



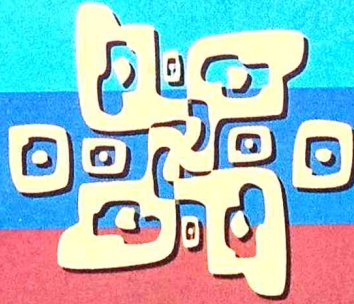
বাংলা

অস্রাজ

সংস্কৃতি

সাহিত্যচর্চা

বহুমান্ত্রিক চেতনায়



সম্পাদনা

তপন মন্ডল | দীপঙ্কর মল্লিক
রাকেশ জানা | অভি কোলে

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সমাজ-সংস্কৃতি-সাহিত্যচর্চা

বহুমাত্রিক চেতনায়

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Partition and Vilification of Body : Exploring Violence against Marginalized Women in the Select Writings of Dalits in Bengal

Biswadeb Rajbanshi

Mass migration victimized women, children and others during partition of Bengal and Punjab in 1947. The polarity of power based on religion led the contemporary nationalists to choose the provision of religion. Contemporary nationalists could hardly think about the highest cost which was paid by women. Their interests overlooked the basic human-bonding, relation and security. Thus marginalized women were raped, abducted, traumatized to persuade masculine libidinous desires and established womanhood in derogatory sense. Migrated people after Partition get another identity and they are treated as Jew by mainstream society. Hence, suffering of migrated Dalit women depicts a new reality (Naya-reality) of caste-based gender discourse. A study of partition literature is important to explore the communal history and post-colonial consciousness of home in relation to cultural, literary history of the subcontinent.

● Violence against Dalit Women before Migration

Kapil Krishna Thakur's 'Anyahudi' ('The Other Jew') explores violence against migrated Dalit women during partition and after partition of India. Thakur manifests how those helpless refugees were leaving East Pakistan and a large number of Hindu minority in Bangladesh were forced to convert their religion into Islam by the extremists. He has witnessed the levels of oppression upon Bengali women who are victims of being particular a gender, a religious community and refugees. In the story 'The Other Jew' ('Anyahudi'), Bistu pandit

is a helpless refugee who has previously worked as a teacher but after migration to India he becomes a helpless refugee and settles down beside the train line of Eastern Railway from Sealdah. In his writing 'The Order of Discourse', Michael Foucault writes about 'the production of discourse' which is 'at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed' in every society'. Policies of certain political and religious extremists targeted minority people toward off its powers. Dalit women, being subjugated thrice within their own community had to suffer the worst as the dominant groups easily targeted those Hindu Dalit women as their prey. Hence, they could either resist the oppression or they have to quit. Thus, a mass exodus took place. Thakur's story exposes this large number of refugees who were forced to migrate from East Pakistan. Psychologically it was the object of their (Razakars) desires. Thakur substantiates the politics and scenario of its dirty desires upon the woman's body. In patriarchal social structure, body of women gets exploited by various forms of masculine desires. Being minority in East Pakistan, Thakur manifests different forms threat from those religious and political extremists who are called Razakars. The story shows how the body of women is possessed by man. So, when Brojo asked Bistupandit about Jhunu, one of the daughters of Bistupandit, he replies, 'Bejo, Jhunu is no more...She was killed. My beautiful, innocent daughter...' This killing is manifestation of desires to translate struggle and violence against Dalit women that became an object of desires even in India during Partition and after Partition. Thakur writes :

She has not died. She was killed. My beautiful, innocent daughter...'That dirty, rotten scoundrel .Ferumiya. One day when Jhunu was coming back from college, Feru and his mates Kidnapped her. Feru wanted to marry her . She did not agree. They assaulted her all through the night and just before daybreak...(Singha and Acharya 81).

Killing is done sophisticatedly to provide traumatic state of uncertainty. This form of domination upon the refugees get maximized during and after the Partition. The religious identity of Ferumiya simply gets exposed. Hence, Brajabasi replies :

That's why we left our home so early. I told you to do the same thing. You didn't listen to me then, you were not ready to accept me. Today you accept me, but for accepting me what a heavy price you had to pay! It's not Ferumiya only, I tell you...

