

Gender Issues in the Short Stories by Zaraphagla: A Study With the View of Sociology

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ABSTRACT

Sociology is a field of social science that examines human social life. In a sense, through the sociology studies we can study the social system works and how it relates to the way in which the statistics of society are lived. Literature is one of the sources that can be used for the scientific study of society. The function of literature is to reflect the situation of society at any time, and the relationship between the statistics of society and the critical view is being examined. Sociology of literature states that literature reproduces human experiences in social life; therefore, the core of any literary work is social life. By adopting the same approach, as there is male and female human being representing the society and it is seen that the works, activities and responsibilities among the male and female characters is not same. In literature or in the literary works is a consequence of life in the sum of other human being as the writer also one part of society. Zaraphagla belongs to Bodo society and as a writer he also brings some social issues of male and female or gender in-equality through his short stories. It is an attempt to analyse this matter through this research article.

Keywords: Sociology, Bodo society, gender issues, reflections of women empowerment

Introduction: Society includes various objectives. Society means various things. A society is made up of both men and women. Due to the different physical structure of both, their work is also different, the responsibilities are different. Variations are also found in their works. Due to different genders, there is a difference in their thinking too. This differentiation between men and women, sometime bring some issues and difficulties. In literature, writers come up with the articles, stories, poems from such a point of view, which gives an introduction to the position of man and woman in that society. From their point of view, the authors try to give knowledge people about the nature of society, the meaning of human life, the power of nature, the principles of society etc. which is going on that society. Through this article, it is an attempt to bring out the gender issues which is shown in the short stories by Zaraphagla with the view of sociology.

1.1 Aims and Objectives of the study: Following are the aims and objectives of the proposed research article-

- a) To explore the Bodo family, Bodo society and religions with the theme of stories.
- b) To explore the women issues and responsibilities.
- c) To study how the author has depicted gender issues through the stories.

1.2. Source: - The writer's book *Banalata* is taken for the primary source and many articles are taken by as secondary source from various renowned writers.

1.3. Methodology: The analytical methods have been employed to complete this research article.

1.4. Hypothesis: Initially, in the proposed study striking hypothesis has been adopted.

These are -

- i. There are four stories at Banalata short story book of bizarre events. The story and construction of plots will be discussed.

ii. The depiction of the culture, traditions and customs of the Bodo society in Zaraphagla's short stories through Banalata has influenced and inspired the society.

iii. Short stories are made up of different characters and each & every character is a messenger of society. The characterization and dialogues given by the characters will be discussed extensively

In this research all these problems will be taken into account for extensive study and discussion. Finally, the result of the study will be come in to shape as concluding statement.

1.5. Literature Review:- The magazine Hathorkhi Hala which was published in 1942 a short story namely ABARI by Ishan Muchahary was published. It is the beginning of short story era of Bodo Literature. According to the Bodo critic Manaranjan Lahary, the short story *Undaha* by Gahin Basumatary which was published in the magazine "*The Bodo*" is the first modern story to grow up Bodo literature. Because after the birth of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952, its quarterly mouthpiece *The Bodo* has taken a great role in the development of Bodo Literature. After the birth of *The Bodo* Magazine, many writers started writing stories and it also became very important for literature development. Many writers established themselves as good short story writer since then. For example Nil Kamal Brahma and Manaranjan Lahary can be mentioned. In the same way Navin Wary, with the pen name Zaraphagla published many short stories through his edited magazines. His first story was *Bobi Hathasi* and it was published in the magazine namely *Onzima*. He was the editor of the fifth issue of this magazine. Then his second edited magazine was *AABIR* and his story *Raobw Gwiya* was published in this magazine. After then he edited *Songali*, *Aronai*, *Danali*, *Rongjathili* etc. where in he published his short stories and novels serially in a large number.

No critics have still criticized on the stories by Zaraphagla. Many critics have discussed a little bit about his novel *Bishni Lwithw* but no discussions are found on his short stories. Therefore this is a discussion on Zaraphagla's creation Banalata and on the four stories which portraits the gender issues.

In this Research article, it is an attempt to discuss on the **Banalata**, plot constructions of the stories inside Banalata and reflection of the pictures of Bodo Society with the view of sociology.

2.0. The plot of the stories:- The story book *Banalata* is published in the year 2020. There are total four different stories- *Guthal(The Wave)*, *Banalata(a girl namely Banalata)*, *Songsar (The world)* and *Ziuni Khobam(The Rhythm of life)*. All the stories portraying women as the lead characters.

