



## Gender Inequality and its impact on Nirupama Borgohain's novel Anya Jiban

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**Abstract:** Nirupama Borgohain is well known in the field of Assamese literature. She is a prolific storyteller, novelist, essayist and translator. She is passionate about gender inequality problem between men and women. This problem is reflected in her writings. In the twentieth century, the gender inequality problem was found in the Assamese society. Many of Nirupama Borgohain's novels have also presented this problem as an important issue. The novel 'ANYA JIBAN' is notable in this regard. According to the story of the novel, Anima, who was born in the Guwahati city, after her marriage went to her husband Manoj's home which was located at the backward village of Lakhimpur district. In Manoj's home, Anima had some experiences that made her feel like that the women of that village are living a very worst life. In this novel a girl whose name was Putali, revealed the stories of some women who were abused and tortured by their husbands. Rambha Khuri (Aunt Rambha), Bihpuriyani Khuri (Aunt Bihpuriyani); Aikon's elder sister, Majani were the examples of such women. By the story of the novel 'ANYA JIBAN', the novelist speaks about the gender inequality problems in the society through the words of Anima. The novel deals with the fact that the gender inequality problem can be eliminated only with the cooperation of men and women.

**Keywords:** Assamese literature, eliminate, gender inequality, Nirupama Borgohain, prolific.

**INTRODUCTION:** Nirupama Borgohain borns in 1932 and later she has a special place in the field of modern Assamese literature. Borgohain, who established herself as a special short story writer of the Ramdhenu era, later rose to prominence as a novelist. Her first novel was Sei Nodi Niravadhi which was first published in 1963. Nirupama Borgohain's other notable novels are – Ajon Bura Manuh(1966), Antahsruta(1968), Anya Jiban(1987), Champabati(1990), Abhiyatri(1993), Pallabir Prithivi(2002), Agramramini(2009) etc. Nirupama Borgohain won the Sahitya Akademy Award for her novel Abhiyatri in 1996. This is how she expressed her feelings after receiving this award –

“I am happy to have the Sahitya Akademy Award. I am happy to receive this award; especially I got the award for Abhiyatri. I think this recognition is also extended to Chandraprobha Saikiyani.”<sup>1</sup>

Nirupama Borgohain is inspired by the social life of Assamese society. It is reflected in her writings. In some of her novels, gender inequality between men and women has been highlighted. In this sense; Anya Jiban, Champabati and Abhiyatri are notable. Gender equality between men and women is discussed in these novels. In this discussion, I will discuss the gender inequality problems that have appeared in the novel Anya Jiban. Modern education spread in Assam in the twentieth century. But women were not treated equally with men. It is revealed in Anya Jiban.

**THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:** The main purpose to study the subject is that to make a thorough analysis of the subject and to find out the importance of the subject. Some other purposes of this study are –

- i. To discuss how the novelist discusses women's rights as human beings, women's empowerment, women's emancipation, women's dignity and so on.
- ii. One of the purposes of this study is to discuss how the gender inequality problems of men and women are opposed in the novel *Anya Jiban*.

**THE AREA OF THE STUDY:** In this discussion, I shall mainly discuss the gender inequality issue that is found in the novel named *Anya Jiban*.

**METHODOLOGY AND THE SOURCES:** The methodology followed in this discussion is descriptive and analytical. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources. The novel *Anya Jiban* has been taken as the primary source for the discussion. Critical essays, articles and research based writings on the novel *Anya Jiban* have been used as secondary sources.

**THE STORY OF THE NOVEL ANYA JIBAN:** Nirupama Borgohain's novel *Anya Jiban* is a widely read novel. The story of the novel is based on the newly married couple Manoj and Anima. According to the story of the novel, Anima, who is born in the Guwahati city, after her marriage, goes to husband's home which is located in a backward village of Lakhimpur district. Manoj who is a professor at Guwahati taught Anima the customs and manners of his village. In this novel, the novelist has skillfully presented the various problems and disadvantages faced by women in a patriarchal society.

At the beginning of the story of this novel, Manoj told Anima that Rambha Khuri (Aunt Rambha) had committed suicide in the Tuntuni River. Manoj's sister Aikon later says to Anima that Rambha Khuri (Aunt Rambha) committed suicide due to her husband's tortures. In this novel, Putali reveals the stories of various women who were abused and tortured by their husbands. Putali's mother Rambha Khuri (Aunt Rambha), Bihpuriyani Khuri (Aunt Bihpuriyani); Aikon's elder sister, Majani are notable in this regard.

The novel goes on to say that the real female liberation and gender equality is possible only with the help of men. The novel is viewed from a feminist perspective. The question of gender equality between men and women has been raised in feminist literature. In the novel *Anya Jiban* the author wants to say that women are not only sexual beings, but also human beings.

