

## PREFACE

Rabindranath Tagore, the first Indian to win the world's highest literary award, the Nobel Prize, is a profound genius. He is a poet, prophet, playwright and philosopher. A large number of writers all over the world have been influenced by him. The present work is a comparative study of quest for identity in Rabindranath Tagore and the poets of Northeast India writing in English and their ecological, ecofeminist and ecomystic insights. Quest for identity being a postcolonial phenomena comprise of several aspects of self, culture, economics, ecology, socio-political affairs, etc. Northeast India being a biodiversity hotspot is ecologically rich and the writers of the region chiefly depict their surrounding, the rich natural environment besides the other aspects of the region.

The Northeast India, being an immensely rich repertoire of some rare species of flora and fauna, and comprising of eight provinces namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura is quite rich in biodiversity. This region, with its hills, rivers, valleys, people, myths, legends, rites and rituals, is blessed with a unique ecology. Writing in English from Northeast as a discourse of self-expression took shape casually in the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century. The poets writing in English from this region at present are the first generation of writers. They have attained a legitimized as well as a powerful voice by articulating their senses and sentiments and by focusing on some core issues of the region. The ethos and major concerns of their respective communities are some of the dominant preoccupations of these multi-ethnic poets. Mamang Dai, Yumlam Tana (from Arunachal Pradesh), Bhupati Das, Lakshahira Das, Dayananda Pathak, Umakanta Sarma (from Assam), Robin S. Ngangom, R.K.Madhubir (from Manipur), Anjum Hasan, Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, Esther Syiem, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih Ananya S. Guha (from Meghalaya), H.Ramdinthari, Mona Zote (from Mizoram), Temsula Ao, Easterine Iralu, Monalisa Changkija and Nini Vingurian Lungalang (from Nagaland), Rajendra Bhandari (from Sikkim) and Bhaskar Roy Barman (from Tripura)

are the representative poets who have been contributing to the multiethnic Indian poetry in English from Northeast.

Rabindranath Tagore is a canonical eco-writer. His works enshrine the the Indian values and the sympathy to nature. The basic Indian ethos teaches us to be compassionate to nature and to be in harmony with it. In Indian culture there has been a tradition of living with nature in a relationship of mutual dependence. The people of the Northeast India also feel an affinity with nature; they believe in a harmonious relationship with nature. The unique ecosystem of the region plays a pivotal role in shaping such a mindset of the people.

Identity crisis and sense of alienation are some of the dominant features of contemporary politics in the Northeast. Racial autonomy, cultural and linguistic conflicts, the problem of insurgency and several dominant racial issues have been ravaging the region. As ecology is an important ingredient of identity, it can play a significant role in bestowing the people of this part of India an identity of their own. And here at this point we mark a powerful note of self-assertion in the works of the aforesaid poets and writers. Their works have many different aspects of the entire ecosystem of Northeast India. They have been celebrating in their works the ecological glory of Northeast with a keen ecological awareness. Although ethnicity is their chief concern as they hail from various ethnic groups, hills, mountains; valleys, people, myths, legends, tribal rites, mystic as well as aesthetic sensibilities, communal violence, and insurgency are also some of the dominant and recurring themes in their works. They use ecology as a tool for acquiring an identity that is unique, legitimized, and also a powerful one.

Writing in English from Northeast, although has attained a remarkable stature, seems to be deprived of proper critical attention in the national level. In the histories of Indian literature in English written by K.R.S. Iyengar and M.K.Naik, the works of the

writers of this region have not been properly mentioned. K.R.S. Iyengar only mentions Prafulladutta Goswami's *Bihu Songs of Assam* (1987:642). M.K.Naik in his *A History of Indian English Literature* (1982) makes no mention of any work by a writer of Northeast India. In his recent book (with Shyamala A. Narayan) entitled *Indian English Literature: 1980-2000* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2001) he mentions only two works of Northeast Indian writers in English. The present study has critically examined the writing in English from this region comparing them with the works of Tagore and thereby to determine their position in the sphere of Indian writing in English and the canon of ecopolitics. Further, it is noteworthy that abundant ecological resources have been pivotal in shaping the aesthetic sensibilities of these writers. So studying their writing from this ecological perspective may even help in understanding this beautiful region called the Northeast — a land with a geographical as well as psychological entity.

The thesis is mainly be a text-based reading of the works of Rabindranath Tagore and the poets writing in English from the Northeast India along with the help of the principles of eco-criticism, eco-mysticism and eco-feminism.

The introductory chapter is an elaborated study of the recent theories on eco-criticism, eco-mysticism, eco-feminism and question of identity. It further has analyzed different aspects of eco-politics on the basis of these theories and introduced the contributions of Tagore and poets of Northeast India. The second chapter entitled “Major Themes in the Poems of Rabindranath Tagore and the Select Contemporary Northeastern Poets Writing in English” deals with the works of Tagore and writers from the provinces of Northeast India in presenting major themes in their poetry. The third chapter entitled “Matrix of Ecology, Ecofeminism and Mysticism in Poems of Rabindranath Tagore” has analyzed the poems of Rabindranath Tagore in terms of various ecological concepts. The fourth chapter entitled “Ecological and Eco-mystical World in the poems of Northeast Indian Poets Writing in English” has presented

ecocritical analysis of the poems of Northeast poets. The fifth chapter has compared the special features in Rabindranath Tagore and the poets of Northeast. The concluding chapter besides concluding the thesis has defined some key issues of the entire region.