

Representation of Women in Bodo Poetry: A Feminist Perspective

Ms Rima Narzary¹, Dr. Rupashree Hazowary²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Bodo, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, Assam.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Bodo, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, Assam.

ABSTRACT

The idea of feminism has slowly spread all over the world. The theory which originated in the western world gained its influence in India and its wave has strongly flourished in the north-eastern part of India too. Women race has been dominated by the society's thoughts and feelings. They are suppressed by their opposite sex and are kept distanced from their rights and privileges. To be liberated from such kind of dominance and atrocities, a major uprising by the women gave its birth to feminist thoughts and ideology. So Feminism is an acquisition of equal rights and equal living along with men in social, political, economic, education etc. It is a revolution where in a patriarchal society fights for the cause of women's rights. Feminism theory has brought new thoughts and new ideology in the literature. Feminism is basically about having equal rights in social, political, economic, and educational areas and living on equal terms with men. Feminist theory has introduced fresh ideas and perspectives to literature, inspiring many writers to create works based on feminist concepts. Many writers have created their writings on feminist ideology. Feminism theory has laid its impact on English literature in the 20th century. In the 20th century, feminism had an impact on English literature, and it also made its way into Bodo literature. This theory became a key focus in Bodo literature too. Bodo poets show the real-life experiences of women in their poems. You can clearly see feminist ideas in the works of some women poets, who really get what it's all about.

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchy, Equality, Rights, Social Conditions.

INTRODUCTION

As the wave of Feminist or feminism theory spread throughout the western countries, it has its influence in India too. It can be truly said that the feminist theory or feminism was not formed in India. Feminism is a political stance and theory. Here, gender appears to be a subject of analysis. In it, sex demands equality, rights and justice. The English word, 'Feminism' has been derived from the Latin word, 'Femina' which means 'woman'. Generally, feminism can be defined as the movement that took place for more than two hundred years for the equality in both the sexes in aspects to social, political, cultural, literature, economics, religion etc.

Through feminism, the rights and status of women are honoured equally as that of men. Like the men, women also should get equal rights in respect to social, political and economics. Chaman Nahal says about feminism "I define feminism as a mode of existence in which the women is free of the dependence syndrome, there is dependence syndrome whether it is husband, father, the community or a religious group when women will free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of

feminism materializes". According to Vasuki Nesiah, "Feminism is simply the awareness of injustice within male-female relations and accompanying commitment to change the situation."

Feminism theory has laid an immense impact on the literary world. According to feminist critics, men concentrate most of their writings based on the value and importance of their needs. Feminist critics basically give importance to depict the picture of women and their participation in literature. It is to be mentioned that feminist criticism began with the work of Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex" (1949). In this work, Simone de Beauvoir discusses about the treatment of women in the literary world and says thus:

"Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers, and Scientists have striven to show that the subordinate Position of women is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth."

Virginia Woolf can be regarded as the first feminist writer. Her "A Room of One's Own" (1929) is highly remarkable. An American feminist critic, Elaine Showalter in her famous book, "A Literature Virginia Woolf can be regarded as the first feminist writer. Her "A Room of One's Own" (1929) of Their Own" (1977) has portrayed the differentiation between male and female. Thereafter women also took up their writings like men which gave them different identity and status in literature

If we turn the pages of the history of feminism in India, it can be stated that feminism started in the mid nineteenth century. But women were not able to express their problems. However, it can be Before the Independence, Raja Ram Mohan Ray has abolished Sati system with the help of Lord Bentinck, which follows the abolition of child marriage, female infanticide, polygamy etc. Then in assumed that they became more aware of their problems along with the western influence on them the year 1917, after the formation of Woman's Indian Association, many laws were enacted to solve the various problems of women. The feminism ideology started in Indian literature with the influence of English literature. The theme of feminism has been used by the writers like Nayantara Sehgal and Roy can be regarded as the other remarkable writers of the feminist theory. The present status of Rana Mehta. Kamala Markandava. Mahasweta Devi. Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati women can be seen represented in their writings.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the representation of feminist ideology in Bodo poetry.
2. To analyze the portrayal of women's oppression, marginalization, and resistance in Bodo poetry.
3. To explore the social status, roles, and rights of Bodo women as reflected in Bodo poetry.

METHODOLOGY

The present study has been undertaken in an analytical method. The data for the present study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary consists of the text of the poetry. The secondary data has been collected from different sources like books, journals, magazines as well as critical writings by different critics and scholars.

