

Moral and Philosophy reflected in Boro Folktales

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Abstract: The folktales are prose narrative or oral narrative which is works of fiction. The folktales are stories coming down orally from generation to generation from time unmemorable. There are different kinds of folktales with thousands of regional and cultural variations but they all share a few common characteristics. At the most basic level, the folktale is a story coming down orally from generation to generation. The word 'folk' comes from the German word 'volk', meaning people and 'skunde' meaning 'knowledge' or 'lore'. So, folktales are stories about everyday life and the day-to-day issues of humanity society. Of course, the folktales sometimes tell the stories of supernatural elements, trickster elements and human elements. Other kinds of folktales involve animals, but the animal character behaves like human, with realities, emotions, flows and animals. This is the part of what makes folktales so enduring and appealing and the listener can relate to the characters in the stories. Moreover the stories make the listener to imagine what they had to do in the same situation. Folktales are shared among generation as a way of presenting everyday life lessons and useful information in an essay-to-understand format. The folktales help connect listeners to common cultural values of particular tribes, ethnic group or culture in the society. Folktales are meant to be told out the children by the grand parent. They are parts of an oral tradition emerging from a preliterate age before the invention of writing starts. Folktales contain moral lessons and values that come at the end of the story.

Objectives of the paper-

- i) To highlight about the Boro folktales extent in the Boro society.
- ii) To study the types and characteristics of Boro folktales.
- iii) To explore socio-cultural aspects of the Boros as reflected through these tales.
- iv) To highlight the moral lessons to children
- v) To highlight the technique of story telling
- vi) To educate for the development of social consciousness
- vii) To establish our relationship with society
- viii) To develop basic social skills
- ix) To experiments in social responsibility

Methodology-

The descriptive and analytical methods are observed for preparation and study of this paper. As a source, the primary and secondary source is used to study the paper.

Keywords: Folk, Tales, tradition, moral, socio-culture, lesson, value.

Introduction:

The folktales predominate as a moral education to each and every people before starting the formal education in the society. The folktales teach a man and children what the value of moral and culture and also teach how to preserve these things to be a sound society. There is no one who doesn't like folktale. But some missionaries and also Bodo scholars were keen interested in collecting and publishing these oral literature and traditions. The Christian missionaries published two books; one is "A Collection of Kachari Folktales and Rhymes" by J.D. Anderson in 1895 and another "The Kacharis" by Rev. S. Endle in 1911. The stories of two books were collected from Kachari Mouzas of Mongaldoi and undivided Darrang district.

Another most important publication on Bodo folktales was “Boro-Kachary Solo” by Mahini Mohan Brahma written in Boro language and published in 1976. The tales published in this book are common tales extent among the Boro community. Among these tales published in “A Collection of Kachari Folktales and Rhymes” and “The Kacharis,” some are resemblance with the tales of the book “*Boro-Kachary Solo*.”

Discussion:

The paper will confine only the tales commonly available in the book “*Boro-Kachary Solo*” by Mahini Mohan Brahma which is edited by Dr. Prafulla Dutta Goswami and published by the Dept. of Folklore Research, Gauhati University in Nov. 1972. There are thirty five tales in this book which are extent in the Boro society.

The thirty five tales are given below for convenience of discussion of the paper. This are-

- 1) alari dambra, 2) gwmbira bir (jwhwlao), 3) dimasrwn, 4) alsiasrwn jwhwlao, 5) maoriasrwn jwhwlao (1), 6) maoriasrwn jwhwlao (2), 7) belmuthi sikhla, 8) bida-phongbai sabrwini solo, 9) malbudangni solo, 10) buthua arw lathua, 11) daobo raja, 11) ragbali raikhos, 13) maidangsri (1), 14) maidangsri (2), 15) dao khokling, 16) baswr bwniya, 17) ambusrwn jwhwlao, 18) danek raja, 19) lapha saikho dao, 20) daosri khophathini solo, 21) hadidogla daoni solo, 22) ha phisa houwa dao, 23) khwthia budang chandramali, 24) habani bantha, 25) lwkhisri sikhla, 26) swimani solo, 27) mwsou janai, 28) sase bairagi, 29) bihamjw nagirnai, 30) maoji arw siyal, 31) bwrai khiphin (khale), 32) ophamaya solo, 33) siyalni burdi, 34) bwrai tharun gaynayni solo, 35) ganda arw ganda thipling

