

Changes In Bodo Society And Culture As Reflected In Selected Short Stories Of Nilkamal Brahma (A Text Oriented Analysis)

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ABSTRACT: Human society is changeable. Changes occur at various levels of the society. The traditional social attitude of the Bodos is on the verge of changing due to impact of modernity. Consequently, their customs, beliefs and way of living are getting changes in course of time. Changes have been visualized both in material and non-material culture. Today there is gradual but immense change in terms of production and consumption in traditional Bodo economy. The factors responsible for transformation are acceptance of modern education system, urbanization and Industrialization, emergence of Science and Technology and mass-communication. The study aims to bring into light about changes of society and culture occurred on various aspects of Bodo culture in course of time. The study has been done from a sociological perspective, and attempt has been made based on literary texts to find out the cause and effects of social changes.

KEYWORD: Cultural Change, impact of modernity, social attitude, literary text.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

The Bodos are one of the tribes of the North-Eastern India. Assam is the main abode of the Bodos. Besides Assam there are some Bodo pocket areas in the neighboring states Meghalaya, Nagaland and West Bengal. Historians and anthropologists observed that the Bodo Kacharis are earliest inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley. Racially the Bodos are Mongolian. They have distinct language and culture. It is worth mentioning that nowadays the Bodo language is one of the scheduled languages of India. Written literature has been flourishing since the 2nd decade of 20th century. Literary genres like poetry, prose, novel, short story, drama etc are available in this language. Literary text is also to be taken into account as the data of any kind of research especially in the area of humanities. In this paper literary text from the Bodo short story written by a famous story teller namely Nilkamal Brahma who was the epoch maker of Bodo literature of the 2nd half of 20th century literary history of the Bodos have been selected as secondary data to reveal about changing scenario of the Bodo society. In this regard, particularly five short stories written by Nilkamal Brahma have been taken into account for an extensive analysis in which social changes may be observed fairly.

II. OBJECTIVES:

Literature is a means of expression of human behavior or society as a whole. The short story writers of the Bodo literature attempt to visualize the cultural changes and many more things of the society. In the light of cultural and sociological perspective this paper aims at highlight changing scenario of the Bodo society and culture as attempted to visualize in the short story of Nilkamal Brahma. It is worth to mention that Nilkamal Brahma is recognized as one of the epoch maker literary personality in the history of Bodo literature.

III. METHODOLOGY

The topic has been analyzed based on literary text collected as secondary data. Chiefly based on five stories of Nilkamal Brahma the topic has been analyzed extensively. Thus secondary data are also collected from review articles and books, which are directly related to the topic. Besides an observation method is used for the study. Collected data have been analyzed inclusively from the view point of cultural studies as well as sociological viewpoint though data are purely literary text.

IV. HYPOTHESIS:

Human society is dynamic. No society is static. Change is inevitable for every society. It seems that the cultural context of the Bodos is also changing slowly in course of time. In addition, it may be assumed that the changes in various sphere of culture are leading the traditional way of living to modern as well as global context.

V. STATEMENT ON THE SHORT STORY OF NILKAMAL BRAHMA

Nilkamal Brahma is one of the most famous short story writers in the history of Bodo literature of second part of the twentieth century. Graphic portrayal of the reality life is an important salient feature of his stories. Most of the characters in his short stories are representative of new generation, thought and ideas. In his stories, he has depicted nicely the contemporary Bodo society. He has focused the urban living people, corruptions and complexity of modern society. Anil Kumar Boro writes, "The broad canvas of Nilkamal Brahma's short stories brings together a whole range of characters that represent the transition from tradition to modernity, from the rural to the urban life."^[1] Brahma's first individual collection of short story **Hagra guduni mwi** (Stag in the Deep Jungle) was published in 1972. The second one is entitled **Phungkha** (Source) was published in 1978. Thus **Soloni Phungkha** (the source of the stories) was published in 1984. Nilkamal Brahma's another short story book entitled **Silingkhar** (Tragic life) was published in 1984. Thus **Sirinay Mander Bibar** was published in 1985. Nilkamal Brahma's **Mem-Daodwi** was published in 1995. Critics are of the opinion that Nilkamal Brahma occupies top position among the Bodo short story writers of the century. About characterization in the short story of Nilkamal Brahma literary critics like Phukan Ch. Basumatary and Swarna Prabha Chainary observe, "From a simple village woman to an educated up to date Boro woman; from flesh trader to a surper ego woman, he tried to reflect every women characters of society. So, his characters are multi-dimensional."^[2] According to critics, '**Hagra guduni mwi**' is considered Nilkamal Brahma's masterpiece. The stories included in this collection show the mastery of Brahma's art in plot construction, character portrayal; and economy in the use of words. There are ten short stories in the book.

