



Social & Cultural Significance of Lullabies of Assam

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Abstract: Assam has a rich as well as diverse cultural tradition that reflects the life, culture & experience its people. Folk song are the important part of folk literature. These songs are traditionally passed from one generation to another through singing and are closely related to everyday life, agricultural, festivals, love marriage, nature, work and religious and social customs. Assamese community have lots of folk songs in their oral literature. every community in the world have their own folk tradition. Folk songs are divided into many categories according to their nature. Lullabies is one of such folk song. There are lots of lullabies in Assamese folk literature. In this paper, we will try to study the lullabies of Assam and their social and cultural significant. In Assam lullabies are commonly known as “nichukoni geet”. Nichukoni geet is always related to children.

Keywords: Lullabies, Assam, Oral Tradition, folk Literature, Children.

Introduction:

A soft or soothing song usually sung by a mother for her baby or small child is called lullaby. The lullabies have a repetitive lyrics. The lullabies make the intimate connection between a baby and the mother. Sometimes lullabies are also sung by grandmother, aunt and elder sister.

Moreover, lullabies are often used for the developing of communication skill indication of emotional intent, maintenance of infants, modulation of infants as oral regulation of behavior and undivided attention. Therefore, the music is often simple and repetitive. Lullabies can be found in many countries and have existed since ancient time. In foreign countries in some hospitals, a program of lullaby music is piped into rooms where mothers are feeding their babies

Assam is a land of anthropologist's paradise. The enormous diversity of groups and sub groups of various extractions and affiliations inhabiting the different areas in the hills and plains of the state constitute and almost inexhaustible source of material both for the anthropologist and the folklorist. The indigenous population is made up of Assamese Hindus, among whom, notwithstanding an Aryan veneer, Indo-Mongoloid Tibeto-Burman affiliation in different stages of acculturation, integration and assimilation with the Assamese Hindu fold live in the hills and plains of the state, the more prominent among them being the Bodos, the Rabhas, the Misings the Tiwas (Lalungs) the Sonowals and the Deuris in the plains and the karbies and the Dimasas in the hills. All the groups of Assamese tribes and non tribals are rich in folklore materials. They have plenty of materials of oral literature. Lullaby is the one of the important classification of oral literature. All the Communities have different lullabies in their respective societies.

Objectives:

- a) To study the lullabies of Assam.
- b) To study the importance & significance of the lullabies.
- c) To study the social & cultural significant of lullabies.

Limitation of the study:

The study will concern only the lullabies of non tribal Assamese as well as the lullabies of Dimasa and Mising communities.



Methodology: Methodology is a part and parcel of research paper. Secondary data including books, journals and internet are being used in this paper.

Lullabies of non tribals Assamese: The lullabies in Assamese is called NisukaniGeet and the nursery rhymes is often referred to as Dhais Nam. The difference between the two songs are very thin. These songs are usually fanciful compositions beyond the reach of literary poetry. While some such compositions contain simple, direct statements made with tenderness and delicacy, others are rather illogical juxtaposition of expressions often put Together just for onomatopoeic affect). However, nearly all of them throw interesting light on certain aspects of the socio-culture milieu. One of such popular NisukoniGeet is -

"AamareMainaSuboye

Barite BogariRuboye

BerireBogoriPokiSoriGole

AcmareMainaiButcliKhabo."

Meaning:

"Our little one will go to sleep,

He will plant a Bagori plum in the orchard The Bagar, plums will ripen and drop,

Our little one will pick them up and eat."

This song is sung in a very simple tune but has an irresistible lifting quality. Another popular song in Assamese is like this..

"Siyeli ye Nahibi Rati"

TureKaneKatiLogameBati."

Meaning:

Donot come at night, o xiyali.

Xiyali cut your ears and make lamps of them.

This song is meant for hushing the baby by frightening it with visions of a fearful animal like the Siyali (Fox) or Hapa (the wild cat).

"Lai hale Ja le

Lopha Hale Jale

Oi Ram KhaboloiAamoni Kore He.

AamareMainaSuboloiDhorise Kali DuporiarBhate He"

Meaning: The small one is going to sleep without taking dinner.

Moreover, there are many rhymes associated with children's games in Assamese in which birds, beasts and other objects of nature as well as the social surroundings come alive.

The lullabies of Mising community: Among the fairly large number of communities living in the hills and plains of Assam contributing to the colourful Assamese culture Misings occupy a position of singular importance and significance. They are the second largest tribal community of Assam and inhabiting along the rivers Subansiri, Dihing, Dibang, Dhansiri, Bharali and the mighty Brahmaputra in the plains of Upper Assam.



