

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 SOCIETY AND ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE BODOS

The Bodo-Kacharis are the sons of the soil of Assam. The Bodo-Kacharis or the Bodos is a very important part of the different ethnic groups and races settling in Assam with their distinctive cultural and linguistic feature. Linguistically or ethnically they belong to the Mongoloid stock of the Indo-Mongoloids or Indo-Tibetans. The Mongoloid peoples are passes along towards the north-east India, i.e. in Assam and extend in all over Assam. The Bodos were a race of people who inhabited the country north of the Himalayas and West of China. This country was known as the Bod or the homeland.i.e.there were various parts of the country- Hor-Bod, Kur-Bod etc. The inhabitants of Bod country were known as the Boddo-Ficha or Boddo-cha (Ficha-cha- children) or the children of the Bod country. Later they come to be known as simply Boddo-Bodo.¹

S.K. Chatterji says that the Bodos, *“Who spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley and North Bengal as well as East Bengal, forming a solid bloc in North-eastern India, and they form one of the main bases of the present-day population of these tracts”*.²

Rev. Sidney Endle opined that *“The origin of the 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 every closely to the Mongolian type, and this would seem to point to Tibet and China as the original home of the race”*.³

According to P. C. Bhattacharya, *“The Boro people including their western and eastern branches had royal glories as we gather from the records of history. The western section of the old Boros (Kacharis) occupied the thrones of Koch-Bihar, Bijni, Darrang and Beltola. An eastern branch in the name of Chutiyas also established a powerful kingdom with its capital near Sadiya. An another section of the eastern Boros maintained their kingdom with capitals at Dimapur, Maibong and Khaspur against the continuous invasion of Ahoms and neighbouring powers up to the advent of British rule in Assam.*

¹Nath, Rajmohan. (1978). The Background of Assamese Culture. Gauhati: Sreeguru Press. pp.15-16

²Chatterji, S.K. (2007). Kirata-Jana-Kriti. Kolkata: Lokenath Printers. Pp-45-46

³Endle, Rev. Sidney. (1997). The Kacharis. Delhi: Nimri Commercial Centre, AsokVihar Phase-IV. P-3

This section of the Boros is known to us now as Dimasaa or Dimasa Kachari (Hills Kachari)”.⁴

The Bodo inhabiting under the great Mongolian have been recognized in different places, as Kiratas, Meches, Kacharis, Bodo or Boro. The Bodos are extended not only in Assam as well as neighbouring states and in some part of Nepal and Bangladesh. However, the majority of them are found on the northern bank and southern bank of Brahmaputra Valley. They have their own culture, language, religion which is being observed since time immemorial.

1.2 BODO POPULATION IN ASSAM

The Bodo people mainly scattered in some parts of North Eastern India. Assam is the main living place of Bodo Community. Except Assam Bodo people live in some other state like- Nagaland, Meghalaya, West Bengal and in some border areas of Arunachal Pradesh. The people also living in some foreign countries like- Nepal and Bangladesh. The main majority living place of Bodo peoples is in BTAD. The Districts like- Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. Except BTAD in some district of Assam Bodo people living districts were- Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Sonitpur, Dhemaji, Nogaon, Lakhimpur, KarbiAnglong, Morigaon, Sibsagor, Jorhat, Darrang, Dhubri. According to 2011 census report the Bodo population in Assam- 14, 16,125.

1.3 BODO FOLK LITERATURE

Folk literature has been the companion of man throughout the history of human evolution in different parts of the world.⁵ The Bodos have a rich tradition of folk literature. The English term “Folk Literature” is known as “*Subung Thunlai*” or “*Khuga Thunlai*” in Bodos. The word ‘*Subung*’ means man or woman and the word ‘*Thunlai*’ means Literature. And the term ‘*Khuga*’ means mouth. The Bodos have their rich stores of folk songs, legends, folk tales, proverbs and riddles etc. which has not been fully explored and brought to the light. The Bodo folk literature has been still orally or verbally transmitted generation to generation through people mouth. According to Anil Boro, “Though the genres of oral or verbal literature of the Bodos dates back to the primitive ages about

⁴ Bhattacharya, P.C. (2007). A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language. Guwahati: Saraighat Photo Types. P-16

