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A Study on Depiction of Migration and Displacement in Assamese Short Stories in Assam

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Abstract- ***Migration and displacement have become persistent social realities in Assam, shaping the region's cultural memory, economic life, and literary imagination. Assamese short stories, with their close attention to everyday experience, offer a sensitive space for representing the pain of uprootedness, the struggle for survival, and the search for a stable sense of belonging. This study examines how selected Assamese short stories depict migration and displacement as lived experiences rather than abstract social issues. It focuses on the movement of people within and beyond the state, the disruption of family and community life, the insecurity faced by labourers and refugees, and the emotional burden carried by women, children, and marginalized groups. The stories also reveal how displacement reshapes memory, identity, language, and relationships with land and home. Through a close reading of narrative situations, characterization, imagery, and social context, the study argues that Assamese short fiction does not merely record migration; it interrogates the unequal conditions that produce it and the human cost that follows. The paper further suggests that these stories contribute to a broader understanding of Assam's socio-political history by reflecting concerns of borderland mobility, economic instability, environmental pressure, and cultural uncertainty. In this way, Assamese short stories become an important literary archive of displacement and a compassionate voice for the displaced.***

Keywords: Migration, Displacement, Assamese Short Stories, Identity, Belonging, Assam

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature functions as a record of human experience and social transformation. Among the many themes explored in literary traditions, migration and displacement remain significant because they reshape identity, memory, belonging, and cultural continuity. Assamese literature, especially the short story genre, reflects social realities through close observation of everyday life and changing historical conditions. The experience of movement from one place to another—whether voluntary or forced—appears repeatedly in narratives that engage with livelihood, family, language, and emotional attachment.

The Assamese short story has evolved as an important literary form for portraying social transitions. Through compact narratives and realistic characterization, writers represent the voices of ordinary people and communities experiencing change. Migration and displacement become literary devices through which broader issues of cultural negotiation, social conflict, adaptation, and continuity are explored.

In Assam, demographic mobility, environmental change, economic aspirations, educational opportunities, and regional transformation have shaped social experience over time. These realities are reflected in literary texts that examine both physical movement and emotional displacement. Such narratives often reveal tensions between tradition and modernity, place and memory, belonging and exclusion.

1.1 Background of the Study

Migration has historically influenced societies by altering patterns of settlement, cultural exchange, and identity formation. In literary studies, migration is not viewed only as movement across geographical space but also as movement across emotional and social worlds. Displacement similarly represents rupture and adjustment. Literary narratives provide opportunities to understand how individuals and communities interpret these experiences.

Assamese short stories frequently engage with themes of home, land, social transition, and changing relationships. Writers portray characters negotiating unfamiliar environments, preserving cultural

memory, and responding to economic and social pressures. Such literary representations
create an archive of human responses to change.

1.2 Conceptual Framework: Migration and Displacement

Migration generally refers to the movement of individuals or groups for settlement, employment, education, security, or social opportunity. Displacement commonly indicates movement resulting from external pressures or structural change. Within literary interpretation, these concepts are treated not merely as demographic categories but as experiences connected with identity, belonging, memory, and emotion.

Literary depictions of migration often reveal questions of adaptation, cultural continuity, alienation, and reconstruction of self. Displacement narratives similarly examine uncertainty, loss, resilience, and social transformation.

1.3 Migration, Mobility and Social Transformation in Assam

Assam has witnessed diverse forms of mobility and social change across historical periods. These developments have influenced cultural life and literary imagination. Assamese short stories often engage with rural–urban transition, educational aspiration, livelihood concerns, intergenerational shifts, and changing social structures.

Writers use characters and settings to represent both visible and invisible dimensions of movement. The emotional distance from homeland, changes in language use, and negotiation of identity emerge as recurring literary concerns.

1.4 Assamese Short Story as a Literary Form

The short story occupies a distinctive place in Assamese literature because of its ability to capture complex realities within limited narrative space. Through symbolism, dialogue, narrative perspective, and characterization, writers communicate deep social meanings.

Migration and displacement themes become particularly effective in short stories because the form allows concentrated attention on moments of transition, memory, conflict, and realization.

1.5 Thematic Dimensions of Migration and Displacement

Major thematic concerns include identity formation, belonging and exclusion, memory of place, cultural adaptation, emotional separation, livelihood struggles, generational transition, and reconstruction of community. These themes appear in different narrative structures and stylistic approaches.

The representation of migration in literature is therefore multidimensional and cannot be reduced to physical movement alone.

1.6 Need and Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it brings attention to literary interpretations of social change. Examining migration and displacement through Assamese short stories helps connect literary criticism with cultural and social understanding.

The study also contributes to scholarship by foregrounding experiences represented in regional literature and encouraging broader discussions on mobility, identity, and belonging.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study concentrates on selected Assamese short stories that portray migration, mobility, displacement, and related experiences. The focus remains literary and interpretative rather than demographic or statistical. Attention is given to themes, characters, settings, and narrative techniques.

