

A Comprehensive portrayal of society during the struggle for independence in Assam in Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya's Mritunjay

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ABSTRACT:

This dissertation paper studies *Mrityunjay*, a novel by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya based on the days of the freedom struggle in Assam, gives a vivid description of various events that took place throughout that period. It is a detailed portrayal of the

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situation of the people of the state during their struggle for freedom from the British rule. It put focus on the livelihood of the people of various castes and tribes and the atrocities faced by them by the police and the military throughout these days under the British rule. It puts special emphasis on the conflicts and sufferings of the public in all spheres. The novel also emphasizes on the mental and physical violence and assault upon woman by the forces. The novel also gives a wide picture of the ideals and cultures that prevailed in the Assamese societies during that time giving a much clearer understanding of the situation of caste system, situation of woman, various rituals, and traditions, etc.

Keywords: Swaraj, Freedom, Violence, Rural-life, Woman, Conflict, Ideals

INTRODUCTION

About the author; Indian writer Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya lived from 14 October 1924 to 6 August 1997. He was a trailblazer in the field of contemporary Assamese writing. His novel *Mrityunjay* (Immortal) won him the 1979 Jnanpith Award, making him the first Assamese writer to get the honour. Indira Goswami won it in 2001. In 1961, he was also granted the Sahitya Akademi Award in Assamese for his work *Iyaruigam*, which is regarded as a literary masterpiece in India. The work was published in translation by Katha Books under the title *Love in the Time of Insurgency* in 2005. Bhattacharya is also the author of the well-known book *Aai* (Mother). From 1983 to 1985, he presided over the Assam Sahitya Sabha, or Assam Literary Society. He served as editor of the venerable Assamese literary journal *Ramdhenu* in the 1960s. The entire time that this seminal Assamese literary periodical was published in the mid-20th century in Assam is known as the *Ramdhenu Era* of Assamese literature because of how well-known and influential his function as its editor was. Dr. Bhattacharya, the preeminent literary critic in India, carried on his aim of identifying exceptional literary talent in Assam even after *Ramdhenu* ceased publication. After a brief illness, Bhattacharya passed away in 1997 at the private college hospital in Guwahati.

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Among his notable works are Dhanpur Lashkar (1986), Rajpathe Ringiay (1957), Aai (1958), Iyaruingham (1960), a novel that won the Sahitya Akademi Award, Sataghni (1964), Mrityunjay (1979), a novel that won the Jnanpith Award, and others. Almost all of his books have a political undertone, especially those that center on the Independence struggle and its sometimes-unacknowledged effects on people's lives.

ABOUT THE NOVEL

"Mrityunjay" signifies "Immortal" or "Conqueror of Death." The novel paints a vivid picture of the Assamese society's commitments and struggle against British authority in 1942. It tells the story of how the Quit India Movement affected the Assamese people and how they carried it out in their state. The narrative revolves around the Barpathar railway derailment, which was instigated by rebel forces. It represents the arguments surrounding the movement among the individual Assamese freedom fighters, who struggle with deep-seated inner conflicts as they choose between Gandhi's nonviolent satyagraha and Bose's violent insurrection. In keeping with Bhattacharya's style, the book examines these political issues within the context of Assamese culture, customs, and daily life.

The characters of the novel are rustic and are representation of the various areas and ideals of the Assamese society during the time. The novel puts forward a picture of the villages and the lifestyle of the people living in them and contrasts them with the folks of the town, concerning many sectors including education, cultures, ideals, and others. The characters in the novel are all part of different parts of Assamese society.

The novel also gives a detailed description of various activities of the freedom struggle by the activists for the attainment of Swaraj. This also includes the pictures of violence, death, and pain. It also gives the readers an idea of the conflict that was in the minds of the freedom fighters about their ideologies and ways they followed. There are mentions of various real-life incidents that happened during the freedom struggle and of various personalities like Kushal Konwar,

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Kanaklata and Tileswari who sacrificed their lives for Swaraj.

The female characters in the novel are also representatives of the situation of woman during the struggle and the diverse ways in which woman lived during the struggle. It shows strengths and weaknesses of woman and their effect in the freedom struggle. The characters of Dimi, Koli Baideo, Subhadra, the Gossain's wife etc. are examples of diverse kinds of woman that existed in the society during that time.

