

A Sociolinguistic appraisal of vocabulary items used in Assamese Folk songs and Proverbs

Hemanga Dutta, Research Scholar
Centre for Linguistics
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi, India
hemangadutta1@gmail.com

Abstract

Is language related to culture? Do rituals performed in a community provide a window to the verbal repertoire of that community? To what extent do proverbs and folk songs available in a particular language illustrate the behavioural patterns and mode of living of a particular society? Do linguistic structures constrain the flow of our thought process or is our mental cognition of perception instrumental in the emergence of new vocabulary items in a language? These issues can be addressed in the wider spectrum of Assamese language and the sociocultural ethos of Assamese life style as reflected in rituals, proverbs, folk songs etc. They are generally the manifestation of sociocultural reality which provides a glimpse into the cultural mode and behavioural patterns of a particular group of people. In Assamese language there are many proverbs which mirror the unique values as well as assumptions that constitute the colourful tapestry of Assamese culture. Assamese folk songs, ranging from Bihu songs, sung during the spring season and marriage songs to Aai naam (devotional songs in praise of the goddess and, Nisukoni geet (cradle songs) are endowed with the potentiality of transcending the barriers of time and space by virtue of universal appeal. The credit for this lies in the songs' lyrics, deeply rooted in Assamese soil and culture. As far as the methodology of this paper is concerned, it is partly based on the empirical observation of some rituals of Assamese community from a linguistic perspective and partly on a critical appraisal of some famous proverbs and folk songs available in this language.

A Theoretical Background

Language that is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas by means of voluntarily produced symbols can be brought to the penetrating light of analysis in relation to culture that is the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, customs and other capabilities that derive from the environmental, psychological and historical components of human experience which an individual acquires as a member of the society. There is an intrinsic relationship existing between the sounds, words, and sentences used in a particular language and the way the speakers of that speech community perceive the external reality around them. It has been a commonly held assumption to treat language as a transparent medium for the transmission of thought as it provides no obstacle to the customary flow of ideas. Saussure (1916) analyses language as organized thought coupled with sound because without language thought are uncharted nebula. There are no pre-existing ideas and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language.

However this notion has been refuted by a host of linguists, especially by Sapir. Language constitutes a sort of logic, a form of reference that is instrumental in moulding the thought of its habitual users. The difference observed in the vocabulary of two languages can be attributed to the difference found in ideas and opinions

commonly expressed in two languages. On bringing the concept of culture into this wider spectrum one is confronted with the anthropological question as to what culture incorporates. For the convenience of our analysis it is quite imperative on our part to treat culture as whatever a person must know in order to function smoothly in the social framework of a society and that the outcome of this social participation in the environmental, psychological and historical domain has nothing to do with any kind of genetic endowment.

This issue of language and culture can be illustrated in the backdrop of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which can be categorised into linguistic determinism or linguistic relativity. Linguistic determinism implies that it is the language which determines our thought process and our cognitive propensities in the sense that we are always at the mercy of a particular language. We “see, hear and otherwise experience in terms of the categories and distinctions encoded in a language and we dissect nature along lines laid down by our native tongue.” The doctrine of linguistic relativity, which is considered as the weaker version of the hypothesis, claims that there is no limit to the structural diversity of human languages. Language does not impose reality but exerts an impact on our psyche in assessing the subjective and objective reality surrounding us. The linguistic structures of a language do not determine a peoples’ world view but is extremely influential in predisposing the speakers toward adopting a particular world view.

A brief sketch of sociolinguistic features of Assamese language

Assamese is the eastern most Indian language the origin of which can be traced back to the Prakrit stage of development of the Indo-Aryan languages. Although it has incorporated elements into its lexicon and grammar mainly from Indo Aryan stock, Austric and Tibeto-Burman elements are also perceived not only in the loan words but also in the phonology, morphology and syntax of this language. The language variety described in this paper is representative of colloquial Assamese spoken in the eastern districts of Assam. Assam is a northeastern state of India and its official language is Assamese, also known as Asomiya. Creoles of Assamese, like Nagamese, are spoken in different parts of northeastern India and in neighbouring countries like Bhutan. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveller who came to Assam in 643 A.D. endorsed his verdict that the languages of Kamrupa (the ancient name of Assam) are different from the languages of mid India, thereby throwing ample light upon the existence of a distinct linguistic variety in this region of India.

