

## **Folk culture as reflected in the short story “FWIMAL MIJING” of Late Chittaranjan Mushahary**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The word folklore or the folk cultures were the same oldness to the folk caste. Different castes have their own folk culture in the world, because any caste or society cannot survive without folk culture of their own. When the people started to live in the earth they were following the living customs and doing all this for living in a society, then only the folk culture started among the peoples of a society. The custom and tradition found in the system of living in a society like daily work activity, eating food habit, singing and dancing, religion, worship etc. are called the folk culture of the society. In the present paper an attempt has been made to discuss on the folk culture prevalent in Boro society with special reference to short story “Fwimal Mijing” of Chittaranjan Mushahary.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Folk culture, Bodo, Religion, Society, Culture, Customs.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The folk culture or the word folklore is same oldness to the folk society of the respective caste since they were living. Peoples when started to live as a community with their rules and regulations, customs, working habits, eating habit, etc. then the folk culture of that community got started. According to E. B. Taylor Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.<sup>1</sup> As different castes have their own folk culture similarly the Bodos have also many folk culture of their own. The eating habit, dancing-singing, social customs etc. that are custom and tradition of a community is called the folk culture of that society. Y. M. Sokolov says Folklore is an echo of the past, but at the same time it is also the vigorous voice of the present.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in this paper, is going to discuss about the folk culture of the Bodos as reflected in the short story “FWIMAL MIJING” (unfulfilled hope/desire) written by Chittaranjan Mushahary, a renowned fiction writer in Bodo.

### **II. WRITER’S INTRODUCTION**

Chittaranjan Mushahary was a veteran writer of Bodo literature. He was born in 1945 at Aflagaon, Belguri village under the Kokrajhar district of Assam. His father’s and mother’s name was Late Lankeswar Mushahary and Late Durgadevi Mushahary respectively. He started primary education in his native village and studied at Abhayapuri Higher Secondary School. Mushahary was compelled to wind up his education due to family problems. He was a strong writer of the Bodo literature who tried to keep the status of the Bodo literature to the same level of other developed literature. He is the first novelist in Bodo literature. He contributed more than thirty-five (35) novels in Bodo literature. The first novel written by Chittaranjan Mushahary is “Jujaini Or” (Fire of husk) which was published in the year 1962 and this was the novel through which he started his literary career. In the year 1970 he published the first short story collection “Fwimal Mijing” (unfulfilled hope/desire) that brought a new dimension in the literary history of Bodo literature. As a novelist and short story writer, Mushahary’s second collection of short stories is “Thalim” (the rehearsal) that published in 1974. His articles were also published in many journals; magazines etc. He got Someswari Literary Award in the year 1992-93 and Praban Borgoyary Award respectively from Bodo Sahitya Sabha in the year 2016. Chittaranjan Mushahary’s short story book “Fwimal Mijing” consists of seven short stories. However, out of these seven short stories, the sources of folk culture reflected in the piece “Fwimal Mijing” will only be discussed.

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<sup>1</sup>Logan, Peter Melville : On Culture: Edward B. Tylor’s Primitive Culture, 1871, BRANCH: Britain, July 2012, p-1

<sup>2</sup> Dorson, Richard M: Folklore and Folklife An Introduction, Edited by Richard M. Dorson, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1972, p-17

### III. THE STORY

The scene of typical life and living of the villagers are seen in the short story "Fwimal Mijing" of Chittaranjan Mushahary. In this short story, the rich owner of the family Topsa is living in peace and unity with his wife and lone daughter as well as servants and maid-servants kept and engaged in agricultural works. The Bodos think that during Amthisuwa (Ambubachi) the earth mother becomes defiled so people do not go for work in the paddy field and on account of this she-owner asked their servant Ondla to tie the trees with thatch which is a custom in the society. It is thought that tying of thatch around the tree enhances its fruit bearing capacity. Again taking of fruit during Ambubachi is considered as good and auspicious. Accordingly, she-owner asks Ondla to bring some fruits like mango, jackfruit from the garden. The owner of the family Topsa goes neither to paddy field nor to ploughs. Being a village medicine man, he roams from one family to the other and always dips in rice beer. In his absence all household and agricultural activities are done by the servant Ondla. On the other side, she-owner could not go to paddy field due to their daughter and do the household works and their maid servant Dumphe goes to the paddy field. Therefore, in absence of their owner both Ondla and Dumphe teases to each other and make fun which later on turns to love. Mutual giving of presents by lovers is seen in the Bodo society. These are reflected when Dumphe gives a Pali (a towel) to Ondla as well as a boiled egg at dinner which she fetched from her own home. Accordingly, Ondla also presented lipstick and eyebrow to Dumphe bringing from the market.