THE STORY OF THE NOVEL

The story, which takes place during the Quit India Movement, follows the activities and lives of a group of individuals who are committed to undermining the British Government of India's imperial apparatus. Some members of the group were more frustrated and conflicted by the slower success rate than others, even though they instinctively adhered to Gandhian values of non-violence. The story is told from the perspectives of Dhanpur, Dimi, Goxaai, Guxaani, and Rupnarayan. The narrative deftly captures the everyday pleasures and tragedies of people as the cops pursue them before they fulfill their desires. For the sake of the nation and loved ones, sacrifices are made. With optimism and a question, the story ends.

Among these is Dhanpur Laskar. For him, the struggle against caste and creed divisions is a local one as much as one against foreign ills. From the beginning to the end of the story, this is passionately addressed. Finally, Tikou's declaration that he is tired of the caste system and that he won't be washing the bowl he used for his tea sends a powerful message.

The story's outstanding female cast is yet another crucial element. Strong women are shown by Koli Baideu, Dimi, Ratani, Anupama, and Gossain's wife. This is undoubtedly evidence of the progressive thought that has pervaded the Northeast. There were times when you felt genuinely terrible for the woman, and Dimi frequently gave me the chill.

The revolutionary acts of terror and violence (only the derailment of a train incident is dealt with in this story in detail and this story essentially revolves around that incident) are in no way

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justified in this book. And even until the last moment there are serious repercussions in even the revolutionaries' minds about the heinous acts of terror that they have committed, and they feel remorse for having to diverge from the Mahatma's path. But they also put forward arguments to keep the struggle going. There are moments when we feel that the revolutionaries are the real freedom fighters and they have sacrificed themselves for the cause of the country and for the cause of 'Swaraj'.

One central love story which goes unfulfilled is Dhanpur and Dimi, then there is Rupnarayan and Arati. But really it is Anupama, a young widow of a policeman that reveals the philosophy of life that, "It is separation that is essence of life and not union".

There is a sense of acknowledgement and patriotism left by the story for the overlooked heroes of the Independence movement. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya was able to successfully describe the pre-independence Assamese society in that regard, adding a dash of geography and historical context. Though it is fiction, it is more than that because it has a much more realistic feel to it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary text this research concerns with is Mrityunjay, a novel authored by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya in 1970 and later translated to English by D.N.Bezbaruah in 1983. The novel is a story of the time of the revolt during the Quit India Movement of India in Assam. A great number of books has been published on Indian freedom struggle. The novel, like the other works of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya shares common themes of history, and the freedom movement plays a very important role in all his works.

In case of Assam, the fifth volume *The Contemporary History of Assam* by H.K. Barpujari provides ample information of non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India movement. It provides the history and information about Assamese riots, the middle class, Education, Swadeshi and boycott movements, the growth of extremism, the world war, national consciousness and many such important aspects of the history of Assam. Dr. Amalendu Guha's *"Planter-raj to Swaraj: Freedom struggle and electoral*

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politics in Assam, 1826-1947” also helps with a deeper understanding of the freedom struggle.

Dr. Fakarul Islam’s *The Quit India movement in Assam* from the book *Redefining India* is another important piece of work. It provides with details of the situation of Assam during the Quit India Movement; discussing about the rise of nationalism and the revolutionary activities and events. The role of the congress and the rise of the idea of freedom can be studied through this chapter. The writes also have written about the various conflicts and the situation of woman during the time.

Pathok Jayanta Dr. “*A True Illustration of the Pursuit of Human Liberation: Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya’s Mrityunjay*” studies and analyzes the thinking of happiness and dreams during the struggle for freedom. This paper reviews the conflict in ideals and beliefs that went into the minds of the revolutionaries. It also discusses the sacrifices that were made for the movement and how there was a pursuit for happiness in the minds of the protagonists in the plot during the unveiling of the events.

Puzari Sarma Rani Rekha, Mazani Kazume, “*Role of Assamese women in the freedom struggle of India*” studied the role woman during the freedom struggle. It analyzes how the woman during that time came out of their conventional roles od homemakers and played an important role in raising the spirits of freedom among the people. The paper presents how women were courageous and even sacrificed their lives for the revolution. Borthakur Akunthita

Dr., *Rethinking the role of woman of Nagaon district in the quit India Movement* also studies similar aspects of women’s role during the struggle for independence. These works draw the struggle and atrocities faced by woman in different areas from the British forces.

