

# THE NOVEL KENCHA PATAR KAMPANI: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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**ABSTRACT:** The plotline of the novel *Kencha Patar Kampani* authored by Dr. Praphulladatta Goswami<sup>(i)</sup> develops according to the flow of stream of consciousness and internal conflicts in the mind of the central character Utpal by name. The author has tried to analyze the effect of society on human characters and focused on the dilemma of those characters which are dependent on the mental environment of the contemporary periods. As the central character Utpal has no quality of a protagonist, he is not engaged in anything worth mentioning, because of which he can imprint his signature in the heart of the future generation. There is no beginning and ending in his journey of life; he just keeps on moving according to the command of time. The unification that can be seen in the novel is just the unification of thoughts and experience of the central character Utpal, but not related to any part of the history. The central character, Utpal is the symbol of modernity because he bears the character of modern human nature by embodying restlessness, loneliness, aimlessness etc. in his mind. In view of a good number of critics, the novel *Kencha Patar Kampani* authored by Dr. Praphulladatta Goswami, is a successful modern and open novel with all time ever green quality in the field of Assamese literature.

## A GLIMPS OF THE JOURNEY FROM EPIC TO MODERN NOVEL

The journey starting from Epic of Mediaeval period to the form of modern and open novel of current era is really a prolong one and interesting as well. At this point we would like to put forward the border lines of the transitions from Epic to Modern and Open novel through Romance, traditional novel etc. It is a well-known fact that the Mediaeval period replaced the literary importance of Epic which was a recurrent type of literature in the Ancient period by extensively following the literary genre, i.e., Romance; a narrative of the experiences of knights, squires or any travelers of aristocratic class which were symbolic representations of feudal system during that period. Likewise novels began occupying a room of prominence as a genre in the modern age and certainly it is the novel which could attract the attention of the readers by replacing the one way traffic of representation of the expression which became lethargic and monotonous, for which the readers took to reading novels as their best choice in the modern period. Whatever it may be our attempt is not to make a look into the rapid transition of taste and colour of readers' choice and likewise our endeavour is not to go in details regarding the nature of novels and its related philosophy. While delivering a lecture on modern novels in the University of Cambridge, Virginia Woolf started her speech by saying that:

“On of about December 1910, human character changed.”<sup>(1)</sup>

Our million-worth question is as to why Virginia Woolf mentioned the month of December of 1910 as the border line in her speech at the very beginning. Perhaps Virginia Woolf was immensely moved by the demonstration of pictures of post-impressionist movement held in the city of London and without doubt she could realise the reactions of viewers of that art and it was she who could penetrate in to the outstanding as well as extra-ordinary responses of the people whose mental set-up started

- (i) Some researchers tempt to write his name as Dr. Prafulla Dutta Goswami; but we write his name as mentioned in the article, because Dr. Goswami had left a note regarding the spelling of his name.
- (1) Dr.Gobinda Prasad Sarma, *Upanyas Aaru Asomiya Upanyas*: Pg.-42

changing in the year 1910. That is why the literary persons did not give stress on the superficial aspects of incidents that we witnessed in our day-to-day life; but instead they took to picking up the indistinct shape of any circumstances that could arrest the readers inner psychology and so they basically focused on that point of human aspects. On the basis of our studies at the perspective, we can boldly take up a notion that in the expression and outburst of feelings of modern novelist there has been tremendous influence of post-impressionist movement. That is why the modern novels are occasionally named as post-impressionist novels. It is to be seen in those novels of the modern era that out pouring of thoughts, the elemental expression of philosophy represented by the characters and at the same time in the dialectic outburst of the inner psychology, the unending imprints of post-impressionist can never be overlooked.

