

# YOUTH STUDIES IN ASSAMESE LITERATURE

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## ABSTRACT:

The Youth is the backbone of a society. Its future depends on the youth. The study of the history, psychology, politics etc., of youth is called Youth Studies. It is one of the popular topics that have been talked about more in the recent times. The issues in relation to the youth have been attempted to be conveyed to the general public through the works of literature. The introduction of Youth Studies as a field in the universities was a result of the growing curiosity regarding youth. In Assamese literature, Ambikagiri Raichoudhury happened to be the first literary critic whose works are considered to be the first written Assamese Youth Literature.

In this paper it is analyzed how the works of Assamese literature, like short stories, dramas, poetry and novels have helped to throw light on the issues of the youth and to bring forward a fresh perspective of the youth culture.

**KEYWORDS:** Youth , Assamese Literature, Novel, Short Story, Drama.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

Nowadays, a word that is at the tip of everybody's tongue is the word 'youth'. It is generally referred to the period between childhood and adult age. However, there are different perspectives on which group of ages should be labelled as youth. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), people aging from age 15 to 24 are considered as youth. This growing curiosity towards the subject gave birth to a study called Youth Studies, which is solely devoted to the development of youth and to learn about its history, culture, psychology and politics. Apart from these units, it also studies their relationships, responsibilities and roles that they play in the society.

The term 'Youth Studies' was first coined in the western countries after the birth of the Industrial Revolution, when young men left the comfort of their homes and migrated to the big urban areas. This migration led to the formation of a new culture i.e., the youth culture. James Cote in his book Youth Studies Fundamental Issues and Debates divided Youth Studies into four categories, which are:

- (1900-1960) Modern Adolescence Turmoil
- (1950-1970) Modern Youth in Rebellion
- (1960-1990) Youth as active agents
- (1980- Present) Prolonged Youth as Positive Identity

Youth Studies also talk about the influence of society on youth from the stage of adolescence to adulthood, the connection between them and work and education, and the contrast between their lifestyles with that of the older generations. Some scholars like James Cote, Eve Tuck, Andy Furlong, Lisa Murphy, Elizabeth Taylor and many other have put forward many theories and studies regarding the subject of youth. These theories have been included in the curriculum of many universities under the field of Youth Studies. For instance in Netherland University of Netherlands, Youth Studies can be pursued as a course. This course explores the liberty, mental health, the influence of broadcasting media and social media, social behavior, culture, relationships, history, politics of youth.

In the book 'Deka-Dekerir Veda (1935)' the Assamese author Ambikagiri Raichoudhury talks about some rules and regulations that the youth should follow in order to lead a better life. Though after the era of Yandaboo many authors attempted to write about the youth, but those works cannot be included in the Assamese Youth Literature because they fall into the criteria of children literature not youth. Therefore 'Deka-Dekerir Veda' can be considered to be the first written Assamese Youth Literature. According to Satyendra Nath Goswami, the issues currently faced by the youth have already been addressed in the study of Ambikagiri Raichoudhury. If his study was taken seriously, Goswami said Assam might have not faced Assam Movement. Ambikagiri

Raichoudhury in his *Deka- Dekerir Veda* talks about certain characteristics that the youth should possess to rebuild a more developed and strong Assam, which are punctuality, patriotism, hard work, high self- esteem, and involvement in social services.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY:**

The main objectives of the proposed study are such as:

- Analyzing the situation of the youth in our society through the works of Assamese literature.
- To explore the issues of youth found in the written Assamese Literature.

## **3.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURES:**

Andy Furlong in his book *Youth Studies: An Introduction* divided the youth into certain stages to analyze their friendships, romantic relationships and other forms of relations. Furthermore, he talks about how they play a vital role in influencing the political, educational fields of the society.

James Cote in his book *Youth Studies Fundamental Issues and Debates* talks about the primary perpetrators of the issues faced by the youth. He through his works tried to put forward a fresh in-depth narrative of the youth.