Mising oral literature is considerably rich in terms of both quality and quantity. Much of the material made up of various kind of narrative, songs, rhymes and other rhythmic composition, proverbs and other popular expressions habitually mouthed by the folk.

Like the other society, the lullabies are also important for the Mising baby to sleep. In Mising society lullabies are called as "Koh NI nam".

Mising women work hard both at home and in the field, and so they can not spend much time with their babies. In such situation, mothers leave the young children in the charge of tender- aged girls who are kept particularly for this purpose. Most of the Mising lullabies are sang by these young girls called as Nebing.

A popular Mising lullaby is like this-

Don't cry, my pet,
Let your parents work in the field,
When they come back
We shall cook rice for you.
Your mother is not here,
Nor your father,
Who will bring clothes for you?
You 're crying-looking at clothes worn by others.
Where'll you get them, now even if you cry?

The lullabies of Dimasa community: The Dimasas are one of the major Indo-

Mangoloid tribes of Assam who are inhabiting mostly the hilly areas of North Cachar Hills district and some interior areas of Karbi Anglong district. They are also known as Dimasa Kasari.

Dimasas are rich in folklore materials particularly in the field of oral literature.

Folksong is a part of their day to day life. Amongst folksong lullabies take an important place in oral poetry. In Dimasa society lullabies are called Nana Thilikoba. There are many melodious Nana Thilikoba in Dimasa's life. Such songs are different for boys and girls. Even, when a song is for first child, and other is for second & third child. One of a Dimasa lullaby is like this-

"Jo Babai Majangdau,
Sumukhe Khasilik Khabaiba?
Sumukhe Muthilik Mugongba?
Thuhini Mudiri Lailadi,
Ja Babai Gajaudau".

Meaning: O, my small one why are you crying? Please you try to sleep.

The Relationship between Mother and Baby and the contribution of the lullabies to this Relationship: In lullabies the mother tells all the happenings of the day to the baby. In text of the lullabies, mother refers from time to time to her husband, natural disasters, wars, her happiness, her sorrows etc. Thus the mother informing the baby and communicating with it. The lullabies make a strong relationship between the baby and the mother.



The children are very affected in the lullabies of the mother. The baby is able to understand its mother's mood deeply and also able to follow the happenings day by day out of what it hears. This powerful bond is realized with the help of the hormones that are secreted in the pre-birth period and the period very close to birth. This bond that is realized between the mother and the baby becomes so strong and develops so much that the mother can easily differentiate her baby's voice amongst tens of other crying babies and at the same time the baby distinguishes its own mother's voice.

The impact of lullabies on society: Lullabies are rhymed and harmonious words, in

the form of poetry and prose according to a certain melody generally sung by mothers but sometimes also by relatives like grandma, aunt, elder sister etc. in order to soothe crying children or make them sleep.

The children's education starts in the mother's womb. In ancient times mothers traditionally sang lullabies for their children and told them the happenings of the day with a harmonious style. As a matter of fact science today has proved that babies perceive the external environment even when they are in their mother's womb and are able to give reactions. It has been proved that at further ages children perceive more effectively owing to the lullabies they heard in their infancy. In a lullaby we found the description of natural things such as the moon, the stars, the sun, the flowers, different animals, vegetables, fruits which are unfamiliar to a small child. In such a situation, he or she can be able to understand these unknown things of nature from her mother gradually. Thus mother introduces her baby to the nature.

From ancient times lullabies have a significant and effective place in our culture. It is one of our main sources of our culture. In those days, there were no such types of dolls, toys, games, and entertainment programs, like television, internet etc. for children. So, during that period grandmothers, mothers, sisters and relatives were engaged to soothe their small child with the help of lullabies, folktales & myths. In that time people like to join family

During that time lullabies took a vital role in rural society. Most of the mothers usually sang lullabies for their babies. But today, the situation is completely changed. Because, today is the time of globalization. In such a situation, every person wants to develop himself. As a result, most of our educated, less educated or illiterate mothers engaged in various jobs. They help their family by earning money. Most of our educated mothers are established as a teacher in schools, colleges as well as universities & other business. So, they can't give sufficient time to their babies. Besides these today, most of our nuclear families where they always feel lonely. But in ancient times, the lullabies help in filling up the emotional gap between children and elders. These create an amiable and lovable contact between children and elders. In such a situation lullabies can take a vital role for the mental satisfaction of the child. It can be implied in the crèche and in the home by the maid in the absence of their mother.

Conclusion:

Since, lullaby is one of the most beautiful oral poetry of folklore, it should be preserved. First, to preserve this oral poetry, we the educationalists and researchers with the help of common people have to collect all the lullabies of Assam scattered amongst the tribals & non-tribals society. After collection, the lullabies have to be practiced by the young generation.

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