⁵ Boro, Anil. (2010). Folk Literature of Bodos. Guwahati: Mahamaya Graphics. P-22

which our written history is completely in the dark, it does not mean that their folk literature or oral literature is a mere vestige of the past.⁶ A minimum sizeable have been recorded and preserved in the book form. Even though it has enriched and added to the grandeur and quality of written forms of Bodo literature besides “revealing the thought processes, the hopes and fears, ideas and primitive philosophies of our remote ancestors, as well as the sudden or gradual changes in all these things effected by the changing conditions of material life.”⁷It certainly gives us “a glimpse of the daily life of our early fore-fathers and shows us their living past, not as we think of it today in the light of history, but as it appeared to them at the time.”⁸

We can imagine the age of folk literature if we see the historical background of the folk literature when the people began how to speak and settling together by forming society as because it is difficult to give correct definition of folk literature when and from which stage it has come into being to the mind of people. It is the oral tradition and handed down from generation to generation. It does not have written records. Generally folk literature is known as old literature. Because the folk literature had originated before it was written generally no name of writer, time, and creator of the folk literature has been known. Generally the characteristics of folk literature can be seen in poetic form. In folk literature different types of different trends are known. As for example, about the historical incident of the society, fowls and birds, river and spring etc. Folk literature denotes the social life records of people of the world. It makes us understand about the life or livelihood and event or about the needs. Folk literature is a social source of the people. It is not only a property of one society or community. Folk literature can be treated as the property of one society or assets for all. Bodo folk literature can be classified into some genres- a) Folk songs b) Traditional narratives c) Proverbs, phrases and idioms d) Riddles e) Charms/ Chanting. Folk Song is the major sub-division of Folk literature or Oral literature. Most of the Folk Songs are associated with various rites and rituals such as- birth, marriage and death. In these various songs connected with different ceremonies, festivals, customs and practices. According to M.M. Brahma the folk tales or narratives of the Bodo society, like the folk songs “Depict profound thought and imagination.”⁹

⁶ibid. p-35

⁷Quoted, from Mochahary, Hemanta. (2014). Unpublished Thesis ‘The Reflection of Society in Bodo and Assamese Folk Literature: A Comparative Study’. P-35

⁸Boro, Anil. Op.cit. p-35

⁹ Brahma, M.M. (2011). Boroni Khuga Methai. Kokrajhar: Mahamaya Printing Works. P-(v)

Regarding the folk songs of the Bodos and their singers “*They possess an inborn capacity to compose songs and verses. The corn fields, the river banks, the lawns and the meadows are echoed by the pleasant songs of the Bodo girls.*”¹⁰ So, the expression of feelings, desire, love and affection, thoughts of Bodo peoples are clearly reflected through their folk songs. It can be said that the forms of their verbal art or folk literature are still extant in the repertory of the simple Bodo folk vibrating and echoing the green fields, the hills, the streams and the rivulets.

In the field of Bodos folk literature, some folklorists have been recorded and published a great body of the traditional songs, narratives, proverbs, riddles, charms etc. The first folklorist who collect and published the Bodo folk tales and rhymes had been made by Rev. J.D. Anderson, who pioneered and bring out “Boro-Kachari Tales and Rhymes”. The Gauhati University Folklore Department undertook a project to collect and publish the folk tales and songs current among the Bodo society. As a result Mohini Mohan Brahma’s “Folk songs of the Bodos” and the “Boro-Kachari Solo” edited by Prafulla datta Goswami and Mohini Mohan Brahma, who were the pioneering the projects. Bhaben Narzi in his monographs ‘Boro Kacharini Samajarw Harimu’, ‘Boro-Kacharir Jana Sahitya’ and ‘Boro-Kacharir geet-mat’, who collect and published some of the Bodo folk songs, tales, myths, proverbs, riddles and charms. He is the great contributor of Bodo folk literatures. The pioneer of Assamese folklorist, Prafulla datta Goswami who included and analysed some of the songs and tales of the Bodos in his famous monographs like ‘Ballad and Tales of Assam’, ‘Songs and Tales of North Eastern India’ and Tales of Assam. The Anundoram Barooah Institute of Language, Art & Culture, Assam research centre undertook a great project of entire North Eastern India to collect and publish the folklore materials in “A Handbook of Folklore Material of North-East India”, edited by Birendranath Datta, Nabin Chandra Sarma and Prabin Chandra Das. Especially Bodo folk songs and tales are also included in this research book. Anil Boroa prominent writer is also published some precious books of the Bodo folk literature. In his research works “Folk Literature of the Bodos: A Descriptive and Analytical study” is credited Ph.D from Gauhati University, Department of Folklore research. The results of his study are- Folk Literature of Bodos and Serja Siphung. His books have some valuable source of Bodo Folk Literature. On the other hand, Kameswar Brahma has also work on the topic, “A Study of Socio-Religious Beliefs, Practices and Ceremonies of the Bodos”.

