

‘Theorizing Fearism’: A Critical Study on Arupa Patangia Kalita’s Short Stories “Written in Tears.”

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Abstract: *The present paper aims to study the short stories of Arupa Patangia Kalita from a very new perspective in literary theory that is ‘The Philosophy of Fearism’, a first east - west dialogue, an emerging philosophy that deals basically with the issues of fear in human life. Arupa Kalita’s stories highlight her concern about ecology, social issues and the traumatic conflicts in human life; nonetheless, we can delineate her philosophical visions of Fearism in her portrayal of characters. The characters go through fearmorphosis, they are being watched by panopticans and sometimes scapegoat the innocent people, even the Nature with modern weapons and gun powder. Subba asserts that fear is terminator as it owns power of all power; Arupa kalita’s stories can also be interpreted with this perspective because the characters are found to be a fear Sisyphus, always under the multiple eyes or lenses of fear.*

Keywords: Fearism, fearmorphosis, scapegoat, panopticans, fear sisyphus. . . etc

1. Aims and Objectives

This paper attempts to delineate the elements of Fearism immanent in the select short stories of Arupa Patangia Kalita, especially with regard to finding the philosophy of Fearism in literature.

2. Methodology

A systematic study of short stories from the collection ‘Written in Tears’ has been undertaken.

As secondary sources dealing with the theory of Fearism different research articles, journals, books, and interviews have been referred to.

3. Introduction

Fearism is a self declared existentialist philosophy founded by Desh Subba in 1999. It is a unique but mostly an eastern than western philosophy, emerged as a new critical theory in 2005 when it was first mentioned in *Tapu Magazine* published in Hong kong. Desh Subba, a Nepali contemporary philosopher, writer, poet, critic born in Dharan, Nepal and now lives in Hong Kong is considered as the founder of this new philosophy of Fearism. His self - published book ‘*Philosophy of Fearism*’ (2014) depicts fear as a major and natural part of human life. “*Bhayabad*” is the Napali term for the philosophy of Fearism, which was translated by Desh Subba into English for the Global society.

Fearism is that first consciousness of living which govern us in every phase of life. When we have a close look at our live, society or civilization, we are always haunted with the idea of fear at different level in different degree. Since the beginning of human civilization till today, no matter how much the progress in terms of science and technology to protect human being, has been done, the deep rooted fear has always affected humanity. We use everything for our safety purposes to make sure that we minimize fear but somewhere in the corner of the heart the looming fear destabilizes our peace of mind. The locks, passwords, security codes, alarms,

CCTV, health care, Insurances, policies and so on are all results of the fear in us. These establishments are meant to minimize our fear, nevertheless, it still irks. Human being always have the fear of death, fear of loss, fear of disease, fear of society, fear of law, etc and this fear governs and controls every moment of life. Thus, fearism argues that “life is conducted, directed and controlled by the fear” (subba, 2014)

Beginning of Fearism:

Desh Subba says -

“*The beginning of ‘Philosophy of Fearism’ can be said to be accidentally emerged. In 1999, I prepared a novel entitled ‘Ujad’ (desolate). A friend of mine Sharan Subba after reading the manuscript, he underlined the word ‘Bhayabad’ with a red ink. I thought of it deeply for a quite a long time about the word. ‘This can be different’ I pondered.*” (2018, subba) Subba means to say that this revolutionary term got a new dimension with his Brother Sharan Subba’s kaleidoscopic observation on the term. Subba began to widen his thought on the term and kept ruminating over it with his friends resulting the most dominating philosophy of the 21st century with the publication of the *Tapu Magazine* published from Hong Kong in 2005. Thus, Nepal has made this place a ‘*workmanship of a new philosophy*’ with a new vision of fearism. (subba, 2018). Hong Kong happened to be a new hub for the germination of this new idea and the visionaries and followers of different strata had chosen Prof. Dr. Tanka Prasad Neupane, a Nepali scholar as the first installed chairman of the ‘Fearism Study Centre’ In Hong Kong. This study centre is committed to award ‘*Tilmati Fearism Award*’ to an author who expands the horizon of the philosophy of fearism, to authenticate it Subba has mentioned the scholars namely Rana Kafle of Assam, India and Rajendra Guragain of Nepal, B Maria Kumar of India and Osinakachi Akuma Kalu of Nigeria for his book titled” *The First Stage of the Fearologist*”. (subba, 2018, 2 sept.) The *Fearologist Institute, Calgary Canada* was founded by R. Michael Fisher to promote the fearism studies.