In the traditional novels we often see the addition of a certain kind of narratives and so in between there must be a beginning, middle and end which are basic requirements of that kind of novels. But especially in modern novels instead of some certain set rules such as inclusion of narratives, there is a continuous flow of psychological insights in to the characters. It is generally seen that the

modern novelists take forward the plotline with amalgamation of actions and reactions of the characters as they appeared in course of time as well as the inflow of the inner working of the conscience of the characters. In this connection Allan Fritmen can be quoted wherein he opined that as there is certain narrative in the traditional novels, so with the end of the narrative, the inflow of the inner psychology comes to an end. That is why Fritmen termed traditional novels as close novels. On the other hand as modern novels are free from such set regulations, so there is no end to the outburst of inner conflicts or inflow of workings of conscience of characters whatever may be. In simple words the stream of consciousness of the characters continues to flow even though apparently the plotline of the novel ends. All materials brought together to give a shape of a novel stretch out to the unending horizon from finite to infinite. Therefore, Fritmen is of the opinion that modern novels are open novels. In this piece of work we will make an attempt to label a signature of elements of openness in the novel *Kench Patar Kampani* authored by Dr. Praphulladatta Goswami in a very critical situation wherein the bifurcated Assamese society trying to accumulate on the same thread.

**Keywords: Modern and Open novel, Stream of Consciousness, Conflicting Ideology, Instability in the mind, fickle in nature.**

## INTRODUCTION

At the outset, we would like to state that not much more attention has been paid by the researchers towards the creations of Dr. P. Goswami in the form of novel and his immense contribution into Assamese literature in his era. In true sense he was the first author in the field of Assamese literature who could break down the shackle of strict bonding, very conservative attitude of the then Assamese society and in turn he could gather the courage to present two trump cards in the form of modern and open novels like *Sesh Kot?* and *Kench Patar Kampani*. The irony is that, Dr. Goswami never ever believe on quantity, instead he did have extreme trust on the quality of a piece of work that he delivered; most probably this is the reason for which he could deliver only two pieces of novels in his entire life line. Without any doubt anyone can accept that Dr. Goswami is one of the epoch-making personalities of Assamese novels who embellished the modern sentiments, human predicaments, hopes and aspirations, loss and gain etc. through his literary works. A million dollar question is why a modern novelist put forward his keen interest on open novel instead of traditional and close novel which is already at his hand. Although it seems to be unacceptable but it is a real fact that a traditional novelist spent his entire time and energy in order to develop the plotline of the novel and obviously during this process somehow he used to lose his freedom in a number of directions. As a result of which a traditional novelist becomes aloof and he discover himself alienated from the crude reality. As a matter of fact, the credibility of a traditional novel entirely depends on the quality of the plotline which has been chosen for a certain piece of work and its smooth progress without any interruption till the end. That is why a traditional novelist has to pay his rapt attention on the aforesaid parameters for the sake of the success of his novel.

However a modern novel is generally presented on the basis of stream of consciousness of the characters concerned and naturally a modern novel is always subjective. Such a modern novel never emphasizes on the happenings in the real world, instead the main attention as well intention of a modern novelist is to portray the internal mental conflicts of the characters concerned. That

is why in comparison to a traditional novelist, perhaps a modern novelist enjoys more freedom of expression, more realistic attitude as well as having a bold outlook to their subject-matter chosen for any of their artistic piece of creations. May be under the influence of such circumstances and because of the existing nasty bonding, rituals etc. of the then Assamese society might be provoked Dr. Goswami to create the open novel *Kench Patar Kampani* so that he can raise his hand of protest against the existing black rituals through the activities and stream of consciousness of the central character Utpal.

We never come across any sort of resistance initiated from the part of Dr. Goswami towards the activities of Utpal in his entire journey of life, even though occasionally some of the activities and unruly behavior (in the eyes of so called the then existing society) of Utpal breaks down the existing rules and regulations, rituals of the so called Assamese society. On the long run, Dr. Goswami never took any single step which may stand as an obstruction on the infinite line of freedom of his characters. To be honest a common reader will witness him not as a novelist, but as one, who happens to be a very simple and silent observer of actions and reactions shown by the characters portrayed by him and narrates all the happenings continuously without giving any form of flavour of his own, in the entire journey of the characters during the course of time.

