



08

**INDIRA GOSWAMI'S *THE JOURNEY*: EXPLORING THE THEME OF VIOLENCE AND
SOCIAL UNJUST IN NORTHEAST STATES**

Barnita Majumder

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Holy Cross College

Agartala, India

Abstract:

Northeast Literature is, indeed, a new literature and unique from the rest of others. It is a voice of resistance and protest writing against the neo-colonial power. The literature plays a pivotal role in searching identity, roots, traditional values, and culture which seems to be deteriorated to the globalization and modernisation of society. Indira Goswami's 'The Journey' (Jaatra) is often classed as a story set against the backdrop of militant violence in Assam. Tilottama Mishra (2011), for instance, reads it primarily through the lens of a mother's love and anxiety for her absent militant son. The son in her reading, represents a 'ruthless and rash world which has no place for mother's love and old-world values. While this reading is a tenable one, interpreting 'The Journey' almost exclusively through the lens of the mother-son relationship which is then conjoined with a focus on 'contingent' forms of terroristic violence does not exhaust its multi-faceted possibilities. The river Brahmaputra has engulfed the lands of the people in the story. The government officials hardly pay any attention to these entire social unjust. The present paper focuses on the militants' action that led to tremendous violence in Assam and with that how the floods of Assam have made people homeless.

Keywords: Identity, Roots, Violence, Anxiety, Social Unjust, etc.

The theme of northeast writers mostly confines to nationhood, identity, insurgency, ethnic violence, corruption, home, migration, exile, memory and many more. Tilottama Mishra says, 'violence features as a recurrent theme because the story of violence seems to be never ending one in this region and yet people have not learned to live with it', as they are expected to do by the distant centres of powers. "You have to be poetic because the subject is so hard and rough. You must protect your subject like a mother protects her children. My stories are based on harsh reality, but I transform it. I turn it into literature; otherwise, it would simply be a pamphlet. You must be an artist to do that, a great artist, or people will not read it" (Goswami).

Indira Goswami who writes under the pen name of Mamoni Raisom Goswami is one of the pre-eminent contemporary Assamese writers. Her short stories and novels set in different locales of India give her readers a taste of life beyond the boundaries of Assam. 'The Journey' starts with the female narrator and Professor Mirajkar returning from Kaziranga National Park. Both of them worked in Delhi University and have come to Assam to attend a conference organised by the students of Assam. Prof. Mirajkar was afraid of extremists as one of his best friends has been killed by them. While Prof. Mirajkar was heavily engrossed with the idea of terrorism in Assam, the narrator on the other hand imagines herself in the balcony of Kaziranga Tourist Lodge with a thick trudge of Bijuli bamboo as if it were muga silk. Indira Goswami gives a picturesque description of the paddy field, the variety of trees that they were passing across by the window of the car. But Prof. Mirajkar was not



able to enjoy the natural beauty as he was repeatedly thinking of the sounds of the gunfire.

Indira Goswami explores the natural beauty of Assam vividly. She mentioned cotton, Khaira, sisoo, holong, poma, bokul and teak trees that she was seeing from her car window. 'Evening wrapped the teak in shreds of silk that the stippling sun seemed to turn magically into deer skin' signifies her way of delving deep into nature and the beauty of the forest of Assam. The driver Ramakanta broke his silence by giving relief to the passengers that last year the road was smeared with blood, but now no grenades and gun fires. But Prof. Mirajkar reminded him that the violence is not yet over as the officers in the forest department of Kaziranga has informed him that some poachers were carrying foreign arms and some smugglers have been caught at Mori Diphu. The two poachers were shot dead. The car jerked and stopped due to mechanical failure. Prof. Mirajkar and the narrator get down from the car and come near a shop where an old man informed that the workshop is seven miles away. The driver can go for the mechanic and he suggested both of them to sit in his shop and offered them tea and betel nut. As there were no customers the narrator wanted to know the reason behind lack of customers. The lady of the shop replied that they don't sell evil stuffs, they are 'Bhakats' (religious being, an embodiment of a rich oral tradition and a performing artist).