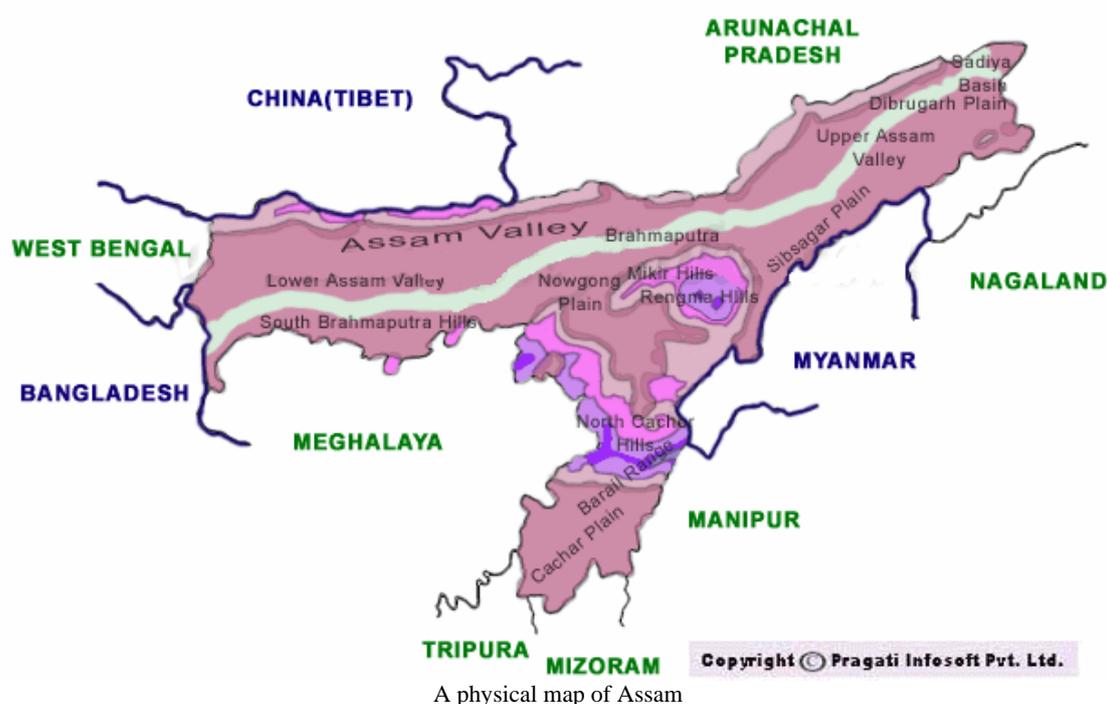
Banikanta Kakoti (1941) has divided the Assamese language into two major groups: Eastern Assamese and Western Assamese. As far as the reports of recent studies are concerned four varieties of Assamese are mostly found in this region:

- a) Assamese variety spoken in the districts of Tinisukia, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Sonitpur.
- b) Assamese variety of central Assam spoken primarily in Nagaon and Morigaon districts.
- c) The Kamrupi variety spoken in the districts of Kamrup, Nalbari, Barpeta, Darang, Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon districts.
- d) The Goalpara group of Assamese spoken primarily in Dhubri and Goalpara districts.

It is clear from the above categorisation that there is a considerable amount of dialectal variation of Assamese within the state, although it is said that the present standard is the variety slowly evolving out of Guwahati, the largest city of Assam. Guwahati is also considered the gateway of the northeast, perhaps owing to the fact that it is a city of settlers from different parts of Assam as well as from India. For the purpose of mass media and communication, a neutral eastern Assamese, without too many regional variations, is still considered to be the norm.

