

## MODERNITY IN BODO CULTURE: A TEXT ORIENTED ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

Human society is changeable. Changes occur at various levels of the society. Regarding the Bodo society, it is observed that due to impact of modernity the traditional culture of the bodies and their way of living is getting changed in the course of time. Changes may be observed both in material and non-material culture. The factors responsible for the transformation of the society and culture are impact of Christianity, Urbanization, Industrialization, Tribal Community Development Schemes of the Government agency, Democratic set up of the Nation and new Education policy of the Government, emergence of Science and Technology and Communication. The study attempts to investigate the social context based on writing literary text; and on the one hand considerable insight will be taken into account to know the impact of modernity on Bodo culture. Chiefly the study seeks to bring into light various causes of impact of modernity on different aspects of the Bodo culture.

**KEYWORDS:** Culture, Tradition, Modernity, Impact, social transformation

### INTRODUCTION

The bodies are racially and sociologically one of the most important tribes of the North-Eastern India, particularly of Assam. Assam is the main abode of the Bodos. Besides Assam there are some Bodo pocket areas in the neighboring states Meghalaya, Nagaland and West Bengal. Historians and anthropologists observed that the Bodo Kacharis are the earliest inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley. Racially the bodies are Mongolian. So, the Bodo culture is a part and parcel of the great Mongolian culture.

This is important to note that Bodo literature is now-a-day recognized as one of the Indian literatures. It has gained a status in the context of literary discipline. From this light literary text may be taken into account for critical discussion from multifarious aspects. Being a means of expression of human behavior or society as a whole the Bodo literature is also able to visualize many more things of the society and the culture. This is why this paper aims at highlighting changing scenario of the Bodo society.

### IN THE LIGHT OF MODERNITY

The English word 'modern' comes from the Latin word 'motto' which means current. The term 'modernity' is used by Charles Baudelaire in the mid - nineteenth century. Peter Childs writes, "Modernity is considered to describe a way of living and of experiencing life which has arisen with the changes brought by industrialization, urbanization and secularization and reformation, fragmentation and rapid change, ephemerality and insecurity. It involves certain new understandings of time and space: speed, mobility, communication, travel, dynamism, chaos and Cultural Revolution.

Modernity cannot be explained by a single term only. Modernity is considered to describe a way of living and of experiencing new life. The structure of modernity is multi-dimensional. There are various perspectives to look at modernity. Modernity is associated with-industrialization, urbanization, development, nation-state, democracy, capitalism, superiority of power, growth of bureaucratic organizations, free market, a developing and expansionist economy, particularly market economy, increasing role of private property, optimism, the search for absolute knowledge in science, technology, society and politics, the idea that gaining knowledge of the true self was the only foundation for all other knowledge and rationality, dominance of secular, materialist, rationalist and individualist values, and the formal separation of the private from the public.

S.N. Eisenstaedt opined, “historically, modernization is the process of change towards those types of social, economic and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth and have then spread to other European countries and in the nineteenth and twentieth century’s to South American, Asian, and African countries. Modern or modernizing societies have developed from a great variety of different traditional, pre-modern societies.”<sup>1</sup>

The famous critic of India Yogendra Singh has also opined, “modernization as a process, in fact, has more elasticity of form than traditional. It implies an open world-view which like science undergoes perpetual self-falsification and self-transcendence in its value-structure and postulates. Comparative studies on modernization in the new states have shown that, contrary to stereotyped beliefs, old traditions are not completely displaced by modernization. What follows is an accretion and transmutation of forms.”<sup>2</sup> Based on this viewpoint the concerned topic will be discussed referring literary text from the Bodo short story.

## OBJECTIVES

Following is the objective of the study

- To look into the emerging impact of modernity on Bodo society and culture.
- To analysis the cause and effects of modernity which leads the society to a changing wave. Primarily this is to be analyzed based on the text of the stories of Z.D. Basumatary.

## HYPOTHESIS

Human society is dynamic. Change is inevitable for every society. Thus, in case of the Bodo society, it is seen that the cultural context of the beads is changing due to impact of modernity. Also, changes in many aspects of culture e.g. socio-religion and socioeconomic is to be observed vividly. It may be observed in a wide range that leads the traditional way of living in modern as well as global context. Here the changing scenario of the Bodo society may be observed if the text of the short stories is to be analyzed from the perspective of sociology. Chiefly the writer attempts to depict the emerging impact of the modernity on the Bodo society through the storytelling and characterization. The writer has used the literary text as the tool of operating view point.

<sup>1</sup> Eisenstadt, S.N. *Modernization: Protest and change*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited,1969.p.1

<sup>2</sup> Sing, Yogendra.Modernization of Indian Tradition. New Delhi: Rawat Publicatios, 2011.Reprinted. p.121

## METHODOLOGY

The topic has been analyzed based on literary text collected as primary as well as secondary data. Chiefly only the three short stories of Z. D. Basumatary, a renowned storyteller in Bodo, have been taken for data based and critical analysis. The secondary data are collected from review articles on the concerned topic and books which are directly related to the study. To acquire information about the Bodo society and culture; and about the emerging impact of modernity on ways of living some related books and articles are taken from a critical study. Collected data have been analyzed from a sociological viewpoint, though data are purely literary text.

