

River Narratives in the Context of North East India: A Study of Selected Texts

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Introduction

Rivers have incessantly attracted the imaginations of litterateurs, artists as well as poets since inception. Throughout the human history, rivers have always served as a poignant symbol of life, metamorphoses and eternal flow of time. In literature, writers have a mysterious connection with rivers. Besides, in the realm of literature, rivers have manifested as powerful conduits, proudly carrying the essence, significance, and relevance of human experiences, emotions and desires. In other words, rivers play an instrumental role in advancing literary creations, inspiring stories, and igniting human being's fancy and imagination. Rivers are serving as metaphors in literature that course through the veins of creative works, infusing them with unprecedented meaning and countless layers of symbolism. Presently, rivers have obliged to become a source of ecological consciousness within literary macrocosm. Rivers embody the fragility and resilience of the ecological realm, prompting immediate introspections including advocate for preservation of life-giving arteries. Likewise, authors are leaving no stone unturned to raise awareness about lethal environmental degradations through scintillating and evocative delineations of rivers as a protagonist and tragic character. Broadly speaking, with the tender pages of creative works of literature, a silent revolution is unearthing. It can be depicted as an alliance between words and environment, with the collaborative mission of safeguarding ecology and rivers for future generations. With animated representations and mind-

bending storytelling and research, literature summons readers to immerse themselves in the incomprehensible beauty and evanescent fragility of the natural galaxy. Consequently, the portrayed passages awaken readers' senses and motivate for ecological conservations. Similarly, writers from North East India such as Kula Saikia, Ankush Saikia, Easterine Kire, Mamang Dai and Arupjyoti Saikia have been bridging the gap between the realm of literature and the urgent need for river and ecological protection. The said wordsmiths, with their literary craftsmanship and linguistic prowess have been endeavouring for the safeguarding of rivers and ecology through their fiction and non-fiction works. In addition, the skilled artisans of language employ their mastery of words to weave captivating narratives, poetry, and prose that serves as pragmatic vehicles for raising awareness and stimulating action towards the protection and preservation of earth's precious ecology. Through the eloquent expressions, experiences, imaginations and contemplations, the above mentioned writers have generated literary landscapes where rivers flow as living, breathing entities, welcoming readers to absorb themselves in the beauty and fragility of fundamental ecosystems.

Objective

This study aims to explore the depiction, thematic portrayal and narrative of rivers in the selected fiction and non-fiction works such as *If A River*, *The Forest Beneath the Mountains* and *The Unquiet River*. Besides, it endeavours to investigate the ways in which rivers shape the lives, identities, customs, cultures and societies of the people in North East India and analyse the socio-cultural roles attributed to rivers in the region. It also analyses the environmental challenges confronted by rivers in North East India, such as massive pollution, unscientific and excessive dam construction, sand and gravel mining, overfishing, industrial waste discharge, wetland drainage, agricultural runoff, over abstraction of groundwater and explore how these issues have been limned and represented in the selected texts.

Methodology

The methodology for the said study on the topic of rivers and literature and their relevance and significance in the context of North East India would involve a combination of qualitative research method,

literary analysis, and cultural studies. Besides, ecocritical dimensions and comparative analysis are applied. The selected texts are closely read and examined to extract themes, symbols, and narratives associated with rivers.