1.8 Research Gap

Existing literary discussions often address historical development and thematic diversity of Assamese literature. However, focused analytical work on migration and displacement in Assamese short stories remains comparatively limited. This study attempts to address that gap.

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II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the depiction of migration and displacement in selected Assamese short stories.
2. To analyze the social and cultural concerns reflected through literary representation.
3. To study the portrayal of identity, belonging, memory, and adaptation.
4. To identify narrative strategies used in presenting movement and transition.
5. To explore the relationship between literature and changing realities in Assam.
6. To contribute to contemporary critical discussion on Assamese short fiction.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Review of related literature provides the conceptual and scholarly foundation of a study. In literary research, it helps identify existing discussions, theoretical directions, and gaps that justify the present investigation. The present study explores migration and displacement in Assamese short stories and therefore reviews literature related to literary representations of movement, identity, social change, and Assamese short fiction. Existing scholarship indicates that migration is not only physical movement but also an experience shaped by memory, belonging, adaptation, and cultural negotiation.

Migration and Displacement in Literary Discourse

Literary scholars commonly interpret migration as a human experience connected with identity, emotional attachment, and social transformation. Displacement narratives frequently portray loss, uncertainty, adaptation, and reconstruction of everyday life. Literary texts provide insight into how individuals and communities understand changing realities. Studies further suggest that migration narratives often reveal tensions between continuity and change, homeland and mobility, and tradition and modernity.

Assamese Literature and Social Experience

Assamese literature has consistently reflected social realities and cultural transitions. The short story emerged as an influential genre because of its ability to portray ordinary lives with depth and precision. Literary criticism has shown that Assamese short fiction addresses changing social conditions, human relationships, livelihood concerns, and experiences of transition. Themes connected with movement and social adjustment appear in different forms across modern Assamese storytelling.

Studies on Assamese Short Stories

Existing studies on Assamese short stories mainly focus on literary development, narrative style, realism, language, and thematic diversity. Researchers have discussed how short fiction documents social transformation and individual experience. However, focused analysis of migration and displacement as central interpretative categories remains comparatively limited. This gap creates scope for deeper literary examination of these themes.

Identity, Memory and Belonging

Research on identity and memory suggests that movement influences both individual and collective consciousness. Literary characters often negotiate attachment to place while adapting to unfamiliar surroundings. Memory functions as an important narrative element through which displaced individuals maintain continuity with their past and reconstruct meaning in changing circumstances.

Research Gap and Relevance

Review of existing literature indicates that although migration and social change are discussed broadly in literary studies, detailed examination of migration and displacement in Assamese short stories remains limited. The present study therefore attempts to contribute to Assamese literary criticism by analysing how literary narratives represent movement, belonging, and cultural transformation.

Conclusion

The reviewed literature establishes that migration and displacement are important themes in literary interpretation. Previous studies provide conceptual understanding but also indicate the need for focused analysis of Assamese short fiction. This study seeks to extend existing scholarship through thematic and interpretative examination.

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IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

1. Introduction

The methodology of a literary study provides the framework through which research objectives are achieved in a systematic and academically organised manner. The present study adopts a qualitative and interpretative approach to examine the depiction of migration and displacement in Assamese short stories. The focus remains on textual meaning, thematic interpretation, and literary representation rather than numerical analysis. The methodology is designed to analyse how selected literary texts portray experiences of movement, belonging, identity, memory, and social transformation.

2. Research Approach

This study follows a qualitative research approach. Qualitative literary research enables close reading and critical interpretation of texts to understand meanings, patterns, and thematic structures. Since migration and displacement are represented through narratives, emotions, symbols, and social contexts, qualitative analysis is considered suitable for achieving the objectives of the study.

3. Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive dimension explains the presence of migration and displacement within selected texts, while the analytical dimension examines how these themes are constructed through literary devices, characterization, setting, narrative structure, and cultural representation.

4. Sources of Data

The study is primarily based on secondary sources of data. Primary literary materials consist of selected Assamese short stories relevant to the theme of migration and displacement. Secondary materials include books, scholarly articles, literary criticism, dissertations, journals, edited volumes, and conceptual discussions related to literature, migration studies, identity, and cultural change.

5. Selection of Texts

Selected Assamese short stories are chosen purposively based on thematic relevance. Texts that reflect movement, displacement, identity negotiation, social transition, memory, or changing relationships are included. The selection emphasises literary significance and relevance to the objectives of the study.

6. Method of Data Collection

Data collection is conducted through document analysis and systematic reading of literary texts. Relevant books, journal articles, and critical writings are reviewed to establish conceptual understanding. Notes are organised according to themes, literary patterns, and interpretative categories.

