

'SONAM' NOVEL: A SOCIAL DOCUMENT OF THE BROKPAS

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Abstract

Brokpa is a tribe. Such type of community are in Bhutan, Tibet, Arunachal Pradesh etc. Their traditional occupation is shepherd. Monpa people practiced 'Khor Depka'. Khor Depka is a custom of Brokpa, they share the same women as their wife. It's preferable in the same clan or same brothers. Literature as a mirror of society, it reflects the social ideologies. Assamese literature is also portrait of Brokpa's life. Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi was the first Assamese writer, who reflects the livable history of Brokpa in his novel 'Sonam'. In this paper going to discuss about how Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi reflects the life of Brokpa in his novel.

Key words: Brokpa, Sonam novel, Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi.

Introduction

Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi is an Assamese writer. His novel 'Sonam' is rooted on Brokpa people of east Bhutan. Traditionally Brokpa people's occupation is shepherd. Their earn of living is domestic animal husbandry. They made Ghee, surpee and yarn of sheep and sell it in different places. The family system of the Brokpas, where a woman are allowed by society to marry more than one man. They could be same brothers or same clans. In the 'sonam' novel reflects the life style, traditional custom, belief and culture of the Brokpa society. In the novel, Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi also vitally described relationship of polyandry. Love and affection of husband and wife and effect of polyandry system. The paper tried to analysis how 'sonam' novel is social document of Brokpa.

Objectives

Chief objective of the paper is that analysis the Brokpa community and also their social customs, life style as reflected in the Novel 'Sonam' of Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi.

Methodology

Critical analysis method used in the paper.

Life and culture of Brokpa people

The story of the novel is Brokpa man Lobjang and his wife Sonam. Sonam means good fortune. Their life changes when they keep another Brokpa man Pema Wnagchu as a 'Khor Depka'. Pema Wangchu going second husband of Sonam. He was not same brothers of Lobjang. But he force to Sonam love him. When Lobjang was in his Broke, he force Sonam to physical relation with him. Broke means farm, where Brokpa People keep their animal. It was Chuksum hills of Himalayan. So, he rarely comes to home. When he went for trade purpose, sometimes he takes Sonam with him. Otherwise newly married Sonam was alone in his village home. Sometimes her younger sister give accompany to her. There village name is Sakteng. It is east side of Bhutan. One day, Lobjang came home, it was night

time, and he saw that Pema Wangchu came out from his home. He understands that he engaged with his wife. First time, he was very angry about it. After that he realized that if he not to do any action, it will be created difficult situation. He give propose to Sonam take his as a 'Khor Depka'. Because if she do second marriage with his, then it helpful for their life. Lobjang will relax from his household activities and she will not be able to stay alone. Pema Wangchu family was against of Lobjang's proposing. Because the custom of 'Khor Depka' is allowed in same brothers. But at last, society and village council give permissioned.

Firstly, they were very happy. Lobjang and Pema Wangchu stay with Sonam one month rotationally. Sonam gives birth two Childs from Lobjang. Once, there was arise food crisis and their family faces lots of problems. Love, betray, and miss understanding of polyandry family and with them Brokpa food habits, way of life, religious belief and every single step Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi narrated in the novel 'Sonam'.

Religion of Brokpa

Brokpa People believed in Buddhisim. Tawang Monastery are the holly place for them. The Tawang Monestry located in Tawang district in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is second largest monastery after the Patala Place in Lhasa, Tibet. Lobjang, Sonam and her younger sister Siring Doima etc. went to pilgrimage the monastery. Because they thought that it will be good luck for them. God will help them. Lobjang and Sonam pray for the child. Because they have not been able to give birth a child. Religion makes their life peaceful, deep belief in their mind any time. That's why first time when Lobjang knew about relationship of Sonam and Pema Wangchu. He was very irritated. He wants to murder Sonam. But it is against their religion. So, keep his mind cool and think it positively.

Trade system

Brokpa people economy is basically domestic animal husbandray. They made Milk products, like Ghee, Surpee, Sheep wool etc. Such type of things trade in the place Tawang, Tasigang, Dirrang, Rongnang, Tukpen etc. They exchange animal with the Monpa people for crops. Because they depended on the Monpa people for the crops. In the novel, Lobjang goes to Tawang for travel Tawang Monastery and they also going for business purpose. Sonam exchange two handmade blankets with Maize.

Food Habit

They used 'Arak' (Traditional wine) in home. Maize, Milk, Poneer, Meat etc their main food.