Analysis

Nestled amidst the captivating and ethereal beauty of the North East Indian geography, a collection of English literature has blossomed through showcasing the regions diverse culture and lifestyle. With the advent of British colonial rule, English became an indispensable language of administration, communication and education in North East India. Subsequently, the indigenous people of the region created a distinctive branch of English literature that reflects the exceptional experiences and perspectives. The North East Indian English writings include a plethora of literary creations produced by eight states authors i.e. Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Sikkim. On the other hand, this emerging literary trend has served as a tool for asserting cultural identity and challenging prevailing prejudices, biases, stereotypes and discriminations. It moved heaven and earth to offer a space for marginalized voices to be heard, shedding on numerous realities and struggles faced by them from the mainstream India. In the similar direction, writers such as Ankush Saikia born in Tezpur, Assam composed remarkable literary works that include *The Girl from Nongrim Hills*, *Red River*, *Blue Hills*, *Tears of the Dragon*, *The Forest Beneath the Mountains* etc. Arupjyoti Saikia hailing from Assam is also noteworthy name who has authored celebrated works like *Forest and Ecological History of Assam, 1826 – 2000*, *A Century of Protest: Peasants Politics in Assam since 1900*, *The Unquiet River: An Environmental History of the Brahmaputra*, *A Century of Protests* etc. Apart from the above mentioned names, writers like Temsula Ao, Easterine Kire, Mamang Dai, Robin S. Ngangom and many more have enriched North East Indian English writing beyond one's imagination. Coming to proposed argument, the study of river narratives in the context of North East Indian English writings, it imparts a fascinating insight into the multifaceted relationship between literature and the region's affluent natural and cultural heritage. By examining three selected texts that

revolve around the river: *If a River, Forest Beneath the Mountains and The Unquiet River*, this analysis is focused to unveil the deeper meanings, symbolisms, and thematic explorations within these narratives by shedding light on the intricate connections between humans, rivers, and the socio-cultural fabric of North East India. According to the tenets of ecocriticism, rivers have been imbued with deep ecological and cultural significance, occupying a distinguished space within the intricate tapestry of the earth. In his work *The Environmental Imagination*, the ecocritic Lawrence Buell argues that rivers have always embodied fluidity as well interconnectedness of nature, making them instrumental metaphors for the dynamic relationships between humans, ecosystems and the natural world. Furthermore, rivers act as vital conduits of water, shaping landscapes and assisting diverse ecosystems. Buell remarks that rivers must be preserved instead of considering it merely as geographical feature. The destruction of river ecosystem for greed by humankind can be traced in the lesson *The Catcher of Elephants* of the novel *The Forest Beneath the Mountains* by Ankush Saikia. For example:

Once, along with a Missing mahout, the forest officials apprehended two Nepalis and an Assamese man for polluting the river by poisoning a significant number of fish within the Nameri sanctuary. The perpetrators resorted to using bleaching powder or poisonous herbs to contaminate the fish, which were later smoked on a large log. (Saikia, 2021, P.113)

In his book *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing*, Scott Slovic explored the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of rivers. He portrayed rivers as a source of beauty, serenity, and awe-inspiring power, captivating the profound influence that water bodies can have on human emotions and experiences. The same feeling can be extracted in the book *If a River and Other Stories* by Kula Saikia in the chapter titled *If a River*:

In the said book, a character called Nimu confidently meets Gokul's challenge by sharing his personal encounter with a river. He elucidates that he has not only seen a river but also immersed himself in its embrace. Nimu also vividly recalls throwing torn bits of paper into the river, watching them swiftly vanish and reappear down-

stream. These unique experiences, he suggests, can only be fully appreciated by those who have been close to a river. (Saikia, 54)

Moreover, ecocritics consider the importance of place and space in literature. To be precise, they explore how specific environments, landscapes, and ecosystems shape human experiences, identities and narratives. This notion can be found in the introduction of the book *The Unquiet River: A Biography of the Brhamaputra* by Arupjyoti Saikia:

The Battle of Saraighat and subsequent conflicts in Assam hinged on the ecological dynamics of the river. The Ahom army's knowledge of the river helped them repel the Mughal army, utilising the terrain to their advantage. The Brahmaputra River also served as an escape route for the Ahom kings. In contrast, the Mughals failed to adapt to the environmental challenges, ultimately abandoning their conquest of Assam. Hence, this exemplifies how ecological factors like space and place played a decisive role in shaping the outcomes of battles. (Saikia, 2019, P. 23)

