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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### THE THEMATIC STUDY OF THREE SELECT POEMS BY ANJU

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#### Abstract

Theme is the main or central idea in any piece of writing or artwork. Anju began as a writer when she was 13 years old, and her writing abilities have continued to improve and become more excellent and polished to the present day. She is considered one of the most notable and eminent female Bodo poets. Anju's poetry depicts love, sadness, culture, race, nationality, ecstasy, concern, expectation, hope, grief, ageing, self-awareness, good versus evil, religion, family, desire, identity, dreams, rights, women's empowerment, humanism, nature, social change, and speaking up for the weak. She holds the belief that we should treat all human beings, regardless of gender, with respect and dignity. She believes the only person who truly suffers from issues and tensions is the one who knows it best. Nobody helps others without their own personal enrichment. An essential element of Anju's poetry is the way in which the poet fits a description of human civilization and its dynamic characters. Her illustrative explanation of the poems is truly amazing, conjuring up lovely images in our minds. Most of the poems by Anju present events that are taking place in the real world and in our society. The poet has dedicated the poem *Ang mabwrwidong daswng* to all of the women in the world who are suffering from loneliness, misery, suppression, oppression, or any other forms of sorrow that deprive them of their basic needs or rights. She frequently questioned why society does not grant women equal rights or status. The poem *Iyun* focuses on the women who work in the marketplace, highlighting their modest yet hopeful aspirations. They simply sell foods, vegetables, and other items related to meeting their most basic needs. *Dinwiangnithwinaisan* has concentrated on the truth, emphasizing its unchanging nature and the fact that no one can conceal or eradicate it.

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#### Introduction:-

The term poetry is derived from the Greek word "poiesis" (Poetry-NewWorld Encyclopedia, n.d.) which means making. The word poetry is so familiar to everyone; however, it is not easy to express its meaning. Therefore, Saint Augustine, an English poet and philosopher, said, "If not asked, I know; if you ask me, I know not" (as cited in Mushahary, p. 11). Poetry is the meaningful expression of feelings, ideas, imagination, etc. in a few words. Unlike prose, it uses figurative language in separate lines with a repeated rhythm and rhyme. Poetry is a way to express

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thoughts, feelings, ideas, passions, imaginations, and more in a few carefully chosen words, usually in verse. Hence Coleridge says that, “poetry is the best words in the best order” (quoted in Mushahary, p. 12).

A theme serves as the foundation for any type of literary work. It is the main or central idea in a talk, piece of writing, or work of art. It conveys to the reader an underlying message that the poet wishes to deliver through their work. It is the lesson or message that the poem, or any other work, intends to convey. In a poem, the speaker expresses the poet’s thoughts and feelings about a subject by saying what they think and feel about it.

Anjali Narzary or Anjali Basumatary, popularly known by her pseudonym Anju, was born on July 15, 1963, in South *Tengapara*, which is located in the Kokrajhar district of Assam, India. She has been an essential factor in the growth of a poetic revival as a Bodo poet. She has been considered one of the best female poets among the Bodos, and some writers and scholars believe that her quality of poetry is truly remarkable and noteworthy. According to Prof. Anil Boro the poetry of Anju is “characterized by a unique picturesque presentation of the familiar faces of life in a poetic language fused with rare artistry and economy of expression” (nelitreview, n.d.). She has published six volumes of poetry. Although she primarily writes poetry, her other literary works, such as prose, short stories, and critical essays, have also been found. In 2016, her poetry collection *Ang mabwrwidong daswng* earned her the prestigious “Sahitya Academy award” (Bodo Poet Anjali Basumatary Gets Sahitya Akademi Award - Sentinelassam, n.d.). In addition to that, she was given the awards *RangsharBantha, Pramod Chandra Brahma ThunlayariBantha* and “Sparrow-R Thyagranjan literary award 2022” (Kynpham & Bodo Writer Anju Get SPARROW Literary Awards for Poetry – Meghalaya Monitor, n.d.).

