Women's Dialect: Some Observations*

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I

First of all, let me express my emotion for organizing such Webinar on 'Women's Dialect'. I thank the Kolkata Society for Asian Studies for inviting me in this Valedictory Session. I thank to all the respected guests and participants.

Dr. Sarmistha De Basu, Secretary, KSAS, and Dr. Debtusi Misra Chowdhury, Assistant Secretary, KSAS, addressed the guests and participants. Dr. Debtusi Misra Chowdhury highlighted the main features women's language like storytelling, code language, forbidden sounds etc.

Guest of Honour Mr. Aminur Rahman Sultan, Deputy Director at Bangla Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Dr Satyabrata Chakraborti, President, General Secretary of the Asian Society, Kolkata; Mina Dan, Professor & HOD, Department of Linguistics, University of Calcutta attended the inaugural session and delivered their valuable speeches.

Professor Mina Dan presented her valuable keynote address. She covered all the aspects related to her discussion entitled "Understanding Women's Dialect". Prof. Dan expressed her views on gender depended expectations of the society.
Mr. Aminur Rahman Sultan discussed on regional and folk dialect in Baul song. Mr. Rahman Sultan gave some examples of devotional words used in the Baul

songs composed by Kanghalini Sufia. He noticed that Kanghalini Sufia rarely used women's dialect.

Dr. Sravasti Roy, Associate Professor, Dept. of Bengali (UG & PG), Convenor, Women's Cell, Egra SSB College, Egra chaired the first Academic Session on 'Social Relationship and Language'.

Saptarsha Seal, Student, UG-II, Scottish Church College, Department of History presented his paper on "Proverbs in Bengali Language: How it reflects the social relationship and the position of wives and mothers in household". Actually speaking of man is bold. He thinks himself superior than woman. On the other side, hesitations of the female speakers indicate inferior position in society. It is common. But in my opinion, we find sometimes some male speakers in their adolescence period become shy particularly before woman. Sometimes it becomes a psychological problem. We should keep it in our mind that Saptarsha is a student of History and he nicely analysed historical aspects of the proverbs.

Debopama Misra, H.M.M College for Women, Dakshineswar (sact) Presenter of Mahila Mahal, Akashvani, Kolkata presented a paper on "Social Relationship: a Dialect from Heart". It is true, that, the voice of women deals with heart. She highlighted emotions of the women, which they express in their speech. Her paper is interesting. But it is a reality that, there are many social strata and all of them do not possess the same psychological role.

Prof. Mahidas Bhattacharya, Former Director, School of Languages and Linguistics, Jadavpur University, chaired the Second Academic Session on "The Gender equation and Hegemony of Language". Prof. Bhattacharya expressed his realization that, man will not properly feel the pain of a woman.

Sampa Biswas, Assistant Professor in Philosophy, Brahmananda Keshab Chandra College, Bonhoogly, Kolkata presented her paper on "Gender Discrimination in Marxian Context". Gender discrimination and exploiting character of the society is a fact. More women labourers are working in the brickfields. At present, in some petrol pumping station women are working. At the time of working women are adopting the terminology and also some lexical corpus normally used by man.

Dr. Purabi Gangopadhyay, Japanese language Faculty, School of Languages and Culture, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata discussed on "Gender, Dialect and Society in Japan". It is a good observation indeed. In Japan society is changing from matriarchal to patriarchal. Change of language in Japan is influenced by these changing characteristics of the society. Politeness is the main characteristics of the language of modern Japan.

Ritaja Mukherjee, Completed Master's in Comparative Literature from the Jadavpur University, presently Blog writer for an international company spoke on "Politics of Women's Dialect: A deeper look into Bengali idioms and proverbs". Her paper is interesting. Particular proverbs characterized woman's fault by the male dominating society.

Dr. Siuli Mukherjee, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Shri Shikshayatan College presented her paper on "(women) leaders and empowerment in South Asia; a study of their Statements and Speeches". This paper is also interesting. Actually education is one of the factors for the woman empowerment.