The ecocritics value local and aboriginal knowledge systems that are rooted in a specific place. In addition, it also critiques the significance of various ways of knowing and learning from the land, including conventional ecological knowledge and indigenous perspectives. In the novel *The Forest Beneath the Mountains*, the depiction of Chariduar forest and its disappearance proves the loss of traditional ecological knowledge system. Broadly speaking, the decreasing area of the Cahriduar reserve forest signifies the loss of a significant ecosystem that held vast knowledge about plants and their uses. The native people living in the region may have possessed traditional ecological knowledge passed down through generations, including the medicinal properties of plants, sustainable harvesting practices, and their role in maintaining biodiversity. Even the degradation of the forests can have detrimental implications for indigenous communities who depend on them for their livelihoods, cultural practices and spiritual connections. Therefore, the reduction of forest area confines their access to resources and disrupts the balance of their customary lifestyles, potentially leading to the erosion of plant based knowledge and practices. The decline in the forest area also affects the overall

biodiversity of the region, including plant diversity. Consequently, the loss of plant species can disrupt ecological interactions, impact the abundance of medicinal plants, as well as diminish the overall resilience of the ecosystem. This reiterates that fact of recognising and valuing the plant based knowledge held by communities since they have played instrumental role in preserving biodiversity. In the book *The Natural Alien: Humankind and the Environment*, the ecocritic Neil Evernden remarks on the alienation of humans from the nature. The same can be felt in the below narrative of the book *The Forest Beneath the Mountains* by Ankush Saikia in the chapter titled *The Forest Officer's Son*:

They came to a wooden bridge over a small river, more like a stream now in the dry season. (Saikia, 2023, P.13)

In the words of Neil Evernden, the presence of the river highlights the human nature relationship and the potential for reconnection. The river's flow, even in the dry season, signifies nature's resilience and its ability to persist despite human disturbances. Evernden's work encourages a reflection on human being's perception of rivers and the need to restore a sense of harmony and reciprocity with the natural environment. Furthermore, the depiction of the first people's fear and caution towards the river reflects the themes addressed by Val Plumwood in her book called *Enviormnetal Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. Plumwood debates that humans frequently perceive nature as an "other" to be feared and conquered. For instance: (*The Camp at Foothills*)

The author paints a picture of a primal landscape: towering hills, flowing rivers, and abundant wildlife. Humans initially fear the mighty river, questioning its origins and destination. Settlements avoid its banks owing to seasonal floods. Over time, more people arrive, including the protagonist's ancestors, forming a diverse community along with the Brahmaputra River in north-eastern India. (Saikia, 2021, P.17)

The idea that rivers can have significant transformation owing to excessive human intervention is critiqued by the principle of ecocriticism. It also focuses on the transient nature of natural landscapes and the impact of human development on the environment.

The author of the book *If A River*, represents that rivers have the power to dry up unexpectedly and alter their course, fading away from the collective recollection of the communities people once traversed. He reiterates that human being also require a vibrant riverside city teeming with houses, fields, hills, people, bustling marketplaces, railway tracks, roads and all the other essential elements that make a city complete. Mere River cannot fulfil human being's needs. All relevant components complement the river's presence, creating a lively and prosperous environment for everyone to enjoy. The ecocritics appreciate the recognition of the need for a comprehensive riverside city that goes beyond the mere presence of a river. The inclusion of houses, fields, hills, marketplaces, and other elements signifies the interconnectedness of human communities and the natural world. It also diametrically suggests that the importance of harmonising human development with ecological sustainability, creating a balanced coexistence between the built environment and the surrounding ecosystem. The character Nimu's desire to let the river through the towns, enabling boat navigation, reflects a longing for the restoration of natural processes and the reestablishment of the river's ecological function. Besides, the mention of tall grass, shrubs, and fishnets in the river sand evokes a sense of nostalgia for the rich biodiversity as well as cultural practices associated with riverside habitats. It emphasises the requirement of conserving and nurturing natural resources with the water evokes a sense of harmony and beauty, fostering a deep connection between humans and their natural surroundings. Accordingly, it reinforces the idea that a thriving environment contributes to the well being and fulfilment of individuals within the community. In the realm of ecocriticism, the metaphor of strong river current symbolised the characters profound connection to the natural world. Because despite being aware of the mobile phone, the character could not resist the compulsion to impart voice to those final sentences, akin to the ceaseless flow of thoughts mimicking the forceful movement of a river. From an ecocritical lens, the said connection between the character thoughts and powerful current of river indicates the inseparable bond between human consciousnesses and the environment. Moreover, the metaphor of river's strong current emphasises the persistent and influential nature of environment. It suggests that human thoughts, like