Mr. Siva Nath Pait, *QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN ASSAM: A HISTORICAL STUDY*, studied the movement and the way the society reacted to the situation in the country. The study discusses about the atrocities of the British forces. The paper describes the violence that took place during that time. It also discusses the economic and social conditions, the impact of the fines and looting

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of the public by the government, the arrests on reason of mere suspicions, it also studies the situation of woman, the violence and face they had to withheld, the rapes and beatings.

Apart from these there are many articles and writings which discuss the freedom struggle and the aspects of the novel, its historical background, and the representation of its characters. There are also various materials on the internet which help to gather a better understanding of the history and its implications in the novel.

INTENT

To get an insight into the life of the public during the freedom struggle.

To have a more detailed idea of various activities during the freedom struggle.

To understand the conflicting ideas that revolve around the minds of people taking part in the freedom movement.

To understand the violence and pain that the people of Assam had to suffer during the British rule.

To understand the dreams and aspirations towards a new way of living after the attainment of Swaraj.

RELEVANCE

Mrityunjay provides us with a detailed image of the events in Assam during the time of freedom struggle and can help with a better understanding of the days during that time. This analysis can help us to understand the history of Assam during the British rule and impact of the freedom struggle on the minds of the participants of the struggle movement and give us a better understanding of the violence on the residents, specially woman of the state and the sacrifices that were made in order to attain freedom; thus, making us learn the value of freedom and love for the nation. It will also help us understand what kind of impacts such situations can have on an individual's personal and social life and relations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method of research has been used for the study and analysis of the Novel and its background. The study is based on primary and secondary data. Primary data includes selective works

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of the author and books with reference to the context of the book and the Quit India Movement in India and the political, economic and social situations in Assam during the movement; and the secondary data includes research articles, journals from numerous writers and scholars and internet sources.

CHAPTER-1

This chapter deals with the aspect of life during the time of the Quit India Movement in 1942 in the province of Assam and how the novel is a presentation of the social, political and economic scenario of that time. It is an analysis of the novel's imagery of life during the time of the movement.

Under the presidency of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the All-India Congress Committee convened in Bombay on August 7, 1942, and on August 8, 1942, the resolution "Quit India" was approved. An essential component of this historic Indian liberation movement was the national movement in Assam. With the resolve to "do or die," the people of Assam plunged headfirst into battle in a way that would have made any freedom loving person proud. After experiencing a baptism of fire in 1921 and again in 1930-1932, the province did not lag other Indian provinces and participated enthusiastically in the Quit India Movement of 1942. The Quit India Movement was larger and more intense than any other movement, even the Great Revolt of 1857.

One important aspect of the Quit India Movement was the large-scale participation of masses in all important activities of it. The response of the people of Nowgong district was overwhelming; the district could rightly be called the Midnapur or Satara of Assam. It was in Nowgong alone that all methods from non-violent non-cooperation to uprooting of railway lines, destroying of bridges etc. were applied. It can thus be said that the district was a political laboratory to the people of Assam in the year 1942. (1)

With the beginning of the Quit India Movement two different groups came into form. The efficient group of Shanti Sena formed under the Congress to face any emergency arising from World War II. This group consisted of about 20,000 volunteers who worked

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together in various villages of Assam. Another group known as the Mrityu Bahini (Suicide group) was formed with ideals of revolution and violence against the atrocities. The Mrityu Bahini took on various acts against the British which included derailing of trains carrying arms and soldiers, bombings and killings of people who were against the revolution.

Jnanpith Award winner Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya successfully assessed and detected the significance of the movement and endowed it to permanence and universality of art. The novel begins with the journey of three protagonists on their way to the Doipara Satra to meet the Gossain. Their journey is for a mission, i.e., the derailment of a train carrying British soldiers along with arms and ammunitions. The author, with the addition of various new characters throughout the journey successfully presents a vivid imagery of the movement and the planning and thoughts that goes into the minds of the people who were the active participants of the revolt. The plot moves ahead with the description of various events that took place in the lives of the characters during the phase of the revolution and of events that occurred before and after the derailment of the train. The novel explores the conflicting ideas of violence and nonviolence, peace and atrocities, freedom and captivity, love and loss, life and death and many others. The plot and characters of the novel revolve around Nowgong and its nearby areas of Kampur, Mayong, Koliabor and others where the movement was at full bloom and gained large popularity among the masses. It deals with the activities of the people involved in the movement. The novel also focuses on the life and ways of tribes like the Garo, Miri, Mikir, etc. The list of protagonists includes characters like Dhanpur, Bibhiram, Manik Bora, Rupnarayan, The Gossain and many more. This list also includes important female characters like Dimi, Koli Bai and Subhadra who played an important role throughout the plot of the novel and are allegorical to the victims of violence by British military and the way woman during that time fought back against them. It is a representation of the ways the movement affected people of different classes and kinds, from villages to towns. The novel is a

