

# Swarna Bora's Simsang Nadir Hahi: An Incomplete Study

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## **Abstract:**

The North East of India, particularly Assam, is home to various ethnic groups, including the notable Garo tribe. The Garo people inhabit parts of Assam and the Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. This novel is centered on the life and culture of the Garo community living along the banks of the Simsang River in the South Garo Hills district. Swarna Bora, one of the most prominent women novelists in Assamese literature, has significantly enriched the field with her works. Her novels vividly depict the lives of various river-centric ethnic groups in Assam and the North East. Notably, the ethnic socio-cultural representations in Swarna Bora's novels are based on comprehensive field studies. Her novel 'Simsang Nadir Hah' also endeavors to capture many aspects of the life and culture of the Garo people in the South Garo Hills district. This paper discusses how Swarna Bora's novel 'Simsang Nadir Hahi' portrays various facets of Garo socio-cultural life.

**Keywords:** River, Garo, Society, Culture, Tribe.

## **Introduction:**

A prominent novelist of Assamese literature is Swarna Bora. She gained recognition in the field of novel writing during the 1980s. In 1985, she wrote the novel 'Diyung Nadir Geet', which is set against the backdrop of the Diyung River. Following this, in 1987, she penned Simsang Nadir Hahi, based on the landscape of Meghalaya's Garo Hills, and in the same year, she wrote another novel, 'Dudhnoir Bedana'. In 1995, she authored the novel 'Meghna, Jamuna, Thema'. The author earned significant acclaim for all these novels. In 1989, she wrote 'Luit Paror Kantho', set against the backdrop of the Assam Movement, and in 1997, she wrote 'Dudhnoir Bedana', inspired by the region of Dudhnoi.

Every ethnic group in the North East of India has its own rich socio-cultural traditions, and the Garo tribes are no exception. The Garos possess unique traditions that set them apart from other groups. The lifestyle of these tribal people often involves residing in mountainous areas. They consider themselves children of nature and take joy in living close to it. Swarna Bora has written a novel titled 'Simsang Nadir Hahi', which focuses on the lives of the Garos living along the banks of the Simsang River.

The Simsang River flows through the Garo Hills, dividing the region into two parts. After crossing the border and entering Bangladesh, the river takes on the name Someshwari. Originating from Nokrek Peak, the Simsang River grows as it is joined by major tributaries, including the Ringdi, Rompa, Rangdik, and Chibok. Along its journey, the river passes through Rangrenge, Williamnagar (the headquarters of East Garo Hills), Nangalbibra, Rewak, Siju, and Baghmara, the headquarters of South Garo Hills.

**Aims and Objectives:**

The Aims and Objectives of the paper are to -

- a) To analyse how the Simsang River symbolizes various aspects of life, culture, or personal transformation.
- b) To examine the relationship between the natural environment and human experiences as portrayed in the narrative.
- c) To investigate the role of the Simsang River in shaping the plot, character development, and narrative structure.
- d) To identify and interpret the symbolic representations of the Simsang river in the novel.
- e) To study the interplay between the Simsang River and main characters, highlighting its influence on their judgments, development, or conflicts.

**Research Methodology and Data Collection:**

The paper entitled "Swarna Bora's Simsang Nadir Hahi: An Incomplete Study" primarily takes an analytical approach. Additionally, descriptive methods are employed in certain cases.

Resources for this paper have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source is Swarna Bora's Simsang Nadir Hahi. Information about Swarna Bora's novels from secondary sources has been obtained through reference books, various research publications, magazines, and Internet resources, using a judgment analysis approach.

**Review of the Literature:**

In Assamese literature, numerous novelists have enriched the collection of Assamese novels with river-centric themes. Among them, Swarna Bora is a prominent figure. However, her novels have not received the depth of critical discussion they deserve. Dr. Tridib Goswami, in his book 'Swarna Bora: Kriti aru Kirti', presents a thorough and insightful analysis of Bora's works. In the book 'Esho Bacharor Asomiya Upanyas' edited by Dr. Nagen Thakur, Dr. Hem Bora briefly mentions the novel Simsang Nodir Hahi on page 102 in his article 'Esho bosoror Asomiya Uponyasor sambridhit Mohila Lekhoksokolor Daan'. Dr. Tridib Goswami also discusses Simsang Nodir Hahi in his edited compilation Swarna Bora's 'Simsang Nodir Hahi'. Furthermore, Dr. Pranab Bhagawati has analyzed Simsang Nodir Hahi in his book 'Nodikendrik Upanyas: Ek Bislesanatmak Adhyan'.