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Deconstructing Fear:

Jaques Derrida in his 'Of Grammatology' (1967) introduced the concept of 'deconstruction' to reject the notion of 'structuralism' given by Ferdinand de Saussure. Derrida points out that the meaning is unstable not fixed and it is always 'differ' or 'defer' to another level for the playfulness nature of language. Desh Subba (co - author) in the book 'Eco - Fearism' (2020) attempts to deconstruct the meaning of fearism to interpret the underlying multilayered meaning of the term. If we make an observation on the very term 'fearism' in the past before 'fearism thinkers', it is pertinent that in the past, thinkers, authors, spiritual leaders or typical Gurus had interpreted fear as a negative emotion or unpleasant feeling. Even some psychologist and motivational speakers were engaged in exaggerating its unfair impact on mankind merely for their own benefits without focusing much on its positive aspects. Fear, according to Subba, is very beautiful and positive consciousness of the world.

"Fear is a very similar (generally unpleasant) feeling (like anxiety) that arises as a normal response to realistic (or imagined) danger or threat. . . If you are rigidly attached to believing that fear is an emotion controlled by the amygdale of the brain (e. g. Le Doux, 1994), your scientifically - biased view will be challenged,. . ." (Subba, 2020)

Human civilization started with the concept of fear, primitive human being invented stone weapons to protect themselves, tree barks as a protection for the fear of cold and since then and till today fear is the basic to everything. Prof. Dr. Sanjeev Upreti Writes:

If we on peeling the layers of an onion, new layers appear and there remain void at last. Meanings are also like solid things –they have existence till a certain period. Gradually, original meanings become extinct and new ones start. The meaning of fear is also the same. We fear due to the meaning that we have heard, understood, and known. (subba, 2020)

Derrida used binary oppositions to clarify meaning of certain thing, but according to fearism binary opposition is insufficient in interpreting the meaning of fear as Subba said fear has tripartite opposition, he states -

"The constitution, law and order, government, police, and court all have been established for peace, happiness, and prosperity. In the absence of these, people fear murder, violence, theft, and robbery. Therefore, fear has tripartite opposition. " (Adhikari, Akuma, Subba, 2020)

Recognizing Fearism:

Fearism with its foundation in 1999 as 'Bhayabad' is able to attract many followers from different parts of the world. The book 'Philosophy of Fearism' with its publication in 2014 consolidated a foundation on a new discourse in intellectual as well as literary world, and perhaps for its realistic applicability in human life the book won 5 International Book Awards in 2015 from USA. Thus, the followers of Fearism Movement are increasing and Africa has got the highest in number. The reason for the increasing followers from Africa could be the fear of war, violence, and

starvation that is prevalent in African countries. It can also be said that fearism might have its impact in the North - Eastern Parts of India since it was once under the grim clutches of insurgency, violence and racism.

There are so many books written and published by different authors across the globe as a testimony to prove that the Fearism is really an emerging philosophy. Canadian author, Michael Fisher, *Nigerian authors* Osinakachi Akuma Kalu and Michael Bassey Eneyo, have already published books on Fearism, Indian authors B. Maria Kumar and B. S. Susmita have recently written the book 'The Youth Dont Cry', (2018) is a critical commentary on the youth about their fears. "Philosophy of Fearism ' - a First East - West Dialogue" (2016) authored by R. Michael Fisher and Desh Subba takes a specific focus on this philosophy pioneered by Subba from the east and Fisher from the west. A recently published book 'Eco Fearism' (2020) co - authored by Bhawani Shankar Adhikari, Osinakachi Akuma Kalu and Desh Subba plungs into a profound analysis, prospects and burning issues of fearism to eco - fearism.

