

THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN WRITERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH-EAST INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

This paper tries to show the contribution of women writers in the development of North-East Indian poetry in English. Though North-east Indian poetry in English has not a long history as such but it is emerging and contributing a lot in the development of Indian poetry and overall poetry in English at international level. Women writers such as Mamang Dai, Tamsula Ao, Lakshira Das, Monalisa Changkija, Mona Zote have addressed social issues, terrorism, women's search for identity, alienation and women-nature relationship in their poetry. They look to return the rich cultural heritage comprising folklore, folksongs and sayings. Along with the social issues they call to return to serene nature for human survival that is losing its way in the North-East India. Their dream is to re-establish human-nature relationship thus offering peace and tranquility to human mind that is tortured and disturbed by violence in the region.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Women's Oppression, Women -Nature Relationship, Revival of Ancient Culture.

Introduction

The North-East literary canon is in the state of emergence and has been fairly contributing to Indian writing in English today. Apart from the men writers writing verses, there are many women writers who have contributed a lot in the development of North-East Indian poetry in English such as Mamang Dai, Tamsula Ao, Anjum Hasan, Nini Lunglang, Mona Zote, Monalisa Changkija, Esther Syiem, Easterine Kire and many others. These poetesses belong to different ethnic groups writing poetry in English. The woman's psyche that is exploited, oppressed, neglected and denied of the rights by the patriarchal society, social atrocities, women-nature relations, identity crisis are the major concerns of their poems. It is also the reflection of customary laws and restraints to women community carrying on from one generation to another. Diversification of themes, concerns, use of images, motifs have attributed a different identity to poetry written by women writers. The history of human life and literature in the north-eastern region of India show male dominance. Their culture is basically patriarchal, ignored the women community that is historically construct. Women poets particularly memorized it through their poetry and expressed the history, culture of their own where gender inequality is seen as predicament as usually we experienced in India

Besides, the women's concern in their poetry, the beauty of landscape, search for identity, orality, ecological concerns, tribal issues are other major themes explored by the women writers writing particularly in Indian North -East poetry in English.

Analysis

Mamang Dai belongs to Adi tribe from Arunachal Pradesh is a leading poetess, journalist, novelist and short story writer who simply mixes with myth and folklore of her own tribe to expose the vital natural concerns and beauty of native land. The many eco-cortical concerns have been recurrently used as the themes by her in her poems. Nature, natural images, motifs have been sharply used by her to delineate the landscape and it's spectacular natural beauty. She has written two anthologies entitled 'River Poems' (2004) and 'Midsummer Survival Lyrics' (2014). Both these anthologies have used setting of the nature and land showing conflict between modernization and aboriginals in the way of postcolonial and modern impacts on the nature and human life. She has also expressed her concern over the loss of traditional, ethical values of the tribal life and culture. She has proud of rich cultural heritage and worried for search for identity. To quote,

"She voices her emotions and feelings through the images and metaphors chosen mostly from nature. Her search for identity has exposed her to be a nature loving humanist. She reveals her beliefs in tribal pantheon of Gods and mystery of environing ecology" (Nigamananda 4)

The objects from nature such as rivers, mountains, hills are frequently used as either images or motifs in her poetry.

The problem of terrorism in the region is resonated in the poetry of Jogmaya Chamka from Tripura. She considers terrorism as a responsible factor for breaking down the Silence of the heaven of land where peace reigns. She is perplexed over the bad treatment given to woman and her sale of business for physical pleasure in the home land. She dealt with the misuse of women in the region by some people who are against humanity and exploiting her for their pleasure and money. The theme of human trafficking has been sternly attacked by her in her poetical sketches.