Brajabasi wanted to say something harsh but controls himself. Within such a short span of time he does not want to forget that once they had kept the highest seat of honour in their society reserved for the man who is now sitting in front of him.(81)

● Vilification of Body

Partition brings forth the nemesis in the lives of common who ultimately had uncertainty, trauma and this metaphor of violence ultimately provided distorted memory that occurred both in collective levels individual. Here

Bishtucharan's remark 'I won't have peace until I can marry Runu off'(81). In patriarchal social system marriage is associated with honour for women. As a father he couldn't protect one of his daughters. Ferumiya destroyed one of his daughters. Hence, at any cost he wants his daughter Runu here. But masculine libidinous desires vilified Raunu's body. She is raped by frenzied drunken members. Thakur substantiates the patriarchal political scenario and its dirty desires upon the woman's body. The story shows how the body of women becomes a possession of man. Bistu Pandit, the father of Jhunu and Runu, describes the incident of gang rape in East Pakistan. Another rape is followed in front of his eyes. Thakur writes :

Those frenzied, drunken members of so-called 'decent families' forcibly pull Runu, Shiuli and other girls of Chenno's age out of the huts and demonically take them to darkness on the other side of the railway line.

'Alas! Allas!' Bishtucharan cries out. Though portions torn off from their saris sealed the mouths of the girls, he can still hear the sounds of their groaning.(89).

So, this incident reminds him of the Albadar Group, who intentionally vilified bodies of women in East Pakistan. This oppression is common in Dalit literature. Migrated Dalit women are often victims of violence and brutality. In his testimonio *Interrogating My Chandal Life*, Manoranjan Byari recalls this incident as "a ruthless saga of massacre and rape arson and plunder" (Byari 236). The nature of vilification and exploitation is sometimes toxic and exposes a link of methodology of suppression. The Human Rights Watch World Report 2000 exposes this nature of violence in the socio-cultural context of India. Bankim Chandra Mandal in his book *Caste Based Violence on Dalit Women: An Inquiry into Social Reality* has remarked, "the use of sexual abuse and other forms of violence against Dalit women as tools by landlords, dominant castes and the police to inflict political lessons, crush dissent and labour movements within Dalit communities."

Henrietta Louise Moore, a British social anthropologist, argues about the complexity of the institutional structures of states in her book *Feminism and Anthropology*. In the complexity of institutional structure, though state policies are not designed to "oppress" or "discriminate" against women, end results contradict with the certain regulations that aim to protect mother, children from discrimination, oppression of social practices. Moore thinks that state policies which "may be extremely contradictory"(Moore129) in its performance upon women when "administrative, legal and coercive systems are the main means through which the state structures relationship between society and the state" (136). Hence, the dominant economic class and caste establish masculine identity and cultural construction of masculinity through the state apparatuses.

The nature of bureaucratic oppression upon Dalit women is a disguise violence structured and restructured by the dominant economic class and

caste. This act of repression upon Dalit women was conducted by the police in West Bengal during 1970s and 1980s. Though oppressions of deprivations upon Dalits in West Bengal exist in a “very sophisticated manner” as Monohar Mouli Biswas Comments in his Bengali Dalit Poetry Past and Present: A Critical Study.

In her book ‘The Other Sides of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India’, Urbashi Bhutalia describes vilification and pathetic condition of women. Bhutalia describes this as ‘orgy of violence’ under the flow of psychological trauma and torture. Rape and other forms of atrocities were beyond descriptions. Condition of Dalit women was the worst. The attacks were made on two levels. First, women were seen as an embodiment of community honour and second their bodies are sources of producing another body. Though they change the land to get security but threat and trauma avail here. The insecurity for women under patriarchal social order is the established truth. The fundamental question gets confronted for being confused about the possible safeguards. Will religion be able to save the body of Dalit women or they would save their lives? And which one would they protect- religion or life? The state policies regarding the issues of migration and Marichjhapi promote a gender-based sexual savagery. Both have secret and masculine enigma to perform through transgression and murder.

● Conclusion

The Partition of India occurred due to monolithic concept of religion. Women were raped, abducted, vilified during and after the Partition of India. Even the majoritarian people of the Hindu community could not save them from Hindu antisocial. Hence, Dalit women were the worst victims as they were killed, abducted, raped, vilified by dominant religious groups – Hindus in India and Muslims in East Pakistan. So, the concept of home or ‘real home’ gets distorted and the question reverberates, “O Bejo, my Bejo...for what then did you leave your home behind?” (90) The Partition is a holocaust in Post-Colonial consciousness that has left an unresolved question as reflected in the end of the story, ‘Tell me, you tell me...where is our real home?’

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