Ethnicity, Gender and Nationalism in Birendrakumar Bhattacharya's *Yauringam*

PARAG MONI SARMA & NEELAKSHI GOSWAMI

> In my novels one can find the essence of the transitory nature of politics: *Rajpathe Ringieai, Yauringam, Pratipad* are the novels where this nature is manifest. Infact, in other apparently non political humane novels . . . it is inevitable that the political is incidental. I have no regrets for this though some of my readers are at times disturbed. The political is an integral part of the human situation and this has found expression in the works of other Assamese novelists as well – Birendrakumar Bhattacharya[1]

Birendrakumar Bhattacharya is considered to be one of the foremost exponents of the political novel in Assamese literature. Appreciative literature in Assamese delineates the phases of 'Scientific Socialism' and 'Democratic Socialism' in his fiction (Sarma 1983) and lauds his vision of "equality, justice, and humanity" (Mishra2002). Writers intimately inhabit their political environment and it is inevitable that their political and ideological constituencies will manifest themselves in their expressive oeuvre, be it creative or ideological. Literary creations are informed by social, political and historical contexts and there is a complex relation between the literature and the political and social history that engenders such representations. The legacy of colonial modernity dictates the creative attitudes of the Assamese novelists of the twentieth century, and the liberal humanism fostered by it permeates the creative attitudes of novelists of the time. The stress was on the glorification of the role that colonial education can play in 'civilizing' the 'oral' cultures in the margins of the nation. The image of the Assamese school teacher or officer venturing into the hills of the North East, like that of Jivan in *Yauringam,* carrying the light of the script and message of harmony and peace amongst the different warring ethnic groups is a recurring motif. The framework of the Indian nation provided the warring groups the opportunity to resolve differences in a democratic framework. The author clearly acknowledges his own experiences as a teacher in the Christian Venture Mission High School in Ukhrul[2], Manipur, as bedrock for his fictional narration in *Yauringam:*

> With them I traveled into the interior villages. I participated in their festivals, visited their unique institutions and churches. . . they were then living in stirring times and I shared their joys and sorrows. I got my theme and characters out of that moving experience[3]

The genre of Assamese fiction can be perceived as a form that constantly strived to meet the historical requirements of a unifying discourse by accommodating and glorifying cultural subtexts in an attempt to forge a larger national, political, and cultural text. The Assamese novelists were:

> . . . deeply concerned with the rescue of the nation from the disaster which is bound to overtake it unless moral and religious values are restored, particularly in the political field[4]

Marked by the existence of numerous ethnic groups, the literatures of the region voice the continuous and evolving dynamics of a unique relationship that exists between them. The first conscious attempt to narrate the plural nature of the region and portray the diverse ethnic composition was made in Assamese literature, especially in fiction. Early post-independent Assamese literature perceived itself as an integral part of the imperative to narrate the nation and integrate plural entities into the national consciousness. A kind of inclination towards metanarratives was emerging in the first flush of Independence and the conscious attempt was to consolidate a larger Indian identity by generating

---

Parag Moni Sarma is Associate Professor in the Department of Cultural Studies, Tezpur University

Neelakshi Goswami is Associate Professor in the Department of English, LOKD College, Dhekiajuli.

regional identities that accommodates cultural and political subtexts. This was perceived to be an integral part of narrating into a strong, vibrant and new national identity. Early Assamese authors inhabited these socio-political narratives and one should view early writings keeping this appropriative discourse in mind. The earliest novel of prominence in this genre is Rajani Kanta Bordoloi's *Miri Jiyori* (1894), which tries to represent one of the prominent ethnic communities in the Northeast, the Misings[5], through the narration of a tragic love story. Yet, such narration often exoticised the ethnic, and saw it as a space where the dictates of a 'civilised' world did not operate. Thus in *Miri Jiyori,* we have the novelist narrating a love story within a clan, and the subsequent trauma of an unwed mother and the travails and suffering that she had to go through. The author was clearly appropriating an ethnic Mising society to Assamese middle class morals, and for all practical purpose, it was an Assamese middleclass narrative with the characters bearing Mising names. In an ethnic community like the Misings, there were inbuilt social mechanisms that could accommodate unwed mothers and resolve forbidden love. It was the ethnic women who had to bear the mainstream 'gaze' and become the object where patriarchy generated moral codes played out, in short a kind of gender stereotyping that sadly persists even today.

