

Bodo Folklore: Transition from traditional to modern customs in Bodo societies with reference to select short stories.

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Abstract: Folklore is a newly emerging field of research and learning since the past few decades. The Bodo/Boro people or the Bodo-Kacharis constitute a very important section of the different ethnic groups and races settling in and around North-Eastern and some other regions of India. Racially, they belong to the Mongoloid stock of the Indo-Mongoloid or Indo-Tibetans (Anil Boro, 2014). Although the Bodos have a rich store-house of oral folk literature handed down from generation to generation, they did not have written literature until recent past, with the publication of the Bibar, the first Bodo magazine published in 1924 as the mouthpiece of the Bodo Chatra Sanmilani (Bodo Students' Union). Research by eminent scholars such as Dr. Anil Boro (2016) reveals that Bodos have a rich tradition of folk literature which has not been fully explored, preserved and brought to light. Some famous Bodo writers and folklorists have mirrored social and cultural changes through their story-telling and characterization. This preliminary study aims to analyze some well known short stories written several years back by famous Bodo writers viz., Ishan Chandra Mushahary, Chittaranjan Mushahary Prasenjit Brahma, Nilkamal Brahma and Manoranjan Lahary with an objective of unraveling the significant essence concealed therein. Analysis of their short stories vividly reflected transition of traditional Bodo society into modern society. Gradual but massive cultural changes are observable among the Bodos of today in terms of production, consumption, exchange and so on (Sekhar Brahma, 2026). The Bodos of present generation (mainly educated) have imbibed new ideology and have accepted modern ways of life. Therefore, the writings of these folklorists bear great significance because they represent farsightedness, striving to make people aware with an intension to help people survive future dangers of altered cultural elements and identity.

Key words: Folklore, Bodo/Boro, Culture, Society, Transition, Gradual, Modern, Identity.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Folklore is a newly emerging field of research and learning since past few decades. Although folklore may be as old as mankind, the term folklore is of relatively recent origin. According to Islam, 1985, there are twenty-one definitions given by different scholars for the term folklore which indicates the vastness of the term ever since it was coined. The meaning of the word folklore has been viewed by different scholars in different perspectives. In Eighteenth century, studies in folklore had already been perpetuated in Europe, particularly in Germany by the Grimm brothers whose studies in German mythology had already taken shape. In the Nineteenth century, folklore was viewed as the surviving records of an earlier, simpler way of life (Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, 2017).

According to the definition of folklore given by the American Anthropologist, Melville Jean Herskovits (1895-1963), folklore denotes the study of the unwritten literature of any group. Therefore, it is understood that all people participate in folk culture directly or indirectly. This newer orientation, by defining more critically its field and approach, has given freedom to folklorists for the study of literary forms among the people anywhere, irrespective of their possession of a written language (Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, 2017).

The Bodo people or the Bodo-Kacharis constitute a very important section of the different ethnic groups and races settling in and around North-Eastern region and some other regions of India. Racially, they belong to the Mongoloid stock of the Indo-Mongoloid or Indo-Tibetans (Anil Boro, 2014). G.A. Grierson mentioned that the generic name Bodo/Boro was first given to them by B.H. Hodgson (Grierson, 1967). The old Sanskrit scriptures and ancient Assamese texts however mention Bodos as the Kiratha people. Sydney Endle called them Kachari (1911) and discovered the racial features to be similar to Mongoloids. However, J.D. Anderson is of opinion that the term Kachari is a corruption of Kossari. He mentions that "Koss" refers to

Koches and “ari” means a clan in Boro (J.D. Anderson, 1990). Grierson is of opinion that the word originated two hundred years ago when the king of Tipperah had given his daughter in marriage to the king of Maibong in North Cachar. The people of North Cachar were called Kacharis by the Assamese people (Grierson, 1967).

According to S.K. Chatterjee, 1974, the term Indo-Mongoloid is significant because the term defines at once their Indian connection and their place within the cultural milieu in which they found themselves, as well as their original racial affinity. However, he also mentioned that these Indo-Mongoloid people had close contact with the Negritos, the Austro-Asiatic, the Nordic and Mediterranean races of India in different stages of history and civilization. This process has been identified to be cultural assimilation and racial fusion by S.K. Chatterjee.