Guthal(The Wave) is the first story in the book *Banalata*. The main character of the story is Irabati and Indranil. Irabati is Indranil's sister-in-law and is a mother of two children. The name of the daughters is Indira, whom they called with a nick name Indu and Illora whom they called shortly as Ilu. Indranil is a rich businessman. He has a travel bus agency in the name of his siter-in-law and a shopping Mall in the name of his niece Indira. Indranil is very kindhearted man. He keeps Hangla, a very poor old man at his town's home. He is not only keeping him as his housekeeper but he also looks after Hangla's granddaughter too, who is an orphan now. Indranil keeps them both in his house and looks after them as his own people. Indranil is also very inspirable for his village's young boys. The young boys of Indranil's village follow his ideas to develop their life and lead a happy life. He has a different kind of relation with his sister-in-law Irabati. The relation of faith, respect, love where there should not be any doubt or any worries. His brother Dabaram and his two sisters Urmila and Neelima too had never doubts on the relationship of sister-in-law and brother-in-law. But Indranil's eldest brother Sonaram's wife Rambasi could not accept Indranil and Irabati's relationship easily. She spread various rumours of their relationship. The rumor got worser after Irabati's husband suffered from illness and died. For which there was a quarrel between Indranil and Rambasi and to control the situation Irabati slaps to Indranil. After being slapped by his sister-in-law Indranil leaves the house and starts living in the city to try to widen his business as he was already an established businessman when his brother was alive. After living alone in the city he realized that he was truly in love with his sister-in-law. At the time of his death, Dabaram also told his wife Irabati that if something happens to him by chance then she must remarry his younger brother Indranil. All these facts are well known by Indranil's elder sisters Neelima and Urmila. So once Urmila told Irabati to remarry their younger brother Indranil but by seeing the disturbances made by some youth of the village of giving proposal to marry her again and again. They were not able to talk about this matter again. After being slapped by his sister-in-law Indranil was very annoyed and didn't talk to his sister-in-law for four years but still tried to know about them through various different sources. But when he came to know that his sister-in-law is ill he came to take care of her. By his care his sister-in-law got better from her illness and by forgetting all the incidents they forgive each other and express their feelings. On the force of their children they got remarried and went to live in the city. At the beginning the villagers were not

able to accept their relationship easily but after knowing all the facts and that Indranil played a vital role in developing their village, the villagers started accepting their relationship.

The second story is ***Banalata(The girl namely Banalata)***. The main character of the story is Banalata and Abhijit. Abhijit and Banalata had studied together since class-I and as the time flew by, their relation also changed to be a colourful one. Their fathers too were friends and both the families have good relation too. Therefore none of the family members have any problem in their relationship. But after passing matric in first division and going to college, Abhijit's state of mind started changing. Abhijit left his studies and started coming forward to do something for his community. Abhijit started attending meetings, seminars and turned to be a great leader fighting for his community and his people. He decided to keep the community alive and demand separate state for his people. His father Mrigen Brahma could not bear this act of his son for which he chased his son out of his home. His mother Mrinali tried to convince her son to come back home when he went to live in a lodge with the other young boys. His sister Amila also tried to convince her brother to return home. At last they asked Banalata to convince him as she was the only resort left. Banalata along with Amila went to convince Abhijit to come back home but he didn't listen to Banalata and didn't come back home. Banalata was very saddened by this act of Abhijit. After that his mother Mrinali went for hunger strike which Abhijit could not bear. By the time he returned home Abhijit was not satisfied with the work of his group. After returning back home Abhijit didn't meet Banalata and didn't talk even though they sometimes came across each other on the road, they just ignored each other. After that Abhijit established himself as a businessman and Banalata also passed M.A. and started working as a teacher in one of the village schools. But they did not try to step forward in their relation, for which there was confusion among the family members. Their age of marriage is almost passed but they didn't go out to marry other people. One day as there was no work to do, because a bandh was called out by some organization, Abhijit went to Hemanta's home along with his friends for a meetup. Taking this opportunity Hemanta's wife Jarou, asked him about the relationship of Abhijit and Banalata. It becomes clear that Abhijit feels ashamed to approach Banalata due to his degree as he is just Matric pass and Banalata is M.A. After knowing all these Jarou went to Banalata and tried convincing her. She requested Banalata to pipe down her pride and to clarify their misunderstanding otherwise along with Banalata and Abhijit, all the other family members will also go through this sad situation. After knowing about the facts from Jarou, Banalata stepped forward to talk with Abhijit and clarifies all the misunderstanding between them. She went to Abhijit and cried while hugging him and ended their anger towards each other. Abhijit's sister-in-law saw this and told this to the other family members and soon announced Abhijit and Banalata's marriage.