However, Langkhob, servant of a neighbour became envy to the true love of Ondla and Dumphe, because he developed one-sided love to Dumphe. Accordingly, to separate them from each other he silently wrote a letter to Dumphe's parents by telling them that their daughter may elope with the servant of the owner. Dumphe's father was not in favour of his daughter's decision. Therefore, talking with his wife he decided to beg the hand of Bergao, a good and expert youth in agriculture for their daughter. Previously Bergao's parents rejected it as the proposal came from the girl's family which is reverse of the tradition. However, seeing the physical fitness and expertise in work of Dumphe they later agreed to the proposal. They fixed that as soon as Dumphe returns from the house of the owner they will arrange their marriage.

Another custom seen in Bodo folk culture is that during giving adieu to the servants a grand family party is arranged in their favour with fish, meat and rice beer. The writer has followed this custom in the short story during giving adieu to Ondla and Dumphe.

Dumphe's mother came to take Dumphe to her home on the day of her release. Dumphe surprised by seeing her marriage arrangement when she reached home. The marriage was fixed with Bergao of the same village. Everybody was very happy for the marriage except Dumphe. Her marriage was arranged without her consent and previously it was like a tradition in the society. In mind, she was planning to leave the home, but she cannot do so as everybody is keeping sharp eyes on her. Dumphe's father asked her to put on the dress and sit in the Awathi (sacred fire for marriage). Dumphe prayed to her father that she is not going to sit in marriage with Bergao as they arranged it without her consent. In her reply, her father said- "he does not cook rice asking to the cooking utensil". Its meaning is that he does what he wants to do and no need to ask to nobody.

After the marriage of Dumphe and Bergao, Ondla and Langkhob came to know about their marriage. The dreams of both were shattered. Langkhob was planning to marry Dumphe by kicking out Ondla from her life, but in vain. All hopes and dreams of these three characters remain unfulfilled and so "Fwimal Mijing" (Unfulfilled hope)

### IV. FOLKLORE ELEMENTS IN THE SHORT STORY

The short story writer was a person attached to the soil. Therefore, in this short story he tried to include so many customs and traditions prevalent in the traditional Bodo society of that period. Here, folklore elements as reflected in the short story "Fwimal Mijing" are going to be discuss below.

#### (1) **Social Folk custom:**

##### (i) **Amthisua:**

Amthisua is a part of agricultural folk custom of the Bodos. It is thought that during the time of Amthisua the mother earth becomes dirty i.e. menstruates. Therefore, ploughing, planting of trees and doing other auspicious works are restricted during this period. On the other hand, the Bodos consume lot of fruits during this period and think that consuming of fruits brings positive impact to their health. Therefore, she-owner asks their servant Ondla to bring some fruits like mango, jackfruit from the garden as the festival is the festival of eating fruits. The culture of eating of fruits during the Amthisua festival is clearly reflected in this short story.

##### (ii) **Marriage:**

Marriage is a social institution and is considered as second cycle of life. In this short story, social folk custom is reflected by bringing to light the marriage ceremony of Dumphe and Bergao. Fire is considered as sacred in Bodo society, so, the marriage of Dumphe and Bergao are performed by offering different things and

objects in sacred fire Awathi and vowing in front of the fire to lead a happy conjugal life. Vowing and offering before Awathi is related to the Brahma sect of the Bodos.

**(iii) Enticing away marriage:**

There are six types of marriage system among the Bodos. Among them enticing/eloping away is one. In this short story, Langkhob, in envy to pure and deep love of Dumphe and Ondla writes a letter to Dumphe's father that if her marriage is not arranged quickly with somebody then his daughter will entice away with Ondla. Enticing away is also a socially recognised marriage system of the Bodos.

**(2) Food habit:**

- (i) Consuming of rice beer is common scenery in Bodo society. It is offered to different gods and goddesses during performance of pujas and festivals as well as to guests and dear ones who pay visit to them. The offering of rice beer to village medicine man is also common scenery in traditional Bodo society. This very picture is reflected in this short story through the character of Topsha who in exchange of healing the villagers suffering from different ailments is consuming only rice beer in the family of the ailing person.
- (ii) In traditional Bodo society, the servant and maid serving in the same household develop soft corner for each other that slowly changes to love in due course of time. In this case, away from the eyes of others they offer towels, powder, moisturiser and eatables to each other to express their love. In this short story, Dumphe secretly offers to Ondla a boiled egg in dinner that she brought from her home when she visited. It is also a symbol of love that has been reflected through the medium of egg and is a kind of food habit prevalent among the Bodos.
- (iii) The chewing of betel nut is a non-avoidable part of folk culture of the Bodos. Betel nut is offered as a mark of respect to the guests, in the puja etc. In this short story, using of betel nut is clearly reflected when Ondla, the servant after taking his breakfast in the paddy field asks for betel nut from Dumphe, the maid. This represents that Bodos have the habit of chewing betel nut after taking food.
- (iv) The Bodos have the habit of collecting vegetables from jungles that are fresh and free from pesticide. Accordingly, in this short story, though collecting of vegetables has not been directly reflected it has been reflected through the imagination of Ondla about Dumphe. Ondla is thinking that Dumphe after getting married with Bergao by now may go to pluck and collect Sibiru (a kind of thorny vegetable resembling to arum variety). This imagination of Ondla about Dumphe gives a glimpse about food habit of the Bodos.

