

Bodo Proverbs and its Social Significance

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1. Introduction

The Bodos are one of the largest ethnic and linguistic groups and early settlers of Assam in Northeast India. They are the descendants of the Mongoloid race of the Indo-Mongoloids or Indo-Tibetans. Their language is a subsection of the Bodo-Naga section under Assam-Burma, a group of Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family [1]. Very early they have settled in most areas of North-East India, particularly north and south bank of Burlungbuthur (Brahmaputra) valley of Assam. Suniti Kumar Chatterji identified them as the Kirats or Indo-mongoloid in his book 'Kirata Jana Kriti' [2]. E. Gait considered them as "the earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley" [3]. The British administration and the Christian Missionaries, who first created writing in Bodo language, used the word Kachari as a racial name. [4] It also appears in the specification of the Scheduled Tribe under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution [5]. Their language is included in 8th schedule in the constitution of India and recognized by Sahitya Akademi. They have their own distinct cultural traditions, social customs, festivals, language, religion, belief system, customary laws, traditional costumes, and folklore & folk literatures like folk song, folk tale, proverb, sayings etc. All these folk literatures have been transmitted to them by their ancestors from generation to generation and have shaped nurtured them till the present day.

2. Methodology

This is a descriptive and analytical research. The data for preparing this paper, collected mainly from primary and secondary. Primary sources are collected from the locality of Kokrajhar district, Assam and secondary sources are collected from locally available journals and referred books.

3. Discussion

Proverbs are noteworthy elements of folk literature. They are popularly defined as short expressions of popular wisdom. It is complete sentence. Allen Dundes defined as "Proverb is impersonal vehicles for personal communication". Roger D. Abrahams said that "Proverbs are short and witty traditional expressions that arise as part of everyday discourse as well as in the more highly structured situations of education and judicial proceedings. Each proverb is a full statement of an approach to recurrent problem. It presents a point of view and a strategy that self-sufficient, needing nothing more than an event of communication to bring it into play. Proverbs take a personal circumstance and embody it in impersonal and witty form. Proverbs are nearly always stated in the form of single sentence". [6]

The ethnic term in Bodo for proverb is *Bathra-phao*. The word *bathra* means speech or utterance and *phao* means gesture or acting. There are lots of proverbs circulated in Bodo society. They are used according to the time, space and situations. They are divided as their used. Dr. Anil Boro divided into four kinds of proverbs as Positive Equivalence, Negative Equivalence, Positive causational, and Negative causational [7]. A few examples of proverbs circulating among Bodo society are given below:

Zerao thuri nuyuu, beonuu bathi garu.

(English Rendering: where there is thatch, there is pole to bring it.)

In comparing of Bodo traditional where thatch are available they used to make ready to bring it with pole from beforehand likewise in connection with this activities this proverb explain about readiness of works of certain thing for their need thing as well. In any case Bodo people arrange and used to be ready for their upcoming works. For example in case of married one matured boy have to search for girl and if he find somewhere than he need to arrange to discuss with her family whether her family will agree or not. In this act above proverb has been uttered as opening point to explain the matter. To explain such activities of readiness for work this proverbs is used in the Bodo society from olden days.

Zuodraibla Bara Buphaigun, Haidraibla Embua Bargun.

(English Rendering:

Wind may shatter if you are too high, Frogs may sit on you if you are too short.)

One should be neither too high nor short. More height is prone to ragging air but too short is also not preferable. The proverb is used to warn against two extremes: Extreme height and short. It is also used to warn against not to be too rough or aggressive as such person may become target of apprehension, and at the same time not to be too soft as such person may easily be cheated.

Bima Biphazung Gongga Gongga, Gondrai Ganduizung Gongnanggun

(Although reluctant to obey parents, obey the loom.)