¹⁰ Ibid. p-(v)

He published the literature and cultural book, *Aspects of Social Customs of the Bodos, A study in Cultural Heritage of the Bodos, Boroni Harimu*. Another research work done by Hemanta Mochahary entitled, “The Reflection of Society in Bodo and Assamese Folk Literature: A Comparative Study.”

The enthusiastic Bodo writer Birendra Giri Basumatary also bring out the Bodo folk songs, traditional games songs, proverbs, riddles, incantations, rituals and folk beliefs in his book “Boro Harimuni Mohor Mushree”, an outline history of Bodo literature and culture. Lakheswar Brahma’s “Bwisagu arw Harimu”, in this book he discussed about the Bodos spring time festival Bwisagu and folk songs. Some enthusiastic and prominent Bodo writers have been collected and published the different genres of Bodo folk literature which are mostly written in their vernacular language like- Late Sukumar Basumatary, Rohini Kr. Brahma, Dhireswar Baro Narzi and others.

1.4 AREA OF THE STUDY

The area of the study is based on Bodo native speaker where are concentrating the state of Assam including BTAD. The topic of research as discussed in above Folk literature which aims at analyzed from a folkloristic point of view. The chosen research topic entitled- *A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS REFLECTED IN BODO FOLK SONGS*.

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aims and objectives of the research as follows:

- Aims at highlighting the different aspects of the Bodo folk songs.
- To study about the reflection of socio-cultural aspects in the Bodo folk songs.
- Aims at focusing social custom, way of living, rituals and customary laws of the Bodos.
- To analyze the folk philosophy of the Bodos.
- Studying the reflection of way of living as well as folk-life of the society.
- Highlighting the folk-belief and traditional knowledge of the Bodos.
- To preserved the folk songs of the Bodos.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is a good opportunity to study the folk songs of the Bodos. The Bodo folk songs play a very important role in the life of Bodo people. It shows their identity. The Bodo folk songs are very sweet to hear and full of meaning in the lyrics. Bodo folk song is yet to be exploring in scientific way and hence it is supposed to be studied systematically and analyze methodically. The Socio-cultural aspects as reflected in different branches of Bodo folk songs and to find out the different branches of Bodo folk songs too. The present study is the systematic analysis of the varied form of folk songs prevalent among the Bodos.

1.7 HYPOTHESIS

Some points of probable hypothesis are given below:

- The Bodo folk songs have been prevailing in Bodo society.
- The Bodo folk songs are extent among the Bodos from time immemorial.
- Most of the Bodo folk songs are not in written form.
- Most of the folk songs are religious and non-religious.
- Social behaviour, folk-philosophy and folk-life of the folk songs.
- Customary laws and folk beliefs of Bodos.
- Some songs are identifying the society and history.
- Socio-cultural aspects have been found in various folk songs.
- The style of Bodo folk songs will be analyzed.

1.8 METHODOLOGY

The study demands a folkloristic approach. So analysis has been done based on the approach that applicable to this discussion. Textual analysis is the primary key of the topic. Many of the data relevant to the discussion has been gathered from published or unpublished sources and gathered from initial field works done in different places in Assam where the Bodo peoples are found concentration according to necessity. To speak this is primarily a field based attempt for folkloristic analysis of the proposed topic. The primary data has been collected from field work from the native speakers, personal observation, interview, recording etc. and secondary data has been collected from various sources like books, newspaper, journals, articles etc.