Arabinda Rajkhowa in his book “ *Axomiya Sutigalpar Gati-Prakiti*” puts forward a study of Assamese Short Stories. He also talks about different themes regarding shorts stories.

Satyendra Nath Sharma in his book “ *Axomiya Xahityar Xamikshatamak Etibrita*” elaborates about Assamese novels, poetry, drama, etc.

“One hundred *Axomiya Upanyash*” edited by Nagen Thakur puts forward an elaborated study of Assamese novels.

*Son Harinar Chenkur* by Anuradha Sharma Pujari and *Ai Xamay Xai Xamay* by Rita Choudhury are two books filled with various youth themes.

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY:**

For this study, in discussing the subject matter Content Analysis and Socio-Analysis method are mainly used.

## **5.0 ANALYSIS:**

### **5.1 Youth Studies in Various Assamese Genres:**

From the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a speedy change was observed in the society of Assam but it was not really a positive one. The involvement of the youth in terrorist groups, such as ULFA created havoc amidst the locals, which led to the infamous Assam Movement. This had a great impact on the internal structure and morality of its society and contributed to its decline. Additionally, the progression of scientific innovation and globalization heavily influenced the youth and led to a significant change in their attitudes juxtapose with that of older generations. All these happenings shaped the foundation of Assamese Literature and have eminent presence in its short stories, drama, poetry and novels.

### **5.2 Youth Studies in Short Stories:**

Short Stories in Assamese literature were first devised by an eminent playwright and poet, Lakhshminath Bezborua and were gradually modified by other literary critics. The themes regarding youth can be found in many of these short stories. A few of the authors of such stories are Apurba Sharma, Bipul Khataniyar, Kula Saikia, Jehirul Hussain, Mrinal Kalita, Mousumi Kandali, Banti Sensua, and many more.

In the story ‘*Ajagar*’ by Banti Sensua one can find an in-depth perspective on the new generation and the decline of the robustness of the older generations. She further explained about the independence that the youth desires-

“ *Ajal-mathali ejak dhulir dhumuhai ran sali dharilei. Zavanika paraloi ze ardhmrita ek bhukhandak sani baraniakoi moidam diba goi, gahin ratipuate tar batarato ahe. Dhalphatato urzya thake. Tar pisat kheuntot dintoe nijake dristikatukoi pradarkhan kari pelai. Uadgra sha bijar jagatat bajar dakhalar vama xadya koikhor xamara konobajanie rusiban darxakak mur dangi saba noara kari zen xanmukhat thio disehi. Enekoa akakhat rang aburat eko rakha naiei*”

In another story of hers named 'Bilupti Prajat', she talks about jealousy in friendships of youth. On the other hand, Mousumi Kandali in her story 'Pas Hejar Bosoriya Noro- Nari' argues about the youth's inclination towards living relationships than marriage. Likewise Prarthana Saikia in her story 'The Second Innings' talks about a similar cause.

Apurva sharma in his story 'Tewlukor Humoishya' openly talks about pre-marital sex and immoral sexual behaviors in youth-

"Guhar bhitarat rupame dekhile tai nixangkose, tar pratito anga xansalanar prati tatkhyanik xanharire tair purna xahajug. Xi saram padakheypaloi agbahil. Prathame tair suranikhan aru tar pisat kurtato dhire, abhyasta dhoizyare khuli xi sakikhanat paripatikoi thale. Tair bukut majat mukkhkan xumuai xi xukhaswadan karile. Tar urudyoiloi prasur raktar xansalan ghatile. Tar shri anga kathin hoi paril. Aru taik xajore xavati dhari xi tair pithit angabaxat hat dile."

These authors talk in-depth about the moral issues that came with globalization and the influence of the western culture on Assamese culture, and how it is pushing the youth away from a morally stable life.

