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Humanity and the Fiction of Mamoni Raisom Goswami: A Critical Study

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Abstract

Humanism occupies a central position in modern Indian literature as a philosophical and literary approach that places human beings, their dignity, suffering, freedom, and ethical responsibility at the centre of literary discourse. Among the foremost Indian writers who successfully transformed human suffering into universal literary experience is Mamoni Raisom Goswami (Indira Goswami). Her novels reveal profound compassion for marginalized communities, women, widows, labourers, tribal groups, refugees, victims of communal violence, and economically deprived people. Rather than merely portraying social realities, Goswami explores the psychological, cultural, and existential dimensions of human suffering and resilience. Her fiction transcends regional boundaries and reflects universal human values such as love, equality, justice, forgiveness, empathy, and hope.

The present study examines the manifestation of humanism in the fiction of Mamoni Raisom Goswami through an analytical reading of her major novels. It investigates how her literary imagination integrates social realism with humanitarian philosophy and how her characters challenge oppressive structures including patriarchy, caste discrimination, religious orthodoxy, communal hatred, and economic exploitation. The study also analyses the influence of Gandhian humanism, Marxian social consciousness, existential thought, and Indian spiritual traditions on her worldview. By examining selected novels such as *Dontal Hatir Une Khowa Howdah* (The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker), *Pages Stained with Blood*, *The Man from Chinnamasta*, *The Blue-Necked God*, and *Ahiron*, the paper demonstrates that Goswami's fiction consistently advocates compassion, dignity, and coexistence.

The study concludes that Mamoni Raisom Goswami emerges not merely as a regional novelist but as a universal humanist whose literary vision promotes social justice, equality, and respect for human life. Her fiction continues to remain relevant in contemporary discussions on gender, communal harmony, human rights, and cultural pluralism.

Keywords: Humanism, Mamoni Raisom Goswami, Indira Goswami, Assamese Novel, Humanity, Social Justice, Women, Marginalization, Compassion, Indian Literature.

0.00 Introduction

Literature has always functioned as a mirror of society while simultaneously providing ethical and philosophical guidance to humanity. One of the most enduring literary ideals is humanism, which recognizes the intrinsic dignity and worth of every human being irrespective of caste, class, religion, gender, ethnicity, or nationality. Humanistic literature seeks not only to portray human life but also to inspire compassion, justice, equality, and mutual understanding. Throughout history, humanistic ideals have shaped literary traditions across the world, from the Renaissance to modern postcolonial literature (Abrams & Harpham, 2015).

Indian literature has developed a distinctive form of humanism rooted in the philosophical principles of Ahimsa, Karuna (compassion), Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, and social harmony. These ideals are reflected in the works of literary figures such as Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand, Mahasweta Devi, and Mamoni Raisom Goswami. Unlike abstract philosophical discussions, Indian literary humanism often emerges through narratives of ordinary people struggling against social injustice and historical oppression (Radhakrishnan, 1927).

Mamoni Raisom Goswami (1942–2011), popularly known as Indira Goswami, occupies an unparalleled position in Assamese as well as Indian literature. Awarded the Jnanpith Award in 2000, she transformed her personal experiences of suffering into powerful literary expressions of universal humanity. Her novels address widowhood, caste discrimination, religious orthodoxy, communal violence, labour exploitation, gender inequality, and the psychological trauma experienced by marginalized communities. Instead of presenting simplistic solutions, Goswami invites readers to empathize with those who remain socially invisible (Goswami, 2002).

Her literary philosophy is deeply rooted in compassion. Whether depicting the plight of widows in Vrindavan, the exploited labourers of Madhya Pradesh, the victims of the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, or the oppressed tribal communities of Assam, Goswami consistently foregrounds the dignity of human life. Her novels reveal that humanity survives even amidst violence, poverty, superstition, and social exclusion.

Critics have observed that Goswami's fiction transcends regionalism by transforming local realities into universal experiences of suffering and hope (Mahanta, 2008). Her humanism is not sentimental but deeply realistic. She portrays both the cruelty and nobility of human nature while exposing structural inequalities embedded within society. Consequently, her works have attracted scholarly attention from perspectives such as feminism, Marxism, postcolonialism, trauma studies, and cultural anthropology.

