

## Folkloristic and Sociological Significance of the Cultural Terminology of the Bodos

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### Abstract:

The aim of the study is to analyze folkloristic and sociological significance of the cultural terminology extant in the context of the Bodo folk-society. Keeping in view, an extensive field work has been done and consequently gathered a huge amount of various cultural terminologies. The collected terminologies of various items are closely related to the society and social life. Each of the terminologies has its contextual use and significance. These are the product of society and shared by the group of people. The physical and the psychological involvement is also a matter of consideration in case of cultural terminology. It focuses all about the fundamental and explicit aspects of the Bodo culture. This aspect of ethnicity of the Bodos and their way of living may also be visualized through the cultural terminologies. In this paper a discussion has been done from folkloristic point of view.

**Keywords:** Cultural significance; way of living; contextual use; representation of folklore and floklife.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The term ‘culture’ refers to the way of living of a specific social group that share among the people of the community. It is set of patterns of activities of the social group. The culture is indeed characteristics which are visualized in intangible things, social customs, various material things, food habits, performing arts, architecture and traditions of the social group. From this point of view it may be said that culture is a biological adaptation among the people of the social group or a community.

There are two types of culture, i.e. material culture and non-material culture. Material culture comprises physical things produced by the society and non-material culture comprises intangible things acquired by the society. These are transmitted and validated from generation to generation through the process of acquisition of knowledge of the society as a whole.

Terms relating to the cultural characteristics of a social group may be called cultural terminology. It is a set of words or phrases that validates through human expressions as well as social discourses. Some of the terminologies are symbolic and semiotics in nature. From this point of view, it may be observed that cultural terminology extant among the Bodos deals in social practices, norms and way of living. It is worth to mention that cultural terminology is a composite term that refers to cultural and sociological context of the society to a great extent.

### II. AREA OF STUDY

The study attempts to study about cultural terminologies and social implications, functions in the context of society. The data relating to the cultural terminologies have been observed and analyzed from the folkloristic view point as extant in the Bodo folk-society in particular. Therefore the area of the study is confined within the Bodo folk-society where many of the cultural terminologies are being used since time immemorial; and handing down from generation to generation. Terminologies related to the cultural context have its own social value and significance. Basically there are sub-categories of cultural traits; each and every category bears numerous terminologies. This is worth mentioning that cultural terminology has undoubtedly social function in the context of society. This view point has been taken into account in this study.

### III. AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study aims at discussion about use of cultural terminology as the human practice and knowledge of the Bodo folk-society. As the set of artifact and intangible knowledge, the cultural terminology stretches focus cultural and social philosophy as a whole. It is, on the one hand, the element of language; and on the other hand able to validating human knowledge, social tradition and philosophy of the society to a great extent. The cultural

terminology of the Bodos is closely related to all aspects of way of living. These are the primary aims and objectives of the study.

#### **IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study has folkloristic significance besides its sociological importance. Cultural terminologies are closely associated to the tradition and value of the particular community. Indeed the study of cultural terminology is important to understand the cultural representation and practices of the social group. From this point of view, the study has been done and as a result a few important aspects of cultural terminology of the Bodos have been observed to a large extent. It is also an important point that an academic significance may also be well-defined from the study.

#### **V. HYPOTHESIS**

As part of the folkloristic research the principal attention of the study is confined within the folkloristic approach. It is assumed that the study will focus,

- (i) Cultural traits and values of the Bodos,
- (ii) Social philosophy and thoughts as well,
- (iii) It may be hypothetically said that cultural terminology of the Bodos are the product of collective acquisition and practices which validating cultural and linguistic traits of the Bodos. The study will focus this focal point.

#### **VI. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

So far requirement for the research, data have been collected from primary and secondary sources. As secondary source published materials in the form of book, newspaper and journals as well as magazines have been gathered as much as possible. This kind of materials makes the analysis more convenient; and gives contribution to review the related literatures. Field works are arranged for collecting data and for making cross-examination to authenticate as far as possible.

#### **VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Both folkloristic as well as sociological approaches are the principal method of the study. In the above, the cultural terminologies of the Bodos are categorized into five sub-categories based on the folkloristic view point. To make the analysis convenient and methodical the categories are done specifically. It is worth mentioning that the folkloristic view point has been taken into account at the level of analysis. The theoretical approach helps more; and it makes easy to annotate the cultural terminologies of the Bodos. Chiefly the analysis has been done based on the methodological processes i.e data collection, annotation of data from folkloristic view point and data analysis to observe the cultural and social value of the cultural terminologies as extant in the cultural context of the Bodos.