If we have a pipe-line view of the activities of a modern novelist during the course of his creation, it will be clear that a modern novelist never ever have any prefixed work-plan to complete a perfect piece of his creation. A modern novelist will never possess any fixed idea about the end point of his novel or intentionally he never tries to overburden himself under the shadow of additional pressure to conclude his propose piece of work. Instead, the stream of consciousness of the characters portrayed by the novelist will automatically conclude according to the demand of the plotline. Perhaps this added an extra dimension in the freedom of a modern novelist. According to one of the modern and open novelists Antony Trollope:

“When I sit down to write a novel I don’t at all know, I don’t very much care, how it is to end.”<sup>(2)</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

During our research work on the topic, *Novels of Ajneya and Praphulladatta Goswami: A Comparative Study*; one specific question regarding the openness of the novels of the authors concerned always hunting in our mind. As a result of which we have carried out this piece of work, though we could not include all the novels of the authors concerned into the preview of our discussion. In this

piece of our work we have chosen to have a close look into the novel *Kencha Patar Kampani*, one of the premier piece of work among the elegant creations of Dr. Praphulladatta Goswami. On the eve of taking over this piece of work, we have gone through in minute detail over a few seminar papers, journals, etc. which are available in some sources. No stone has been left un-thrown in order to achieve cent percent authenticity in the conclusion of this piece of work. In fact a good number of suggestions, critics were received from learned Professors, students of Colleges and Universities in response to our quarry for which we do have no words to express our gratitude towards them. We always acknowledge their suggestions and due respect has been paid towards their suggestions while drawing the conclusion of this piece of work. To justify the sprite of the entire piece of work occasionally we discussed all the matters included here with a number of persons having commanding authority on the subject matter chosen here.

## FINDINGS

### Review of the novel *Kencha Patar Kampani* from the perspective of open novel:

The main flow of the plotline of the novel *Kencha Patar Kampani* revolves around the stream of consciousness and internal conflicts in the mind of its central character Utpal who hails from a middle class Assamese family. Here we have not witnessed any pre-fixed plotline as in case of a traditional and close novel. Instead, a reader will discover him among some pictures confronted by the central character Utpal together with some supporting characters in the journey of his life as if these were displayed in a distorting mirror. One will certainly be disheartened if he or she expects the flow of these pictures in a synchronized manner, because nothing has been presented here in a sequential way. The entire plotline of the novel flows according to the flow of the stream of consciousness in the mind of the central character Utpal, as it appears in the journey of his life and some supporting characters like Nilima, Ka-Drop etc. occasionally appears whenever it reflects in the stream of consciousness of the central character Utpal. From the view point of the presentation one must agree to the fact that the very way of the presentation in the novel is really dramatic in nature. In order to add more to that Dr. Goswami perhaps started the plotline of the novel with a restless young youth Utpal who complete his bachelor degree having no certain future plan. He lacks the necessary characteristics to be termed as a hero. After completing his Bachelor's degree, he looks for a job. But as modern education system usually fails to provide a job of mental satisfaction to a man, he too had to join the job of a clerk on temporary basis with dissatisfaction for his living. As a result he found meaninglessness of his ideology of life in the harsh reality of the world. Therefore, Utpal does not find happiness and satisfaction in his job with a busy schedule.

This novel is also a renowned creation of art by the novelist Dr. Goswami who portrayed the then picture of a young boy Utpal by name representing the middle class family and their problems related to their day to day life where we also come in contact with the inner conflicts of the modern man stricken by the newly arisen difficulties during the post independence era. The plot line of the novel has been narrated in the first person narrative and there are twenty chapters in the novel. The plot line of the novel has been constructed on the historical town of Gauripur (Now in Dhubri District, Assam, India), the Phulbaari village near Raha and Shillong (The then capital city of Assam) town. The first part of the title **Kencha Pat**<sup>(ii)</sup> represents youth and **Kampani**<sup>(iii)</sup> on one hand represents the initiation of the beating of life and on the other hand, indicated the restlessness of the youth. The plotline of the novel *Kencha Patar Kampani* is rests on the stream of consciousness of a youth and his restless mental conditions. The central character of the novel Utpal represents the modern educated middle class people, but no quality of a protagonist can be found in his character. The plotline of the novel begins with the movement of Utpal from Gauripur to his birth place Raha and contrary to his willingness, he goes to a nearby village Phulbari to collect tax wherein he comes to understand the fire of rebellion is burning in the hearts of the tax payers Kachari and Mikir. Influenced by the new era, the **Rayats**<sup>(iv)</sup> refuse to pay tax and they are restless due to the effect of the new age. Under the impact of the new age, there has appeared instability in

(ii) **Kencha Pat:** An Assamese word, stands for green leaf of a tree.

(iii) **Kampani:** An Assamese word, stands for vibration.