DISCUSSION

Literature is a reflection of a society. Every aspects and activity of the people of the society like thoughts and feelings, work habits, enjoyment, sadness etc. all are represented in the literature. Like other forms of literature, poetry is also a part of it. Among the different forms of literature like prose, drama, essays etc.

poetry has a first place in its origin. Poetry is the melodic tone which arises from the feelings of heart. It is a colorful portrayal of imagination. When thoughts and feelings from one's heart overflows, and when it is written down adding splendid beauty, then it becomes poetry. It is difficult to analyze the meaning of poetry through its outward look. That is why, Saint Augustine says, "If not asked, I know; If you asked I know not." Not only imagination has its place in poetry, the essence of various spheres of life in the society can also be witnessed. The various aspects of life can be shaped into poetry. That is why Mathew Arnold says, "Poetry is the criticism of life." The feelings of man are represented through poetry. Along with one's thoughts and feelings, the true picture of reality of life also is represented through poetry. Many poets have created poetries on women. They have depicted about the status and rights of women in respect to social, political, economic, religion etc.

Poetry representing feminism can be seen in the works of Kathy Acker, Frances Dana Barker Gage, Dorothy Hewett, Kishwar Naheed, Carolyn Kizer, Anna Maria, Lenngreer and Nellie Wong. In India, Feminism poetry emerged from the hands of Aditi Rao, Kamala Das, Kamini Ray, Meena Kandeswary and Rupri Kaur. Similarly, in Assamese literature too taking the account from Sneha Devi, we find Nirupama Borgohain, Indira Goswami, Arup Patangia Kalita, Rita Chowdhury, Anuradha Sarma Pujari as feminist poets. In Bodo literature, starting from: Kali Kumar Lahary, we witnessed Prasenjit Brahma, Brajendra Kumar Brahma, Anju, Indira Boro, Rashmi Choudhury, Rupashri Hajowary, who have created poetry based on feminism ideology.

Bodo literature started in the year 1920 when an edited work of Satish Chandra Basumatary's magazine "Bibar" was about to be published. Though in the year 1915, the book "Boroni Phisa O Ayen" was published in Goalpara district by "Howraghat Boro Sonmilani", yet the kick off for Bodo literature is considered from 1920. Bodo literature is divided into two period: Olden and Modern period. The old period is considered from 1920 upto 1951 and the modern period began from the birth of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in the year 1952. It can be said that, before the year 1920 or the year between 1884-1914, which can be said as Missionary age in Bodo literature, the different genres of books were written and created by missionaries for Bodos for the sake of preaching their religion. It was the time where Bodo women were badly downtrodden, It was then Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, along with the preaching of "Brahma" religion, started to work for the upliftment of the society in different spheres. It is because of his inspiration, women were able to form an organization and they were able to get involve themselves in various activities like raising voice for the equal rights as enjoyed by men, for widow remarriage and to abolished the illegal practice within the families.

In Bodo literature, ancient period is divided into two: Bibar period and Alongbar period. In the Bibar period, there cannot be seen the creation of poetry and literature based on women's participation. But in the Alongbar period, little significance is shown in the treatment of women in literature. Bodo women's social condition can be clearly witnessed in the first short story of Bodo literature "Abhari" by Ishan Chandra Mushahary included in the 1940 edited magazine, "Hathorkhi Hala" by Promod Chandra Brahma in which we feel the presence of feminist theory. Feminist theory can also be felt in in the writings of Anandaram Mushahary namely "Noni Maidang" and "Leka Gwrwng Howa arw Leka Rwnngwi Hinjao" but "Noni Maidang" is a prose and "Leka Gwrwng Howa arw Leka Rwnngwi Hinjao" is an One act play. Kali Kumar Lahary's "Kontai Bijab" collection of poems was published in 1951. This book depicts women's characters, strength and their courage. Feminist theory can be witnessed in some of the poems like 'Sorkhar Hinjao', 'Hinjao Sorkhar Bijou', 'Hinjao Jati mani Durgothi', 'Jakangdw Boibw Boro Bima' and more other poems.

It has been already mentioned that the modern age in Bodo literature started in 1952 along with the formation of the Bodo literary organization. It is because of the formation of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha that the new thoughts and new experiences flourished in Bodo literature. With the advent of new thoughts and ideologies, women also became the subject of discussion in the literary creations. Writers like Prasenjit Brahma, Kamal Kumar Brahma, Brajendra Kumar Brahma, Anju, Bijay Baglary, Indira Boro, Rashmi Choudhury, Rupashri Hazowary and Sunil Phukan Basumatary emerged as a feminist poets.