VI. DISCUSSION

For the present study, from the short story book entitled **Hagra guduni mwi** (Stag in the Deep Jungle) we have chosen only five short stories, namely Megonni Akhol: Gwswni Mohor, Hagra guduni mwi (Stag in the Deep Jungle), Raobw raonibw noga, Orni Begor (Fire's Seed) and Gamini simang (Vision for the village) as data for analysis.

1.6.1 In the short story called 'Megonni Akhol: Gwswni Mohor', the characters are Somila, Nikolson Daimary, Hamphe, Arup, Modon, Kishore, Lalu, Bima and Tom. From an observation, it may be said that Somila, Nikolson Daimary, Arup, Modon and Kishore all are fond of modern way of living. Traditionally the Bodos are village dweller. It is noticeable that Somila's family lives in urban. The houses of Somila's family are not traditional, rather modern. Moreover, it is also observable that factory made modern domestic articles are used excessively in the family of Somila in place of traditional domestic articles. Nevertheless, instead of traditional utensils, Somila's family uses factory made modern utensils. They prefer factory made modern furniture and utensils which are easy means of standard living and preferable for day-to-day use in family life. Now-a-days, people have tendency to accept the factory made modern furniture and utensils and tend to replace the access of traditional utensils slowly. Such kind of attitude is to be observed in the short story of Nilkamal Brahma. It is observed that tea is used as drinks in the family of Somila besides traditional drinking, like the rice beer. On the other hand, professor Nikolson also lives in rented house in town. Nikolson lives in town for doing job. In the contemporary social sphere, living in town as well as living in rented house is the new experience and modern way of living for the Bodos. This is the impact of modernity which is fairly depicted in short story of Nilkamal Brahma.

Earlier Bodo people are always busy in agricultural work. It is noticeable that Somila, Arup, Modon and Kishore are busy in pursuing modern education, which is very much essential to bring all round improvement in society. Somila, Arup, Modon and Kishore are college students. In traditional society, generally a woman keeps busy herself with domestic work like- cultivation, weaving, fishing and collecting leaves from nature. But, it is observe that Somila is not busy with traditional cultivation as well as weaving. Somila does not go for fishing. She also does not go to collect leaves from the jungle. Rather Somila goes to School. Again, after completion of High School life she goes to College for higher studies to acquire the modern knowledge, which is important for modern world to survive. Learning modern education mindset of Somila is widening slowly. After completion of B.A. degree Somila does job in government agency to earn money besides cultivation. Somela becomes a teacher of a High School. In traditional Bodo society, youth do not select their life partner. Parents or elderly village persons take the responsibility of selection bride or bridegroom for marriage. Somila chooses her life partner herself. She loves professor Nikolson. Thus, Somila writes a letter to professor Nikolson and send Lalu to give the letter as well as to invite professor Nikolson to their house. This indicates Somila's

¹ Boro, Anil Kumar. *A History of Bodo Literature*. Kolkata: Sahitya Akademi, 2012. Second Edition.p.57

² Basumatary, Phukan Ch. & Chainary, Swarna Prabha. *Monograph of the Boros*. New Delhi: Lakshi Publishers & Distributors, 2017. First Edition. P. 39

progressive outlook. Besides, during college life Somila played badminton with her college friends. Badminton playing is a new game for the Bodos. Playing of badminton signify their progressive mindset. Besides, Nikolson also accepts government job as main source of income as well as livelihood. Nikolson is a college professor as well as a short story writer. Thus, it is noticeable that the social outlook as well as culture attitude of the Bodos is changing slowly due to impact of modern education and world view. Through the short story, the writer has attempted to reflect the scenario of middle class Bodo society.

