

THE FEMALE VOICE AND TRADITIONAL DISCOURSE IN MAMONI RAISOM GOSWAMI'S NOVEL: AN ANALYSIS

(With special reference of Dotal Hatir Uye Khuwa Howdah)

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0.1 Abstract: Novelist pictured perfectly the painful consequences of child marriage faced by upper class ladies and their sufferings. How society set rituals made every day and every moment difficult for a widow author described through the characters. With the image of some tottering ladies in a conservative social structure, author left a strong hint of social revolution. Abandoned, deprived and Dalit Women's heart-rending incidents, love of common people, affection, and complaints or grievance of life and pictures of saddened stories, grieves are reflected in Mamoni Raisom Goswami's novels. Lives of all female characters of DOTAL HATIR UYE KHUWA HOWDAH where sorrows and miseries of Brahmin-Widow are reflected are misery. They are insignificant to the society and these characters lead their lives in isolation. This discussion is prepared to discuss the characters from various perspectives.

0.2 Methodology: This paper is prepared with the help of different subject related books and internet. Discussion is prepared using analytical process but with the progress presence of subjective methodology can be found.

0.3 Boundary: For convenience of the discussion subject will be confined in the female characters of Mamoni Raisom Goswami's DOTAL HATIR UYE KHUWA HOWDAH.

1.00 Introduction: Challenging obstacles of a struggling life and directing her creativity in a positive manner with her soul Mamoni Raisom Goswami contributed in her own way to Assamese literature and was a rare and fine talent. She was not bounded in Assamese language rather showed her talent in English language also. She was not limited to stories and novels and tried Literary Translation; she was awarded with Bharat Nirman, Honor Friendship, Assam Sahitya Sabha Award, Kotha Xonman, Sahitya Akademi Award, Kamal Kumari Award and many more.

1.01 Goswami's Novels: Humanity reflects through her literature and life. She was famous from the day she presented herself as a fabulist. Her novels are- 1) **Chenabor Srot** (1972) (চেনাবৰস্ৰোত, ১৯৭২), 2) **Neelakanthi Braja** (1976) (নীলকণ্ঠী ব্ৰজ, ১৯৭৬), 3) **Ahira** (1980) (অহিৰণ, ১৯৮০), 4) **Mamorey Dhora Tarowalaru Dukhan Uponyax** (1980) (মামৰেধৰাতৰোৱাল আৰু দুখন উপন্যাস, ১৯৮০), 5) **Dotal Hatir Uye Khuwa Howdah** (1982) (দঁতালহাতিৰ উয়েখোৱাহাওদা, ১৯৮২), 6) **Udaybhanur Soritra** (1989) (উদয়ভানুৰ চৰিত্ৰ, ১৯৮৯), 7) **Ishwari Jakhmi Jatri** (1991) (ঈশ্বৰীজখমীজাত্ৰী ইত্যাদি ১৯৯১),

- 8) **XaporSalorJuta** (সাপৰছালৰজোতা), 9) **TezAruDhulireDuxoritPristha(1994)**
 (তেজআৰুধূলিৰেধূসৰিতপৃষ্ঠা, ১৯৯৪), 10) **BhikkharPatraBhangi** (ভিক্ষাপাত্ৰভাঙী),
 11) **AdhaLikhaDostabez** (আধালেখাদস্তাবেজ), 12) **DaxrathirKhoj(1999)** (দাশৰথীখোজ, ১৯৯৯),
 13) **SinnamastarManuhtu(2001)**(ছিন্নমস্তাৰমানুহটো, ২০০১),
 14) **ThengphakhriTahchildaarorTamorTarowal(2006)**(থেংফাখ্ৰীতহচিলদাৰৰতামৰতৰোৱাল, ২০০৬),
 15) **BuddhasarDhuxorGaisaAru Mohammad Musa** (বুদ্ধসাৰধূসৰগাইসাআৰুমহম্মদমুছা),
 16) **JakhmiJatri** (জখমীপাত্ৰী), 17) **EkMohiyoxirJibonBrittanta**(একমহীয়সীৰজীৱন-বৃত্তান্ত),
 18) **DebapitharTez**(দেৰপীঠৰতেজ) etc.

Sorrows, misery, hurdles, and bad circumstances could not resist MamoniRaisomGoswami. She concurred those bad days with a creative wisdom. Goswami reflected common people, mostly neglected, deprived and Dalit WOMEN'S heart-rending incidents, love, affection, and complaints or grievance of life through tragedy and pain.