#### **VIII. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The review of related literature is an indispensable part of the academic research. It is an important approach at any of the research fields. As the study is a part of folklore studies, it requires related data and information for convenient of pragmatic analysis. Therefore required data and information are gathered from published and unpublished sources. There are two types of literatures that have been collected and reviewed as well. Firstly, literatures in the form of books related to the proposed study in respect of folklore studies as well as cultural anthropological studies in general are gathered for review; and secondly, study materials related to the Bodo culture are consulted and reviewed so far concerned. The highly accepted book on folklore studies 'Folklore and Folk-life' edited by R.M Dorson is regarded as the key concept for the study. The basic concept on the folk and folklore has been acquired from the articles included in the anthology which may help the analysis in due course of time. Primarily the research topic is closely related to the folklore. This why, it is thought that the research on Bodo cultural terminology may get a high level of benefit for further investigation and analysis. Finally it has been realized from the process of review of some articles comprises in this volume. Besides, the books written by Bhaben Narzi entitled 'Boro Kocharir Somaj Aru Sanskriti' and "Boro-Kachari Geet-Mat" respectively a key source for gathering data relating to the cultural terminologies of the Bodos. Many of the data have been extracted from the book. From an observation it is assumed that the Bodo cultural terminologies are closely associated with cultural traits, social values and way of living. The review of the book reveals this aspect of cultural features. Besides, a few books like Folk-literature of the Bodos written by Anil Boro which reveals about many of the traits of the Bodo culture; Boro Agor, Boro Haba both are written by Sukumar Basumatary which helps in acquisition of primary knowledge regarding cultural terminologies of the Bodos. Many of the books and articles relating to the study have been gathered and reviewed so far concerned.

It is a great experience that review of the related literatures has given striking clues to make the analysis more convenient.

## **IX. CULTURAL TERMINOLOGY AND REPRESENTATION OF FOLK-LIFE**

Each and every terminology relating to the way of living of a group of people is no doubt a social product. As a term it validates the archaic of the languages of the Bodo community. Thus as a linguistic property it focuses the social behavior that has been practicing through the ages by the Bodo people. This is why cultural terminologies have two folds of functions: one is validation of cultural behavior and the other is validation of linguistic behavior.

### ***9.0.1 Terminology of Festivals as representation of the Bodo folk-life:***

The cultural terminology is the result of acquired knowledge of the community. The Bodo community has also various cultural terminologies which are closely associated to the way of living. The life and knowledge of the Bodo society may be visualized through the cultural terminologies. Terminology relating to the social folk-customs is the product of folk-society. The name of traditional festivals like Domasi, Rongjali Bwisagu and Katigasa are cultural terminologies which are closely related to the agricultural activities. The terminology associated to the festivals has itself sociological significance. Each of the names of festivals is like a key of reflection for visualizing agricultural society of the Bodos. Besides, social behavior may be observed through the practices extant in the cultural context. The Bodo society is fond of dance and merry making performances. It reflects during the festive occasion. The spring time festival popularly known Rongjali Bwisau is one of such kind of merry-making festive occasion. During the festival boys and girls, aged male and female persons visit each of the family of the village and enjoy each other by dancing and singing. Besides, they observe some rites which are particularly associated to the cattle worship. Offering of honour to the elderly person by the younger one is to be called a cultural behavior of the Bodos. The cultural term Rongjali bwisau is the key for visualization of such kind of cultural context of the Bodo community. Thus Domasi is a festival of agriculture which is observed by the Bodo folk-society. As part of the festival they observe traditional rituals which demonstrate social behavior of the Bodos. They make Bilagur (a kind of straw heap) and set-fire at the early morning of the day of Sangkranti. As part of the festival they make rice cake and various kind of traditional light food, rice beer and so on. Katigasa is also a part of festival of agriculture held in the name of goddess of wealth. Mainao is the Bodo word used to refer to the goddess of wealth. As part of the ritualistic festival earthen lamps (called in Bodo Gasa) are burnt at the paddy field and in front of the Granary in the evening of the last day of Asin (Bodo word) month. The traditional customs and rituals associated with the festivals are representation of social behavior of the Bodos.

### ***9.0.2 Terminology of the social folk-customs and rites as representation of Bodo folk-life:***

The terminologies relating to the social customs and rites are represented as code of the social behavior of the Bodo folk-society. Each of the terminologies is closely associated with traditional knowledge and folk-life. For example, the term relating to the umbilical cutting of newly born baby is called 'Uthumai Hanai'. Traditionally this activity is performed by aged woman. For cutting the naval of baby a sharp bamboo split is used as equipment. Use of bamboo split is assumed to be free from any kind of infection. This traditional knowledge is acquired from older generation.