The issues surrounding the youth like unemployment and defective education have a negative impact on their mental health which leads to depression and suicidal tendencies. Kula Saikia in his story 'Sankhya' talks about how competition in exams and their results affect the youth-

"Tair sakur bhitarat xi sab khujile eimatra olomai thua parikhyar rizaltr shitkhan aru azashra zankhyaborar majot xi bisari thaka xangkhat. After all, zivanat ei muhurtat eta xangkhyai nitulak diba xanmukhar rastator naksha aru tar sthanagka"

In a similar way Bhaskar Thakuriya in his story 'Hartaal' talks about certain negative incidents that happen in the university campus that influences the youth negatively, for instance the formations of political parties on campus, etc.

These two authors explore the sufferings of the youth in the field of education, how the exams are more about winning a race than obtaining knowledge.

Furthermore, there is a significant lack of sex education amongst the youth, as talking about 'sex' is considered a taboo in the society. Therefore, after puberty, they are unable to explore their curiosities regarding their bodies and that of the opposite sex. These things are talked about in Mousumi Kandali's short story 'Xei Sokutu' and in Sibananda Kakoti's story called 'Abhihar'. In this story he talks about the sexual curiosity of the youth, along with issues surrounding sexuality and sexual violence.

### 5.3 Youth Studies in Drama:

In the Modern Era, Assamese literature broke away from the religious hold and embraced realism. There was a change even in the ways the plays were formed. This led to the introduction of one-act play, street play, etc. One can find, if not directly, about the issues related to youth in these plays of prominent playwrights like Mahendra Borthakur, Satyaprasad Boruah, Ali Haider, etc.

In Mahendra Borthakur's 'Janma', he talks about the issue of unemployment, where the two protagonists Ajay and Abinash were well educated but unemployed, and hence to earn a livelihood they thought about defrauding people but later realized that it would be an immoral way of earning money.

"Ajay: Ki ki, pali?"

Abinash: Eti puti thoa purana banduk.

Ajay: Dhuit.

Abinash: Hoba safa kari lom, bujisa, hoba de.....

Ajay: Ki hoba, hoba karisa, kid al hoba?"

Abinash: Akhara. Akharato antata hoba deson. Sa, sason.

Ajay: (bandukto sui) Akhara! Eai akhara hoba amar zatio zaratak dhangxa karar akhara, tor, mor, amar zivank zivan karar akhara".

Ali Haider in his play 'Dhumuha Pakhir Nir' puts forward an argument about the challenges that the youth posed against the beliefs of the older generations. In another play of his 'Ekanggrasta Klanti' he covers issues like unemployment, terrorism, etc.

Satya Prasad Boruah in his play 'Shikha', he coins the issue surrounding the romantic relationships and one sided love in youth. For instance, in the play the protagonist goes through severe mental trauma after rejecting a guy's proposal which led him to leak morphed pictures of her. This criminal behavior can be observed frequently amongst youth. Similarly, Prabin Phukan in his play 'Tamasha Nari', talks about the stubborn behavior in youth and the harsh competitiveness regarding education.

Therefore, one can conclude that the plays are heavily influenced by the real-life activities of the society, and through plays many playwrights have tried to project the realities on stages to spread awareness against the issues, one of such issues are the issues related to the youth.

#### 5.4 Youth studies in poetry:

The history of Assamese poetry is thousands of years old. However, through the years Assamese poetry has evolved. The influence of the youth culture can be now found in Assamese poetry. In the works of poets like Pranab Kumar Barman, Nilim Kumar, Himanshu Prasad Das one can find various themes of youth.

Young people are often required to leave behind their own dreams and aspiration for their parents. Also, the competitiveness in certain field has pushed them into a state of depression. In the poem of Pranab Kumar Barman 'Suicide Note' talks about the sensitive issue of suicide, referring to a student whose mental health declined under the heavy pressure of competitive exams and it led to him taking his own life.