Geographical description of Assam, the land of Assamese

Assamese is the official language of Assam which is located in the northeastern part of India surrounded by Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Nagaland in the east, Mizoram and Tripura in the south and West Bengal in the west. Assam shares international borders with China and Bangladesh. Assam, the green belt which is famous for tea and one horned rhino, is surrounded by a ring of blue hills. It is an amalgamation of plains and river valleys. Its two main river valleys, notably Brahmaputra in the north and Barak plain in the south are divided by the Mikir and Cachar hills. A map of this region is provided below for the convenience of the readers.



Proverbs in Assamese: A Replica of Assamese Culture

Proverbs are generally the outcome of a sociocultural reality which provides a glimpse into the cultural mode and behavioural patterns of a particular group of people. In Assamese language there are plenty of proverbs that poignantly reflect the values and assumptions of Assamese life. This paper aims to explore the relationship between the diction employed in the proverbs and the sociocultural reality they indicate. A few proverbs are cited below for illustration:

jar nai goru xi xobatuikoi xoru

who gen neg cow he all superlative degree small

Paraphrase in English: Those households which do not have a cow endure the lowest dignity in the society.

This proverb bears the significance and important role that a cow plays in the life of Assamese community. Assam is an agricultural state in which the cow is considered as part and parcel of Assamese life, interwoven into the whole Assamese cultural fabric. Even the first day of the traditional Bihu festival is devoted to cows. The cow is an emblem of sacredness for the people inhabiting in this geographical region.

jar nai bah tar nai xah
who gen neg bamboo he gen neg courage

Paraphrase in English: Those who do not have bamboo plants in their household lack courage.

From this proverb it becomes quite evident that bamboo is associated with status on the part of an individual in Assam depending on whether he has bamboo plants in the backyard of his house. The prominent people in a rural community should have bamboo plants on the premises of their household. Bamboo plants in the backyard of the house are indicative of the valour and might of the host.

makotkoi jiyek kaji dhekithurare bote paji
mother comp deg daughter apt dhekithura instr weave thread

Paraphrase in English: The daughter is more apt than her mother in the acts of weaving; even she can manage to weave with the help of a *dhekithura*, which is an arduous task.

This proverb shows how skilled and talented the Assamese women are at the activities of linen weaving. This tradition of weaving is transmitted from one generation to the next although it restricts itself to the female line of descent. It is the responsibility of the mother to make her daughter apt in this divine art. In the countryside of Assam there is hardly any household which does not have *taat shal*, "loom". The place where the loom is kept is considered a sacred place by Assamese women. The term *dhekithura* used in the proverb is the name of an instrument made of wood and bamboo that is seen in the rural Assamese household and it is used by the Assamese women in preparing delicious food items from rice.

bohobo janile matiei pira khabo janile saulei sira
sit to know soil pira eat to know rice sira

Paraphrase in English: If you know how to sit, the ground can function as a seat for you and if you know how to eat, then rice can become *sira*, "a dish prepared from rice".

This proverb implies that it is the nature of human beings to blame others or give excuses in order to hide one's weakness. If a person has faith in his or her inner potential, external constraints have limited impact as such people can adapt to the situation and circumstances which never appear as impediments to their progress. The furniture called *pira* and food item called *sira* are available in the Assamese

household. These terms cannot be translated fully into other languages. Hence, we can assume that sometimes vocabulary help in moulding culture and vice versa.

lau dangor holeu pator tol
pumpkin big be despite leave gen below

Paraphrase in English: A pumpkin may be big in size, but it always remains enveloped in its leaves.

Here the pumpkin represents the Assamese woman who despite having enormous potentialities has to keep herself confined under male subordination. With the advent of modernization, this proverb starts to lose its legitimacy, yet it can provide a portrait of the Assamese society dominated by patriarchal values. Still the proverb bears significance in the rural areas where men are considered as doers and women as nurturers.

puruxor ron tirir biyon
man gen fight woman gen suffering

Paraphrase in English: The credibility of a man lies in aggression but the woman should be the epitome of tolerance.

This proverb shows the differing societal norms and values involved in the socialization of boys and girls in Assam. Through this saying a man is shown as the agent of action and change whereas a woman is shown as the puppet of passivity and subordination.

bahir xuwoni kakini tamul pisphal xuwoni paan borghor xuwoni gabhoru suwali
outside beautiful kakini nuts backyard beautiful leaf home beautiful young girl
tulona paboloï taan
comparison get to difficult

Paraphrase in English: The outside of the household looks beautiful with nuts and the backyard with leaf. In the same way the young daughters make the house a pleasant place to live in. These things can not be compared to others.