MamoniRaisomGoswami's first novel **ChenaborSrot** was based on life and tragedy of workers engaged on bridge construction work over Chenab river of Kashmir. The story proceeds with some real characters. Rather than showing native life routine of Kashmir author pictured the life of workers that stayed in the land for short period, characters like engineers associated with above mentioned bridge construction along with wives and children of the workers could be found in the novel.

By mentioning dirty sides of Brajadham she presented sanctity in suspicious way in MamoniRaisomGoswami's second novel **NeelakanthiBraja**. This small volume book is skilled and heart touching. This is the first Assamese novel plotted on Brajadham.

With some unwanted incidents from field study she wrote the novel **Ahiran**, which was based on lifestyle in a temporary society created by the workers and officials engaged over dam construction on Ahiran River in Madhya Pradesh.

She presented her life to the readers without hiding anything and boldly in her auto-biography **AdhaLikhaDostabez**. Childhood, religious environment in Satra and how her life shattered after becoming widow in a very young age, she described in the novel.

The novel **MamoreyDhoraTarowal** was based on her experience from Aqueduct construction over Sai River in Raibareli Uttar Pradesh. The crisis situation among the workers due to strike and betrayal of opportunist leader created the storyline of the novel.

Declining social bigotry due to the start of modernization after Second World War was mentioned in the novel **DotalHatirUyeKhuwa Howdah** with Kamrupi language.

In a tour to South-East Asia and Japan taste of different people, experience and different incidents of unpredictable life were collectively presented in the novel **Buddha SagarDhuxorGaisaAru Mohammad Musa**. This was the first travel based Assamese novel.

The novel **UdaybhanurSoritra** is based on an ill-mannered character who gradually destroys his family and his own life. Udaybhanu was an artist but due to the deprivation of certain achievements he lost his artistic soul.

How physical attraction or lustfulness can affect life, Goswami mentioned in the novel **XaporSalorJuta**. Goswami mentioned about bizarre life of Gayatri, her husband Bhaskar and Amaresh.

Real images of ill-human treatment of people towards each other, cruelty, and woman abuse during the vicious mass murder in Delhi in 1984 were reflected in Goswami's **TezAruDhulireDuxoritPrasthan** novel.

Extortion and domination, sexual abuse by landlords in rural areas of Kamrup and insecurity of common people, crisis and depression were pictured in the novel **BhikkharPatraBhangi**.

Theoretical or logical thinking of researchers along with some human emotions and research journal presented by different researchers of different countries in Ramayana Conclave of Mauritius and Japan were collectively presented in Goswami's **DaxrathirKhoj**.

She did a bold but silent movement against a ruthless tradition based on religion through her novel **SinnamastarManuhtu** which was based on Kamakhya temple, the novel was a collective representation of different cruel and indescribable incidents going on back of religious sanctity.

Description regarding religious Superstitions of society, aristocracy, wrong deeds of powerful high class greedy people, bold but decorous presentation of sexuality, life of lower class or workers can be found in MamoniRaisomGoswami's novels. In these novels plotted over different places logical thinking of highly educated people of society, social stands and pictures of religion and tribes can be observed.

2.01 Storyline of DOTAL HATIR UYE KHUWA HOWDAH: Future Satradhikar (Supreme priest of a Satra) of AAamrangaSatra, Indranath who considered the conservative traditions of Satra as abomination is a sensible and a supportive person to traditional rule breakers. Neglecting delusions, negative reformation, racism he stands in favor of living together, eating together and accepting all classes of the society. He was often hurt by widowed pehi (sister of his father), sister and Aunt XoruGoxani. He loved daughter of a Brahmin family Ilimon. Conservative society did not allow him to marry her. Apathetic towards land Indranath died in the hand of riots while visiting them sitting on howdah (carriage on the back of an elephant) to hand over all the land. Banning of Ating, independence movement, miserable life of upper class Hindu widow, rise of communist party, love, physical need etc gave complete structure to the story.

3.00 WOMEN'S VOICE IN DOTAL HATIR UYE KHUWA HOWDAH: MamoniRaisomGoswami's **DOTAL HATIR UYE KHUWA HOWDAH** is a social novel written in the beginning of eighties. Experiences she gathered from days in Satra, she mentioned the degradation of historic AamrangaSatra of DakhsinKamrup in her novel. Novelist explained the negligence and domination faced by widows due to feudal age rules and traditions of Satras.

