

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Boro and Rabha: Two ethnic languages of the NE India:

The Boro and Rabha both are ethnic languages of the North East India. Their numbers of language speakers are found in large numbers in Assam in comparison to other states. Racially they belong to the great Mongoloid stock and linguistically belonging to the Tibeto-Burman sub-branch of the Sino-Tibetan Language Family. Close linguistic and cultural affinities are noticed between the Boro and Rabha linguistic communities. The Tibeto-Burman Group of Languages like Boro, Rabha, Dimasa, Kok-borok, Garo, Tiwa etc. demonstrate a close relationship in case of language and culture. From a general observation it is found that the Boro and Rabha languages may have been split on from the proto-Tibeto-Burman stock. That is why they have shown an innate linguistic identity of their own. As per 2001 census report of Assam the total number of population of Boro speakers are estimated as 13,52,771(Male-682770,Female-670061) and the Rabha population of Assam are recorded as 2,77,517(Male-140614,Female-13,6903). About the ethnic identity and origin of the Boro community most of the scholars have some valuable opinion. Once Sidney Endle observed, *“The origin of Kachari race is still very largely a matter of conjecture and inference, in the absence of anything entitled to be regarded as authentic history .As remarked above, in feature and general appearance they approximate very closely to the Mongolian type; and this would seem to point to Tibet and China as the original home of the race”*¹ Endle used the term *Kachári* instead of the racial term *Boro*. The great Indologist Suniti Kumar

¹ Endle, Sidney (1911). *The Kacháris*, p.3.

Chatterji said, *“The area of characterization for the primitive Sino-Tibetan speech appears to have been North-western China between the head-waters of Hung Ho and the Yang-tsze- Kiang Rivers. Possibly very early off-shoots of the Proto-Sino-Tibetan speaking Mongoloids, before the Language was fully characterized, came down to South China and Burma,...”*² Thus Rajmohan Nath opined, *“The inhabitant of various parts of the Bod country were known as Boddo-Ficha or Boddo-cha (Ficha-cha-children) or the children of the Bod country, and were later known simply as the Boddo or the Bodo”*.³

Different scholars have different opinions about the source and origin of the Boro and Rabha communities. But it may be said that both the linguistic communities represent the proto-type of linguistic and cultural elements. They have been concentrating since time immemorial in the land of the North East India; and cohabit with the circle of Indo-sphere.

1.2 Distribution of Boro and Rabha speakers in Assam:

The Geographical distribution of the Boro and Rabha speakers is found throughout the state of Assam and in some adjacent states. Majority of the Boro speakers are found in the Brahmaputra valley in the district of Dhubri, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Chirang , Baksa, Odalguri, Kamrup (including the northern and the southern part of the Brahmaputra valley), Darrang district and West Bengal (particularly in three district e.g. Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Cooch Behar). In Nepal Boro speaker are found in Jhapa and Muran district. The Boro speakers are also found in Meghalaya. On the other hand majority of the the Rabha populations are found is the southern part of the Brahmaputra valley; particularly in undivided Goalpara district. Besides they inhabit in the district of Kamrup, Darrang, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Odalguri district in Assam and in the Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. Besides, the Rabhas are found in Nowgaon, Sibsagar, Karbi Anglong, Dibrugarh, North Lakhimpur and

² Chatterji, Suniti Kumar (1974). *Kirāta-Jana-Krti*, p. 21

³ Nath, Rajmohan (1978, 2nd edition). *The Background of Assamese Culture*, p.16

Cachar districts in Assam. The Rabhas are divided into eight clan groups such as Rongdani, Maitari, Kocha, Pati, Dahari, Totla, Bitalia and Hana. The Rangdanis are concentrating in the western and north-western parts of the Goalpara district in the south bank of the mighty Brahmaputra River; and northern part of the Garo hills district. The Maitari, Dahari, Pati and Bitalia groups are found in the south-western part of the Goalpara district and northern part of Gaolpara district. The Totla and Hana groups are found in undivided Darrang and Kamrup districts. The person of Kocha group is found in the western part of the undivided Goalpara district and north-Bengal especially in Cooch-Bihar and Jalpaiguri districts. Some of them are also concentrating in Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon district.

1.3 Review of Literature:

Writers and scholars have carried out some outstanding studies on the Boro and Rabha languages and cultures. Rev. S. Endle wrote a preliminary book of grammar entitled '*Outline Grammar of the Kachári (Bārā) Languages*' (1884). Thus Rev. L. Skrefsrud wrote a grammar entitled "*A Short Grammar of The Mech or Boro Language*" (1889), J.D. Anderson (1895) made some primary works on Boro language and culture. Thus Holvorsrud wrote a grammar entitled '*Boro Grammar*' (1959). G.A. Grierson also carried out serious works on Boro philology and included in the "*Linguistics Survey of India*", Vol-III, Part-II. Robbins Burling also carried out research work on Garo language that entitled "*The Language of The Modhupur Mandi(Garo) vol.II:The lexicon2003*". Paul K. Benedict has also research work on Sino-Tibetan languages and published with the title "*Sino-Tibetan A Conspectus*" (1972). P.C. Bhattacharya was carried out research work on Boro language from structural point of view and published with the title '*A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language*'. Discussion was done on the phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary of Boro language. Bhaben Narzy worked in the field of Boro language and culture. He wrote a Boro grammar namely '*Boro Bhasa*' (Boro Language, 1990). The Boro scholars namely Kamal Kumar Brahma and