**Discussion:**

The novel Simsang Nadir Hahi by Swarna Bora is a pleasant read. Bora is beautifully innovative in his storytelling. The novel opens with the story of a Garo couple, Millet and Minnie. Minnie has no parents, siblings, or close family, as they all died of Kala Azar (Black fever). She and Millet were married with great celebration. Two years later, they had a son named Richang, who has been unwell since birth. Both Minnie and Millet are deeply saddened by their sick child, and Millet's hospital earnings are barely enough to support them. After this, the novel's plot takes a different turn, evolving into a love triangle. The story is narrated through the lives of Ramkin, Anna, and Dr. Debojit Chowdhury.

Ramkin, a young Garo boy, is devoted to Anna, a spirited young Garo girl, who in turn falls in love with Debojit, a doctor from the plain belt of Assam. Debojit also loves Anna deeply, and after facing various challenges, their love finally blossoms. In time, however, Ramkin becomes vengeful; he had paid a bride price, giving Anna land on the banks of the Simsang River, symbolizing his claim over her. Debojit and

Anna's love, however, seems doomed by fate. Anna contracts leprosy, but Debojit, with unwavering love and sacrifice, tries to cure her. Ramkin, unable to bear Anna and Debojit's relationship, attempts to kill Debojit with a Jathipat (a traditional weapon). However, his anger dissipates when he learns of Anna's illness, finding solace in this knowledge and turning instead to preach the word of the Lord.

The novel is populated with many well-crafted characters, each distinct and memorable. Dr. Debojit is a particularly compelling figure; his simplicity and resolve easily capture the readers' admiration. His strong personality and determination create a sense of connection with the reader, and his calm patience in difficult times showcases his strength. When Ramkin confronts him with intent to kill, Debojit pacifies him through understanding and compassion. Debojit is sensitive, idealistic, and rooted in eternal values.

Anna's character, though not complex, remains somewhat mysterious. She is not a symbol of seductive or negative intent; instead, she is simply a loving girl who finds fulfilment in her relationship with Debojit. Readers feel sympathy for her and root for her happiness, often forgetting Ramkin. Yet, her affection for Ramkin has sincerity, giving depth to her character. Ramkin, in turn, faces an internal conflict between his loyalty and love for Anna and his commitment to his faith. The novel concludes with Ramkin's struggle between these opposing forces, leaving the reader anxious over his uncertain fate. His decision to let Anna be with Debojit without protest stirs both admiration and frustration.

Swarna Bora also excels in creating realistic settings. The novel vividly captures the daily life, customs, and landscapes of the Garo Hills, providing rich, detailed descriptions of the area's roads, scenery, and people. Bora's poetic sensitivity to the natural beauty of the Garo Hills reflects his deep appreciation for nature. The setting of Simsang and its surrounding fields—Baghmara, the resorts, and the beauty of the Garo Hills—adds a gentle, peaceful backdrop that parallels the emotions of the characters, as if the hills themselves impart tranquility to their hearts.

The folk life along the Simsang River is deeply intertwined with nature, which is expressed poetically throughout the novel. The environment is as essential to the story as the characters, as removing Millet, Minnie, or Anna from their villages along the river would disrupt their very identities. The Simsang River remains a constant presence, its movements and changing nature described in poetic detail across the seasons. At times, these depictions take on a picturesque, still-life quality. Millet and Debojit, in particular, share an innate love of nature, which enhances their compassionate and grounded personalities. They seem like children of nature—unburdened by internal conflict or quiet suffering, as free and independent as the natural world around them. Their generosity of spirit mirrors the vast, open landscapes of the Garo Hills.

### **Conclusion:**

Swarna Bora's talent as a novelist has reached an undeniable peak, where her voice rings with both power and clarity. In the novel form, she has found a perfect canvas that allows her thoughts and boundless imagination to flourish. Her distinct narrative style is both engaging and profound, creating a unique impression that sets her work apart from others in the genre. While 'Simsang Nadir Hahi' carries the charm of a romantic story, it also offers intellectual substance that engages readers on a deeper level. The narrative invites readers to revisit it again and again, revealing layers of meaning upon each read. Creating a novel that captivates without exhausting the reader's interest is a rare achievement, and Swarna Bora has mastered this art, delivering a work that is both accessible and meticulously crafted.

This novel stands as a testament to his skill and has earned its place as a significant and celebrated piece in Assamese literature.

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