Costumes of Brokpa people

According the novel, attire of the Brokpa male and female is made of Sheep and Yak wool. Main character Lobjang ware a thick half jacket, which is called 'Paksa'. The woolen Trousers are covered until the née. He used a red belt, cap, shoe all are made from Yak hair and skin. For Women, an apron-like 'Shingka' reaches a few centimeters below the knees woven from silk, the shingka is covered with a 'Tudung'. They ware belt and a cap. When they went to see Tawang monestry, the costume is quite different from daily wearing.

For the felicitation they used 'Khata', a kind of silk colth. Any anniversary like marriage, occasions it uses by them.

Folk belief

In the novel, Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi included the folk belief of Brokpa people. In the animal farm of Brokpa, some clan Brokpa people not stay with wife. It will be harmfully for them. Lobjang's family God is not wanted that to women stay in farm. Because if they sexual relation in their firm, then it will be bad 'omen' for their family, animals. So Lobjang alone live in animal farm. Other hand his friends Tikara and his brothers has not any problem to living together. Their wife supported in their activities.

When Pema Wangchu mother insulted Sonam to affair between them. She used 'Domow' word. Domow means some women nails had pain, if someone take wine or any food to offer by the Domow woman. Then he will be died. Monpa and Bhutanese people used the word and it used for the women to show her low position.

On the other hand, when Lobjang, Sonam and their friends went for Tawang Gumpa, they hang 'Fun'(some false type small cloths) branches of trees. They believed the flying cloths will carry the good message for their life. They also believed in rebirth, when their pet Domboo was dead, Lobjang cried. His friend Tikara told him that if he will cried then his soul will not be able to rebirth very soon. Even when their first girl child Rincin tell something about the tiger, that time they believed that Rinchin is the rebirth of Domboo.

The author describing the novel that when the tiger killed many animals of Lobjang and others cannot be killed, the people of the village thought that it is some bad spirit to take revenge the village people. The tiger was killed by Lobjang and Tikara. When they come back to village carrying the deadbody of tiger, People welcoming themselves traditionally. They also give the respect tiger. Because tiger is the king of animal. It is the sign of Brokpa people's respect for animals.

Life with animal husbandry

Brokpas people life is eternally related to animals. Their earn of living is animal husbandary. So they have needed to good care themselves. Everything of knowledge needed to a Brokpas people animal related diseases, how could be cross birth and also protect them. For the animal is very dangers Him tiger. Himalayan tiger attacked the animal's. So Brokpa peoples needed to be careful. For the protection they keep Dog. This type of Dogs has highly ability from other dogs.

Effect of Polyandry customs

The traditional marriage custom of Brokpa people is 'Khor Depka'. Same brothers share a women as their wife. The polyandry system is included in the same family or clan. The relationships of husband and wife have no any rules. If someone doing 'Khor Depka' with other clan or community, then they follow some rule and regulations in their relationship. In the novel, Lobjang and Pema Wangchu maintained the rules. They stay one month rotationally with their wife Sonam. Pema Wangchu was not responsible as Lobjang dedicated for their family. Once, in the whole area facing food crisis. Brokpa people's main source of food is Tawang, Kalakatang, Dirang etc. type of Place. Their snow mountains have not the opportunity for crops. The cultivators of the places also facing crisis of food. They cannot be able produced crops cause lack of rains. Pema misdirect Sonam about Lojang. Lobjang has relationship with Yonton etc. Sonam believed in Pema Wangchu. One day Lobjang misbehaved Pema Wangchu for his irresponsible. When Sonam interfere with their, he beat first time Sonam. After that he repents about it. They decided to avoid Pema Wangchu, because he is main culprit of their family. Lobjang went to Broke. Pema Wangchu Come back and offer her to go his own home for mind refreshing. Sonam accepted his proposal. Sonam really loved Pema. It is going rumour that Sonam separated from Lobjang. Lobjang upset it. For the illness Sonam going to die. She repents her mistake. Her mistake is she trusts Pema Wangchu. Actually he did not deserve the kind of love and respect. End moment Lobjang came back to Sonam. She drinks 'Arak' from the Lobjang. She told that now her name Sonam, the good fortune is successful.

At the end of novel, Sonam advice her younger sister not to marry two mans. The custom of 'Khor Depka' is ruined her life. After Sonam death, her sister marry Lobjang according to Sonam. Sonam realized that her sister will happy with her husband and their children Rinchin, Tasi will not feel absent of their mother.

Conclusion

In the Novel 'Sonam', Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi very artistically draws the picturesque life of Brokpa community. Its not only story of polyandry custom but also social life of Brokpas. Sometimes such type of customs helpful for the household activities, but sometimes it creates problem in the family. Health issue is related in there. Because a woman gives birth Children from two or three husbands, it's harmful for her body.

Above the discussion we can say that Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi's novel 'Sonam' is the social document of Brokpa People.

Citation

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