

## **Status of Women in Assamese Proverbs: An Analytical Study**

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**ABSTRACT** : Assamese Society is known for its rich history of oral literature. Proverbs are one of the important sub-genres of oral literature. Therefore, it is all means an important part of folklore. Like the other folklore items, proverbs can also be the medium of representation of society. Almost in all societies, elder and parents used proverbs to spread the knowledge and to guide the new generations. In this present paper, an analysis is attempted the status of women in the assamese society through the proverbs. This paper will look into these certain examples how to women are portrayed and symbolized in the assamese society.

**Key words:** Folklore, Proverbs, Gender studies, Patriarchal society, Women.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION :**

Folklore can be considered to be a part of the traditional knowledge system of a society. Proverbs is one of the most important collectors of the moralities that are wide spread in a society. Thus a analysis of proverbs can lead to a better understanding of the representation of gender in that society. This would also help us to understand the images of women are generated in Assamese Society. Through the present research paper, we try to analysis by the collected proverbs with a view to looking at the status of women in Assamese society. This analysis would help us in situating the position of women in Assamese society which is traditional and patriarchal.

Objections of the study:

The research paper aims to analyze the state of women in society by application of Gender perspective as an analytical lens to the Assamese proverbs. The research paper also a step to preserve the proverbs which related with women society.

Methodology :

This research paper is based on analytical method. The analysis basically concentrates on the perspective. Secondary data have been collected from topic related books research works and internet.

Status of Women in Assamese proverbs:

Proverbs of Assamese language are filled with different images of women. Proverbs being an important genres of folklore, can be mentioned a representational medium of society. In the Assamese proverbs, women are represented as loving, sacrificing, caring, emotional, weak or cruel, jealous and selfish.

Proverbs are the representation of the society at large. Proverbs are made from the experiences which got from the society. Proverbs are kinds of moral or educational lesson for the folk-society. Through the proverbs various picture of a society are reflected. It is a kind of medium through which women and men are represented and can give us some idea about the patriarchal frame of a society. Society creates a crucial role in constructing the gender role depending upon its idea of masculinity or femininity. In a patriarchal society, the male ideology has always positioned women under men and the socialization of people is such that it gets institutionalized. The society provides different sets of social rules for men and women to be a member of the society and created binaries as man and woman.

The proverbs are one of the important verbal forms that act as an expression to communicate and to spread moralities and traditions. It plays an important role in confirming the traditional ideas. Proverbs can be an important source to understand the gender construction of society.

There are many characterise lies of a woman in society. They play the role of a daughter, bride, daughter-in-law, mother, co-wives, step mother and mother-in-law. In a folk society the women are all-in-all of a house. The all responsibility of the house is upon the women. They have to look after the children help her husband and also take care of their in laws. And these all picture of women are clearly reflected in Assamese proverbs. The every necessary daily work of a woman in her house is mentioned in the Assamese Proverbs. Therefore, famous Assamese folklorist Birinchi Kumar Barua said that the Assamese proverbs are made by the assamese women. A huge number of Assamese proverbs analysis the varieties character and daily life of an assamese women. The above mentioned folklorist clearly expresses his opinion in this famous book "Asomor Lok-Sanskriti".

Being a patriarchal society man is considered the owner of the property and permanent member of house. They take the major decisions at home as well as in society. But the women are considered as the subordinate to a man. The role of a woman should remain confined household chores only. The position of an Assamese woman can be cleared in proverbs 'Poti Nijar/ Jiiti lokar' (sons are property of own house but the daughters are the property of her in laws). As like as there is another proverbs is here which is the same meaning that is Lora dhan, sowali patan (boys are like the paddy, girls are the blighted corn).

Most of the times the, proverbs have observed some hidden meaning. Sometimes the literal meaning of a proverb seems to have relation with women but in reality it's not. Thus, the hidden meaning of a proverb may be totally different from the literal meaning. On the other hand, sometimes a proverbs may literally seem to refer to some other meaning but by analyzing the inner meaning we can understand that its hidden meaning contain reference to women and their nature. As example-

Lao jimanei dangor hauk  
Sadai pator talat

The literal meaning of the proverb is that the size of a gourd immaterial but it will always be under the leaves. But the inner meaning of this proverb is that women can never be equal with men. A woman may be highly educated or she might have achieved a lot of success. But she will always rank after man in the patriarchal society. This proverb consists of metaphorical words like 'gourd' and 'gourd leaves' which symbolise the womenfolk and the men folk respectively. Most commonly the user of this kind of proverbs towards the female is the male members of the society. But women are also seen to use this term proverbs for themselves. At present day when society is changing, women is taking part equally in society with the man in the various field, getting the higher education, the using of such proverbs to degrade the position of women is still available in society.