After Independence, Kailash Sarma's *Bidrohi Nagar Hatot* (1958), *Anami Naga* (1963) and *Dalimir Sapon* (1972) depicted the Naga way of life and gave the first hint of narrating ethnic assertions and the violence associated with it. But the representation of the violence and lawlessness in the margins of the nation was perhaps an indirect justification of the necessity to bring order and stability, the inevitability of state violence. Later works like Jnanpeeth award wining novel *Mritunjoy* (1977) by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya and Umakanta Sarma's *Ejak Manuh Ekhan Aranya* (1986) are novels that immediately come to the mind. Both the novels have representation of ethnicity, but the main aim was to forge and consolidate regional and thereby national identities. The first novel has the revolutionary approach to the Independence struggle as its main pre-occupation where ethnic representations are incidental to the main narrative thrust, and how such struggle forms a common legacy that binds the nation together. The second novel is a humanistic depiction of the travails of the diasporic tea labourers in Assam, their emergence as a distinct ethnic identity, and the author's ideal of their final assimilation and integration into the canvas of a larger Assamese society.[6]

In his appreciation of the Sahitya Akademi award winning novel *Yauringam* (1960), Krishna Kumar Mishra calls it a 'prophetic' novel, whose interrogation of the upheaval in Naga life and society was a pointer to the future and an assertion of the democratic ethos of the Nagas: "It was an expression of the dream of democracy and the conclusion a deep optimistic commitment that has been proved to be true in later times."[7] Mishra's effusiveness is reinforced by the author's choice of name: *Yauringam* mean people's rule. Mishra's contention is, however, difficult to accommodate from contemporary social and political vantage, given the protracted political problems that still persist between the Indian government and the Naga political groups and also the simmering inter ethnic tensions amongst the various Naga groups in the formulation and execution of the vision of a Naga nation, separate and distinct from Indian identity.[8]

From the vantage of the present political and social situation in the North East, a rereading of *Yauringam* transcends the paradigm of romantic humanism and reveals a rather complex engagement on the part of the author with ethnic differences and the liminal nature of social and political formation. *Yauringam* treads the difficult path of dealing with other cultures, in trying to delineate the essential difference between the diverse ethnic groups that inhabits the North East fringes of India. Set in the days of the Second World War, the novel opens with a narration of the violation of a Tangkhul girl, Sarengla by Ishewara, a soldier of the occupying Japanese army. Defilement of communal honour through the violation of female sexuality is a recurrent theme of patriarchal discourse and often doubles up as violation of one's homeland. A woman's violation, as Jasodhara Bagchi points out "becomes an exclusionary boundary with which the women's own community preserves its caste-class identity."[9] Bhattacharya's opening is a stock image of patriarchal discourse, and not much different from the tenor set by *Miri Jiyori*: a defiled woman being metonymic of a defiled land. Sarengla degenerates into a fallen woman within her own community. How appropriate is this depiction of Tangkhul society in terms of mainstream nationalistic middle class morals is of course open to interrogation, for behind this portrayal of Tangkhul society remains, to borrow a phrase from Jasodhara Bagchi, a "grand appropriation of female sexuality by the community" (Ibid: 86) and has the familiar element of a moralizing patriarchy, whose source of power over women emanates from a carefully constructed male aggressiveness. Bhattacharya's focus is on the aggressive and violent world of man: Videsselie, Rishang, Khating, Phanitphang, Najek and others. The women are rooted to their own world of mutual jealousy, competing for men and a sense of vulnerability in the

face of far reaching social and political changes. The ethnic woman here is a 'muted category'. The good woman of patriarchal discourse, like Khutingla, was the upholder of the community honour, while Sarengla is seen as a threat to that honour, a potentially corrupting influence, a fear for her body and sexuality over which the community has lost possession. In the nationalist discourse, the signs of feminity are clearly marked out and include virtues like self sacrifice, religiosity and submission,[10] the parameters along which Sarengla is sought to be redeemed by the author. When "gender relations are made symbolically relevant in nationalist ideology":

