

# The Symbolist Movement and Assamese Poetry

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**Abstract:** *In 1940s the publication of "JAYANTI" magazine, introduced the trend of symbolist poetry in Assamese literature. Modernism found a remarkable place as a replacement of Romanticism. Social consciousness, Sex, Psychology, and Revolutionary tone were the new themes of Assamese poetry. Assamese poets realized that Symbolism is the key to Modernism. In 1940s Amulya Barua, Bhabananda Dutta, Hem Barua and Ajit Barua were the chief exponents of Assamese Symbolist poetry. 'Public symbol' and 'Private Symbol' are the assets of modern Assamese poetry. But we must say Assamese poets were greatly influenced by Eliotian symbolism e. g. "IYAT NODI ASIL" by Nabakanta Barua.*

**Keywords:** Symbolism, Private symbol, Public Symbol, Synaesthesia, Derangement of Sense etc.

## 1. Introduction

The Symbolist Movement was based in Paris. Started in 1857 by Charles Baudelaire. In 1857 Baudelaire published his 'Les du mal' and this poetry collection was the guide book of Symbolist Movement. Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud were the pioneers. Preceded by the Romantic Movement, the European Industrial Revolution and the abolition of Slavery in Europe. In England Ezra Pound, T. E. Hume, and T. S. Eliot vocalized the slogan of Symbolist Movement.

In context of Assamese Symbolist poetry, Prof. Dr. Hiren Gohain says, abstract lives found fresh lives in symbolist poetry, there is a texture of personal sense, synaesthesia and derangement of sense in symbolist poetry.

Critic Imdadullah observes some prominent trademarks of Symbolism in the poetry Post World War - II Assamese poets:

- Use of symbols to picturized internal thoughts of individuals.
- Use of Personal Symbols.
- Polished use of words with deep meanings.
- Mixture of Conscious mind and emotions.
- Use of symbolic conversations, rather than direct conversations.
- Symbolist structure is based around grand, illogical intuition.
- Founded on ESSENTIALISM.

These trends were found in Ajit Barua's works. But Bhaben Barua, Nilmoni Phukan, Mahim Bora were greatly influenced by the characteristics of Western Symbolist movement. In the context of writing poetry Assamese poets were modified the symbols, but the basic was western.

**Public Symbol in Assamese Poetry:** Public symbol was subjective, symbols of laymen. These types of symbols were most commonly used by Assamese romantics, Spiritual songs and even in Vaishnab Verse form. These symbols were collected from day to day affairs. For example, **Hem Barua's BALICHANDA** and **MANMYURI**. Barua used the symbols of laymen. His sources was Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagbad. He gave symbolic meanings to

Krishna, Karan, Kunti, Rama, Sita, Shakutala, Kalidasa, Arjuna etc. These characters are well known to common readers and so Barua's poetry are laymen's poetry, and also for intellectuals. His poetic characters like **Bhadai** and **Sonpahi** were the symbols of common Assamese working class men and women.

**Private Symbol in Assamese Poetry:** Assamese poets who were influenced by French symbolist movement, they used intensely individualistic symbols in poetry. Their sources were their own emotions and intellect. These kinds of symbols were so polished and not for laymen. Hem Barua also known for his intense personal symbols. Barua's **MAMATAR CHITHI** one of the finest example of symbolist poetry. **The Candle** symbolized the life of a widow. **The Yellow Moon** symbolized the extreme physical urge of young Mamata and her husband. In the last stanza the poet used **Mejir Jui (Fire)** which symbolized the Revolution against rigid society. Again he used the symbols of **White Lambs** which symbolize the hope of reformation in society. **The Grandmother** symbolized the rigid, orthodox society.

**Naba Kanta Barua, The Symbolist:** Nabakanta Barua's "**He Aranya He Mahasagar, Kauri, Palas** were the finest production of Assamese symbolist poetry. He was greatly influenced by the Aestheticism of Rabindranath Tagore and symbolism of T. S. Eliot. Like French Symbolist poets, Barua travelled through conscious and subconscious mind and created aesthetic symbols.

**PALAS** is one of typical Assamese modernist poetry. "**It's not the creator but Creations stays in the society**" - - - this symbols covers the whole poem. Palas used as a symbol of creation. In this poem **The Grandfather symbolized past, the Grandchild symbolized future and KALANG KAPILI symbolized the flow of time.**

**Nilamani Phukan, A Humanist with A Symbolist Mood:** Nilamani Phukan was a humanist like Bacon and Symbolist like Eliot. His prime source of symbolism is humanism. He was affected by evils of modern civilization but never give up his childish innocence. Traditional rustic life was his prime value. In the poem **DAH JAN DEKA MANUHAR PRATYABARTAN**, the poet described the whole cycle of

human civilization. The Coffin, The Bull, Black Stone, Sea, The Trodden Temple, Mad Woman are the examples of intense private and public symbols.

Ajit Barua's use of symbols also impressive. When he described the decaying mindset of modern society, he was fully influenced by Eliot's Prufrock. His "JENGRAI 1963" was the symbol of limitless thought. Faith, betrayal, panic, death are the symbols of sub conscious mind.

## 2. Conclusion

The Modern period, in the decades after the Great War, was a notable era of symbolism in literature. Many of the major writers of the period exploit symbolism which are in part drawn from religious and esoteric traditions and in part invented. During the 5<sup>th</sup> decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Assam witnessed vivid socio - political and socio - economic changes. The NE region was under the occupation of armed forces of Japan. There was great anxiety in the entire region. After independence riots and communal disharmony and chaos. Economic and political crisis was unbearable. Eliot also observed same situation in Europe. Thus the modern Assamese literature was massively influenced by Eliot's Europe and The Wasteland.

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