1.9 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this study the research scholar have carried out many outstanding books on folk literature and folklore. Besides the researcher read and collected many books, magazine/journal, souvenir of the folk literature and folklore of different languages like- English, Bodo and Assamese. Thus a number of similar works have gone through. Such as-

An Introduction to Folklore and Folklife, edited by Richard M. Dorson was published by The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London in the year 1982 (paper back edition). This is the most important books of the folklore study. This book consists of articles written on different writers various folklore and folklife heritage of all over the world. This book is a high academic work where the author's fruitful work has been seen. The book has written by dividing into two parts. In the first part the author written about folklore and in the second part written on folklife.

Boro Loko-Sahitya (geet-pot) by Madhu Ram Boro was published by Priyadini Brahma, Hajo in the year 1995, in this book he discussed about the Bodo folk songs. In this book divided many sub branches of Bodo folk songs such as- a) *Hador Onphaori Methai* b) *Zwhwlaoari Methai* c) *Abadari Methai* d) *Gotho Burkhainai Methai* e) *Gwsw thwlainaini Methai* f) *Maonai Dangnaini Methai* g) *Haba Methai* h) *Jongkhainai Methai* i) *Bwisagu Methai* j) *Laokhar Methai/ Gelenaini Methai* k) *Bwidasi Methai* l) *Dhwrwmari Methai* and his another creative is "Boro Loko-Sahitya (phokora-jojona, sathor, jana biswas)"; He has discussed in these two books about the Bodo folk songs, *Bwidasi* songs and *Charms*, proverbs, riddles and folk beliefs etc. These two books are very helpful in this research work.

The Kacharis by Rev. Sidney Endle was published by Nimri Commercial Centre, AsokVihar Phase-IV, Delhi in the year 1997, in this book mention briefly about the aboriginal races of Assam; the Bodos of the Kachari block. The author speaks characteristics, physical and moral, origin and historical summary of the Bodos. So, far detail are given about their social and domestic life, laws and customs, religion, folklore, traditions and superstitions and some description of outline grammar. Here the author has given more stress about the Bodo folk tales. In this book Rev. Endle discuss briefly on different genres but he did not mention about the Bodo folk literature.

Kirata-Jana-Kriti by Suniti Kumar Chatterji was published by Professor Ramakanta Chakrabarty, General Secretary, The Asiatic Society 1 Park Street Kolkata 700016 in the year 2007 (Second reprint). This is an Indo-Mongoloids great survey record book. Here he discussed about the Indo-Mongoloids tribes and different languages of both the Tibeto-Burman and Siamese-Chinese branches which is the same Sino-Tibetan speech family. The writer in his book tries to highlight the Kirata or Indo-Mongoloid's character, participation in Indian history and contribution on Indian culture or Hindu culture. Again the writer tries to discuss briefly about- The Mongoloids Tribes in India and Mongoloids outside India. The North Assam Tribes of Indo-Mongoloids i.e. the Bodos (Baras), the Nagas, the Kuki-chins, the Garos, the Chutiyas of East Assam, the Dima-sa or Kachari, the Khasis and the Syntengs or Jaintia and other Indo-Mongoloids of Assam. Again in this book speaks- Indo-Mongoloid Fusion in the Indian Body-Politic still continuing in Nepal, in Assam and in North and East Bengal, the Nature of Indo-Mongoloid participation in Hindu culture, The Early Mongoloids and Hindu History and Culture: some Ancient points of Contact, the Indo-Mongoloids in Nepal; the name 'Nepal', The Karnataka Kings: their cultural contribution, the Malla Kings of Nepal, to 1768 A.D. And he also narrate some outstanding Mongoloid culture, Pre- Aryan (Indo-Mongoloid) Toponymy in Assam: Lauhitya, Brahma-putra, etc. Bhaskar-Varman of Kamarupa: the Glory of his Reign and China: the Tao-teh-king of Lao-tzu.

A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language by Promod Chandra Bhattacharyaw was published by Gauhati University in the year 2007. This book is a highly academic work of his efforts. He was a great Linguistician. He discussed mainly about linguistics of different branches. He analysed phonology and phonetics, Morphophonemics, Morphemics and Tactics, Morphology: Word Grammar, Syntax: Sentence Grammar etc. In this book in the first chapter discussed mainly about Bodo folk literature and culture. And also in chapter six discussed about Bodo tale and folk songs are indicating with Phonemic Transcription.