Eco - Fearism:

Eco - Fearism, a very new term was firstly coined by Dr. R. Michael Fisher in his technical paper 68 (Fisher, 2017). Fisher has presented the concept to illustrate Eco - Philosophy of fearism and Eco - Criticism which deals with eco - crisis philosophically as well scientifically. Eco - Fearism aims to generate a positive fear about the ecological global crisis in the heart of every human being. Fearism can be vocal in handling eco - crisis philosophically and scientifically because the rationality of the human being can direct them towards positivity that can help save the environment. The book *Eco - Fearism –prospects and Burning Issues* 'co - authored by Bhawani Shankar Adhikary, Osinakachi Akama kalu, Desh Subba, (2020), talks about the formula of eco - fearism which states:

"I use life - consciousness - knowledge - Fearism, normally as theory in philosophy of Fearism. This theory can be applied any where looking its requirements. Now, Eco - crisis requires it. So, it is better to apply here. (2020)

Fearmorphosis:

Desh Subba has used the term Fearmorphosis in his book "Fearmorphosis' – Man is a fear Sisyphus being watched by panopticons" (2023) to deal with his philosophy of Fearism which carried forward the issues and ideas underlying the emotion of fear. Subba refers to the different kinds of myth, for example *Sisyphus, the panopticon, the scapegoat, Das capital, and Metamorphosis* as the most powerful driving forces for humanity. But Subba has tried to rewrite history, culture, politics, literature and philosophy through a systematic criticism of Sysiphus, the panoptican, and the scapegoat point of view.

Among a number of analytical perspectives, it focuses on classic existential literary teaching stories, like Metamorphosis, the Myth of Sisyphus, and No Exit from a new Fearmorphosis lens. (Subba, 2023)

4. Textual Analysis

The North - East region, geographically a place of hills and rivers, store house of tribes and ethnic groups, situated in the extreme corner of the map enjoys its special identity. Since the region is diverse in its manifestation of unique distinctive cultural traits, the literary activities of the writers of the region have beautifully demonstrated all these in their respective works. The writers from the region are found vocal in dealing with the heterogeneous modes of expression with their themes like ecology, trauma, conflicts, insurgency, violence, social issues, religious and cultural traits. . . etc as found reflected in the literature. Writers from the peripheries, however selective, are able to draw the attention of the mainstreams by breaking the rigid boundaries of their society. One of the most unexplored themes, seldom taken by any research scholar till now is the theme of Fearism in the North - East literature. Desh Subba, writing from Hong Kong inaugurated a new way of looking at the literature with a perspective of fearism that is deeply engrafted in every aspect of human world.

The writers from North - East India like Indira Goswami, Mamang Dai, Robin S. Ngangan, Tamsula Ao, Mona Zote, L. Chandte, R. K. Madhubir, Indira Goswami, Mitra Phukan, Janice Patriat, Arupa Patangia Kalita have demonstrated the multifaceted ingenuity in their writing and the 'cry' from the north - eastern region is no more inaudible in main lands. Fearism is a theory that can be applied to any aspects of human life and therefore, literature has proven the fact.

Among so many other writers, one of the most vocal from Assam is Arupa Patangia Kalita who has a good number of works to her credit. She is one of the leading voices in contemporary Assamese literature who won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2014. The stories in the collection to her credit vividly demonstrate the ongoing agitations and violence of indigenous people which leave a deep impact on the nature and the environment for polluting and spilling of innocent blood in the peaceful region. The beautiful region that was so dear and integral part of these indigenous people is no more the same since the agitators have exploited it to turn it into a place of violence and conflict. Arupa Kalita has articulated the theme of fearism emerged as a result of insurgency in her story collection and a good number of the stories are set at the backdrop of Assam Agitation. Assam has a very terrible history of militancy arising from various socio - political - economic aspects which aim to segregate themselves from main stream. Writers of different class have witnessed the evolving uprising from the very near and have made efforts to respond by producing works of impression to record those experiences.