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mixture of historical events and fictional characters altogether and presents to the readers a visual description of the life of people in areas of Assam during the Quit India Movement of 1942. The novel also talks about the views of different organizations like the Muslim League and the Communists in the story. "The Muslim league wants to include Assam in Pakistan." (pg 18).

"Amazing! This relationship between men and women. The way one was considerate of the other. And wasn't this consideration itself an indicator of humanness. pg. 110"

The novel also explores the relation of man and woman through different points of views. It views the relations of a husband and wife, the relationships of lovers and unrequited love, the relation between friends and sisters. It dwells through the themes of love, sacrifices, intimacy and freedom.

Swaraj : Acting for it

The public fed up with the actions of the British government came out in large numbers of one aim, i.e., attainment of Swaraj.

The farmer, worker, and student movements led the 1942 uprising. There have been strikes in schools, colleges, and enterprises.

As symbols of British authority, police stations, post offices, and railroad stations were attacked, destroyed, or set on fire. Afterwards, a few sabotage incidents were also in rise. Trains derailed; telephone cables were severed. The *mrityu bahini* set out to curtail every possible movement of the British and thereby used every opportunity they can find to make benefits for their mission. They looted and collected guns and other weapons from various sources, captured the spies of the government, and raised their voices against the forces while being thrashed with violent responses from the police.

Mrityunjay provided with a description of the ways the movement and its participants functioned amongst the presence of the British police, the CID, and the military. It discusses the ways the leaders communicated and gave orders for the revolution in the form of letters and the volunteers' loyalty for the orders. The secrecy and encryption followed by the revolutionaries during their missions is exemplary and was a very important factor in the functioning of

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the movement. The novel also shows the involvement of people from different social backgrounds varying from the sharecroppers and the villagers, the people of different tribes, the members of the sattras and the Vashnavite society, to the people of the town like the doctor and Rupnarayan in the various activities of the movement. “From the gossain of Kuruwabahi to Tikou, the milkman - there was hardly anyone who has risen in revolt. Pg.320”. The involvement of the common people in the movement and their belief in it can be seen by the help and support they provided to the revolutionaries during their missions. They were provided with food and shelter when required and were also helped for their escapes. The common people helped the revolutionaries with helping them with routes and travel.

The novel also provides a visual description of the landscape and scenery during the time. The detailed descriptions of the house and the places, the hills and the mountains, the fields and the rivers; all comes together throughout the plot to come together with the people for the attainment of their purpose. The deep imagery of nature is an important feature of the novel, and it is a representation of the importance of nature in the purpose of humans. The protagonists used the resources of nature like the forests and rivers and the darkness of the night as a way of travelling while hiding from the police and used as the ways of nature as an escape.

There are also mentions of the ways the volunteers had to take different disguises and travel at high risks of being captured. They would take up different identities; sometimes even as woman to keep themselves safe.

“But I am ready to die for a good cause” (pg. 17) This shows the do or die attitude of the volunteers of the Mrityu Bahini, who were ready to sacrifice their lives to attain Swaraj.

“This was not the kind of work which resulted in speeches and photographs being published in newspapers. pg. 110” This portrays the secrecy of their jobs. The risk of arrests and death always followed the people. There protesters were always in run from the police and the CID and even a small mistake in the process

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of communication and their activities could result in their death or arrest. “Even a scrap of writing inspired fear. A scrap of Kushal Konwar’s writing spelt doom for him. pg. 110”

“Thereafter, as we get close to our scene of action, in the name of Krishna, we have been abandoning one by one all things sacred to us. pg. 140”. The movement forced the believers of God and non-violence to take on ways which were an extreme change for them. This made them filled with guilt.