### **Methodology and Data Collection:-**

For the present study, the descriptive analysis method is used. The poems are analysed through a close reading of the texts. The three selected poems are the primary source of data for the study, while all available written and electronic materials related to the study’s themes are the secondary source of data. In addition to that, Anju was also interviewed to clarify some matters pertaining to her as a poet and as an individual. The present study is limited to these three selected poems of Anju and their themes only.

### **The aims and objectives of the study:**

The aim of the research is a thematic study of the selected poems of Anju. Despite the fact that she is a renowned Bodo poet, no proper study of her poems has been done yet. This study is to conduct an in-depth investigation of the themes of the three selected poems by Anju. Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To explore the themes of three selected poems.
2. To find out the Anju’s distinct style of poetry writings.
3. To find the literary value of her poems.

### **Discussion:-**

The Bodo literature is comparatively recent when evaluated alongside Assamese and Bengali literature in India. Bodo poetry predominantly explores themes such as love, nature, revolution, human existence, the struggle for freedom, and the quest for identity. Themes present in her poetry encompass love, nature, marriage, death, family, culture, community, aging, self-awareness, the dichotomy of good and evil, religion, desire, identity, dreams, rights, women’s empowerment, humanism, guidance for change, and advocacy for the marginalized. She employs visual imagery and symbols drawn from diverse cultures. Her detailed explanations of the poems, which evoked vivid imagery in our minds, are remarkable. The writing style she employs is a significant element of her work that warrants acknowledgement.

The poem *Ang mabwrwidong daswng* (Ask me not how I am) is 70 lines in length and is divided into 15 stanzas. It is composed in spontaneous verse. It is a poem that explores the universal suffering and challenges that all women encounter. It delineates the challenges that women encounter on a daily basis. Occasionally, even the wife’s companion or spouse finds it challenging to comprehend the events that are unfolding in her life. The poet employs this poem to exemplify the same obstacles she has encountered in her own life as a woman. In spite of the modern, civilised world, there are numerous nations and societies worldwide that maintain patriarchal societies in which women are not regarded with the same respect as men. This authority could be demonstrated by agreeing with their perspective or permitting them to maintain employment, travel independently, or take on independent projects. The right to express one’s thoughts is promptly denied to them, and their opinions are ignored or dismissed, even if they

have the courage to do so. Typically, women experience feelings of inferiority in comparison to men when confronted with such discrimination, and their opinions or thoughts ultimately become buried behind such insecurities. Therefore, the poet stated:

Bodo : “Ang mabwrwi dong nwnngswrdaswng  
 Ang thwywithwywithangnanwidongna  
 Simangmizingphwrnigwthwisohphwrkhowgwbakhrobnanwi  
 Gobonanwi dong gwrbnigwzadwimayao  
 Nwnngswrdaswngthar” (Ang mabwrwidong daswng, p.5)

English: Ask me not how I am  
 Whether I'm living like a dead person or  
 By embracing the corpse of a dreams  
 Or drowning into the red river of my heart  
 You people don't ask me at all.

She doesn't want us to ask her how she is, whether she is going through a hard time, whether she is feverish due to the lack of fresh air in the open sky, or whether her dreams or her wishes are dying like the deprived water of the river. Whether she is taking a deep sigh of sadness or sorrow, she doesn't want anyone to ask her. She just doesn't want to know what other people think about her, as nobody listens to her or fulfils her dreams and wishes.

The poet emphasizes the desire of any woman who wants independence—the kind of freedom that a bird represents as it flies freely over an open sky. Women carry the same aspirations as men, which include achieving success via hard work, education, concentration, and learning new skills, respectively. It is extremely unlikely for such desires to come true as a result of the persistent objections and discouragement voiced by those who are against the progression of time and who are adamant in their adherence to age-old traditions. It would appear that the storms that life brings are sweeping away the vibrant hopes and dreams of women's lives. Consequently, the author has requested that you refrain from attempting to figure out why she is unable to fly or why she is unable to do anything through her own individual efforts and wishes. Hence, among the selfish people of the world, she does not want to speak about her grief and has refused to ask about it.