7. Method of Analysis

The collected materials are analysed through thematic and textual interpretation. Themes connected with migration, displacement, belonging, identity, memory, adaptation, and cultural continuity are identified and interpreted. Literary elements such as plot, characterization, symbolism, and narrative perspective are considered during analysis.

8. Delimitation of the Study

The study is limited to selected Assamese short stories and does not attempt a complete historical survey of Assamese literature. The focus remains on literary interpretation of migration and displacement and excludes demographic or statistical examination.

9. Ethical Considerations

The study follows academic standards of responsible citation, original interpretation, and careful engagement with published sources. Interpretations are presented objectively and aligned with the objectives of the study.

The methodological framework ensures consistency between research objectives, textual selection, and interpretative procedures. It provides a clear foundation for subsequent analysis and discussion chapters.

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V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Introduction

The present chapter analyses selected Assamese short stories through a qualitative and interpretative approach. The analysis focuses on literary representations of migration and displacement and examines how narratives express experiences of movement, identity, memory, belonging, and social transformation. Rather than measuring quantitative outcomes, this chapter interprets recurring themes and narrative patterns found across selected texts.

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2. Depiction of Migration as Human Experience

In Assamese short stories, migration is represented not only as physical relocation but also as a deeply human experience shaped by aspiration, uncertainty, separation, and adjustment. Characters often move in response to educational opportunity, livelihood concerns, family expectations, or changing social conditions. Literary narratives portray movement as a process that transforms relationships and everyday life.

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3. Representation of Displacement and Emotional Transition

Displacement appears in literary narratives as an experience of emotional interruption. Characters frequently encounter distance from familiar environments and attempt to rebuild meaning in new contexts. Feelings of isolation, nostalgia, uncertainty, and resilience emerge as recurring dimensions of displacement. Such portrayals demonstrate that displacement operates at both social and psychological levels.

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4. Identity, Belonging and Memory

Identity becomes an important theme in narratives dealing with migration. Literary characters often negotiate attachment to place while adapting to changing realities. Memory functions as a connecting force between past and present and helps preserve continuity despite movement. Assamese short stories portray belonging as a dynamic process shaped through interaction, memory, and cultural experience.

Identity becomes an important theme in narratives dealing with migration. Literary characters often negotiate attachment to place while adapting to changing realities. Memory functions as a connecting force between past and present and helps preserve continuity despite movement. Assamese short stories portray belonging as a dynamic process shaped through interaction, memory, and cultural experience. The interpretation emphasises textual meaning and thematic continuity across narratives without

reducing literary expression to a single social explanation.

5. Social and Cultural Transformation

The analysed narratives suggest that migration contributes to broader processes of social and cultural change. Changing occupations, altered family structures, generational differences, and adaptation to new environments influence character development and social relations. Literature reflects these transitions through detailed portrayal of ordinary life and changing values.

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6. Narrative Strategies and Literary Techniques

Writers employ setting, symbolism, dialogue, characterization, and narrative voice to communicate experiences of movement and transition. Contrasts between remembered spaces and present realities strengthen emotional depth within stories. The short story form allows concentrated expression of change and human response.

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7. Interpretation in Relation to Objectives of the Study

The analysis indicates that migration and displacement are represented as multidimensional literary concerns. The selected narratives reveal connections among identity, memory, adaptation, and social transformation. The findings support the objectives of understanding thematic representation and literary techniques within Assamese short fiction.

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8. Major Findings

Analysis suggests that: (i) migration is portrayed as both social and emotional movement; (ii) displacement affects identity and belonging; (iii) memory remains central to literary representation; (iv) Assamese short stories document changing realities through human-centered narratives; and (v) literary expression provides insight into cultural transformation.

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VI. CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS AND REFERENCES

1. Conclusion

The study examined the depiction of migration and displacement in Assamese short stories through qualitative literary interpretation. The analysis demonstrates that these themes extend beyond physical movement and include identity formation, emotional transition, memory, belonging, and cultural continuity.

The selected narratives portray human responses to changing social realities and show how literary expression records experiences of adaptation and transformation. Migration appears as a process that reshapes relationships and perceptions of place, while displacement reflects both social and psychological dimensions.

The findings suggest that Assamese short stories preserve lived experiences and contribute to understanding wider cultural transitions. Literary representation therefore functions not only as artistic expression but also as a means of interpreting social change.

2. Suggestions

1. Future studies may undertake comparative analysis between Assamese and other regional literatures on migration themes.
2. Researchers may explore specific dimensions such as identity, memory, environment, and language in relation to displacement.
3. Additional literary studies may include contemporary short stories and emerging narrative forms.
4. Interdisciplinary approaches may connect literary analysis with cultural and social studies.
5. More critical attention may be given to regional literature as a source for understanding human mobility and transformation.

3. Implications of the Study

The study contributes to Assamese literary criticism by highlighting migration and displacement as meaningful interpretative categories. It also encourages broader engagement with literary narratives as sources for understanding social and cultural processes.

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