

The Depiction of Insurgency in Assam in Selected Short Stories by Assamese Writers

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Abstract:

In the 20th century, India witnessed several separatists' movements at different parts of the country. There were organizations such as ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) who wanted a separate nation for the Assamese. These organizations wreaked havoc in Assam, disturbing the public life. These rebels were waging an armed insurgency to topple the established government in Assam. Youths joined this revolutionary organization in huge numbers which was eventually curbed down with force by the central government. Assam was, thus, in the grip of violence for more than 30 years - from 1980s to 2010. Looking back at the insurgency period, the writers in Assam wrote about the tumultuous traumatic past of the state. They wrote about the undaunted account of a war India has been fighting against terrorism. The present paper is a study of selected tales of the insurgency period in Assam, which narrate how the war affected individuals as well as the public.

Key words: Insurgency, trauma, war, short story

India has entered the 75th year of its independence in 2021. The journey of India's independence has been rather difficult as the country had to face challenges of separatism and insurgency. Many states or parts of the country felt neglected and did not consider themselves as parts of the country. The north-east states in India, especially, had the strong feeling of being culturally and linguistically very different from the rest of the country. Thus, in the North-East the insurgencies were born out of desires for separate countries; every state in the region wanted to build a homeland for their tribes. They were angry with the neglect and apathy from the decision makers in New Delhi. In Assam separatist tendencies emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s; it got momentum in 1980s when the ULFA became stronger, gaining control over the majority parts of the state. The ULFA's objective was to attain an independent, sovereign Assam – 'Swadhin Assam' (Prabhatkara 72). The central government tried to appease the insurgent group and later took military action against them when they denied to surrender. Eventually, the separatists' tendencies died away and Assam joined the mainstream of India.

Assamese writers have been writing about the insurgency period since the 21st century. More recently writers like Temsula Ao and Jahanavi Barua came up with many stories of insurgencies which depict the tumultuous traumatic experience of individuals as well as of the community. The trauma of war had a profound effect on the minds of Assamese. The writers from the region set the stories in the insurgency period and narrate how it affected the lives of the people who were involved in it. In the recent anthology of the short stories *How to Tell the Story of an Insurgency* (2020) Aruni Kashyap, the editor of the collection, brings together several stories of the disturbing era of the state. These stories are originally written either in Assamese, Bodo or English language highlighting the polyphonic conditions