As the old lady was arranging everything alone, the narrator asked her about any help. The old lady replied her elder son's wife used to help her but now her daughter in law is very weak. Her son also died because of an unknown disease. The doctors have turned devils at that time. They could not arrange medicines for him. She also added that she has two sons and daughter. The girl fell in love with a soldier in Indian Army who had come to wipe out terrorists in Assam. The old lady expressed her concern how the last seven years were hellish for her daughter. The girl is limping back to her normal health. She also added how the treacherous river Brahmaputra had grasped their land. In the last seven years, the river has swallowed up so much land. The Flood Relief Committee has stopped the resentment of people by paying them a mere amount of hundred rupees. The old lady also added that her husband feels ashamed to touch the feet of those officials, who have digested up the money sanctioned by the government for flood relief. The picture of social unjust among the people of Assam has been portrayed by the narrator. River Brahmaputra has swallowed many of the Namgharson its bank. Arimrah, Holapar, Kohara, Mihimukh- people in all these places appreciates the songs the old man played with his Dotara. It's because of the floods that they have to take shelter by the Highway and wait for the customers' days after days, the old man narrated. The old man was reminiscing the glorious days they used to have before the flood, when the old lady interrupted him saying that she got the information that their son was seen near the railway tracks. She was requesting the old man to find out their son as he might be hungry.

The old man showed his disinterest and almost paid less heed to his wife's request to bring back their son. We witness three forms of violence in the story. Violence of terrorist and armed forces, gender violence and violence to old man and women resulting from crisis and conflicts in the region are the major violence express in the story. Nirmali, the young girl, is despised by the society and even by her family for she falls in love with a soldier. Her brother, Kanbap, scolds her as: "I will smash your womb! I will kill the bastard child of that soldier you are carrying... Making love with an Indian soldier, dirty bitch! Phoooh! Phoooh!" (Goswami, 12) It is shown in the words of Kanbap that how women are treated in chaos and confusion period. The violence of old man and woman is shown in the parents of Kanbap and Nirmali. They led a life of misery because their son had joined the underground army and daughter had an affair with an enemy.

The pattern of Indira Goswami's fiction is mainly focused on the transformation of humanity into inhumanity in the midst of terror and violence. She delves deep into the prevailing situations of the society and writes with zeal to bring a change in the society. For the northeast writers, literature becomes a therapeutic purpose and a cultural antenna which can act as an outlet to outpour all the



pent-up feelings and ultimately to restore peace, stability and order in the region. Northeast literature is highly didactic and it is also a complete representation of the social realities and the traumatic socio-political upheavals of the region. It portrays the historical and political trauma of suffering and marginalization but not at the cost of losing identity and culture. Writers vividly present the picture of violence, conflicts, trauma and resistance caused by the cross-conflict of centre and state.

References

- Baishya, Amit R. 'Slow Violence: Time out of Joint in Indira Goswami's 'Jaatra''. Indiragoswami.com, July 12. Web.
- Dusad, Mithu, 'Ethnic Violence in Indira Goswami's Jaatra'. Webology. Vol 17, No.2, 2020. Print.
- Goswami, Indira. *The Power of Culture*. 2008. Print.
- <http://www.krachtvancultuur.nl/en/current/2008/december/journey.html>. Web.
- Laishrum, Sangita. 'Conflicts and violence and its impact on women: A reading of selected works of Tamsula Ao and Indira Goswami'. International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities. Vol V, Issue -VII, August 2017. Print.
- Veeramani, B.R, Kumaravalli, A. 'Social Reform and Remedy in the Select Novels of Indira Goswami.' Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies. Vol 17, No. 4, 2021. Print.



This is an Open Access e-Journal Published Under A Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

To Cite the Article: *Majumder, Barnita, "Indira Goswami's The Journey: Exploring the Theme of Violence and Social Unjust in Northeast States". Literary Cognizance, IV - 2 (September, 2023): 50-52. Web.*