Conflict : Ideals and ways

“He now realized it was not Gandhi’s satyagraha; it was an operation that meant taking lives”. The rise of the movement and revolt lead to rise in differences and conflicts in the ways and ideals of the people. The people who till that time had adapted to the ways of the Congress and Gandhi’s Non-violence were slowly becoming aware of the ideals of Subhash Chandra Bose’s way of attaining freedom. Many protestors moved their ways from Gandhi’s principles to that of Bose’s, leading to a rise in the number of violent protests. This gave rise to conflicts among people who were united by the same aim for freedom but were divided by the means of attaining it. “The leaders were divided. One fraction wanted to follow the path of nonviolence. The other preferred violence. pg. 105” This shift from non violence to violence came as the followers saw no other way. “Do you know why have Manik Bhakat(Vaishnav bhakta), Bhiviram and others begun thinking of guerrilla war? They see no other way. They (British) have to be driven out of India” Pg-42 There was also the shock and trauma that came with the killings. This shock led to a series of doubts and conflicts in the minds of the protagonists. The men ardent followers of spirituality and nonviolence were on their run from the government after the killings of numerous soldiers; and it was enough to send them through the route of self-doubt and misery in their minds.

With the World War II on its peak and the faceoff between the Japanese and the British came another conflict. The people were concerned about the coming of the Japanese into power. The British defeated the Japanese, and this led to development of ideas

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against both the powers and rather fighting for their own independence. “We want neither the Japanese nor the British pg. 105” This on the other hand also gave rise to a unity among these protesters where they worked together for the common aim of Swaraj.

The novel also presents the conflict between different social classes and the class differentiation and discrimination that prevailed in society. The author uses the characters of Dhanpur and Ahina Konwar to show the presence of class discrimination between the people of the Sattras and the members of the working-class society.

There are also mentions of the differences in the ideas and ways between the people of the villages and the people living in the town. Their different ways of looking into the various aspects of life can be seen in instances of interactions between Rupnarayan who an educated youth from the town with a well to do lifestyle and the others. “The town folks don’t realize the realities of village life” pg. 23

The differences between the working of the tribal society are also portrayed in the novel with the characters of Dimi and the villagers of the Miri village. There is also a vivid imagery of their traditions and cultures.

The novel with the help of its characters also gives an insight into the role of religion and belief in God. The excerpts from different religious scriptures and the belief of the members of the sattras contradicts with the ideas of Dhanpur’s approach about the presence of God.

Life: Sufferings and Struggles

The beginning of the Quit India Movement of India in 1942 marked an unravelling period in the history of India and had a great impact on the province of Assam, which was one of the forerunners of the movement. The movement was marked by nonviolent protests under the leadership of different leaders of the congress but with time also came various acts of violence. The mrityu bahini which became more influential during the time conducted various activities of violence and terror against the British forces and tried to curtail their communication and resources. The rise in these activities made

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the British Government much curious and the made conscious efforts to keep the protests in control, but despite all efforts and arrests made by the forces to control the movement they failed miserably.

These events rather fueled the Indians for putting more efforts in the protests in the absence of their main leaders. The movement was successful in giving rise to the feeling of unity among the citizens and people came out in large numbers throughout the country and state.

“It was around this time that atrocities of the police, the CID and the military were stepped up. “The British military and police were made more active and were given full freedom and power by the government in order to curtail the movement which was in full motion as the time passed by. This led to the police using violence and force on the citizens. The police began collecting fines from the people with unnecessary causes and put a lot of pressure on the people. The public were tortured and looted in their homes by the police on failing to do so. Moreover, people were arrested in places in cause of mere suspicion and were tortured both physically and mentally. The public were forced to be in their houses and there was a situation of panic and fear among the people.

Moreover, the economy of the state was also deteriorating due to the effects of the world war; and the various activities of the police which include looting, burning of houses and granaries, destruction of crops, etc. had a devastating effect on the people. There was a rise in prices of necessary commodities and people were failing to buy food for feeding their families. “Fires aren’t burning in many kitchens all over the country. That’s why we are doing all this, after all. Pg.334”.

The loss of belief on God by the common people was a result of the atrocities by the British forces. This can be seen in this line spoken by Dhanpur “Where had your God disappeared when Subhadra was outraged?”

Woman: Action and atrocities

Woman throughout the freedom struggle had to face various challenges in different spheres of life. In Assam, the woman who were adapted to the lifestyle of being at home came out in large

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numbers in protest against the government and took part in the revolt for the attainment of Swaraj. The rise of nationalism among the woman had a much bigger impact on the movement and provided a sense of courage among the masses. Many women sacrificed their lives in the hands of the British during the movement which angered the protesters and thereby fueling the revolution.