The tales are narrative invented by unknown people in timeless and placeless. It is coming down by word of mouth. The works of tales are pure fiction even though they profess to describe actual occurrences in the real life of the society. Tales have no other aim than entertainment; they make no claim on the credulity of the audience. Thus, Bascom observes ‘they are fiction pure and simple, devised not to instruct and edify the listener, but only to amuse him. They belong to the region of pure romance.’¹ Of course; it is to be mention that tales contain a well proportioned structure and finished form itself. So, folktales have some common characteristics. These are-

- (i) All folktales are originally begun as stories told by word of mouth from generation after generation.
- (ii) All folktales have a moral lesson and value which have pivotal role to play in the society.
- (iii) Many old folktales explain how something came to be happened (these are called creation myths).
- (iv) Character in folktales is usually animals or people which are taking role model.
- (v) Usually a character in a folktale must face an impossible test which we supposed to be impractical in the society.
- (vi) Folktale is no place and time where from it is originated.
- (vii) The characteristics of folktales are fictional in nature.

The oral literature of the Boros is very rich in folktales. The tales published in the book “*Boro-Kachary Solo*” may be classified into the following sub-genres:

- 1) Animal tales (Zunathni Colo)
- 2) Supernatural or Wonderous tales (Gwmwthao Colo)
- 3) Jokes or Humorous tales (Jongkhainai eba Minithao Colo)
- 4) Trickster tales (Cian-Zamba Colo)

1) Animal Tales:

As Linda Degh Says, ‘the animal tales is a short narrative that contains adventures of the animal that is its principal character. While almost all of the actors are animals, they act as human beings and their world is analogous to the human world.’² The animal tales may be referred to: *swimani solo*, *mwsou zanay*, *maoji arw siyal*, *siyalni burdi*.

The tales referred above are animal tales. The chief character of these tales is animals leading as a pivotal role. The leading characters are swima (dog), mwsou (bull), maoji (cat) and siyal (fox). The moral and philosophy reflected in these tales are: one should not deceive upon others and feel inferior to others than him. The two stories “*swimani solo*” and “*mwsou zanay*” show how one has to render his services in repayment of debt as a swima (dog) and mwsou (bull) even after dead. They did not repay their loan money to lenders. On the other hand, the stories *maoji arw siyal* and *siyalni burdi* show that siyal always think him more superior to cat. Siyal wanted to eat and kill the cat by any means. But cat understood the intention of siyal. So, maoji says, “Hello, my dear friend. Where are you going? Siyal did not dare to do anything hearing his address to him. Nevertheless the siyal thinks him smarter and cleverer than maoji. But unfortunately the siyal has to die in the hands of man in the long run. The stories teach us some lessons that we should not underestimate others and their skill and talent.

The moral and philosophy of the tales show not think over smart and cleverer than others and also not to deceive others which may cause dire consequences in the life. Again depicts that one should not remained unrecovered their due money taken in the earlier life.