Temsula Ao is a renowned poetess, short-story writer and novelist is from Nagaland. She has been awarded with 'Padma Shri' in 2007 and the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 2013 respectively. Her poetry basically discusses the women- nature relationship where nature as women has been exploited by men as. Her poetry is full of ecofeministic approach. To express this approach she, also makes use of myth from her own culture. To quote,

"The depiction of nature as feminine and hence exploitable has been clearly stated by the poet. This eco-feministic stance points out to the fact the domination of women by men is intimately linked to the destruction of the environment. Eco-feminist argues that a strong parallel exists between suppression of women in families as well as in society and the degradation of nature by similar masculine attitudes. Eco feminism is a new movement born

out of the interest generated in the last few decades to both feminism and ecological /environmental movements. The common ground of these two movements is that they seek liberation and new practices based on a model of non- domination. Many ecofeminists argue that the historical and casual links between nature and women are located in patriarchal domination and in the way women nature having conceptualizes in western thought. They consider the conceptual structure of the modern Industrial societies as being oppressive and dominating for it explains, justifies, the subordination of women and nature .The dichotomy between culture/nature and the association of man with culture, and women with nature have been manifested since the early stages of western thoughts .This association is closed related to the identification of women as emotional and irrational and therefore barred from the realm knowledge in general and Science in particular.”(Choudhary 90-91)

The destruction and degradation of nature by human being recurred as a vital concern in her poetry. She uses folklore, folksongs myth to explore the rich cultural heritage for own tribal people .She is proud of her tribal identity and at the same time disturbed about the loss of traditional and cultural heritage in the wake of modernization .she has contributed six books-‘ Song that Tell’ (1988),‘Songs that Try to Say’ (1992) ,‘ Songs of Many Moods’ (1995), ‘Songs from Here and There’ (2003), ‘Songs from the Other Life’ (2007)and‘ Songs all the Way Home’ (2017) respectively. The poems by her depicted the important concerns related to ecological devastation in the world of science and technology, where enforcing the nature causing ecological crisis.

Esther Syiem is a poetess, writer and professor at NEHU,Shillong,Meghalaya.She frequently makes use of Kashi folklore and folksongs .The man as a child and nature as a nurtures him embedded in her poems. This ecofeministic attitude delves into the poetry composed by her. The emotions and feelings of the poetess also records the native beautiful natural scenario of the Shillong and surrounding landscape .The blend of ethnicity and mysteries related to the ecology of the land echoes in her verses. She has contributed three volumes of poetry entitled ‘Oral Scriptings’(2005),‘of Follies and Frailties of Wit and Wisdom’(2010) and ‘Many Sides of Many Stories ’(2017).All these collections of poems have been published by A Writer Workshop, Kolkata.

Mona Zote is the famous poets from Mizoram. She recorded and recalled the memories and incidents related to the native land. She intermingles myth with ecology of the land .She has published many verses and some are included in the anthology in the Contemporary Poetry from North East published by Penguin books. Her compassion and love for nature is unique in the tone and experience.

The poetry of Lakshira Das from Assam, a militant female poet sings the love, sentiments and the transformation of earlier love to the universal feelings regarding nature. The women's oppression by male dominated society is evoked. Her ‘Between Births’ (1990) originally contains only ten poems in English and her other fifty poems have been translated into English by Pradip Acharya and others. Being humanistic, she demands equal treatment to both male and female and in such a way addressing very important social issue related to society for better tomorrow. Her poetry is anxious in tone. Women’s emancipation from the

shackles of patriarchal society has been retold and made her full of sorrows, grief about the inequality towards female in the society.

Conclusion

The Northeast Indian poetry in English has been developed immensely by female writer. They seek for search for identity, alienation, gender equality, emancipation and their love for serene nature of the homeland. It has women dominance. Despite of having patriarchal society in their land, women have contributed a lot in the past and present history of the North East Indian poetry in English. The poetess like Mamang Dai ,Temsula Ao and Esther Syiem have been internationally acclaimed and also awarded with national and international awards as well .The Poems composed by many women writers deeply exposed the grim social realities and sentiments also. All these women poets urge to love and return to the nature and simultaneously worried about the ecological degradation happening in the present time. Their poems are humanistic, sentimental, lyrical and anxious in tone.

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