

The Treatment Of Death Anxiety And Fear Of Bereavement In Adolescents Minds In Homen Borgohain's *Saudar Puteke Nao Meli Jay*: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

The present inquiry endeavors to provide a discerning perspective on the treatment of death anxiety and fear of bereavement in the adolescent psyche as portrayed in Homen Borgohain's Saudar Puteke Nao Meli Jay. The adolescent mind is often besieged by the distressing and agonizing experience of losing a cherished one, which can instill in them a sense of trepidation and ambiguity. The study aims to explore how literature can offer a platform to represent and address such intricate emotions and experiences. By meticulously scrutinizing the various coping mechanisms and strategies employed by the characters in the novel, this study illuminates the efficacy of literature in facilitating adolescents in navigating and coming to terms with the process of grieving and loss. The study's findings have profound implications for mental health professionals and caregivers who work with adolescents grappling with death anxiety and fear of bereavement. By providing a nuanced and insightful examination of the subject matter, this study serves as a valuable resource for the academic community and the broader public interested in comprehending the role of literature in addressing complex emotional and psychological issues.

Key Words: Death anxiety, Adolescent, Fear, Bereavement, Pain

1. Introduction

The concept that literature can preserve devastating situations as textual representations to delineate the memories and experiences of individuals is a multifaceted notion. It emphasizes the ability of literature to encapsulate intricate and profound emotions that individuals undergo, and how much literary works can serve as potent instruments for fostering empathy and comprehension.

With the impact of death anxiety on children, its effects can be both psychological and physical. It can engender a considerable amount of turmoil and confusion in their minds, resulting in a variety of behavioral and emotional reactions. These responses can also manifest as physical symptoms, such as alterations in sleep patterns and appetite. Furthermore, it is regrettable that children may encounter difficulties in articulating their feelings, and experiences during these periods, which can exacerbate their distress and feelings of isolation.

Taken together, these issues underscore the significance of empathy and understanding in our interactions with others, particularly those who may be undergoing challenging circumstances. It is imperative to offer support and resources to individuals who may be tussling with these difficulties, including children who are contending with the repercussions of death anxiety. This research paper endeavors to stretch out the state of being jittery in a child who is constantly suffering from the dread of his mother's imminent death. To analyze these factors and arrive at a definitive conclusion, the literary work entitled *Saudar Puteke Nao Meli Jay* authored by Homen Borgohain has been utilized as a resource.

2. Review of Literature

Through a myriad of literary devices, literature assumes a paramount role in scrutinizing the multifarious concerns that permeate a societal milieu.

Satyendranath Sharma's opulent tome, entitled *Asamiya Upanyasar Gatidhara*, which was released in 1976, delves into the ethereal realms of the novels that were masterfully crafted by the esteemed Homen Borgohain.

The publication *Esho Bacharar Asamiya Upanyas*, edited by Nagen Thakur and published in 2000, offers a comprehensive evaluation of Borgohain's diverse literary works.

In the year 2000, the book *Homen Borgohain Jiwan Aru Sahitya*, edited by Amiya Kumar Handique, was published. This book sheds light on various facets of Borgohain's life and presents a thorough analysis of his literary contributions.

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3. Objectives of the Study

- To meticulously scrutinize the existential dread that plagues the tender minds of children through the medium of the novel.
- To carefully delineate the root causes and the consequential aftermath of this harrowing death anxiety.
- To expound upon the profound behavioral transformations that occur within the impressionable psyche of young children.

4. Methodology of the Study

The present study draws upon primary data sourced from the novel, *Saudar Puteke Nao Meli Jay*, and secondary data derived from a range of research articles published in various journals and books. The analytical and descriptive approaches are employed to scrutinize the data obtained from the research work.

5. The Examination of the Novel *Saudar Puteke Nao Meli Jay*

The novel entitled *Saudar Puteke Nao Meli Jay* is a fruit of Homen Borgohain's personal childhood encounters. The author himself has openly acknowledged this fact.

"Within the pages of my novel, *Saudar Puteke Naou Meli Jay*, I delve into my own life, portraying the central character, 'Bapukan,' who is essentially a reflection of myself. During my childhood, I was affectionately referred to as Bapukan. The remaining characters in the novel are also drawn from real individuals, albeit with altered names. Despite these alterations, the people in my village can easily identify these characters. However, it must be noted that the character of 'Dulal' has some significant imaginative elements (Borgohain 7)."

While childhood is typically associated with innocence and joy, the childhood experiences depicted in the novel, particularly those of Bapukan, are marked by pain. The author alludes to this by quoting a line from the Yogavashishtha Ramayana as a prologue:

"The thoughts that haunt the heart during childhood, youth, old age, sickness, and grief persist even at the time of death. Childhood, often disregarded by all sensations, can be more agonizing than death itself. (Borgohain n. page.)"