Prof. Ranjana Ray, Professor Emeritus, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta chaired the Third Academic Session on "Women's Empowerment vs. Women's Dialect".

Sayantani Mallick and Dr. M. Alankara Masillamania, Department of Palli Charcha Kendra, Visva-Bharati University, West Bengal and Sayan Das, Department of Computer Science, Ananda Mohan College, Calcutta University presented a paper on "Bengali Dialect and Advance Technology: Obstacle empowerment of woman Artisan's Kumartuli, Kolkata". This paper is based on sociolect used by the artisan of Kumartuly. They discussed on code mixing also.

Safi Ullah, Lecturer, Department of English, Sheikh Hasina University, Netrakona-2400, Bangladesh spoke on "Passivity of Expression and Patriarchal Portrait of Female A Study on Ukil Munshi's Baul Song". In Ukil Munshi's Baul song female diction is used.

Paramita Das Sharma, Associate Professor, Gobardanga Hindu College, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal presented her paper on"নাট্যকার মনোজ মিত্রের নাটকে নারী

চরিত্রের ভাষা". She explained the dialogue used by the female characters. This paper is interesting.

Shreyashi Chaudhuri, Faculty, Department of History, Calcutta Girls College and Kuntal Narayan Chaudhuri, Assistant Professor, Department of Botany, Vivekananda College spoke on "Silenced Voices: Articulating the Role of 'Invisible' Women Farmers in the Conservation of Agro-biodiversity in Rural and Tribal India". It is an excellent paper. This paper observed the terminology used by the women farmers.

Dr. Aditi Ghosh, Associate Professor, Dept. of Linguistics, C.U. chaired the Fourth Academic Session on "The Effects of Women's Dialect to Global Technology & Business Strategy".

Konthoujam Firoza Devi, Lieutenant Commander, Eastern Naval Command presented a paper on "Mapping the labryth of absence – hegemony of language". This paper is based on gynocriticism.

Rupanjana Sinha, Research Scholar at the Department of Sociology, Vidyasagar University & Asmita Bhattacharyya, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore discussed on "Gender and Work: Reconsidering Women Legal Professional's Identity and Space". This paper deals with a special outlook.

Dishari Sarkar, M.A., Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Calcutta presented her paper on "Women and hegemony of language: A case study of 21st century Bollywood action films promoting rape culture". This paper is also deals with a different outlook.

The chairpersons of these sessions suggested their valuable opinions and also stimulated the young participants who presented their papers today.

II

In this electronic media dependent age, when we are thinking that we are mechanically using this world, when we are thinking that our attitude towards

our neighbours and relatives are gradually becoming artificial, today's discussion again reveals a human face of our attitude.

From a long time we have been discussing women's language as a separate language. According to sociolinguistics, woman's language is a sociolect. It is different from the language of male speakers. There are several social features behind such psychological thinking.

Physiologically, there are some basic difference between woman and man. These physical features take part in using supra-segmental features.

Language is changing gradually. The prominent characteristics of women's dialect are becoming neutral day by day. In Bengal, normally women like to use passive expression. Such as,

> 'শুধু শুধু এতক্ষণ বসে থাকা হলো', 'তা এখন থাকা হবে কদ্দিন'?, 'আর তো দেখা পাওয়া যায় না '

instead of 'শুধু শুধু এতক্ষণ বসে থাকলাম', 'তা এখন কদ্দিন থাকবে/ থাকবেন', আর তো (তমাকে/ আপনাকে) দেখতে পাই না etc.

Sometimes women speak mixing some codes.

> 'for nothing এতক্ষণ time waste করতে হলো!'
>
> 'for nothing এতক্ষণ সময় waste করলাম 'etc.

We should find out the corpuses used by women of different social classes for our minute analysis. Ronald Wardwaugh raised a question;

> "Do the men and women who speak a particular language use it in different ways?"