"Eai prithivi mor babe ekhan marksheet

Kisu number, grade, sakarir purna

Xambhavana

Eai zivanar mor babe okha attalika

Kritadax, bilat, pherat, kot tai"

Parents often compare their kids with others, failing to realize that every child has their own unique personality. This comparison develops in them an inferiority complex, which hampers their self-esteem and makes them insecure. In this poem, he talks about these feelings-

"Rohanatkoi mor medha kam nahai papa,

Dikhyatkoi mor bujar xakhyamata adhik

Rajatkoi mor hand writing bhal ma

Xihante relativity zane, theory of evolution

Moi zano Einstein aru Darwinar bistruta bishal zivan

Tathapi parikhiyat mor nambar kam"

Similarly, Siva Prasad Borah in a poem of his talks about the struggles of the educated unemployed. How even an educated person struggles to find employment because of his economic status, as jobs are now given not based on merit but on the amount one can pay. It has turned into an unjust and immoral market-

"Sakari etar khubei proiuzan

Proof reader, sub-editor, mahari, kerani

Jiei nahonk sakori

Arhata buliboloi bavan xatangso number loi BA pass"

It can be seen that through poetry many poets attempted to spread awareness and paint a picture of the issues through the eyes of the youth.

### 5.5 Youth studies in novels:

Through novels one can paint a bigger picture of almost everything. The novels from the pre-independent days did not contain anything about the culture of youth. It is only after independence that a change could be observed in the mindset of people, which led to the discovery of Assamese Youth Literature. Assam movement, illegal immigration, unemployment, terrorism, etc., perhaps heavily influenced the authors' minds, as these things have eminent presence in Assamese novels.

Dilip Bora in his novel 'Kalijar Aai' talks about the life story of a boy named Chinmoy and his involvement in Assam Movement-

"School-college lora-sowalibor andolanate byosto thakiba laga howat xikshar parivex prai nohowar nisina hol. Schoolar baserekia, pariksha, college, universityar degree pariksha adi pisuai gol."

The influence of Assam Movement and the ULFA can be observed in almost every novel of his. Such a novel is 'Apaharan', in which an academically exceptional boy even after scoring a seat in a reputable university ends up joining the terrorist group, ULFA.

Out of all the authors of Youth Literature Anuradha Sharma Pujari can be said to be exceptional. Her novel 'Naharar Niribili Sanh' is filled with experiences faced by some university students. One of her novels that is solely targeted at the youth is 'Son Harinar Chenkur'. In this novel, she addresses how education is more of a competition than about gaining knowledge, and how this perspective towards education has had a negative impact on youth.

Biswa Jyoti Sharma in his novel 'Tezpia' talks about the reoccurring issue of unemployment and how it affects youth. In this novel he puts forward an example of four boys, namely Rabin, Madhav, Gautam and Shantanu, who appear for the exam of Assam Civil Service but unfortunately fail, which leaves them unemployed. Hence, when a fraudster named Mriganka Hazarika offered them jobs in exchange of money, they accepted and ended up losing all of their finances. Through this the author attempted to expose the defective elements in the education and employment system.

Pranab Kumar Barman in his novel 'Handique College' puts forward an example of how the economically weaker section develops an inferiority complex when they migrate to the urban areas. In this novel the protagonist, Neelanjana is financially conscious as she belongs to a middle class family, hence when she moved to a developed area she ended up developing an inferiority complex-

"Hey girls. Devalinai economicsar classroomloi goi thakote siyari dile. Baki pansojani roi gol. Aji offat canteenat amak treat diba Nilanjanai. Ataitkejanie Devalinar kathat support dile. Nilanjanar murat xarag bhagi paril. Pansojanik khuwaba lagiba. Xambhav neki?"

Canteenat xomai ki ki order die ba."

These issues found a platform to incite a debate in the society. It is through novels that such issues have been brought to light.

### 6.0 CONCLUSION:

Since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century the topic of Youth Studies has slowly gained recognition, and has found a prominent place in creative literature. Even though Ambikagiri Raichoudhury first talked about the youth culture, but it only gained its gravity towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The importance of Youth Studies has been conveyed through the various works of literature. It is important to study the youth because they hold a lot of potential to build a better future, and if not guided well they might lose their way and end up creating a dystopia. It is also important to take into consideration the new perspectives that they bring on to the table and not disregard them as childish fantasies. Youth Studies have brought into light a clearer perspective on the youth culture and has helped in understanding their views and beliefs.

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