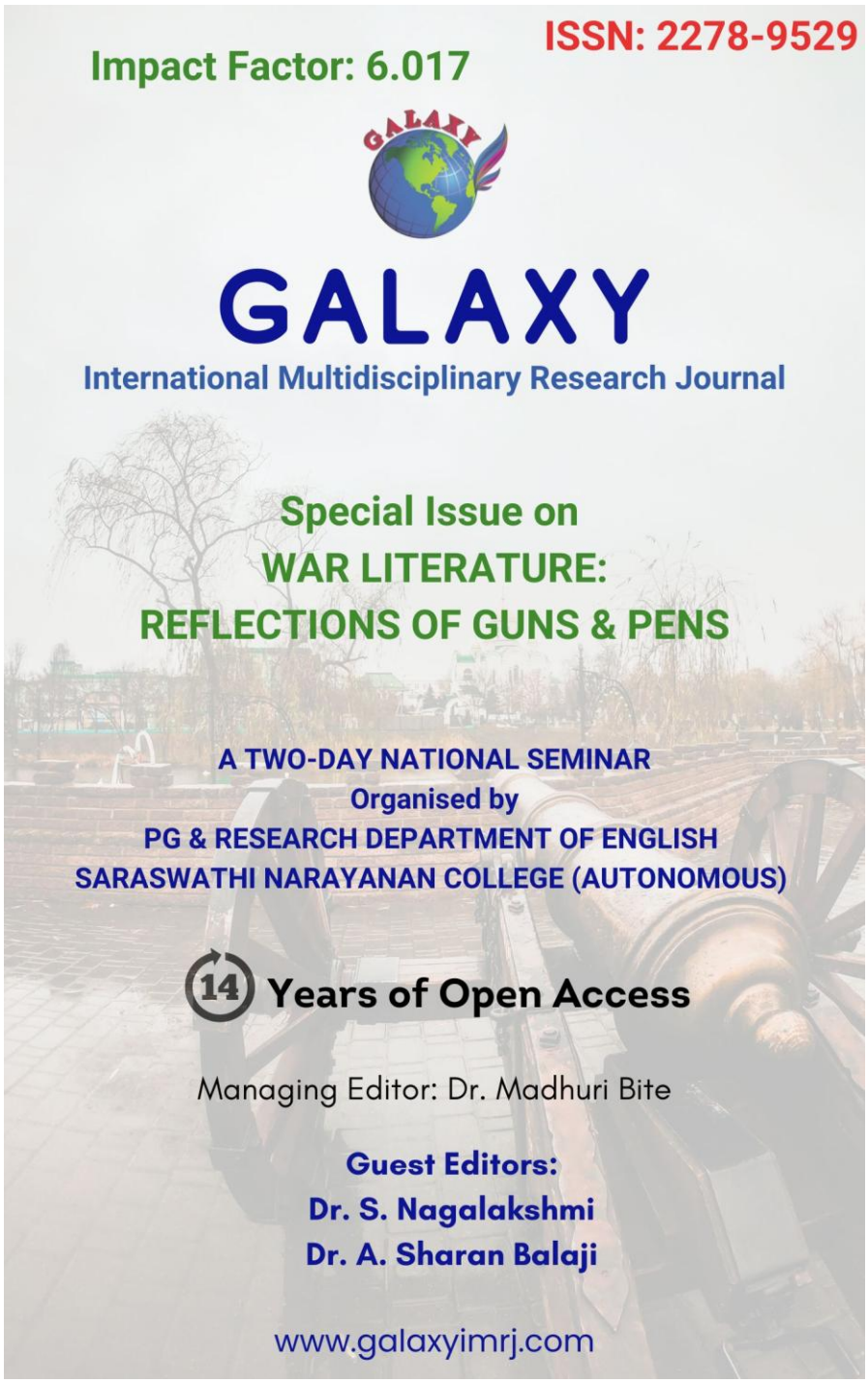


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Social Trauma in Indira Goswami's *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker*

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Abstract:

In *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker*, Indira Goswami takes a deep look at how social stress shows up in the lives of an Assamese noble family that is falling apart. In addition to looking at how families fall apart, the novel also looks at how cultural norms, male dominance, and social breakdown hurt people's minds and feelings. The main character, Giribala, is used by Goswami to show how trauma is hidden and continues to spread because society expects painful silence from its members. This story shows how social relegation ends women's lives in loneliness because being widowed takes away their freedom and sense of self. Throughout her life, Giribala shows how strict social norms can be very traumatic for women who are bound. The falling apart mansion is a key symbol in the novel that shows both the social problems in post-colonial Assam and the chaos within a family while also showing how their minds are breaking down. Goswami shows Giribala's mental decline through vivid images and first-person narratives. This shows how long-term emotional repression and unresolved conflicts can affect the mind. According to the novel, social hierarchies are naturally violent and cause long-lasting harm to women and everyone else.