the relentless flow of a river, can be challenging to control or halt entirely. In the context of ecocriticism, the nature's role as a well-spring of inspiration, introspection, and creative expression can be traced. In other words, it accentuates the concept that human thoughts and emotions are interwoven with as well as shaped by the broader ecological system in which individual exist. The character's struggle to silence the current of thoughts illustrates an ongoing dialogue between humanity and the environment, affirming the indivisibility of human consciousness from the natural realm. This element can be explored in the chapter called *The Game* in the book *If A River* by Kula Saikia:

The character of the story found himself unable to resist uttering those final sentences despite knowing the phone had been disconnected. His thoughts surged forth, akin to the forceful current of a river. Subsequently, it took him considerable effort to subdue that relentless flow. (Saikia, 2018, P.1870)

In the book *My First Summer in the Sierra*, John Muir puts forward the notion of wilderness preservation that highlights the significance of maintaining the integrity of natural environments including forested areas and the river systems. As depicted in the book *The Unquiet River*, the Kachari tribe's focus on the Brahmaputra River's sands that are subjected to human activities such as sand mining and alteration of river dynamics, may conflict with John Muir's conservation tenets. Muir's comprehension of the interconnectedness of ecosystems would suggest that these activities could disrupt the natural flow of the river, potentially affecting sedimentation patterns and mineral concentrations. In the book *If A River* by Kula Saikia, the characters' perspectives on shaping a river without water can be analyzed through an ecocritical lens. Prabha's enthusiasm for the endeavor reflects a human inclination to exert control over nature, potentially disregarding the ecological ramifications. The character Gokul, however, exhibits a certain discomfort, indicating a heightened sensitivity to the fundamental essence of a river, which is the presence of flowing water. His unease can be interpreted as an awareness of the significance of water in supporting ecosystems and an inclination to respect the inherent processes of nature. Another character Nimu's explanation

resonates with an ecocritical perspective, underscoring the dynamic nature of landscapes and the vulnerability of ecosystems. By referring to the transformation of a sea into a desert, Nimu draws attention to the concept of environmental change, be it triggered by natural calamities or human activities. This serves as a reminder that human interventions can have far reaching consequences on the environment. *If A River* prompts a contemplation of the interdependence of the natural world, the impacts of human actions on ecosystems, and the imperative to comprehend and honor the intricate balance of natural systems. It encourages critical examination of our relationship with the environment and fosters a deeper appreciation for the complexities inherent in the natural realm. In the chapter titled *If A River* from the book *If A River and Other Stories* written by Kula Saikia, the river takes center stage as a profound symbol embodying the interconnectedness of nature and human history. Drawing upon ecocriticism, the chapter explores the multifaceted role of the river and its significance in the broader context of environmental understanding. The river acts as a metaphorical bridge, linking the old and the new, and providing a narrative that resonates with the ebb and flow of water. It serves as a conduit for forgotten chapters of history, connecting the past with the potential for a fresh start and renewal. The river's dynamic nature reflects the ever-changing course of time and the constant flux of life. Within the chapter, the author highlights the powerful narration of the river, akin to the desert's subtle messages. The desert, with its silent presence, mirrors the river's enduring vitality and the whisper of ancient times. The river's existence predates the emergence of living beings, symbolizing its timeless presence in the natural world. It breathes alongside humans, inhaling and exhaling the same air, while quietly preserving layers of forgotten history within its depths. It acts as a custodian of the past, silently burying the memories of blood-thirsty individuals beneath its flowing currents. However, the narrative takes a poignant turn as the author reflects on the river's current state within their own town. Once abundant with life and dynamic forces, the river has transformed into a mere ditch, devoid of its former vigor and yearning for water. This transformation highlights the consequences of human impact on the environment, shedding light on the degradation and loss suffered by rivers and their eco-

