

INTRODUCTION

The novel, as a literary genre occupies a significant place in the history of literature. A novel is a narrative fiction written in prose form. It is longer than any other prose work. Arnold Kettle defines, “the novel is a realistic prose fiction, complete in itself and of a certain length.”¹ The word ‘novel’ is derived from the Italian word ‘novella’ meaning ‘new’. There are different types of novels. The major types include Epistolary, Novels of Manners, Historical, Social, Scientific, Picaresque and Psychological etc.

The novel developed in the early 17th century. ‘*Don Quixote*’, published in 1605, written by the famous Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes, is considered to be the first novel ever written in the West. The first novel written in the English language is Daniel Defoe’s ‘*Robinson Crusoe*’ published in 1719.

The novel emerged in India in the 19th century. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s ‘*Rajmohan’s wife*’ (1864) is regarded as the first Indian novel written in English. The novel ‘*Anandamath*’ (1882) written in Bengali by the same author is measured to be the first Indian novel.

The Assamese novel came into existence with the publication of Padmanath Gogain Baruah’s ‘*Bhanumati*’ in 1890. Padmanath Gohain Baruah is considered to be the father of the Assamese novel.

1. Arnold Kettle: An Introduction to the English Novel, Vol 1, page- 29

The novel can be written in any standard language. The primary aim of the novel, irrespective of language, is to give aesthetic pleasure to the readers. The novel inspires to accept life with all its ups and downs. It teaches the readers the value of life. The novel is an essential part of life as it adds vigour to it. It also enriches human mind with vast knowledge.

Subject:

Mamoni Raisom Goswami is one of the most prolific Indian writers of international repute. Anita Desai who writes in English, a contemporary writer of Mamoni Raisom Goswami is also a legendary writer of global fame. Both Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai are basically known as novelists of excellence.

They have taken Indian fiction into a new height with their creativity and originality. Some major novels of Mamoni Raisom Goswami are: *Chenabor Shrot* (*The Current of Chenab*), *Ahiron*, *Nilakanthi Braja* (*The Blue Necked God*), *Datal Hatir Uye Khowa Howdah* (*The Moth Eaten Howdah of a Tusker*), *Mamore Dhara Tarowal* (*The Rusted Sword*) etc. Anita Desai's major novels include *Cry, the Peacock*, *Voices in the City*, *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, *Fire on the Mountain* etc. Both the female novelists show their concern about the plight of the women in a patriarchal society. They also deal with different themes in their novels. Both the writers concerned exhibit almost the same temperament as women writers. The thesis studies the major novels of both Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai critically to discover new directions and purposes of their writing.

Aims and Objectives:

The aims and objectives of this research study are divided into two halves – Primary objectives and Secondary objectives.

Primary Objectives: The primary focus of this research work is to analyse critically some of the major novels written by both Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai. This critical study attempts to analyse the selected novels from different perspectives.

Secondary Objectives: The secondary objectives of this research work are –

- (i) To find out how the concerned writers viz. Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai deal with psychological problems of their characters.
- (ii) To identify the different approaches of both the authors to feminine issues.
- (iii) To find out Indian sensibility in their novels.
- (iv) To measure the use of symbols in their novels.
- (v) To study the selected novels from a folkloristic perspective.

Significance of the Study:

The most significant aspect of this study is that the novelist under study viz. Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai have influenced on all societies of man of different countries in different ways to a great extent. Their informative ideas, humanistic approach, appeal for human rights and values, raising voice against injustice and stand for woman issues will help to create a healthy society. The socio-

economic and political scenario of contemporary India as exposed in their novels, will give the readers an opportunity to know more about India.

This study will be helpful to the future researchers as well as learners while exploring new ideas in their novels.

Therefore a critical study is needed to throw light on their novels from different perspectives.

Hypothesis:

1. Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai expose the psychological realities of their characters in their novels.
2. Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai explore feminine sensibility in their novels.
3. The novelists show the predicament of their female protagonists in a patriarchal society.
4. Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai show the socio-economic and cultural scenario of contemporary India in their novels. Both Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai show their love for Indianness in their novels. Both the writers depict Indian culture in their novels.
5. Symbols play a vital role in the novels of both the novelists.
6. Both Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai are humanists.

The novelists concerned are very close to each other in the sense that they share almost the same thematic concern in their novels. Apart from the above hypotheses, this study aims to reflect the other related matters found in their novels.

Review of Literature:

The present study is a critical study on the novels of Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai.

Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai are two of the most recognized major literary figures in India and who have contributed a lot to the world of fiction. Their contribution to literature of the world is epochmaking.

The aim of this literature review is to find out and examine research and other literary activities previously done on Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai. There is a long list of critical references available in relation to both the writers.

To begin with Mamoni Raisom Goswami, many renowned scholars have written articles on her life and works. For instance Hiren Gohain writes an article on ‘Some Remarks on the Major Fiction of Indira Goswami (Mamoni Raisom Goswami)’, Gobinda Prasad Sarma writes an article on ‘The Worm-Eaten Howdah of a Tusker’, Malashri Lal writes an article on ‘Indira Goswami and Women’s Empowerment’. Rajul Sogani writes on ‘Caged Birds: Widows in the Novels of Indira Goswami’, U.R. Ananthmurthy writes an article on ‘Dr. Indira Goswami – An important figure in Indian Literature’, Nabaneeta Dev Sen writes on ‘Indira Goswami’, Phanindra Kumar Dev Choudhury writes an article on ‘My Mamoni Raisom’ etc. To illustrate, there are so many books published on Mamoni Raisom Goswami and her

works. For example, *Hridayar Tapaswini* (1989) compiled and edited by Rani Gohain, *Indira Goswami (Mamoni Raisom): A Critical Study of her writings* (1994) by Malaya Khaund, *Moor Swapna- Duswapnar Diary* (1998) edited by Hemanta Kumar Bharali, *Adhunikatar Sandhanat Mamoni Raisom (Mamoni Raisom: In Search of Modernity)* 2001, by Hridayananda Gogoi, *Indira Goswami: A Compilation on her life, works and achievements* (2007) by Manjeet Baruah, *Dr. Indira Goswami: Assam's Fiery Pen* (2008) by Shenar Bano Khan *Mamoni Raysamar Abha Aru Pratibha* (2011) edited by Nikumoni Hussain. etc.