Women actively took part in this movement as well. The women assumed responsibility for organizing the programs due to the high number of men incarcerated. A significant number of women came out to support the movement's programs. They registered themselves as members of the Women's Wing and Santi Sena. After Mrityu Bahini (the Suicide Squad) was established, the women's force engaged in acts of violence and sabotage. Amal Prova Das, Pupalata Das, and Chandraprova Saikiani were the well-known leaders of the women's wing. The Mrityu Bahini included active members such as Kanaklata, Damayanti Bora, Ratnabala Phukan, Buddheswari Hazarika, and Khahuli Nath.

The novel through its plot presents different woman characters from different social spheres; and shows the changes and growth that occurred in them with the growth of the movement.

"A virtuous woman never touched by any other male was dragged about until her clothes came off. "The woman of that time also had to face violence and abuse from the British Military and police forces and were the victims of the atrocities of these forces. The acts of violence included beatings, mental torture and abuse, rape and murders.

In spite of the numerous incidents of violence and atrocities upon woman; the woman of the state was courageous and held their heads high against the British officials. The woman showed resistance and dignity and came forward for the protest. They were courageous enough to sacrifice their life for the purpose of freedom.

The novel describes about the courageous tales of brave woman who came forward for the movement and fought against the forces of the government and raised their voices for their freedom. There are mentions of the real-life historical figures like

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Kanaklata, Tileswari and Bhogeshwari who played a pivotal role during the movement and inspired the people of that time, especially woman. The novel gives an insight into the minds of these women and their determination towards their aim. “‘I am going, don’t let this fall. Come hold it up’ were her last words as she fell”(pg 99). The description of young girls like Tilswari who came out for the movement are tales of inspiration to many till the present. “A tender girl of twelve summers. The police shot her down as well”

CHAPTER 2

Dreams : After Swaraj

This chapter deals with the way the movement affected the life of the people who were a part of the revolution. It deals with the areas of interpersonal relationships with family and loved ones, the sacrifices made in their personal life, the loss of the loved ones and the dreams and expectations held by them that were meant to be fulfilled after the attainment of Swaraj.

The dreams of a nation after the attainment of Swaraj were different for each. The protagonists are allegory of the different dreams of the Assamese society. The dreams ranged from the personal lives of the protagonists to dreams of a modern society free from all ills and evils. The dreams ranged from dreams of a happy family, dreams about the upcoming generations and dreams of a society free from all differences and discrimination. The dreams were material as well as spiritual.

The sacrifices made for the dream of Swaraj are an important aspect of the novel. There are events throughout the story that present the different sacrifices that the protagonists had to make for their aim. These sacrifices are an important part of the plot and play a very important role during the purpose.

“You all will be tried in independent India pg.295”. The independent India was a dream for all the people of that time. The atrocities of the Police and the military, the unstable society, and the failure to have a proper life made the people aware of the necessity of a free country. The revolutionaries considered the police to be traitors who were members of the Assamese society but worked

against it. The revolutionaries were working for a free country and a free society where there would be peace and prosperity; a society free from killings and violence; a society where people would be able to live freely.

“They would not experience wars. They would laugh, talk, sing, and make love in an age of non-violence free of wars”. pg. 277 This was the India the revolutionaries imagined and fought for. They wanted to let off violence and war from society. They dreamt of a country where one could live, sing, talk and love freely away from all worries.

Economic development and upliftment of society and the individuals were also another aspect of the revolution. The revolution led to degradation in the economy as the British forces controlled the resources and looted the local villagers putting up fines and taxes. The World War and the Japanese invasion also impacted the economy to a great extent.

The vision of a society free from all disparities and discrimination was another dream for the upcoming youth. The youth who were educated and were aware of the ill traditions and cultures followed by people of various class and wanted to let go of these ill cultures from the society and establish a nation which was free from the wrong habits, traditions and cultures of the past. These include various habits like the addiction of opium, various superstitions and its effects. Moreover, there are also mentions of various forms of discrimination and differences within Assamese society. The differences between the ideals and the ways of living and thinking of the world can be seen within the plot. There are also differences among the people of the villages and the tribals; their cultures and traditions are pictured in the novel beautifully. The aspect of class discrimination and the way of looking down on the lower caste was also an issue which was prevalent during the time. The dream was to end these differences and form a society where the civilians were treated equally irrespective of caste and class, where all the groups lived in harmony and coordination as the members of a single nation. “The sooner we demolish all these, the better... I mean

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caste, untouchability and all the rest. Pg. 140”.