The significance of the proverb lies in the fact that it shows the importance of nut and leaf in Assamese society. They are part and parcel of any ritual or function ranging from a religious festival to a marriage ceremony. This proverb also shows that although Assamese society is patriarchal, yet daughters are adored by parents. They are never considered as burden; rather they are treated as assets by the family.

ahu saba godhuli xali saba puwa jakoi baute suwali saba kun kenekuwa
ahu look evening xali look morning jakoi use girl look who how

Paraphrase in English: See the *ahu* crop in the evening and *shali* in the morning. In the same way you can better judge a girl while fishing in the river with a *jakoi*.

This proverb provides a glimpse into the Assamese behavioural patterns. *Ahu* and *shali* are two paddy crops while *jakoi* is a fishing tool used by girls. From this proverb we have an idea of the food habits of the Assamese people. Rice is the main food in Assam as evident from the reference to the paddy crops in the proverb. That the

Assamese people are fond of fish is implied by the reference to the fishing tool mentioned in this proverb. Assam is a land blessed by Nature with lots of streams and rivers and almost every household has a pond where there is plenty of fish. Such a geographical set up is, to a great extent, instrumental in predisposing the inhabitants towards adopting a particular food habit which, in turn, gets manifestation through the medium of language, especially through proverbs and folk songs.

*phota hok sita hok pator tongali kona hok kuja hok bhuyar puwali
torn be echo word be pat garment blind be bend be bhuya gen son*

Paraphrase in English: The *muga* silk has a unique value of its own even though it may lose its dazzling quality or may be torn into pieces; in the same way, a son from the Bhuyan dynasty enjoys all the privileges despite the fact that he may be blind or physically deformed.

This proverb is a reflection of Assamese social prejudices as well as the trend of caste-ism prevalent in ancient Assam. Caste is a sociological concept associated with the Hindu religion and its premise lies on the notion of purity and pollution. It acts as a divisive factor, distorting the solidarity among the people in a social network. Although the practice of caste-ism is considerably less in Assam in comparison to other parts of India, yet we feel the presence of this social evil in some occasions. The proverb exhibits in an explicit way the existing social discrimination in the society in the name of caste. The reference of the term *bhuyar puwali* “the son of bhuya” in this proverb is indicative of the caste-ist bias prevailing in the society. This proverb displays the fact that an ascription of social decorum is given priority over achievement.

Assamese songs and culture: An Evaluation

Assamese folk music, rich in Bihu songs, marriage songs, devotional songs and cradle songs is characterized by virtue of the fact that they can transcend the barriers of time and space.

The Bihu songs are short pieces of Assamese folk poetry celebrating the theme of love. They occupy a significant position in the realm of oral literature. The composition of these songs is simple and straight forward; illiterate men compose them orally and so they are unpretentious; to someone they may appear to be vulgar due to their free expression of sexual themes, but are, in fact, only the outburst of unfettered feelings of a young heart, as light as a puff of floating cotton. For the readers’ convenience the following example can be taken in to consideration.

*hahe hoi sorimgoi tumare pukhurit parimgoi salot ghame hoi xumamgoi
swan be swim fut you gen pond pigeon be sit fut roof perspiration be enter fut
makhi hoi suma dim galot
flies be kiss give cheek*

Paraphrase in English: I shall be a swan and swim in your pond, I shall be a pigeon and sit on your roof; I shall be perspiration and shall enter in your body; I shall be a fly and kiss your cheeks.

From the diction used in the above song it is quite imperative for a reader to have an understanding of the deeper sentiment inherent in this genre of song. Some scholars may try to negate the importance of these songs in the formation of Assamese culture simply stating the fact that these songs are replete with carnal desire of the young

heart. In opposition to this kind of criticism an argument can be put forward that Bihu is a folk song which does not adhere to the ethics of morality imposed by the elites, but displays in an explicit canvas the life style of the common masses and the mode of living of the rustics as well as their behavioural patterns.