The present study aims to explore the philosophical foundations and literary manifestations of humanism in the fiction of Mamoni Raisom Goswami. Through textual analysis of selected novels, the paper examines how compassion becomes an instrument of social criticism and moral transformation.

0.01 Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

- To examine the concept and philosophical foundations of humanism.
- To study the literary career and artistic vision of Mamoni Raisom Goswami.
- To analyse the manifestation of humanistic values in her major novels.
- To examine the representation of marginalized communities in her fiction.
- To evaluate her treatment of women, widows, labourers, tribal communities, and socially oppressed people.
- To explore the relationship between humanitarian philosophy and social realism in her novels.

- To assess the relevance of Goswami's humanistic vision in contemporary society.

0.02 Scope of the Study

The present research is confined to the study of humanistic values reflected in the fictional writings of Mamoni Raisom Goswami. Although she wrote short stories, autobiographies, travel narratives, essays, and scholarly works, the present study focuses primarily on her novels. Special emphasis is given to:

- Dotal Hatir Une Khowa Howdah (The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker)
- Pages Stained with Blood
- The Man from Chinnamasta
- The Blue-Necked God
- Ahiron
- Selected other novels wherever relevant.

The study does not attempt a complete biographical analysis but considers biographical experiences only insofar as they illuminate the humanistic dimensions of her fiction.

0.03 Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative and analytical research methodology.

Primary Sources : The primary sources include selected novels written by Mamoni Raisom Goswami in Assamese and their English translations.

Secondary Sources : Books on Assamese literature, Critical essays, Peer-reviewed journal articles, Doctoral dissertations, Literary criticism, Biographical works, Research papers related to humanism and Indian fiction

0.04 Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study lies in its attempt to understand Mamoni Raisom Goswami's fiction through the lens of humanism. Although extensive research has been conducted on her feminist concerns and social realism, comparatively fewer studies examine her comprehensive humanitarian philosophy.

The study contributes to Assamese literary criticism by demonstrating that Goswami's novels represent a synthesis of literary aesthetics and ethical commitment. It highlights her concern for marginalized individuals and establishes her relevance in contemporary debates on gender justice, communal harmony, and human rights.

The study also provides useful academic material for researchers working in Assamese literature, comparative literature, gender studies, Indian philosophy, and postcolonial literary studies.

1.00 Discussion

1.01 Concept of Humanism

Humanism is one of the oldest philosophical traditions that places human beings at the centre of intellectual, ethical, and cultural inquiry. Derived from the Latin word *humanitas*, the concept emphasizes the dignity, rationality, freedom, and moral responsibility of human beings. Humanism rejects discrimination based on race, religion, caste, gender, or nationality and instead promotes equality, compassion, and universal brotherhood (Lamont, 1997).

Historically, the roots of humanism can be traced to ancient Greek philosophy. Thinkers such as Socrates emphasized ethical self-examination, while Plato and Aristotle viewed human reason as the foundation of moral and political life. During the European Renaissance, scholars including Petrarch and Erasmus revived classical learning and promoted education, reason, and human dignity, thereby shaping Renaissance humanism (Kristeller, 1979).

Modern humanism expanded beyond intellectual freedom to include social justice, democracy, human rights, and secular ethics. It recognizes that literature should not merely entertain but also deepen our understanding of human existence. Humanistic criticism therefore evaluates literary works in terms of their representation of compassion, empathy, moral choice, and the complexity of human relationships (Abrams & Harpham, 2015).

Indian civilization has nurtured its own rich tradition of humanism. The Upanishadic principle "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" ("The whole world is one family"), the Buddhist ideal of compassion (Karuna), Jain non-violence (Ahimsa), and the Bhakti movement's rejection of caste discrimination collectively contribute to Indian humanistic philosophy (Radhakrishnan, 1927). Medieval saints such as Kabir, Sankardeva, Chaitanya, Guru Nanak, and later Mahatma Gandhi emphasized the equality of all human beings before God and condemned social divisions.

In literature, humanism manifests itself through sympathetic portrayals of ordinary people, critique of social injustice, affirmation of individual dignity, and advocacy of ethical values. Humanistic writers seek to awaken readers' conscience by revealing the pain, aspirations, and resilience of those who remain marginalized by society.

