

Status of Ramo Women: Analysis Through Ramo Folksongs

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ABSTRACT:

The rationale behind this study is an attempt to analyze the status and role of Ramo women through the selected Ramo folksongs. The folksongs of the Ramo community is called as Jajinja. The meaning of the term Jajinja is self-respect, pride, joy, beauty etc. The poetic language of Jajinja is known as the dong in Ramo community. When presented in the form of song, the word Jajinja is called as Jaying. In Jajinja, the language remains the same. There is a difference in words and tones. They used different words to address different things like clans, place, male, female etc. Jajinja may be sung at any occasion. Like during Mithun, Ox and Cow sacrifice, wedding ceremony, community feast, cultivation period, erection of building etc. Jajinja also narrates about some important event. Ramo folksongs can be divided into two broad categories, i) Ritualistic folksongs and ii) Non-ritualistic folksongs. Ramos are one of the sub tribe of Adi tribe, inhabiting in the Shi Yomi District Arunachal Pradesh. Since generation the status of women has been everyone's focus of attention in all the society. Women play vital role in the progress of the society, but the identity of Ramo women is still yet to evolve. In this paper an attempt has been made to understand the Ramo women from the perspective of various socio-cultural, religion-economic and political aspects of their life. Besides, this study will also try to perceive different problems faced by the women along with existing changes in the 21st century.

Keywords: Ramo Folksongs, Ramo Community, Ramo Women.

Introduction

The rationale behind this paper is to analyze the status and role of women through the selected Ramo Folksongs. Since generation, the status of women has been everyone's center of attention in all the society as women play vital role in the progress of the humanity. Yet the identity of Ramo women is still to evolve. In this paper, an attempt has been made to understand the Ramo women using translated Ramo folksongs. To acknowledge the status and role of women is so important in the Ramo society because women signifies as mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, and as the preservers of the cultural customs and traditions of society. For example,

Lady of The House (Ugu Ga Nyeme)

She is the lady of the house Jajinja,
She takes care of the family Jajinja,
She goes for cultivation Jajinja,
She works from sunrise to sunset Jajinja,
She depends on man economically
Jajinja.
She cannot inherit property Jajinja,
She does not have a voice Jajinja,
She has no choice Jajinja. (Field work,
collection and translation)

The given folksong shows the work and occupation of the Ramo women in the society. Since generation, traditionally Ramo womenfolk are associated with agriculture. There is no particular work enclosed upon conservative Ramo women. Ramo men does the harder activities like carrying heavy loads, fencing etc. But women constantly do the standing work as compare to men. The workload of married women is more than menfolk. Especially after their marriage women tend to take the responsibilities indoor as well as outdoor activities.

In the Ramo society women are economically dependent on men. Although woman gets equal share of work or sometimes more than that of man, she is not allowed to be the bread winner of the family. According to Ramo tradition women are not permitted to inherit property from their parents. The right to movable and immovable property is permitted to only menfolk. Even married women cannot claim her husband's property after his death. Widow-wife, daughter and son can only take care of the property until the son grow up. Even during divorce women can only take the ornaments but cannot claimed any property. In case of pre-marital sex, if a boy denies to keep her, he has to pay fine in case or kind. But the alleged girl never disagrees for the marriage with the lover.

The given folk literature reflect how Ramo women are confined within appropriate position in terms of household responsibility, family matters, and home supervision. In fact, women do almost all the household management. They play a vital role in both assisting economic needs as well as taking care of the family. They are actively involved in preparing meal, beer, to look after their children, their health, education etc. Women, normally

work from sunrise to sunset. She sleeps after completing all the important works, and wakes up early morning. After completing domestic works, women go outside for additional task. Sometimes their husbands also help. But women do not have a complete right to control the family purse.

Today few women have started earning. But Ramo women are still dependent on the menfolk for the financial support. Thus, the above folk literature reflects that women's low position in the Ramo society. Over all it shows that in the Ramo society women have neither voice or nor choice. There is another translated folksong which reflect the disparity of Ramo women in the society. (The following poem has been collected by the scholar through field work. The translation is also by the scholar).

I Am the Bride (Ngo Nyamne Hena)

For the new bride Jajinja,

Daughter of Ramgo Family Jajinja,

The bridegroom of Dungram family

Jajinja,

He is blown away with her smile and
beauty Jajinja.