It is observed that a huge number of terminologies are closely associated with the marriage customs of the Bodos. Starting from the rites of marriage agreement to the closing rites of the marriages is a cluster of various rituals. Each of the rituals is entitled with a terminology. For example, the term 'Biban Langnai' is a code of respect which is associated to the marriage ceremony. 'Biban' consists of two different packages having edible things along with a pair of local rice beer. 'Langnai' refers to carry on the pair of packages to the family of the bride. It is a symbol of respect that expressed to the family of the bride. Thus each and every cultural terminology has cultural implication and importance in the social context.

### ***9.0.3 Terminology relating to surnames and representation of ancient clan system of the Bodos:***

In ancient days the Bodos practiced rigid clan system. It is vividly represented in myth relating to the origin of Kherai worship. As myth recounts the Bodos have all total 12 principal surnames that indicate the archetype of Mahari (Clan) of the Bodos. But now-a-days clan practice is no more valid among the Bodos. Of course the remnant of Baro Mahari (twelve clan) is recalled through narrative of the myth. It is observed that the surnames particularly inherited surnames prevailing among the Bodos are originated, as belief prevailing, from the ancient practice of Kherai worship. The twelve principal surnames are indication of existence of ancient Bodo clan structure though it is not being practiced at the present social context of the Bodos. This aspect may be observed from the sociological view point. That is why the study of surnames of the Bodos is considered relevant in this study.

Thus each and every surname has mythical narratives and relates to the ancient cultural context which is more significant to study from anthropological as well as sociological perspectives.

The adopted surnames like Das-Boro, Brahma-Choudhury, Sarania etc. are also result of socio-cultural assimilation between the two religious heritages i.e origin Bathou and Vaishnavism. This esoteric aspect may be observed from an anthropological as well as sociological perspective. The Bodo surnames prevailing like Patgiri, Choudhury are also result of historical background in Assam. During the British ruling system it was inherited in India. In the Bodo society the surnames Patgiri and Chodhury both are prevailing among the family, but particularly who belonged to the Mauzadar, i.e ruler of Mauza. It may be said that the two surnames focuses historical and sociological aspect of the Bodo society.

#### **9.0.4 Cultural terminology relating to Kinship Terminology and sociological significance:**

The kinship terminology extant among the Bodos is also the key of understanding the cultural structure. In the Bodo society the kinship terminology is associated to the patrilineal and matrilineal kin group. The kin group is restricted within the circle of family and constitutes a genetic relationship. It is generally determined from father's and mother's side. The kinship terminology of father's kin group is determined by patrilineal generation, i.e blood kin and the kin associated by marriage. An individual by birth in the family is to be confined within the kin generation and affiliate with kin group of their father. Therefore children of a father by social convention are affiliated by patrilineal descent.

##### **9.0.4.1 Kinship terminology associated to the Father's blood relation:**

Some of these are mentioned below:

- (i) Father's father: Abwu
- (ii) Father's mother: Abwi
- (iii) Father's younger brother: Dada (called in the Eastern Boro Dialect)/Adwi (called in the western Boro Dialect). There is dialect variation in this kinship term. No semantic change has been occurred.
- (iv) Father's younger brother's wife: Adwi (called in Eastern Boro Dialect)/Madwi (Called in Western Boro Dialect)
- (v) Father's elder brother: Ayong
- (vi) Father's elder brother's wife: Ayong
- (vii) Father's elder or younger sister: Anwi
- (viii) Father's elder or younger sister's husband: Amai
- (ix) Father's father's father: Ayong
- (x) Father's father's wife: Ayong

Apart from these certain kinds of kin relationships are also used in some cases. In case of father's elder/younger brother's child, if age limit is more than an addressee, it is to be called "ada" (elder brother), "abo" (elder sister). On the other hand if age limit is less than an addressee it is to be called "phongbai" (one's younger brother) in case of 1<sup>st</sup> personal pronoun, "nwnghphong" (your younger brother) in case of 2<sup>nd</sup> personal pronoun and "biphong" (his/her younger brother) in case of 3<sup>rd</sup> personal pronoun. Thus the same process is applicable in case of female child. For instance, "anao"/ "agwi" (younger sister) in case of 1<sup>st</sup> personal pronoun, "nwnghanao" (your younger sister) in case of 2<sup>nd</sup> personal pronoun and "binanao"(his/her younger sister) in case of 3<sup>rd</sup> personal pronoun.