Madhuram Boro both have done remarkable work on Boro language. Kamal Kumar Brahma has written '*Boro Raokhanthi*' (Boro Grammar). On the other hand, Madhuram Boro has also made distinctive study on the Boro language. The result of his study is "*The Boro Structure*" (1991), "*The Historical Development of Boro Language*" (2007), "*Assamese and Boro: A Comparative and Contrastive Study*", (1990). These are valuable contribution in the field of language studies. These are undoubtedly a great contribution to the field of Tibeto-Burman studies. The research has also gathered an enormous data as well as information that have been utilized in course of study. Thus D.N. Bhat has also written "*Boro Vocabulary*" and it was published by Deccan College. Phukan Ch. Basumatary has credit of research works on Boro and Rabha languages. The study includes "*A Study in Cultural and Linguistic Affinities of the Boros and Rabhas of Assam*" (2004) which is a doctoral thesis (unpublished) on Boro and Rabha languages. He has discussed about the Phonology, Morphology, Lexis and Cultural affinities of both the two languages from comparative view point. A few outcome of research are *An Introduction to the "Boro Language"* (2005), "*Boro Raoni Moharkhanthi*" (2010), "*Boro Rao arw Thunlai*", "*Comparative Vocabulary of Boro-Garo Languages*"(2014), "*Boro and Rabha: Two Tibeto-Burman Languages of the North East India*" (2013). These are result of his reliable study. Some outstanding works has also made by Swarna Prabha Chainary who has credit of research. "*Boro and Garo: A Comparative Linguistic Analysis*" (unpublished thesis under Gauhati University, 2005) is a doctoral thesis on Boro and Garo languages. She has discussed about the Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, and Vocabulary in both the two languages from comparative view point. She has written remarkable books entitled "*Boro Grammar*" (*Boro Raokhanthi*), "*Tibeto-Burman Languages of North East India*" (2014) etc. She has discussed about the Tibeto-Burman Languages based on Boro, Garo, Dimasa, Rabhas languages from structural view point comprising the areas of phonology, morphology, syntax etc.

The Linguistic studies on Rabha Language had been started by Christian missionaries. Besides some scholars namely Rehati Mohan Saha, U.V. Jose, Robbins Burling, Upen Rabha Hakasam, Malina Devi Rabha, Phukan Ch. Basumatary, Jibeswar Koch and some other scholars have done research work in this regard. *“Rabha Bhasa Aru Sahitya”* (Rabha Language and Literature, 1997), *“Asamiya Aru Asamar Tibbot Barmiya Bhasa”* (Assamese and Tibeto-Burman languages of Assam, 2000), *“Focus on the Rabhas”* (2011), and *“Rabha Bhasa”*, *“Rabha Samaj Aru Sanskriti”* are the outcome of Hakasam’s research work. U.V. Jose was published Rabha English Dictionary i.e *“Khurangnala”* (2000). Rehati Mohan Saha has credit of research work entitled *“Rabha Janajati Samkshipth Itibriti”* (2002), Rajen Rabha has also credit of field works and door to door observations. After that he achieved finding that comprises in the anthology entitled *“Rabha Janajati”*, (2008) and *“The Rabhas”*,(2002). Nabin Ch .Rabha has published a vocabulary book entitled *“Rabha Sabda Mala”*,(1981) comprising vocabulary of Rabha language, Biswanath Rabha Tara has published *“Sahaj Rabha Bhasa Siksha Path”*,(2004) aiming at teaching-learning and spoken of Rabha language, Jaba Thakuria has also done research work on Rabha language that entitled *“Rabha Language: A Descriptive analysis”*, (2004). This is a doctoral thesis on Rabha Languages. In this thesis he has discussed about the Rabha languages specially based on phonology, morphology, vocabulary and syntax. Monoj Kumar Singha has done research work on Rabha and Boro phonemes entitled *“Representation and Recognition of Bodo and Rabha phonemes with special reference to other ethnic language of North-East”*. He has discussed about the Rabha and Boro phonemes from comparative view point. Phukan Ch. Basumatary has also written *“The Rabha Tribe of North East India Bengal and Bangladesh”* (2010) comprising the analysis of language and culture. Jibeswar Koch has done research work on Rabha dialect entitled *‘Rabha Dialects: A linguistic study’*. He has discussed about the Rabha dialect highlighting three different clan dialects like Rongdani, Maitari and Koch groups from linguistic view point.