Boro Harimuni Mohar Mushree by Birendra Giri Basumatary was published by N.L. Publication in the year 2009; this book is written mainly on Bodo folk literature. But he gave more stress and discussed about culture, historical summary of Bodos, folklore, religion, traditional custom and practices. This book is also helpful on my study.

Folk Literature of Bodos by Anil Boro was published by N.L. Publication in the year 2010. Here in this book Bodo folk literatures discussed broadly different outlook genres.

Like as - Folk song, Prose Narratives of the Bodos, Ballads, Riddles etc. The folk literature of his discussion brings a new dimension on Bodo folk literature.

Boroni Khuga Methai by Mohini Mohan Brahma was published by N.L.Publication in the year 2011; the book is written on three languages- English, Bodo and Assamese. This is a very precious book of folk songs. The author divided the Bodo folk songs on the basis of season, nature, religion, marriage, didactic songs etc. He tries to collect the Bodo folk songs from the western lower Assam where Bodo people are scattered. This book is very helpful in my work.

Boro Kacharini Samaj Arw Harimu by Bhaben Narzi was published by Chirang Publication Board in the year 2014; this book is a precious written on data base description. The author has consisted in his book Bodo culture, religion, folklore, sociology and anthropology. In this book speaks on the main origin of Mongoloid or Kiratas in India. This book is a field work based as regards- the myths, the origin of Bodo-Kachari and creation, the legend etc. He discussed about North-Eastern India including Assam, West Bengal, Nepal and Tripura where Mongoloid or Bodo-Kachari scattered. He has defines the Bodo society, family, method of preparing a house, paddy cultivation, agricultural festivals and folk beliefs. Again he discussed the Boro-Kachari family system and relation with different types of marriage, social laws and rules of atonement, social customs related with birth, death and funeral ceremony. The book also speaks about the fishing and hunting along with descriptions of tools and traps as well as folk beliefs related to these. And the author writes about the Bodo tradition food and cooking, traditional drink, *zumai* (rice-beer) and method of preparing it, also different types of vegetables and curries tasted and flavour to different seasons of the year, the Bodo traditional dress, ornaments and its belief. He speaks about the Bodo religion *Bathwu* and also discuss about the ancient religions of India, the place of Siva among the Aryan and the Mongoloids or Kiratas, the *Kherai* and *Garza* festival, the *Phuthuli Haba* (Doll marriage) and Boro-Kachari's *Bwisagu* and *Amthisua* festival too.

A Handbook of Folklore Material of North-East India, edited by Birendranath Datta, Nabin Chandra Sarma and Prabin Chandra Das was published by Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language, Art & Culture, Assam (India) in the year 2015 (Reprint). The book is mainly written on different community's folklore heritage of North-East. It is a highly academic research work where writers collected with hard work. This book is divided into

two parts- in the first part mainly discussed on different folklore materials of North-East and second part discussed about the different folklore items. Here they discussed broadly- the oral narratives, folk songs, chants, proverbs and riddles, folk tales, myth, legend, religion, folk beliefs and customs of the North-East India.

A Study of Socio-Religious Beliefs, Practices and Ceremonies of the Bodos by Kameswar Brahma was published by Asian Offset Printers, Delhi in the year 2015; here the author has discussed mainly on social customs, beliefs and practices of the Bodos. In this book there are no detailed descriptions regarding the Bodo folk literature. The chapter five, The oral tradition: Myths and Legends of the Bodos etc. and chapter ten, The oral tradition: folk songs are help in this research work.

Many enthusiastic Bodo writers also recorded and published some outstanding books on the Bodo folk literature and culture. Like as- Laksheswar Brahma's, "Bwisagu arw Harimu". The book emphasized the Bodos spring time festival Bwisagu and varied songs like- weaving, love, joking and Bwisagu songs. "Subung Harimuni Rifithai" by Dhireswar Boro Narzi. In this book he has discussed the folk literature of the Darrang area. Hence, the book also stressing on traditional culture, practices and superstitions of the Bodos. Bhaben Narzi's, "Boro-Kachari's Jana Sahitya", "Boro-Kacharir Git-Mat". The books mentioned the folk song such as- festivals, ceremonies, lullabies and nursery rhymes, cowboys songs, proverbs, ballads, tales etc.