

# **INSURGENCY IN NORTH EAST INDIA**

EDITED BY  
**ANJAN SAIKIA**  
**GAUTOM KUMAR SAIKIA**





# INSURGENCY IN NORTH EAST INDIA

*Edited by*

**Anjan Saikia**

**Gautom Kumar Saikia**



**purbanchal prakash**  
GUWAHATI

## EDITORIAL BOARD

**Chief Adviser : Dr. Bijuli Borchetia**  
Principal,  
Kamargaon College

**Editors : Anjan Saikia**  
**Gautom Kumar Saikia**

## INSURGENCY IN NORTH EAST INDIA

*Edited by*

**Anjan Saikia & Gautom Kumar Saikia**

A compilation of seminar papers presented in a UGC sponsored National Level Seminar on "Insurgency and its impact on Socio-economic Development of India with reference to the North East" held in Kamargaon College, Golaghat, Assam

The views expressed in the papers included in their volume are of the writer's themselves. The editors are not responsible for the views, content, authenticity and originality of the papers.

All rights reserved by editor.

First Published in 2017 in India by

**purbanchal prakash**

H. No.-2, Seujee Path, Wireless, Dr. B. N. Saikia Road, Guwahati-781006

e-mail : [purbanchal\\_prakash@yahoo.com](mailto:purbanchal_prakash@yahoo.com)

ISBN : 978-81-7213-307-8

₹ 600.00

12.	Insurgency and India : An Overview <i>Dr. Munmun Majumdar</i>	133
13.	Insurgency in the North East Region of India : An Impediment to Economic Development <i>Anuj Kumar Das and Dipjyoti Mili</i>	142
14.	Insurgency and Its Impact on Economic Development : A Study on Karbi Anglong District of Assam <i>Mousumi Gogoi</i>	149
15.	Lack of Quality Education, Youth Unrest, and Problems of Insurgency : Its Impact on Civil Society with special Reference to North East India <i>Piku Doley</i>	161
16.	Small Arms Proliferation in India's North East : Linkages and Implications : A case of Assam <i>Prasanta Bora and Monjit Gohain</i>	173
17.	Transcendental Meditation in Alleviating Insurgency : initiatives taken by Spiritual Regeneration Foundation (North-East Region) <i>Bedabrata Bora</i>	180
18.	Stepping Forward, Looking Back : Impact of Insurgency with Reference to Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya's 'Yaruingam'	188
19.	<i>Gargi Garima Sonowal</i> <b>FELANEE : A Graphic Document on Insurgency and its Dire Consequences</b>	193
20.	The Insurgency Imbroglio and Its Reflection on Contemporary Literature <i>Anjan Saikia</i>	201
21.	Insurgency and Women Issues in North East India from a Gendered Perspective. <i>Samudra Singha Konwar</i>	210
22.	Insurgency and Justice of Development in the North Eastern Region <i>Anmona Bora and Dr. Jolly Borthakur</i> <i>Devartha Morang and Tarun Loying</i>	218

# **FELANEE : A Graphic Document on Insurgency and its Dire Consequences**

**Anjan Saikia**

## **Introduction :**

Literature as a mode of expression serves any society through authentic presentation of the contemporary incidents or incidents of great national importance. Assamese literature is also not an exception in this context. A host of illustrious Assamese sons have worked hard to record the various happenings of the state and its multi ethnic nature in their works of literature. Since insurgency has posed as a great threat especially after 1970s in the North-East, the literary torchbearers have also captured scenes of violence in their works perpetrated by outfits like ULFA, NDFB and so on. The name of Arupa Patangia Kalita holds ample attention in this respect. A recipient of several awards for her works, Kalita deliberates upon this crucial issue in her novels bringing into light the dire consequences that insurgency leaves behind for the masses. She has more than ten novels and short story collections to her credit. Among her acclaimed books, mention may be made of *Mriganabhi* (1987), *Ayananta*, *Millenniumar Sapon* (2002), *Marubhumit Menaka* *Aru Anyanya*, *Kaitat Keteki*, *Rongamatir Paharto*, *Felanee* etc.

Arupa Patangia Kalita's *Felanee* published in 2003 is undoubtedly a significant novel in the entire realm of modern Assamese literature. Immediately after its publication, the novel heralded a great era of modern Assamese novel bringing into light a host of crucial issues linked with Assam and the nation as well. Hence the subject matter presented here in the novel is replete with novelty as well as serious deliberations on the life of the Assamese people in the aftermath of 'Assam Agitation', emergence of 'ULFA' and 'SULFA' etc.



Moreover, the language and expressions of the novel are filled with great novelty and ingenuity which has made the novel a real piece of art.

**Objective :**

The objective of the paper is to scrutinize critically the activities of both ULFA and SULFA as reflected in the novel "Felanee" and the terrible atrocities that the common people were inflicted upon after the 1990s in the name of freedom struggle and secessionism. The paper would also deliberate on the instability that Assam has witnessed after the 1980s in the wake of the nationalist movements and the repercussions of all these negative developments on the overall condition of Assam. In short, in this paper, an effort has been made to unearth the deeply entrenched effects of insurgency in the minds of people as presented in the novel *Felanee* by Kalita in a superb way. It also further probes the loopholes as depicted by Kalita behind the failure of finding solutions to this prolonged evil in the North-Eastern region of India.