The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of humanitarian literature responding to colonialism, industrialization, war, communal violence, and gender inequality. Writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand, Mahasweta Devi, and Indira Goswami portrayed the struggles of common people while affirming the possibility of moral regeneration.

Mamoni Raisom Goswami belongs to this broad humanistic tradition. Her fiction neither glorifies suffering nor romanticizes poverty. Instead, it reveals how social institutions often dehumanize individuals while simultaneously celebrating the extraordinary capacity of ordinary people for compassion and endurance. Her novels portray humanity not as an abstract ideal but as a lived ethical practice expressed through kindness, sacrifice, empathy, and resistance against injustice.

Thus, humanism in Goswami's fiction becomes both a literary philosophy and a social commitment, transforming individual experiences into universal reflections on human dignity.

1.02 Mamoni Raisom Goswami as a Novelist

Mamoni Raisom Goswami (1942–2011), popularly known as Indira Goswami, occupies a distinguished position in Assamese as well as Indian literature. She is regarded as one of the most influential novelists of post-Independence India whose writings transcend regional boundaries and attain universal significance through their profound concern for humanity. Awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Jnanpith Award (2000), and the Padma Shri, Goswami enriched Indian literature with novels that combine artistic excellence with deep social commitment. Her literary works are characterized by realism, psychological insight, symbolic richness, and humanitarian concern (Goswami, 2002).

Born on 14 November 1942 at Guwahati, Assam, Mamoni Raisom Goswami grew up in an intellectually vibrant Vaishnavite family. Her father, Umakanta Goswami, was an educationist, while her mother Ambika Devi was deeply interested in literature and culture. The cultural environment of her childhood significantly influenced her literary sensibility. Her early exposure to Assamese folklore, Vaishnavite traditions, and rural life later became important sources for her fictional world (Mahanta, 2008).

A decisive turning point in her life was the untimely death of her husband, Madhavan Rajkumar Ayangar, in a road accident in 1965. This tragic event profoundly affected her emotional life and literary consciousness. Instead of surrendering to despair, she transformed her personal grief into creative energy. Her writings repeatedly reveal an intimate understanding of loneliness, suffering, emotional trauma, and the struggle for survival. Consequently, her novels possess remarkable psychological depth and authenticity.

Professionally, Goswami served as Professor of Modern Indian Languages at the University of Delhi. Her academic engagement with Sanskrit, medieval literature, Ramayana studies, and comparative literature broadened her intellectual outlook. Her extensive travels across different parts of India exposed her to diverse cultures, religions, and social realities, enriching the thematic range of her fiction.

Unlike many regional writers whose works remain confined to local concerns, Goswami transformed regional experiences into universal narratives. Her novels portray Assam, Delhi, Vrindavan, Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, and other regions not merely as geographical locations but as symbolic landscapes where human beings confront injustice, violence, discrimination, and existential anxiety.

Realism and Social Commitment

One of the defining characteristics of Mamoni Raisom Goswami's fiction is its uncompromising realism. She depicts society without romanticization or sentimental idealization. Poverty, exploitation, superstition, widowhood, communal violence, religious orthodoxy, caste discrimination, corruption, and gender oppression appear in her novels with remarkable honesty. However, her realism never degenerates into pessimism because it is always accompanied by faith in human compassion and moral courage.

Her social realism is grounded in firsthand experience. While writing *The Blue-Necked God*, she lived among labourers involved in bridge construction over the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir. Similarly, her experiences in Vrindavan inspired her portrayal of widows, while her residence in Delhi during the anti-Sikh riots formed the basis of *Pages Stained with Blood*. These direct observations lend exceptional authenticity to her narratives (Goswami, 2002).

Psychological Depth

Another remarkable feature of Goswami's novels is psychological realism. Rather than presenting characters as representatives of fixed moral categories, she portrays them as complex individuals struggling with conflicting emotions, desires, fears, and ethical dilemmas.

Women occupy the centre of many of her novels. Their emotional conflicts are explored with extraordinary sensitivity. Characters experience loneliness, sexual repression, grief, alienation, hope, and resilience. Goswami demonstrates that external social oppression often produces profound psychological suffering. Consequently, her fiction combines social criticism with psychological exploration.

Her male characters are equally complex. Priests, labourers, landlords, revolutionaries, scholars, and ordinary villagers appear neither entirely virtuous nor completely evil. Instead, they embody contradictions that make them psychologically convincing.