Bodo : “Nwnngswrmwnthinwdalubwi  
 Ang manwdaophwrzwnngbirphanwhaya  
 Ang manwhathorkhiphrzwngrwzabphanwhayaokhablingnimethai”  
 (Ang mabwrwidong daswng, p.6)

English: You don't need to know why  
 I can't fly together with the birds of an open sky  
 Why I can't sing the song of Moonlit along with the Stars

According to the poet, suppression of women and their sorrow or sadness has been going on among us for a long time, and it is a very old suffering; this kind of sorrow and the sadness of women have been going on for a long time. This misery has persisted for as long as our planet has existed, and for precisely the same reasons. Since time immemorial, domination over women has been prevalent in society at various stages of life.

Bodo: “Be dukhuwamwnsegwzamdukhu  
 Zesebanggwzamzwnngni be buhum  
 Zesebanggwzamonnamwzangmwnnaiarwnimahanigabphwr  
 Zesebanggwzambimanigwrbwkhoarwaizwnimwndangthi”  
 (Ang mabwrwidong daswng, p.6)

English: It's an ancient sorrow  
 As old as our earth  
 As old as like the primordial love, feeling and forgiveness  
 As old as the womb of mother and their experiences

Women sacrifice everything for their houses, husbands, and family members, yet no one will think of them or care about them. Nobody comprehends her sadness and pain, for which she must think and act independently. Sometimes, numerous beaks and sorrows prevent her from sleeping, and she keeps thinking throughout the night, causing her to wake up. She does not even realise that it is already morning.

Bodo: “Ningwmahorphwrkhow ang mazwngkhangw  
 Mwdwizwngnahangmaphwrzwnngnwnngswrdaswng

Dukhunikhonthaiphwrkhow ang  
 Thwizwnglirwnamwdwizwnglirw  
 Bekhowbdaswng” (Ang mabwrwidong daswng, p.7)

English: How I do pass the sleepless nights  
 With deep sighs or tears of sadness you don't ask  
 The melancholic verse  
 I do pen with tears or blood  
 Ask me not that too

Finally, the poet finds peace of mind in the poem's final stanza, when she comes to the realization that even the most beautiful lotus flowers grow in muddy or murky water in dirty places. Much like diamonds can be found in the rough, or the seeds of greatness can be sown in the most barren of soils. The poet felt that she would experience the same level of joy when she found her lost items again, just as she had when she first lost them.

Bodo: “Ang mwnthiya  
 Habruaoswphamiyabarw  
 Dukhuzwngswgwrbbwasomaiyw  
 Rannayaoswmwnnainisukhu” (Ang mabwrwidongdaswng, p.8)

English: I don't know  
 The Lotus blooms in the mud  
 The heart becomes more adorned with grief  
 The joy of gain is felt through the pain of absence

On the other hand, *Iyun*(Future) is a poem composed of three stanzas with a total of forty-four lines. It is written in free verse, and the author has avoided using a full stop and has made limited use of other punctuation marks. The focus lies on the challenges individuals encounter in their daily existence and the means by which they can overcome these obstacles. The poem centres on the challenges faced by women in the realm of business. The author has articulated the challenges that women traders encounter in their everyday existence while striving to care for their families. The women, while managing their daily routines and meals for themselves and their families, confront the persistent challenge of hunger as they sit by the roadside. This situation persists despite the essential nature of their labour and lifestyle, which is crucial for securing food and other necessities for their households.

Business women who are living in poverty also desire to spend quality time with their children, other members of their family, and other relatives. They also want to spend some time eating meals with their families, having enjoyable conversations with them, and going outside to do so. They also desired the freedom to teach their children how to weave, how to cook, and how to study or read great literature, and they desired to teach their families these skills. They also desired to be a part of the moment, whether it was a time of joy or sadness, and they desired to be helpful to one another in times of need. After they have finished eating, they want to have some betel nuts, and then they want to nap sometime in the afternoon when they are feeling drowsy. However, they just do not have the time for all of this. They have no choice but to come to the marketplace in order to sell something, earn some profit for the daily usage earning.