Keywords: Social, family, women, loneliness, suffering.

Introduction

Understanding Indira Goswami's, *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker* fully needs looking into the historical and cultural factors of Assam in the 20th century, where it was

written. The story of the novel is told through the many layers of twentieth-century Assam, which went through both economic and political changes after being a British colony. In her story, Goswami creates a family that stands for the changes happening in Indian society after it was colonized. The author uses the crumbling house as a metaphor for how the feudal system of the past is falling apart just as society starts to move toward a more democratic and uncertain future. During this time, traditional ways of owning land fell apart, and new economic and political factors caused a lot of social chaos and economic uncertainty.

Readers can see how patriarchal social systems were important in the traditional Assamese society of the upper class through the story. Society put a lot of social limits on women to make sure they would always follow men's rules. The novel shows through Giribala's story how widows are extreme examples of being rejected by society, which also kept them from using their own power. The strict caste system led to the formation of social structures that linked unfair treatment and oppression, creating a society built on privilege.

Assam is going through more and more political unrest at the time when the novel takes place. During this time, there were many social and political movements in the area that wanted to be free from the control of the central government and questioned its right to rule. The conflicts and fears caused by all of these factors made the area even less stable. During this time, anxiety and uncertainty caused many problems that add up to the overall theme of decay and disappointment that runs through the whole novel. The things that Goswami has been through in life affect how she writes. In the years she lived in Assam, the area went through major social and political changes. She probably drew detailed female characters while writing about issues of gender dominance because she herself had to fight against patriarchal oppression in real life. Aside from being a sad family story, the story is also a thoughtful take on the social, political, and cultural changes that happened in Assam in the 20th century.

While reading *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker* by Indira Goswami, readers will get a deep look at how Assamese society was falling apart and how people were hurting mentally in the early 1900s. The novel is more than just a history of a dying aristocratic family. It also explores the deep psychological and emotional effects of social changes, patriarchal oppression, and the breakdown of traditional power structures. People from all over the world can relate to Goswami's story because it goes beyond the boundaries of its own culture to show how society problems and personal emotional wreckage affect people. Giribala is the main character of the story because the things that happen to her are like how societies fall apart. The novel is a detailed account of Goswami's research into how internalized trauma shows up to show how social demands and forced silence cause people to suffer over and over again. The main sign that the author uses is the run-down mansion, which represents the breakdown of family relationships and mental health that is a reflection of the larger post-colonial upheaval in Assam.

Goswami tells a story that is both personal and social by using personal stories and notes about society. The novel is powerful because it clearly shows how trauma in the family can be linked to events in society that change the way people live together. Through the characters' experiences, the novel shows what it means to be a widow, to be oppressed by a man, and to lose control over your life. Giribala's mental breakdown is clear from the way she writes and the way she thinks about things. This shows how deeply repressed emotions and unresolved conflicts can permanently damage a person's mind. Goswami looks at social power structures and the damage they do that can't be seen. This makes readers face important truths about people and their ability to both endure and beat suffering. The story changes into a detailed look at how ongoing social trauma affects people's lives and changes how they understand life events forever.

Indira Goswami's *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker*, shows a deep look at social degradation, personal damage, and the persistence of male power in Assam's complicated political and social climate in the 20th century. The story of a failing royal family in this novel gives a powerful look into why people can put up with terrible violence while also suffering personally. Giribala's development shows readers how pain builds up because of social rules and forced silence, while the finished story shows how trauma works invisibly.

The crumbling house, which is a central and powerful symbol, shows how the family is falling apart and how the people who live there are losing their minds. The house maintains a stagnant environment by combining traditional burdens with rules set by society. According to Goswami, "The house seemed to breathe with the sighs of generations, each sigh a lament for lost grandeur". (p. 45) The author uses vivid language to show how shifting power affects both the institutions of society and the mental health of people who are stuck.