1.6.2 In the short story called *Hagra guduni mwi* (Stag in the deep Jungle), the writer has tried to reflect the modern attitude as well as society through the role of characters like Satyaprio, Sormila, Urmila and Khantal. They are important characters of the story. From an inclusive analysis of the text, it is observable that Sormila, Satyaprio, Urmila and Khantal are modern in so-called behavior. Khantal is a contractor. Contract work is the main source of earning as well as livelihood of Khantal. Khantal leads his family with the earnings of contract work. Thus Satyaprio is also a progressive youth. He prefers doing job in place of traditional occupation. He teaches in a High School where Urmila, sister of Sormila reads. Besides, he is a private tutor of Urmila. Apart from that, he is a short story writer. It is evident that Satyaprio selects his life partner himself. He loves Sormila. The attitude of Satyaprio to select life partner himself is contrary to traditional believes and custom, which indicates his progressive outlook. Satyaprio prefers to dress up with machine made clothes. Thus, he wears Punjabi Cloth besides traditional dress. Nevertheless it is observed that besides machine made costume he uses modern domestic articles like- wrist-watch, mirror and perfume in day to day life which indicates his modern way of living.

It is also evident that the two daughters of Khantal namely Sormila and Urmila is educated modern girl. Earlier majority of the Bodo women were busy in weaving and domestic as well as agricultural works. Weaving was practiced in every Bodo family. Earlier a girl who was inefficient in spinning and weaving generally castigated by the society and did not get any status in society. Nevertheless, the maiden who was inefficient in spinning and weaving was neglected by the people and difficult to get married. It is observed that Sormila and her sister Urmila prefer learning modern education instead of traditional weaving and other household activities. Khantal realizes the need of modern education for their all round development. Therefore, he keeps their children busy in studies. Sormila and her sister Urmila are always busy in studies instead of spinning and weaving. Urmila is a college-going girl. Urmila's father has given a private tutor for Urmila. Satyapria is a private tutor of Urmila. On the other hand, Sormila is a B.A passed girl and is a regular reader of magazine. She passes her time reading magazine. Nevertheless, Sormila likes to dress-up with contemporary clothing; and she likes to go for movies. In early day the Bodo people did not mixed up freely with the people of other religion or racial community due to existing concept of purity and social taboos. Nevertheless, the people of other religion are restricted to enter in the kitchen and main house of the Bodos. Nevertheless, there is a restriction from taking food in the house of other caste. Thus, the Bodo people did not take food in the house of other caste. However, it is noticeable that Sormila freely mixes up and interacts with other people. Sormila goes with chief executive engineer P.K. Langthasa for movies as well as to take an evening trip. Sormila believes in cross marriage. Sormila chooses her life partner herself and accordingly she marries P.K. Langthasa. Sormila is a bold and trendy girl. Sormila's mind is wide and thoughts are progressive. This is the impact of modern education. Thus, it is apparent that due to impact of modern education and new worldviews the thinking and way of living of the Bodos are gradually changing.

1.6.3 In the short story called '*Raobw raonibw noga*', the writer has attempted to reflect the scenario of modern society. The important characters of the story are Sorola, Suren Choudhury, Prof. Ronjona and Prof. Ranelson Dawlagufu. Other characters of the story are Suren Choudhury's new wife, Sorola's two children and Prof. Ronjona's child. From an extensive analysis of the text, it is observed that Sorola and Ronjona are educated girls. Besides their traditional activities, Sorola and Ronjona are also showing great interest in taking modern education. Sorola and Ronjona studied college education living at college hostel to acquire modern education to survive in this competitive world. Nevertheless, Ronjona became a prefect of hostel when she was in B.A final year. Sorola and Ronjona are modern girls. Sorola uses factory made modern domestic articles like-suitcase to carry her belongings. Thus Ronjona and other girls of hostel enjoy movies.

