



The Elements of Bodo Culture Reflected in the Short Stories of Janil.Kr. Brahma

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Abstract:Janil Kumar Brahma is considered one of the greatest Bodo short story writer. He has published three collections of short story books named -

- i) Dumphaoni Phitha (2005),
- ii) Mwidar Muhini (2007), and
- iii) Japanni Swima (2009)

He has depicted the picture of rural area in his short stories. The short stories are the reflection of Bodo society, its cultures, value, traditions, norms, etc. Moreover, he has shown the habit and act of migration of people in his short stories. There is a discussion on the Bodo cultural heritage and its effort towards development of cultural norms and standards in the writing of Janil Kumar Brahma.

Keywords:Respect towards culture, working of rural peoples, cultivation, food, clothing, wearing

1. INTRODUCTION

Short story is one of the most important genre of literature. In the present day situation, we find that the popularity of short story is gaining ground in the society. "Abari" by Ishan Ch. Muchahary is the first short story in Bodo literature. It was published in the "Hathorkhi Hala" magazine in the year 1940 edited by Promod Ch. Brahma. Since then many writers have contributed number of stories today in Bodo literature. Not only in the collection of stories

in quantities, but also in the inculcation of quality of knowledge, short stories

just as other techniques of writing have also emerged as a good technique or scope of writing. Janil Kumar Brahma is today's most remarkable writer of short story writing in Bodo language. He was born on 1951 in a village, Tipkai. He is also a poet and a prose writer. Nonetheless, he has emerged as a famous short story writer in Bodo literature. He has published three collections of short story books. Some of them are Dumphaoni Phitha (2005), Mwidar Muhini (2007) and Japanni Swima (2009).

Janil kr. Brahma has also received Sahitya Academy award for his short story book 'Dumphaoni Phitha' in the year 2007.

2. AIMS OF STUDY

Following are the basic aims of the current study-

- i. Discussion regarding some of the remarkable cultural heritage in the writings of Janil kr Brahma.
- ii. Reflection of Bodo culture in the literature of Bodo community in the writing of Janil Kumar Brahma.



iii. The creativity of Janil Kr Brahma through the reflection of Bodo society, traditions and community are analysed through his short story writings.

3. HYPOTHESIS

- i) The Bodo traditions, cultures are reflected in the writing of Janil Kr. Brahma.
- ii) Discussion on the stories in broader way of concept and selecting some of the main central idea or aim of the stories.
- iii) To judge whether the creations based on Janil Kr. Brahma are true facts or not.

4. METHODOLOGY

In the preparation of the research works, both the primary and secondary sources of data have been taken into account. In the primary sources data has been collected from the three short stories published by Janil Kr. Brahma and a face to face interview has been conducted with the writer. On the other hand, secondary sources have been collected from different journals, articles and critical writings of different writers.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The writings of Janil Kumar Brahma are still praised and spoken about. But, the reflection of Bodo culture in his writings has remained undiscussed till now. In the preparation of this research work, help and support have been acquired from the writings of Janil Kr. Brahma, the literary works of Rakhao Basumatary and the critical analysis of literary works of Anil Kr. Brahma.

6. DISCUSSION ON THE SUBJECT

Literature is a mirror of a society. Just like the way we see our faces in the mirror, in the same way, when we turn the pages of literature in the real sense in a factual way. The

language, beliefs, fooding, cultivation, clothing, working, traditional dance, composing songs, faith, worships, livelihood etc. are reflected through the medium of culture. Therefore, it is said that culture is a life and backbone of a society. Without backbone, none can stand for a long moment of time. Just like that, without culture, no society can proper or stay lively and cannot stay for a long time standing. There is strong sense and involvement of culture in the writings of Janil Kr. Brahma. It is very remarkable. The analysis on his short stories is discussed below.