Despite living in the same political and economic environment women have a different truth from men. Women face menstruation, women can carry child in her body, women can become mother. In a patriarchal society women consider her in-law's house as her own leaving her birthplace. In MamoniRaisom'sGoswami's novel **DOTAL HATIR UYE KHUWA HOWDAH** she reflected the faulty side of degrading society in a heart rending way mainly through four characters. These four characters are- Durga, Giribala, XoruGoxani and Ilimon. Durga's life became empty as a grave yard after society tagged her as sinner and ominous due to her deceased spouse. Giribala lost her husband in a very young age and she was not feeling comfortable to follow strict rules for a Brahmin widow. And she ate meat cooked in her Grandfather's Shardha secretly, her mother caught her red handed and pulled her back holding her

ponytail, she poured water on Giribala to make her free from this sin. Women need to accept the demise of husband and treat him with honor forgetting bad experiences during their married life. In this society a girl attaining puberty in her father's house was considered as a sin for whole family. Ilimon's father broke down mentally because he failed to arrange his daughter's marriage before her puberty. To keep her puberty secret Ilimon's father decided to send her to DibakarBhagawati's house. Though XoruGoxani was not able to build a concrete well and to store oil in a bottle, she was leading her life all alone. She was dominating her desires of young life and sexual need due to the ethics she learnt from this conservative society.

We will discuss this four wailing characters.

3.01 Durga: sister of Aamranga Satra's Satradhikar Mahpravu (Priest of Satra). She was married to a Goxain family of Sikarihati before her puberty but she lost her husband at the age of 16 and faced a lot of problem in her in-laws house, witnessing all these Indranath brought her back to Aamranga. Showing great enthusiasm while taking her back to home her father in law said- *"I will bring you back after returning from Gohainghar"*. But her in-laws did not come to take her back till her last day- *"Goxain of Sikarahati never came to take Durga back"*. She spent rest of her life with her brother. To express pain, sorrow, sufferings of Brahmin widow in a patriarchal society was the prime motive of the novelist. Author represented the unfortunate situations a widow faced in a Hindu social structure through the characters Giribala, Durga and XoruGoxani without any hesitation. At a time as a consequence of child marriage women suffered pain of being a widow. Upper class widow had to follow strict fasting rules, and as a result they were deprived of healthy food, sacred events and happy moments. These women felt financial and physical insecurities, they had to depend on others and were deprived of various works and they led a life through insults. Widow and childless was neglected in his husbands reformed society and faced criticism. Even she was criticized by her mother-in-law for sins written on her horoscope, she was kept aside from auspicious actions, and she became a captive of superstitions, bad-reforms and narrow mentality. In author's words- *"Her mind became black like her body got black while firing a husk fire"*. According Indian and Assamese tradition husband is the absolute God for a woman. Worshiping husband is the prime duty. In the love of deceased husband Durga worshiped with flowers and tulsi and she planned to go to Ganga River to dissuade her husband's ashes by selling her ornaments but she lost her ornaments and failed to go to Ganga. She was in deep pain for failing to dissuade her husband's ashes in Ganga. Durga skipped her food and her body and mind started to degrade and she suffered from illness. At last everyone was sure about her death and decided to send her to husband's house saying *"It is better to die in husband's house"*. Widow of an upper class Hindu Brahmin family Durga was following all the norms set by the society for a widow regarding attire, eating, rituals, and religious actions without opposing. With demise of her husband how Durga became captive of superstitions and leading a hopeless and unhappy life, how she became emotional and angry, author explained through Durga- *"Depression came to life slowly. There was shadow before for not having a child. But that shadow turned into a dark night after death of husband. A woman who sat firing husk fire till mid night had turned into real witch; she started getting furious over small things. She had started to curse people."* Following the rules set by traditions for a widow Durga woke up and perform her diurnal duties and put flowers in her husband's Kharam (A sandal made of single block of wood). She was a slave of time. Though awfulness and misery had turned her life to a nightmare she accepted it without any complain. Considering her staying at father's house brought good luck to Durga's in-law's family, Durga's father-in-law broke his promise of bringing

her back and never tried to bring her back. They did not even show the little hospitality one need to show to their relative widow during the period of Ambuvachi (a ritual followed in Assam). She was hoping for her return to husband's house, sometimes she uttered while arguing with her Bou (Brother's wife)-*"My brother-in-law will not let me die in this hell. They will come; they will come to take me back"*. With this type dialogue novelist gave more emotion made the character more touching. Durga also had sexual desire. She tried to sleep keeping her husband's kharam over her breast. In this kind of work of Durga Freudian influence can be observed. While representing Durga novelist entered in the character and expressed her painful existence with sympathy. With the character novelist depicted successfully how bad-reforms and superstitions can make widow's life painful and deadly.

