

Women's Social Position Reflected in Arupa Patangia Kalita's Short Stories

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ABSTRACT: Gender discrimination is a big problem of the society. The weak position of women in society is the result of the gender discrimination in social and economic life. Arupa Patangia Kalita, a powerful writer of contemporary Assamese literature draws the realistic picture of the various aspect of gender barrier in her short stories. She presents the pain and struggle of women in a patriarchal society in her short stories. The author also gives a strong voice in her women characters to break the gender barrier and thus she expresses her social sense. The present study will try to find out the society's gender barrier, women's position in society and the women's voices against the patriarchal society in Arupa Patangia Kalita's short stories.

KEYWORDS: Society, women, gender barrier, patriarchal, short story.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Arupa Patangia Kalita is one of the most powerful novelists and short story writer in contemporary Assamese literature. She achieved her Ph.D. degree from Gauhati University on Pearl S. Buck's women characters. Arupa Patangia Kalita is a retired professor in English Literature, Tangla College, Darrang. Arupa Patangia Kalita has enriched Assamese literature by many short stories, novels, travelogues and translation literature. Mriganabhi, Ayananta, Kaitot Keteki, Arunimar Swadesh, Phelanee, Tokora Bahor Sonor Beji are her novels. Arupa Patangia Kalita has published eleven short stories collections till now and these are – Moruyatra Aru Anyanya, Morubhumit Menoka Aru Anyanya, Deopaharor Bhognostupot, Pas Satalor Kothokota, Mileniyamor Sopun, Alekjan Banur Jan, Kuruswuwar Sopun, Mur Sopun, Hihotor sopun, Sonali Egole Koni Parile Beliyé Umoni Dile, Moriyom Astin Athoba Hira Boruah, Jalatarangar Sur and Pani Gabhini Asil Aru Anyanya. She has been rewarded many prizes for her contributions to creative literature. She has received the Sailendrachandra Das Gupta Sahitya Setu Award in 1993, the Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad Award in 1995, the KATHA Award in 1998, Sahitya Sanskriti Award in 2009, the Prabina Saikia Award in 2012, the 2014 Sahitya Akademi Award and Asom Upotyaka Sahitya Award in 2016. Her novel Ayananta was translated to English as Dawn: A novel by Ranjita Biswas. One of her another novel Felanee was translated into English by Deepika Phukon. Many of her short stories also have been translated into various languages.

Arupa Patangia Kalita has drawn various subjects of contemporary social, political and economic conditions of Assam in her short stories. Woman is one of the main subjects of her short stories. She has presented many aspect of women's life such as problems of women, social position of women in a patriarchal society and the struggles of women in society. The present study is focused on some issues of women's social position in Arupa Patangia Kalita's short stories. For this study, the selected short stories are – *Chikar* from the collections of Moruyatra Aru Anyanya (1992) and *Prastavana* from the collection Morubhumit Menoka Aru Anyanya (1995).

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of study are-

- To find out various aspect of the women's positions in patriarchal society in Arupa Patangia Kalita's short stories.
- To analyse how the author draw gender barrier created by the society in her short stories.
- To find out how the author raise the women's voices against the male domination in her short stories.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary and secondary data. Primary data includes selective works of the author and the secondary data includes research articles, journals and internet sources.

IV. DISCUSSION

An author observes contemporary society with keen sight and deep sensitivity. Thus it is possible to the authors to draw a realistic picture of the society in their literature. Arupa Patangia Kalita also observed her society with exceptional and curious sight. She monitored the life of women in a patriarchal society in Assam and expressed the sadness of women, male domination on women and the mental harassment on women by the society.

Chikar is one of the remarkable short story of Arupa Patangia Kalita. In this story, the author presented a very sensitive matter of the society. It reflects a realistic portrait of the pain and problems of marriageable young women Kushum. The family of Kushum and the society considered her unmarried condition as a problem or burden for her. No one choice Kushum for her ugliness and the black colour of her skin. Her marriage had been broken in seventeenth times. Again a bridegroom came and she unwillingly agreed to come out to the front of bridegroom and other guests. But again she was not selected for her over age. At last she lost her mental balance by unbearable inhuman harassment given by the society.

The patriarchal society thinks that the marriage is the biggest success for women and therefore they considered marriageable but unmarried women as burden of the society. Society gives them a pitiful sight. Moreover the society mentally harasses those women. The author Arupa Patangia Kalita draws this picture about the position of women in this story by the main character Kushum.

A woman in a patriarchal society must learn to tolerate for living –the author reflected this type of male-dominated thinking of the society in this short story. When the eighteenth bridegroom came into Kushum's home, she disagreed to come out in front of him. Then her mother consoled her and said that a woman should try to suffer all pains. The signs of gender barrier of society and the law position of women in society are inherent in her mother's consolation.

The viewpoint on women conceived by the patriarchal society and the inequality between male and female created by the society are reflected in Arupa Patangia Kalita's short story Prastavana. Reema is the main character of this short story. She showed very good result in her study. She and her parents also dreamt of a bright future. Reema wanted to be a doctor. Though the economic condition was very weak of her family, her father fully supported and helped her to fulfill her dream. But some peoples of society remarked his devotion for his daughter's higher education was full of foolishness. Knowing the dream of Reema to be a doctor, the neighbours tried to understand her father that it was not logical to give higher education to a daughter. The gender inequality of society are reflected in the following comments given by the peoples of society-

- (a) "Suwalik loi iman matta huwa bhal nohoi." (It is not good to show so much affection to daughters.) (p 54)
- (b) "Aitu mastoror lora hobo lagsil, ekotha khuwaleheten." (He would have shown various colours had he been the son of the master.) (p55)

The point of view of society is that women are always dependent on men. The comments of neighbours made Reema mutinous. She expressed her angry and said that she would not marry. She wanted to be single for whole life if marriage was just a symbol of subordination by the husband. Hearing her statement Rambha's grandmother screamed and said only the single word "Tiri Jati" (Female Class). Rambha's grandmother also gave her an advice that it was not good to be unmarried for a women. The statement of Rambha's grandmother indicates that the society accepts it easily and traditionally that a woman is sheltered and repressed by the husband through the marriage. The argument of Rambha's grandmother on the side of marriage for women, women's helplessness and dependence on her husband proves about the weak position of women in a patriarchal society.

In this short story, Reema fulfilled her dream and she married Arun, a rich and ambitious man. After marriage Reema has obstructed by Arun to do her duty. Her freedom had been destroying by Arun's male ego. Reema, who was suppressed in every situation, felt the binding of the invisible chain of the patriarchy. At last Reema thought to come out from that insufferable situation and she decided to do work as a doctor in a hospital of a distant place from her home. Reema's final decision is the symbol of indomitable courage to come out from the patrilineal by breaking this chain. The author announced the protest against the patrilineal of the society by Reema's bold and determined decision.

V. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, we found that Arupa Patangia Kalita has drawn a realistic and reliable picture of the very weak position of women in society, gender inequality between man and woman in her short stories. We found that the author give a bold voice in the female characters of her short stories to break the gender barrier and the unseen chain of the patriarchal society. Another important aspect is opened that the author Arupa Patangia Kalita's social sense and responsibility are visible very strongly in her short stories.

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