



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## An Introduction to ‘Campus Novel’ with special reference to Cotton College

Kukumoni Sarmah

Research Scholar

MIL & LS

Gauhati University, Guwahati

Assam, India

**Abstract:** - ‘Campus novel’ or ‘academic novel’ is a recent development as a literary genre among fiction. Though most of the literary critic has been discussing the nature and characteristics of campus novel, yet it is very difficult to confine it in a fixed definition. However, in this paper an overall introduction of Campus novel is put forward with special study to one of the famous Campus novels in Assamese literature *Cotton College* which probably the earliest of its kind written in any Indian languages.

**Purpose:** This paper aims to present an overview and introduction to ‘Campus novel’ and its reflections in Assamese literature.

**Methodology:** The research method mainly used in this study is analytical. The study materials collected from reference books and library.

**Main findings:** - This paper able to establish a clear understanding of Campus novel and its evolution in Assamese literature.

**Application:** - This paper will be beneficial in future study of evolution and history of Assamese Campus novel.

**Originality:** - The main significance of this study lies in the fact that the critical analysis of campus novel in Assamese literature is very few which urges the necessity of this study to understand the recent trends in literature.

0.1: ‘Campus novel’ or ‘academic novel’ is a recent literary phenomenon which gained a worldwide readership. The Campus novels first started in European Countries. David Lodge is one of the most popular contemporary writers of this type in Britain. In his own words ‘Campus novel’ is “a term used to designate a work of fiction whose action takes place mainly in a college or university and is mainly concerned with the lives of University professors and junior teachers-faculty...”and to a lesser extent with their students both undergraduate and postgraduate”. These novels are basically humorous, though, sometimes it explores serious themes, including power, politics, sex, class and exile. The narrator is basically the academic staff and students are the objects perceived by the narrator.

Etymologically the Latin word 'Campus' means 'field'- in English, the physical space occupied by the college or universities, originally used in American usage which entered in British English around 1950s.

The Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century Literature in English (1996) defines campus fiction as:

'Campus fiction is a term describing a particular genre of novels, usually comic or satirical, which have university setting and academics principal characters.'

Hence, from the above discussion the followings can be enumerated as the salient characteristics of the 'Campus novel' or 'Academic novel':

- (1) The setting of this kind of novels take place mainly in a college or university. And in campus novels, the unity of time ,action and character is seen.
- (2) The narrator is the academicians by whose point of view the story is told and students are usually perceived as objects.
- (3) The campus novels are basically comic or satirical and humorous.
- (4) The characters of the Campus novels are academics and its students, faculty members, administrators.

Some of the modern academic or Campus novel in western literatures (British and American literatures) are C.P. Snow's *The Masters* (1951), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academe* (1951), Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man* (1975).

It is in the beginning of the twenty-first century, modern Indian English writers have shown its keen interest in exploring this innovative and exquisite theme. These writes probe into the many Indian issues and explore a variety of themes that are contemporary and very Indian. Indian English novelists like R.K. Narayana, Prema Nanda kumar, Anuradha Marwah Roy, Anita Desai, Rita Joshi, Kaveri Bhatt, Ranga Rao, Chetan Bhagat, etc. has contributed to this genre.

0.2: *Cotton College* of Nabin Baruah is the first Campus novel of Assam written in Assamese language, and perhaps the first in its genre, in Indian literature in Indian languages. Nabin Baruah prepared the manuscript in 1965 when he was merely a second-year student in the prestigious Cotton College. It is, Dr. Homen Borgohain who showed the interest and curiosity to publish the novel in the special Bihu edition of *Neelachal* in theyear 1969. Later on, Bangshidhar Sharma of Guwahati Book Stall published it in the book format in the year 1970. Till now, altogether nine editions have been published and it marks its golden jubilee in the year 2020. The popularity of the book, in its generations, and contemporaries is expressed by the writer as, he mentioned that later editions saw the light of the day only for the persuasion of the younger readers who found themselves in the novel and it surpassed the bindings of time.

0.3: As discussed earlier in this paper, Campus novels are basically having a setting of academy or universities. And this aspect of Campus novel aptly portrayed in the *Cotton College*. The novel has a setting of 1960's Cotton College. Though there is no intentional description of the college in the novel, but with the narration of the story, we can assume a fair idea of the Campus.

In the 1960's *Cotton College* there were classroom, library, Common room, canteen as a necessary part of college campus-

"Students are roaming. Some have returned as there is no space in canteen, library, common room". (Page 11)

Cotton College had separate hostel facilities for boys and girls and in the boys' hostel, there were provisions to accommodate four inmates in a single room. The protagonist stated-

"I have entered into this *Cotton College*. Admitted in the hostel. Four boys from four different places staying in the same room". (Page 12)

There was graphical portrayal of Union Hall which is used to conduct various meetings, Cultural functions, etc. Hostel Campuses, Warden's residence, restaurants, gallery- classrooms - are the touch real world of the

college seen in the picturesque narration of the novel. For administrative purposes, an administrative building was also there which is visible from union hall. Gallery facility were there in the classrooms in the Cotton College of 1960's which the novelist has successfully delineated through the various characters and scenes in the novel.



Cotton College in Postage Stamp

Administrative Building of Cotton College

The first hostel of Cotton College

0.4: *Cotton College* is basically a melancholic outbreak of its protagonist Niranjan Baruah. But the sorrows he was underlying was not his own, it is rather engendered by the general sorrow of humans, sorrows and indecisiveness of modern man. But at the same time Nabin Baruah have portrayed youthful vibrancy in the novel through characters like Ramen. And characteristically the writer used satire or humour to make the novel more interesting. For instance - Ramen the roommate of Niranjan Baruah hangs a placard in front of his room prior to the students' union election to attract the candidate of the election:

“You only seek vote  
And we only give you  
But in between pray  
Spare time for Delight”.

The sense of humour of the novelist brilliantly penned in the picture of college election and campaigning, Freshers' social, description of dresses during NCC Parade, mess committee meetings, train boarding on their way home during vacations- which created thrills and served sometimes as “Comic relief” in the novel.

0.5: Campus novel has been recognized as one of the most popular and significant genres of literature of late. These types of novels have marked a distinct imprint of past, present and future the educational institutions and society. These novels vividly express different aspect of socio-political issues which directly or indirectly influences the education system and its component. Nabin Baruah have successfully established *Cotton College* as a Campus novel which rejoices its importance and popularity in Assamese literature beyond time. ‘Nabin Baruah actually wrote two Campus novels. *Cotton College* and *Medical College*’ - as told by the writer of *Medical College*- Pranabjyoti Sarmah. Hence Nabin Baruah's *Cotton College* is a pioneer to this ‘genre’- which envisages a rich legacy of Campus novel in Assamese literature followed by *Medical College*, *Naharar Niribili Cha*, *Dibrugarh Bishwabidyalar Nandini*, *Cotton College-ar Hazar Sandhia*, *Moi Cottonian Asilu*.etc.

## References:

1. Abrams, M.H., Harpham, Geoffery Galt: **A Glossary of Literary Terms**  
Cengage Learning India Private Limited.  
418, FIE, Patpargang, Delhi, 110092.  
2015. Published
2. Baruah, Nabin : **Cotton College**(Ninth Edition)  
Purbanchal Prakash, Dispur, Guwahati-06  
January 2018.Published
3. Stringer,Jenny. Sutherland, John: **The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English**  
Oxford University Press, New York.1996.  
2004.Reprinted.