**3. Material culture- use of wood and bamboo**

- a. The Bodo society is agriculture based society. Agriculture is their main livelihood. In the agriculture field they use plough and spade to plough and dig respectively. So, in this short story Ondla, the servant of Topsha, is using plough made from the wood in the agriculture field for tilling the soil is clearly seen in the short story which implies the use of wood by the Bodos from dim and distant past.
- b. The bamboo is also a very important part of material culture of the Bodos. Its use is represented in the short story by Dumphe and Ondla who were using khofri (a kind of umbrella like implement made from leaves and bamboo) to get relieve from scorching heat and rain in the agriculture field.
- c. The Bodos also use bamboo for different purposes and out of these, the kherkha (utensil made of bamboo with pores), used for keeping and washing vegetables as well as serving rice during festivities or at home also reflect about the use of bamboo in Bodo society.

**4. Costumes and apparels:**

- a. Wearing Dokhona: The Bodo women use the clothes like Dokhona, pali, etc. Dumphe was wearing Dokhona fathong (woman apparel dokhona in short) during the uprooting of paddy saplings shows the habit of using of Dokhona in short during working in the paddy field by the Bodos.
- b. The bride wear a special type of Dokhona in marriage ceremony known as Dokhona Thaoshi that has a special floral design known as Agor Gubwi having a special colour. Coming of Dumphe by wearing Dokhona Thaoshi to Awathi shows that this apparel is very special for a bride on the day of her marriage.
- c. As a token of love, the lovers give some presents to each other. The lover girl generally gives phali (a kind of towel that can be tie on forehead or waist when working) to her lover boy. In this short story, this picture is reflected by giving of phali to Ondla by Dumphe.

**5. Delainai (Embellishment)**

- a. The Bodo women tie the hair in different types of knots and the tying of different knots of hair beautify the women. The culture of tying of hair knot is reflected when Ondla says to Dumphe that if she ties the knot of the hair falling on the neck she will look prettier.
- b. The woman gives different items to her beloved as a symbol of love similarly man also gives different items as a gift to his beloved woman. Accordingly, in the short story Ondla giving different luxurious items like lipstick, eyebrow, ugra to Dumphe as the symbol of love reflects the culture of using of luxurious items as gift by the Bodos.

#### 6. Verbal Folklore:

The verbal folklore is also a kind of non-avoidable folk culture among the Bodos. In this short story of Mushahary, different types of verbal folklore are used and these are reflected in the short story as mention below:

- (i) "Hinjaofwrna Bangsin Gwsywasw Raijlayw Khugaya Raijlaya"-girls generally speak with their heart and not with their mouth. (10:2011)

The above mention is a kind of proverb used by the Bodos.

- (ii) "Jerwibw Gaosini Khurmafra **Fesa Megonjwng** Nwjwr Hwgasinw Dongo" –every nook and corner relatives are keeping strong eyes on her (10:2011)

The word strong eyes used here is a good specimen of idiom used in Bodo society. Here, in this short story Dumphe's marriage was performed without her consent. She was not at all interested to sit in marriage with Bergao but had strong interest to sit with Ondla. Therefore, her family members and relatives kept strong eyes on her so that she can't entice away with Ondla.

- (iii) "Jasinanwi hwbla sonayabw fithlai jayw" –if you offer gold to somebody it turns to aluminium. (9:2011)

It is also a kind of proverb used among the Bodos. According to this proverb if you offer something to somebody it becomes valueless.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The short story "Fwimal Mijing" is base on the true and deep love of Ondla and Dumphe. However, Langkhob who was against their love broke down their love and himself was in one-sided love with Dumphe. Keeping the story of the short story aside the main focus of this paper was to draw some light on folklore elements available in this short story which have been discussed above under six (06) different heads. This gives to the readers an idea that Mushahary's short stories are full of folklore elements and he was a down to the earth person who had deep love and respect towards culture and tradition of the Bodos. This is the reason that this short story has been selected here for discussion.

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