Many other proverbs show conformity to the idea that women by nature are mysterious and advise that they should be guarded and rigidly controlled. These type of proverbs are also popular among the common people of Assamese folk-society. Some of them mentioned below-

Tiri, miri, bhatou, kowa  
Ei charis asaui nopowa,,

(Women, Miris, Parrot and Crow about these four nobody really knows)

This proverb maintains that women generally are irresponsible, frail and unreliable by nature. They can be compared in this regard to the Miris, a tribe of Assam, Parrots and Crows all of which are equally unreliable and unpredictable.

Violence against women is most common in folk-society. Violence against the female is the most popular event to show off the strength of a male. Using violence they want to control women and their rights. Proverbs like-

Katari dharaba xile  
Tiri chalaba kile,

(Use rock to sharp the knife like that if you want to control your wives then beat her fortnightly on monthly).

Other proverbs-

'Mahake pasheke diba tao

Tehe dekhiba tirir bhao.'

' Daot khan, kutharot xil

Maheke pasheke tirik kil.'

Basically goes with the same theme. These proverbs reflect the dependence behaviour of the female. The popularity of this kind of proverbs proves the violence on women and dominance of male in a contemporary society. A man should beat his wife time to time to control his wife. If, the man unable to do this, then the society will not accept the situation and it shameful for the man society. These type proverbs are not only clear the behaviour of the men nature but also trying to make a forceful masculinity in the society with that proverbs.

Women are supposed to be categorised as the secondary position in society. Any gendered culture teaches people how to behave in the society depending upon the concept of masculinity and femininity. All these trainings are given by the people through a process of socialisation from the childhood. The home, the educational institutes, the religious institutes, the legal, the political and such other social institutes take the main role to give such trainings to the people from the childhood. They teach every man and woman how to behave in society. The patriarchal society has always the ideology that women should be positioned next to that of men. People in such society unknowingly acquire a kind of patriarchal ideology when women are supposed to be dominated by the hegemonic power group.

Besides, the contribution of women in the economy of the family is not considered directly. The male members are the main earner of a family. Women work inside the house and men are meant to work outside. Women should always stay inside the boundary of house and serve the domestic works. She is the housewife

and these rules are made by the patriarchal society. If a women stay in the house and do the everyday household works then she is recognized as the idle woman for the society. The evidence of patriarchal society is very much clear through the proverbs like this-

Giri jai porot

Tiri thake gharat.

(The man/ husband work in outside) and the women/ wife work in inside)

Some times through some proverbs we able to see another pictures of Assamese Society. Besides women in Assamese society have always been accorded status hardly enjoyed by women in other side in India. The Assamese women have always been making significant contributions towards the society. Many proverbs provide the clear pictures-

Gharar ghoini, chalur maak

Tok nusudhi, sudhim kak.

Its mean that, woman is wife of the man and the mother of his children. Therefore, her opinions are very important to progress his family. The wife is the main source and happiness and prosperity of a family.

Tiriye giri

Tiri nohole jai hatachiri.

This proverb means that, in a traditional Assamese family, the women are the key to everything. She controls everything. If she wants she makes a house like the heaven. As well as she also can destroy everything and turn the house into a hell. In this proverb, it shows the role of a woman in making a house. In Assamese society if a woman is meek, soft, humble, weak than she is a ideal character for the society.

Through the above proverbs, a quite, high and respectable position have been seen of a woman in Assamese Society. But it must be mentioned that women in general did not enjoy their social position which they deserved. Through the above two proverbs they are considered the basis of the peace and prosperity of a family, but they were not considered as the main part of a family.

Conclusion:

Thus, it is seen that gender roles in Assamese proverbs are basically generated by patriarchal world. Through the Assamese proverbs led to a revelation of the social differences between men and women. These proverbs indicate some social challenge, issues, social divisions faced by the women community in Assamese Society. By the analysis on Assamese proverbs it is proved that there was no voice of women against the gender difference at the time. But, now in this time some proverbs which are mentioned above are not used by the society. Because, in the present time, the status of the women are not same as the former society. In Assamese Society now women are developing them from every side. Now, they are highly educated and developed themselves in many side. They progress in social, cultural and economical way. So may of proverbs where women are clearly dominated my patriarchal society are not used in present days. Therefore, many proverbs are lost from the society. By this research paper, we try to analysis the status of women in folk-society. In the other hands we also try to save the female related proverbs which are not used in the present days. Because, the women related proverbs are valuable property for the folk literature.

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