systems. By exploring the river through an ecocritical lens, the chapter prompts readers to contemplate the fragility and vulnerability of natural systems. It encourages a deeper appreciation for the intrinsic value of rivers as vital lifelines, nurturing diverse ecosystems and sustaining countless species. The river's decline serves as a powerful reminder of the urgent need for environmental conservation, sustainable practices, and the restoration of damaged ecosystems. In *If A River and Other Stories*, Kula Saikia skillfully weaves together narratives that delve into the intricate relationship between humans and the natural world. In Arupjyoti Saikia's book *The Unquiet River: A Biography of the Brahmaputra*, the river itself takes center stage as a vital component of the ecological discourse explored through an ecocritical lens. Saikia delves into the intricate relationship between the Brahmaputra River and the surrounding environment, shedding light on the ecological significance of this powerful waterway. Through ecocriticism, Saikia highlights the Brahmaputra's role as a dynamic and complex natural entity. He examines the river's ecological functions, such as its contribution to the region's biodiversity, the nourishment of surrounding ecosystems, and the overall balance of the natural environment. Saikia delves into the river's flow, exploring its unique characteristics and the impact of its water levels, currents, and seasonal fluctuations on the surrounding flora, fauna, and landscapes. Furthermore, Saikia delves into the human-nature relationship along the Brahmaputra River, emphasizing the reciprocal interaction between the river and human communities. He explores how human societies have adapted to the river's presence, drawing upon its resources for sustenance, transportation, and economic activities. However, he also addresses the ecological consequences of human interventions and the challenges posed by practices such as dam construction, deforestation, and pollution. This highlights the complex and often problematic interaction between human activities and the river's ecological integrity. Saikia's examination of the Brahmaputra River through an ecocritical lens underscores the need for environmental consciousness and sustainable practices. He calls for a deeper understanding of the river's inherent value as a natural entity and emphasizes the importance of preserving its ecological integrity. By recognizing the river as more than just a resource for human exploitation, Saikia encour-

ages readers to develop a sense of stewardship and responsibility towards the river and its surrounding ecosystems. Overall, Saikia's exploration of the Brahmaputra River within an ecocritical framework offers a comprehensive understanding of the river's ecological significance. By emphasizing the river's role as a living entity intertwined with human communities and the broader environment, Saikia prompts readers to reflect on the intricate connections between humans, nature, and the necessity for sustainable environmental practices. In the chapter entitled *Monetising the Wild from Ankush* Saikia's novel *The Forest Beneath the Mountains*, a mesmerizing and multi-dimensional narrative unfolds, weaving together a tapestry of intricate relationships and profound ecological implications centered around the enigmatic river. The chapter deftly employs a third-person perspective to immerse readers in a labyrinthine exploration of the human-environment dynamic, interlaced with the thought-provoking lens of ecocriticism. Within this literary masterpiece, the river emerges as a majestic and ubiquitous presence, its flowing waters carrying not just the weight of life-sustaining currents but also the profound clash of conflicting human desires and environmental imperatives. In a mesmerizing dance of narrative intrigue, the chapter unveils the protagonist's friend, an audacious yet unyielding character, beseeching the beat officer for the seemingly innocuous permission to extract sand from the sacred river. However, the officer, donned in a cloak of bureaucratic authority, weaves a web of artful excuses, ultimately rejecting the request, thereby encapsulating the underlying struggle between rapacious human ambitions and the urgent need for ecological preservation. Saikia's literary prowess expertly immerses readers within the rich tapestry of this chapter, where the river transcends mere backdrop status to become a sentient entity, a metaphorical conduit through which the intricate tapestry of human desires and environmental considerations unfolds. Employing the enlightening lens of ecocriticism, the chapter beckons readers to traverse the labyrinthine corridors of introspection, contemplating the delicate interplay between human activities, resource exploitation, and the irrevocable impact on the river's ecological equilibrium. Through the protagonist's relentless pursuit of truth, an immersive investigation ensues, beckoning readers to ponder the pervasive issue of monetization within the untamed wilds. Saikia's