The real merit and worth of Bihu songs lies in their relation to life. The whole range of Bihu songs is marked by poetic fervour and sincerity. The fact that Bihu is an integral component of Assamese culture is reflected in the following stanza:

otikoi senehor mugare mohura tatukoi senehor maku tatukoi senehor rongali bihuti
very dear muga bobbin comp deg dear shuttle comp deg dear rangali bihu
nepati kenekoi thaku
neg celebrate how remain

Paraphrase in English: Very dear to me is the *muga* bobbin and very dear is the shuttle; dearer still is the Bihu of Bohag, how can I stay without it?

The *muga* silk bobbin and the shuttle, mentioned in the Bihu song, represent the loom, so dear to Assamese women; but dearer still is the festival of Bihu, which has been celebrated from time immemorial.

The vocabulary used in the above song drives home the point that Assamese culture and the Bihu, the spring festival, can never be dissociated from each other. Bihu is a nonreligious festival which is observed by people living in Assam irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

However, most commonly, young people express the sentiments of love through meaningful songs as evident in the following stanza:

porbote porbote bogabo paru moi lotanu bogabolo taan boliya hatiku bolabo paru
mountain mountain climb know Isg creeper climb to difficult wild elephant tame know
moi tumak bolabolo taan
Isg you woo to difficult

Paraphrase in English: I can climb over hills and mountains, hard to climb a creeper; I can tame the wild elephant, hard to woo my lady love.

This song shows the romantic and passionate yearning of the lover for his beloved.

Marriage songs, or *biya naam*, occupy a distinct position in the realm of Assamese culture. The lyrics used in these songs provide an insight to the cultural repertoire. These songs are the domain of women. All the intricate customs of a wedding are known only to women. From the very beginning till all the ceremonies are over, young and old women get busy at every stage, finding a lyrical outlet in their orally composed songs. Simple in language and easy imagery, they are replete with similes, alliteration, wit etc as evident in the following example:

kelei kutila kumolkoi posola luke bati bhorai khabo kelei tulila rupohi aidewk aane
why cut sftly posola others bowl full eat fut why bring up beautiful daughter others
bone korai khabo
work passive eat fut

Paraphrase in English: Why do you cut the tender banana trunk into pieces? Only others will eat bowls full of it. Why do you bring up the beautiful daughter? Others will enjoy the fruit of her labour.

This song mourns over the fate of a daughter because in accordance with the social rules she is bound to leave her parental home at her marriage and has to embrace her in-laws as her own. In Assamese, daughters are compared to honey bees which do not stay in a particular place for a long duration. In the same way a daughter spends only her girlhood at her parental home and after marriage she has to bid farewell to this place of birth.

There is no end to the praise of ornaments which the bride is supposed to wear. Every Assamese girl has a special liking for jewellery and they find a special mention in marriage songs:

*dhup dhuna loguwa juron ahi roi ase adorugoi uluwa marar alongkar thuwa kati kori
incandescent light enlightens juron wait prog welcome lets mother's ornaments setaside
deutarar alongkar thuwa rame di pothaise bisitro alongkar xir pati luwahi
father's ornaments set aside Ram send prog diverse ornaments head nod take*

Paraphrase in English: Light the incandescent lamps; *Juron* is waiting. Let us go to welcome the *Juron*. Keep aside the ornaments of your parents; Lord Rama is sending beautiful ornaments for you; bow your head and accept these gifts.

The lexical item such as *Juron* is replete with great significance. It is the name of an occasion just one day prior to the wedding, in which the mother-in-law, along with several women, visit the family of the bride and offers cloths and jewellery to her daughter-in-law and more importantly apply oil and vermilion on her forehead. From that day onwards a girl is expected to take *bindi* and vermilion on her forehead to symbolize her marital status. This ritual is unique to Assamese culture and is not evident in other parts of India.

Some of the marriage songs revolve around the bath given to the bride or the bride groom. The following marriage song is a description of an interesting talk between the mother and the daughter.