In the novel *Saudar Puteke Nao Meli Jay*, Borgohain demonstrates a particular focus on the themes of death fear or anxiety and the loss of relatives. During his childhood in their village, the occurrence of deaths due to cholera, eclipse, malaria, pox, and other causes was a monthly phenomenon. The sorrowful expressions of mourning individuals who had lost a loved one deeply affected the emotions of all. Among these deaths, a few had a personal impact on Borgohain (Borgohain 22). Consequently, he developed an acute awareness of the specter of death, which he subsequently portrays through various novels:

"The novels written by me, such as 'Pita-Putra', 'Saudar Puteke Nao Meli Jay', 'Matsyagandha', and 'Haladhiya Charaye Baodhan Khay', depict the deaths I encountered during my childhood and the subsequent reactions that left an indelible mark on my psyche. Furthermore, the tragic demise of some of my dearest relatives during childbirth also inflicted immense suffering upon me (Borgohain 22)."

The formidable incidents exert a profound influence on the psychological well-being of children and adolescents. The demise of a parent, sibling, or cherished individual elicits a profound sense of sadness and grief in young individuals. The concept of death itself instills fear in them, as the abrupt and unforeseen loss of a loved one deeply affects their mental state. Although the repercussions of such a loss may not be as alarming or traumatic for adults, it is a matter of great concern for children, potentially leading to the emergence of traumatic grief.

"The death of someone special can be very difficult and sad for a child or teen, but when it is a sibling who dies, the family faces a unique set of challenges. Siblings often have very complicated relationships. Sisters and brothers experience a range of sometimes conflicting feelings for each other—they may love and look up to one another, older siblings may feel responsible for, enjoy and/or resent caring for younger ones, or they may be jealous and fight—and their relationships can change over time (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network 3)." The novel, however, does not depict the intricate dynamics of the relationship between Bapukan and his siblings. The author provides a brief insight into the affectionate bond shared between Bapukan and his brothers and sisters, particularly in the context of their illness. Among them, Bapukan's closest sibling is Makhani, who also serves as his confidant. Consequently, the untimely demise of Makhani proves to be an insufferable torture for Bapukan.

The character of Bapukan in the novel is portrayed as melancholic and anguished due to his apprehension of mortality. Bapukan has undergone traumatic experiences as he has encountered several death-related events. In the narrative, Bapukan, along with his siblings and other children in the village, is affected by an epidemic-like outbreak of blood dysentery. Regrettably, Bapukan's sister, Makhani, succumbs to this ailment. Bapukan is overwhelmed with sorrow upon witnessing Makhani's gradual deterioration, as she becomes increasingly pallid, emaciated, and feeble. Subsequently, when Makhani passes away, Bapukan is rendered speechless by the intensity of his agony. The premature demise of his sister instills in Bapukan a realization of the inevitability of death, and he is seized by a sense of trepidation regarding it. This sentiment is further compounded when he learns from his father's horoscope that his wife will expire before he

attains the age of fifty. With his father's fiftieth birthday looming, there is a possibility of his mother's demise at any moment within this timeframe. Bapukan is profoundly disheartened and taken aback upon discovering the potentiality of his mother's death in his father's horoscope, which was revealed abruptly. Such occurrences have a profound impact on Bapukan's psyche, rendering his childhood a vessel of traumatic grief.

The afflictions that befell Bapukan and his siblings have cast a shadow of distress upon their esteemed parents. To witness the frailty of one's offspring, succumbing to the clutches of illness and embarking upon the treacherous path towards eternal slumber, is an insufferable torment that no parent should endure. Alas, Bapukan's parents find themselves burdened by the weight of this tragic fate, their hearts heavy with agony. Overwhelmed by the fear of losing her beloved child, Bapukan's mother finds solace in her tears, a torrential outpouring of despair. Yet, amidst this somber backdrop, a glimmer of hope emerges as Bapukan, his elder sister, and two younger siblings gradually regain their strength. Alas, fate is a cruel mistress, for it claims the life of Makhani. The suddenness of this unbearable moment renders Bapukan's mother utterly inconsolable, her tears cascading down her face as she clings to the lifeless form of her departed child, halting the arrival of the man tasked with the sacred duty of cremation. Meanwhile, Bapukan's father, a stoic figure, finds himself transformed into a statue of stone, seated upon the ground in the very heart of their courtyard. The demise of a child is an experience that engulfs parents in a maelstrom of intensity, complexity, and excruciating pain. Thus, it is no wonder that Bapukan's parents find themselves unable to bear the sudden loss of their cherished offspring.