The culture of the Bodo community are very remarkably reflected in the short story, "Dumphaoi Phitha". Most of the Bodo culture like poultry, cultivation, weaving clothes etc. are reflected in this short story. The Bodo women, like in other communities, have started making their own business and marketing in today's time which is reflected in the story. The character named Dumphao becomes the symbol of encouragement for women working in marketing or business. Example may be cited as below: "If the women of any other culture can survive with betelnut and tea stall, why would it be impossible for the woman of Bodo culture to survive in the same way? I am also a human being. Dumphao thinks, she also does it accordingly" [1]

Another remarkable story on the culture of Bodo community is "Alasi". In this story, birds and nature are the two components that reflected the image of Bodo culture. In the words of an elder Bodo person it is said that, chirping of Khayali bird is a symbol of some visiting guest coming or being invited to visit in the people's home. The bird would sing her voice from the early dawn till the morning furling its wings by sitting at the mango trees. This sound of bird always made Labari happy. By having a look at the birds' chirping, her heart is filled with joy and she would tie a cock as a ritual. She will rejoice in the hope of a guest or someone close to her heart will come to her. There is a belief among Bodo people that if cocks fight each other, then there is again a chance of guest coming to the home. Labari beliefs in this thought. So



she tied a cock which has been defeated in the fight in order to keep ready which would be prepared for the dish when her guest comes.

There is another belief among the Bodos regarding the cawing of the crows. If the crow caws continuously in a high voice, it becomes a matter of concern because it symbolizes danger or any untoward incident to the family. When Labari was suffering from a serious sickness, the crow was cawing continuously with a high loudness, furling its wings. So, it became a sign of danger for the life of Labari, which ultimately led to the end of the life of Labari.

It was ingrained into the culture of Bodo community regarding rituals, ceremonies, shraddha etc. that follows after someone's death. In the rituals of Anaram, it seems to be missing in the story. The drums, mini operas, dancing etc. are mostly ingrained into culture of Bodos. The cultural products of Bodo people are reflected in the marriage ceremony of Anaram.

In the season of celebration, most of the people are engaged in the enjoyment of joy like elders, youngers, pupils, small children, youthful boys and girls etc. Drinking wine and visiting house to house asking eggs are also the rituals of Bodos. This is based on Bodo traditional culture that cannot be ignored. The writer says in the story : " The beginning of a new year begins with the celebration of people together along with the elders, youngers, children etc. Those girls Who could not have husbands like Hamphe, Dumphe, Anathi and Sansri composed their own songs and made a satire or humour out of it by making a joke on the Bodo youth. Those men who do not drink went from house to house asking for eggs in the name of Bodo culture" (Alasi). [1]

"Rego Dahwna" is a short story on maid servants and cultivators and it is about their way of livelihood. The works in paddy fields like graining, ploughing and reaping done during the monsoon season is the central theme of the short story. Apart from these works, the cultural enrichment of Bodo women like weaving, knitting, embroidering and sewing

clothes have got focus on the short story. A young girl Sewli in the short story, also presented a colourful handkerchief for her lover, Rego the servant.

In the culture of Bodo people, the belief on traditional medicine is still prevalent. When someone gets sick, instead of getting treatment with the physician the Bodos would instead go to the practitioner of traditional medicine to get relief or for treatment [2]. In the story of "Dodore Rumbangni Jieu Dahar", such activities can be seen. If any person from the village does something wrong or harms, the society takes the responsibility to judge and punish the person. One of the bad habits among Bodos that is, wine making, which is continuously going on could be seen throughout the story. Some of the playfulness of children and making home with sands, mud and preparation of food of sands etc. are seen in the story. Dodere and Rumbang were seen playing while they were little children.

In today's time, although people have their own degrees and qualifications many people are still jobless. If someone is poor or does not have contact with the powerful persons, it becomes tough to get job. So although Sonaram is a B.A by degree, he takes cultivation as a profession to engage himself for his livelihood. "Sonaramni Jiuni Lama" is a short story where such picture has been depicted by the writer through this story.

In a Bodo community there is a culture called 'Bisigi Kanai' (ceremony of making friendship). In the story "Mansi Geder", there are characters like Khorde and Megooram who went to study at Cotton college. Both are very close friends. So, they make friendship each other which is called 'Bisigi Kanai'. So, the story is about unification of two friends together. Bodo people like to welcome or invite guests. In the story, Khorde invites his close friend Megooram for a dish. It was a chicken. In Bodo it is specially called 'Daola Khasi'. So, he served his friend with a good dish along with wine.