Bridegroom examines her soul Jajinja,

He used chicken liver to examine

Jajinja,

The chicken liver test is positive Jajinja,

His and her soul are showing positive

Jajinja,

They can plan for the marriage Jajinja,

For the new bride Jajinja. (Field work,
collection and translation)

The above folksong brings out the social expectation from women. Since ancient time, and till today there has been lots of hope from women. Traditionally prior to marriage women's character has been examined through the rituals. Though many got converted into Christian yet many follow the culture till today. In the past girls were not allowed to talk about their marriage. Women did not have any idea about their future husband. Basically, women did not have any choice, and they just have to obey their parents. Though there is some transition in terms of the choice of life partner in the twenty first century. But even today they often married off at early age. In the Ramo society, there is a prevailing notion of women measured as core of income and helping hand to the parents of bridegroom even today.

Divorce is commonly practiced among the Ramo tribe. Disloyalty, carelessness of women, infertility etc. are the possible causes of divorce. But women have also got right to divorce in case they are being torture and dishonest. The entire case is handled in the traditional village kebang. If a husband divorces his wife forcefully without any proper reason, he must be punished and charged a fine by traditional village council. However, if wife deserts him, she has to arrange for the return of the price her husband paid for her. After divorce, generally, the female child goes with the mother and the male with the father. If separated husband desires to keep all the children with him, he can do.

There is another translated Ramo folksong where the obligation of a women is reflected.

I Am the Mother (Ngo Ane Hena)

I am the mother Jajinja,
I am the mother of son Jajinja,
I am the mother of daughter
Jajinja,
I am the mother of love Jajinja,
I am the mother of compassion
Jajinja,
I am the mother of peace Jajinja,
I am the mother of growth Jajinja,
I am the mother of family Jajinja,
I am the mother of hope jajinja,
I am the mother jajinja.

I am the mother of society Jajinja. (Field work, collection and translation)

It also has been observed that in Ramo society more value is placed on the motherhood than any other female role. It is through her children that a woman makes her vital contribution to society. Motherhood overshadows her role as wife, for her primary obligation as a wife is to provide continuity of her husband's ancestry. Thus, motherhood is given great importance in family and society. But she has to resume her normal duties shortly after giving birth and taking care of the newly born child.

In the Ramo society, the women are also considered as part of religious mechanism. Both men and women can take part in the religious activities and issues. But, in reality, such an opportunity for works means that a Ramo woman is treated as a slave. That's because she has everyday burden. For example, housekeeping and management, bearing and rearing children, and so on. Thus, equal opportunity for work does not necessarily come as a blessing for the Ramo woman.

It has been observed that in terms of formal education and training the Ramo women are still lacking behind. The early marriage of the girls is one of

the main causes for the dropout of their education. Though the Government have made many provisions and strong favorable social attitude, but the status of women's education is very low as compare to that of the men folk of the Ramo society. In fact, since childhood women are made to believe that, they should always try to keep their parents or husbands happy. They work very hard to contribute towards family maintenance. This is the reason they lack interest and to undertake formal education. But today overall social attitude towards girl's education is positive and favorable. In fact, if any girl wants to take study, the parents as well as the society support them.

In the twenty-first century it has been observed that there are some slight changes taking place among the Ramo women in the society. However, change is also noticed in a very poor scale. Women are into boutique business, shops, vendor on their own expense. The menfolk are supporting their spouse in their business. Few of them have started working as government employee and few of them are engage in private sector.

As compare to earlier time women are little bit raising and struggling, fighting for their rights in the workplace, seeking help from their husband and family members. This day's marriage has become liberal. Now a day's love marriage is very common. Menfolk also recognize the importance of women. In political life Ramo women are taking keen interest and participate in election. Over all it has been analyze that the womenfolk of the society have been occupying a very low educational status in their society which is an important factor to elevate the status and the

position of women in the different aspects of their social life.

Therefore, in the conclusion it has been explored through Ramo folksongs and fieldwork that there is disparity of gender performativity. Between the two sexes men is visible and women is invisible. Change is a process which requires time. It has been analyzed that change is going on in different aspects of woman's life in the Ramo society. One of the sad observations is that, even in the era of twenty first century where women of different society are evolving and empowering, Ramo women are still struggling for their identity. The quest for identity is the quest of Ramo women.

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