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Book Review

Usha Das¹

MRIDUL SARMA. *Tejimalār Mākar Xādhu*
Aank-Baak, Guwahati, 2011, pp.352,
Price- Rs. 230.00, ISBN: 978-93-80454-74-0

The existence of human is associated with the heritage. The foundation of the heritage is formed by the native tales, legends, myths, traditional songs, traditional customs etc. According to post modernism, heritage is actually multifaceted. Normally various aspects are related with heritage. Hence, the cultural and intellectual contexts can be accepted from several points of view. Depending on this re-construction of heritage, the style of re-construction or re-installation has been formed. Various sectors like literature, music, motion picture, art, architecture etc. have also used this style in order to provide a new dimension to these forms. Through re-construction of the past, human beings have been trying to express themselves. The third world countries are also trying to restore the native heritage. In these countries, re-construction of ancient heritage has become more popular in the fields like literature and

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culture in strengthening the foundation of the native culture rather than acting in accordance with the western laws. In this particular style, all the pros and cons of the past are evaluated rationally. The multifaceted aspects inherent in the folk tales, myths and legends have also been taken into consideration. In this particular form, the pre-established views and sense of values are exceptionally changed.

Tales can be considered as the non-written history of any society. The tales that are passed down from generation to generation, reflect the psyche of both male and female. Though externally these tales seem to be unvaried, but in the style of re-construction, their multifaceted aspect can be spotted. Those aspects, which are dominated by the prevalent society, are also reflected in this style. The least important character may become the most important character while re-constructing any tale. Even sometimes the storyline gets a new dimension. The re-construction of tales is much attractive than re-construction of all the creative works like poem, novel, drama or motion picture.

It should be noted that some popular poems like 'Tejimalā' by Chandra Kumar Agarwala, 'Pānesoi' by Ananda Chandra Agarwala, 'Kramasa' by Navakanta Baruah, 'Kamalā Kunworir Jiek', 'Eyāte Gā Dhui Lo Champā' by Keshab Mahanta etc. are the re-construction of tales which are prevalent in the society. Similarly dramas and motion pictures like 'Kamalā Kunworir Xādhu', (drama) 'Tejimalā' (drama) by Paramananda Rajbanshi, 'Chānd Banikar Pālā'(drama) by Shambhu Mitra, 'Tejimalā' (motion picture, 1963) by Anowar Hussain, 'Kathānadi' (motion picture, 2016) by Bhaskar Hazarika etc. are also compiled by reconstructing the tales. 'Tejimalā' is one of the famous tales of Assam. Ratna Datta has composed a novel named 'Dwitiyā' keeping this story as its base. 'Tejimalār Mākar Xādhu' by Mridul Sarma is such a novel which is also a re-construction of the story 'Tejimalā'.

The society, on the basis of which the story of Tejimalā has been

composed, is a patriarchal society. In this society the women are been exploited and deprived of what they deserve. Tejimalā's father has two wives and in most cases, these co-wives do not inherit a co-operative attitude towards each other. It can be said that the practice of keeping more than one wife is in itself a dishonour towards the women. In the tale, Tejimalā's stepmother has been victimized for her condition. Tejimalā's father is a rich man and he has all the influential power because of which it is quite easy for him to marry two girls. For the happiness of the husband, the society wants a healthy relation between the co-wives and expects them to treat their co-wives' child as their own. In the tale, the stepmother is presented in a very negative and cruel manner in order to develop a negative attitude towards all the stepmothers. In normal condition no woman can develop such a cruel attitude. There may be some reason behind such cruel attitude of Tejimalā's mother. Her stepmother too, has some emotions, which the patriarchal society has never tried to understand. The tale is constructed based on this mentality of the society. That is why Tejimalā's stepmother is treated with hate and extreme dislike since ages.

In his novel 'Tejimalār Mākar Xādhu', Mridul Sarma has thrown light on the tale from various perspectives. He has evaluated the story from feminist and socialist point of views. Tejimalā's mother is the centre of the story. The negative character of the tale turns out to be the positive one in the reconstructed novel.

The novel is multifaceted. The author has evaluated the tale of Tejimalā from several points of view. Repression is one of the main reasons of mental illness. Angry Sumitrā keeps herself away from Bhogeswar after she has known the dark side of her husband and has forcefully repressed her physical desire. The mother, who is the storyteller of the novel, has stated to her daughter that, "Mental pressure, self torture by suppressing the physical desire, importance on oneself, uncontrollable desire, to live with the hated one for long time, to develop extreme love for someone – these are the main reasons behind the incidents that take place in the story."³ The story of the novel clearly

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indicates that no person take birth as a culprit, only the circumstances compel him to be one. Moreover, nobody can commit any crime single handedly; he/she must need partners. Hence, it would be unethical to accuse only one person against a crime.

Heritage never signifies an expired past. There is always a relation between present and past because man always remain the same despite the massive changes of time. Hence, all the old stories can be treated as modern ones. In the novel the author has been able to maintain the relation between the past and the present. He has brought the context of the mother and her daughter of modern age in order to maintain this relation. Though, in the novel, a folk tale is re-constructed, but the incidents of the past are not converted into new ones; these are presented with a new dimension. In order to provide a realistic touch to the old folk tale, the novelist has depicted some lost village scenarios. He has used lots of native phrases, idioms and words to make it more vivid. The symbols that he has used in the dialogues help in increasing the charm of the novel. Harekrishna Deka has called this as a 'metaphorical novel'⁴. The conflict between exploiters and exploited is the central theme of the novel. Sumitrā, Tejimalā, Batāhi, Shāoni - all have faced trouble because of the exploiters like Bhogeswar. The class of exploited have failed to understand the mentality of exploiters and fight with their own perspective as they perceive. In the same way, a conflict between the good and the evil can be witnessed in the human mind. The contradictory position of the good and evil makes the story of the novel more engrossing.

The novel has also some weak points such as two stories of two ages are depicted simultaneously in the novel which are not complementary. The author also places more importance on the character of the father while describing the character of Tejimalā's mother that seems to be the weak point of the novel. Despite having some limitations, 'Tejimalār Mākar Xādhu' of Mridul Sarma has gained a significant place in the history of Assamese literature. This kind of novel is essential in amplifying the richness of the trend of Assamese novel.