Prasenjit Brahma's poem 'Bima Ai' is a poem of high standard which deals about Women. Women race has been treated and pictured in different ways by the different genres of literature of the world. Prasenjit Brahma too has visualized women in the form of a mother. Some histories of the past show how women have taken different types of roles in different times. These are mentioned by Prasenjit Brahma in his work, 'Bima Aie'. In this poem, the poet depicts Urmila as an absurd character. It is known to everyone that Urmila is the wife of Laxman but her name is forgotten to be mentioned by Bhalmiki Muni in the Ramayana. The fact that women are not given equal status in the society and are deprived by everyone has been represented by some feminist writers by mentioning the name of Urmila as an exemplar.

A renowned poet Anju, who has a strong influence on the modern Bodo literature, penned a book 'Ang Mabwrwi Dong Daswng'. It was published in the year 2014 and she was awarded the Sahitya Academy award for the work in the year 2016. The new thoughts and ideologies, problems, burdens and responsibilities, pains and sufferings of the Bodos and the various forms of oppressions and atrocities laid on women are reflected in most of the poems of the book. She narrates all these reflections with instances and with the use of symbols and images. In the base of her writing of the poem, 'Ang Mabwrwi Dong Daswng' presents a pity woman. Before the start of the poem, she briefed up saying: "Buhumni gaswi dukutiya Aijwphwrni mungao" (In the name of all the pitiable women of the world). The poem shows the unbearable pains and sufferings of women. Since the past, women were dominated, humiliated and are deprived in various spheres of life. In the

Expressed aceelongsociation between socialism and feminism leads the supporters of socialist feminism to explain the inequality of the sexes in terms of social relations and economy structure of capitalism. Women also have dreams, hopes and desires but due to constraints from the family, community and the society, women have to sacrifice their dreams, aspirants, hopes and desires. The poet has not only concerned about Bodo women but tries to concern about all the women from the nook and corner of the world. The poet has put different questions and argument through her writings based on the sufferings and anxieties of women and their various experiences in life.

As-

"आंहा अजदआ बेसो
सोमोन्दोनि दिसखाथाखौ आइजोफोराल' मानो सुजुबनांगौ
मानो सुजुबनांगौ
एबा जिनाहारिनि दागोआ मानो थालाडो बिसोरनि देहा गोर्बोआवल'
आंहा अजदा बेसो
बबे इसोरनाव बिनो आं अनागारिनि बिसायनाय
एबा दंदा सोरबा इशोर बोखांफैनो आंनि थै रना-रनि जिउमा"

English rendering:

"My argument is this
Why is bundle of relation build only by woman Why build

Or Why is the spot of rape lie only on theirs physical body And soul?"

My argument is this

At which deity's altar can I seek justice against perpetrators

Is there any God, in this cosmic expanse who can lift the heavy burden of my shattered life"

The feminist thought is clearly reflected in this poem. She has put an argument why in the case of rape, spot can be viewed only on woman. In the patriarchal society the roles and duties of women are assigned and fixed by men, which they cannot cross beyond it. Women have to honour and worship their husbands in the form of Sati Sabithri, but the husbands are not accused even for the crime they do.

In the patriarchal society, the actions, duties, responsibilities of women are prescribed by men, and these are to be followed by women as Sati-Savitri, yet even if men commit crimes, they are not held guilty. It is said in Bodo society- "हिनजावनि फिसाया जेब्लायबो हिनजावनि फिसाखा" (A woman's daughter will always be a woman). Society beats a woman like Beula with open arms, will worship her like a mother, but if she lives according to her own wishes or comforts, society will reject her and exploit her. The voice that has risen in favor of such women has echoed in the poem of his beloved as follows:

“बेनो जान हागौ

बेउलाबादि आं सति हिन्जाव नंगौ ना नडा

बेनि आन्जाद नाइनोसो सौदों आनि सुवामीखौ

एबा सोरबा इसोर जानो हास्थायारि सौनो थिनहरदों

मोत्रो बाइस्रानाय गैयै फुजिनाय-गंग्लाइनाय

मानोना इसोर जानायनि बेनोथ' गिबि चर्त'

English rendering:

“Perhaps this is how it must be

Am I another Behula, whose devotion must be put to the fire

Has a serpent fanged my husband merely to test my virtue

Or has some enduring deity sent this venomous strike

Scheming to extort absolute reverence and worship

For it seems, to reign as a God

Striking the innocent is always the very first decree”

The poem relies heavily on the North-East Indian and Bengali folklore of Behula and Lakhindar (from the Manasamangal kavya. In the original myth, the goddess Manasa uses a snakebite to test Behula's chastity and force her family into submission). Anju in her poem rejects the romanticization of female suffering. Instead of praising Behula for saving her husband through painful trials, the poet questions why a woman's virtue must always be tested through tragedy. The poem expands from a personal grievance into a universal socio-political critique. The “deity” acts as a metaphor for any patriarchal or dominant authority that inflicts pain on the vulnerable just to demand unconditional fear and “respect”.