> They tend to reproduce a patriarchal view of the family. If the nation is regarded as a metaphoric kin group, then the mother's metaphorical role is to reproduce – to raise children and to provide domestic services. In war imagery, this passive role of women is particularly evident. 'The fathers have fought/and the mothers have wept'. . . if the nation-state is symbolically depicted as a family writ large, then it makes sense to investigate actual family relations in the society in question to find the sources of nationalist imagery. Here we may find that nationalism tends to reproduce and strengthen the gender relations already prevalent in a society. . .[11]

In Bhattacharya's narrative the feminine body perhaps become a site for the writer's conflicting attitudes, an encounter with the mores of a society he was mired in and of a society whose moral values he couldn't perhaps fully fathom.

In his preface to the original Assamese version[12] of *Yaruingam,* Birendrakumar Bhattacharya declares that his stay with the Tangkhul Nagas was an attempt to understand their way of life. But he found it as *difficult as dealing with a stone that can't be lifted.* Denying that his love for their way of life was a love for *primitiveness*, yet he goes on to say that in their *primitiveness* he glimpses constituents of the quest for a new life. He says that the Nagas too are a people, but a different kind of people; beneath the facade of uncompromising iron will lie the beauty of a timeless humanness. These apparent contradictions in his preface clearly points out that the author was on uneven ground, a territory that he was not familiar with. He was clearly trying to move between cultures, perhaps attempting to live another kind of life. This moving between cultures, an engagement with otherness and difference that interrogate the familiar, the *comfortable own* is perhaps central to Yauringam. The narrative clearly rides the tension between the writer's cultural and intellectual conditioning and reaching out to an unfamiliar cultural milieu.

This can be accommodated within contemporary appreciative paradigms like the ethno critical approaches to literature and other expressive behaviours. According to Arnold Krupat, who strongly endorses the idea, "the ethnocritical perspective manifests itself in the form of multiculturalism . . . that particular organisation of cultural studies which engages otherness and difference in such a way as to provoke an interrogation of and a challenge to what we ordinarily take as familiar and our own . . . is consistent with a recognition and legitimation of heterogeneity . . ."[13] It seeks to replace the 'us and them' oppositional mode with a dialogic mode more concerned with difference rather than opposition, and dissolve borders and boundaries from absolute categories to shifting spaces where cultures encounter and deal with each other. Ethnocriticism seeks to appreciate expressive forms against the backdrop of a pervasive and dominant social and political episteme and calls for a legitimation of heterogeneity. It brings into play different conceptual categories like culture, history, imperialism, anthropology, and literature and takes an inter-disciplinary approach to interrogate appropriative discourses. Inimical to the postulations of ethnocriticism is the urge to speak for or interpret the other. This could be a coercive means to appropriate the 'other' to dominating discourses or nationalistic metanarratives. Ethnocritical writing is noncoercive and is situated between cultures and is not an engagement ". . . in writing or in acting out a tragic or comic destiny or identity but, rather with recognizing, accommodating, mediating, or indeed, even bowing under the weight of sheer difference."[14]

At the apparent level, the author was clearly trying to consolidate the Indian nationalist cause, making a conscious attempt to appropriate Najek and Videsselie's militant ethnic assertion to the notion of the Indian nationhood by associating them with Netaji's ideals. In reality, however, Birendrakumar Bhattacharya's interrogation dialogises the emerging parameters of the Indian consciousness of his time in the shifting cultural spaces of the north-eastern fringes of post-independent cartographic reality. Bhattacharya is perhaps adopting, a deconstructive philosophical position in offering an impossible critique of a structure that he himself "inhabits intimately"[15] for as the novel bears out, he was a committed nationalist. However, instead of the predominantly Hindu and Indo-Aryan brand of Nationalism, we have a mostly Christian and Tibeto-mongoloid alternative paradigm, the cultural encounter being represented by the excursion of the likes of Rishang to Calcutta and the Assamese schoolteacher Jivan's excursion into and marriage in the Tanghkul heartland. There is a discernible narrative tension between the author's intellectual veering towards emerging