In traditional Bodo society, there is a belief in purity and chastity. There is a restriction in interaction and freely mix up with the people of other community as well as taking food in the house of other community or religious section. Cross marriage is restricted in traditional Bodo society. It is observed that Sorola and Ronjona freely mixes up and interact with other community without any perplexity. Parents in discussion with elderly village people in traditional Bodo society settle marriage tie. However, it is visible that both Sorola and Ronjona select life partner according to their choice. Cross marriage is restricted in traditional Bodo society, but Sorola and Ronjona prefer cross marriage. Hence, from schooling time Sorola keeps relation with Officer Suren Choudhury, who is non-Bodo. Suren Choudhury puts a ring in Sorola's finger for marriage when she reads in high school stage. During her college life, Sorola keeps her relation with Officer Suren Choudhury, who is an Assamese by linguistic community. Even when she is expelled from the college hostel, she straight goes to

Suren Choudhury's house instead of going to her own home. There are six types of recognized marriage system in traditional Bodo society. It is visible that Sorola gets married with Officer Suren Choudhury at Kamakhya temple. Temple marriage is a new experience for the Bodos. Instead of village and agro-based life, Sorola prefers town life. She does not want to keep herself in backward and downtrodden society. She wants to live a modern way of life. On the other hand, professor Ronjona weds Prof. Ranelson Dawlagufu, who is a Dimasa man and belongs to Cachar. This is the impact of modernity. Modern education liberates Sorola and Ronjona from traditional beliefs and behavior. It is evident that both Sorola and Ronjona travel by train for their works. They intend to change their thinking; and it occurs due to learning of modern education. In place of traditional occupation, both prefer government job for earning money. Thus, both Sorola and Ronjona become teachers. Sorola becomes a teacher of government L.P. School at Bijni. On the other hand, Ronjona becomes a professor of Government College.

1.6.4 In the short story called 'Orni begor' (Fire's seed), characters are Onjima, Horesh, Swilesh, Onjima's husband, Uncle of Onjima's husband and Chawkider. Onjima is the central character of the story. From an extensive analysis of the text, it is visible that Onjima and Swilesh are modern. The thinking of Onjima and Swilesh is progressive. In traditional Bodo society, sons and daughters are to get married according to desire of their parents. Parents bind marriage relation of their children and children are supposed to obey the decision of their parents. Thus, Horesh forcefully binds Onjima's marriage tie with the professor. Horesh is the representative of typical Bodo father. Horesh accepts professor's proposal, a proposal to marry Onjima. However, Onjima does not believe in social dogmas and beliefs; rather she fights against the customary dogma and beliefs. Therefore, Onjima disagrees with her father. She fights against her father's decision; the decision to give Onjima in marriage with the professor. Thus when professor arrives at their home to put a ring on her finger she runs away from home and goes to Swilesh home. Onjima does not want to get married soon in life; rather she desires to take modern education as much as she can for her future life. Onjima realizes the importance of modern education to stand on her own feet. Therefore, she keeps herself busy with study. The mindset of Onjima to learn modern education as well as to stand on her own feet is progressive. Despite Onjima's resistance, the professor marries Onjima. But, after three days from her marriage, giving up all the relation and customs Onjima runs away from professor's rented house to fulfill her dreams. Swilesh gives mental support and encourages her to study again. Consequently, Onjima goes to Mahatma Gandhi Ashrom of Delhi to study again. There she gets positive lesson of living and becomes fearless and optimistic. She dedicates her life to fight against the social dogma and anti-social element which indicates Onjima's progressive outlook.

1.6.5 In the short story called Gamini simang (Vision for the village), willingness of an educated man to make a backward village to a developed village as well as a backward society to a developed society is reflected. The important characters of the story are Somresh, Bimola, Gaobura (village head), Assamese Contractor and the writer himself. Somresh is the main character of the story. Somresh is presented in the milieu of both rural and urban culture. From an inclusive analysis of the story, it is obvious that Somresh is an educated village man. Therefore Somresh prefers to do job for earning money. Accordingly, Somresh serves as an employee of Accountant General Office in Shillong. Besides, he serves as a teacher of High School at his own village. Finally, he becomes a President of Village Panchayat when new Panchayat System introduces in their locality. Somresh has a vision to up-lift own village as well as society. He deeply realizes that knowledge of modern education is very much essential for doing service in government agencies well as modern education is very essential for bringing up the society. However, he observes that there is no High School, no Post office, no Hospital etc. in his area. Thus, he quits his service to materialize his vision, a vision to up-lift his backward village. Consequently, with the help of village head and the elder village people Somresh establishes a High School at their village where he becomes a teacher. The thinking of Somresh, village head as well as villagers to set up a High School for development of the village is progressive; it is the impact of modern education as well as contemporary worldview.

