



USES OF CHILD LANGUAGES IN BODO LULLABY AND NURSERY RHYMES

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Abstract: The Bodos are the largest and the earliest inhabitant of Assam. They are concentrated in the northern and southern areas of the Brahmaputra River valley. Earlier the Bodos have not fact history of written literature. But they have very rich in folk literature. Their folk literature is handed down from generation to generation. Lullaby and nursery rhymes take an important role in Bodo folk literature. It helps the language acquisition of a child or the development of language skills of a child. Some child languages have been used in Bodo lullaby and nursery rhymes.

Keywords: Bodo, folk song, lullaby and nursery rhymes, child language

1.1 Introduction: Lullaby and nursery rhymes are taking an important place in Bodo folk literature. Lullaby and nursery rhymes are mainly sung to amuse the baby or child and to coax a crying baby. In Bodo language it is known as “Gotho burkhaynay methai.” Generally, lullabies are created and sung by ‘Bokhali’ i.e., teenage girls who look after a child in Bodo society. When the parents go to outside from their home, they leave their children along with Bokhali. Bokhali care about the child. When the baby cries then Bokhali tries to amuse the child sung by different types of lullaby and nursery rhymes. Bokhali is the main singer of lullaby and nursery rhymes. Hence, it is sometimes called ‘Bokhali methai’ (song of a young girl caretaker of a child) in Bodo.

Apart from Bokhali, lullaby and nursery rhymes are sung by elder sister of a child, parents, and grandparents too. There is no deep meaning in lullaby and nursery rhymes. It is just created to amuse the crying baby. This kind of song is created on birds, animals, flowers, butterflies, glow- worms, moon, stars etc. That is why the themes of songs are very simple and easy to understand. Some child languages are used in Bodo lullaby and nursery rhymes. Child language is *“the language spoken by a child that doesn’t control over it yet.”*¹ In this paper it is trying to study the use of child language in Bodo lullaby and nursery rhymes. Lullabies help

¹ <https://www.yourdictionary.com>

the first language acquisition of a child. Children cannot pronounce words which are used by adults generally. So, some words are used briefly and simplified by the children.

1.2 Objectives of the study: Objectives of the propose study are stated as follows:

- i. To find out the lullaby and nursery rhymes of the Bodos.
- ii. To discuss the role of Bokhali i.e., a young girl caretaker of a child in Bodo society.
- iii. To preserve the lullaby and nursery rhymes of the Bodos.
- iv. To analyse the child languages used in Bodo lullaby and nursery rhymes.
- v. To examine how the lullaby and nursery rhymes help in the development of the language skills of a child.

1.3 Data Collection: In this study both primary and secondary sources are used. Primary data has been collected through observation method, interview, or field study. Secondary data has been taken from some available books, journals, review articles, internet, websites, Wikipedia and so on.

1.4: Methodology: Descriptive and analytical methods are followed for present study.

1.5 Discussion: Language is not inborn. A child acquires language from his/her family or social environment. Caretaker of a child i.e., Bokhali (in Bodo language), elder sister, parents, grandparents are taking an important role in teaching the language of a child in Bodo society. They are the main singers of the lullaby and nursery rhymes. Singing to children may help development of language skills of a child. Hence, the lullaby and nursery rhymes are very important for children. Importance of lullaby for language development of children psychologist Sally Goddard Blythe says in her book 'The Genius of Natural Childhood': "***Song is a special type of speech. Lullabies, songs and rhymes of every culture carry the 'signature' melodies and inflection of a mother tongue, preparing a child's ear, voice and brain for language.***"²

Use of child languages used in Bodo lullaby and nursery rhymes is an important feature of Bodo folk literature. Following are the examples of lullaby and nursery rhymes where child languages are used:

Ao agwi ao dagab agwi

Dagab agwi rindao rinsi

Aiya na lainw thangdwng

*Abaya **thai** lainw thangdwng*

Danw phwigwn.

Dagab agwi rindao rinsi

Hangma surhab surhab

Aiya souphwisandi

Abaya thai labwsandi

*Ondorao nenanwi thagwn anglai.*³

² Ibid

³ Bishwanath Basumatary, Gotho Burkhainai Methaini Saugari, First edition, p- 2

English rendering:

Do not cry baby

Do not cry in anguish

Mother went fishing

Father went to bring fruit

They will come soon.

Do not cry baby in anguish

I will wait till the mother arrives inside

I will wait till the father brings fruit.

In the above lullaby, four lines of song ‘*Abaya **thai** lainw thangdwng*’ (father went to bring fruit) here the word ‘*thai*’ is a child language. Generally, it is called ‘*phithai*’(fruit) in adult language.

Another example can be seen in the use of child language. Such as:

*Phwi **du du** (Okhaphwr) phwi phwi*

Phwi sangrema phwi phwi

Jwnghani babujwng gelenw phwi phwi.

