

## An Eco-critical Analysis of the Assamese Novel Felanee

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**Abstract:** Eco-criticism can be defined as the study of the relation between literature and the physical environment. This paper attempts to analyse the novel *Felanee* by Arupa Patangia Kalita from the perspective of Eco-criticism. While analysing from this context, the focus will be given to some characters that will help in the eco-critical study of the novel. The novelist is trying to focus on how we need to preserve nature because without nature human cannot survive in this world. All throughout the novel, Kalita is trying to reflect that we need not take anyone's permission to work for nature. She says that there are a lot to do for the sake of nature as well as mankind and we need to make people aware of it.

**Key Words:** Eco-criticism, Literature, Environment, Nature, Culture

### Introduction:

Eco-Criticism runs a whole gamut of definition of which the most well known is by Cheryll Glotfelty's as "the study of relation between literature and the physical environment" proposed in *The Eco-Criticism Reader*. According to Richard Kerridge, the eco-critic should track environmental ideas and address debates wherever they appear in the partially concealed cultural spaces and 'evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to the environmental crises'. Michael P. Branch refers to Eco-Criticism as a 'Call for Cultural Change' which is not merely an exercise in analysing nature in literature but a "Move towards a more bio centric world-view, an extension of ethics, a broadening of human's conception of global community to include nonhuman life forms and the physical environment. In his seminal work, *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*, Joseph Meeker affirms that as the world's only literary creature, human beings have the responsibility to discover the role of literature in the welfare and survival of humanity and the natural environment as well as to examine the 'insight it offers into human relationships with other species and with the world around us'.

When we discuss the concept of Eco-Criticism, romanticism also comes into the context. Romanticism's idea of 'Return to Nature' was an influence that inspired eco-critics to study the connection between Romanticism and ecology. Many concepts of contemporary environmental thinking can also be traced to key texts belonging to the Romantic period. Axel Goodbody states that "Mother Nature" was a poetic product of the age of the steam engine. Romantic writers conceptualised environmental pollution as both an external phenomenon resulting from industrialisation and an inner state resulting from the fragmentation and alienation of human personality. Some eco-critics have also opposed the simplistic application of romantic concepts such as unity of mind and nature, intuition and concept of intrinsic value to the environmental problems that we face today.

### Eco-Criticism and Contemporary Assamese Novel

The term Eco-criticism is a much debated one in the present times. The term, coined by Cheryll Glotfelty gained popularity towards the end of 1990 especially in English literature. It could not attain popularity in Assamese literature like that of English which becomes the basic reason for the absence of any proper Assamese words for the term Eco-criticism. The Dictionary meaning of the term 'Criticism' is to give comment or opinion. In a nutshell, eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. It implies that Eco-Criticism studies the environment from its theoretical perspective. This research article attempts a critical study of the novel *Felanee* by the eminent novelist Arupa Patangia Kalita .

The social responsibility of literature in the context of the ever-changing socio-economic scenario has been covered by the area of Eco-criticism. Creative literature has provided continuous and renewed reading experiences in connection with the diversified subject matter. In the same way, the world of criticism has also experienced the influence of the different issues in the area of social, political and cultural changes. Environmental theories and environmental preservation criticism has turned out to be the most debated aspects in the recent days. *Felanee* will be discussed within the specific scope of eco-criticism for the study of this research article. Nature and its elements are discussed from a romantic standpoint in the popular literary criticism. The natural elements like trees, rivers, hills and mountains, flora and fauna turns out to be the foundation of the study of all such criticisms and it also mentions the relation between man and nature. When the natural imbalances and it affects created threats towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then such literature came up with a mission to preserve nature as a whole, making the readers accountable for towards the greater cause of humanity.

The major areas covered by Eco-criticism are – man-made disaster, the scope of men’s right to nature, social responsibility of literature, literary presentation of the awareness towards environment preservation etc. The importance of Eco-criticism gains importance in the present context.

