

ON THE CONSTRUCT AND TRAJECTORIES OF AWADHI BARAMASA

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ABSTRACT

Baramasa is found as a literary form in Hindi and its different dialects. In the line of singing the feelings of the season, it offers a poetic rendition of the separation of a couple and provides a narration of the effect of this separation on the psyche of the protagonist. The vision and personalities of the characters emerge as the meta-theme, with many subsidiary allusions and insertions in different contexts. In such texts, generally, the man is shown busy performing his business or job at a place far away from home. The characteristics of the seasons work as a catalyst in affecting the psyche of the female protagonist. Associating herself with nature, she translates her anxiety, separation, and the good past days spent in union through the rhymes of Baramasa.

Key Words: Folklore, Separation, Baramasa, Women Narrative, Orature.

INTRODUCTION

As a literary form, Baramasa is found in Hindi and its different dialects. In describing the season, it offers a poetic rendition of the separation of a lover from the beloved, and provides a narration of the effect of separation on different working patterns and thoughts of the narrator. The vision and personalities of the characters emerge as the meta-theme here, with many subsidiary allusions and insertions in different contexts. In Indian literature, the seasons are often depicted in two literary forms; the Rituvarnana and the Baramasa. The condition of togetherness and union of the lover and the beloved is represented in the form of the Rituvarnan, and that of separation finds words in the verses of the Baramasa. In Rituvarnan,

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the poet divides the year into three or six-time slots, as the circle of different Ritus is, and in Baramasa, the characteristics of the twelve months of the year are put in sync with the mood and behaviour of the narrator. The narrative of the Baramasa expresses the co-relation of season and psyche. In Baramasa, generally, the man is shown busy performing his business or job at a place far away from home. The characteristics of the seasons work as the catalyst in affecting the psyche of the female protagonist. Associating herself with nature, she translates her anxiety, separation and the good past days spent in union through the rhymes of Baramasa.

Baramasa has its origin in folk and oral tradition. From the folk culture, it has moved into the elite or sublime/standard writing as a genre. Its association with folklore is quite natural. Folklore in general records the traditions, knowledge, and lore of the people who have been conventional in their work, having an agrarian vision of life. The common folk have been moving from their places to industrial towns in search of a job in between two crops, and sometimes for a longer time to earn cash from industrial times to maintain a healthy balance in the family economy. The rural economy is mostly based on agriculture, animal husbandry, and cottage industries.

As traditional Hindu scriptures suggest, the socioeconomic matrix frequently brings up instances of separation and longing. Baramasa is a unique narration touching upon the reverberations of the human psyche, the socio-economic condition of the habitat, cultural background and sanctions, and the blossoming of human love in the mirage of a labyrinth of man, society, and money. Over the centuries in Indian folklore and literary culture, it has been a noteworthy tradition, showing an intricate pattern of the impact of the basis on the ideological superstructure. The narration of Baramasa depicts the circularity of the Indian concept of time. The Indian concept of time is circular, whereas the western concept of time is linear. The circle of time moves on its own axis with its own pace. It is *Kaal* as described in Indian Pauranic literature. Under this circle, human beings have their own course of work, rituals, ceremonies, rituals and celebrations. If their course comes in synch with the wheel of time, it gives pleasure; and when the synch is estranged, human life gets affected, and there comes pain. In this way, the circle of pleasure and pain moves on. Time seldom waits for our pace, and it is our endeavours, management and fortune that bring it in sync. We mould and shape ourselves according to it. The approving pace of time gives vent to happy notes in literature, and the adverse state naturally bears gloomy signs. Baramasa represents the same circle and relationship of human beings and time, with special reference to the illustration of the pining in the hearts of couples. It is a layered manifestation of such a psyche in association with the emotions of love, togetherness, and separation. Some texts in the Baramasa tradition also reflect the feeling of association—the meeting of the lover and the beloved—but most of them express the phase of separation. The separation affects not only the body and the soul, but its vibes also reach the universe, and a clash is shown in the lyrics.

