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A Comparative Study on Boro and Assamese Folksong

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of the modern age in literature has undeniably contributed to the development of human thought. In contemporary research, the comparative study of folksongs has emerged as a significant and fascinating subject. Though it may seem peculiar within academic fields, the study of folksongs remains crucial for further exploration. Folksongs are not only an important cultural element but also serve as valuable tools for understanding education and societal values across generations. Historically, folksongs were considered songs of the illiterate, sung in early childhood and passed down orally from one generation to the next. These traditional songs, often referred to as folk songs, are an integral part of cultural heritage. They are passed on orally, through word of mouth, and carry with them a sense of continuity and connection to the past. Over time, these songs have provided joy and entertainment, adding to the richness of human life. In particular, the Bodo and Assamese communities of Northeast India have a long-standing tradition of singing folk songs. These communities, living close to one another in the state of Assam, share similarities in their folk musical traditions. Therefore, a comparative study of Bodo and Assamese folk songs offers a fascinating opportunity to examine how cultural elements have been assimilated and exchanged between these neighbouring groups. This research paper will focus on several types of folk songs that have been integral to both Bodo and Assamese cultures. These include Baisagu songs (celebrating the seasonal festival), Haba Mathai (marriage songs), Gothofwrni Mathai (children's songs), ballads, weaving songs, and work songs. Each of these categories plays a significant role in human entertainment and cultural expression, and will be explored in depth within the context of this study.

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KEYWORDS: *folksong, illiterate, generation, sessional, festival, marriage, children weaving.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Folksongs have always held a special place in the hearts of both the Bodo and Assamese peoples. These songs enjoy a prestigious status in society and are deeply cherished across generations. The cultural significance of folksongs extends their value in both Bodo and Assamese literatures. Various types of songs can be found in these traditions, each representing the people's voice. They are passed down from one generation to the next, preserving the cultural heritage and stories of the community. Folk songs, Richmond says, *"concentrate on a single episode, develop their stories dramatically and are impersonal in their approach to subject matter"*[1]

Folksongs are often regarded as ancestral songs, traditionally sung by people who may not have had formal education. Both Bodo and Assamese folksongs carry deep, intrinsic meanings that reflect the socio-cultural realities of their respective societies. These songs offer valuable insights into the cultural, social, and historical fabric of the Bodo and Assamese communities.

The Folk Song singing is an extra ordinary entertainment among the Bodo and Assamese people and related with their day to day lifestyle. There is so much special day like festival, celebration within the moment the folk song singing has been provided as performance with them.

[1] Baro, Anil. *Folk Literature of the Bodos,* N.L. Publications, panbazar, Guwahati 01. 2001. P. 30

1.1. Aims and objectives:

1. This paper aims to explore a comparative study of Bodo and Assamese folk songs.
2. Various Bodo and Assamese folksongs share similarities, which to be discussed.
3. To be explored the socio-cultural reflection on folksong.

2. Methodology:

The research paper is an authentic outcome and works of the researchers. The need of research methodology is an important idea to developed the topics with related to the subject matter. In this research work has been used descriptive and analytical method for the fulfilment of this paper**.**

2.1. Data Collection:

The research work is based on the field study or data collection. This approach is intended to learn to gather various data and information relevant to the research objectives. Both primary secondary sources have been used in this research. The primary included data collected from field reports such as folk songs sung by the people of rural areas. The secondary sources include reference books, magazine, and newspapers, journals which have been used to the support the research process.

2.1.1. Comparative study on Bodo and Assamese folksongs:

This comparative study of Bodo and Assamese folk songs constitutes a significant contribution to the literature. Both Assamese and Bodo folk songs have been sung by common people since ancient times, reflecting various aspects of social life. These songs provide insight into the cultural and emotional landscapes of their communities. Each folk song, whether in the Bodo or Assamese language, offers a unique window into the traditions and experiences of the people. For example, the Assamese songs like Bisagu and Bihu, and the Bodo songs such as Gothphorni Mathai and Xikhur Git, as well as Haba Methai and Biyar Git, serve as cultural expressions that capture important moments in the lives of their respective communities.