When a tender soul, be it a child or a blossoming adolescent, finds itself grappling with the weight of harrowing circumstances, such as the untimely demise of a cherished kin, the tendrils of these haunting memories ensnare their every waking moment. The mere recollection of that beloved figure metamorphoses into an ominous specter, casting a pall of trepidation over their existence. Alas, the specter of mortality looms large, instilling in them an unrelenting fear of losing yet another cherished soul. Consequently, a myriad of peculiar thoughts besiege their fragile psyche, rendering sleep elusive, solitude unbearable, and emotions tumultuous, as they grapple with the safety of their being and those dear to them.

In the captivating tome of *Saudar Puteke Nao Meli Jay*, a profound revelation unfolds, shedding light upon the disquietude that engulfs Bapukan's soul upon the lamentable departure of Makhani. Alas, Bapukan himself is tormented by an enigmatic affliction, a nameless and insidious blood dysentery. Yet, over time, Bapukan miraculously emerges from the clutches of this ailment, while Makhani's condition inexorably deteriorates, culminating in her untimely demise. The loss of Makhani, who possessed an unwavering determination to embrace life, casts a somber shadow upon Bapukan's heart, plunging him into the depths of desolation, a consequence of ceaseless anguish that knows no respite.

As a result of the incident involving his sister's death, Bapukan is traumatized. This has led to the emergence of certain imaginary thoughts that have caused him undue distress. Specifically, Bapukan is troubled by the mental image of his deceased sister's cremation. His character is further perturbed by the thought of his little sister Makhani, who had never before slept alone at home, now lying alone underground in a desolate cemetery located on the banks of a river. Bapukan's mind conjures up vivid images of Makhani struggling to breathe beneath the weight of the soil that has been imposed upon her, screaming in fear and pain, and calling out to her brother for comfort in her solitude. These intrusive thoughts continue to haunt Bapukan's character.

The esteemed author eloquently depicts the profound impact that befalls Bapukan upon receiving a mere inkling of his mother's untimely demise through the celestial alignment of his father's horoscope. Panic, anxiety, and a myriad of other distressing emotions seize hold of the character, casting him once again into the depths of fear. Indeed, the mere notion of his mother's imminent departure from this mortal realm leaves Bapukan in a state of shock, his very being trembling at the thought of her vanishing presence.

Consequently, the character finds himself gradually succumbing to the torment of insomnia, as the weight of his mother's impending loss bears heavily upon his weary soul. Bapukan, who once delighted in engaging his father in heartfelt conversations before retiring for the night, now finds himself devoid of any interest in such discourse. Fear, like an unwelcome specter, haunts his every waking moment, compelling him to feign slumber in the presence of his father.

As his mind wanders to the prospect of his mother's demise, Bapukan is consumed by a profound dread of being deprived of her familiar fragrance, her tender embraces, her nurturing presence, and the delectable flavors that emanate from her culinary creations. The mere thought of living without his beloved mother inflicts upon him a searing agony, rendering him incapable of regulating the rhythm of his breath.

In the solace of his father's embrace, Bapukan finds himself ensnared in a relentless internal struggle, his thoughts held captive by a sense of helplessness. The image of his cherished mother's body, reduced to ashes upon the river's banks, torn away from him, elicits anguished cries from the depths of his being. These harrowing symptoms, reminiscent of post-traumatic stress disorder, manifest within the character as a result of the perilous specter of his sister's potential demise and the impending loss of his mother.

"In the afterlife, amidst the eternal obscurity that has engulfed his beloved mother, he roams aimlessly and alone for an interminable duration on the other side of the abyss. At intervals, he utters plaintive cries, beseeching the boundless void to restore his mother to him, to relinquish her from the clutches of eternal oblivion. Yet, a sudden apprehension grips him, that there is no one to heed his fervent supplications in that vast expanse of darkness. Despite his unceasing wails, his voice reverberates into nothingness. In an instant, he is overcome by a profound sense of desolation, so intense that he is moved to tears, burying his face in the softness of his pillow (Borgohain 92)."

6. Conclusion

The demise or passage into the great beyond is a harrowing ordeal for the young ones, as portrayed in the opus by the esteemed Homen Borgohain, who seeks to provide a comprehensive and refined discourse on the contemplation of mortality for the tender minds. Bereft of the ability to articulate their thoughts on matters of death, the protagonist of this literary masterpiece is condemned to dwell in a wretched realm, where anxiety and anguish coexist as unwelcome guests. Probing inquiries about the nature of demise pierce the very core of the protagonist, stifling their active engagement and subduing their grievances and sorrows within their desolate inner sanctum. The author, driven by genuine concern for the delicate psyche of children, meticulously documents these truths. Borgohain's real-life muse serves as a vital foundation for the elaboration of this poignant tale.

In the face of losing a cherished soul, children find themselves at a loss for words, their vulnerability and isolation magnified. Borgohain's earnest endeavors to elucidate the anxieties surrounding death in the young shed light on the transformative shifts in their behavior, thereby constructing an astute realm of awareness for discerning readers.

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