

# Lakhminandan Bora's *Kayakalpa* as a Science Fiction: An Analysis

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## **Abstract:**

*Literature is the artful combination of imagination and realism. Apart from other sources of literature, there are plenty of works written on science. Now-a-days, science based literature is regarded as an established branch of literature. This form of literature has developed from the early twentieth century. In the background of the society, science fiction is written on the incident which is not occurred at present but might befall in future or happened in the past and if these incidents arise out of social changes borne out of the growth of science and technology, then these stories can be termed as science fiction. That means this type of fiction can not be written without any scientific base. Lakhminandan Bora's book *Kayakalpa* (awarded with one of the most elevated recompense in Indian literature 'Saraswati Award') is undoubtedly a popular science based novel.*

**Key words:** science fiction, science and technology, bio-technology, gene therapy, Gerontology, human society, materialism, medical science, modern literature, longevity of life, imagination, science and humanity.

## **I. Introduction:**

Imagination and reality collectively give birth to literature. Like various other areas of literature science also provides a strong platform on the basis of which many valuable literary creations have been made. Science fiction is one of them which is at present times, a well-known theme of modern literature. This type of literature has flourished since the early part of the twentieth century. Science fiction is written on the incident that has not occurred yet, but might happen in the future or took place in the past. The stories which get encouraged by the events arising out of the social changes emerging out of the improvement of science and technology may be termed as science fiction.

In Assamese literature, the trend of science based novel or science fiction is not so new. The science fictions of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, Arthur C. Clarke, R. L. Stevenson etc. have been translated a lot. Many Assamese writers endeavour to write original science fictions also. Among them the name of Dinesh Chandra Goswami, Bijoy Krishna Debasarma, Bondita Phukan, Abhijit Sarma Baruah, Hariprasad Baruah, Kumudeshwar Borthakur, Sourav Kumar Chaliha, Santanu Tamuli, Lakshmi Nandan Borah etc. are mentionable. Nagendra Narayan Choudhury's story

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'*Rasayan*' published in *Abahanin* 1937 is probably the first Assamese science fiction. Writing science based fiction is not easy. A writer should not only have vast knowledge on science, but his imagination must be theoretically genuine. Hence, though science based fictions are eagerly accepted, there are not many Assamese writers in this regard. Moreover, there has not been much discussion over this trend in Assamese literature yet.

Lakshmi Nandan Borah's '*Kayakalpa*' is certainly a very popular science fiction. It is a rare comprehensive novel of unique subject-matter where science and humanity is unprecedentedly inlaid.

**Subject-matter of the Novel:** Dr. Lakshmi Nandan Bora's novel comprises the combination of human emotion along with various scientific inventions and yearning of keeping the youth intact. The effort of acquiring youth again, delaying the youth and increasing the life-span has been a continuous practice in the human society since long. The modern medical science is also having effort in this field. The progress of organic technology puts up new facts regarding human body. In the preface of the novel the writer mentions – "*The value of the universe is associated with the human body.*" He again said, "*Though Kayakalpa can apparently be termed a science based novel that is written on the basis of some sparkling facts of medical science in India related to rejuvenating human body, the key human attributes like sorrows and sufferings, wishes and aspirations, conflicts, love and affection etc. are not excluded from it. Hence, it is a simply novel, only its subject-matter is taken from modern science.*" The novelist has created this voluminous novel by providing words to the natural curiosities of human minds by dint of a purely imaginative story devoid of social materialism. There is a reflection of the novelist's own life sketch in it as well.

**The Story:** The story of the novel is unconventional. It is centered round Indian scientist Dr. Anuj Kripalani, the head of Atomic Biological Department of the world famous multi-national company 'Vivian International'. In the start, America's famous scientist V. P. Richard informed Anuj Kripalani that he later has won the prestigious Martin Handerson Award from the Chemical Society of North America and thus congratulated him. Dr. Kripalani's study on the atomic biology facilitated the gene therapy and his research paper on DHEA (Dehydroepiandrosterone) benefited the Gerontology. Professor Richard usually gives Kripalani immense pleasure.

After that, the novelist makes us known about some personal facts of Dr. Kripalani. Once during his tour from America as a visiting professor to Jawaharlal Nehru University at the age of 37 he got introduced with his 22 year old student the young and beautiful lady Nayana Narlikar from Delhi. Though there was a huge difference between their ages, Nayana's active role resulted in their marriage. But coming to America, Nayana gets swayed away in the wave of the materialistic society of the country. She after completing post graduate degree in Mass communication from Stanford University, started a job in a Company namely Megavision where short films and TV serials are produced. As she goes away from Chemistry, a considerable difference of intellectual thinking between the two starts to occur. Hence, as a result of always keeping himself absorbed in the study of Chemistry and biology, the desire of sex has gradually disappeared from Anuj's mind. Eventually, the courses of their life get contradictory. Anuj is faithful towards Indian idealism, whereas Nayana becomes habituated in the materialistic society of America. The married life of the two does not prove happy. Their two sons Hrituraj and Bngaraj also like their mother get accustomed to the worldly life.

