



Subject:-Nativism in Assamese Literature

Dimpi Das, Cotton University, dasdimpi535@gmail.com

Abstract: Nativism is the political policy of favouring native inhabitants as opposed to immigrants. Nativism promotes the interests of native-born inhabitants against those of immigrants. There is a significant relation between nativism and migration. Nativism is a product of the West. It originated in America. Nativism has its roots in politics and it emphasizes the importance of native-born and established inhabitants of a region. In between the years 1840 to 1850, a certain political party rose to power in America. This party was called- The Know Nothing Party. This party brought attention to the term "native" for the first time. One of the basic aspects of nativism is to highlight the importance of and give preference to native language and literature. Nativism came to India in the 19th century. In India, the influence of nativism can be seen in Marathi literature, Kannada literature etc. Nativist theory was also popular in Assamese literature. Nativism has influenced the literary works of Assamese litterateurs like Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Ambikagiri Raichoudhury, Bishnu Prasad Rabha, Syed Abdul Malik, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Bina Baruah, Nalini Bala Devi, Hiren Bhattacharyya etc. In this article, we discuss the significance of nativism in Assamese literature. Nativism can contribute to the literature and culture of a country to a large extent. The reason behind selecting this topic for the article is to show the presence of nativism ideology in Assamese literature. This research paper is prepared by using descriptive method.

Keywords: nativism, immigration, literature, native, politics.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Nativism is the policy of protecting the interests of native-born or established inhabitants against those of immigrants. It is a policy of favoring native inhabitants as opposed to immigrants. The primary aspect of nativism is the protection or revival of native culture and traditions. Immigration brings harm to the practice of native culture and tradition. Hence, nativism opposes immigration and emphasizes the importance of native thought culture. Therefore, the essence of nativism is to revive native literature. Nativism also means the protection of native languages and traditions. Nativism has influenced Indian literature on a large scale including Assamese literature.

Purpose of study and significance:

According to nativist theory, we should only favour the interests of native inhabitants. We are well aware that all over the world, people keep migrating from one country to another at all times. Migration is human nature.

Migration is related to nativism and human culture. Purpose of this study is to discuss the various ways in which nativism has influenced Assamese literature.

Area of study:

The primary feature of nativism is the protection of traditional cultural roots of the natives and revival of the native literature of a region. Nativism is based on the concept that one should show respect to one's culture and heritage. It can be said that Indian nativism is related to nationalism. This research paper aims at discussing the different ways in which nativism has influenced Assamese literature including the works of Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Bina Baruah, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Raghunath Choudhary and the others.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

There are various books that have discussed nativism. These books tell us the history of nativism in America, India and how nativism has left an impact on Assam and Assamese literature. "Sahitya Samalochana", a book by Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University, "Nativism in Literature" (1983), an essay by Balchandra Nemade, and "Nativism", a book by the same author offer clear views on nativism as well as its impact on literature.

Method of Study:

This research paper has been prepared with the help of descriptive and analytical method.

III. A BRIEF HISTORY OF NATIVISM:

The history of nativism began in the western nations. Unlike classicism or romanticism, nativism originated in America, and not in France. With the birth of nativism, the interests of the natives of America were given more importance and Chinese labourers were restricted from migrating to America, as well as immigration-restriction measures were taken. Much emphasis was given on the interests of the native inhabitants as opposed to the immigrants and native language and culture were promoted more than ever.

Nativism in India:

Nativism is an age old concept in India. In the modern ages, nativism theory rose to popularity in India during the freedom movement. Towards the end of the 19th century, native languages and culture were being protected by the people of India. Especially Mahatma Gandhi was the one who opposed foreign traders doing business in India, and promoted the nativist ideology. Under British rule, the Indian people became more aware of their origins and their cultural roots. Indian nativism is based on self-respect and survival. The thirst for independence brought awareness on native rights among the people of India. Nativism opposes colonialism. Nativism basically focuses on the awareness on the history, culture and tradition of a region.

Nativism in Assamese Literature:

The influence of nativism is ever-present in Indian literature including Assamese literature. Gandhi made efforts to protect the Indian culture from the Congress front. It is also reflected in the literary works of Assamese writers. Native sentiment, theories and ideals are present in every aspect of Assamese literature.

Nativism in Assamese Stories:

Nativism has been present in Assamese stories since the 19th century. The most recognized story-writer of the 'Jonaki' era, Lakshminath Bezbaroa, has applied nativism theory to a lot of his stories. The ideals of Mahatma Gandhi can be seen clearly in the story "Patmugi" by Sri Bezbaroa. The misfortunes that Patmugi (a woman) had to go through compelled her to follow Gandhi's teachings. Patmugi's husband had left her for another woman. Initially, Patmugi went to the court of in the hope of justice, but later she resorted to living a life led by the teachings of Mahatma. Therefore, it can be said that nativism theory was present in the story "Patmugi" by Lakshminath Bezbaroa.

Nativism in Assamese Poetry:

It is very difficult to apply nativism theory to literature, since literature is global in nature. Literature does not stay confined to one country or region. Modern literature is basically a product of the West. The Indian society is conservative. Nativism is present in many patriotic poems by Indian poets. "Janambhumi" by Nalini Bala Devi, "Mor Desh" by Hiren Bhattacharyya, "O Mor Aponar Desh", "Asom Sangeet" and "Been Boragi" by Bezbaroa, "Lachit Phukan" by Debakanta Baruah are some of the poems that strongly reflect nativism theory. These poems are influenced by nativism through patriotism. "Lachit Phukan" by Debakanta Baruah glorifies the heritage of Assam and is backed by nativist ideology.

Nativism in Assamese Novels:

Just like Assamese stories and poems, Assamese novels are also influenced by nativism to a great extent. In the novel "Jibanar Bat" by Bina Baruah, when Kamalakanta gave a ring to Togor, Togor was overwhelmed. Togor considered Kamalakanta her husband because of the ring. Togor even told Kamalakanta that they should take blessings from their parents. Here, Indian culture and traditions are strongly reflected. In Assamese novels, there are certain instances which are purely products of nativism theory. In the novel "Mrityunjoy" by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, the protagonist is involved with the bomb blast in a train, in order to protect his own country. This storyline was inspired by nativism. The various historical novels in Assam are also influenced by nativism. Such novels try to make people aware by appealing to the sentiments of people regarding their past and their heritage. They promote the culture of the land. Nativism is present in novels like "Dhanya Nara Tanu Bhal" by Abdul Malik (based on the life of Srimanta Sankardeva), "Banduka Behar" (based on the life of Sri Madhabdeva) etc.

IV. CONCLUSION:

Nativism did not originate in Assam. It has only influenced Assamese literature. Although the writers have adopted the Western style of writing, the literature talks about the Indian society and native sentiments. Nativism theory is reflected in Assamese stories, poems and novels. Nativism has been promoted in literature through patriotism, patriotic sentiment and traditions. It takes a very talented litterateur to start a particular writing style to be followed by others. Assamese literature has been influenced by nativism although it was not a distinct, separate writing style.

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