(iv) **Rayats:** An Assamese word, stand for those farmers who has to pay tax against their cultivating land.

the mind of everybody. The attention of Utpal has diverted by the affection of a beautiful girl of the village by name Bahagi and the sight of Bahagi reminds him about Nilima whom he meets at Gauripur and they have fallen in deep love. Unfortunately Utpal fails to gather courage to accept Nilima as his life partner due to the caste differences prevailing in the society because Nilima belongs to a Bengali Brahmin family and Utpal was a Shudra. This is a perfect example of multidimensional character of the stream of consciousness; here we witness that one layer of stream of consciousness of Utpal is engaged in the job to collect tax, though it stands against his philosophy and at the same moment the other layer is engaged to recall his beloved Nilima and to compare her with the beauty of Bahagi.

Utpal goes to Shillong for two months. His elder sister always advises him to get a job but he has no stability of mind to do any job. Even though his brother-in-law works in the secretariat, he could not get a job to satisfy his sister and his parents. It was not a difficult task for Utpal to get a job as he has already passed B.A. Moreover, being the capital of Assam, Shillong was the hub of government jobs. But he spoils his time; he thinks whether to do job or to start a business. On being absorbed in the discussion about art with his artist friend Rabindra Kumar, he forgets his earthly responsibilities. The faith caused by Rabindra Kumar in art is lacking in the mind of Utpal, as he has a clear idea that it needs a huge amount to continue some activities in the field of art; what he don't have, for a young boy like Utpal practicing art is nothing but a luxury. We never claim that Utpal does not have any

perception of his life; definitely he has perception of his own life, but he does not have that much mental stability to continue with his perception of life. Utpal could not accept Nilima as his life partner due to lack of right decision in time and his mental instability, though he fell in love with her in the beginning of his youth. He is much aware regarding his maturity, in order to establish his maturity, Utpal put forward his explanation to Rabindra Kumar that he is not standing in the threshold of youth but he has entered deep inside its home. It is not that Nilima was the lone girl who came to his life, in fact apart from Nilima, girls like Minati (a classmate of Utpal), Ka-Drop (a Khasi whore) also came to the life of Utpal. Once while travelling to Dhubri for the purpose of business, he met Minati in a train, who happened to be a teacher by profession. Minati and Utpal spent a night in a hotel at Dhubri due to some unavoidable circumstance; as a result of which Minati fell in love with Utpal but it could not last long, as Minati could understand the instability in the mind of Utpal within a short period, for which she got married with someone else, keeping aside him. In search of stability and mental piece, he was ready to adopt any means whatsoever may be, in fact he did not hesitate to come to the company of a Khasi whore Ka-Drop by name; but everything go into vain.

Like the trembling of the leaves of a pine tree, life also continues, amidst these how lonely a man is! Every man has a dark cave inside his mind and inside that dark cave everyone has his own treasure. Utpal himself belongs to the middle class society and hence he is well aware about the habits and behaviour of these people. Utpal confesses that same type of social hypocrisy, he himself possesses too. Ka-Drop is naturally a happy-go-lucky girl, as in case of a professional whore, she does not like to confine herself to only one man. Utpal does not accept such type of wild idea of love but sometimes he too feels the necessity of Ka-Drop's company.

In his life Utpal has no fixed planning for future, the mindset possesses by Utpal cannot develop the personality of a human being. Utpal is a strange youth, no specialty is there in his character which can inspire anyone. On other hand, it is better to term such type of characters as abnormal one. From that point of view the character of Utpal is not inspiring for the youth of new generation. This is proved when Utpal fails to concentrate in any of the business that he chooses. First he tries with the business of jute and leaves it in the middle and then goes for grocery shop with his friend Nitai. When Nitai joined a revolutionary group, he could not continue that business too. He even seems to be not interested in the collection of taxes that his father asks him to do

as the son of **Moujadar**<sup>(v)</sup>. He is not interested in family life too. Moreover, he is not interested in the newly created political party which has sympathy for leftist ideologies by his friend Rabin Kumar, because he has no faith in it. He has also lost faith in love. Sometimes he thinks to change the social system and after sometime that idea also goes away from his mind. He comes back home for his father's illness but leaves for Shillong again as soon as his father dies. Unfortunately, Utpal loses his new job of apprentice clerk for making delay in returning to the office. He spends a life of gipsy by losing his job and fails to establish a business. During this time he thinks to go back to his native village but still he is not confident in his decision. At this critical point of his life wherein he lost his father and his job, Utpal cannot take a firm decision for his future journey of life. Though he says he may go home, to his elder sister, still he is not sure whether he will go back to his home or not. This is how the plotline of the novel comes to an end keeping the reader amidst million questions in their mind.