2.1.1.1. Bwiagu song

The Baisagu song is an integral part of the Baisagu festival, which is celebrated by both the Assamese and Bodo communities in the north-eastern region of India. This festival marks the beginning of the new year for both groups and is traditionally observed in mid-April. It signifies the arrival of the Baisakh month in the Assamese calendar, symbolizing the start of a new agricultural season. *As the springtime Bohag Bihu is the most characteristically typical Assamese festival, so are the Bihu songs (bihu geet, bihu nam) the most distinctive types of folksongs of Assam, both for their literary content and for their musical mode*[2] from this research study should explore the traditional knowledge and idea about the aboriginal people of Assam.

The Bodo people celebrate Baisagu, which coincides with the Assamese festival of Bihu, celebrated at the same time. Interestingly, while the first day of the Baisagu or Bihu festival is known as Guru Bihu in Assamese, it is referred to as Mwswoni Baisagu (or Cow Days) by the Bodo people. During this period, there is a special folk song dedicated to cows. In the past, people would bathe their cows in the river, and these folk songs were sung as accompaniment to the bathing ritual. The song is mentioned below.

Bodo Baisagu song:
Lao ja phanthao ja
Bwswr bwswr er hanja hanja
Bimani khither bifami khither
Nwngswr jagwn haluya gader
Bima gaide badi daja
Bifa bolot badi ja

Assamese Bihu song:
Lao kha begeana kha
Bosore bosore palok pale bari ja
Mahor protihot, pitere protihot loi
Tohot hobi dangor haluya.
Maror dore sapor nohobi
Pita bolodor dore hobi.

English rendering:
Eat gourd, and brinjal
Grow up year to year
To spite your mother and your father
You will be a large bullock
Do not be short-tempered like your mother
Be as large as your bull father
The above song mentions

The song, which is popular among both Assamese and Bodo communities, holds a special place in the hearts of people from both groups which is sung by the peoples mouth from the ancient time. It beautifully reflects the socio-cultural and ritualistic traditions of both Bodo and Assamese societies. Members of both communities share a deep connection to the song and use it in similar ways.

2.1.1.2. Love song of Baisagu:

The Baisagu or Bihu season began, bringing great joy and excitement to the young boys and girls. During this time, they express their feelings for their beloved

[2] Dutta Birendranath, Sarma Nabin Chandra, Das Prabin Chandra, "A Handbook of Folklore Material of Northeast India," 1994, p. 61.

through the songs, sharing their emotions with enthusiasm**.** The song is mentioned below.

Bodo song:
Bwisagw bwthwrni okha hanaijwng
Bomfang laifanngabw khrab khrab
Jwngni gwswabw bagurum
bagurum mwsanw
lubwikhangw hai lwgw lubwikhangw**.**

English rendering
The rain of the Baisagu season,
accompanied by the rhythmic sound of Khrab Khrab,
Inspires us to dance the Bagurum Ba Bagurumba with joy and energy

Assamese song:
Ghoroto noboha mon xomoniya, potharoto noboha mon
Komuya tulabor jenikoi urise, tanakoi uribor mon.

English rendering;
I don't want to stay at home, nor do I wish to remain in the open field.
My mind is soaring, like a drifting wool.

The song in question, presented in both Assamese and Bodo languages, beautifully encapsulates the emotions of love and excitement that flourish among young boys and girls with the onset of the spring season. This period, marked by the arrival of Rongali Bihu in Assam, is celebrated with fervour and is deeply intertwined with themes of youth, romance, and the rejuvenation of nature. *Bihu songs, as we have just seen are songs of young love and desire, of expectation and exultation*[3].

2.1.2. Children's Song:

Children's songs hold a significant place in Assamese and Bodo folk music, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and traditions of these communities. These songs, passed down through generations, offer insights into the societal values, beliefs, and everyday life of the people. *Children folk songs are traditional, short, rhythmic and imaginative songs that are created, sung and transmitted orally among children or by adults for children. They are closely associated with children's games, lullabies, and daily rural activities*[4].