The book, "Bublini Guthal" by Rashmi Choudury, published in the year 2011 also reflects feminism. She has been conferred the "Bhob Medhi Gwswkhang Mora Phagoldia" literary award for this work. Her poetries reflect the hardships and hurdles of life experiences and along with it reflects the women's experience and humanism and feminist thoughts. The poem, "Ang Ang Jananwi Gwiliya" depicts the picture of the Bodo Movement and its consequences, where women were not safe, rape and brutalized, leading to their dreams shattered. In the poem "Jinahari Jousangao" there is not only the picture of rape in physical body but also the rape that takes place in mind and soul. In a poem "Bublini Guthal", she has

presented the woman's ability to bear every burdens and hardships. Though women has the equal liberty to man, yet they are deprived of their liberties in every spheres. Men always try to take the advantage to dominate the women. Some tries to take the chance of dominating seeing the weaknesses of women. The picture representing on this is given in the below lines taken from the poem thus:

“उदां अखोराडाव
नों बिरथिं
आं नायदावगोन
हायेनखौ गोबा गोबा
नों मिनि सोरगोफुरियाव
आं गाबोन नोरोगफुरियाव”

English rendering:

You keep flying
In the free sky
I will look you above
Embracing the earth.
You keep smiling in heaven
I will keep weeping in hell.

Indira Boro can be regarded as a feminist poet. Her poetry book "Aizw" (woman) written about women was published in the year 2019. She has been conferred the "Probon Borgoyary" award for this book. The language used in the poem is simple and expressive. The poem represents picture of women in different forms, their pains and sorrows of life that they have to come through and the burden they have to hold as a mother, daughter and daughter-in-law. In the system where society and family are caught up under the traditional accepted ideologies, how many women who are flourishing in their education as well as in their work has to face different obstacles and hardships, all these occupy a place in the poem. Few lines from the poem is given below:

“जोनि नखर बिहाव बिखुनजो
आरो जोनि फसाय
खामानि मावना
समनि हेर फेर जाब्ला
मोनखासै गालि गोथां होनब्लाना
रेबगन दैग्राया रेबगन दैनायनि दाय
मेथाइ रोजाबग्राया
गान गाग्रा होनना
थात्था दाननाय-सोंखारिजानाय
गैयाथ’ बेसेनथि”

English rendering:

“Our family with father and mother in-laws
And our husband
After work
If delays the time in seconds
Is sure to be reprimanded

The writer is accused of writing
The singer
Is being mocked
Worth is nowhere.”

Rupashri Hazowary, a flourishing poet has so far published five poetry books. Some of her poetries are reflected in different magazines. Her poetry book "Angni Bilwagw Hainari" published in the year 2006 was written based on woman centred. It depicts the nature and characteristics of women and on the basis of their way living in the society. Her another work, "Bidinta ni Saogari" published in the year 2008 also presents poem based on women. In this male dominated society, the women are not fully independent and from childhood till the last day of their life they have to face various kinds of atrocities, pains and sorrows in their life. All these are reflected in the poem.

Apart from the above mentioned poets, feminist theory can also be witnessed in some other poets. Mentioned may be made of Brajendra Kumar Brahma's work, "Bima", Sunil Phukan Basumatary's "Bonlota Brahma", "Bulbuli", Rita Boto's, "Hwsrikaonai", Dhwnshri Swargiari's, "Mwnbrwi Swngti", Sahilal Basumatary's, "Begom" etc.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussions we came to know that Bodo women's uprising has started not so long ago. In comparison to men, women are also not so far behind. They are not lacking behind, though they are not able to fully participate in social, political and economic affairs. Bodo women are progressing much in education, business, wage earners, office employee, industrial workers etc. In the literary spheres too, women are very much in progress. In Bodo literature, rare feminist poets can be seen. But many feminist writers can be seen in other genres of Bodo literature like short stories, novels and Dramas. In the writings of Phallocentrics, the creation of poems on feminism theory is very rare. But they concentrated much more in the creation of short stories, novels and Dramas through the theory. On the other hand Gynocritics are busy in creating poetries through feminism theory.

Though Bodo women have sufficient liberty, they are not free in all the aspects. In the patriarchal society, women are being dominated by men. Though some of the women have liberated from such dominations, yet they have to face and come across different obstacles and hardships. These very experiences in women's lives and their conditions, the feminist poets created poetries. The Bodo poets in many of their poems, instead of concentrating only on Bodo women, write poems about the women of the world.

End-Notes:

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