

## ABSTRACT

Metaphor is not merely an ornamental device confined to poetic language but a fundamental mechanism through which human beings conceptualize abstract experiences. Rooted in the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, this research explores how the abstract concepts of life and love are conceptualized through metaphors in modern Assamese poetry. Moving beyond the traditional rhetorical view that treats metaphor as a stylistic embellishment, the study adopts the cognitive approach proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, which asserts that metaphor is intrinsic to human thought and language. According to this view, human cognition is embodied; abstract domains such as life, love, death, or time are understood and articulated through concrete physical experiences.

Through a detailed analysis of the works of nine distinguished modern Assamese poets - Amulya Barua, Hem Barua, Bishnu Prasad Rava, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Hiren Bhattacharya, Nilomoni Phukan, Nabakanta Barua, Nirmal Prabha Bordoloi, and Bhupen Hazarika, the research examines the underlying conceptual metaphors that shape their poetic expressions of love and life. It identifies a set of primary metaphors such as Life is a Journey, Love is a Precious Object, Love is Fire, Life is a Battle, and Love is a Plant structure everyday Assamese discourse. It also finds powerful, creative manifestations in poetry. The study reveals how these poets extend, elaborate, and sometimes subvert conventional metaphorical structures to express nuanced emotional, existential, and cultural realities.

This research demonstrates that the metaphors found in Assamese poetry are not isolated literary devices but deeply connected to universal patterns of human cognition while also reflecting the distinct sociocultural fabric of Assam. The study also underscores the creative use of conceptual metaphors in the poetic discourse—where familiar metaphors are reshaped into evocative imagery, enhancing both aesthetic depth and emotional resonance. For instance, the poetic rendering of love as an irreplaceable ornament, as seen in Bishnu Prasad Rava’s imagery of the “blood red coral of my heart,” is deeply rooted in the cultural symbolism of Assamese society while resonating with universal metaphorical patterns like Love is a Valuable Object.

Furthermore, this work contributes significantly to both literary and linguistic scholarship by filling a notable gap in the study of Assamese literature from a cognitive linguistic perspective. While the field of Cognitive Poetics has developed globally, its application to Assamese poetry remains largely unexplored. This study, therefore, serves as the first comprehensive attempt to bridge cognitive linguistics and Assamese literary analysis. By examining how conceptual metaphors operate at both linguistic and cultural levels, the research highlights the profound interconnectedness between language, cognition, culture, and creativity.

The findings reinforce the idea that metaphor is a cognitive necessity an indispensable tool for organizing thought, structuring experience, and conveying meaning. This work not only opens new avenues for literary analysis in Assamese and other Indian languages but also invites further interdisciplinary engagement between cognitive science, linguistics, and literary studies.