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An infinite canvas of nostalgia, longing, anxiety, revulsion, disappointment, revolution, and self-flagellation is sung in the lyrics here. It is quite symbolic and suggestive.

The Baramasa emerges as a *sui generis* poetic narrative which culminates in rainbow colours. Baramasa is a folksong that expresses the longing of the narrator for someone absent from the scene. This longing is associated with the changing colours of nature. In a way, the personal becomes universal, and the whole cosmos, the fauna and flora communicate. The following is an abstract from a Baramasa, collected by me from the Awadh region in Uttar Pradesh :

*Padi fuhaar aaj sawan kai
Jiv me chingi bhabhki
Beete dui dui baras virah ma
Na abahi balmu laute .
Aie re badri lai kai hamka
Baalam tak pahuchao
Agar mile na hamre saajan
Sagraa ma hamai dubao .*

*Waise pahile aayav hotiv
He ,baadar badri manbhavan
uthat fasal lak lak hinv gaavan
balmu jaiten bhatke kahek vides .*

*Sookhi gayin bhuyin mayi
Gaunen kere baad hamare
Sookhi bhuyin
sookhi gayi dehi
Piv ker yaad satavay*

*Aaj jauni badri ghiri aayi,
Man ma khusi ghata ghiri aayi
Dharti harsi , hamu harer
Hey dharti maa kuchh karav upaai .*

(Collected from Nanhiya Pur Village , District Barabanki , December 2021)

English Rendition: The following is the English rendition of the above-mentioned extract:

With the shower of Sawan,

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*my heart has shown sparks
Two years I spent in separation so
my hubby didn't come back.
Hey , cloud , take me with you.
My husband's place is up there.
If he is found ,not there,
Make me drown in the deep blue sea.
Had you come earlier ,
hey pleasing happy cloud ,
it would be the raising of a happy crop.
and for what my hubby
would move to the distant land.
Just after my gauna
Mother earth got parched.
and the same my body feels
I yearn for my husband.
As the cloudy weather turned
Psyche bursts forth with mirth.
The earth got mirth and the same green I ,
Hey Mother Earth, I request further recourse .*

The lines of the abovementioned text are simple and forceful. The partner of the narrator is absent from the scene. He has travelled to a distant land in search of work. The narrator associates this with the famine in that area. The clouds are giving hope to the female protagonist and perhaps to Earth, too, is parched without rain. Baramasa's narrative emerges more as a woman's story. The state of separation can sometimes create a hallucination-like situation in the life of a woman pining for her lover. The state of hallucination becomes even hysteric, which creates even the scope of whims, fancy, and fiction. On the construct and nature of women's narratives, the following statement by Fewzia Bedjaouri holds significance in the context of Baramasa,

If women's narratives are partly fiction, they include stories set by the narratives within which their lives are intertwined. Indian women's voices seem very much present in post colonial literature, certainly more audible than ever. They need to claim their right to exist and have to clear a psychic space for themselves. They can afford to be not only parodic but playful and highly sophisticated as well. " (36)

The texts of Baramasa create many webs like these. The longing for the man creates many totems and many imaginary things come into view in the psyche of the protagonist. Sometimes, I find the following steps in the flow of sensibilities in Baramasa.

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In popular sensibility, I am sure, that Baramasa has the traces of its origin from the very beginning of time immemorial. Whenever two lovers separate from each other, the longing is natural. This longing can inspire the genre of Baramasa. In documented literature, the beginning of this genre may be traced to *Bisal Deo Raso* in the early *Aadi Kaal* of the history of Hindi literature. "According to *Nahata*, a 13th century *Apabhramsha* work -*Baharan Khand* is the first Baramasa like work. (Richa Upadhyay, 'Barahmasa').