2) Moral and Philosophy of Supernatural Tales:

Super natural tales are fictional tales with complex plot and contain within their narrative of the marvelous skills, achievements, magical devices of the heroes and heroines and their supernatural adversaries. These tales narrate, “An ordinary human being’s encounter with superhuman world and his being endowed with qualities that enable him to perform supernatural acts.”³ The tales are: *alari dambra*, *gwmbira bir* (*jwhwlao*), *dimasrwn*, *alsiasrwn jwhwlao*, *maoriasrwn* (1), *maoriasrwn* (2), *belmuthi sikhla*, *maidangsri* (1), *maidangsri* (2), *dao khokling*, *ambusrwn jwhwlao*, *lwkhisri sikhla*. Most of the tales of “*Boro-Kachary Solo*” are supernatural characters. In these tales marvelous activities are shown and some magic achievement is also seen in these tales. *Alari dambra*, *gwmbira bir*, *dimasrwn*, *alairsrwn*, *maorisrwn*, *maidangsri*, *ambusrwn* are simple in nature and straightforward characters. They look like as tricksters to some extent but what they do are magical and marvelous. They are also ordinary human being live ordinarily and due to simple and laziness, they have to bear many difficulties and tortures by their elders and relatives. They do not stand against them in spite of difficulties and tortures made upon them. The overcome all these things successfully and achievement come in their life in the long run. Thus, their legendary heroes and heroines reflect and encourage others to love their nations and to be tolerant and enthusiastic. It is also teach us good moral which may impact to human being and society.

The moral and philosophy of these tales show simple, straightforward and patient may lead their successful. On the other hand, it also encourages the children to be brave, visionary and foresighted whatever may happen in their life next to come. It also teaches us to be punctual, nexus to social and nation’s development and their responsibility to society.

3) Moral and Philosophy of Jokes or Humorous Tales:

D.S. Thompson defines jokes or humorous tales as short anecdote told for humorous purposes.⁴ Again he observes, “A large proportion of the most popular anecdotes and jests are concerned with cleverness.”⁴ Of course, the animals are characterized by human qualities. The jokes or jests spring from absurd acts of foolish persons, deception and obscene situation. The examples of jokes or humorous tales are not scaly in Boro verbal art. These are – *bida-phongbai sabrwini solo*, *buthua and lathua*, *bihamjw nagirnai*, *bwrai khirphin (khale)*, *ganda arw ganda thipling*, *sase bwiragi*, *habani bantha*, *malbudangni solo*, *daosri khophathini solo* etc. The central characters of the tales are human but in absurd acts of foolish persons, deception and obscene situation predominate. In ‘*bida-phongbai sabrwini solo*’ and ‘*bihamjw nagirnai*’ show relating to the matter of daughter-in-law searched by father-in-law as his desires. But it creates ridicule and humorous when one old man searched his daughter-in-law in a place of river from which water is drawn for bathing. On the other hand, one old man searches his daughter-in-law by going home to home. These acts make humorous because daughter-in law is searched in home to home not in the place of river bank. In another tale ‘*bida phongbai sabrwini solo*’ shows one old man asked his four sons to bring him unseen things if they want to get marry to their beloved girl who are very much poor and needy. Again the tale ‘*bwrai khirphin (khale)*’ a miser man who always records the money lending by the poor a little more than what they have been taken. ‘*Sase bwiragi*’ a hermit once appeared in front of one man and beg something from him. The hermit told him that he want to be man or dog or any else. He gives him a ‘gila begor’ (a flat round seed) through which he can see the future life of man. ‘*Habani bantha*’ depicts ‘karma phal’ means result or reward of one’s work. We get our reward as we work in life. If we do well we are rewarded and if we do bad or harmful work then we get punishment.

The moral and philosophy of all these tales teach us some lessons not to hate others and to avoid negativism mind of human being as per possible. It also gives some ideas to develop our skill and presence of mind. The tales teach us to make correction of our misconception and wrong ideas through humorous. The tale of simpleton or fools in Boro tales are the numskull heroes indulging in foolish acts and thus give rise to joke and humor.