Representation of Marginalized Communities

One of Goswami's greatest achievements as a novelist lies in giving voice to marginalized people. She writes about those who are frequently ignored by mainstream society—widows, labourers, tribal communities, poor peasants, prostitutes, refugees, manual workers, and victims of communal violence.

Unlike many writers who merely describe poverty, Goswami enters the emotional world of marginalized people. She portrays their aspirations, disappointments, humour, dignity, and resistance. Her fiction therefore challenges readers to recognize the humanity of those excluded by dominant social structures.

Her concern for marginalized people extends beyond sympathy. She exposes the institutional mechanisms responsible for their suffering, including caste hierarchy, patriarchy, religious orthodoxy, feudal exploitation, and bureaucratic indifference.

Feminist Consciousness

Although Mamoni Raisom Goswami often resisted being labelled exclusively as a feminist writer, her fiction represents one of the strongest voices for women's dignity in Indian literature. Her female characters refuse to remain passive victims of patriarchal oppression. Instead, they question social conventions and seek personal identity even under adverse circumstances.

Widowhood constitutes one of her recurring themes. Through sensitive portrayals of widows in Assam and Vrindavan, Goswami exposes the cruelty of social customs that deny women emotional, economic, and sexual freedom. She critiques religious practices that exploit vulnerable women in the name of tradition.

Importantly, her feminism is deeply humanistic rather than ideological. She does not depict women as morally superior to men but as equal human beings deserving dignity, freedom, and respect.

Humanitarian Vision

Compassion forms the philosophical foundation of Goswami's fiction. Her novels consistently affirm the intrinsic value of every human life regardless of social status, religion, caste, ethnicity, or gender.

This humanitarian vision emerges through her portrayal of ordinary people facing extraordinary suffering. Whether depicting the victims of communal riots in *Pages Stained with Blood*, impoverished temple widows, exploited labourers, or socially ostracized women, Goswami emphasizes their shared humanity.

Her fiction repeatedly suggests that violence and hatred ultimately destroy both victims and perpetrators. Conversely, compassion, forgiveness, and understanding possess transformative power. This ethical perspective distinguishes her from purely political novelists.

Narrative Technique

Mamoni Raisom Goswami employs diverse narrative techniques that enrich the artistic quality of her novels.

First, she skillfully combines realism with symbolism. Objects such as rivers, temples, animals, forests, bridges, and ruined houses often function as symbolic representations of human destiny.

Second, she frequently uses autobiographical elements without allowing them to dominate the narrative. Personal experiences become universal reflections on suffering and hope.

Third, her language is marked by poetic intensity. Even while describing harsh realities, her prose retains lyrical beauty. Nature frequently mirrors the emotional states of characters.

Fourth, she integrates folklore, mythology, and religious symbolism into modern narratives. Rather than glorifying tradition uncritically, she reinterprets myths from humanitarian perspectives.

Religion and Humanism

Religion occupies an important place in Goswami's novels, yet she distinguishes genuine spirituality from institutional orthodoxy. She respects religious faith while criticizing rituals that perpetuate exploitation and injustice.

Her scholarly engagement with the Ramayana enabled her to reinterpret religious narratives from ethical perspectives. She questioned patriarchal and caste-based interpretations without rejecting the spiritual values embedded within Indian civilization.

This balanced approach explains why her novels appeal simultaneously to secular and religious readers.

National and International Recognition

Mamoni Raisom Goswami's contribution extends beyond Assamese literature. Her works have been translated into English, Hindi, Bengali, Malayalam, French, German, Japanese, and several other languages. International scholars recognize her as one of India's foremost humanitarian novelists.

Her literary achievements include: Sahitya Akademi Award (1983), Jnanpith Award (2000), Padma Shri (2002), Principal Prince Claus Laureate (Netherlands), Numerous national and international honours.

These recognitions reflect not merely artistic excellence but also the universal relevance of her humanitarian vision.

Critical Evaluation

Literary critics have interpreted Goswami's novels from multiple perspectives, including feminism, Marxism, postcolonialism, trauma studies, psychoanalysis, and cultural anthropology. Nevertheless, humanism remains the central thread connecting all these interpretations.

Her fiction demonstrates that literature can simultaneously achieve aesthetic excellence and social responsibility. Rather than preaching moral values directly, she allows readers to experience compassion through the lives of ordinary people.