The third story is ***Songsar(The World)***. The main character of the story is Laogi and the male characters are Laoga and Laoga. Because of the same name many problems came up and later Laogi's husband Sonaram, brought up a solution. They decided to call their son Laoga as Lallu and an orphan Laoga who stays with them in their house to work as Laoga. But one day Lallu's father dies in a sudden road accident. Laogi who had never step out of her house is now in a problem. She has no idea about the outside world. At this situation their servant Laoga helps them by taking all responsibilities of taking care of Lallu and his education. He advised Laogi for compassionate job of her husband and he has done all the official works by taking Lallu with him. Though Laogi didn't have any financial problems but as she was too young and beautiful, she had faced many problems. Some men of her own village, people from nearby village want to marry her and tried to get Laogi as their wife in different ways. To get rid of all these issues Laogi discussed with her son and planned for contractual wedding with Laoga. Once her son Lallu completes his graduation then they will end this contractual marriage and will let Laoga marry the girl he wants to marry. They planned in a proper way and when Laoga decided to leave home on Lallu's final year of graduation then only some things came to light. Because by this time Laogi could not realize that though Laoga is younger in age she could accept Laoga as her husband, because Laoga not only cares and serves Laogi but he is also deeply in love with her. Laogi also has fallen in love with Laoga. Laoga too have the right to be loved and respected as a husband. Therefore Laogi discussed with her son Lallu about this situation and ended their contractual marriage and accepted Laoga as her legal husband.

The fourth and the last story is ***Ziuni Khobam***. In this story, marriage is the main theme with a major female character Baneswar, called as Banda by his family members. He has three sister-in-laws and one sister. When Banda was very young his eldest sister-in-law had a young child too. On the sudden death of Banda's mother, he grew up on his sister-in-law's breast feeding. That's why he considers his eldest sister-in-law as his mother and respects her. But Banda doesn't have a good relation with his second sister-in-law, Sundari. Sundari

does not have a good relation with not only Banda but with all the other family members too. But Banda has the best relation with his youngest sister-in-law, Neelima. They are same in age too. Banda discusses each and everything of his life with Neelima, he respects her, obeys her and is always friendly with her. He is surprised to know that a woman could have such qualities. He respects and believes his elder sister Shwmsree. But he is having a problem with his wife Urmila. After the wedding, Banda's wife Urmila didn't return home after the Athmangla. Athmangla is the ritual of Bodo society where the bride goes back to her parents home after the completion of seven days in the newly married home. In this Athmangla, bride and groom have to throw a party to the friends and relatives of bride. After that they come back to newly married family. But Urmila didn't come back. No one knew the reason why Urmila didn't come back to home. Banda's family went to pick up Urmila many times but she rejected all their requests to come back and she neither told them the reason too. So after clearing ACS and before going to training, Banda wanted to clarify their relation with Urmila whether she will come back to him or she wants divorce. Therefore he talked about the matter with his elder sister and sister-in-laws. For the last time Banda's sister Swmsree, his brother Gabda and sister-in-laws Neelima and Rupathi went to Urmila's parents home. Urmila was happy to see them and she confessed that she was doing wrong with them. She also told the reason why did she was not come back to Banda after Athmangla. The reason was that Banda's another sister-in-law Sundari, told her that Banda has illegal relationship with his sister-in-law Neelima. So ensuing that she will not lead a life with a man who keeps illicit relation with his sister-in-law, for which she didn't return after Athmangla. But later Urmila came to know that all those were just the rumor spread by Sundari because Sundari had spread same rumor about Banda's brother Gabda saying that he has a relation with sister-in-law Rupathi. After realizing her misunderstanding Urmila felt ashamed and couldn't gather the courage to come back to Banda. After that when Neelima and Swmsree called her Urmila returned back happily to Banda. After knowing all the facts that the second sister-in-law is the main reason for all the problems in their family Swmsree told her brother and sister-in-law to live separately and should not keep any relation with the family.

3.0. The picturization of Gender Issues in the stories:- People live with the society. People's own society and community helps in up living a life. To develop a community one must first develop oneself and the house they live in. If one stands strong as a person then only one can do something for the community and the development of the region. The stories of Zaraphagla also presents the same portraying the home as theme. If the family members have a strong bonding among themselves then only one can think about others.