**Methodology :**

This paper has been written on the basis of available secondary sources of data and information along with thorough study of the novel. To make the cited points candid and support the argument, textual evidences are quoted.

**Insurgency and Assam :**

India's North-East has become the safe haven of numerous insurgent groups in the post-independence period. The militant outfits usually resort to violence and other such activities in the name of attaining their goals and also to capture the attention of the governments. This strategically important region has been affected inexplicably over the years due to widespread presence of the militant outfits. The economic backbone of the entire region is totally at disarray in the wake of kidnapping, murders and such heinous activities carried out by these so called rebels with different names operating within the Indian territory.

*Felanee* is one of the widely discussed novels of Kalita. Here she

covers the tumultuous period of Assam history from 1983 to 1998. It begins with the reference of the Assam movement that continued between the period 1979-1985, and ends with the plight of the people affected by the violent activities of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and other terrorist outfits of Assam with separatist tendencies. She has also minutely probed the role played by surrendered ULFA members, popularly known as the SULFAs. She has painted a detailed picture of insurgency in Assam through the eyes of a small group of about twenty women, and the story of their lives.

Struggle for the basic necessities i.e. food, shelter and cloth and the marginalization of lower class people from the mainstream are found to be the core subject matter of the novel. Almost all the characters in the novel are depicted with equal emphasis in an attempt to expose the scapegoats in the name of nationalist movements in Assam in the last quarter of the last century. In brief, the novel brings into forth the struggle and challenges that common people are inflicted to owing to various revolutions and the dismal result of these revolutions.

In *Felanee*, we find characters from its beginning to the end leading lives in extremely tense situations. Ratnamala, as described in the novel, was the daughter of the Mouzadar. Ratnamala gave birth to a girl named Jyotimala and this very Jyotimala gave birth to a daughter who is none other than the titled female character i.e. Felanee. The novelist clearly refers to the birth story of Felanee in the novel:

*The undaunted boy thought that fighting against all the dangers of the world one could be victorious. Kshitish went out leaving the groaning woman at home. There was smouldering fire all around, guns fired, many people were hiding in the jute plantation. He went out never to return. Jutimala was lying in the yard after giving birth to a girl child. Escaping from death Kshitish's distant nephew Ratan reached home. He was looking around. The burnt roof of the house was hanging just over the almost unconscious*



*body of Jutimala. He heard a sound of something falling into the tank. Someone throw the baby into the tank. The crowd disappeared. Ratan came to the bank of the tank. The baby was lying over a bush of long grass. Picking up the baby from the grass Ratan Ghosh took her on his lap.*

*She was Felanee. Her name remained entangled with the thud on the water of the tank. The girl thrown into the water became Felanee. (Page 10)*

Later Felanee married to Lambodar and like any other women, Phelanee had also innumerable dreams for her future life with Lambodar. But she couldn't transform her expectations and dreams into reality due to the catastrophic situation in her village during the days of agitation. Lambodar never came back physically once he went out of his home that very particular day for some business. Before leaving, Lambodar said to his wife i.e. Phelanee:

*"Malati! My Malati! Don't grieve. See, I'm with you. Only one night. We'll go home tomorrow....." (Page 21)*

This man didn't come back to his home after that day. He along with innumerable sons of the land of Assam became victims of the agitation. The movement brought incalculable damages to the lives of the people who were left in a state of absolute lawlessness and total insecurity.

"Bhasha Andolan" 'Bideshi Bohiskoron Andolon' turned the lives of people especially the commoners into total chaos and disorder. The activities of the advocates of these movements endangered all the Assamese people of every corner of the state and compelled them to live in doldrums at every moment of their lives. The untraced death of Lambodar as described in the novel is an excellent example of the insecurity and hackneyed life that Assamese people were subjected to during that time.

The novelist has rightly bothered on these revolutions which caused serious and irreparable losses to the common people over the years. While deliberating upon these revolutions, the novelist has also kept her attention basically on the negative implications that these



nationalist movements had in the lives of the common people. Apart from all these revolutions, the novelist has also extensively dwelt upon the ground factors behind the emergence of such militant outfits as ULFA, NDFB, and the subsequent surrendered faction of ULFA namely SULFA within the ambit of the novel.

Ironically most of the characters depicted in the novel have no knowledge of these revolutions which ruined their lives to a huge extent. But the point of concern is that all these were the ultimate sufferers of these bloody revolutions which claimed lives of hundreds of thousands of common people. People like Felanee, Bulen etc. became homeless and consequently roamed in various places without any directions and knowledge where to go finally. Their houses were burnt down and thus they eventually paid the price for the sins committed by the so-called pseudo leaders by facing such irreparable damages as the loss of their near and dear ones and so on.