The universality of her novels lies in their ability to transform local experiences into reflections on the human condition. Through realistic characterization, psychological depth, ethical sensitivity, and artistic craftsmanship, Mamoni Raisom Goswami established herself as one of the greatest novelists in modern Indian literature.

1.03 Reflection of Humanism in the Fiction of Mamoni Raisom Goswami

Humanism constitutes the philosophical and artistic core of Mamoni Raisom Goswami's fiction. Throughout her literary career, she consistently portrayed the lives of ordinary people who suffer because of poverty, gender discrimination, caste hierarchy, communal conflict, religious orthodoxy, and economic exploitation. Unlike writers who merely expose social evils, Goswami combines social criticism with profound compassion for human beings. Her novels reveal that every individual—irrespective of caste, religion, gender, or class—possesses inherent dignity and deserves justice, equality, and respect. Her humanitarian outlook is reflected through characterization, narrative structure, symbolism, and ethical vision (Mahanta, 2008).

The humanistic dimension of Goswami's fiction may be understood through the analysis of her major novels.

1.03.1 Humanism in Dotal Hatir Une Khowa Howdah (The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker)

Among Mamoni Raisom Goswami's greatest achievements, *Dotal Hatir Une Khowa Howdah* occupies a unique place. Set against the background of a decaying feudal Vaishnavite society in South Kamrup, the novel portrays the gradual collapse of traditional social institutions and the immense suffering experienced by women, particularly widows.

The "moth-eaten howdah" itself functions as a powerful symbol. Just as the damaged howdah can no longer serve its original purpose, the rigid social order has become incapable of sustaining genuine human values. The novel suggests that institutions survive only when they uphold human dignity rather than oppression.

The widows in the novel become victims of religious orthodoxy, social isolation, and emotional deprivation. Their lives are controlled by customs that deny them freedom, happiness, and personal identity. Goswami does not merely criticize these customs; she enables readers to experience the emotional pain of the widows. This empathetic portrayal constitutes the essence of literary humanism (Goswami, 2004).

Through detailed psychological characterization, the novelist demonstrates that suffering is not limited to physical deprivation but includes loneliness, emotional suppression, and the denial of basic human rights. The novel therefore challenges patriarchal interpretations of religion that reduce women to symbols of ritual purity.

The humanitarian significance of the novel lies in its insistence that every individual possesses emotional and moral worth regardless of social status. Compassion rather than ritual becomes the true measure of civilization.

1.03.2 Humanism in Pages Stained with Blood

Pages Stained with Blood is one of the finest fictional responses to the anti-Sikh riots that followed the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984. Rather than presenting political arguments, Goswami focuses on the suffering of ordinary human beings trapped within communal violence.

The novel portrays Delhi as a city transformed by hatred, fear, and violence. Innocent people become victims simply because they belong to a particular religious community. Homes are destroyed, families are separated, and human relationships collapse under the pressure of communal fanaticism.

However, Goswami refuses to reduce the conflict to a simplistic opposition between communities. Instead, she portrays both cruelty and compassion existing simultaneously within society. Even during moments of extreme violence, acts of kindness, friendship, and sacrifice continue to affirm humanity.

The narrator repeatedly questions how civilized societies can become so inhuman within a short period. Through this moral inquiry, Goswami exposes the dangers of communal politics and emphasizes the universal identity of human beings beyond religious divisions (Sharma, 2014).

The novel ultimately argues that communal hatred destroys not only its immediate victims but also the moral foundation of society itself. Humanism therefore emerges as the only viable response to violence.

1.03.3 Humanism in The Man from Chinnamasta

The Man from Chinnamasta addresses one of the most controversial religious practices associated with the Kamakhya Temple—the ritual sacrifice of animals.

The novel examines the conflict between religious tradition and humanitarian ethics. While respecting the cultural significance of religious faith, Goswami questions whether violence committed in the name of religion can ever be morally justified.

Different characters represent contrasting perspectives regarding animal sacrifice. Some defend tradition, while others advocate reform based upon compassion. Instead of imposing a single ideological position, the novelist encourages readers to engage in ethical reflection.

The central message of the novel is that genuine spirituality must promote compassion rather than violence. Religious rituals lose their moral legitimacy when they inflict unnecessary suffering upon living beings.