Bodo: “Hathaiyaophalangikhalamgraaizwphrabwlabwiyw  
 Zangzikhengphrunanwisansunibwthisethebrezanw  
 Biphangsayayaozirainainamwimwdwmpbrukhandise goi saosubnw  
 Biswrblubwiywisanaozurinwzorasepharowmegon  
 Sikhladernaiphisazwngdangnai-bunaiakhaihohomwiphwrwngnw  
 Arkhangnwlaihagar, hazwagor, bwigribibar  
 Thenthorwmbelasiyao dandies unduglangnw  
 Khurma-bahagilwgwdigimwzangzriraidaohwinw  
 Dwi sarnaisaoribadalinangwzangkhragamigurnw  
 Nathaisomgwiyaabiswrhabephwrnithakhai”

(Ang mabwrwidong daswng, p.126)

English: Women who trade in the marketplace also  
 Wanted to have the lunch pleasantly  
 To chew some betel nut while sitting under the tree shadow  
 They too wanted to start the weaving pharowmegon  
 To teach growing children by holding their hands to weave

To weave Laihagar, Hajw Agor, Bwigribibar  
 To get a nap in the drowsy afternoon  
 To be touched with relatives and talked to them  
 To enjoy in all fairs and festivals too  
 But for all these they don't have time

The women traders have to continue to fight for their daily lives even while they are leading their own lives. They are required to go through a variety of tests and challenges. It is often necessary for them to carry out their duties in different places in order to help satisfy their appetites and provide their families with sufficient grains and food, even when the weather is adverse. There will be highs and lows, and occasionally the worst will occur; yet, even after a tremendous deal of effort and testing, they will not be able to gain any profit. Laziness and tiredness are not on their minds, and they cannot be called tired as nobody comes and feeds their appetite and fulfils their needs. Their children are waiting at home, hoping to get a few grains of rice. The children anticipate their mother's return from the market, bearing their necessities.

Bodo: "Hathaiyaophalangikhalamgraaizwphra  
 Sapha saphadaoharuzewni  
 Zuzinangowzaywsuthurphwrzwng-  
 Biswrnidarsinsuthuranikhaori" (Ang mabwrwidong daswng, p.127)

English: Women who trade in the marketplace  
 Are all fighters of their lives  
 Have to fight with enemies-  
 Their greatest enemy is poverty

They put in so much effort to fulfil their dreams that it also transformed their physical appearance. Their once-beautiful faces, which were the colour of an apple, turned a scorched red, and their hopes vanished like a green vegetable that has dried out in the sweltering sun. The harsh reality that they face on a daily basis puts a limit on their dreams. Their goals are small; they primarily focus on overcoming the challenges of day-to-day existence and satisfying their requirements for being self-sufficient. They could only trade with the small amount of money they received from the sale of this item in the marketplace to meet their essential day-to-day requirements. They trade solely for the purpose of meeting their day-to-day requirements, not to acquire wealth or further their commercial interests. Their needs are quite basic, encompassing tasks such as repairing their hut, buying essential items for their home, and covering their children's tuition fees.

*Ang thwinainonga* (I will not die) is another Anju poem with seven stanzas and 58 lines without punctuation. Truth is explored in the poem. Truth, especially eternal truth, is important to *Ang thwinainonga*. The author hopes that pursuing the truth will save everything. Truth revival is the topic of this poetry. Good-hearted, truth-seeking people are few today. Deception helps many people accumulate wealth and live lavishly while denying reality. Thus, truth values have vanished. Almost everyone today follows the dark road of falsehoods and untruth. After hearing the truth, everyone degrades, feels embarrassed, and attacks it. The poet uses the following words to elucidate and convey her feelings:

Bodo: "Dinwiangnithwinaisan  
 Dinwiangnwhwnaizagwnthwinaini saza  
 Phwtharseraizwnisigangaodinwi ang zewgargwn" (Ang mabwrwidongdaswng, p.62)

English: Today is my death day  
 Today I am going to be sentenced to die  
 I will sacrifice my life in front of people in the field

People in this day and age are being disregarded even after seeing and hearing, and their voices are not being heard either. Fear causes some people in today's society to avoid asserting their rights and maintaining their independence. Those who engage in deception are capable of driving themselves forward, but those who adhere to the path of truth fall further and further behind; the truth falls down and cannot move forward.

