



Criminal Psychology and Assamese Short Story: Special Reference to Selected Stories of Homen Borgohain

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ABSTRACT

Criminal Psychology is an important branch of Applied Psychology that studies the criminal tendencies and hidden psychological processes of the human mind. Although scholars have attempted to define the subject in different ways, no single definition has gained universal acceptance. Criminal psychologists G. H. Gudjonsson and L. R. C. Haward define it as the branch of applied psychology concerned with the collection, examination, and presentation of evidence for judicial purposes. Over time, criminal psychology has also emerged as an important literary theme in world literature as well as in regional literatures. In Assamese literature, the noted writer Homen Borgohain significantly explored the psychological dimensions of crime and human behavior in his short stories. Through his characters, he reveals the hidden emotional conflicts, loneliness, fear, frustration, and moral dilemmas that often remain invisible beneath ordinary social appearances. This paper attempts to study the use of criminal psychology in selected short stories of Homen Borgohain, especially *Voi*, *Norokot Bokhonto*, and *Epitaf*. The paper also examines how psychological suffering, depression, and social alienation gradually transform individuals from within. Borgohain's



stories not only depict crime but also explore the mental conditions that lead human beings toward emotional and moral collapse.

0.0 Introduction

Criminal Psychology is a specialized branch of Applied Psychology that deals with the study of criminal behavior, mental processes, and emotional motivations behind criminal actions. The subject attempts to understand why individuals commit crimes and how psychological conditions influence human behavior. Though various scholars have interpreted the term differently, there is still no universally accepted definition of Criminal Psychology.

G. H. Gudjonsson and L. R. C. Haward define Criminal Psychology as “that branch of applied psychology which is concerned with the collection, examination and presentation of evidence for judicial purposes.” Another psychologist, Wrightsman, described it as “any application of psychological knowledge or methods to a task faced by the legal system.”

Compared to other branches of psychology, criminal psychology developed relatively late. In the early stages, research related to criminal behavior was conducted under criminology, psychiatry, and forensic studies. The term “criminal psychology” itself was not commonly used at that time. In the nineteenth century, scholars in Europe and North America began systematic studies on criminal behavior, laying the foundation for modern criminal psychology.

Today, criminal psychology has become a recognized field of academic and professional study. Various books, journals, and research works have contributed to its growth. The subject is no longer limited to legal investigation alone; it has also become an important area of literary exploration. Modern literature frequently uses psychological themes to portray the hidden conflicts, fears, and emotional struggles of human beings.

In Assamese literature, several writers have explored the psychological aspects of human life. Among them, Homen Borgohain occupies a special position for his deep understanding of the human mind and his realistic portrayal of psychological conflict. His stories reveal how loneliness, depression, social pressure, and emotional instability can influence human behavior and gradually push individuals toward destructive actions.



0.1 Objectives

The objectives of this paper are:

1. To discuss the concept and significance of criminal psychology.
2. To examine criminal psychology as a literary theme in Assamese short stories.
3. To analyze the psychological dimensions in selected short stories of Homen Borgohain.
4. To study how the writer portrays loneliness, fear, depression, and moral conflict through his characters.

0.2 Methodology

The methodology of this paper is qualitative, analytical, and descriptive in nature. The study is mainly based on primary texts written by Homen Borgohain along with secondary sources such as books, journals, and critical essays related to psychology and Assamese literature.

1.0 Theoretical Framework on Criminal Psychology

Criminal Psychology studies the thoughts, emotions, motives, and behavioral patterns of criminals and psychologically disturbed individuals. It seeks to understand the reasons behind criminal actions and examines how social, emotional, biological, and environmental factors shape human behavior.

The roots of criminal psychology can be traced back to the nineteenth century. Early criminologists such as Cesare Lombroso tried to explain criminality through biological theories. According to Lombroso, criminal tendencies were inherited traits that could be identified through physical characteristics. Though his theories were later criticized, his studies played an important role in the development of criminology and criminal psychology.

Later psychologists focused more on psychological and social explanations of crime. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory explained criminal behavior through unconscious desires, suppressed emotions, and inner conflict. Freud divided human personality into three parts — the Id, Ego, and Superego. According to him, criminal behavior may emerge when instinctive desires overpower moral control.



Behaviorist psychologists such as B. F. Skinner viewed criminal behavior as a learned response shaped by environment and experience. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory also suggested that individuals often learn violent or criminal behavior by observing others in society.

Modern criminal psychology further studies the effects of loneliness, depression, frustration, anxiety, alienation, and social isolation. Psychological suffering often creates emotional instability, which may gradually push individuals toward antisocial or destructive behavior.

In literature, criminal psychology has become an important thematic concern. Modern writers often focus not only on external actions but also on the hidden emotional and psychological realities of human beings. Psychological realism allows readers to enter the inner world of characters and understand their fears, guilt, trauma, and mental conflict.

In Assamese literature, Homen Borgohain effectively adapted these psychological elements into his stories. His characters are psychologically complex individuals who struggle with emotional pain, moral confusion, and inner fear. Through his stories, Borgohain reveals that crime is not always the result of evil intention alone; often it grows from loneliness, suffering, helplessness, and psychological disturbance.