Many research works have also been done on Mamoni Raisom Goswami and her works. To mention a few – Sailendra Narayan Thakuria has done his research study on ‘Mamoni Raisom Goswami Upanyasat Nari, Hrishikesh Chaudhury has done his study on ‘Voice of the Subaltern in selected Novels of Mamoni Raisom Goswami etc. Rita Sarma has done her research study on ‘Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Mahasweta Devir Upanyas: Eti Tulanamulak Adhyayan’, Pranjali Sarma has done research on ‘Folklore and Folklife as reflected in the Novels of Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Rama Mehta with special reference to Datal Hatir Uye Khowa Howdah and Inside the Haveli: A Comparative study’, Bhanita Nath has completed her research work on Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Nananeeta Dev Senar Upanyasar Nari Charitra’, Niharika Moran has done her research study on Mamoni Raisom Goswami aru Nirupama Borgohain Upanyasat Nari Charitra: Eti Adhyayan. Rani Kakati has done her research on the topic ‘Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Amrita Pritamar Upanyasar Nari Charitra: Eti Tulanamulak Adhyayan etc.

The other author undertaken for study is Anita Desai, an Indo-Anglian novelist of universal repute. There are voluminous works such as articles, research papers, books, reviews and research works on Anita Desai and her works. To illustrate a few of such works – Rani Prakash Chapke writes an article on ‘A Study of Anita Desai’s Characters: Maya and Sita’, Bindu Rani writes an article on ‘An Analysis upon the Portrait of Anita Desai as an Artist’, Rajani Bala writes a research paper on ‘Psychological study of Anita Desai’s Novels’, Sujog Dodal writes a paper on ‘The theme of Alienation in Anita Desai’s Where Shall We Go This Summer?’, Sheetal Thakore writes an essay on Anita Desai’s Cry, the Peacock: As a Cry of Alienated Self’, Sanjoy Kumar writes a critical essay on ‘The Reverse of Journey in Anita Desai’s Cry, the Peacock and Where Shall We Go This Summer’ etc.

It must be mentioned here that there are volumes of works published on the life and works of Anita Desai. ‘*Anita Desai: A Study of Her Fiction*’ (1971) by Meena Belliappa, ‘*Anita Desai: The Novelist*’ (1981) by Madhusudhan Prasad, ‘*Anita Desai*’ (1981) by R.S. Sharma, ‘*The Novels of Anita Desai: A Study in Character and Conflict*’ (1988) by Usha Bande, ‘*The Fiction of Anita Desai*’ (1989) by R. K. Dhawan, ‘*The Novels of Anita Desai: A Feminist Perspective*’ (2002) by R.K. Gupta, ‘*Women and Society in the Novels of Anita Desai*’ (2005) by Bidula Choudhary etc.

Moreover, there are so many research studies done on Anita Desai. For example, Suresh Chandra Das has done research study on ‘Anita Desai: A Critical Study’, Kuljeet Kaur has done research on ‘Anita Desai as the Voice of Contemporary Indian Women’, Charu Shah has done research study on ‘The Select Novels of Anita Desai: An Analysis’, Kuldeep Pandey has done research on ‘Women Characters in the

Novels of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande: A Comparative Study', S. Sajina has done research on 'The Portrayal of Women in the Select Novels of Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai: A Comparative Study' etc.

The above literature survey conducted proves that a lot of literary activities have been done on the life and works of both Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai. Much has been done on different topics related to their fictions. But there is hardly any critical study exclusively devoted to their novels. Consequently this present study has been taken up to do a research on the novels of Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai with special reference to seven major novels from each of them.

Methodology:

This research work studies the novels of Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai. In this research work basically descriptive and analytical method are used. Sometimes comparative method is also applied wherever suitable.

Data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources to make a critical study of the selected novels of both the novelists. For collecting data from the primary sources, close reading, interpretation and analysis have been done on the select novels of Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Anita Desai. In case of secondary sources, a significant number of critical writings on both the authors and their works have been read and analysed for collecting data. Moreover, different reference books, journals, magazines, essays, research articles, research papers, paper clips, news papers, published and unpublished M. Phil Dissertations and Doctoral theses have been shuffled for gathering knowledge and ideas related to my research work. It must be

mentioned that many interviews given by the authors are also gone through for collecting data.

For collecting study materials Krishnakanta Handique Library, Gauhati University; Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva Viswavidyalaya Library, Nagaon; District Library, Nagaon; Mahendranath Maihangdang Dekaphukan Library, Nowgong College, Nagaon and Kampur College Library, Kampur have been visited.

It is true that bookish library method is supposed to be the most suitable for a researcher in a literary field, but at this age of advanced technology internet browsing is one of the most important ways of data collection. Therefore data and relative materials have also been collected through internet.

Thus, all possible methods are applied to solve my research problem.