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Review Article

Representation of Economic Oppression: A Critical Analysis of L. H. Pde's Novel U Raimon bad ka Dashisha

Pynkmenhunlang G Sohtun

PhD Scholar, Department of Khasi, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India

Corresponding Author: * Pynkmenhunlang G Sohtun

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Abstract

Economic oppression refers to the restriction, deprivation, or control of economic resources in ways that undermine an individual's economic autonomy. This paper examines the representation of economic oppression in L.H. Pde's U Raimon bad ka Dashisha, with particular attention to the experiences of Kong Jngen and Dashisha. Using qualitative textual analysis, the paper examines episodes in which property documents, land, and inheritance-related resources become objects of control and conflict. The analysis is informed by scholarship on women's economic empowerment and economic abuse, particularly the work of UN Women, Sundari Anitha, and Adrienne E. Adams and her co-authors. The discussion shows that the novel represents economic oppression not simply as the loss of material resources but as a form of coercive control that can be reinforced through intimidation, physical violence, and psychological suffering. Kong Jngen's experience centres on the alteration of land-ownership documents and the attempted sale of property, while Dashisha's experience involves pressure to surrender documents connected with her mother's property. These episodes demonstrate how struggles over property can affect women's autonomy, security, and dignity within family relationships. The paper argues that the novel complicates any simple assumption that a matrilineal social context automatically protects women from economic control, while avoiding the broader generalisation that all women in matrilineal societies experience oppression.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Economic control is an important dimension of gendered inequality because access to property, income, land, inheritance, and other material resources can shape an individual's capacity to exercise autonomy and make independent decisions. Women's economic empowerment therefore involves more than participation in economic activity; it also concerns meaningful access to and control over economic resources. From this perspective, the literary representation of property disputes can provide an important way of examining how economic power operates within intimate and family relationships.

L.H. Pde's U Raimon bad ka Dashisha presents situations in which women's relationship to property becomes a site of conflict and coercion. The experiences of Kong Jngen and Dashisha are particularly significant because the conflict is not limited to ownership as a legal or material question. The struggle over documents and property is accompanied by attempts at intimidation and, in Dashisha's case, physical violence and severe psychological suffering. The novel therefore allows economic oppression to be examined as a multidimensional form of control in which material deprivation intersects with interpersonal power.

The focus on a literary work situated in a matrilineal context is also significant. However, this paper does not assume that matrilineality by itself either eliminates or produces economic oppression. Instead, it asks how the novel represents women's actual control over economic resources within particular family relationships. The distinction between formal or socially recognized relationships to property and the practical ability to exercise control over that property is central to the analysis.

2. Research Problem and Gap

The central problem addressed in this paper is the representation of women's economic vulnerability when family members attempt to control property and property-related documents. Although economic oppression is often discussed in relation to income and employment, the evidence examined in the novel foregrounds land, ownership documents, and inheritance-related resources. This makes property control an important analytical category for understanding the women's experiences.

The present paper develops a focused reading of these episodes by connecting the novel's representation of property-related conflict with established concepts of economic abuse and women's economic autonomy. The contribution of the paper lies in bringing together the literary evidence concerning Kong Jngen and Dashisha and a conceptual framework that treats control over resources as a significant dimension of economic oppression. The analysis is deliberately limited to the textual evidence available in the selected episodes and does not claim to represent the experiences of women in Khasi society as a whole.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To examine the representation of economic oppression in L.H. Pde's U Raimon bad ka Dashisha.

To analyse how property, land, and ownership documents function as sources of economic power and conflict.

To examine the relationship between economic control, intimidation, physical violence, and psychological suffering in the experiences of Kong Jngen and Dashisha.

To interpret the novel's representation of women's economic autonomy through scholarship on economic abuse and women's economic empowerment.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative textual-analysis approach. The primary text is L.H. Pde's U Raimon bad ka Dashisha, with particular attention to passages concerning land, ownership documents, property, threats, violence, and the consequences experienced by the female characters. The analysis is interpretive rather than statistical: selected passages are examined in relation to concepts developed in scholarship on economic abuse and women's economic empowerment.