3.02 Giribala: Wish, taste and life of an upper class Hindu Brahmin is controlled by male and traditions, for which they cannot have their own desires. Influenced by Freudian mentality Giribala is a significant woman character of DOTAL HATIR UYE KHUWA HOWDAH. She was sister of future Satradhikar of Aamranga Satra and hero of the novel Indranath. She was married to Latu Goxain of Bongora Satra before attaining her puberty, but after few days of her puberty she lost her husband and return to her mother's house with a premature pain of widow. While leading an unstable, uneasy life with anxiety she met Christian Priest Mark who came to write history of three satras, to collect Sanchipaath (bark of Agar wood) and to spread awareness about consuming Afing. Giribala helped in his work. Both came closer but Mark was careful about the dignity and pride of a widow, he was hurt by hearing about pain of Giribala. Life of a widow of so called high class people was intolerable. They need to follow strict rules often in their life. It was not only forbidden for them to eat meat or fish, they had to face atonement for staring at meat. Young widow Giribala faced punishment for eating meat secretly in his grandfather's Shardha. Her mother punched her, kicked her, Durga insulted her, she had to face criticism from others. It was not enough for the main priest, he forced her for Aathdhenu (donation of eight cows) expiation. But dependent widow Giribala faced all criticism silently.

People from her in-law's house came to take her back. But she denied, her body shook in fear. She felt like returning back to husband's house and living in a grave yard was same thing, she ran to Mark's house neglecting rain and storm and expressed her sorrows and pain with an emotional voice- *"Does pride become worthless like dust?...Sir ladies from Jagalia's sore said Giribala is beautiful, her face is life a rose. I believed those words. Touch it Sahib. Touch it- my body has no worth."* Mark felt pity for Giribala and his eyes filled with tears. Seeing Giribala half naked in Mark's room family priest criticized Mark and sentenced Giribala for atonement. A shelf was made with hay, sticks and bamboo in the area where elephant was tied, Giribala was made to expiation under that platform and later it was set to fire. But she lost love for life and her inner conflict made her to stay inside that shelf. The shelf was surrounded by fire at instance and the priest shouted- *"Come out, come out girl. The shelf is about to break down"*. That burning shelf was the death angel for Giribala. Giribala's life was painful and heartbreaking. Pain of a married life, miseries of a widow, tough traditional rules, and criticism of society destroyed her life completely. She accepted death as a voice against all her humiliations. While presenting Giribala through inner and outer conflicts, progressive thinking and humanity came out of from the novelist. Her dialogues, movements and consuming meat in grandfather's last rites, running to Mark's house in late night without caring for rain and storm and expressing heart out in front of Mark made Giribala an exceptional and uncommon character. Victim of inner and outer conflict Giribala gave a hint of her mentality- *"Mark Sahib. I do not like any these days. Durga says I don't give flowers and tulsii in Gohain's Kharam. I ate*

meat of grandfather's shradha. I am a sinner. ...I don't feel like that. That day also after eating meat and performing atonement I don't consider it as a sin". Eager to fulfill her physical need Giribala was humiliated and misbehaved by LatuGoxain and made married life a disaster. After becoming a widow her fasting soul-body and her wild sensation started giving a new kind of pain, a pain of premature widow. In Sahib's (Mark) presence she felt a new ambiance, she even imagined him as her husband. In author's word- "*Silk cloth of the umbrella is soft, glossy. Glossy like Mark Sahib's cheek*". Freudian mentality can be observed in the character's every work and thinking.

Tears came in her eyes thinking that one day Mark Sahib would leave her one day. To express her attraction towards Sahib Novelist said- "*Brown eyes of the Saint is just like two small hut of straw. One can create a home of eternal peace there*". She could not spend her life in pain and sufferings and showering flowers in memory of demised husband. She wanted freedom, she wanted that Saint as her life partner. But that ruthless society could not understand her, rather she was humiliated and forced to burn herself sacrificing her desires.

