Dilip Borah’s Fictional Universe

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Apart from being a writer of fiction Dilip Borah has also shown his expertise in the realm of short story. He is a writer who strikes a nice balance between subject matter and theme and it is to be noted that he never repeats himself in his creations. Borah has carved a niche for himself in the domain of contemporary Assamese literature and an alert reader will find a fresh resonance in his fiction. Compassion and sensitivity are the characteristics of good literature and Borah’s novels and stories evoke these twin qualities. Borah has seen a particular type of life during his service and his varied experiences have enabled him to choose themes from the sophisticated to the seamy-side of existence. Borah knows how to weave a rich tapestry of meaning through his rich texture and structure in his fiction. His stories are polyphonies in nature, he knows how to keep the readers glued to his narrative and often the ending of the stories provides a pleasant surprise to the readers. Borah picks up contemporary themes and setting but he also deals with the external and universal themes like love, life, passion and death. Borah’s stories demand alert intellectual and emotional participation on part of the reader and one’s patience is highly rewarded after the perusal of the story. Borah is not a prolific writer, rather he takes time to create and that is why most of his writings clinch the appreciation of readers. A critical glance at a few of his stories will provide opportunity to the sensitive and sensible readers to judge his creation from a fresh perspective. Jeevan Mrityu is a poignant tale of love, life, ideology, commitment, hope, despair, personal and political quest, hope being crushed, dream, desire and above all death. The story concentrates on two male protagonists who gradually reach the destination of friendship after much differences regarding political ideology. The story focuses life in Assam and particularly the internal politics of student organizations in various educational institutions. The conflict that lurks behind the texture of the story is resolved only when the two friends meet after many years as respective jobs of administration and engineering bring them to a common place. Borah shows how the struggle
for power takes upper hand in various organizations and how the lust for power pressurizes individuals to fight with each other. The story also refers to the period of Emergency that was forced by the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to bring about political transparency and sound socio-political setup. The two individual friends who were once rivals because of student politics gradually come to term with each other as they shake off individual egocentric attitude and also discover a deep affection and intimacy. The affection turns out to be attachment and this is shown in figurative language as one friend dies of blood cancer which redefines human fragility in the wake of death. The political and social events concerning Assam Agitation find a crucial place in the story that shows how the original inhabitants of Assam became intolerant towards illegal migrants from the other side of the border and Borah does not merely suggest the anger and frustration of different political parties and insurgents, he also shows how such migration weakened the economy of the state. The first person narrator comment on the political unrest of the state thus -, “The state became a strife-ridden zone because of curfew, rail-block, gatherings at oil refineries and at pumping stations.” The remarkable aspect of the story is that Borah juxtaposes the personal and political contours quite nicely. The story showcases plenty of emotional moments at various crucial junctures and this is intensified towards the end after the demise of the narrator’s friend. There is oblique reference of the Assam Accord that was signed by Rajeev Gandhi and Prafulla Mahanta in 1985 but Borah leaves it with merely a cursory reference. The emotional ideological and professional gabs between various generations are graphically portrayed by Borah. Another important dimension of the story is the identity crisis faced by native Assamese people as constant migration threatens to reduce the native to the level of minority. The aspects of political opportunism, dreadful condition of the state due to activities of insurgency and socio-moral corruption are also hinted at various points of the story. The poignant ending is achieved by the gradual building of the particular theme (in this case disease and death of a person named Pranab) and its resolution towards the end. The emotional distance and psychological trauma both find expression in the story and the dichotomy between life and death is achieved through the wise appreciation of the eternal truth of the world. There are a few references to the works of Kahlil Gibran which suggests the writer’s reading depth and the story is able to hold the attention of the readers.
In *Amfulor Renu* Borah picks up an important and uncommon theme---the plight of a woman once her manopoze and the story shows Borah’s command over medical terminologies. The story focuses on the lives of a couple –namely Pradumna and Mondira and shows how the wife is gradually overpowered by an unknown anger which often results in emotional outbursts. Mondira’s anger does not have any specific cause but the fact that she cannot control her wrath makes the life difficult for others around her. Her own husband is often at the receiving end and because he is sympathetic and caring he does not show any offence. Rather the husband tolerates his wife as she suffers from anger, frustration, and discontent and Borah very poetically highlights how human beings react to seasonal change. The source and geneology of the anger are unknown but it is due to certain hormonal disorder that the wife might be reacting in a particular manner. The husband’s attitude to his wife is very protective as he gradually understands that it is due to a particular disorder and that is why he strikes an appointment with a reputed doctor. However, the wife does not want to go for any medical checkup but the situation changes suddenly one day when after a serious bout of anger towards her husband the wife realizes her mistake and pledges him to take her to the doctor. The change of mood is brought about by beautiful autumn season when leaves of trees take up new hue and brings about love and satisfaction. Throughout the story Borah shows his ability to create poetic prose and readers find a freshness of diction and the story also brings to light various contours of memory.

*Tumiei Mur Kolponare* is an extremely significant story because it brings to light two seminal issues ecological destruction and identity politics. The forests and greeneries of Kaziranga are getting destroyed and nearby places are witnessing uprooting of trees and other likewise natural objects. There is specific reference to Nagaon as the narrator laments the disappearance of erstwhile town as old topography and natural environment are gradually disappearing. The wanton destruction of nature reminds the narrator of Hollywood movie ‘Matrix’ which predicts that one day machine will replace human beings. The rapid expansion of technology and the gradual erosion of forest threaten human beings in the contemporary time. The narrator makes it clear that the last few decades have been terrible for Assam as insurgents and miscreants have reduced the state to a land of death. The rapid disappearance of seasonal flowers creates a void in the
heart of the narrator as beauty is replaced by artificial spectacle. The narrator predicts that the greeneries of Kaziranga will soon disappear like the Rhinos of Assam or become scant. The story is dialogic in the structure and texture as we find the mention of a sub-plot that raises issues like identity, secularism, religion, fundamentalism, rivalry, genocide and also mutual trust and love. Love can cross border and two different people belonging to two different religions can turn out to be intimate friends. The author condemns religious and sectarian divide and raises important international issues like nationalism and identity politics. There is also reference to various nuances of music in the story and there is constant reminder that there can be no greater religion than philanthropy. The story shows how religious identities can be fragile and reminds us of the comment of the Black American author James Baldwin, “If we don’t love each other than we will end up destroying each other.” The urgent need for ecological preservation is repeatedly argued and one can find traces of similar thought in a recent novel by Pankaj Govinda Medhi titled Chorai Chuburi but one must give credit to Borah as he has raised this issue much before than Medhi. The story catches human beings in crucial moments of their lives and whatever is left unsaid can be grasped by sensitive readers because of the writer’s empathy for nature and a continuous engagement with our immediate natural environment. Borah suggests that India has been a land of different religion where people have lived in harmony with each other and this human dimension has been a characteristic of Assam. There are several allusions to different historical incidents and Borah’s basic purpose seems to be an unflinching faith on humanity. The concept of village forestry and ecological preservation are given priority and Borah believes that love is the antidote of all bigotry and he celebrates the victory of religious harmony in this story. It is also to be noted that within the framework of a physical journey Borah raises a number of important issues related to our beloved state and country.