metanarratives of nation and nationhood and the autonomous dynamics of an objective portrayal. So we enter the novel with the Angami youth Videsselie's dream of "liberating the whole country and forming an all embracing new nation" a nation under the tutelage of Netaji. However, counterpoised to this was the assertion of the Tangkhul elder and ideologue Ngazek that "Videsselie would not like to stay under anybody. He spoke like a true Naga. A true Naga will give his head first and then his freedom."[16] To Ngazek, to be a Naga was to be free. So, by the time we leave the novel, Videsselie mutate to a Naga rebel who wants to bring freedom to the Naga people like Gandhi had brought freedom to India.

However, counterpoised to this ideal of recovering lost liberty for the Nagas was the cynicism of the likes of Rishang and Khating at the "half crazed Angamis dream."[17] Khating informs Rishang on his coming back from Calcutta that:

> Videsselie is successful in turning young men's mind to agitation. He has a large following. He was raising a guerrilla army supposedly to fight the British. And now that the white men are gone, one would have expected him to have abandoned his plan. But he says he does not accept the new government.[18]

However, to Rishang, maintaining a status quo was important, because it provided the scope for the community's development. Christianity and Indian democracy were the parameters that held for Rishang the potential for the fulfilment of the dreams he had for his community- education, hospitals and employment. Rishang's and Jivan's ideals were the overt coercive strategy of the author to appropriate the Nagas to the nationalistic narrative. The author assumes the role of a spokesperson for the general people in the Tangkhul community and orchestrates the narrative towards his own ideological convictions:

> The majority of the people disliked violence and the idea of secession. But they were helpless. It was the minority coercing the majority into accepting a reality which they did not think inevitable. Rishang was convinced that the people wanted peace.[19]

The author's contention of a minority coercing a majority should be taken at face value and is indicative of where the author's overt affiliation lies. The clash of words between Videsselie and Rishang in the rebel camp after they were kidnapped is an interesting event that helps in the identification of the narrative tension on which the novel is mounted. Videsselie's contention that the Nagas are a 'separate and distinct nation' (ibid; 273) is countered by Rishang's retort that the "Nagas are a distinct group no doubt, but they belong to a great family, I mean the Indian nation'[20]:

> . . .the Nagas are as much Indians as the Assamese or Manipuris. They live in a common territory and under the same administration, and share the same economy. Their present and future are bound up with the fate of the country as much as their past was.21

That Videsselie is himself not a Tangkhul is a subtle authorial insinuation that rebellions are constructed and are etic categories[22], and the image of the frustrated rebel Phanitphang shows the authors belief at the futility of violence:

> . . .so far he had lacked the power to act freely. The underground political work had made his life a miserable hell, where he could see man only as a tool of rebellion, fighting without questioning.[23]

Christianity was in itself an emerging meta-narrative in the Northeast, subsuming the traditional and ethnic way of the communities of the region. In a strange kind of way, Christianity becomes for the author a potent force for consolidating a larger Indian identity. However, beyond authorial intention was the latent disruptive threat present throughout the narrative in the clash between the clans of the Christian Yengmaso and non-Christian Ngathingkhui over the Church on the disputed hillock, which results in the tragic consequence of Yengmaso being mortally injured. Ethnic assertion also involved going back to the religo-socio mores of the past, which would result in dangerous consequences for the nationalistic project, and hence had to be reigned in.