AnujKripalani, by dint of his research in Bio-technology, becomes a popular face in the whole world. His research generates new hopes in the fields of agricultural and medical science. His study on the molecule named Sildenafil Citrate has been able to eradicate impotency of many men. Though he is staying in America, Kripalani feels proud to be a true Indian. He has a tendency towards Western science and technology, but he does not want to accept the materialistic society of that nation. He thinks that there should be a synthesis between the progress brought out by science and human values. Worldly enjoyments can destroy a civilisation. He neither gets upset in diversity nor becomes overwhelmed during success. After receiving the Martin Handerson award, he had to visit many universities of the world, but when he was invited to India he got delighted. During his stay in India, he travelled many places of pilgrimage and asserts that in the holy places, India's genius can be found. When India's Prime Minister invites him to India for the well-being of the Indians by using technology at cheaper rate, his love for his motherland knows no limit. He is at present disgusted with his wife Nayana as she has already turned unrestrained. He approaches Dr. Watson, a psychologist of America and according to his opinion, Kripalani prepares to back to India. Moreover, he would be happier to work for his own nation rather than toiling under a multinational company in foreign. However, hardworking and ambition turns him older than his real age. Hence, it is usual on Nayana's part to dislike a prematurely old person who is indifferent towards his family. Anuj thinks of Gautam Buddha. Buddha and Buddhist mendicants perhaps overcome old age and decrepitude by means of self-control, posture and *pranayama* etc. Kripalani decides to invent such a medicine that can rejuvenate the mankind and sustain the young period by eliminating the process of ageing. With this dream in mind, he comes back to India and establishes a unique science laboratory. There along with other high class researches, he secretly continues the study of regaining youth. In a very short time, his laboratory gets success in many respects. After a rigorous mental and physical toil, Kripalani becomes successful to invent a medicine namely '*Kayakalpa-25*'. However, he notices that though the medicine is able to revitalise a man's sexual power to a great extent, but it turns the man devoid of the sense of good and evil by providing him brute-force to fulfill sexual desire. This outcome disappoints Dr. Kripalani. Furthermore, he is threatened by the American multi-national companies. He himself realises that his treatment for longevity proves more harmful rather than beneficial. Human should get young, matured and old by the natural laws and not consuming medicines. It is necessary to maintain natural and environmental balance of the world and hence for the welfare of the world, Kripalani himself destroys the '*Kayakalpa-25*' without informing its secret of production to anybody. In this way, the story comes to an end.

## **II. Presentation Method and Art and technique of the Novel:**

Dr. Lakshmi Nandan Bora by writing the popular science fiction '*Kayakalpa*' introduces a rare type of novel where he surpasses previous genre in respect of subject-matter, background and presentation method. There happens a good fusion of science and humanity in the novel. The heaving sexual desire hidden in the heart of a man imparts an immediate motion into the story. A devotee of science on one hand and an author of prose fiction on the other – the combination of these two personalities of Dr. Bora is quite evident in this novel. Accordingly, Dr.

AnujKripalanithough attracted by the Western science and biotechnology, could not forget the Indian ideals of sacrifices and satisfaction.

In respect of the technical directions, '*Kayakalpa*' is truly a superior science based prose piece. Though it is a novel of completely imaginative story, it is not lacking any scientific base. The marvelous inventions of science and development and bio-technology that were discussed in the novel have already gained immense success in the western countries. Eventually, the human imagination has got an opportunity of turning into reality. In this regard, the probability of treatment of rejuvenation and regaining youth can not be denied. Although the novel is written in Assamese, its background is international. From that point, it can be a novel of international standard.

The aspects like story-telling, conflicts of characters, attractiveness of language and dialogue, the philosophy of the writer's life deeply flows through the novel. Science and technology is like a martial horse – swift and strong; yet, if it is not controlled, it may go astray and the same is the case with science – if not restrained, it may probably cover the ways of progress with dust. For this reason, though famous physician Dr. Kripalanisucceeds in creating a rare drug to regain youth, he himself destroys it for the wellbeing of the human society. Science may make thrilling progress, but the duty of ascertaining a science-controlled society depends on the very human race. When unnaturalness comes to the life-circle or if any anomalies happen, devastation starts to occur. Materialism and Sensual pleasure desire are inordinate desires not to be satiated. Therefore, in the end of the novel, importance is imposed on restraint and self-abnegation. We are obliged to abide by the impassable rule of destiny at any cost; this is the eternal truth and it can never be denied.

### **III. Conclusion:**

In present times, science and technology rapidly progresses. Simultaneously, in near future, the demand for science fiction is also increasing at a high pace. The winner of all India Saraswati award of 2008 '*Kayakalpa*' of Dr. Lakshmi Nandan Bora is undoubtedly a perpetual literary masterpiece. The exceptional science-related constituents and attractive techniques of presentation make it a magnanimous novel. Furthermore, the analysis on this great literary work adds a new horizon of scientific outlook to the field of science fictions in literature and in this way will also assist the research fellows in future.

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