Dry fish, dry meat and serving it with foods, preserving it are some of the old cultural habits of Bodo



people. So it is said 'Bodos are always self- dependent'. They need not depend on others for food or shelter. All those traditional food items of Bodos are available in their home as good food. It is the ability of the Bodo people to make themselves. The main character of the story goes to his friend Megoanram and take a lot varieties of Bodo traditional food items like fish, meat, dry foods etc.

Most of the Bodo people are dependent on cultivation. The cultivation process with the help of servant and maid servant in the way of traditional system is seen in the story, "Uwal". In this story pictures of Bodo culture are seen depicted, such as waking up early dawn with the crow of cocks. The wife of Songfla Mahajan and the maid servant are seen engaging in processing rice as it is done among Bodo people. In today's culture, there are changes in scientific technique, such as rice mill, television, cooking gas etc. Though these inventions have paved the way towards easing the workload, the Bodo people's work ability are still prevalent like that of Uwal, Gaihen etc.

In the story "Lwgnwi Haba" the writer tried to depict the ceremony of making friendship (bilwgv Khanai) of two friends together in Bodo culture in the story. It is still prevalent among the Bodos. Two characters Faogali and Bugali from the village Sudempara have also tied friendship among themselves. There are still people who sale their lands and property in the name of drinking. Dangsw Mengbrang, the elder brother of Bugali has taken the same sort of path and sold a fifty bighas of paddy field. Later on, he suffered from tuberculosis and this ultimately led to his death. There is also a habit of taking bath among the Bodo people by the side of the river. Both Bugali and Faogali are seen taking bath in the Alary river. Apart from that some servants and maid servants, playing hide and seek by small children in the roadside, community work ,which is called 'Shaori Janai' is also seen in the story.

Weaving and handloom are also a major tradition of Bodo community. Most of the illiterate Bodo people try to

earn the means of livelihood through weaving. Bugali's friend, Faogali also adopts weaving as her means of livelihood.

"Hwnnanwi Bungtharw Ang" is a short story based on the beliefs of the Bodo society that is still prevalent and are followed by the Bodo people till today. In this story, Jumbra Dewani tries to make Thingkli, the daughter of the Khwrwm ojha his second wife. While Jumbra's wife, Khobsri goes to a person called Maila, who is considered to be a witch and is feared by most of the people of the village. She goes there in order to ask and solve her personal problems. She wants her husband for all the times and to forget Thingkli by applying 'Haina Muli'. She takes it and serves her husband along with rice. It was also said that the medicine must be returned as soon as possible. So, she returned it back. "Mwider Muhini" is a short story where the same theme may be found.

"Orge" is another short story where another aspects of Bodo society, like keeping someone bound to work under her directions is seen [3]. Orge's drunkard father, Thobra went to Bhasiram Mahajan during the raining season to celebrate the beginning of harvesting of rice. He took along with him two quintal of rice bag and also took along with him one whom Bodo called 'Bandi' (bounded labour for work) under Bhasiram Mahajan. Some of the culture and traditional food are also being depicted throughout the story like catching fish, dishes like black lentils along with snails or chicken are also depicted.

'Hal Jangkra' is the last paddy field work. Ceremony is being observed during this time. This is the end of the plantation of paddy. This tradition is seen in the story "Bijuli Barua" On this day, people from the village come to Thengwna Mahajan's house to enjoy with the traditional foods. They are very happy in celebrating the occasion.

On the other side through this story, we see that there is the influence of other culture on Bodo culture as we find in the story Dayaram Mahajan who was born with Bodo's blood wedded his daughter Bijuli at Sivsagar in the hands of



Assamese family to a young man named Pramesh Barua, who was a Ranger [4].