Whatever names have been given to the Bodos by different scholars in the past, they have maintained their distinctive identity throughout the ages. Moreover, Bodos neither call themselves Kiratas or Kacharis, rather they call themselves Bodos or Borofisa. The term Bodo denotes a race or a speech community speaking the Sino-Tibetan Bodo language (Anil Boro, 2014)

Although the Bodos have a rich store-house of oral folk literature handed down from generation to generation, they did not have written literature until recent past, with the publication of the *Bibar*, the first Bodo magazine published in 1924 as the mouthpiece of the Bodo Chatra Sanmilani (Bodo Students' Union). However, it would be inappropriate to deny the contributions made by some Christian Missionaries even before this publication in Eighteenth century. The significant contributions made by them include publication of *Collection of Bodo-Kachari Tales and Rhymes* by J.D. Anderson; *Kacharis*; the well known monograph on Bodos by Sidney Endle. He also compiled a *Grammar of the Bodo Language* in 1884. Many years after this in 1959 (*Boro thunlai Afadni Zarimin*, 2016), again a *Bodo Grammar* was published by Rev. H. Holvourshrud with the help of his team including Rev. Maguram Mushahary, Mr. Michael Basumata, Mr. Sulen Basumatary and Mr. Dinesh Narzary who were actively involved in translation of The Bible into Bodo language. It is worth mentioning in this context that, due to relentless efforts of many litterateurs and associations such as All Bodo Sahitya Sabha and All Bodo Students Union, Bodo language has been recognized as one of the Indian languages in 2003.

Research by eminent scholars such as Dr. Anil Boro (2016) reveals that Bodos have a rich tradition of folk literature which has not been fully explored, preserved and brought to light. According to some scholars, though the genres of oral literature of the Bodos dates back to the primitive ages about which the written history is completely in the dark, it does not mean that their folk literature is a mere vestige of the past. Rather, it has enriched and added to the grandeur and quality of written forms of Bodo literature besides revealing their thought processes, the hopes and fears, ideas and philosophies of the remote ancestors of the Bodos, as well as the sudden or gradual changes in all these things effected by the changing conditions of material life.

About the transformation of Bodo society and culture, Sekhar Brahma writes, “The traditional Boro Society, which came into contact with different cultures and societies underwent a great change in the 20th century. These changes are visible in the traditional institutions like religion, marriage, economy, social customs and also in the position and status of men and women, food habit, dress and other spheres of life. The changes are found in the forms of Sanskritization, Modernization and Westernization to some extent. The prime factor of these changes are, certainly the influence of Hinduism, spreading of higher education among the Boros and the development of science and technology” (Brahma, Sekhar, 2011).

In view of the above discourse, as the Bodo writers and folklorists have mirrored social and cultural changes through their story- telling and characterization, this preliminary study aims to analyze some well known short stories among the Bodos with an objective of unraveling the significant essence concealed there in.

Future scope of the study:

1. While literature has its value in serving as a mirror of a culture, folklore would also make a thorough understanding of a culture possible, by appreciating its social and cultural role. Therefore, there is an urgent and increasing demand for following specific analytical approach for the investigation of literary concepts of ideas and issues in folk literature.
2. The vast body of Folk literature provides ample scope for a rewarding exploration of the literary grain and essence inherent in its poetry, myths, tales, ballads, songs, proverbs and numerous other expressive components constituting it.

Method of present study: Contextual reading (Historicism).

Materials: Well known short stories by Ishan Chandra Mushahary, Chittaranjan Mushahary Prasenjit Brahma, Nilkamal Brahma and Manoranjan Lahary.

II. Result:

1. “Abari” Written by Ishan Chandra Mushahary: Ishan Chandra Mushahary is known as a pioneer in short-story writing amongst the Bodo writers (Grierson GA, 2005). Abari, was the only short story written by Ishan Ch. Mushahary in which he has skillfully depicted the customary practices and attitude of the agro-based society of the Bodo people. It is based on a traditional peasant family of the early 20th century. The important characters are Abari (The central character of the story), Gugri, Uli and Maiphri. Other characters include a youth of Sikhar village, a youth of Jajiguri village, and a youth of Sumliguri village.