Children's songs have been a cherished part of society since ancient times. In these songs, the moon is often depicted as a beloved symbol, representing happiness and joy. It serves as a comforting and enchanting image for children in various cultures. The song mentioned below reflects this timeless connection. The following is an example of such a song.

Bodo children's song:
Okhafwr okhafwr ma nagidwng
Baji khanda nagirdwng.
Biji khandakhao manw
Hisri giji suthanw.
Hisri gijikhou manw?
Mwisw rangyanw ganhwnw.

Assamese children's song:
Oh jun oh jun baji ata diya
Bajinu kale lage
Mona xiyabolai lage
Monanu kalai lage
Dhon bhoraboloi lage

English rendering
Hi Moon, give me a needle half the size
Why do you want a needle?
To make a beg
Why are want beg
To keep money.

Grandparents often play a pivotal role in a child's life, offering love, wisdom, and comfort. One of the cherished ways they soothe and bond with their grandchildren is through singing lullabies. These songs not only calm children but also foster a deep emotional connection..

Bodo Children's song
Ai bibar ai bibar nwng manw bara
Mwswoadi angkhwo jayw ang manw barnw

Assamese Children's song
Oh phul oh phul nufula kio
Garuye ji ag khai moinu phulim kio.

English rendering:
Hi, flower, why didn't you bloom?
The cows are eating me, how can I bloom

Both Assamese and Bodo children's songs serve as vital tools for cultural transmission, teaching the younger generation about their heritage, traditions, and societal values. They encapsulate the collective wisdom and creativity of the communities, ensuring the preservation and continuation of cultural identities.

2.1.3. Songs relating to Marriage:

In both Assamese and Bodo societies, marriage songs play a pivotal role in expressing cultural narratives, social norms, and emotional sentiments associated with marital rituals. These folk songs not only enhance the celebratory atmosphere but also serve as a medium for storytelling and cultural transmission.

[3] Ibid.p.66
[4] Goswami, P.D. Asomiya Loka Sahhitya (Assamese Folk Literature), Bina Library, Guwahati. 2012.

Assamese marriage song:
In Assamese culture, "Biya Naam" are traditional wedding songs integral to various stages of the marriage ceremony. Sung predominantly by women, these songs reflect the community's values, beliefs, and mythological tales, particularly those from the Ramayana. The lyrics often depict episodes from the epic, bringing them closer to everyday experiences and emphasizing virtues like devotion and righteousness.

Assamese version:
Kino tamulkhoni dila mor maina
Oti chinahora khalu
Xoi no tamulkhoni khabore pora
Tumar logot chinaki hola

Translate to English:
Why did you give that betal-nut
My dear?
It felt so very familiar.
It is from eating that betel-nut
That got acquainted with you.

Bodo marriage song:
Similarly, in Bodo society, marriage songs are an essential component of wedding ceremonies, encapsulating the community's traditions, humor, and social commentary. These songs are performed during different ritualistic stages, adding a unique flavor to the festivities.

Bodo version:
Goi bari fathwi bari
Thanai noaolai
Angkhwo bilaihor
Afa angkhwo bilaoihor

English Version:
Whoever has a large
betel-nut garden
get me married to that groom

In traditional Bodo and Assamese societies, young women preferred to merry a groom who possessed a large betel-nut plantation, as it was believed that its ownership ensured a comfortable and sustainable livelihood.

Both Assamese and Bodo marriage songs are more than mere musical expressions; they are repositories of cultural identity, social values, and communal unity. Through these songs, individuals connect with their heritage, participate in shared traditions, and reinforce the social fabric of their communities. Preserving and promoting these folk songs is crucial for maintaining the rich cultural tapestry of the region for future generations.

3. Conclusion:

A comparative analysis of Bodo and Assamese folk songs offers valuable insights into the rich cultural tapestry of Assam and its neighboring regions. These songs, deeply rooted in ancient traditions, have been meticulously passed down through generations, serving as vital carriers of cultural identity and societal values. The folk songs of Assam and the Bodo regions are invaluable cultural assets that offer profound insights into the societies from which they originate. A comparative study of these musical traditions not only enhances our understanding of regional diversity but also underscores the universal role of folk music in preserving cultural heritage and fostering social unity.

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