The theoretical discussion draws on the supplied sources by UN Women, Sundari Anitha, and Adams et al. These sources are used as conceptual lenses rather than as evidence about the novel itself. The distinction is important: the novel provides the primary textual evidence, while the secondary sources help define and interpret the forms of economic control represented in that evidence.

5. Conceptual Framework: Economic Oppression and Economic Abuse

Economic oppression may be understood as a condition in which access to, ownership of, or control over economic resources is restricted or taken away. The UN Women resource on women's economic empowerment places emphasis on women's access to and control over economic resources, including property and productive assets (UN Women). For the purposes of this paper, the concept is applied specifically to situations in which women's ability to control property or property-related resources is undermined.

Sundari Anitha's discussion of economic abuse is particularly relevant because it expands the concept beyond simple financial deprivation. Her work examines forms of control over financial resources, assets, employment, and labour that restrict women's economic autonomy and their ability to sustain themselves (Anitha 1854–77). This framework helps interpret the property-related experiences of Kong Jngen as more than an ordinary dispute over ownership: the alteration of ownership documents and the attempted sale of land are represented as attempts to control a resource to which she is entitled.

Adams et al. similarly conceptualize economic abuse in terms of behaviours that control a woman's ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources, thereby threatening economic security and self-sufficiency (564). This framework is particularly useful for reading the episode involving Dashisha, where pressure to surrender property documents is

accompanied by threats and physical violence. The theoretical framework therefore connects economic resources with coercive interpersonal practices rather than treating material and physical forms of domination as completely separate.

6. Representation of Economic Oppression in U Raimon bad ka Dashisha

6.1 Kong Jngen: Property Control and Economic Autonomy

Kong Jngen's experience provides the first major representation of economic oppression in the novel. According to the textual account, Arbor takes control of her land by altering the ownership documents and attempting to sell the property. The significance of this episode lies in the transformation of a material resource into an instrument of interpersonal power. Land is not merely a physical asset; control over its ownership determines who can make decisions concerning its use and disposition.

Read through Anitha's framework, Arbor's actions can be interpreted as a restriction of Kong Jngen's economic autonomy because the control of the property is transferred away from the woman whose economic interest is represented as being connected to it (Anitha 1854–77). The episode therefore illustrates how economic oppression can occur through administrative or documentary manipulation. The narrative does not need to depict the complete loss of all income or possessions for economic oppression to become visible; the attempted removal of control over a significant resource is itself central to the conflict.

The episode also demonstrates the importance of distinguishing ownership from effective control. A person may have a recognized or claimed relationship to property while another individual attempts to determine what happens to that property. Within the novel, the alteration of documents is therefore significant because it represents an attempt to convert control over documentation into control over the underlying economic resource.

6.2 Dashisha: Property Documents, Intimidation, and Violence

A second and more explicit representation of economic oppression appears in Dashisha's confrontation with Arbor. Dashisha refuses to hand over documents connected with her mother's property. When she resists, Arbor threatens her verbally: "lada pha kren heh bad pham sei, ngan thab haduh ba phan da mih ding ñiangbading" (20). The statement is followed by physical violence: "U la thap tyngheh ar thap, lai thap" (20). Within the narrative, these acts are directly connected to the demand for property-related documents.

The significance of the scene is that economic control is enforced through coercion. The objective is not simply possession of a document; the document is connected to property and therefore to economic authority. Dashisha's refusal interrupts Arbor's attempt to obtain that control, and the response is intimidation and physical violence. This pattern corresponds with Adams et al.'s understanding of economic

abuse as behaviour that restricts a woman's ability to acquire, use, or maintain economic resources (564).

At the same time, Dashisha's resistance is important to the literary analysis. She is not represented solely as a passive victim of economic control. Her refusal to surrender the documents constitutes an act of resistance to the attempted appropriation of property-related resources. The scene consequently contains both oppression and agency: Arbor attempts to impose economic control, while Dashisha's refusal exposes the coercive nature of that attempt.

6.3 Psychological Suffering and the Extension of Economic Control

When verbal and physical intimidation do not secure Dashisha's compliance, the narrative presents another attempt to control her through what it represents as black magic. The episode is followed by severe physical and psychological suffering. Her condition is described as follows: "Ka khlieh ka long kumba dang dep tied da u nembah. Ka sngew kata ka jingshit long kumba la thep ña ka tyndur shet ruti. Ka Dashisha ka la kylla long ei kha-ma-kha kaba bieit" (27).