Thus supposed an individual is one of the children of a parent and has two or more brothers of blood relations. The individual is the younger or youngest brother among them and they have also children within the family; in that case the individual calls their elder brother's children as "biadwi" (nephew) while introducing in front of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> persons. For example, "biw angni biadwi phisa" (He is my nephew son.). The kinship structure is handed down towards the children of nephew. In that case the kin relationship is affiliated within the linearity of the family tree. The individual calls the male child of his nephew as "abwu" (grandson) and "abwi" (granddaughter) in case of female child in direct address. Thus, while addressing in front of other persons the individual calls them "phiswu" (grandchild) in collective sense. To distinguish gender one has to be called "phiswula" in case of masculine and "phiswuzw" in case of feminine gender.

There is other kind of kinship structure. Supposed an individual is a female and she is the eldest or elder one among the children of a parent; and all of the brothers of the individual have female children in that case the individual calls "anwi" in direct speech. While introducing in front of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> persons she calls "bianwi".

##### **9.0.4.2 Kinship terminology associated to the mother's affine kin group:**

- (i) Mother's father: Abwu
- (ii) Mother's mother: Abwi

- (iii) Mother's younger sister: Madwi (called in Eastern Boro Dialect) / Madwi (Western Boro Dialect)
- (iv) Mother's younger sister's husband: Dada (called in Eastern Boro Dialect)/Adwi (called in Western Boro Dialect)
- (v) Mother's elder sister: Ayong
- (vi) Mother's elder sister's husband: Ayong
- (vii) Mother's elder or younger brother: Amai
- (viii) Mother's elder or younger brother's wife: Anwi

#### **9.0.5 Terminology relating to material culture and folkloristic significance:**

The Bodos possess various terminologies relating to the material things. These things are community product and shared by the people of community in the context of society. The art of making of each material product has its ethnic characteristics that may be called result of the community knowledge. The community knowledge may also be called traditional knowledge.

The household utensils, tools and implements relating to agricultural purposes, tools relating to hunting and fishing practices, material things relating to traditional loom and costumes, musical instruments relating to performing arts etc. all of the categories demonstrate native features and identity of the Bodo culture. For example, an aspect may be taken for discussion. While going for investigation about costume design and making of the Bodos it is to be noticed that there is something peculiarities in the arts of making of traditional costume and its text and texture. Maximum of the floral designs of the Bodos are transformed based on the natural things and forms, imitation of picture of animals, birds and creatures. Therefore the name of floral design is entitled with the name of those particular things, and content. For example, there is a kind of floral design popularly known as 'Lewa Agor' it means floral design of creeper which is designed based on the size of creeper. Thus there is a name associated to the ethnic floral design known as 'Hajw Agor' it means floral design of hill. Likewise the Bodos acquire different names of floral design which demonstrate nature friendly peculiarity of the Bodo community. A few names of floral design may be mentioned here. These are Pharou Megon (floral design of pigeon eye), Lau Begor (floral design of Gourd seed), Khasi Agor (floral design of Sickle) etc. This may be evidently observed in traditional Bodo costume. These products represent artistic view and social philosophy of the society. The color, art of floral design all of the modes are being traditionally acquired and validating since time immemorial.

The names of material things extant among the traditional Bodo society are closely associated to the nature of use, and size of making. In this regard a few terminologies may be mentioned. These are- Ual (a kind of rice husking tool made of wood), Sandri (a kind of sieve made of bamboo), Dahra (a kind of mat made of bamboo strip), Kho (a kind of basket), Thousi (a kind of pestle generally made of wood) and many more names may be mentioned here. It is worth mentioning that many of the material things, tools and utensils are made of bamboo, wood or fiber of natural things. These are natural product and have social and cultural importance because of their use and attribution in social life. The names of the material things signify its peculiarity; and on the other hand each of the names of material things and tools has native identity of the traditional community. This aspect of the cultural terminology relating to the material things and tools has a folkloristic and social significance. To speak, each cultural terminology represents existence of community property and traditional knowledge.

## **X. CONCLUSION**

At the beginning of the paper it is stated that the study aims for a folkloristic analysis based on the cultural terminologies as extant in the cultural context of the Bodo folk-society. It is also a hypothetical statement as expected in the paper that the cultural terminology represents different aspects of way of living of the social life. It is also said that each and every terminology is part of culture and has folkloristic and sociological significance in the social context of the Bodos. This view point has been examined reasonably from the analysis as done in this paper.

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