Analysis of this story reveals the transition of traditional marriage customs and beliefs in Bodo culture during that period. Contextual reading shows that the main character of the story Abari refused to follow the traditional marriage customs and beliefs of the Bodo Society. It may be mentioned in this context that Bodos have their own traditional marriage systems as well as customs and beliefs among the traditional marriage systems. The arranged marriage (Swngnanwi lainai haba) is the most common socially accepted marriage system. It is usually solemnized with great gravity and honour. It involves several formalities. These formalities are divided into three stages: Pre-marriage ceremony (selection of the bride), proper marriage ceremony and post-marriage ceremony. The most important formality of pre-marriage ceremony is Gongkhon Hwnai or Ashan Thebnai (Formal negotiation among the families of the Boy and the Girl). Traditionally, the bride is selected by the parents of the bridegroom who formally go to the bride's house with the proposal and then the marriage is settled after negotiation. In traditional Bodo society, the parents of both the boy and the girls do not allow their children to select their own partner. Finally, the marriage tie is undertaken by the parents in consultation with the village elder persons. Once the marriage tie is settled by the parents, then the son or daughter is bound to obey the decision taken by the head of the families. In this story, Abari's elder brother Uli is the head of the family. It is observed in this story that Uli and the whole family members supported Abari in her decision of not getting married to a youth from Sikhar village who was physically handicapped and had a hunched back. As revealed in the story, Uli initially keeps the silver bracelet offered by the boy's parents in consultation with the elder village persons to tie Abari's marriage with the lame and hunchbacked boy from Sikhar village against Abari's wish. She wanted to get married to a handsome and physically strong boy from Sumliguri village. Abari was also physically handicapped with a slight lameness, but she had a strong personality and she was an expert in all forms of domestic work like most girls of that period. She also had great expertise in weaving and embroidery. Abari had always been confident, optimistic and self-reliant. Therefore, she wanted to live an independent life on her own earnings and also with confidence in her own choices, be it for other matters or her marriage. She strongly compels Uli, her elder brother to return the silver bracelet to the boy's parents to cancel the marriage agreement with the parents of the handicapped youth. In those days, as a traditional belief in the Bodo society, a lame girl was supposed to marry a lame boy, a blind girl to a blind boy or a deaf girl to a deaf and dumb boy. However, it is observed in this story that Uli, the head of the family and other members of Abari's family supported her decision and didn't follow the traditional customs and beliefs of the society. Eventually, one day, at a full moon night, Abari, wearing an 'Asan' (bracelet) and 'Engthi' (small earrings) entered into the bridegroom's home at Sumliguri village to choose him as her groom. This type of custom was known as 'Kharconnai- haba' (wedding by crossing the threshold). Thus, it is seen that Abari goes against the decision of the family as well as socially established marriage customs and beliefs of the era indicating transition of the cultural customs. The acceptance of Abari by the boy and his family of Sumliguri followed by their marriage also shows significant change of mindset, customs and beliefs of the society.

Another significant transition in marriage tradition is observed in this story. According to traditional practice in Bodo society, the elder son and/or daughter get married first. However, due to the match rejection by Abari followed by different events, there was a delay in her marriage. Three years after this incident, Uli and the whole family decided to choose a groom for Maiphri, Abari's younger sister. Uli eventually settled Maiphri's tie with an educated boy of Jajiguri village and the marriage took place ceremonially. This event also reveals the violation of marriage tradition by the family and also acceptance of this transition in marriage customs and beliefs by the elders and the society as a whole.

The relevance of the story in present day Bodo society may be observed that today's Bodo societies have almost completely accepted the modern way of life with some exceptions. 'Swngnanwi lainai haba' (Arranged marriage) still exist in the society to some extent, but the educated and urbanized youth mostly choose their own partners. The pre-marital relationships have become more prevalent among the young generations. Such affairs may end up into an arranged marriage-like ceremony if the parents agree to accept, or it may lead to another kind of marriage if the parents disagree, which is called 'Dwnkharnai' (To elope/The boy takes the girl away from her house) or 'kharconhwinai' (Crossing the threshold/Girl enters boy's house on her own) like Abari did in this story. It may be observed that majority of modern generations give more emphasis on personal issues and mutual respect in marital relationships. Therefore, Abari may be regarded as a symbolic character that represents numerous girls with a similar kind of personality in the society- confident, self-reliant and

courageous who dare to stand against blind beliefs and marriage customs in the society. The decision made by her guardian and family members also reveals their mutual love, respect and thoughtfulness. Therefore, it may be mentioned that this interesting story written by Ishan Chandra Mushahary flamboyantly reflects the changing marriage customs and beliefs in Bodo society which encourage the readers especially the thinkers and writers for self-reflection. Self-reflection, as we know is the gateway to personal wisdom, turning raw experience into insight.