Giribala's forced widowhood is a small example of how society structures tend to get worse over time. Through a detailed story, the novel shows how being a widow hurts women mentally before society pushes them to the edges and takes away their independence and sense of self. Through Giribala's story, Goswami skilfully dealt with both the horrible pain she was feeling and the fact that she truly understood how bad her situation was, "She felt like a ghost, drifting through the corridors of a life that was no longer hers" (p. 87), which show how lonely she feels. By looking at how Assamese caste segregation works with patriarchal laws, the novel shows how social order systems lead to violence.

Through the story, the author looks at how repressed feelings and unresolved problems can hurt people's minds in the long term. Goswami uses reflection in his stories to show how Giribala's mind breaks down because she has to keep quiet and hold back her feelings. "The silence within her was a storm, raging with unspoken words and unwept tears"

(p. 123)". According to the statement on p.123, she is filled with a storm of unspoken words and dry tears. The novel shows how both social standards and not being able to make your own decisions can hurt your mental health.

With great skill, Goswami combines personal observations with judgments about society to make a big story that is still very personal. What makes the novel powerful is that it shows small-scale family traumas while also showing how they are connected to bigger social traumas. By showing how the characters fight in real life, the themes of widowhood, father abuse, and personal helplessness become clearer. The story is set in the social and political world of Assam in the 20th century, a time when people there had to deal with social differences and colonial systems that were still in place even though the old ones were falling apart.

The novel is also a criticism of the feudal society that is falling apart and how it affects people, especially women. The author uses the breakdown of the family to show how Indian society was changing after it was colonized. A crumbling house stands for feudal great power and shows how society has changed from hierarchy to equality, even though it is still having problems today. During this time, many of the old ways of owning land were broken down. At the same time, new economic and political forces came into power, which caused widespread social and economic unrest across the country. The author shows how traditional order disappeared and whole groups lost their sense of who they were through these words.

Goswami wrote her novel based on the real-life events she encountered while living in Assam. These events gave her writing more depth and feeling. When she was a child, she saw how politics and society changed in Assam. As a woman, she probably got ideas for feminine characters and researched gender-based oppression topics from the male-dominated society she lived in. The words of Giribala "To be a woman in this society is to carry the

weight of centuries on your shoulders" (p. 201), say that the weight of hundreds of years falls on women who live in this culture. Goswami does a good job of making the story's themes stronger by using symbolic language to paint lively pictures. The howdah that has been eaten by moths is a main symbol because it shows how traditional values and standing are falling apart. This memorable object shows both how things are getting less grand over time and how strict things are now. From the author's point of view, "The howdah, once a symbol of prestige, now stood as a testament to our decline". (p. 238)

Through *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker*, Goswami shows Giribala's mental breakdown through her expressive writing style and internal stories. She also shows how Giribala's mind has been hurt for a long time by repressed feelings and unresolved inner conflicts. By looking at the violence at the heart of social hierarchies and how they leave lasting trauma, Goswami forces readers to face everything that makes our society uncomfortable and explores the power of pain and survival in people. The main theme of this novel is still social trauma because it's a deep look at common human experiences that has long-lasting effects on readers. Giribala says that, "We are all prisoners of our past, bound by the chains of memory" (p. 275). This sentence shows the main idea of the novel, which is about surviving trauma and being free.

Conclusion

Indira Goswami's *The Moth- Eaten Howdah of the Tusker* shows how aristocratic life is bad. It also looks deeply into how social pain and persistent male control shape characters. Giribala's story in Goswami's novel shows hidden patterns of pain that come from social rules that say people shouldn't tell the truth. These habits keep pain going for a long time. The broken-down state of the house is a metaphor for both the decline of the family and

Assam's changing social and political landscape in the 20th century, which saw the end of stable systems and the start of unstable new ones.

Goswami skilfully uses a variety of story-telling methods to show how Giribala's mind falls apart because of unresolved conflicts and hidden emotions. This shows how these issues can have long-lasting effects on mental health. In his novel, Goswami criticizes the social roles that women are stuck in and keep them from fully participating in society. Goswami uses small-scale family traumas to show larger-scale social traumas in our society. This creates a lasting work that looks at how people are hurt and how strong they can be. In her writing, Goswami encourages people to face the harsh facts of social life and the effects of the past that are still felt today. We learn that our daily lives are connected to big political structures and that we need to have empathy to understand how other people live. The novel *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker* is a huge work of literature that will stay with readers forever. It also shows that Goswami was a brave writer who was able to deal with deep social and psychological wounds.

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