

Women characters in economic activities and their social status as reflected in nil Kamal brahma's short stories

Dr. Dipali Kherkhatary

Department of Bodo, B.H. College, Howly, Assam, India

Abstract

Nilkamal Brahma, a pioneer among Bodo fiction writers who for the first time used modern techniques and styles opening the door of modernism into Bodo literature. He portrays various social pictures by depicting satirical and ironical situations and character. Most of the short stories are based on Bodo society. In his short stories writer tries to depict the social life. In the writings of Nilkamal Brahma, there are a myriad of human characters as evident from his versatile plots in his short stories. However, the researcher shall limit herself to the discussion on women characters alone within the ambit of this paper. Keeping in view to this aspects the paper attempts to highlight the women characters engaged in business and economic activities and social status of the Bodos that has been depicted in the short stories of Nilkamal Brahma.

Keywords: women, social status, business and economic activities

1. Introduction

The history of the Bodo short story started in the third decade of the nineteenth century. Nilkamal Brahma is an eminent and talented among the short story writers in the Bodo literature. Brahma brought about a turning point by introducing new trend and technique in the field of Bodo fiction. Pioneer Nilkamal Brahma was the luminary who nurtured and left behind the spirit of short story writing in Bodo literature. It is visible that the contrasting characteristic and attributes of the traditional and the modern ways of life are tactfully painted in Nilkamal Brahma's short stories. Majority of his characters are from middle class families. These middle families are both rural and urban, presented as corresponding traditional and modern, with a bias and orientation towards modern outlook. In Nilkamal Brahma's short stories women are represented in different multiple ways. Sometime they are seen as literate, illiterate, lustful and hard working. Besides they are also seen engaged in various activities as businessman and politician too. In case of the stories of Nilkamal Brahma it may be noticed extensively.

2. Aims and objectives of the study

The aim and objective of the study is to highlight the women characters found engaged in economic activities in the short stories of Nilkamal Brahma. Bodo women from both rural and urban areas are presently seen to have engaged in various economic activities to get more financially secured. That realistic scenario of work participation of women of present day Bodo society is reflected in the short stories of Nilkamal Brahma to some extent. The target of the paper is to measure the social status of Bodo women in terms of various roles played by them in economic activities in the society.

3. Methodology

The methodology used in this study is simple. Here, a few short stories written by Nilkamal Brahma have been picked up to discuss the status of Bodo women in the light of economic

activities engaged by them. The study has been done from descriptive view point. To make convenient the study necessary data have been gathered mainly from secondary sources.

4. Discussion

As the Bodo society is patriarchal in nature, the economic and business activities are generally in the hands of man. However, Bodo women are seen to be engaging in income generating and business activities. This particular attribute of the society has found a wide space in the writings of Nilkamal Brahma in general, and more specifically, in his short stories. Presently, the short stories that have women characters that fit in this category will be discussed in the following.

In the story *Hor gejerni tragi comedy* (tragedy of midnight) the author depicts the life of a woman who runs her family by earning her wages as a domestic help. The maid servant was seen to support her family out of her meager income; she eventually ended up becoming the mistress of the rich house-owner, though. Thus, she not only supported her widowed mother, but also built a house for her later on. The author depicts the character of Swmbaoshri as shameless and despicable in the eyes of the society.

Beher (deep mud) is another story, where Mwirathi's actions have been depicted as shameless in the society. She lived in abject poverty and was seduced by her house-owner for a petty sum of money. As she was a bonded-labour, she was left with no other alternative but to give in to the nefarious advances of the house-owner. In this way she found herself in a quagmire whence she could hardly recover. Mwirathi's character symbolises the life and depredations of a poor and oppressed woman at the hands of the rich and the powerful.

In the story, *Ang arw gubun saba* (Me and five others) Melinda is sketched as a woman who had to earn her living as a lowly and much despised prostitute. It was in this way that she could support her family and also purchases a job for her husband. Yet again, the author presents her character as

contemptible and disgraceful in the society. A woman such as Melinda has no place in the Bodo society; her status has no standing in it.

The story *Abo Durmao* (Durmao sister) presents the unfortunate life of a poor woman who had been abandoned by her husband. As a last resort, she had to make a living by selling wine and engaging in sex-work. The author has painted her character as loathsome in the face of the Bodo society. As a result of her activities and in her struggle for survival, she met with an untimely death and left her children stranded in life.

The story *Raonibw raobw nonga* (*No one is not of no one else*) depicts Sarala as a woman disillusioned by the materialistic happiness offered by the Bodo society and hankering after riches of other communities. However, she learnt a painful lesson early in life, as she was abandoned by her husband. She had to raise her two children on her own by taking up the profession of a school teacher. Here, the author portrays the unfortunate life of a woman whose dreams were dashed to the ground and who had to rebuild her life all anew all because of her miscued aspirations. Another aspect that may be evinced from the story is that there are several Bodo women who support their families by taking up the job of a teacher that is considered as a respectable job in Bodo society.

The character Balangsri in the story *Sirinai mandar* (fallen mander flower) married three different men in order to gratify her materialistic pursuits and desires. She was able to achieve high and economically sound status in society, however, in the context of the Bodo society, it was nothing but vanity and despicable. She would be despised and spat upon. She was well aware of this facet of her life and therefore compared herself to the *mandar* flower that gets trampled by passers-by. In sum, she has been sketched as a person who falls prey to the unbridled passions and desires in life. As such individuals are hard to come by in the Bodo society, it may be evinced that this character stands as a fore-warning from the author.

Bansri, in the story *Udrainai* is presented as a character who tries with all her might to repay and undo the misdeeds of her father. She was never fascinated by riches and wealth for herself, however, her zeal for recovering the debts of her father is noteworthy. As a job was difficult to come by, she sold off the items and materials that were meant for her dowry to bail out her father. Bansri's character is praiseworthy in the Bodo society and thus her deeds accord her a pedestal position among women.

Aruna is much disillusioned by the evil and avaricious nature of her husband and in-laws in the story *Sakondra* (Abductor). Qualified with an advanced degree in Arts, she shores off her ties with her in-laws and takes up the job of a lecturer in a college. The author portrays Aruna as a strong woman who serves as an example for others to pursue.

Gwdan slogan (New slogan) depicts the vanity and frailties of three sisters Bina, Mina and Rina who have all acquired graduation. They lived on the meager income of their retired father; yet, their thoughts and outlook were of high class. They sought marriage proposals from the likes of doctors and engineers on the one hand and despised the likes of teachers and rangers. They aspired for high profile jobs and sophisticated life-styles. In spite of their arrogance, it might be seen that these ladies were desirous of independence as they earned their way out through engaging in private tuitions. In this regard, the need for the educated women in Bodo society

to engage in activities that would afford them economic independence, as portrayed in the story, is much welcome.

5. Conclusion

After going through Nilkamal Brahma's short stories it is clear that Bodo women also engage in various economic activities to run their family. Some of them engage themselves in socially recognized economic activities like- serving in others family, rearing of cattle, goat, piggery, etc. Some educated women is seen trying to run their family as a tutor. Besides, a few women of the society involve themselves in sexual activity with a view to lead their life and family. Among them some women unwillingly chose such way helplessly with compulsion.

6. References

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5. NB. This paper is prepared based on my unpublished thesis titled Women Characters in the Short Stories of Nilkamal Brahma: A Critical Study.