Arupa Patangia Kalita's story collection 'Written in Tears' (2015), which contains six stories, can be best read applying the theory of Fearism. In one of the stories, titled 'The Half Burnt Bus at Midnight' narrates the terrible story of a bus entering the town at midnight that was set ablaze by a group of insurgents. Arupa Kalita tries to express her concern that violence and agitations were the daily activities those days in Assam and common people have to live their life under the fear looming always over them.

'So the people remain fearful - like cattle after escaping from a burnt - down shed and now so scared as to fear even the hint of a red cloud. So they prick their ears instantly even if the sound of bursting crackers comes from a wedding party arriving at the bride's house.' (Kalita, 2020)

The common people of the village always had a fear of being a victim of the insurgency; at the same time they were to counter the Armies who came into the village in a search operation. In Desh Subba's Fearism the Fear is primary, and others are secondary. Thus, the characters in the story Terrorists, Armies, or the innocent village folk are all affected by fear and the mechanism to minimize fear was the major concern according to Subba.

The story 'Ayengla of the Blue Hills' also narrates the similar connection of characters with nature, Ayengla is a happy woman who lives amidst the blue hills with her husband, two children, paddy fields, with pigs and chickens. *It shows her love and attachment with the ecology but at the same time ecofear is a matter concern for her. Ayengla is so distressed to know that the people in the jungle have planted a landmine to attack the Army patrolling group.*

Last month, an army truck had just turned around a bend in the hills when a landmine planted by those in the jungle had blown it to smithereens.' (Kalita, 2020)

The bloodshed and the devastation caused on both mankind and nature is the reason of her fear in the story which is beyond her understanding that left her with sleepless nights. After the bomb blast villagers barely stepped out of their house and the harvest and the gardens were all empty with no attention. Subba, as stated in his 'Eco - Fearism' - prospects & burning issues (2020) the character Ayengla is more concerned about eco - crisis and therefore, she fears the landmine blast in the hills. According to Subba -

"Central task of eco - Fearism is to do theoretical analysis to eco - troubles. The entire troubles path goes to Fearism.' (2020, Eco Fearism, p - 47)

The story 'The Girl with Long Hair' narrates about an indigenous tribal girl Mainao who is the product of her tribal culture and traditions. She is a cheerful girl with her small twinkling eyes and rounded limbs taunt with the sun and rain and she loves to be in close connection with the nature around her. Mainao is so attached to the soil, a happy-go - lucky girl but she is always under a grip of fear which does not have the liberty to enjoy her blooming days as the restrictions are imposed on her by the terrorist organisations living in the forest.

'The boys engaged in the andolan announced the ban and warned that those who defied it would be punished. Their word was law' (2020, p - 11)

Mainao is basically a happy - go - lucky girl she doesn't remain remorse during Durga puja festival, and enjoys it to the fullest even if there is a restriction from the agitators hiding in the forest nevertheless, a fear of being the target can't be ignored. According to Subba there are some fear

factors or fear agents responsible for triggering fear in human being.

'They are simply known as objects of fear or fear factors. They are the agents responsible for triggering fear.' (2020, p - 6)

For Mainao the fear factors could be the people residing in the forest giving the orders of ban, or the Army forces patrolling in the villages who might interrogate her for providing food stuff or asylum. Mainao is seen caught in fear dilemma whether to defy the ban or to overcome the fear and plunge into the mission of joining her friends to celebrate the Durga puja.

Another story 'Arunima's Motherland' narrates how a mother goes through series of trauma and fear just because her son joined the underground organization. A wedding engagement of a daughter of the family was broken, a bomb was hurled into the house, the villagers always neglected and the mental agony piled up every moment in their life. Arupa Kalita gives a very vivid narration how the fear of being annihilated in the locality disturbed Arunima, her mother - in - law, father - in - law, and other members of the family. The fear of losing her son always destabilises her so she kept on asking others about the news of her son which she anticipates, might be a blow to her.