## DISCUSSIONS

Z D Basumatary is one of the contemporary short story writers in Bodo literature. Z D has contributed two short story books. The books are namely **Ang Phwiphingwn** (I will come back, 1997) and **Mister Hybridni Gwlwmdwi Aew Mwdwi** (Mr. Hybrids sweat and tear, 2005). For the present study I have chosen only three short stories, namely **Mister Hybridni Gwlwmdwi Arw Mwdwi**, **Ashokhanda** and **Bidinthani Lamayao Dandise**. These three short stories are gathered from the story book entitled **Mister Hybridni Gwlwmdwi Arw Mwdwi**.

In the short story **Mister Hybridni Gwlwmdwi Arw Mwdwi** (Mr. Hybrids sweat and tear) the writer attempted to reflect remarkable changes in traditional mindset, habit, belief and values of the Bodo society. In the story the character 'Jwngblao' is a modern cultivator. In the short story we see massive change in the traditional mindset of Jwngblao. Jwngblao has taken up the cultivation as the means of earning on a commercial scale. Jwngblao learned to produce more food not only for consumption in day-to-day life; but also for marketing. This is the attitude of cultivators in general in modern Bodo society. In early days crops were cultivated mainly for domestic consumption not for commercial purpose in traditional Bodo society. These crops are the main source of cash income for Jwngblao. Earlier the Bodo people were not interested in trade and commerce at all. In this literary text the writer has visualized changing attitude of the Bodo society. As story recounts previously the central character of the story was busy in the work of community development service for twelve years. But he has no interest in politics, in service and contract works. Therefore, since last five years he has been busy with cultivation. He gets inspiration for cultivation from the cultivators of Punjab and Haryana. In the story Jwngblao is busy in calculating about his new scheme. He observed that the bodies had a very primitive way of cultivation regarding use of hi-tech-technology, seeds etc. In earlier days cultivation was carried on by the crude method by cutting down jungles and trees, setting them on fire, making holes in the land with the help of digging and the sowing deeds. Traditionally the bodies are a farmer, used wooden Plough, spade, harrow, spike-teeth harrow, chopper, etc. For cultivation. They could not think of other means of cultivation, besides cow and a wooden plug. In the story Jwngblao cultivates with modern scientific methods. He uses a tractor, hybrid seed, modern methods and modern pesticide for his cultivations. Jungle beliefs, one can earn lacks of money through cultivation if he cultivates with hybrid seeds and modern scientific methods. So from the beginning he uses hybrid seeds, tractor; and also uses modern scientific methods for cultivation. Looking to his enthusiasm people call him Mr. Hybrid instead of Jwngblao. He thinks if other community can live and earn money by cultivating in barren land, then why not the Bodo community? Why he can't make the Bodoland second Punjab? These are the instances of the changing attitude of some of the enthusiastic people of the Bodo society. Jwngblao is planning to cultivate hybrid tomato 'Obinash-2'. Each sampling of 'Obinash-2' will give 10 kg to 20 kg tomatoes when it grows. He is planning to cultivate Obinash-2 hybrid tomato in five bogus land and planning to earn ten lacks money from this product.

But his wife 'Thingini' has no faith in his new scheme; because he failed totally in cabbage cultivation earlier. But this time he is quite confident with his new scheme. So he tries to show his new plan to his wife; and informs if he plants the Obinash-2 hybrid tomato sapling at a distance of two feet, he will be able to plant 3600 saplings in one big ah land. If one tree gives 5 kg then 15,000 kg tomatoes will be produced in one view land if 3000 saplings grow out of 3600 saplings. That means the production of tomatoes will be 15 tons in one bingo land. If these tomatoes are sold in the early session, he will be able to get fifteen rupees for per kg. The total value will be  $15000 \times 15 = 2,25,000$  rupees in per begha land. Then the total value of five began land will be  $2,25,000 \times 5 = 11,25,000$  rupees. Wife Thinking is also putting questions one after another to him. Thingini wants to know about the expenditure of the scheme. Jungle informed his wife that if he subtracts one lacks and twenty five thousand as expenditure then also he will get net ten lacks. Again, after repaying the private loan also net amount seven lacks will remain with him. With this money if he wants, he will be able to buy a new tractor again.

Due to use of low level of technology the production of the farmers was too low. Now-a-days people can't produce more crops with traditional seeds and traditional methods which is more time consuming and needs more manual labor. So people cultivate with hybrid seeds and modern scientific methods. A necessity of life has increased, so the Bodos to go for commercial farming in order to get additional income for essential commodities and services. The arrival of modernity has smashed all these traditional methods of cultivation. This changing scenario has been depicted fairly in this short story.