However, Birendrakumar Bhattacharya leaves the novel in muted ambivalence. Videsselie, who had abducted Rishang and Jivan, refuses to punish them leaving justice to history. Yet, Jivan is shot dead by the rebels for preaching peace and Rishang injured by a ricocheting bullet. As Videsselie flees refusing to surrender and join the mainstream, one could sense an emotional non-coercive reaching out towards Videsselie's convictions. Jivan's life remains only "half revealed", and "the people would remember him only as a man of thought – an eccentric."[24] What the author was trying to consciously do was to appropriate the Nagas to the emerging parameters of the Indian Nation. What he also, perhaps unconsciously, succeeded in doing was to polyvocalise the nationalistic discourse by offering an alternative paradigm. This is valuable, for as Homi K. Bhabha has pointed out in his introduction to *Nation and Narration,* it draws "attention to those easily obscured, but highly significant, recesses of the national culture from which alternative constituencies of peoples and

oppositional analytic capacities may emerge – youth, the everyday, nostalgia, new 'ethnicities', new social movements, 'the politics of difference' . . . and assign new meanings and different directions to the process of historical change"[25]

The self assertion happens at both the social and the personal level in the novel, as Sarengla breaks away from Khutingla's family, thus bringing to an end their mutual jealousy over the favour of Ngathingkhui. This marks an end to their competition set up by the author. Sarengla's acceptance of the renegade Phanitphang into her bed in a deserted cottage is accommodated with the authorial comment that Phanitphang "needed a woman's care and she willingly gave it, without surrendering the dignity of her womanhood"[26] This is in sharp contrast to Jivan, the Assamese school teacher's comment that her liaison with Phanitphang "was something that appeared outrageous to society". His advice to abandon her ways is met with the stoic reply that she was "still attached to the world."[27] This perhaps was Sarengla's redemptive statement, a movement from being the muted to the voiced, and her subsequent miscarriage, the author's *deus ex machina*, abrogates her link with Ishewara, thus paving the way for her rehabilitation in the narrative. Her acceptance of Jivan and Roni's son Kongcheng, the "child of two cultures" who "will be a brother to all"[28] substitutes her role of the biological reproducer of her community and as insurgency takes over Bhattacharya's narrative in *Yauringam*, Sarengla in her own silent way mutates into a self assured character that get back control over her life, an element of sanity amidst conflicting ideals and mutual hatred. As Jivan dies, Rishang realises that the love Sarengla have spoken about is the real love, a love beyond restrictive morals and social structures. In Sarengla's defiance of the stereotype of the fallen woman, and her location within the flux of a tumultuous time, and in her final sense of lonely hurt, one can sense the value of her experience as men plays out their violent and self-destructive games. The figure of the woman can never really totally disappear even from patriarchal and male centred discourses, but like in *Yauringam*, can be subject to violent disfigurement, and often the "medium through which competing discourses represent their claims."[29] Dominant patriarchal constructions of nation, race, class or gender is very often located within the embodied self of the woman, and more dangerously, "may have been accepted and internalized by women as being their defining characteristics,"[30] like the early Sarengla who considered herself to be a sinner and for whom redemption lies in the Bible. It is perhaps time that the 'mainstream' Indian socio-polity moves away from the coercive nationalism that appropriated the 'marginal female' and the 'peripheral ethnic' in the exuberance of the first flush of nation formation, and perhaps "it is imperative to imagine a new transformation of social consciousness which exceeds the reified identities and rigid boundaries invoked by national consciousness . . . facilitate the emergence of what we might, after Said, call an enlightened 'postnationalism'"[31]

The status of literature as practised by the likes of Birendrakumar Bhattacharya in the formation of a national canon is an interesting phenomenon to be interrogated. A 'post nationalist' canon of Indian literature must apparently accommodate oral-derived and written literature that represent and give expression to its peripheral and alternative constituencies, what can be termed as 'emerging' literatures in India. The political imperative of awards (not discounting the obvious literary merit) like Sahitya Akademi and Jnanpeeth, which is a mode of enlarging the scope of 'national literature', by accommodating voices that conform to the overall notion of the nation might be an overt agenda. Thus the graduation of Birendrakumar Bhattacharya from Sahitya Akademi (*Yauringam)* to Jnanpeeth (*Mritunjoy*) can be seen as a movement of the author from the regional canon to the national canon. Such a movement is a complicated process in India, with the politics and poetics of translation and representation thrown in for good. Literature, beyond the realm of the artistic and the creative, is also an act of "social transaction, a transaction involving the process of dissemination as well as reception by a specific audience."[32] It is interesting to note that the first translation of *Yauringam* was published by Christian Literature House in 1984, and in some way or the other, it was felt that it conformed to the missionary agenda in the North East, mainly because it highlighted the positive impact of Christianity on indigenous societies of the North East. Authors like Birendrakumar Bhattacharya, writing from the space of a post colony, and trying to come to terms with the notion of a new found nationhood, articulates through the travails of his characters, how society was trying to emerge from traditional boundaries and coming to terms with new social and political realities. Novels like *Yauringam* are narratives where the "story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third world culture and society,"[33] and how such restrictive structures were transcended with the help of agential factors, facilitated by the state machinery or humanitarian organisations. The very notion of a national literature is often seen as a third world concept:

> National literatures are constituted by a national sense, or, what may or may not amount to he same thing, by a sense of

nationalism. Thus national literatures are not necessarily present (not prominent or dominant) in all nation states Ö national literatures are, however, characteristic of the newly independent states of the third world. These later are defined by. . .an experience, the experience of imperial and colonial domination.[34]

If national literature is formed by literary voices of the contributing constituencies of the nation that conform to the notion of the nation, regional literature can be said to be consolidation of such contributing constituencies that are formed by the contribution of the indigenous literary voices of a region. The notion of a regional literature is in itself a problematic area in the North East which is an ad-hoc entity that emerged through the interface of colonial and post colonial mediation, and "points no more than the areas location on India's political map:

Northeast India has been known this way since a radical redrawing of the region's political map in the 1960s. It was a hurried exercise in political engineering: an attempt to manage the independentist rebellions among the Nagas and the Mizos and to nip in the bud as well as to pre-empt, radical political mobilization among other discontented ethnic groups. From today's vantage point this project of political engineering must be pronounced a failure.[35]

In literature, these dimensions finds expression through questions of the marginal/central or written/oral and are areas of contestations. Early scripted literature like Assamese and to some extent Manipuri, which had adopted the Bengali script, are seen as the dominating forces, and writers like Birendrakumar Bhattacharya are often seen as voices of a dominating and appropriating episteme. Such a condition has been described as competing egocentricities where:

We have an incredible multiple of egocentricities arrayed against each other: the Assamese against the Bodos and the Misings and the Karbis; the Karbis against the Dimasas; the Nagas against the Meiteis; the Tangkhuls against the Aos and the Angamis; the Khasis against the Garos and so on.[36]

Such tensions will obviously leave indelible traces in literatures of the North East.

The emerging indigenous literature subsequently adopted the roman script, thanks to the pedagogic initiative of the Church, to pen down what can now be called as the pre dominantly oral-derived literatures of the different communities of the region. It is interesting to note that for most communities, the Bible in translation is the first instance of scripted literature in their language. The gradual emergence of a written literature can be said to be an expression of the interaction and interface of the local/traditional/tribal/ethnic expressive modes with the dominant form of literature patronised by the nation state through various state agencies. Thus, indigenous literature of the North East is an author's adaption of the external forms through the mediation of one's own cultural practices resulting in polyphonic and multifarious expressions of the concepts of self, society, community ethics and aesthetics along with the realisation of being almost the cultural other and yet a part of the nationscape.