deft literary strokes unveil a tapestry of complexities, wherein the chapter's focal river symbolizes not merely a conduit of economic prosperity but an intricate ecosystem teeming with delicate ecological relationships. The author's contemplative prose guides readers towards introspection, inviting them to unravel the intricate layers of environmental exploitation and its irrevocable repercussions on the river's sacred ecology. In summation, the chapter titled *Monetising the Wild* from Ankush Saikia's visionary work *The Forest Beneath the Mountains* mesmerizes readers with its labyrinthine narrative. Through an opulent blend of prose and ecocritical discourse, the chapter peels back the layers of human desires, environmental preservation, and the enigmatic river that intertwines them. Saikia's narrative tapestry prompts readers to delve into the ethereal realms of introspection, ultimately kindling a collective yearning for responsible stewardship of the river and its irreplaceable ecological heritage. In the idyllic realm of picnics, where nature's beauty unfolds, a poignant tale emerges, showcasing the intricate relationship between humanity and the river. Amidst the laughter and camaraderie, a disconcerting reality lurks, where the river's vitality is threatened by the thoughtless actions of those who visit its banks. In the chapter titled *Monetising the Wild* from Ankush Saikia's book, *The Forest Beneath the Mountains*, a magnificent tapestry of human desires, ecological implications, and the river's silent agony is delicately woven. It is within this chapter that the protagonist's friend, driven by ambition and the promise of profit, seeks the elusive permission to extract sand from the river's embrace. But fate takes a cruel turn as the beat officer, adorned in a cloak of bureaucratic authority, rebuffs the request with artful excuses. The beat officer's reluctance, born not only from suspicions of the protagonist's friend's intentions but also perhaps from an inherent aversion to outsiders, marks a pivotal moment in the narrative. It signifies the clash between human aspirations and the rivers' intrinsic worth, illuminating the profound power dynamics that govern the human-environment relationship. The river, a silent witness to these events, embodies both vulnerability and resilience. Its flowing waters, once a lifeline for countless species, now bear witness to the destructive forces unleashed by human hands. The act of damming the river during picnics, ostensibly for amusement, disrupts its natural course,

altering the delicate equilibrium that sustains its ecosystem. The wanton use of bleaching powder, a chemical intrusion into the river's depths, not only extinguishes the vibrant lives within but also symbolizes a callous disregard for the river's inherent value. As if the river's lament were not profound enough, the chapter reveals another distressing practice—dynamite fishing. The explosive force, unleashed upon the river's tranquility, stuns and disorients its inhabitants, leaving a trail of ecological destruction in its wake. The river, once a haven of life, becomes a battlefield where the struggle for survival is usurped by human greed and ignorance. In the wake of these haunting revelations, ecocritical perspectives shimmer like distant constellations, casting light upon the interconnectedness of all living beings within the river's ecosystem. The chapter beckons readers to traverse the labyrinthine corridors of introspection, urging them to question the implications of their actions on the river's delicate balance. It challenges society to transcend the superficial allure of economic gains and embrace a more holistic understanding of the river's intrinsic worth. In the depths of Ankush Saikia's fiction, the chapter *Monetising the Wild* serves as a powerful testament to the river's enduring spirit. It evokes a profound sense of responsibility, compelling readers to reevaluate their relationship with the natural world. Through its poignant narrative, the chapter underscores the urgent need for environmental consciousness, advocating for the protection and preservation of the river's sacred ecology. In the broader tapestry of the book, the chapter Journey to Tawang transports readers on a transformative expedition, where the river transcends its role as a mere backdrop and assumes a central position in the narrative. Through the lens of ecocriticism, readers are invited to explore the delicate interplay between human exploration and the river's ecological dynamics. The river, a guiding force throughout the protagonist's voyage, symbolizes the interconnection between humanity and the natural world. It becomes a source of solace and contemplation, prompting a deeper understanding of the profound significance of environmental stewardship.