In the story '**Ashokhanda**' we get a reflection of changing scenario of the Bodo society. We see a change in way of thinking as well as living of the Bodos. The traditional Bodo society is rural society. In the story, Mwinathi and her husband Somjit stay in a rented house at Dhaligaon. Modernity created the urban living space. In modernity, the individual's choice guide life in urban society. Both Somjit and Mwinathi are H.S. passed. Agriculture is the principal occupation of the Bodos. Earlier they were satisfied participating in the process of cultivation. All the members of a family could not think other than participating in cultivation. In the story we see occupational changes among the bodies. Somjit works as supervisor under one contractor of B.R.P.L. In the short story we see massive change in traditional mindset. In the short story we see Mwinathi wants to mix up with society of city or town. She wants to bring change in their thought and their way of life. Mwinathi wants to send their first child Alongbar in English medium school at Dhaligaon when Alongbar became three years old. This is the common attitude of present day Bodo society. Considering the economic condition of the family Somjit wants to send their child Alongbar in Bodo medium school. But the wife Mwinathi do not want to send their child in the Bodo medium L.P. School. Rather, she wants to send their first child Alongbar in English medium school at Dhaligaon. Mwinathi is confident in her decision. Mwinathi is the representative of thousand of mother those who wants to send their children in English medium school instead of Bodo medium school. Service man, contractor, businessman, cultivators and even the poorest families who live selling local rice-beer also send their child in English medium school in the area where they live. So, Mwinathi also wants to give their children in English medium school. Mwinathi wants to mixed-up themselves with the modern culture or the culture of the town. So, she feels shy to send Alongbar, their first child to Bodo medium L.P. school. Mwinathi is determined to send their child in English medium school at Dhaligaon, if necessary she is ready to sell local rice-beer to bear the school fees of their child as well as the other expenditure of the family. She brews, local rice-beer and sells it. Accordingly Mwinathi send both the son and daughter, namely Alongbar and Nigeria to English medium school at Dhaligaon.

In the story '**Bidinthani Lamayao Dandise**' the writer has painted a modern Bodo society. In the story we see

remarkable changes in their pattern of living, habit, belief and values. We see changes in the traditional marriage system. The change in marriage system is overwhelming. In the story after distributing the magazine, namely 'Phungja' among the Bodo employees of Bongaigaon Railway colony Zabra went to the marriage ceremony in Rwmari village. It is a marriage ceremony of rich and educated family. The sitting site (Pandal) of the marriage ceremony is nicely constructed and decorated with modern materials like a palace. A temporary parking area is made for vehicles in a marriage ceremony. Many invited guests who come to attend the ceremony with vehicles they keep their vehicles in the temporary parking area.

The traditional way of life is changing day by day due to the influence of modernity. We see occupational changes among the Bodos in the story. New employment opportunities were introduced into society. Salaried posts were new to the Bodo people. Earlier economy of the Bodo society was basically dependent on the land and agricultural products only. In the story Zebra is a story writer and Birjoy Muchary does the job in govt. Office for earning money. In the marriage ceremony Zabra met Birjoy Muchary who is one of the friends of the college time. They met each other after long fifteen years gape. Both of them read H.S. in Kokrajhar College. Bijou Muchary went to Delhi for higher education after completion of H.S. from Kokrajhar. On the other hand Zabra participated in Bodoland movement organized by ABSU activities. Now Birjoy Muchary is a district transport officer of Bongaigaon. Just one month ago, he came from Gauhati being a district transport officer of Bongaigaon district. Bijou Muchary has two children. Both the children of Birjoy Muchary are well versed in Hindi and English. But wife of Birjoy Muchary and both the child can't talk in Bodo language. This is the impact of modernity. The new world view that they encountered also brought a change in their way of thinking as well as living. In the story while discussing themselves Birjoy Muchary wanted to know about the zebras profession. He wanted to know in which department Zabra works. Zabra is neither a serviceman nor a businessman. He is a Bodo story writer. Bijou Muchary took 'Phungja' a Bodo magazine from Zabra. Bijou Muchary feels that the readers can form professional writer in the Bodo language also. He thinks that if the Bodo people do not make a reading habit till then no professional writer will bear in Bodo language. It refers to progressive outlook of Birjoy Muchary. This is the impact of modernity. We see change in food habits of the Bodos. Traditional drink of the bodies is rice-bearable. In the story we see the use of tea and factory made liquor in a marriage ceremony.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the discussion done based on the literary texts selected from a renowned story teller (as mentioned above) it is observed that the writer has attempted to visualize many more of the society as well as transformational aspects of the way of living of the Bodos. Besides, the writer attempts to reflect social pictures and different problems of the society as may be noticed in the day-to-day life and in the contemporary social context. Due to impact of modernity, today there is a change in traditional Bodo culture. A middle class society came up from traditional Bodo society. A necessity or needs of life increased. Bad people have taken up the cultivation as the means of earning from the perspective of modern economy and commercial viewpoint. Due to impact of modernity a consumerist mindset was adopted by the Bodo people also. Bodo people began to adopt western attire. A new economic system emerged against the static cast based economic system. The increase in urbanization and industrialization led the Bodos to abandon their old value systems and traditional forms of behavior. Different types of modern food items added to the Bodo traditional diet. Education introduced the Bodos to a new world view, and rid them of the fear of superstitions and belief. The educated Bodo people imbibed new morals,

values and higher standard of living. Such kinds of descriptions are vividly noticeable in the literary text written by the writer.

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