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| Barua, Navakanta (1926-2002) |
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| Navakanta Barua was one of the best known Assamese modernist writers of the twentieth century who worked through multiple genres. A graduate from the Visva Bharati University and an MA from the Aligarh Muslim University, he joined Cotton College, Guwahati as a Lecturer in English in 1954, where he worked till his retirement from service. During his lifetime, Navakanta published more than a dozen volumes of poetry and songs, five novels, eight volumes of non-fictional prose and literary criticism, besides a substantial body of children’s literature. He edited two children’s magazines (*Jonbai* and *Pohar*) and a journal of art and culture (*Seerolu*). He translated into Asamiya the verses of Kabir and some of the major works of Euripides, Goethe, Pushkin, Rabindranath Tagore, Nazrul Islam, Sumitranandan Pant, Subramanyam Bharati, Walt Whitman and T.S. Eliot. Some of his best translations render the texture and nuances of the original in a brilliantly creative manner. |
| Navakanta Barua was one of the best known Assamese modernist writers of the twentieth century who worked through multiple genres. A graduate from the Visva Bharati University and an MA from the Aligarh Muslim University, he joined Cotton College, Guwahati as a Lecturer in English in 1954, where he worked till his retirement from service. During his lifetime, Navakanta published more than a dozen volumes of poetry and songs, five novels, eight volumes of non-fictional prose and literary criticism, as well as a substantial body of children’s literature. He edited two children’s magazines (*Jonbai* and *Pohar*) and a journal of art and culture (*Seerolu*). He translated into Asamiya the verses of Kabir and some of the major works of Euripides, Goethe, Pushkin, Rabindranath Tagore, Nazrul Islam, Sumitranandan Pant, Subramanyam Bharati, Walt Whitman and T.S. Eliot. Some of his best translations render the texture and nuances of the original in a brilliantly creative manner.  Though in his early poetry Navakanta had liberally borrowed images from T.S.Eliot, in his later poetry he strove to find his own mode through a conscious synthesis between the techniques of modern poetry which had evolved in the West and an indigenous tradition which was rooted in what he calls the ‘people’s faith’. In his two long poems *Samrat* (1962) and *Ravana* (1963), he uses epic imagery to depict the modern individual’s struggle to retrieve the aesthetics of life from the machinations of state-craft and the politics of nationalism. His first volume of verse, *He Aranya, He Mahanagar* (1951) has been considered the earliest expression in Asamiya poetry of an individual’s encounter with spiritual loneliness, fear, ugliness and loss of faith associated with life in a modern city. A deep emotional involvement with the universe around him and philosophical engagement with the complex problems of life make him the pioneer of new poetry in Asamiya. In all his writings, Navakanta was deeply concerned with the theme of transience. His last volume of poetry, *Dalangat Tamighora* (Tent on a Bridge—1999) represents life as a temporary tent built on a bridge between eternities. The poet is intensely aware of the inadequacy of religion, philosophy, reason and even knowledge to capture this eternal process of change, and yet, his poetry records his sincere quest for a stable world where love and friendship would triumph over all uncertainties. In some of his well-loved poems Navakanta transcends the cynicism and spiritual dilemma of modern life to express his love for this earth and hope for the future generations.  Navakanta’s novels have also been acclaimed for their creative engagement with issues that concern modern life. In *Kakadeutar Har* (The Bones of Grandpa—1973) for which he received the Sahitya Akademi award in 1975, *Kapilpariya Sadhu* (A Tale from the Banks of the Kapili, 1953) and *Goroma Kunwori* (Princess Goroma, 1980), he displays a deep historical sense of the past. In his poetry as well as fiction, Navakanta constantly grappled with the problem of finding a suitable language for his complex thoughts and emotions. List of Works He Aranya He Mahanagar (1951)  Kapilipariya Sadhu (1953)  Siyali Palegoi Ratanpur (1956)  Samrat (1962)  Ravana (1963)  Mor Aru Prithivir (1973)  Kakadeutar Haar (1973)  Goroma Kunwori (1980)  Manuh Ataibor Dweep ( 1980)  Ratnakar (1983)  Ekhon Swatcha Mukha (1990)  Suryamukhir Angikar (1990)  Dalagat Tamighora (2000) |
| Further reading:  (Barua)  (H. Barua)  (D. Barua)  (Gohain) |