Literatures as available in the form of print have been gathered as far as possible. From a survey it is observed that linguists and researchers have done an extensive work basically in the field of phonology and morphology of both the languages; but extensive study yet to be done on the micro-level area of affix and their functions from typological point of view. It is observed that the affix used in these languages have functions in morphological level. In different situations they may change the structure of word class or sometimes may change the whole structure of the words or semantic. Keeping in view the proposed topic has been chosen for a structural as well as typological analysis.

1.4 Area of the study:

The study is confined within the proposed area of subject. The major area of the study is confined under the level of morphology. The study is entitled “*Affixes in Boro and Rabha: A Typological Study*”. A typological study on the affixes of both the languages has been taken into account. Thus the topic of research as mentioned above has a great scope of study from the structural point of view. It aims at micro-level analysis from a typological point of view. Keeping interest to this kind of research the topic has been chosen for a linguistic analysis. The use and function of affixes in both the language has also been observed in this regard.

1.5 Aims and Objectives of the study:

The present study aims to discuss about the typological affinities of affixes as used in both the languages. Affixes are bound morpheme from functional representations. The use and morphological function has been taken into account in this analysis. As the Boro and Rabha are belonging to the same language family, there are lots of affinities in the level of linguistic features; and in the typological level. To focused this particular aspect an attempt has been taken to a great extent. All these aspects are discussed from the morphological point of view.

1.6 Significance of the study:

The study has a great significance in the scholarship of language and linguistics; particularly in the area of Tibeto-Burman studies. In the morphological analysis the role of affixes are undoubtedly considered as much as important. Though they are dependent or bound in nature, but no meaningful or extended word can be formed without the component of such kind of linguistic units. Therefore it has a major significance in the morphological relationship of a language. It is expected that the study will surely convey the morphological features of both the languages. The scholars and students of Tibeto-Burman studies may gather information on the particular area. It is not only an academic study but also a study of ethno-linguistics on the Boro and Rabha languages.

1.7 Hypothesis:

Initially in the proposed study some striking hypothesizes have been projected. These are:

- Affixes (prefix or suffix) have functional representations in derivation of words. .
- Either it may be used in nominal or verbal category of words (Class of words).
- Some of the affixes are lexical in nature i.e. inherited from the Tibeto-Burman sources and mostly comparable to other cognate languages. Lexical types of affixes are mostly bound base in nature and they may also be reduplicated to make extend the sense of speech.
- Affixes play a great role in changing class of words or in some cases it can maintain class of words though it extends meaning of words.

- Due to the function and application of affixes the lexical structure of both the languages have become agglutinating in nature which is the basic feature of the Boro and Rabha languages.
- Some of the affixes used in both the languages are of the Aryan origins that have been received through the process of borrowings.

1.8 Methodology:

As the study closely related to the typological approach (on the one hand it is a comparative study) it demands a structural analysis. It may be mentioned that the famous linguists in Tibeto-Burman studies like James A. Matisoff, Robins Burling, Paul K. Benedict and Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya have done typological as well as morphological study on the Tibeto-Burman languages as a whole. In this study necessary references have been acknowledged from the research findings of the famous linguists of Tibeto-Burman studies. For identification of typology of affixes of both the languages a synchronic view point has been adopted as a whole. Thus to assess the use and functional representation of affixes of both the languages, a morphological view point has been taken into account to a great extent.

1.9 Data Collection:

Data collection and identification is a serious task for any one of the researchers. Therefore an attempt has been done to gather a huge amount of data relating to the research topic. It was the foremost and necessary attempt before going for an extensive analysis. The researcher took an effort to be free from the puzzles and ambiguousness while involving in gathering data from the field work or from the published materials. During the research a constant effort was taken to collect necessary data from the primary and secondary sources. The primary source is mainly based on empirical as well as observation and interview oriented field investigation. Most of data have been gathered from the native speakers and active bearers of both the linguistic communities. In such a context interview and

questionnaire method is mostly applicable. It makes convenient the process of identification of data. The other kinds of data have been gathered from secondary sources which are mainly depended on the published materials found in the form of books on language, literature, culture, history etc. Journals and periodicals, news papers and documentations in any form are considered as the source of data. Necessary references related to the study have been consulted for verification of data and analysis. As the research methodology concerns about scientific planning of research as well as logical designing it aims to follow up the necessary methods as applicable to the morphological analysis.

1.10 Research Statement:

The major issue of the research is typological study on the affixes of the Boro and Rabh languages. The study demands all relevant scopes of study that applicable to the study of morphology. As the topic is closely related to the study of Tibeto-Burman linguistics, it needs to follow and observe the Tibeto-Burman structure with a keen interest of investigation; basically to the common features of Tibeto-Burman morphology. The Boro and Rabha have inherited the similar features in case of morphology and other levels of linguistic typology. An observation has been done on the use and function of affixes in both the languages.

There is a critical issue on lexical type as well as onomatopoeic type of affix as available in both the languages. These are used in forming different words of noun category by addition of lexical words i.e. free morpheme (bound base) in structure. This is also a matter of discussion that needs to be analyzed from a typological view point.

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