



Documenting Oral Literature of the Jolhas

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Abstract

Oral Literature is considered to be helpful in reconstructing the History of Mankind. These are basically traditions prevailed among people and also are preserved in the memories of the elders. It is very necessary to collect all those to enrich the History of a society. It may include folklore, myths, songs and stories passed down over the years by word of mouth. It is very necessary to lay emphasis on the oral History of the people of the region especially the ethnic groups that would definitely enrich the literature as well as the history of any land. The Jolhas is also an important part of the Tea community of Assam who has a rich oral History of their own. In this paper an attempt has been made to throw light on the oral literature of the Jolhas depending on primary sources.

Key word : Oral Literature, Oral History, Jolha

Introduction

Oral History is considered as an important source of writing History. The collection and study of oral information using proper method and materials can help to reconstruct History. Throughout ages people have learned about the past through the spoken word and also wrote about the contemporary period depending on spoken word Oral history can be defined as the recording, documentation and interpretation of oral information, based on the personal experiences and opinions of the speaker. It may include folklore, myths, songs and stories passed down over the years by word of mouth. It is very necessary to lay emphasis on the oral History of the people of the region especially the ethnic groups that would definitely enrich the literature as well as the history of any land. The Jolhas is also an important part of the Tea community of Assam who has a rich oral History of their own. Though Jolhas are inhabited in ten districts of Upper Brahmaputra Valley such as Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat, Golaghat and Sonitpur, Biswanath Chariali and Baksa, the study has been done basically in Tinsukia and Golaghat district.

Objective of Study

This paper aims to analyse the state of oral literature of the Jolhas of Assam in the field of Religious songs, Tales, Proverbs, Marriage Songs or *Shadigeet* and Filthy talks.

Methodology

The analytical method is applied to draw the oral literature of the Jolhas. To prepare this paper the primary data was collected through field study and Personal Interview method.

Discussion

1. MarchiaGeet

Jolhas have lost most of their distinct ethnic feature in course of their living in Assam. While coming to the land the Jolhas were well versed in *MarchiaGeet* (Autochthonous song contains tragic history of Karbala). They were used in singing these songs in the month of *Muharram* (the first month of Islamic calendar) when the Moon first appeared in the sky. The women folk used to sing the *Marchia* songs in the processions of *Taziya* in the Muharram. During the study, we met some age old persons who sang these songs before us. But the younger generation is found to be much more attracted towards *Zikir* and *Zari* instead of these *MarchiaGeet*. These are mostly collected from Lt. Ramjan Ali, Kehang Tea Estate, Tinsukia on 15th June, 2013 and Osiron Begum, Kehang Tea Estate, Tinsukia 16th June, 2013. A few of *MarchiaGeet* are mentioned below.

Jharuapokorkeroyedadi
Hussainchalediltodke,
Aao re sheherke logo
Dadikochomjhaoge,
O' Dadi tum chomojhkeroho
PhirDunia main phirenge.

[Grand mother is crying holding flag in her hand as Hussain (her grandson) has gone (to war of Karbala) breaking her heart, come the people of the town to console grand mother; O' Grand mom, try to understand, Hussain will come again to your world.

Nalarowenodirowe
AroroweSokhina
Lotaelotaerowe
Bonoredhodhokiphool
Karbala main Begum rowe
ChunahoiloModina.
(Banu, R:2006:p21)

{After the death of Immam Hussain, the *Begum* (wife) is crying as *Modina* (Home place of Immam) has become empty and with her all the rivers, flowers, creepers are crying }

EkSedamkaganzaliya
Sante santé der hua
KhatepiteAdha rat
Aabcholo Imam kesath.

{(I have)bought opium of *eksedam* and become late in preparing the same and half of the night has gone in having the *Ganza* or opium, now it is time to go with the Imam(Hussain)}

2. Shadigeet

Like *Biyanam* of Assamese society, *Shadigeet* (Shadi-marriage, Geet-song) were sung by the ladies assembled for the occasion of the marriage ceremony. These are not familiar among the Jolhayoung girls but the elder ladies even now are continuing this tradition in some places. Coming under the influence of Islam all these has gradually gone into dark, which is still prevailed among their Hindu counterpart of Tea Garden areas. The tunes of these songs are similar with that of *Jhumoir* (The traditional song and dance form of tea community). Some example of *Shadigeet* are-

Jawa re Gohumake Ubton
Rai Soricha Ke Tel
Beti Boithol Re Ubton

[The daughter or the bridegroom sits to spread *Ubton* or the paste of the articles of 'Logon' including oil over her body part]

Ghara se Bahara Bhail, Maya Mora
Biha Maya Logon Chumai Ho
Logon Nihara Bhail
Hate Gulala, Mukhe Paan
Logon Nihara Bhail, Mai Ho
Logon Nihara Bhail"

[The bride will go out of home as 'Logon' has come. With *Mehendion* her hand and *Pan* in her mouth, she is having her 'Logon'].

Aharaho Sukhi Gel
Pokhorahosukhigeil
Aabebetirohobe Kunwar.
Aharahobhorigeil
Pokhorihobhorigeil
Chuyanbasi Baihrbohigiel
Baba kechatiaahi
Porosaphutigeil
Abe betihowo to Biha

[The are no water in the ponds and so the daughter will remain unmarried and when all of those are full of water like flood is there in the pond, the father become happy as his daughter is going to be married now.]