Here Goswami expands the scope of humanism beyond human society to include ethical concern for animals and nature. Such ecological sensitivity anticipates contemporary discussions on environmental ethics and animal rights (Barua, 2012).

1.03.4 Humanism in The Blue-Necked God

Based upon the lives of labourers working on bridge construction projects in the Himalayan region, The Blue-Necked God presents one of the most moving depictions of working-class life in Indian literature.

The labourers endure poverty, dangerous working conditions, inadequate medical facilities, and exploitation by contractors. Despite their indispensable contribution to national development, they remain socially invisible.

Goswami lived among these labourers during the writing of the novel. Consequently, her portrayal possesses remarkable authenticity. She describes not only their economic hardships but also their dreams, humour, love, family relationships, and cultural traditions.

The novel demonstrates that human dignity cannot be measured by wealth or social status. Labourers deserve recognition not because they contribute to economic production but because they are human beings possessing intrinsic worth.

Through vivid descriptions of physical suffering and emotional resilience, Goswami exposes the contradiction between technological progress and human neglect. Development without compassion becomes morally meaningless.

1.03.5 Humanism in Ahiron

In Ahiron, Goswami explores the lives of economically marginalized rural communities. Poverty, social inequality, and exploitation shape the everyday existence of ordinary villagers.

Yet the novel refuses to portray poor people merely as helpless victims. Instead, it emphasizes their courage, mutual cooperation, emotional richness, and determination to survive despite overwhelming adversity.

Human relationships rather than material wealth become the foundation of meaningful existence. Love, friendship, and solidarity repeatedly emerge as sources of hope.

The novel illustrates that humanitarian values flourish most powerfully among those who possess the least economic privilege.

Humanism and Women

One of the most significant dimensions of Goswami's fiction is her representation of women as complete human beings rather than social stereotypes.

Women in her novels experience emotional deprivation, domestic oppression, widowhood, sexual exploitation, and economic insecurity. Nevertheless, they retain remarkable moral strength and psychological resilience.

Unlike conventional literary heroines, Goswami's female characters possess individuality, intellectual curiosity, and emotional complexity. They question social conventions and seek dignity within oppressive environments.

Her concern for women extends beyond feminism narrowly understood. She advocates recognition of women's humanity, autonomy, and equal participation in society.

Humanism and Marginalized Communities

Throughout her fiction, Goswami consistently gives voice to marginalized communities.

These include: Widows, Tea garden labourers, Tribal communities, Refugees, Poor peasants, Construction workers, Victims of communal violence, Economically oppressed people.

Instead of portraying them as passive recipients of sympathy, she presents them as individuals possessing agency, aspirations, and moral dignity.

This inclusive representation reflects democratic humanism, which recognizes equality across social boundaries.

Humanism and Religion

Religion occupies an important position in Goswami's novels. However, she distinguishes genuine spirituality from institutional orthodoxy.

She respects faith but opposes superstition, ritual violence, caste discrimination, and religious exploitation. According to her literary vision, religion should strengthen compassion rather than justify oppression.

This perspective reflects the humanitarian teachings of Indian philosophical traditions, particularly the ideals of compassion (Karuna), non-violence (Ahimsa), and universal brotherhood (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam).

Humanism and Nature

Nature in Goswami's fiction functions not merely as scenic background but as an active participant in human life.

Rivers, forests, mountains, animals, birds, and changing seasons mirror human emotions. Environmental destruction frequently symbolizes moral decline.

Her ecological consciousness reinforces her humanitarian philosophy by emphasizing the interconnectedness of all forms of life.

Universal Humanism

Although deeply rooted in Assamese culture, Mamoni Raisom Goswami's fiction transcends geographical boundaries.

The problems she portrays—war, communal violence, gender discrimination, poverty, displacement, loneliness, and social injustice—are universal.

Consequently, readers from different cultures recognize themselves within her characters. This universality explains why her novels have been translated into numerous Indian and foreign languages.

Ultimately, Goswami's fiction suggests that compassion constitutes humanity's greatest moral resource. Social institutions, religious traditions, and political systems acquire meaning only when they protect human dignity.