In the story *Banalata*, the strong bonding of sister-in-law and brother-in-law is presented. In the story *Guthal* too sister-in-law Irabati have faith and love on her brother-in-law, Indranil. In the story *Banalata*, sister-in-law Rina and jarou love and believe in Abhijit. In *Songsar* too Laogi loves and has faith on Laoga. Similarly it's found in *Ziuni Khobam* too that sister-in-law Rupathi and Neelima love their brother-in-law Gabda and banda. Rupathi brought up her brother-in-law Gabda by feeding him her own breast milk. So these four stories presents that the brother-in-law and the sister-in-law too have the same relationship like a brother and a son. Whereas how the relationship of a families members should be strong and bold in the same way all the strong bond of beautiful and colourful relationship. But as in a society a various types of characters are found with various habits and behaviours. So among them some dark sided people are also found. This work is done in the story *Guthal* by Indranil's sister-in-law Rambasi, in *Songsar* the ladies who came to help in work like Kharphati, Rupathi and Rwimali. On the other hand in *Ziuni Khobam* Sundari tried to break the relation of Urmila and Banda. A woman herself is the reason for the problems of another woman. And women become enemies of each other.

Women who have lost their husbands at a young age come across different problems. How to lead a good life with a young child and if by chance they get someone's support what will their child's future be, etc all these thoughts give them a lot of tension. So in the stories *Guthal* and *Songsar*, the life of widowed women is portrait nicely with the problems they face. In this way many young widowed come across different difficulties in leading their life. Many evil eyed men approach such widowed women and try to spread rumors about them. Such stories are found in these two stories. For such reason it is found that, though the society didn't accept the remarrying of brother-in-law and sister-in-law but with time the society is bound to accept all these. All these situations are presented in the stories.

In the story *Banalata* it is presented how a mother Mrinali had to take up hunger strike to bring a father and son back together, it also presented what problems comes up when a female acquires a higher education and what problem a woman faces when she has a bold figure.

The most attractive story is *Songsar*, where a mother Laogi finds no one to share her feelings and has to accept her son as a friend to share her problems. Though the society does not accept all these and even though few things could not be possible to share or talked with a son. She was bound to do so. Laogi wants a contractual wedding with their servant Laoga and even after the wedding they did not have any intimate relation with each other. She had talked to her son about this. Other than that she also told her son about the marriage proposal from a few men. When a couple does not have a child even after many years of their wedding the questions brought up by the other women is also a social issue, whereas after the wedding the husband and wife must have physical relation and as a result must have a child is a bound ritual of the society and such ritual is presented in the stories.

In the story *Ziuni Khobam* the bride had menstruation on the first day of the wedding and she felt shy to share with her husband and the situation is the worst problem for the women and it's a real truth. Other than all the above cited problems there are many more social problems such as the gender issues between the differences of men and women and the story also present some solution of how to come out from such problems.

In the story *Guthal*, sister-in-law Irabati could not take bath or wash clothes herself due to her illness. Indranil not only helped her bath but also washed her clothes. Other than these he also taught his niece Indira to drive a car which people of the village considers as very tough work. Through the story the empowerment of women is presented where Indu and Ilu learned from a very young age how to protect themselves, how to save money, how to help the needy people and how to face through some social problems.

In the story *Banalata*, Abhijit's mother Mrinali, his sister Amila and Banalta played a vital role in bringing back lost Abhijit to the right path. To solve Abhijit's life problems his brother's friend's wife Jarou played an important role. These are the examples that the women can be a pillar of solving different problems.

In the story *Songsar*, though Ruphathi and Kharphathi spoke against Laoga and Laogi they make the pillar stronger which was not even possible for Lallu and her husband Laoga.

In the story *Ziuni Khobam*, though the problems in Urmila's life was created by a woman, at the same time woman like Neelima and Swmshree helped to solve the problems.

Through the stories some beautiful sceneries of women working together like cooking food together, planting paddy, pounding rice, etc such beautiful social pictures are also portrayed. Other than those if any problems come up in a village how it is solved together, drinking wine together, caring about the kids of their friends like their own child and feeding them, etc., such pictures are also nicely portrait.

5.0. Conclusion: It is seen that the development of the society starts with education and if this education is given to women then the society will be more developed. In Zaraphagla's Banalata, the highly educated women are presented. Irabati, Banalata, Laogi, Neelima, Urmila all are educated women, for which they always think higher. On the other hand those who are less educated or not educated always think low.

The problems of widow, widow's remarriage, a bride on periods on her first night who sleeps to convey to her husband and if a woman having higher education than her husband, all these problems are presented in the stories. So other than all these problems, if a woman fights with truth along with education if women get the freedom from the few laws and regulations and if women get freedom from various bondage then women can establish themselves and also could help in building better society. The author has shown few ways for all these problems.

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