He also remarked on this,

> "If they do, do these differences arise from the structure of that language." [Wardwaugh, Ronald. 1986. An Introduction to Sociolinguistics. Basil Blackwell Inc. New York. P. 302]

Actually he wanted to find out the reasons behind a women's dialect. Why is the dialect of the women separate from the man? We may raise many questions regarding this.

First of all, is there any structural difference between the spoken language of a man and a woman? Secondly, do any difference is that exist simply reflect the ways in which they choose to deal with each other in that society. We may say, all different way depends on structure of that language. Fourthly, the way of speaking, may it be possible to describe a particular language as sexiest or should we reserve such a description for those who use the language. The society already determined that, women's dialect is different from that of men. Without any knowledge of linguistics even without any formal education, a woman knows better that her way of speaking is different from any man. In reality, it is difficult to change such psychological observation of the society. Linguist Sukumar Sen remarked that,

> "Traces of sex dialect in Oldest Indo-Aryan (Vedic) are exceedingly scarce, owing, no doubt, to the sacred and religious character of its literature." [Sen, Sukumar, 1979. Women's Dialect in Bengali. Jijnasa. Kolkata. P. 3]

There are many historical evidences of sex dialect in many ancient societies. At present we know what sex dialect is. Apart from our India, in Egypt we found many word lists written in hieroglyphic script. We noticed two different stages of the Egyptian language and three different Egyptian scripts. We come to know that the use of feminine and masculine form of words was in practice. Such as,

> 'wḏ͗ȝ͗' = you are well ('you' feminine)
>
> 'ḥnḵ' = you ordered ('you' masculine)
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> [Lepschy, Giulio; ed. 1994. History of Linguistics. Volume-1. Longman, Londan and New York. P. 64-65].

Jesperson observed that, in India, the social position of woman is inferior to man. Even the culture of the women in our society is considered as lower culture. On the other side the culture of the men is higher. Sukumar Sen opposed Jesperson's opinion.

But Jesperson noticed important language behaviour in bilingual society. He noticed that, there is a difference between the dialects used by men and women and they are struggling for their own mother tongue. He wrote,

> "A difference between the language spoken by men and that spoken by women is seen in many countries where two languages are struggling for supremacy in a peaceful way – thus without any question of one nation exterminating the other or the male part of it." [Jespersen, Otto. 1922. Language Its nature Development and Origin. New York, Henry Holt & Company. P.241]

The women of the German and Scandinavian immigrants in America remain within doors. Therefore, they are preserving their own tongue. But the men are mixing with English speaking people and they are learning English.

When we try to follow the language of higher society, we think ourselves superior than those who are still speaking our native tongue. Such motive is called as the prestige motive. In the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century Bengali literature we found that husbands feel themselves superior to their wives when they utter some English words. Naturally the vocabulary of the women was limited within her mother tongue. Education and mixing with the people of other language community enriched the vocabulary of the men.

If we follow the language of elder women in a particular endangered language family, we shall find the actual and older form of that language. We know women are preserving the language more than men, as they are normally communicating within their community. Men have to go outside their community and compelled to acquire other tongue. Thus dominant language families are killing minor languages slowly. But women are best preserver of their own tongue.

But at present our social condition is better than before. The role of education is important factor. It is neutralizing the difference between the language of men and women day by day. The media like TV, movie, mobile, internet etc are playing good role in spreading social consciousness. Both men and women are taking same part of work in the society. Both men and women are speaking the same language using same vocabulary and syntactic structures.

Still there are some basic features which are particular in sex dialect. There are some particular phrases used by men or women. The way of utterance of word is

not the same. There are particular suprasegmental features which are common for women and are not common for men. Men posses separate suprasegmental features of their own.

In our society men have their own expression. Women can follow that, but they rarely use such expression. Women also have their own expression and men never follow that. The differences of expression of men and women are realized by the common people.

The knowledge of such sex language exists in our mind. If we follow the terminology of generative linguistics, it is our language competence and our communicative competence. We do posses such inherent knowledge. Actually, the sex language is expressed through our behavioural attitude in a social context. Finally, let us assume that conception of sex language is related with our language cognition.

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