3.00 Conclusion

Mamoni Raisom Goswami occupies a unique place in modern Indian literature because of her unwavering commitment to human values. Her fiction is rooted in the realities of Assamese society, yet it transcends regional boundaries by addressing universal questions of suffering, justice, compassion, dignity, and coexistence. Through her novels, she transformed literature into a powerful medium for expressing the

pain and aspirations of marginalized people. Her humanitarian vision is neither abstract nor sentimental; rather, it emerges from close observation of lived experiences and from her own encounters with grief, loss, and social inequality.

The present study has demonstrated that the central concern of Goswami's fiction is the affirmation of humanity in the face of oppression. Her novels portray widows, labourers, tribal communities, refugees, victims of communal violence, and socially marginalized individuals not merely as passive sufferers but as human beings endowed with dignity, emotional depth, and moral courage. By giving literary voice to those who remain excluded from mainstream social discourse, she challenges structures of patriarchy, caste hierarchy, religious orthodoxy, economic exploitation, and communal hatred.

Humanism in Goswami's fiction is closely associated with compassion. Her works consistently suggest that no religious ritual, political ideology, or social institution can claim legitimacy if it ignores the suffering of human beings. Through novels such as *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker*, *Pages Stained with Blood*, *The Man from Chinnamasta*, *The Blue-Necked God*, and *Ahiron*, she demonstrates that genuine civilization is measured not by material progress but by the ethical treatment of the weakest members of society (Goswami, 2002).

The study also reveals that Goswami's humanism is multidimensional. It incorporates feminist consciousness by advocating women's dignity and freedom; social humanism by exposing exploitation and inequality; religious humanism by distinguishing compassion from blind ritualism; ecological humanism by emphasizing respect for all forms of life; and universal humanism by transcending barriers of caste, religion, language, and nationality. These dimensions collectively make her one of the foremost humanitarian novelists of contemporary India.

From a literary perspective, Goswami successfully combines realism, symbolism, psychological insight, and poetic language to create narratives that are artistically rich as well as socially meaningful. Her characters are psychologically complex and morally convincing, enabling readers to experience empathy rather than detached observation. The universality of her fiction explains its continued relevance in discussions of gender studies, postcolonial literature, trauma studies, ethics, and human rights.

In the contemporary world, marked by communal conflict, gender violence, displacement, environmental degradation, and widening economic inequality, Mamoni Raisom Goswami's literary vision remains profoundly relevant. Her fiction reminds readers that compassion, tolerance, justice, and respect for human dignity constitute the true foundation of civilization. Thus, Mamoni Raisom Goswami may rightly be regarded as one of the greatest humanist novelists in Indian literature.

Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. Mamoni Raisom Goswami's fiction is fundamentally rooted in humanitarian philosophy.
2. Human dignity occupies the central position in all her major novels.
3. Her literary humanism transcends caste, class, religion, ethnicity, and gender.
4. Compassion (Karuna) emerges as the most significant ethical principle in her works.
5. She portrays marginalized communities with dignity rather than pity.
6. Widowhood is presented as a social issue rather than merely a religious condition.
7. Her novels strongly criticize patriarchal oppression and gender discrimination.

8. Religious rituals are evaluated on ethical rather than orthodox grounds.
9. She distinguishes genuine spirituality from institutional religious exploitation.
10. Communal violence is portrayed as a betrayal of humanity.
11. Economic exploitation of labourers receives realistic and sympathetic treatment.
12. Psychological suffering is depicted with exceptional artistic sensitivity.
13. Nature functions as an integral part of her humanitarian worldview.
14. Her novels combine social realism with philosophical reflection.
15. Human relationships are portrayed as stronger than social divisions.
16. Her characters possess moral complexity rather than stereotypical identities.
17. Literature functions in her fiction as an instrument of ethical awakening.
18. Regional Assamese experiences acquire universal literary significance.
19. Feminist concerns in her novels are inseparable from broader humanistic values.
20. Mamoni Raisom Goswami's fiction remains highly relevant for contemporary debates on human rights, gender justice, secularism, and social equality.

Footnotes

Throughout this study, the names Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Indira Goswami refer to the same author. English translations of Assamese titles are used according to published editions.

The humanitarian approach discussed in this paper refers to literary humanism rather than secular humanism alone.

The translations of Assamese texts cited are based on officially published English editions wherever available. APA 7th edition guidelines have been followed for citations and references.

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