The relationship between men and animals and the environment has been in continuum from times immemorial. The earliest texts like Vedas and Upanishads too are evidences of the inclusion of the relationship between different environmental elements of the universe. The natural environment plays an important role in the physical, spiritual and psychological good health of people whereas global warming has carried negative aspects to the world. Assamese literature has expressed its awareness towards environmental issues since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Assamese novels have especially developed newer vistas introducing ever new thoughts and have created different circumstances for its plots. Assamese fiction is abounding with the description of nature along with the changes of time that nature has provided ever-changing aspects to Assamese fictions. The new trend raises awareness towards emotional responsibility for the Universe. Multiple Assamese fictions have taken up Eco-criticism as their central theme. *Mereng* by Anuradha Sarmah Pujari, *Mayabritta* by Rita Choudhury, *Felanee* by Arupa Patangia Kalita, *Jerew Hagramai Gabo(Jetia Aranyoi Kande)* by Ratna Bharali Ozah, *Sukula Hatir Khuj* by Prabhat Goswami, *Sorai Suburi* by Pankaj Gobind Medhi are worth mentioning in this field.

#### **Eco-criticism: A Study of the novel Felanee**

Eco-Criticism is the theory that deals with the relationship between nature and man in literature. In the introductions of *The Future of Environment Criticism*, Lawrence Buell describes three specific aspects of Environment Criticism-

- 1) Different aspects of Environmental depiction and presentation
- 2) Redefining space as a fundamental dimension of art and lived experience
- 3) Ethical and political motives for literary representations of environmental bodies.

Arupa Patangia Kalita is a powerful Assamese writer of the contemporary times. *Felanee* by Arupa Pantangia Kalita is one of the seminal fictions of the present times. Kalita explores many aspects of the environment through the relationship between nature and man. This is mentioned at the beginning of the novel- ‘*Tar pasor kothakhini jen toranidorat guli khai pori thoka modhuriamhen gar rongr sei deka loratur jibontur dore, sorang beparie ujar kora paharor namonit thoka surobhit chandan kathar Aranyakhanor dore mari mari mangh khai sesh kora sei mora soraijakor dore futukia pohujakor dore sokolu arambha hoishil –sob asil, kintu atia eku nai. aase kebol hahakar,shunayta,apurnata.Deka loratur bukur pora ulua huluk-huluk tez ,kati bogorai pelua chandan gochat bah lua soraiburor akash-botah bakuhi pelua ciorr dore ,pakhi ajuri ajuri mari ronga mongoh uliai pelua mora soraikitar thoronga ulongo sariror dore , kati kati bojarot bhag kori thua phutukia pohukaitar tez lagi thoka mongohor dore – kewal shunyata, dhongsho,hahakar’*( *Felanee*-9-10)

In an often influential document of the ferocity of nationalism, Felanee carries a research experience of reading from an environmental perspective. From theoretical point of view, there is a lot of potentiality for eco-criticism in Felanee. There are lot of sub-plots in the novel and every page reminds the readers about the importance of environmental awareness. The opening parts of thirty-eight chapters show that the forest of the countryside and border areas are the most reliable refuges of the rebellion, presenting the relationship between literature and environment. The novels show that the same people use the forests as the safest tool to acquire wealth, power and the desire to become rich.

Abrams' view of the politics of significance behind culture or literary representations of nature further illustrates Felanee's political context –*“Our identities, or sense of self, for example, are informed by the particular place in which we live and in which we feel that we belong and are at home. On the other side, human experience of the natural environment is never a replication of the thing itself. But always mediated by the culture of a particular time and place; and its representation in a work of literature inescapably shaped by human feelings and human imagination (Abrams:73)*

Symbolically, the livelihood of the people whose income is dependent nature seems to be cut off. Therefore they do not hesitate to beat and cut the innocent goat with sharp weapons in their hands- *Sutalot gamusha ekhan pindhi udang gare lora atai hatt da ekhan loi mati ghopiai ase .si jen dakhan loi mati ghopiai thoka nai junor makor gabhini sagoli jonihe ghopiai ase ( Felanee-89)*. The death of the goat has brought death to the lives of those people.

According to the theory of Eco-criticism it is our duty to preserve environment. The human civilisation has been pushed into a very crucial bloody future through selfishness and self centeredness that is because of human's merciless attitude.

### Conclusion

Eco-Criticism is given importance in order to make a link between environment and literature. In fact the forest has fed us to live; it gives us food and medicine. The forest is given back dead trees. The forest gives us more than we give back to it and still we destroy forest. Nature is our wealth and we should not destroy Nature. The easiest way to understand this trend in literary theories would be to learn what these people do. Many novelists in the contemporary time are focusing on the concept of eco-criticism through their literary texts. These writers are very much conscious about the environmental issues and they are trying to make the readers aware through their writings. In the novel *Felanee*, Arupa Patangia Kalita through with the help of the plot is trying to focus on the environmental issues which in a way will make the readers aware of these concerns.

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