Conclusion

The wee study of river narratives in the context of North East Indian English literature through selected texts impart an affluent

and nuanced comprehension of the literary landscape and cultural heritage of the region. Throughout the investigation, the intricate ways in which rivers are represented and symbolised in literature has been unearthed. These narratives offered insight into the diverse perspectives, experiences, and emotions associated with rivers, reflecting the unprecedented voices of the litterateurs as well as the community's they delineate. In conclusion, the study of river narratives in the context of North East India provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between humans and the environment, particularly with regards to the region's rivers. Through the analysis of selected texts, it becomes evident that these narratives serve as important vehicles for understanding the ecological, cultural, and socio-political dimensions of rivers in the region. The river narratives analyzed in this study reveal the deep-rooted cultural and spiritual significance of rivers in the region. These texts often portray rivers as living entities, endowed with agency and deserving of respect. They showcase the intricate interdependencies between human communities and rivers, emphasizing the role of rivers in shaping the socio-cultural fabric of the region. Such narratives serve to strengthen the sense of ecological awareness and responsibility among readers, encouraging them to view rivers not merely as resources for human exploitation but as integral components of the natural world deserving of protection. Furthermore, the study of river narratives in North East India also highlights the pressing environmental challenges faced by these rivers. Issues such as damming, industrial pollution, and climate change pose significant threats to the ecological balance and the livelihoods of local communities dependent on rivers. Through an ecocritical lens, these narratives draw attention to these environmental crises, urging society to take action and adopt sustainable practices to safeguard the region's rivers and the ecosystems they support. The study of river narratives in the context of North East India reveals the multifaceted nature of the relationship between humans and rivers. Ecocriticism provides a valuable framework for understanding the ecological, cultural, and socio-political dimensions embedded within these narratives. By exploring the interplay between humans, rivers, and the environment, this study emphasizes the need for environmental consciousness and sustainable practices to protect and preserve the rivers of North East India

for future generations. In addition to the ecocritical perspective, the study of river narratives in the context of North East India also offers pragmatic notions that can inform environmental policies and practices. These pragmatic notions emphasize the importance of practical and actionable steps to address the ecological challenges faced by the region's rivers. Through the analysis of selected texts, pragmatic notions emerge in the form of concrete suggestions and solutions for sustainable river management. These narratives shed light on traditional ecological knowledge, community-based initiatives, and indigenous practices that have sustained rivers for generations. By recognizing and valuing these local knowledge systems, policymakers and stakeholders can integrate them into decision-making processes, promoting sustainable development and conservation efforts. Furthermore, river narratives provide insights into the social and economic dimensions of rivers in North East India. They depict the dependence of local communities on rivers for livelihoods such as fishing, agriculture, and transportation. These narratives highlight the importance of ensuring the equitable distribution of resources and the inclusion of marginalized communities in decision-making processes related to river management. Pragmatic approaches involve promoting participatory governance, engaging local communities in conservation efforts, and fostering sustainable economic alternatives that reduce the pressure on rivers. Moreover, the study of river narratives also underlines the need for cross-border cooperation and regional collaboration in addressing shared river systems. Many rivers in North East India flow through multiple states and countries, presenting complex challenges that require collaborative efforts. Pragmatic notions advocate for transboundary river management frameworks, dialogue among stakeholders, and the sharing of best practices to ensure the sustainable use and protection of rivers. In conclusion, alongside the ecocritical perspective, the study of river narratives in North East India offers pragmatic notions that guide practical actions and policies. These notions emphasize the importance of incorporating traditional ecological knowledge, community-based initiatives, and indigenous practices into decision-making processes. They also underscore the significance of social equity, participatory governance, and cross-border collaboration

in addressing the ecological challenges faced by the region's rivers. By integrating these pragmatic notions, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards sustainable river management, ensuring the preservation and well-being of North East India's rivers for present and future generations.

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