



Patriarchal challenges of Women of the Society in the novel “Mayabritta”

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Abstract-Rita Choudhury, a prominent figure in contemporary Indian literature, stands as a beacon of feminist thought and advocacy. Choudhury's literary journey began in the late 20th century, a period of burgeoning feminist thought in India. Her works, rich with the cultural and socio-political nuances of Assam, delve deeply into the experiences of women, challenging entrenched patriarchal norms and advocating for gender equality. A feminist perspective typically refers to a viewpoint or analysis that focuses on understanding and addressing the experiences, challenges, and rights of women within society. It emphasizes the advocacy for gender equality, the dismantling of patriarchal structures and norms that marginalize women, and the promotion of women's empowerment in various aspects of life, including social, political, economic, and cultural spheres. The novel portrays a society where male dominance is normalized and women are expected to conform. From the beginning, put's life is shaped by her family's disappointment at her birth: ``she was born because they hoped for a son.``

Index term- Patriarchal challenges, Women of the Society, Mayabritta

I. INTRODUCTION

Rita Choudhury, a prominent figure in contemporary Indian literature, stands as a beacon of feminist thought and advocacy. Choudhury's literary journey began in the late 20th century, a period of burgeoning feminist thought in India. Her works, rich with the cultural and socio-political nuances of Assam, delve deeply into the experiences of women, challenging entrenched patriarchal norms and advocating for gender equality. Through her novels, essays, and activism, Choudhury has made significant contributions to feminist discourse in India.

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II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

The main objectives of the research are

- To identify the patriarchal norms reflected in the lives of women characters.
- To examine the struggles faced by women under societal expectations.
- To analyze how the author portrays gender-based oppression in the novel.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly based on primary data. Primary data includes chosen works of the author. The secondary data includes research articles, journals and internet sources.

IV. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The novel Mayabritta explores the deep-rooted patriarchal structures that shape women's lives. It reveals how female characters like Puti and Nira resist societal norms, asserting their identity, agency, and desires. The narrative highlights issues such as gender discrimination, the impact of marriage, and the suppression of female sexuality. Through symbolic imagery and complex characters, the novel portrays both the pain and power of womanhood, emphasizing resilience, resistance, and the need for equality in a male-dominated society.

4.1. The Patriarchal norms reflected in the lives of women characters

The novel portrays a society where male dominance is normalized and women are expected to conform. From the beginning, Puti's life is shaped by her family's disappointment at her birth:

“she was born because they hoped for a son.”

This reflects the deeply rooted son preference in patriarchal societies.

Nira's father and later Brajen continue this dominance. Brajen says: "She's your daughter too. But I can't let her be like you... I don't want her to be an indifferent person like you who doesn't wear crowns and jewelry." (p. 303)

This dialogue reflects the expectation for women to conform to traditional feminine roles—obedient, decorated, and silent.

4.2. The struggles faced by women under societal expectations

Women in Mayabritta are constantly judged and constrained—by skin color, marriage pressure, sexuality, and silence. Puti is marginalized for her dark complexion but remains kind-hearted. Her quiet strength is shown through her transformation into Nira.

Nira's friendship with Subarna is slandered by society, reflecting how:

"Men and women cannot be friends in a patriarchal society."

Nira also protests the unequal treatment in marriage:

Nira to Brajen: "I am not asking your permission, I am just informing you of my decision." (p. 302)

This powerful statement challenges male control over female autonomy and underlines her self-determination.

4.3. The author portrays gender-based oppression in the novel

Rita Choudhury weaves gender oppression into every layer—family, marriage, society—yet allows her female characters to resist, evolve, and assert.

The novel critiques how masculinity is often equated with control, while femininity is seen as submissive. Brajen represents the contradict of a protector who simultaneously limits Nira's independence.

“Even sindoor and veil can become chains if forced,” reflects the author's critique of cultural traditions that limit women's freedom under the guise of respectability.

In contrast, Nira's journey to Gomukh becomes a metaphor for liberation and self-discovery. Her dreams, once dismissed, guide her to challenge expectations and find meaning beyond domestic roles.

V. Conclusion

Rita Choudhury's *Mayabritta* is a powerful literary exploration of womanhood, identity, and resistance within a patriarchal Assamese society. Through the complex journeys of Puti and Nira, the novel uncovers the emotional, social, and psychological impact of gender-based oppression. It challenges traditional expectations placed on women—whether in marriage, sexuality, or social conduct—while highlighting their resilience, agency, and inner strength. By weaving personal struggles with broader feminist themes, Choudhury not only critiques patriarchal norms but also reimagines spaces for female empowerment, autonomy, and transformation. The narrative stands as a testament to women's enduring fight for dignity, desire, and freedom in the face of systemic constraints, making *Mayabritta* a significant contribution to contemporary feminist literature in Assam.

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