect is that communities are no longer swirled in the old circuit of time. There are frequent references to ideological clashes between the old and the new generation of people in these novels. The old

represents the conservative sections of the society, who are bound by traditional beliefs and superstitions.

It is shown through an examination of the aforementioned Assamese novels that urbanization and advent of technology and their far reaching impact reached many of these societies in various proportions. However, all sections of the communities have not been able to enjoy their benefits because of continuing poverty and backwardness (as seen in Karbi and Missing societies in the novels). As discussed earlier (Chapter 4), there are political and economic factors related to such backwardness. In the majority of novels under the category of depicting ethnic communities and the four novels taken up in the thesis, such aspects are highlighted in different degrees relating them to themes, characters and situations. As a result they become distinctive features of the narratives.

Though they have differences in livelihood, the tribes in the North East have some common areas bearing certain similarities relating to their festivals, beliefs, worships, superstitions, food-habits, magic practices, use of folk medicines and medicinal plants for treatment of disease, music and dance. Most of the tribes living uphill resort to Jhum cultivation. They love nature, and they are dependent on her for livelihood and all other community causes. They bear certain similarities relating to the ways of celebrating the festivals and rites of passage. The marriages are held through some rituals common to all. Sometimes, the bridegroom has to go to the bride's household before marriage and has to pay the bride price or to work for the household (Jowai Khata), which may be called as a practice of 'inverted dowry' (Datta 2012: 14). The Deka Chang and the Gabharu Chang being village dormitories for young boys and girls are to be found almost in all the tribes which are considered to be institutions for training of social morality and other norms for the village youths. The village head man has control over the entire village and he is

highly honoured. The home-made liquor and home spun clothes are favourite of all the tribes. This has led to the important role of weaving in each of the tribal societies and even among the non-tribal societies of Assam. It is seen that there is a close link in between all these novels in their very approach to reflect the cultures of these tribes under discussion.

About this Ajit Saikia writes:

“From such perspectives it can be said that the novelists behind these efforts have successfully elevated life to the level of art. And it is indubitably a vibrant approach, worthy to be praised.” (Saikia 2005: 539)

Apart from these novels, the other novels under this category also shed light on the life and society of various tribes, and have contributed to the growth of Assamese novel.

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