3.03 XoruGoxani: XoruGoxani was the wife of younger brother of AamrangaSatra's Satradhikar Mahaprabu, Ramananda and daughter of Pat Halodhia. With this character author expressed different qualities of a woman and her desire, hope. After the death of her husband in an accident happened in annual fire cracker festival, she never returned to her mother's house like other widow. She mentally prepared herself for the obstacles and to live her life rather than following the rules set by the tradition. Bravery and firmness of the character can be observed in her visit to Shih (students/devotee) without caring the adverse weather, to run a family all alone, running land and farm all alone. After her husband's demise she created a history in Satria society by teaching students by own and running her house and farm alone. Her deeds astonished many people. Mahaprabu's wife complemented her as- "*She is brave. Xoru is brave*". Lonely Goxani appointed widower Mahidhar Sarma Pathak as her assistant in running her land. She was attracted towards her right hand Mahidhar gradually. If Mahidhar was in trouble Goxani was affected too. She felt a storm inside her chest. She wanted to come closer to him but Satria Rituals controlled mind hold her back. She never cared for the rumors people created about them. "*She always wanted to live in a house made of Spanish cedar tree with that person. She will be able to resist her from building a physical relation. She believes that. She believes that this power of self control she acquired from past reformations*". The man for whom Goxani's heart melted, with whom she wanted to stay in the same house betrayed her by taking her signature in evil design and collecting taxes from the riots and ran away from her; Goxani fainted by witnessing these sacrifice and heart breaking result of her love. The character expressed emotions, excitement, and sexual desire. Freudian mentality can be seen in the character. The attraction Mahidhar is surely sexual. Normal desire life and body of a woman soul is expressed minutely and sensitively. Again BishnuOjha's sight created an excitement in XoruGoxani's heart but she dominated her desire with her ethics. In presenting the inner conflict of the character the literary skills novelist used is mixed with personal life experience.

3.04 Ilimon: Ilimon is the healthy and happy daughter of priest BapuJashBhagawati of Rajapukhuri. She is a lateral character in the novel with her own qualities. She was brought up by an old lady after the death of her mother. In the novel different emotions of a puberty attained girl like desire, love, insults etc are successfully portrayed. After a sudden meet up with the Hero Indranath, Ilimon fell in love with Indranath gradually. On the other hand Ilimon's beautiful face impressed Indranath and her grace and words left a mark on Indranath's heart. Though he failed to marry her for following the strict rules of society Ilimon

was safe in his heart till his last moment. The society mentioned in the novel considered physical growth of a lady as a sin. That too if a girl attain puberty in her father's house the whole family was considered to be associated with the sin. Ilimon father tried to kill himself for failing to arrange marriage of her daughter before her puberty. Her physical growth became a topic of discussion for the people "*In the backyard of to be grown up Brahmin girl's house ladies are active like a sniffing vulture in morning and evening*". The old lady kept the news of Ilimon's adulthood and met Indranath overnight in the bridge over Jagalia River and requested him to rescue her from the difficult situation saying "*Goxain, in a Damodar family no one has ever married to a Brahmin girl. But as far as we know in the south bank of Jagalia a Goxain married a Brahmin girl from upper valley.....Goxains from Dakhala, Bamundi and even Rajabaha married Brahmin girls. Their followers never shouted. XoruGoxai, see her face once. Help this poor soul*". But in his family no one had been married to a Brahmin girl and a grown up girl stood far. Despite being a compassionate and a lover Indranath was not able to marry Ilimon due the strict rules of a SatriaGoxai family. He loved Ilimon till his last breath. In Indranath's word "*If there is still something to be satisfied, it is because of her means she is still in alive in me*". Novelist expressed the pain, sufferings, social humiliation of an unmarried grown up girl in the 4th-5th decade of 20th century through the character Ilimon splendidly. The novelist gave the love-pain, affection, care of the character a physical structure.

4.00 Conclusion: Mamoni Raisom Goswami's DOTAL HATIR UYE KHUWA HOWDAH is a successful social novel. In every part of the novel social life and cultural features of the characters' are expressed. Novelist pictured perfectly the painful consequences of child marriage faced by upper class ladies and their sufferings. How society set rituals made every day and every moment difficult for a widow author described through the characters. With the image of some tottering ladies in a conservative social structure, author left a strong hint of social revolution.

5.00 Books:

Main Resource:

Goswami, Mamoni Raisom: *UPONYAX SAMAGRA*. Students' Stores, Guwahati. 4th Edition, 2011.

(Citations are given from this book while preparing the paper)

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