The novelist also depicts here the people and their unending struggle in slum areas. All these people have been displaced by various factors. Some of them are people who have fled away because of flood; some of them are unfortunate women who have been estranged from their husbands, while some others have settled there due to the displacement that revolution has brought in their lives. Physical atrocities, humiliation, poverty, diseases etc. have become the routine affairs of their lives.

The horrible ground realities of the said revolutions and the unending sufferings of people during the days of agitation are brought into light in the novel. Each page of the novel is loaded with such descriptions. The novelist says:

*There. They have locked the doors from outside. What the dacoits are doing? The smell of petrol and kerosene touches her nose. A huge fire engulfed her house in front of her own eyes. Shouts of two men were heard from inside. She pushed Moni closer to the dry leaves of banana trees. She clutched the broken piece of a machete. A woman was running in the street. A cracking sound was heard. The crowd surrounded her. They cut the body of the half dead woman into pieces. The baby on her lap was thrown into the burnt house.*

*Following her son's voice she saw that the men went ahead. From their brisk walking it seemed as if someone was chasing them. She began to increase her speed. Suddenly her feet touched something that rolled on to the roadside. Although it was dark she clearly saw in the sugarcane field that the object which touched her feet was a baby. It was not a full human baby. It was cut into two; head, nose, abdomen, feet were separated into equal parts. A cry came out of her mouth. The men looked back. A sound was heard somewhere. Something was running through the destroyed sugarcane field. Two foxes came to the view of everyone. She, Moni and the men saw that the foxes dragged one part of the baby's body towards the other part that stuck amidst the sugarcane plants. (Page 26-27)*

These revolutions are not only found to be disastrous for the common people but also proved to be damaging to the revolutionists themselves. Jiuda who deceived Minoti had to confront a tragic death in the later part of the novel. On the other hand, Bulen who went out of home for a separate Bodo state also became a victim of his own dissident activity as shown at the end of the novel.

Felanee is, perhaps, the first Assamese novel to paint a picture of the people of lower class Assamese society during the days of agitation. The society in which Felanee lived is exactly the lower class society which is far away from the standards of high class society. People like Felanee have to lead lives in extreme poverty struggling hard even for a roof besides shelter and food. Dignified life has become a far cry for these people. In spite of these uncalled for manmade hazards, these people are leading a life expecting something optimistic in the near and distant future.

Felanee has almost covered up every incident of the history of post independence Assam. The odd happenings in the land of Assam in the name of freedom, ethnicity especially after 1980s have greatly destabilized the lives of the peaceful people belonging basically to the lower strata of society. Therefore, the novelist has carefully chosen the characters to unearth the hidden and untouched parts of the revolutions and the catastrophic impact of these revolutions on



the ignorant and naïve people. The novelist unfolds how these people had to lead lives of total insecurity:

*"We won't stay with these dogs any longer for our own state. See, you'll see, we'll get our own state one day."*

The atrocity of the military personnel in the aftermath of these revolutions and the impact of the emergence of ULFA and NDFB on the common people has also been reflected here in a well orchestrated way. Felanee who has become an epitome of the lower class as well as the marginalized section says candidly:

*"My own dress is a piece of cloth that can cover my body. I don't want any other clothes, not even separate state. It's enough for me if I get a piece of cloth and food."*

This statement of Felanee has reflected unquestionably the position of every deprived Assamese citizen. Vested revolutions or pseudo revolutions can only bring unending sufferings of the masses. Felanee understood this very well and so stated in the novel:

*She cried out, "She does not know them. Their hands are soiled with human blood. Those men who get the taste of blood become very greedy."*

In spite of the endless strife in their respective life, the novel contains a host of characters who have showcased great humanity and generosity towards the needy and homeless as well. Kali burhi is an exquisite example of those characters as painted in the novel. Kali burhi offered the much needed help to Felanee at the time of her needs. Later Felanee also did the same who offered assistance to Sumala or Minnoti at the time of their helplessness.

### **Conclusion:**

Above all, Felanee by Arupa Patangia Kalita is a modern Assamese novel of great importance. The novel can be judged as a repository of events happened in the last two decades in the land of Assam and the dreadful impact of all these on the commoners. The revolutions paved the way extensively for resorting into violent means for

getting the demands of every opponent fulfilled. But ironically it is the common people who have been compelled to pay the price and bear the brunt on every occasion thereby making them scapegoats of these developments in Assam after the 1980s. The emergence of the dreaded militant outfits such as ULFA, NDFB etc. and their nefarious and cowardice activities well illustrate the negative developments that the people of Assam witnessed in the post-‘Bhasha andolon’ period.

### References :

- Das, Amal Ch. (ed.), *Asomiya Upanyas Parikrama*, Guwahati: Banalata, 2012.
- Deori, Mihir (ed.), *Prakash*, Guwahati: Genesis Printers & Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2015.
- Kalita, Arupa Patangia, *Felanee*, Guwahati: Jyoti Prakashan, [2003], rpt.-2004.
- Gogoi, Lila (ed.), *Adhunik Asamiya Sahityar Parichay*, Dibrugarh: Banalata [2002], rpt.-2010.

\* Anjan Saikia teaches English at Kamargaon College, Golaghat, Assam