*Jwnghani aiya **mam** songdwng*

Babua mwdwi rotho gabdwng

Babujwng gelenw phwi phwi.

***Mam khwi** mwnbwla*

Jaroujwng nwnjwng jagwn phwi phwi.⁴

English rendering:

Come moon come moon

Come glow-worm come glow- worm

To play with our baby

Our mother is cooking food

Baby is weeping

Come come

To play with our baby

When the food is ready you will have together.

⁴ Ibid, p- 10

In the above lullaby 'du du', mam, 'khwi' are child languages. 'Du du' means moon, 'mam' means rice and 'khwi' means curry. Generally, 'du du' is called Okhaphwr (moon), 'mam' is called wngkham (rice) and 'khwi' is called wngkhri (curry) in adult language.

The use of child language can be found following lullaby also. Such as:

Wngkham song song

Wngkhri song song

Ali dan dan

Wrwibw lama gwiya

Horwibw lama gwiya

Thu jwnggha khangkhrai khonohwini

*Jogno jogno.*⁵

English rendering:

Prepare (cook) boiled rice,

Do prepare curry

Eat as much as you can

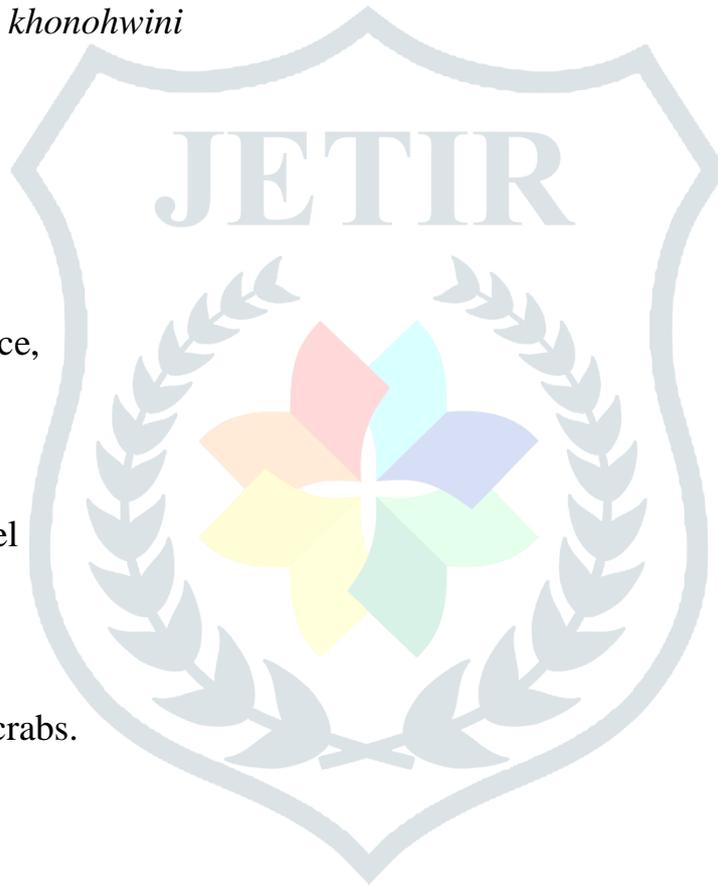
Trace out a road to travel

There is no way hither

There is no thither

Let us go to search out crabs.

Ah! Let us go ahead.



In the above lullaby the words 'song song,' 'dan dan' are child languages. 'Song song' means songnai (cooking), 'dan dan' means dannai (cutting) in adult language generally.

Another example can be seen in the use of child language. Such as:

Phwi sangrema phwi phwi`

Jarouni khathiao phwi phwi

Jaroua du du janw gabdwng

Jarouni khathiao phwi phwi

⁵ Boro-Kacharir Geet-Mat, Bhaben Narzi, third edition, 2003 p- 62

Jaroujwng gelenw phwi phwi.

Aiya lai mam songdwng

Abaya thai lainw thangdwng

Danw phwigwn.

Jarouni bwrabnaikhou

Khusi jahwdw,

Mini rongjahwdw

Hathorkhi sangrema nwn⁶.

English rendering:

Come come glow-worm

Come beside our baby

Baby is crying because he is hungry

Come beside our baby

And to play with her

Mother is preparing and cooking food.

Father went to bring fruit

They will come fast

Star and glow-worm

You will make happy

To our baby.



In the above example, in the third line of the song the word ‘*du du*’ is a child language. Here ‘*du du*’ is signify ‘*ahar*’ (breast). Sometimes ‘*du du*’ is used to signify ‘*Okhaphwr*’ (moon) in the lullaby. Basically, it depends on lyrics or theme of the song.

The use of child language in Bodo lullaby can be found following example also:

Su agwi su su dagab jarou

Abaya gagai lainw thangdwng

Aiya mai gainw thangdwng danw phwigwn.