Polygamy is being seen among the Bodo community [5]. Man would marry a second wife for his own sake. This is one of the drawbacks of the Bodo community. In the story, “Madwi Udang”, this theme is depicted through the character of Gayaram Mahajan. Although his wife was still alive, he married Odang again. Odang used to complain about his first wife. So, he used to torture his first wife and keep her away from the home. He also kick the servant Budlang out from the house.

In this story, some greedy and wicked characters are also depicted. Odang was a maid servant in the house of Gayaram mahajan but due to her greedy for money and wealth, she plans to be a maid servant at Gayaram’s house. At the end of the story, it is seen that Odang finally becomes the owner of all those properties of the house.

“Bangkhoni Gan Thalim” is another short story of the writer. The story is based on an attempted made on the part of people to clean or serve a society in proper way. It was done by the people of the village name ‘Owabari’. Man cannot survive only by drinking, eating and working. Within the culture of the society a person can gain nationwide attention and make his own identity. So, the people of the village brought the music teacher and rehearsed a jatra named ‘Khwifwr Muti’. In this way they tried to broaden the culture of the Bodo people.

“Borondani Faothai Bijab” is a short story planning to develop language culture and literature are being emphasized. On the other hand, the lack of reading books among Bodo community is also revealed through the story [6]. It is seen that the culture of reading books in the society of Bodo is very less as it is seen in the story. Boronda cannot sale his “Dimaphurni Nida” the book of drama at the time of conference of Bodo Sahitya Sabha. This is a clear picture of the Bodo society where book reading culture is very less. “Ambushrwn Palla” is another short story were the writer try to

depict Bodo people’s endeavour to popularize its culture with the help of Jatra Gaan or open air theatre.

Bodo people are unable to stay for a long period in a place. They like to change their places frequently. Somewhere in the jungle. This habit of the community is seen in the story “Lakharani Kharlung Akhu”.

Deubar Gaobura is the richest man of the village having hundred bighas of cultivated land. Three numbers of granary house, four numbers of cowshed and many more. While he died, his son Lakhra become the owner of all these. His house was surrounded with big trees, having ‘o’ size building. Lakhra the idle illiterate lost all belongingness by drinking wine. Later on, he went to Gohpur searching new plot of land. He could not last long there too. After that he went to Mimang, Dwiang and lastly to Arunachal Pradesh. Marriage by elopement is prevalent among Bodo Community. In this story, Lakhra’s daughter Huma eloped with the son of a teacher named Donda.

The same picture is also seen in the story “Orong”. Making and drinking wine is one of the deep rooted habit of Bodo community. They are unable to forego this habit at any cost. In the short story “Orong” tries to exhibit how a family losses everything by this sort of habit. These guardians who loss by drinking wine, lastly adopt searching of new lands somewhere in distance places like Mimang, Dwiang, Gohpur, Silapathar etc. They came back home when they cannot materialize their dream in these places.

Fishing by traditional weapons – like Jekai, Polo are also seen in the story. Bodo damsels are expert in fishing too. Bishary, the daughter of Orong, also catches fishes in the river and sale in the market and tried to cooperate her father. In this way she tried to help her father during his bad time.

7. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is seen that the writer Janil Kr. Brahma has tried to enlarge the culture of the Bodo through his writing. His writing revealed traditions, customs,



talk and belief, work culture, food habit, weaving and handloom, costumes and everything of the Bodos. In some stories, influence of other communities has also been observed. In the story, “Bijuli Barua” the Bodo girl, Bijuli gets married with a youth of other caste who faced many problems. In the story “Hajwni Sikiri, Hayenni Bibar” the hill tribe youth Birdao Waricha gets married with a plain tribe damsel Goyshri. By their marriage, the writer tries to establish the cultural unification of both the tribes. In the story, “Undaha” the writer tries to focus the Bodo medium problem. Many Bodo parents educated their children in English Medium Schools. But some of them failed to give quality education to their children. Some family from the Bodo community adopts dogs as pets that live on the waste foods. But the dogs from Japan when adopted are taken care and given meats to eat every day. Such picture is seen in the story, “Japanni Swima”.

Therefore, in every and all of his short stories, the picture of the culture of Bodos are depicted directly or indirectly.

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