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আগস্ট, ২০২০

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বিপ্লব ভট্টাচার্য

স্কলার পাবলিকেশন্স

করিমগঞ্জ, আসাম, ৭৮৮৭১১

মুদ্রক:

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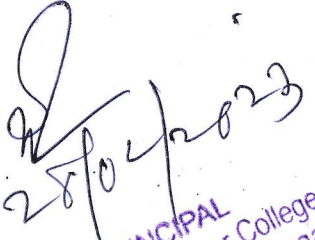
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প্রকাশক ও স্বত্বাধিকারীর লিখিত অনুমতি ছাড়া এই বইয়ের কোনো অংশের
কোনোরূপ পুনরুৎপাদন বা প্রতিলিপি করা যাবে না। এই শর্ত লঙ্ঘিত হলে
উপযুক্ত আইনি ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।

উৎসর্গ

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প্রেমীদের উদ্দেশ্যে


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- হোজাই ও করিমগঞ্জ জেলায় প্রচলিত সিলেটি বিবাহ রীতি : একটি তুলনামূলক বিশ্লেষণ
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Scope of Gender study in Assamese Folktale with special reference to Laxminath Bezbaruah

Banajit Sarma

Regardless of any nation or any language, each country has a specific folklore. Recently the study of folklore has been geared up looking at the importance of its exploration to know the root of the nation life of a country. Folktales are the components of it which depicts the socio-cultural life of ancient time of a nation.

There remained a misconception in the past that folk tales are childish and useless. But the German schools were the first to usher the true value of folk tales to the field of scientific study of itself. They asserted that the root of a nation lay in the folktales as these reveal the age old practice, habits and customs as well as thought and imagination of any nation. Recent, study of folklore has unfolded different scopes in the field of literature like gender study, myth, religion and so on. It has offered ample scopes for gender study as folklore and has explored the formation of Gender through its folktales.

The present study makes an endeavor to analyze the position of women from gender perspective in a selective folktale named "Tula and Teja" taken from the collection of folktales "Burhi Air Sadhu" (Grandma's tale) penned down by famous Assamese author Laxminath Bazbaruah. The discussion will be on the concept of formation of gender in the past and its consequent state of women in the society.

Gender studies is conceptualized as a field for interdisciplinary study pinpointing to gender identity and gendered representation as core interest. Simone de Beauvoir maintains regarding gender, "One is not born a Woman, one becomes one." (Beavouir, 295) It implies that in Gender studies, the term gender refers to the social and cultural constructions of masculinities and femininities; it is not just about sex, male or female (biological). Therefore construction of gender in society is a significant field in gender studies. It asserts that gender formation and gender identity is the creation of society not of birth.

Many of the folktales are shaped taking women as the center though men are also depicted sometimes as dominant characters. The status of women in these folktales is determined by gender specific bias prevailing in the society. Hence the scope of gender studies into folklore cannot be ignored and gender perspective is observed as important academic domain in this field of study.

The folktale dissected under the microscopic observation here is "Tula and Teja" taken from the popular Assamese folktale collection. "Burhi Air Sadhu" (Grandma's Tale) authored by Laxminath Bezbaruah. This collection is one of the milestones of Assamese literature. The tales of the collection are translated to English by Different writers time to time.

The present tale tells about the central character Teia who happens to be a woman character. A rich framer had two wives, the younger one was his favorite (Lagee) and the elder one was alienated (Elagee). The husband is depicted as a henpecked one and the younger wife is as a wicked woman envious of the elder one. The elder wife had a daughter and a son namely Teja and Kanai. The younger had a daughter named Tula. She hardly could tolerate the elder wife and her husband's visiting the elder wife in her separated house made her too annoyed. Therefore, she plotted to put an end to her life. Once she accompanied her for fishing and she, by her Cunning, pushed her into the water uttering some

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magical incantation, "Become a big turtle" (Baruah, 75). Consequently she became a turtle and started to live in that pond.

