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A Mourning Myth Behind The Misty Arunachal Pradesh-'Women

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Abstract

Arunachal Pradesh is a North East Indian state filled with mist and glorifying myth of its own origins. The region has a vast cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious background. The people of this region are united in a way though the states are filled with many differences.The Northeast part of India has long been on the fringe of mainstream literary consciousness, edged out by its complex sociopolitics, crisis of identity and the prolonged rule of the gun. Issues like nationality, identity, ethnicity has increased with the onset of globalization. Apart from the entire crisis, women who were once considered sacred and worshipped are of late being trampled upon.This paper is an attempt to unveil the hidden myth that women are celebrated in unison with men and nature. In this region women mourn behind the misty land Arunachal Pradesh. Their voices are that of the subaltern which can never speak or if spoken will never be heard. Despite the growth in technology and society the mentality of the male chauvinists of this region remains rusted with the ideologies of patriarchy and dominance.

Keywords: Ecology, ethnicity, identity, patriarchy, angst, dominance, male chauvinism, social and cultural milieu.

Arunachal Pradesh, a North East Indian state filled with mist and glorifying myth of their own origins. A land unexplored with her heterogeneous tribal community characterized by astonishing ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. The state surroundedwith majestic

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mountains with an area of 83,743 sq. km is the largest state among the North Eastern state of the nation. The unique hill system of Shivalik and Himalayan origin and intersected by numerous rivers and streams make this land an exceptional land mass. Around 1630 kilometers of the state of Arunachal Pradesh is shared with international borders of the neighbouring countries. Administratively the state is divided into sixteen districts, Itanagar in Papum Pare district being the Capital of the state. This thinly populated state has a very low human density against land being 13 people per sq.km, with 26 major tribal communities and more than hundred sub tribal inhabitants each tribal community with their distinct culture, dialect and customs make Arunachal Pradesh an enthralling state. (Dai, 2009)

The state has rich mineral deposits such as limestone, dolomite, graphite, coal, marble, oil, natural gas beside many more untapped mineral resources. (Dr. Mishra, p. 3) Abundance of vegetation made the tribal communities practice a life style entirely dependent on agriculture resulting affection towards the natural blessings. The misty mountains of North East has unfolded mysteries and untold myths boulder than the land mass, taller than the mount peaks. According to a study carried by Dr. Behal NEN, women in North East enjoy a higher privilege of mobility and visibility compared to other communities within the country (p.1). Practices such as dowry and assaults on bride are not predominant in the region. This shows a marginal equality between man and woman, but a survey conducted says that domestic violence against women is noticeably increasing in the North-East (Dr. Behal).A perception that assists at broadening of human capabilities as one of its core concerns cannot remain unaware to the striking disparities between males and females in many spheres of life. There is an urging need to understand the degree and nature of disparities that exist between the genders, the conditions in which such disparities are created, defended and sustained (AP HDR pp.115). UNDP's Human Development

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Reports since 1995 have clearly demonstrated that nowhere in the world do women enjoy equal opportunities to men, although in some spheres significant progress has been made towards gender equality.

The widely noted phenomenon of treating the girl child and the male child differently within the family is closely related to the preference of the male child, the reasons for the preference are diverse. Although gender relations are considered to be relatively more egalitarian in tribal societies; in Arunachal Pradesh the preference for a male child is high in comparison to the other North East Indian states. According to NFHS-2, 41.9 percent of married women in Arunachal want more sons than daughters and only 2.5 percent want more daughters. In Arunachal Pradesh there is a gender gap in education as well. Education is one of the basic means for expanding opportunities building capabilities and safeguarding freedom. Denial to access of education is denial of the basic freedom to build a better future for individuals and the society as a whole. The literacy rate for women in Arunachal Pradesh according to Census 2001, is 43.5 percent, 10 points lower than the national average 53.70 percent. An important determinant of the gender gap in education is that many of the benefits of female education are societal a more productive workforce, lower fertility rate, lower infant Mortality rate whereas the costs are private (King and Hill, 1999).Prevailing armed conflicts in the region increase the violence faced by women, regardless of ages, from sexual, mental or physical abuses and clashes. Though armed conflicts damage the community as a whole, the position a woman carries in her society and the sexuality of being a 'woman' causes tremendous impact on women when compared to the opposite gender. The state under the cover of conflict rose on to a society now controlled by man, from a society where a fair equality existed. This restricted the mobility

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of women, new codes in dress, what they wear and precisely physical abuses such as rape, an ancient tactic against dominating a target populace (Dr. Behal p.3).

One of the fundamental aspects of gender discrimination in almost all parts of the world, is the unequal access of women to gainful employment opportunities. A majority of women work in the informal sector with a low level of earning and poor working conditions; the underlying causes of such differences in the access to employment are complex and diverse, unequal opportunities for learning, socially constructed barriers, patriarchal ideologies are responsible for women's unequal participation in income-generating employment opportunities. The relatively lower level of participation in paid work doesn't mean that women have a lower work burden. Women shoulder a disproportionately higher share of reproductive responsibility including child-rearing, caring and other types of domestic work. Ironically though they perform tedious tasks and spend considerable amount of time and energy in doing unpaid domestic work their contribution remains undervalued and unrecognized. It is interesting to see the North East women weeping silently, over the victories they never glorified but lost. Women, who were the domestic volunteers who take up the responsibility of daily routine of the household; holds an arid view in the misty land, with distinct geographical and historical backgrounds, their weeps were little known or largely misunderstood. The key question that needs to be addressed in the context of economic transformation of Arunachal Pradesh is the changing pattern in the gender division of labour and underlying changes in the social attitudes and stereotypes. The economic contribution of women remains systematically underreported in the official data systems. The problems associated with valuation of unpaid and unaccounted work, perceptions of the interviewers the social conditioning and other factors have contributed to the underestimation of women's work. Apart from this the girl child worker is another important issue that calls for help

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and discussion, according to the census 1991, 5.7 per cent of children in Arunachal in the age group 5 to 14 were working, which was marginally higher than the national average of 5.4 pr cent, the percentage of working girl child remain higher than that of boys. In 1991, 6.7 per cent of girls and 4.6 per cent of boys were working, the incidence of girl child worker was considerably higher in rural than in urban areas. Special attention has to be given to the additional constraints faced by the girl child in programs aiming at the elimination of child labour from the state.

The expressions of the writers from this land consist of love for the land, nature, myths and folklore and loss of identity due to urbanization of modern interference. North East poets cannot be studied in isolation as their writing is a mixture of past, present and a quest of the future. The literature from North East is a complicated and mythical they express the sorrow and pride simultaneously compared to the counterparts. Significant female poets of North East share a common stage;they reflect their love on their land, their immense affection on their folklore, the lost identity and the patriarchal struggle they undergo. They make an ally with a common goal considering the present times. “Writing is a way of becoming” is precisely said to them by the Afro-American poet and political activist Alice Walker. North East poetry has a purpose, it has committed for a social change it struggles for honest representation of gender and self. (Barman, 2016). Enormous challenges lie before the North East in achieving gender equality in access to health, education and space in the land. There is a call for a clear need to mainstream gender concerns in the overall policy-making and implementation of various government and sponsored programmes. The success however remains limited unless there is a holistic transformation (Nussbaum 2002). Equality and empowerment of women require simultaneous action in number of areas critical to gender equity. Women in Arunachal Pradesh are almost

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invisible in the government structure. There is an ongoing change in the state to empower women and to bring them to the forefront but the pace of the change is very slow.A bold policy initiative with a long term commitment to implement change is necessary.

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