The poet is not anti-government, nor is she an extremist; she has not stolen any explosives, nor has she been caught stealing; she is also not a thief. Never have done anything that may be considered unethical, such as cheating, exploiting, oppressing, suppressing, or even killing someone. She has not committed any illegal crimes or done

anything else that would be considered wrong; the only thing she has done is tell the truth and not lie. That's why she said:

Bodo: "Nongkhaibungwiyaangnisazaywbla  
Zanwhagow  
Mansikhowmwzangmwnnayaogwrwnthizadwngbla  
Zanwhagow" (Ang mabwrwidong daswng, p.63)

English: If not lying is my punishment, then  
I may be  
If loving people is the mistakes  
I can be

Due to the prevalence of deception in today's society, it can be extremely challenging to find someone who will tell you the truth. Owing to this, the person who walks in truth makes an effort to control the people, while the person who walks in truth sometimes makes an effort to implicate the people by placing the responsibility on him. Even though she was threatened with death as a punishment, the poet in the poem did not give up insisting on the truth, and this resulted in it being maintained. She tries to uphold the truth in all that she does and hopes to serve as an example to others. In order to serve as a lesson to everyone else, even after death, an example should be set.

The poet maintains the belief that even after she passes away, people will remember her as she has worshipped the truth, walked through it, and was always upright in opposition to untruth. This message, or the truth, will always remain in the minds of the people, and it will continue to do so. She knows that her truth will illuminate the minds of the people long after she dies and live on eternally. A person dies, but their charitable acts live on forever. The truth always ultimately wins, and everyone is delighted in the end to convey this message the writer created in the following lines:

Bodo: "Theobw ang mithigow  
Ang thwinainonga  
Ang thwinainonga" (Ang mabwrwidong daswng, p.64)

English: Nevertheless, I know  
I will not die  
I will not die

### Conclusion:-

Anju is the authentic heir of the modernist tradition in Bodo poetry. Her poetry examines themes of love, self-awareness, morality, desire, identity, aspirations, rights, women's empowerment, humanism, and advocacy for the vulnerable. Her poem *Ang mabwrwi dong daswng* addresses the universal adversities and challenges faced by women. The poem underscores a woman's aspiration for autonomy, which entails attaining success through diligence, education, focus, and the development of new skills. The author has rebelled on behalf of all women globally, as their suffering, pain, hunger, thirst, aspirations, and desires are disregarded. The poem *Iyun* focuses on women working in the marketplace and their humble, joyful desires. Numerous women sustain their families with small enterprises, such as marketplace sales of food, vegetables, and other everyday necessities. Women participate in this type of business to financially sustain their families and oversee the daily management of their households. On the other hand, the emphasis of *Dinwiagnithwinaisan* is the veracity and its immutable essence. The poem's central theme is the enduring nature of truth, and the author expresses the belief that persistent pursuit of truth ensures nothing is ever lost in the world. The poem addresses the resurgence of truth, as individuals with integrity and a commitment to honesty have become exceedingly scarce in contemporary society. A multitude of individuals are amassing significant wealth and indulging in a luxurious lifestyle through deceit, while the principles of truth have been obscured by the suppression of reality. The poet asserts that those who pursue the road of truth will never suffer loss; they will invariably prevail. Due to their unwavering commitment to truth, their names will endure long after their demise, akin to the enduring legacy of Gandhiji's truth among us. This study aims to deliver a comprehensive examination of three chosen poems by Anju. The study aims to facilitate readers' understanding of the themes in the selected poetry. Moreover, it is anticipated that this work will motivate readers to create exceptional poetry. The poetry book *Ang mabwrwidong daswng* is an important piece of writing in Bodo literature. This study has only focused on analysing her poetry in terms of its underlying themes. There is a great deal of room for future research in her poems.

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