'What's happened? Have they arrested Rupam ? She was smiling.'

'No, it's about something else, ' she replied.

'Something else? What happened has the other one died?'

'I don't know, ' her face reddened as she retorted. (2015, p - 28)

The story 'Surabhi Barua and the Rhythm of Hooves' narrates how the people who opposed the Assam movement were harassed by the agitators. Surabhi Barua who is a professor in a College had to go through insults by her own students of the college for writing articles against this agitation. She always feared to face the slogans shouted against her; the fear was so vehement that other colleagues advised her to go on leave for few days. " The Principal advised Surabhi Barua to take a few days' leave. . . . (P - 196)

The story 'Kunu's Mother' shows how a woman without the support of a man in the family has to live amidst alarming fear. After the death of her husband, Kunu's mother always felt a kind of insecure because she has a young daughter very attractive and beautiful. A young man, from a militant outfit snared by her enticing beauty, starts to woo her which is the central reason of Fear in the story. According to Subba, Philosophy of Fearism teaches the solution to the problems of life. Subba believes that man must learn to minimize the amount of fear and moderate fear can solve the problem. Here, in the story Kunu's Mother does not lose her temper due to the excessive fear of her problem rather she curbs it and looks for a solution by sending her daughter to some distance places so that her daughter continues further studies.

'My aunt's sons have their own electrical repair shop. They have their own house, not like ours. . . you won't have any problem. My aunt will take care of you'. (P - 176)

Albert Camus 'The Myth of Sisyphus' (1942) describes about Fear but not to the extent of fearist thinkers because the myth says life is absurd where as the fearist likes to affirm the meaning in life. The fearmorphosis varies with prior ideas, like deconstruction and metamorphosis fear does not have a fixed and distinct feature. Desh subba, with his fearist theory, asserts that the human being must be out of this absurd position. " I submit that a fearist generalization, is that the human must be free from this particular form of a victim idea and absurd position" (subba, 2023).

In the prescribed Short stories by Arupa Patangia Kalita the characters are the victims of fearmorphosis, every character is a fear Sisyphus in some sense being watched by 'Panopticans' (Bentham). They always look at the boulder of Sisyphus which may fall on them in any form like the agitation, killings, bombing or being exploited by the Armies.

In 'The Half Burnt Bus at Midnight' the people of the village have seen a burning bus rolling down towards them like the Sisyphus, *Ayengla* in the Blue hills is disturbed because the ecology, the blue hills are being destroyed by the terrorists with the gun powder, and bombs so, the ecoFearism is an issue for her. The whole nature has been 'scapegoated' for human benefit, thus, Subba says - Heavenly Earth became Hell by our doing'. (Subba, 23, VII) *Mainao*, a young and attractive tribal girl is under a threat for violating the 'commandments' of the banned outfit. She is under a mental tussle cannot enjoy the freedom of her life, like participating in *Durga Puja* procession, so, always fearing for the expected debacle that might fall on her because of those foul elements. 'Suravi' cannot continue her job in the college, gets the ultimatum, and runs away from the field for the fear of her life. Even the Principal of her college is a fear Sisyphus being watched by the agitator in the form of 'Panoptican'. 'Kunu' and her mother faces the unending atrocities, always feared the consequences if she is not married to that young member of terrorist who is after *Kanu* so; the family is just a 'scapegoat'.

5. Conclusion

Arupa Kalita's Short stories highlights the theme of philosophy of Fearism which is the 'power of all power'. (subba, 23). According to, him fear is a terminator and it segregates all other weaker emotions to take a lead. The characters in the stories are somehow affected by fearism and for being watched by panopticans they sometimes remain united into one structure to minimize the fear. The profounder and the believer of the theory of Fearism argue that we have to learn to "fly with the term fear" and to bring it to life to bear new fruits. Arupa Patangia Kalita's stories have depth that explore multi themes including fearism, and a systematic and scientific study on her writings from a new perspective like Philosophy of Fearism can bring into light the unexplored aspects of literature, hopefully, helpful for the new research scholar in the coming days.

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