Sanwijwng jem saogwn agwi

⁶ Bishwanath Basumatry, Gotho Burkhainai Methaini Saogari, p- 11

Jem jagwn

Gangjema angkhaori minikhusi

Jem jagwn

Dagabswi agwi dorsi dorsi.

Angnw bagwn angnw bamgwn

Araibw nwnghou anglai.⁷

English rendering:

Do not weep baby

Go sleep

Father went to dig crab

Mother went to plant paddy

They will come soon.

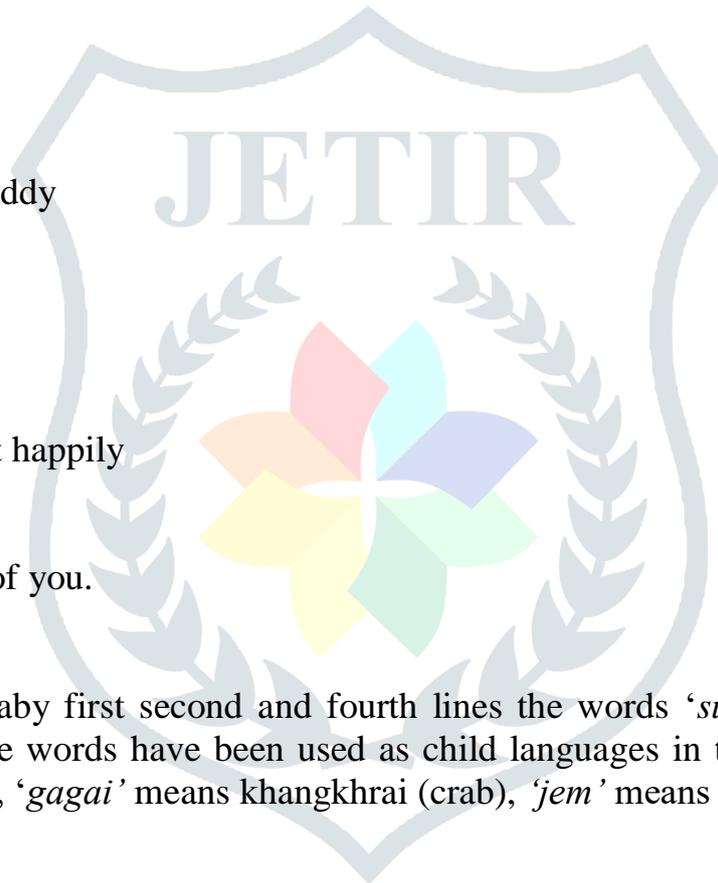
We will burn it on fire

And eat together

We will eat water insect happily

Do not weep and upset

I will always take care of you.



In the above lullaby first second and fourth lines the words ‘su su’, ‘gagai’, ‘jem’ are used respectively. These words have been used as child languages in the lullaby. Here ‘su su’ means ‘undu’ (to sleep), ‘gagai’ means khangkhrai (crab), ‘jem’ means ‘sao’ (to burn).

In another song the used of child language can be seen. Such as:

Du babu du

Du raja du

*Aiya thangdwng **na na** lainw*

*Aphaya thangdwng **do do** lainw*

Hwswnanwi langfwigwn nwngh gabwbla

*Ising khonayao **meu** dong*

⁷ Ibid, p- 3

Bari khonayao siyal dong

Hwswnanwi langphwigwn nwnng gabwbla

Hwswnanwi langphwigwn nwnng gabwbla

Du babu du

Du raja du⁸

English rendering:

Go sleep baby

Go sleep

Mother went fishing

Father went to bring meat

Cat is inside the corner of the kitchen

Fox is inside the corner of the orchard

If you cry, they will come to carry you

If you cry, they will come to carry you

Go sleep baby

Go sleep

In the above example, first, second and the last two lines the word 'du' is used as a child language. Generally, 'Du' means 'undu' (to sleep). And the third and fourth lines of the song the words 'na na' and 'do do' are used as child languages respectively. Generally, 'na na' is used as 'na' (fish) and the 'do do' is used as 'bedor' (meat) in adult language. And the cat is used as 'meu' in child language here. Generally, cat is called 'mauji' in adult language. Here the sound of cat is used to signify the cat.

1.6 Conclusion: From the above discussion it is seen that the child language is also a part of language. So, we need to preserve the child language. Some child languages are used in Bodo lullaby and nursery rhymes. Lullaby and nursery rhymes are an important part of folk literature. It can help the first language acquisition of a child. Hence, lullaby and nursery rhymes are very important in society. Lullabies and nursery rhymes are taking an important role in the socio-cultural life of the Bodos. It is handed down from down from generation to generation in Bodo society. It can be said that the child languages are preserve through the lullaby and nursery rhymes in Bodo society.

⁸ Informant: Birbai Thikhreb Boro, (M-58), Simaluguri, Udalguri

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