*ga dhui aaidewe makok xudhile o aai ki xaj xolabo paye he sate xukuwa muthite
body wash daughter mother to ask o mom which dress change should shade dry gip
lukuwa o aai xei xaj xolabo paye he
hide o dear that dress change should*

Paraphrase in English: Bath is over, what shall I put on, mother? A piece of dress drying in the shade, hide it with the palm of your hand, daughter.

Through this song one may have an idea of the various rituals associated with marriage ceremony. Secondly, it also points out the quality of the silk which is worn by the brides on this auspicious occasion.

There is another kind of marriage song which is chiefly characterized by humour. They are known as *jooranam* in upper Assam and *khichageet* in lower Assam. Girls in the bride's party aim at the groom describing him as a bushy haired man. Similarly girls from the groom's party also pay them back in their own coin. Often they compose these songs on the spot to suit their purpose. Sometimes the poor priest falls a prey to their pranks.

bidhi porohe bupodewe maje maje ere ghorot ase khaloipeti taloi monot pore
rules rituals priest sometimes avoid at home is potbellied her remembers

Paraphrase in English: The priest reads the scriptures but forgets to read between the lines; he must be remembering his potbellied wife back home.

o poka komola mukhor rumal nugusai darhi pokily hobola
hi rotten orange face gen handkerchief neg remove beard grey may be

Paraphrase in English: Hi, rotten orange, why don't you remove the handkerchief from your face? Maybe your beard has grown grey.

Apart from marriage songs there is another kind of song prevalent in Assamese culture, that is, *Aai naam*, which is sung in supplication to *aai* or mother, the goddess of pox along with her seven sisters. The disease of pox has been considered by the common villagers as a goddess who appears and departs from the human body at her own will. Whenever a person suffers from pox, utmost caution is observed in maintaining cleanliness and hygienic condition surrounding the patient and women take care of everything. A congregational prayer is arranged in which the women of the neighbourhood sing *ainam* to cure the patient suffering from pox. Deep humility and a sense of submission are keynotes of the prayer songs as evident in the following paragraph of the song devoted to *aai*:

e dukhiyar ghoroloi ahe xatu bhoni
poor gen home to come seven sisters
diboloi naikiya eku e
give to nothing
muror kexe singi pau mosi dime
head gen hair pluck feet wash fut
dehor pari dime xaku e
body spread fut bridge
nejani xumalu aaire phulebarite
neg know enter mother's garden
nisini singilu koli
neg recognize pluck bud
eibar duxoke khyoma bhagawoti
this time blunder forgive bhagawoti
matu soronote dhori
call feet touch

Paraphrase in English: "Seven sisters visit the impoverished home
And we have nothing to offer;
We shall rub your feet with hair of our head,
Make our body a bridge for her,
Unknowingly we trespassed into Ai's garden
And plucked there a bud.
Forgive us this time for our faults,
We pray at your feet."

The *Aai naam* itself is a representation of Assamese beliefs and nuances. With the outcome of modernity people have developed an apathetic attitude towards these rituals as a consequence of which these age old melodious songs and cultural values pertaining to them are on the verge of extinction.

In Assamese culture we have *Dhai naam* which can be compared with English lullabies. *Dhai* in Assamese means a woman who takes care of the child since birth along with the child's parents. These songs are the spontaneous creations of the care givers of the child, meant for the act of soothing a weeping baby to silence. The lyrics of these songs are instrumental in transporting the small children to a new world where reason is subservient to magic, where every wonder is possible as the world is perceived through the children's eyes: their pleasures, fears, their unreasonable beliefs and non-beliefs. These kinds of sentiments are echoed in the following song:

xiali e nahibi rati
vixen neg come night
tur kan kati logam bati
you gen ears cut attach bowl
xialir murore moruwa phul
vixen's head gen moruwa flower
xiali palegoi rotonpur
vixen reach rotonpur

Paraphrase in English:

O vixen, do not come at night, or we shall cut your ears.
 The vixen wearing a *morua* flower on her head has reached Ratanpur.