3. Proverbs:

The proverbs are the verbal arts which reflect the humour of the people who initiated these. Proverbs are used to explain a situation in some tricky and reflective words. The Jolhas have some proverbs among them which reflect their society and their art of living. Some of these are like,

1. *Ler more murga, Bilaikhaianda*

[The cat takes away the egg when the hens are quarrelling for the same]

2. *Ghorebhuji bhang nai, Miyanpadechira*

[There is nothing in home to eat and (they) want to have *Chira* (one fooditem made of rice)]

3. *Gaarlongtifotehkhaon, Mon koreKolkotteJaon*

[There is nothing in home to wear but the mind wants to go to Kolkata.]

4. *Jane naBisakMantar, Hat de Sap keDhandor*

[With a little knowledge, people want to do many more.]

5. *LotanaThari,Phatok Nanda Girdhari*

[Nothing in hand but wants to become a king]

6. *OkotaPota, SongeiMuta*

[Spare the Rod and spoil the child]

7. *Apse Moriha, Debak dos*

[Doing something wrong of own and blaming God for the same]

8. *BhukkhailageloMaghbese, Agheilakahedhare de.*

[An unlucky person suffers everywhere]

9. *Nikoriya Beta Jiha hat, Hat dekhkejiaphat.*

[Vagabond son goes to market and become sad seeing the same]

10. *Nachnajaneanganterh*

[To blame other for own fault]

11. *RarhghareChereikeJhul*

[It is meaningless to pour a drop of honey in the ocean]

12. *Beta na Seta ago Dandakdori*

[To count chickens before they are hatched]

4. **Filthy words**

Like every society there are some filthy words exists among the Jolhas but they hardly use these. In the process of modernization and spread of education, every society lost these types of words, which are basically used in anger, to tease anyone and in joke only. Most important is that it is very difficult to find out these words, as the people are not at all ready to disclose these words before the investigator. Beside, rare use of these words in day-to-day life make them unaware of all these. A few of these words are mentioned bellow.

1. *GharaGoor Mari*

[They didn't disclose the real meaning of the word but it is basically use to scold the woman who go in wrong way]

2. *BaapBhatari*

[This is also used to scold woman by paring her with her own father]

3. *Bedhua*

[Use to scold one who is not ready to pay heed to anyone]

4. *KhalBhora*

[Who like to eat more and more]

5. *Haath Kura*

[A miser, this type of people seems to hate spending money and to spend as little as possible]

6. *He Sudu*

[A dull person]

7. *He Noti*

[A girl having loose character]

8. *Nirbosa*

[People without the name of his father]

9. *KhetBhora*

[Vegabond]

10. *Biyal Mari kibeti*

[Used in scolding the daughter-in-law]

5. Folk Tales :

As this ethnic group of people were brought from out of India they have lost many of their ethnicity while living in Assam. They were converted Muslims. After coming to Assam , initially they were used in performing some of the Hindu religious beliefs like *Sapher Puja* (Snake Worship) , Worship of *Maya Saheb*

Worship of Maya Saheb:

It was a practice prevailed among the Jolhas which is come to the knowledge of the investigator somehow in Bongaon of Golaghat district during the period of early 2011 A.D.. They believed that all the evils occurred in society was caused by *Maya Saheb* (one invisible power) and he/she harassed people if he/she became angry with the people for their evil deeds. They were used to worship *Maya Saheb* and they forwarded *Bhog* to her or him to make him/her satisfied for the sake of the society. If *Maya Saheb* became satisfied with the *Bhog* she or he won't harassed the people again.

The Jolha people are unaware of this practice as it was prevailed during the early ages of their stay in Assam and perhaps it has been continued till the 2nd and 3rd generation of the Jolhas.

Sapher Puja

Sapher Puja (worship of snake) was another practice that prevailed among the Jolhas while coming to Assam. This was continued even after that, in some places of Jolha inhabited area.

They used to consider the snake as the saviour of their property specially the paddy and livestock. When the snake appeared around their home they forwarded Milk and *Khoi*(one special food item made of rice) to the snake. There is a folktale against the practice. Once upon a time a lady gave birth of a snake. The mother of the snake and the other people consider the snake as a human in form of a snake. The mother adorned the nose of the snake with a *Luluk* (nose ring). But one day the snake was killed by some persons while the snake was on his way to the paddy field. The village people loved the snake very much and they believed that he always helped the people as a saviour of their paddy stock and other things. They also believed that even if they get some paddy from the stock, next day they found the stock became full of paddy which was happened by the grace of the snake. So, that they used to worship the snake for good harvest. (Ahmed, S; Peronal Interview: 3rd March, 2011)

Conclusion

Oral literature is considered as one of the important source of reconstructing History. To find out the oral literature of the Jolhas was not an easy task as the people hesitate to disclose the filthy word exist among them, sometimes they couldn't able to remember the songs as those were no more in practice among them on the other hand, the source persons were already died when the study was being carried out . in fine, it can be said that most of the oral literature discussed in this paper are about to be lost to view or it was lost already. In conclusion, it necessary to say that the present piece of work is a micro-level study based only on two district of Upper Brahmaputra Valley and the work is exploratory and descriptive in nature. Thus, it may not cover a complete description of the oral literature Jolhas by covering various facets along with the change and continuity that are occurring at present. But the study may provide some of the facts and also the areas which may need further study.

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