2.0 Psychology as a Theme in Assamese Short Stories

Psychological themes have occupied an important place in Assamese short story literature. Assamese writers gradually began to move beyond simple storytelling and started exploring the emotional and mental realities of human life.

Dr. Parag Kumar Bhattacharya, in his book *Golpor Prosongo Aru Asomiya Golpo Sahitya*, classified Assamese short stories according to style and theme. According to him, crime stories deal with incidents involving the violation of law and the psychological dimensions connected with criminal acts.

In world literature, Edgar Allan Poe first popularized crime and psychological fiction. Later writers such as Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle further developed the genre. Their works inspired writers across different languages and literatures. In Assamese literature, Lakshminath Bezbaruah introduced psychological elements in his stories. Later, writers such as Homen Borgohain, Arupa Patangia Kalita, and Apurba Saikia expanded psychological exploration through modern literary techniques. Among them, Homen Borgohain stands out for his deep psychological insight. His stories focus on the hidden mental world of ordinary people. He portrays how emotional



suffering, isolation, and inner conflict shape human behavior. His stories are not merely crime stories; they are studies of the wounded human mind.

3.0 Criminal Psychology in Selected Stories of Homen Borgohain

3.1 *Epitaf*

Epitaf presents the tragic psychological condition of Gautam Baruah, a famous poet and artist who decides to commit suicide on his forty-first birthday. Throughout his life, Gautam experiences emotional neglect and loneliness. He feels disconnected from society and believes that nobody truly cares for him. On the night of 31 December 1952, Gautam prepares to end his life. However, his emotional attachment to his pet cat Dora reveals the remaining traces of human affection within him. He realizes that Dora may be the only living being who would suffer after his death. In a disturbed state of mind, he feeds poison to the cat before attempting suicide himself. The story beautifully portrays depression, emotional isolation, guilt, and mental instability. Gautam's inability to complete his suicide after killing Dora reflects the psychological conflict between destruction and emotional attachment. Borgohain presents crime here not as legal violence alone but as a deeply psychological act rooted in loneliness and emotional suffering.

3.2 *Norokot Bokhonto*

In *Norokot Bokhonto*, Homen Borgohain presents a dark and disturbing social reality. The protagonist Shankar searches for his beloved Monimala but gradually enters a cruel and morally corrupted world where humanity seems absent. The story explores how social circumstances can psychologically transform individuals. Shankar slowly becomes emotionally trapped in the environment around him. The character Julifa represents another tragic dimension of psychological and social suffering. Economic helplessness and social pressure force her into prostitution as a means of survival. The story reflects the relationship between social conditions and psychological breakdown. Borgohain shows that criminal or morally condemned actions often emerge from helplessness, poverty, and emotional despair rather than inherent evil.

3.3 *Voi*

The story *Voi* explores the fear and psychological conflict hidden within the human mind. The protagonist Amal Baruah encounters what appears to be his own inner self. Through this symbolic confrontation, the story presents the dual nature of human personality. Amal's conversation with his inner self reveals fear, guilt, insecurity, and suppressed anxiety. Though a person may appear normal



externally, internally he may struggle with deep psychological conflict. The story suggests that even criminals fear their own criminality and cannot completely escape their conscience. Through psychological symbolism, Borgohain portrays the hidden battle between external identity and inner reality. The story reflects the complexity of human consciousness and the invisible fear that often controls human behavior.

4.0 Conclusion

Homen Borgohain occupies an important position in Assamese literature for his remarkable exploration of human psychology. His short stories go beyond ordinary social narratives and deeply investigate the emotional and psychological conditions that shape human behavior. The stories *Epitaf*, *Norokot Bokhonto*, and *Voi* clearly demonstrate his ability to portray loneliness, fear, depression, guilt, and emotional conflict with artistic depth and realism. His characters are not portrayed merely as criminals or morally weak individuals; rather, they are presented as psychologically disturbed human beings struggling against inner pain and social alienation. One of the greatest achievements of Borgohain is his ability to reveal the hidden side of the human mind. He explores the subconscious fears and emotional wounds that often remain invisible in everyday life. His stories show that criminality is not always born from cruelty alone but may also emerge from emotional suffering, isolation, helplessness, and mental instability.

Through realistic narration and psychological insight, Homen Borgohain enriched Assamese short story literature with a deeper understanding of human consciousness. His works continue to remain relevant because they reflect the complex relationship between society, psychology, and morality. Therefore, his stories are valuable not only from a literary perspective but also from psychological and social viewpoints.

5.0 Findings

The major findings of this paper are as follows:

1. Criminal Psychology is an important branch of Applied Psychology that studies criminal behavior and mental processes.
2. Psychological conflict and emotional suffering are significant causes behind many criminal tendencies.
3. Criminal psychology has become an important literary theme in modern literature.



4. Assamese literature also reflects psychological themes through the works of several writers.
5. Homen Borgohain successfully portrayed the hidden psychological dimensions of human beings in his short stories.
6. Stories such as *Epitaf*, *Norokot Bokhonto*, and *Voi* reveal the influence of loneliness, fear, depression, and social alienation on human behavior.
7. Borgohain's stories establish a strong connection between literature and psychology by exploring the inner world of human consciousness.

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