Baramasa is the song of a graceful land, with all its melodious sounds and sweet aspirations. It shows the philosophy of human life, where contentment is defined as satisfaction. In my surveys of oral literature, I have found some texts by Baramasa that offer a note of eco-feminism in their connotations. The feelings of the narrating woman become synchronised with the feelings of the earth's mother. The following lines from an unpublished Baramasa are quotable,

*"Jiyara vyakul manava vyakul"
hiyan hamar
huan mahtari
piv hamre tav vides base hain
dharti matahu hain dukhiyari
bhadav sookha nayan mula jhar jhar neer bahaven
huan mula dharti ka karihay, kehka aani bulavay."(Singh, 'Orature')*

The female protagonist says that her heart and mind are both depressed. She discovers the same situation as Mother Earth. Her partner is busy at work at a far off place, ignoring the longings and aspirations of conjugal life, so she can express. She is taken aback by her speech about the plight of Mother Earth and simply wonders. The statement of Irene and Gloria holds importance here.

They find that through poetry, rituals, and social activism that connected the devastation of the earth with the exploitation of women, these activists reinvigorated both feminism and social change movements more generally. The languages they created reached across and beyond the boundaries of previously defined categories. These languages recognise the lived connections between reasons and emotions, thought and experience. They embraced not only women and men of different races but all forms of life- other animals, plants, and insects—and their refraining led to a new, more complicated experiential ethic of ecological interconnectedness. (Irene and Gloria 'Introduction')

In line with the plight of the woman, the state of mother earth is not what it once was. Here she finds a close association with Earth. The longing partner never subscribes to the idea of

materialism. The company of her man is better than any kind of richness. Indian folklore echoes the patterns of Indian philosophy, and shows a special purpose in life, and that is spiritual purpose. Accumulating material avenues and resources in such a world view is rather secondary. Some texts of Baramasa truly subscribe to the patterns of women's aspirations, plight, and struggle.

*Jetha tapay baisakha tapa hai , sookh gava hai paran
Hamka tav seetal piya kerī chhahiyan , unkay dhan ma dhara hai paran.
Din din jhankh jhank kay beetay
Andar bahar judh macha hai
Din na beetay
Raat na beetay !
(Singh, 'Orature')*

The narrator mentions the scorching sun and heat of the Hindi calendar months Baishakh and Jeshtha (May June). She holds that the company of her husband is the coolest for her, whereas her husband is stuck in making money. The woman protagonist refers to the war within and out , and says it is difficult to sustain and to spend the days and nights. Irene and Gloria's following statements hold value here. They state that

women's struggle in the rural Third World is, of necessity, also an ecological struggle. Because so many women's lives are intimately involved in trying to sustain and conserve water, land, and forests, they understand in an immediate way the cost of technologies that pillage the Earth's natural riches. By contrast, in the industrialised world, the connections between women's concerns and ecological concerns were not immediately apparent to many feminists. (Irene and Gloria 'Introduction')

There is a need to record and translate the endangered tradition of Baramasas into English. It will help in communicating the rich folk cultural tradition of India to those who are unaware of its richness and glory, which is, unfortunately, being maligned by the sinister forms of cultural colonialism. It will help in communicating the rich cultural tradition to foreign lands along with those who willingly or perchance fail to taste and relish the folk flavour. The folk tradition has been, for some strange reasons, curbed and stunted by the writers of cultural and literary rule books, but it has always maintained its flow and force and has provided a basis for the elitist literary tradition. Baramasa is not an extinct genre, but it only exists in the form of mini-discussions. With the flow of time, it has remained to change the course of engaging reality. I find the following statement by Sukrita Paul Kumar et al. appropriate in this context when they write, " Since language and literary traditions emerge from specific historical and political points of reference, they have to be studied from within their constantly changing cultural frames and not in isolation." The boundaries drawn between various disciplines in

academia then have to shed their rigidity and make space for a relatively more comprehensive view of lived reality. " (qtd. in "Editorial", Indian Literature.)

It is true regarding Indian folklore, which promises to offer references in almost every field of human knowledge.

Notes

The texts of Baramasa and recorded orature are collected by author and his team from the northern part of the Awadh region. These are translated by the author of this paper.

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