4) Moral and Philosophy of Trickster Tales:

There is a few trickster tales in this book. Trickster tales are those which cluster round a rogue expert in cheating others. The attraction of such tales lies in the cleverness of the trickster. The role of the trickster is very often played by an animal. D.S. Thomson says, “The adventures of the trickster, even when considered by them are inconsistent. Parts are result of his stupidity and about an equal number show him overcoming his enemies through cleverness. Such a trickster as Coyote, therefore, may appear in any of three rules, the beneficent culture hero, the clever deceiver or the numskull.”⁵ These tales are replete with clever tricks and foolish mishaps of the trickster.

There are a few trickster tales current in Boro verbal art. The example may be referred as- *siyalni burdi*, *maoji arw siyal*, *bwrai tharun gainaini solo*. The tales show some trickery tactics upon others. The tale ‘*siyalni burdi*’ depicts its superior and cleverness than others. Siyal always plays game to win upon others. It shows how siyal tricked on the birds when they are fleeing to escape from sky’s fall on earth. He told the birds that he will show the way to go to thakur (preserver). But the way to go to thakur is nothing but his cave that eats one after another. In the tale ‘*maoji arw siyal*’ shows the siyal’s trick so as he can eat maoji by any difficulty. Knowing siyal’s intention maoji addressed him, ‘Hello friend, where are you going.’ When siyal heard this address made by maoji, siyal becomes speechless and asked him when from we were friend. Moaji replied without any hesitation in front of siyal that we are friend from our ancestor. Siyal did not dare to eat and kill him by dint of his skill and tricks. ‘*Bwrai tharun gainaini solo*’ is a tale that once upon a time

there was an old man who was planting tharun (arum plant) in the field. Seeing planting of arum, siyal tricks the old man so as he can eat the arum planted by the old man. Siyal comes beside the old man and call him, 'Hello grandfather, what are you planting? The old man replies that he is planting arum. Siyal then told that arum shoots immediately if it is planted by boiling. The old man did accordingly as siyal told him. Next day siyal eats the entire arum planted by the old man. After one week the old man sees the arum by digging out. The old man surprised that there is no arum but stools of siyal. Thus the old man took revenge on the siyal for cheating him.

The moral and philosophy of these tales teach us not to deceive or cheat the other. If one cheats others he is also cheated by others in contrary.

Findings:

Mahini Mohan Brahma wrote the book '*Boro-Kachay Solo*' by collecting the tales scattered in the Bodo society. He took many painstaking in collecting these tales and compiled and published by the Deptt. of Folklore Research, Gauhati University which was edited by Dr. Prafulla Datta Goswami. In this book four types of folktales are found which mention is made in earlier paragraph. The tales contain moral values and social context which disseminate moral ideas.

The book, '*Boro-Kachary Solo*' is a great contribution in finding the track of literature of the Bodos. The book is valuable and milestone to the history of Bodo folk literature. The tales collected and published in this book are worth mentioning and praiseworthy and also filled up the history of Bodo folklore.

The language used of this book is spoken by folk people and uneducated artisans. The story telling has a pivotal role to play in human society serving as an ideal medium through which children can be taught moral and valuable lessons about life and also captivate young children's attention. It is for these reasons that stories have been told for generation and continued to be used throughout the world today to teach moral values.

- i) Folktales can also be used in a variety of ways to help children
- ii) to develop a stronger social and reading skills,
- iii) to study Bodo culture and society,
- iv) to appreciate their traditions and social responsibility,
- v) to learn about decision making skill,
- vi) to explore new ways of seeing the world and social consciousness,
- vii) to discover a love of stories etc.

Conclusion:

Folktales are type of narrative, which are very popular within an eclectic number of cultures. Folk tales tells us about the realities of the society that they were made popular within and helps in the reconstruction of the society. There is a possibility to trace a socio-cultural history of the Bodos through the folktales. The folktales collected and published by author in the above mentioned book is the great contribution towards exploring Bodo language and culture in the world. Through the book, we come to know about Bodo language, tradition and culture. We should not have been known if he did not collect and publish these tales as a book. So, necessary initiative should be taken in near future to unearth unexplored resources of the book.

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