The passage intensifies the representation of oppression by showing that the property dispute has consequences beyond the immediate question of possession. The imagery of intense heat and physical pain conveys the severity of Dashisha's experience, while the subsequent description of mental disturbance represents a profound deterioration in her condition. Because the novel presents this episode as part of the continuing conflict over the documents and property, the narrative links economic coercion with bodily and psychological suffering.

This interpretation should remain within the literary framework of the novel. The paper does not treat the representation of black magic as a clinical explanation of mental illness. Rather, the episode is analysed as a narrative device through which the novel represents the escalating consequences of coercion and the vulnerability produced by a struggle over economic resources.

7. Economic Oppression within Family Relationships

The experiences of Kong Jngen and Dashisha demonstrate that economic oppression can occur within family relationships. The family context is important because the attempt to control property is not represented as an impersonal economic transaction. Instead, the conflict is embedded in relationships of trust, kinship, authority, and obligation.

In Kong Jngen's case, the alteration of ownership documents and attempted sale of land threaten her control over an economic resource. In Dashisha's case, the demand for documents connected with her mother's property is accompanied by verbal threats and physical assault. These episodes show different mechanisms of economic oppression: documentary manipulation, attempted appropriation, intimidation, and violence.

The novel therefore invites attention to the difference between a social structure and the actual operation of power within

individual relationships. The presence of a matrilineal context does not, by itself, guarantee that every woman will exercise effective control over property. The literary evidence examined here instead foregrounds the possibility that women's economic rights can be challenged within the family, particularly when another person attempts to control property-related resources.

8. DISCUSSION

The textual evidence supports an understanding of economic oppression as multidimensional. First, it involves control over material resources, particularly land and property documents. Second, it involves restrictions on women's capacity to exercise economic autonomy. Third, the novel represents coercive practices—threats, physical violence, and the narrative representation of psychological suffering—as mechanisms that accompany attempts to secure economic control.

The two characters also reveal different dimensions of resistance. Kong Ingen's experience centres on the attempted alteration of control over her land, while Dashisha actively refuses to surrender property-related documents. Dashisha's resistance makes visible the relationship between agency and coercion: the more explicitly she refuses the attempted transfer of control, the more forcefully Arbor responds.

Taken together, these representations complicate a purely economic definition of oppression. Property has economic value, but the ability to control property also carries social and personal significance. The loss or threatened loss of such control can affect security, dignity, and psychological well-being. The novel consequently represents economic oppression as a form of power that can move from the material sphere into interpersonal and bodily experience.

9. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the representation of economic oppression in L.H. Pde's *U Raimon bad ka Dashisha* through the experiences of Kong Ingen and Dashisha. The analysis demonstrates that property and ownership documents function as important sites of economic conflict. Kong Ingen's experience centres on the alteration of land-ownership documents and the attempted sale of property, while Dashisha's experience involves pressure to surrender documents connected with her mother's property.

The novel further demonstrates that economic control may be reinforced through intimidation and physical violence. In Dashisha's case, resistance to the demand for documents is followed by verbal threats and physical assault, while the subsequent narrative of black magic is associated with severe physical and psychological suffering. These episodes support an interpretation of economic oppression as a form of coercive control that can extend beyond material deprivation.

Most importantly, the analysis suggests that a matrilineal social context should not automatically be equated with complete economic autonomy for every woman. The novel's specific family conflicts demonstrate that the practical control of property can remain contested. Rather than making a generalized claim about Khasi society, the paper shows how the

literary text represents the vulnerability of women's economic rights within particular relationships. Through this representation, *U Raimon bad ka Dashisha* foregrounds the relationship among property, economic autonomy, coercion, and women's resistance.

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About the Corresponding Author



Pynkmenhunlang G Sohtun is a PhD Scholar in the Department of Khasi at North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, Meghalaya, India. Her academic and research interests are focused on Khasi language, literature, and related areas of cultural and linguistic studies. She is actively engaged in scholarly research and academic activities.