One may not obey parents, but one must know daily chores for living. The proverb is used to refer to teenagers of who have deaf ears to the instructions of their parents. The reality of life is that one has to get married and maintain their family and hence the knowledge about household chores is prerogative. In case of Bodo girls the knowledge about how to weave clothes in the loom was utmost requirement to a boy and sought for his bride.

3.1 Significances of proverbs in Bodo society

The using of proverbs is a part of daily activities in the Bodos society and it is like forefathers knowledge which has given for their offspring as a treasure and hidden knowledge. The proverbs which are used in Bodos society has played a crucial role and even it has form as like folklore and these are importance for encouragement among themselves. Bodo proverbs are divided into three kinds and discuss its significance in the following:

3.1.1 Proverbs relating to women

In the Bodo society women take importance role and place in the family, village and in their area and even as an individual. To be a matured and expert for domestic work and in culture the Bodo women need to learn and acquire knowledge so that they can adjust morally, thus women can mingle and build up their society. So there are lots of proverbs regarding women. Following are some of them

Bimaya Naiu Mukhangao

Hinzaoa Naiu Siphiyao

Phisaya Naiu Khosao.

(English Rendering: Mother observe the face, wife look at pocket, children checked the bag.)

Face is index of human being. So, we can recognize the condition of one through his appearance. Therefore you may come from somewhere your mother will first observe your face to know your condition, is there anything happen to you or not. On the other side your wife will see your pocket as you are back by having some amount or not. Because she has to manage family expenditures and feeding to their children.

Sikha gudana santham, Hinzao gudana dantham.

(English Rendering:

New knife come to know within three days, bride character known within three months.)

A new knife can be known after using two-three days whether it is sharp or not. A bride will be known in her character and activities roughly within three months of time. In general, it is believed that it needs only a few times to know anything in Bodo society.

Sometime bride shows to his bridegroom's house as she is so smart and active in works and smooth in character, but her real character and laziness activities will display after few days.

Busurse Abad Zaiuikhuo Dagab, Hinzao Haba Runguikhuo Gab

(English Rendering:

Don't get upset for failure of cultivation for a year; get upset for having unskilled bride.)

As an agricultural family if a crop growing is not success for some reason, it is only for one time suffering. But if you marry unskilled or lazy girl or marrying girl who doesn't know how to cultivate or household work, than if you marry to such a girl you may have to suffer in the whole life. That sentence can be explained through this proverb.

3.1.2 Proverbs relating to agriculture

There are proverbs relating to agriculture in Bodo society which are circulating among them through words of mouth. Some of them are given below:

Ha dala agni khona

Musuo dala gong mena

Mai gaiubwula

Dao zalanggun

Makhuo munjagun

Haoria zjagun.

(English rendering: Do not take the land in the nook-corner, Do not buy bull with long horn, If you plant paddy the birds will eat away, what you get to eat, Will be poor.)

According to the Bodo traditional society there used to be full of Betel-nut, jackfruit and mango trees and Bamboo trees in nook-corner (*agni-khona*). So, we can't take care or look upon cultivation in that side or in the nook-corner. Even we can't see if crops are wiped out by animals. If we buy bull having long horn its horn will be fearful and it may disturbs when we tying up them to plough on his shoulder. Again if we plant crops near the drain, the animal like- pig, poultry will destroy all the crops as we are unable to drive them out. If it is continuing the ultimate result will be zero or no good result will be there and then we will get nothing.

Abadkhuo mao khathiao, Phisa hinzaokhuo Bilai guzanao.

(English Rendering:

Cultivate your crops nearest to your home, but get marry your daughter so far to you.)

If you do your cultivation nearest to your house, you will get easy to take care of it. So you will get good crops. One the other hand if we give faraway the daughter to marry, you will be get relief from disturbing. In that situation the above proverb is used.

Maona zanu rungbla zeraobu mai bakhri.

(English rendering: Everywhere barn for one excel person.)

It is easy to an expert and excel person that wherever they go they can make way for their livelihood, moreover for such person there will be chances and they can earn and treasure abundantly in their barns. To explain and give encourage to people those who are like idle and lazy this proverb is used in the Bodo society since ancient days.