One can easily claim that there is no connection of these songs with reality. However the image of a vixen can create panic among the children and if her ears are cut off, the child will be happy. These songs have ample space for creativity as evident in the following song:

junbai e tora eti diya
o moon star one give
pat nai sut nai kihotkoi dim
leaf neg rhyming neg give
halodhiya soraye baudhan khai
yellow birds bau paddy eat prog
xaudor puteke nau meli jai
merchant gen son boat row prog
nawe bule tulung bhutung bothai bule bau
boat says tulung bhutung oars says bau
godhulite godhulite doba kubau
evening evening drum beat

In this song a child asks moon for a little star. Moon says that he has no leaf to wrap a star. The yellow birds are pecking at the paddy field and the son of the merchant is rowing his boat away; his boat is shaking and in the evening temple drums are being beaten.

The description of these songs provides solace and comfort to the weeping child. This is how Assamese village women discovered psychotherapy of their own from the experiences of ages to console their weeping children. However these special songs have not received their due recognition and are relegated to the background owing to the predominance of western culture, which, I think, is a severe loss for Assamese language and culture.

In Assam, when a girl attains puberty at the age of twelve to fourteen, a ritual is organized, which, in Assamese culture, is known as *tuloni biya* or small marriage. This festival revolves around the young girl and the women performing the ritual where boys are strictly prohibited to participate. It is a cause of celebration for the

family of the girl and the neighbourhood as the girl has attained the potential to bear a child. The songs sung on this occasion are manifestations of the celebration of womanhood although they indirectly impose restrictions on the freedom of the girl as perceived in the following song:

*abeli belika konai nuliyaba silai thape mari nibo
evening time konai neg bring sila snatch take fut
silai thap maribo modarot tulibo burhimak bauli hobo
sila snatch modar loc keep grandmother overwhelmed be futs*

Paraphrase in English:

Do not bring the *konai* outside in the evening
The bird may snatch it away and will fly away to the *modar* tree
The grand mother will be overwhelmed with grief.

Here the word *konai* is replete with great cultural significance. It is a part of the ritual of the women on this occasion to make a doll called *konai* of nuts and cloths and place it on the lap of the young bride so that she can bear a baby in the future when she will be getting married. Most of these rituals are no longer performed in the Assamese household and as a result most of the vocabulary items associated with this function are lost.

There is a genre of song called *Deh bisaror geet* the real motif of which lies in spiritual salvation from the bondage of worldly affairs. The main purpose of these songs is spiritual absorption that speaks in general terms of the futility of human life and the presence of higher impulses that guides human destiny. Such kinds of sentiments are reflected poignantly in the lyrics of the following song:

*jibon dudiniya ahe oi jaboloi nethake onadi kaal
life twodays come go neg stay endless duration
apun apun buli misa mohe bandhe tori loi mayare jal
own own call false illusion tie up spread illusory web
xongxarot tori loi mayare jaal
life loc spread illusory web*

Paraphrase in English:

Life is transitory and blossoms only for two days; it does not stay for a long duration. In this earthly abode we are entangled in a web of false illusions in terms of our aspirations and affections for kith and kin.

The lyrics of the song explain in explicit terms the futility of the worldly life and thereby glorifying the life which is beyond our epistemological means. This song is a revolt against the dominant materialistic trend and unlimited mortal cravings and desires. The philosophy embodied in this song reminds us of a Shakespearean quotation which states that life is “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing”. A sense of other worldliness coupled with a vibrant religiosity characterizes the theme of this genre of song.

Hence, in the final evaluation, it can be claimed that it is the language through which culture is manifested. Simultaneously, cultural knowledge, comprised of social, historical and psychological components of human experience, is instrumental in shaping the linguistic structure of a language and creating new vocabulary in a language. The detailed description of Assamese folk songs and culture adequately

summarises this point. To claim a causal relation between the lexical items employed in the proverbs, folk songs and the colourful fabric of Assamese life is not to say which influences the other: either may be the causal agent. Both may be the joint effects of a common cause, or there may be mutual causal action. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that language and culture, two integral components of human life, cannot be dissociated from each other. Although it is debatable whether the language of a community shapes the community's culture or it the mode of community living determines the flow of thought processes through the medium of language, nobody can deny the intrinsic relationship existing between the two.

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