Notes

1. Cited in Krishnakumar Mishra, "Birendrakumar Bhattacharyar Uppanyasat Rajnoitik Chetana". *Asomiya Uppanyasar Gati –Prakriti.* (Ed.). Sailen Bharali. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2002, p.103
2. Birendrakumar Bhattacharya, like many young Assamese educated youths of the time, started their professional career by going to difficult 'tribal' terrains of the North East as school teachers. This was especially applicable to Nagaland (erstwhile Naga Hills district of Assam), Arunachal Pradesh (Formerly NEFA) and Mizoram (erstwhile Lushai Hills district of Assam). However, Bhattacharya went to the Tangkhul dominated Ukhrul district in Manipur as a teacher in a 'venture' school run by the missionary. The word 'venture' in Assam means an institution run voluntarily without government support and mostly with a non-profit motive and aimed at social betterment and spread of education. Most well known schools and colleges, which were later adopted by the government under a scheme of 'grant in aid', started as 'venture' institutions.
3. Birendrakumar Bhattacharya, *Yauringam: People's Rule.* Guwahati: Christian Literature House, 1984, Preface.
4. P. C. Sabhapandit, *Sociological Study of the Post War Assamese Novel.* Guwahati: Omsons Publications, 1988, p. 124.
5. The Misings are the second largest Tibeto-Mongoloid ethnic group in Assam after the Bodos with a distinctive language and culture of their own. Marriage by elopement is a very common mode and is part of the traditional practice even in the present times. More often than not, marriages by elopement are followed by due social recognition through simple formalities. However, clan endogamy is a taboo, and would involve annulment of such alliances, and any 'illegitimate' child born of such a union would be taken care of by the community by delegation of responsibility. It would not involve the heartless persecution or ostracisation as depicted by Rajani Kanta Bordoloi.
6. Parag Moni Sarma, "Ethnicity in the narration of the Northeast: A study with reference to Assamese Fiction". *Punjab Journal of English Studies. Volume XXI.* (2006) 49-57. Amritsar: GNDU, p.50.
7. Krishnakumar Mishra, "Birendrakumar Bhattacharyar Uppanyasat Rajnoitik Chetana". *Asomiya Uppanyasar Gati – Prakriti.* (Ed.). Sailen Bharali. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2002, p.106
8. The 'Naga Problem' is a complex political problem and only a short hint can be given here. The Naga political movement is split into two strong factions, the NSCN (Issac Muivah) and NSCN (Khaplang), which are involved in fratricidal clashes.

Each faction has their constituent Naga ethnic groups, and age old inter ethnic dynamics continues well into the present time. In Manipur, the Metei-Naga clash is an age old legacy which was rekindled by the recent demand of NSCN (IM) to include all Naga inhabited areas in the formation of a Naga nation. In an atmosphere of violence and insurgency, the very concept of 'people's rule' seems to be a cruel irony and the common people is caught between the muzzle of the 'revolutionaries' and the State.

9. Jasodhara Bagchi, "Female Sexuality and Community in Jyotirmoyee Devi's *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga". Embodiment: Essays on Gender and Identity.* (Ed.). Meenakshi Thapan. Delhi: OUP, 1997, p.75.
10. Thapan, *Embodiment: Essays on Gender and Identity*, p. 28.
11. Eriksen, Thomas Hylland Eriksen,. 2002. *Ethnicity and Nationalism.* London: Pluto Press, 2002, p. 172.
12. The novel was first published in 1960 in Assamese with a preface that delineated the authors experience in Ukhrul. In 1984, the author translated the novel into English, but many of the points raised in the preface to the Assamese originals were not reiterated and the narrative also varied in the different places. This interpretation takes into account both the versions.
13. Arnold Krupat is an American scholar of Native American Literary forms who tries to generate appreciative paradigms to understand native forms against the backdrop of a pervasive hegemony of western appreciative approaches. His ethno critical perspective takes into account emic categories that is not necessarily in opposition to mainstream western forms, but mediates differences and seeks to understand how it shapes the world view of the marginal natives. There are remarkable similarities in the contexts where the expressive traditions of native America and indigenous North East are shaped, and an appreciation of such forms further democratizes the post-colonial approaches to indigenous and marginal expressive forms. (See Arnold Krupat, *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, p. 3.)
14. Ibid., p. 124.
15. Ibid., p.8.
16. Birendrakumar Bhattacharya, 1998 (1960). *Yauringam.* Guwahati: Lawyers Book Stall,1960, pp. 26-27.
17. Ibid., p. 15.
18. Ibid., pp. 178-179.
19. Ibid., p. 200.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., p. 318.
22. There are remarkable similarities between Bhattacharyas fictional narrative and the present context. The two main leaders of the Naga nationalistic movements, Issac Muivah and Khaplang are not from Nagaland; while Muivah, in a kind of role reversal of Bhattacharya's fiction, is a Tangkhul from Manipur, Khaplang is from Myanmar. Rivals of both often points out to the fact that they are not 'Nagas' in the true sense, since they are not from Nagaland.
23. Bhattacharya, *Yauringam*, p.247.
24. Bhattacharya, *Yauringam: People's Rule*, p.323.
25. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, p. 3.
26. Bhattacharya, *Yauringam: People's Rule*, p.153.
27. Ibid., p. 193.
28. Ibid., p. 232,
29. Leela Gandhi,. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction.* New Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks, 1998, p. 90.
30. Thapan, *Embodiment: Essays on Gender and Identity*, p.11.
31. Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, p. 124.
32. (Forbes, Jack Forbes, "Colonialism and Native American Literature". *Wicaza Sa Review Volume 3* (1987), p. 23.
33. Fredrick Jameson, in his influential essay, identifies third world literature as particularly concerened with issues of nationalism, which is a feature of post colonial societies in trying to come to grasp with the notion of a new found nationhood remarkably different from the one that existed in the pre colonial times. On the other hand, in first world nations, the consolodative parameters of a nation is intrinsic and are based on different parameters of industry and economy, unlike third world nations where cultural and linguistic nationalism are seen as consolidative factors, and are factors of political and social empowerment.
34. Arnold Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, p. 212.
35. (Baruah 2007: 04). Baruah, Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of north East India.* New Delhi: OUP, 2007, p.4.
36. Mrinal Miri, " Two Views of the North East". *Problems of Ethnicity in the North East India.* (Ed.). B.B. Kumar. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2007, p. 5.