With the dreams of a free nation and a society free from its differences, there were also dreams of individuals for a happy life. The protagonists made numerous sacrifices for the mission of freeing their country from the imperial forces and lived a life full of pain and loneliness. They wandered throughout the state through the forests, fields and rivers and went through unbearable hardships to save themselves from being caught and tortured by the Police. Some had to sacrifice their lives for the mission; while the others sacrificed their families and their loved ones and had to leave their homes. They also faced the loss of their dignity, ideals, beliefs and faith. They wished for a normal life after independence. They dreamt of a life with their families and loved ones. They dreamt of having their loved ones beside them. They dreamt of marriages and children; of having a home to live in. There were dreams about keeping the society together. “We were thinking of building a house in Nagaon town beside the Kolong.pg. 163” “When the relations of the martyrs come from the villages, they can stay here.pg.164”

“There is really something happening to our country. I can follow it now. Otherwise, why should this Garo woman be so spirited? Why should policemen resign their jobs? Why should hundreds of people court imprisonment willingly? Do I feel the blast of it too, I wonder.” pg. 410 The Quit India Movement was not a complete success, but it was successful in rising the spirits of the people and make them come forward for a change. The movement was able to make the people feel the importance of nationalism and the importance of their independence. I shook the whole society and brought in the wave of new courage, lit a fire in the spirits of the individuals. The people were more focused on their mission of Swaraj. Every member of the Assamese villages and town felt a blast of new courage and determination and thus the vision of a free nation was nearing to be a reality.

CONCLUSION:

Throughout this dissertation, I have analyzed and illustrated the how Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novel Mrityunjay presents

the society during the time of the Quit India Movement. The novel portrays the last stage of the Quit India Movement where activities of terror was at rise. This paper reviews the novel's literary presentation of the Quit India Movement of 1924 in Assam focusing on the condition of Assamese people and society and the ideals and conflicts that revolved in the minds of the participants of the revolution. It also analyses the representation of struggles and sacrifices made for the mission of attaining Swaraj. The latter part of this dissertation reviews the presentation of dreams and hopes the people saw about the society after independence.

Bhattacharyya's novel is his discourse about Assamese history during the freedom struggle and the relationship he had with history and the past. He uses the novel to represent the history and past he experienced with the freedom struggle. Bhattacharyya uses his knowledge and experience to present through his novel a realistic portrayal of the Assamese society of that time. The novel explores themes like history, independence, struggle, sacrifices, culture, superstitions, conflict, love, marriage, death, violence, and others. Bhattacharyya is able to showcase the way people reacted and the way the spirit of independence gives rise to courage and strength to fight for their right to freedom. The novel provides a description of the life of people from different classes and groups. It explores the various cultures and traditions of the people, their faiths and beliefs, the customs and rituals that were followed by them.

The novel also successfully presents with a picturesque description of the atrocities and terror that the people had to face from the British government and its military, the CID and the police. There is a detailed description of the way the revolutionaries acted against the forces; the activities of terror for curtailing the forces. The planning, process of communication and transport, the role of various people and groups in the movement and the other concerns of the revolution are all portrayed with great realism in the novel. There is also the presentation of the way the revolution impacted on the minds of the people and the conflicts and sacrifices that were made for the revolution.

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The novel gives special emphasis on the life of woman and their role throughout the freedom movement. It showcases the abuse woman had to face in both physical and mental spheres. The way they raised their voices and came forward with bravery was an act of inspiration for the public and made the public feel the spirit of freedom within them.

The second half of the paper is about the presentation of the dreams and wishes of the people. The dream of a free nation was the priority. It talks about personal aspirations and the wish for a greater society. The revolution made the people gain a better understanding of the evils of society and a realization to let go of the discriminatory customs came to a rise among the people. It also presents through the characters the individual dreams of the people like the wish to have a happy family, of love and the dreams for a home; away from all the struggles and sacrifices.

Therefore, with the paper A Comprehensive portrayal of society during the struggle for independence in Assam in Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya's Mritunjay, we have analyzed that the author through his novel has presented his experience of the terrors and struggles faced by the people of Assam and the way the revolution effected the people's personal and social life.

LIMITATIONS:

There are limitations to the analysis as the sources are based on general history and there is very little scope for new discoveries. The analysis is moreover limited and dependent on facts and events mentioned in history.

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