3.1.3 Proverbs having moral lesson:

Proverbs having moral lessons or advices are available in the Bodo society which are effective in exercising social organize. These may also be used to caution or advise people and to smooth social friction and dissatisfaction. Examples are given below:

Ha gurung-ao Maozi khiyu.

(English rendering: Cats excrete in soft soil.)

The cats search for soft soil and dig out and excrete there and bury their excretion. Likewise a cunning man may try to fool and cheat to a meek man. With this proverb humble and genuine people can be aware from cunning people.

Muiderkhuo sunanguo khapalao, Mansikkuo rainanguo sigangao.

(English Rendering:

To an elephant pierce in the forehead and to a man one should scold and correct in the front.)

When elephant try to attack us we should take spears and pierce it in the forehead and then only we can be save from elephant. Likewise if we find any mistake one should tell and make him known his mistake and error and then he/she can be correct his/her own mistake. If we gossip it may create enemy and bring more problem. To give advice to people this proverb had been used in the Bodo society.

Guzwoao muzubla bikhaidao nangun, Naigongna muzubla athingao nangun.

(English rendering: Spit high it will fall on your chest, Spit low it will fall on your feet.)

One may bring into trap and tragedy according to his own deeds, to explain and give advice above proverb is used. No person get direct trap by someone and can't be accuse but it is he or she which make mistake and bring mistake thus whatever we do we should not be too serious but need to be careful before doing the work.

Zeblassu bala gudungao gaphlanguun, Humbassu mithigun.

(English rendering: the moment when you get married, then only you will realize.)

People think that getting married is a simple task for which young people married unconsciously and used to face in problem in their life. Because young people they don't know when we married what problem we have to face that's why after married such people get unbearable burden. To explain this sentence above proverb can be used. With this proverb young generation could be aware beforehand.

Naya thuiyu thophainaiyao,

Sesaya thuiyu khiyao,

Muiya thuiyu aganao

Mansiya thuiyu kugayao.

(English rendering: Fish dies in gasping air, Rabbit dies in excretion, Deer dies in its footprint, and Man dies in his speech.)

Every hunter knows in which direction the deer has gone by seeing the footprint of deer. They are so expert that they can detect the deer by seeing the footprint. Likewise by seeing rabbit's excretion one can find the place of rabbit. On the other hand human words are like poisonous things. Sometime people wrongly speak out of unconscious and it create enemy for himself. Like this we may bring tragedy in one's life. Same thing happen in case of fish. The fisherman can find by gasping of fishes in the water and fisherman can catch the fishes. That means one should not talk meaningless or pointless sentences which create trouble in one's life.

Some important proverbs circulating among Bodo societies are:

- a) *Oza burzabla phisa thuiyu. (Eng.h rendering: Lots of physician kill the child.)*
- b) *Akhai thaisejung apha khobzaya. (Eng. rendering: Single hand can't make applause.)*
- c) *Mudumnai bibarkhuo hukhumanu haya. (Eng. rendering: Fragrance flower can't be hiding.)*
- d) *Inzurabu khuma dongo. (Eng. rendering: Even a wall have ear.)*

e) *Okha hahangnanui khophri homnai. (Eng. rendering: Using khopri (kind of tool using as umbrella) after rain.)*

4. Conclusion

The proverbs are like treasure in Bodos society and culture. Through this the behaviors and characters one can feel the influence of proverbs in Bodos society. These proverbs are essential for common people and through this human culture remain alive. In regards of Bodos folklore this proverbs are taking as special and important factor to those illiterate people where they learnt and got knowledge through the proverbs. These proverbs can be collect more and elaborate deeper and we can get more information regarding proverbs in Bodo society and likewise there will be more chance to correct errors as well. Along with modern advance technology development we could preserve it and prove it more through scientific study and in future generation it will be save and available for upcoming generation.

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