Modern transport and communication facilities make human life easy, fast and more comfortable. Modern transport and communication is very much essential for modern generation; without modern transport facility people cannot think for moving from place to place; and without modern communication people of new generation cannot contact and exchange their thoughts and feelings with other society nowadays. Thus it is observed that when he becomes a President of newly introduced village Panchayat Somresh discusses with P.M.G. official of Shillong to set up a Post Office at their village which is very essential to contact and exchange their thoughts and feelings with other society and other world. Besides, being the President of village Panchayat Somresh discusses with Bus Association to take necessary steps to provide a Bus for transportation up to village for better transportation. The realization of a Post Office to contact and exchange their thoughts and feelings with other world and the initiative to set up a Post Office in their locality is progressive. Nevertheless, the thinking and aspiration of Somresh to connect their areas with other places with the help of modern transportation indicates his progressive outlook. The attitude to avail modern transportation and communications is the impact of modernity. Moreover being the President of Village Panchayat Somresh sets up a rural hospital

at his village to avail modern medical care and medical services. Christian missionaries first establish dispensaries in Bodo concentrated areas to provide medical treatment. Modern education as well as Christian missionaries teaches them hygienic way of living, proper dietary habits and enables them to realize a need of modern medical care and medical services. Nowadays majority of the Bodos go to hospital when they fall in illness and take help from doctor instead of going to Oja, a man who cures a sick person with traditional methods and medicines made from natural environment they live. The realization of modern hospital for better medical care and medical services for their village people and the setting up a modern medical hospital at their locality signifies his progressive mindset. This is the impact of modernity. It is observed that when Bimola, wife of Somresh flees with the Assamese contractor Somresh's dreams to up-lift his village and society. However, Somresh again dreams to bring reformation in agriculture sector availing the modern technology and modern methods of cultivation. In traditional Bodo society the instruments as well as the way of cultivation is primitive and more traditional. Therefore, they cannot produce more crops. Thus, Somresh aspires to adopt modern technology as well as modern way of cultivation to produce many crops for income. Somresh desires to get a tractor on loan from agriculture department. The thinking of Somresh to bring reformation in agriculture sector availing the modern methods of cultivation as well as modern instruments like- tractor to earn more money is progressive. It is noticeable that Bimola, daughter of village head as well as wife of Somrash is a modern woman. Bimola prefers to live in town for various facilities. She forces her husband constantly to shift to town after their marriage when Somrash dedicated to work at village to uplift the backward village people. She is a good consumer of modern items. She purchases many items like-oil, salt, pulse, tea, perfume etc. from contractor's shop regularly at any time. In traditional society, sex is an expression of love and means of procreation. Rather in traditional Bodo society, sexual purity is greatly valued. However, for her sexual purity does not have any value. She gives more important on money in place of moral values and character. She is fond of easy sexual relationship. Thus, she involves in sexual indulgence. She is a lecherous. She keeps illicit relation with the Assamese contractor. Finally, she flees with the Assamese contractor spoiling Somrash's dreams, the dreams to up-lift his village and society. Thus, it is obvious that Bimola is materialistic, consumerist and lechery.

VII. CONCLUSION:

From the above analysis based on selected literary texts from a renowned storyteller (as mentioned above), it is observed that modern education rid the Bodos from fear and superstitious belief and introduced them to a new world. Today there is a change on traditional Bodo culture and social dogmas. Some of the Bodos have taken up the cultivation as the means of earning economy and commercial viewpoint. Nowadays besides cultivation, some of the Bodo people do different job to earn money as well as for livelihood. New economic system emerged against the barter system. Necessity or needs of life increased. A middle class society came up from traditional Bodo society. Due to impact of new worldview, the Bodo people have adopted a consumerist mindset also. Bodo people have begun to adopt modern attire. The increase of urbanization and industrialization led the Bodos to abandon their old value systems and traditional forms of behavior. Different types of modern food items added to the Bodo traditional diet. A section of the Bodos, mainly the educated people has imbibed new ideology; and accepted multicultural way of living. Such kinds of descriptions are vividly noticeable in the literary text written by the writer. The writer attempts to visualize the cultural changes and many more of the society through the storytelling and characterization. Besides, the writer attempts to reflect different problems of the society as noticed in the day-to-day life and in the contemporary social context.

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