## FINAL CONCLUSION

Though Utpal, the central character, by name appears in the novel *Kenchha Patar Kampani*, if deeply gone through that character, it will be crystal clear that the very colour and shape of the personality of Naba in the novel *Sesh Kot?*, is being shown in the same line and thought and it will not be denying the fact that Utpal is the another identity in the form of Naba in the novel as mentioned above, because we witness the same rhythm and tone of Naba in the character Utpal. The novels which may be said of *Sesh Kot?* and *Kenchha Patar Kampani*, as for instance, bear the same replica of Naba and Utpal who are the two sides of the same coin, one of which could not be imagined without the other side. In the novel *Sesh Kot?*, the central character Naba decides to go for business after returning from Kalkata with which the plotline of the novel concerned ends and Utpal who, in the novel *Kenchha Patar Kampani*, begins his career as a businessman, which was suppose to be started by Naba in the novel as already mentioned, which can be said to be inter-related as the replica of one with the other. Our million worth question is, why the novelist Dr. Goswami presented the novel *Kenchha Patar Kampani* as the second part of his earlier novel *Sesh Kot?*; further why he did not chose Naba as the central character of the novel *Kenchha Patar Kampani* instead of Utpal, despite both of them bears a lot of similarities. Here we do not have any concrete idea having cent percent assurance towards the answer of the above mentioned questions. In search of the answer to the above mentioned questions, we would like to raise a few points within which one might get the clue to proceed forward to reach their desired destiny. At first the background of both the novels is coming into our mind, the irony is that the then capital city of Assam, Shillong by name occupies a place in the background of both the novels. Apart from Shillong, in the earlier novel *Sesh Kot?*, the lone city by name Kalkata and the un-named native village of the central character Naba, complete the entire background; whereas the background of the novel *Kenchha Patar Kampani* consist of the places like Gauripur, Dhubri, Raha and Phulbari. Clearly the periphery of the background of the later novel is much larger than that of the earlier one. This might be one of the reason for which Dr. Goswami could not brought forward the earlier novel into the later one. Although we term both the central characters as replica of one another, it will be much better to term them as two sides of the same coin; because if we have a minute look into them then it will be clear to us that Naba hails from a lower middle class family, whereas Utpal belong to a upper middle class family, being the son of a Moujadar. Furthermore, both the central characters are fickle by nature and instability always prevails in their mindset; but the intensity of fickleness and intensity of instability in the mind of Utpal is always a mile ahead than that of Naba. This is why, the character, Naba cannot occupy the place of the character Utpal as perfect replacement in true test and colour. According to one of the renowned critic of Assamese literature, Dr. Dayananda Pathak, in the flow of the lifeline of Utpal, we never witness any fixed planning for his future life. He never involve in some tremendous activities, because

of which neither he can imprint his signature on the leaf of time nor he can contribute something extraordinary to the existing society for which he can deserve few

**(v) Moujadar: An Assamese word, stands for an special class of people who collect taxes from the tax payers.**

lines of golden alphabets in the heart of future generations. Such type of mindset cannot develop the personality of a human being. Utpal is a strange man. Nothing of such character can inspire us. On other hand, it is better to term such type of characters as extraordinary one. From that point of view the character of Utpal is not inspiring for the youth of new generation. In view of the points raised here in apparent sense one can readily ask a question, was it not a futile exercise of the novelist Dr. Goswami, who has given huge amount of thrust to achieve the ultimate velocity in the life line of Utpal through his stream of consciousness. In fact, Dr. Goswami was immensely moved with a very clear intention to outburst his own thoughts, philosophy over those people of the then Assamese society who came across the turbulent period of Second World War and just for a while gets the test of independence, for which he did have no option but to take the help of a character like Utpal. This is because the novel *Kench Patar Kampani* will remain as one of the most beautiful evergreen modern open novel in the heart of every reader and Dr. Goswami, an institution rather than a human being, will remain in the heart of every Assamese people for ever.

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