Work Cited

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Bagchi, Jasodhara. 1997. "Female Sexuality and Community in Jyotirmoyee Devi's *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga". Embodiment: Essays on Gender and Identity.* (Ed.). Meenakshi Thapan. Delhi: OUP.

Baruah, Sanjib 2007. *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of north East India.* New Delhi: OUP.

Bhattacharya, Birendrakumar.1984. *Yauringam: People's Rule.* Guwahati: Christian Literature House.

———, 1998 (1960). *Yauringam.* Guwahati: Lawyers Book Stall.

Bhabha, Homi K (ed.). 1990. *Nation and Narration.* London: Routledge.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2002. *Ethnicity and Nationalism.* London: Pluto Press.

Forbes, Jack. 1987. "Colonialism and Native American Literature". *Wicaza Sa Review Volume 3.* 17-23

Gandhi, Leela. 1998. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction.* New Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks.

Jameson, Fredric 1986. "Third World Literature in the era of Multinational Capital". *Social Text Volume 15.* 65-88.

Krupat, Arnold. 1989. *The Voice in the Margin.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

———, 1992. *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Miri, Mrinal 2007. " Two Views of the North East". *Problems of Ethnicity in the North East India.* (Ed.). B.B. Kumar. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

Mishra, Krishnakumar 2002. "Birendrakumar Bhattacharyar Uppanyasat Rajnoitik Chetana". *Asomiya Uppanyasar Gati –Prakriti.* (Ed.). Sailen Bharali. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Sabhapandit, P.C. 1988. *Sociological Study of the Post War Assamese Novel*. Guwahati: Omsons Publications.

Sarma, Gobindaprasad. 1983. *Birendrakumar Bhattacharya: Uppanyasik.* Guwahati: Barua Agency.

Sarma, Parag Moni.2006. "An Ethnocritical Approach to Birendrakumar Bhattacharya's *Yauringam*". *Yatra: Journal of Assamese Literature and Culture. Volume 2, Number 2.* 63-65. Guwahati: North East Foundation.

———, 2006. "Ethnicity in the narration of the Northeast: A study with reference to Assamese Fiction". *Punjab Journal of English Studies. Volume XXI.* 49-57. Amritsar: GNDU.

Spivak, Gayatri C. 1990. "The Making of Americans: The Teaching of English and the Future of Culture Studies." *New Literary History* 21. 781-798.

Thapan, Meenakshi. 1997. "Gender and Embodiment in everyday life". *Embodiment: Essays on Gender and Identity.* (Ed.). Meenakshi Thapan. Delhi: OUP.