Then the step mother i.e. the younger wife of the rich framer started to torture Teja and Kanai different way, even she did not give them proper food to eat. Later the turtle revealed herself to her children and started to provide them with good food when they came to tend cows in the field. Both the children became healthy and strong taking that food. The step mother noticed this and found out the reason of that with the help of her daughter Tula. Knowing the fact she again designed to kill the turtle and finally succeeded in doing that. As tutored by mother turtle, Teja and Kanai managed to collect the legs of the turtle and buried those in the bank of the pond.

Two trees bearing fruit and flower of majestic taste and beauty sprouted on the burial spot. The produce of the two trees enabled Kanai to convince the king to marry Teja as the king desired to have the beautiful flower of that flower plant. When grown up to a young girl, Teja was married by the king. This again organized the step mother and she devised to send her own daughter Tula to the palace of the king in place of Teja by transforming Teja to a small bird Myna (Salika). The king was unable to recognize Tula in the place of his wife Teja as they resembled too much. But truth came to the light as Teja in the appearance of Myna revealed the conspiracy of her stepmother and Tula. After realizing the evil trick of the step mother of Teja, he cut the imposter Tula into pieces and sent back to her mother. Teja in the form of bird was transformed to a women by removing the magical pin from her head. The king thereafter spent his life with Teja happily ever

It is observed from the narrative that folktales can be explored taking gender as important parameters, It can encompass different areas of gender issue like: i) The importance of gender specific folklore ii) Social barriers, challenge and deprivation in the uprising of female in the society iii) Investigation into the role of

female in the formation of gender iv) Suppression of female and their lack of voice in the patriarchal social set up.

Delving deep into the folktale 'Tula and Teja' it is primarily observed that three serotypes of female are found in the folk tales which are: i) Young woman in the portrayal of daughter and bride, ii) Middle aged woman like mother, step mother or co-wives and iii) Old woman like maid or rural physician. The first and second category women are found to be in the uncomfortable zone who suffers at the hand of male or female.

In the present tale it is depicted that the relationship between the spouses impacted on the relationship of their children. The daughter of younger wife Tula was forbidden to mix up with Teja and Kanai, the daughter and son of the elder wife. Teja and Kanai were inflicted by the step mother after the scheming murder of their mother. But being step sister, Tula never defended them. On the contrary she also joined hand with her mother in the process. Moreover, the father was a totally indifferent towards the well-being of Teja and Kanai as their mother was not his favorite. It is observed here that female character put every barrier in the well-being of other female characters and hence fueled in gender formation. The young wife of the rich person went up to any level to spoil the life of elder wife and her daughter Teja. In this way they are transformed to women characters by social agent. Their biological sex did not make them women but they were made women by the evil imposter i.e. the younger wife. It is observed that females had to face barriers, deprivation and atrocities in the society in the process of their evolution as a human being. It is again found that women characters lacked any voice, silent wailing was the only resort for them in the past.

Notwithstanding the inhumane treatment met by Teja. she strove and strove and finally witnessed goods fortune. With the blessings and super natural power of deceased mother, Teja became the queen. Here beauty also plays an important role and it appears to be pre- requisition of marriage. Teja's father also

married his second wife as she beautiful and started to ignore the first wife. Makes are found to consider females as mere sex object and thus their domination contributed in the formation of gender. Teja was married by the king as she was also extremely beautiful. Thus man's attitude towards women was responsible for gender formation in the past.

Polygamy happened to be very common in the society of the past. The present story "Tula and Teja" and displays the tendency of males to have more than one wife. The father of Teja and her husband, the King, also married again only because of beauty of the females. This throws a light on social evil of male domination prevailing in the past which ultimately was a factor of gender formation.

The tale "Tula and Teja" opens up scope for gender study in Assamese Folklore. It reveals the social differences between male and female and also the role of female in the formation of gender. At the same time the story unveils the truth behind gender formation exposing the social barriers, challenges, deprivation and infliction met by the female sex. These factors ultimately fuel in forming gender identity. The story also focuses on the fact the male considered females as objects of sex instead of honouring as beings. Analysing the story in the perspective of gender studies has brought forward different agents contributing in the formation of gender. Social injustice, male domination and the evil female characters are key to the formation of gender identity in the society of ancient time.

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