**GENDER INEQUALITY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE NOVEL:** Gender inequality between men and women has been highlighted in the novel *Anya Jiban*. In this novel, Manoj's mother cooks very carefully for everyone in the house even in her old age. But for the sake of the mother's happiness, the men of the family, even Manoj, is completely silent. The fact that women are not self but other is also reveals here.<sup>2</sup>

When Anima asked Manoj about mother's food habits, he replied – "What are you talking about? Is it something to keep in mind what Bouti (Mother) eats? Does she has any illness or will we have to arrange special food for her because of her illness? She can eat what we eat."<sup>3</sup>

It is clear from Manoj's point of view that he is neglecting his mother's eating habits. Manoj's father is a wise, ideal man but such a man is ignoring his wife's happiness, needs etc. He is also not interested about gender equality.

Manoj's younger sister Majani is married to a rich man. But for the reason of not giving birth to a boy child, Majani's husband continues to inflict severe physical and mental torture on her. Anima was shocked to hear this. Majani have not received the dignity, the importance as a woman from her husband. Instead of it, she got unspeakable torture from her husband. Seeing the situation of Majani, her younger sister Aikon tells to her family members that instead of getting married she want to complete her B.A. degree. But her mother opposed to the decision and said –

"In fact, it is wrong to teach a girl A-B-C-D."<sup>4</sup>

Under the influence of the social system of that time, Aikon's mother does not think to be given the same importance to a girl as that of a boy. But Aikon is bold in her own decision. By the point of view of Aikon, the equal rights of men and women are also expressed in this novel.

In Anya Jiban Bihpuriyani Khuri (Aunt Bihpuriyani) is a victim of gender based inequality system. She is neglected by her husband. Bihpuriyani Khuri's ( Aunt Bihpuriyani) husband Rajani Khura (Uncle Rajani), who has a wide range of knowledge from home to abroad, misbehaves Bihpuriyani in front of the guests. This person is actually a representative of a barbaric society. He treats his wife as an insignificant object and does not give her the respect and the dignity that she deserves as a wife. But on the contrary, Bihpuriyani Khuri (Aunt Bihpuriyani) believes that Heaven is gained by make the husband happy. Rajani Khura (Uncle Rajani) has an extra-marital affair. But Bihpuriyani's thoughts to him that he is a God. She understands everything of Rajani and works from morning to midnight. Anima is shocked about Bihpuriyani's activities. By the point of view of Anima, the novelist says that Bihpuriyani has no self respect. She is not aware of her dignity and the rights as a woman. As long as a woman does not give importance to her own desires, aspirations etc. until then, gender inequality between men and women have not really disappeared. That's why; Bihpuriyani does not get respect, importance from her husband in Anya Jiban.

The central character of the novel Anima is worried about the humiliations and crime against women from time to time. Women have long been known by die together with their husbands dead body in the funeral pyre, they are raped by men, they abandoned by husbands, also sometimes abandoned by the society. Some girl children are killed by straining the neck as soon as they are born. Many girl children are killed by their fetus period. The reason of their murder is that they are girls. Many women are burn for dowries. The violence against women is not over. But in the other hand, the men are not victims of such oppression. No man is killed in his fetus period; no man has been burnt for dowry. No man dies together with the wife's dead body. Gender inequality is being addressed through Anima's thinking.<sup>5</sup>

**THE SOLUTION OF GENDER INEQUALITY AS REFLECTED IN ANYA JIBAN:** Anya Jiban tries to say that women can overcome the gender inequality problem only if the women are educated and empowered. In this novel Anima, Aikon and Putali are the example of such educated and empowered women. Aikon is conscious about her own identity and she is one of the bravest girls in the novel.

The daughter of Rambha Khuri (Rambha Khuri was tortured by the husband and for this reason she had committed suicide) is Putali. In this novel, Putali is also speaking about the empowerment of women to eliminate the gender inequality problem. In this case, the contribution of Putali's lover Naren is significant. With the help of Naren, Putali becomes aware of the gender equality, women's freedom and women empowerment.

Anima, the central character of the novel, is always speaking about women's empowerment. In this regard, Anima has always received the support from her husband Manoj. The only way to eliminate the gender inequality issue in life is with the help of both men and women. It is reflected by Anima and Manoj. The novel deals with the solution of gender inequality by Anima's viewpoint. Anima says in the novel, -

Yes, I was furious at first. But, a little girl in the village, (Putali is the girl) taught me not to take up arms against the men. The torture against women can be eliminate with the help of men.<sup>6</sup>

It is said by the point of view of Anima, in the novel Anya Jiban that the issue of gender inequality can be eliminate with the help of both men and women.

**CONCLUSION:** In Anya Jiban, some women related content has been picked up from the society. The name of the novel Anya Jiban is indicative of the fact that the women are regarded in the society as 'the other being'.<sup>7</sup> But some men want to give the women equal rights and respect in the novel. Manoj and Naren are remarkable in this regard. Not hatred towards men, but with the help of cooperation with the men, the gender inequality problem will be solved. In this novel, it is reflected by Anima's point of view. The novel Anya Jiban will continue to be considered as an important novel in the field of Assamese novels for its emphasis on the issue of gender inequality.

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