2. *Fwimal Mijing (Unfulfilled hope)*, a collection of short stories by Chittaranjan Mushahary (Published in 1970): Chittaranjan Mushahary started his writing career way back in 1962 as a novelist. Apart from novels, he published collection of short stories titled 'Fwimal Mijing' and 'Thalim' in 1970 and 1974 consecutively. About Chittaranjan Mushahary's short stories, Phukan Ch. Basumatary and Swarna Prabha Chainary write, "...Chittaranjan Muchary reflected different social pictures and the transition of the Boros from simple village life to the so called aristocratic city/town life"(Basumatary, Phukan Ch and Chainary, Swarna Prabha, 2017). From the book titled *Fwimal Mijing*- "Gwmanai Dairy" (Lost Diary) has been referenced for the present analysis.

In "Gwmanai Dairy", the main characters are Amrit, Amrit's father, Ratan Narzary, Kamala, Ramala, Krishna Narzary, and the wife of Krishna Narzary. A reflection of the modern way of living amongst the town-dwelling contemporary Boro society is found in this story. Instead of choosing traditional Bodo livelihood in the likes of agriculture, fishing, bamboo handicrafts, spinning of silk, weaving and so on, Amrit's family and Krishna Narzary's family can be observed to have chosen a modern way of life because Amrit, Amrit's father and Krishna Narzary, Ratan Narzary, Kamala and Ramala received modern education. By profession, Amrit was a college teacher and Krishna Narzary was a school teacher. Amrit's father encouraged him to choose a modern job as a main source of income instead of traditional sources such as agriculture, fishery or animal-rearing. The story reveals that they were open-minded and the family members discussed everything openly. The story reveals that Amrit's father takes consent from Amrit to finalise his marriage tie. He also freely enquires whether he has chosen anyone for himself. He also expressed his wish that Amrit should marry who he loved and wanted to. This was unusual for Bodo traditional marriage customs. It shows that Amrit's family was a modern educated family with modern outlooks. Therefore, the change of mindset amongst the Bodo families due to modern education is clearly reflected in this story. Another character Krishna Narzary also represents a modern educated person along with his family members, including his wife, Radha. Her advice to Amrit to remarry after his wife Kamal's demise reveals the family's progressive outlook. However, ill effects of modernity have also been observed in the story. Earlier, the lives of Bodo people were simpler and people followed their traditions whole-heartedly. In traditional society, source of inspiration and achievement was faith, good character and saintliness, which were regarded as utmost assets. Respect and honour for elderly people was a primary matter in the society. Nevertheless, it is seen in this story that Kamala's younger sister Ramala crossed every limit of selfishness and cruelty by killing her elder sister to get a chance to marry Amrit. Her habit of journaling in the diary revealed all her feelings, plan and act of removing her own elder sister from the world to fulfill her own desires. It may be mentioned in this context that the habit of diary writing was also not in practice among the Bodos. This aspect was also one of the impacts of modern education. Apart from these, the story also reveals that both Amrit and Krishna's families lived in modern type of well-furnished houses instead of traditional thatched houses with handmade bamboo and jute furniture and other handicrafts. The impact of advanced science and technology is clear in this aspect as well. It may also be observed that, Krishna Narzary's wife offers coffee to her guests in place of rice-beer which is widely used to entertain guests in traditional Bodo society. Another habit of Amrit's, which was smoking factory-made cigarette instead of handmade 'Biri' (Handmade Tobacco wrapped in leaves) shows the impact of modern lifestyle in the said families. It can be observed from the story that Ratan Narzary is a Head teacher of the Sesapani High School, Krishna Narzary is the Principal of a College and Amrit is a College teacher and they all lived in a town. Amrit also lived in Krishna Narzary's house as a tenant. Pursuing a job in a town and the idea of renting out one's own house is a modern way of living for Bodos. It may be observed that modern education imparted the required knowledge and skill to them to do their respective jobs in town adeptly. Gradually, the requirement for better facilities for job-holders and others brought about emergence of towns and semi-towns, boosting economy and standard of living among Bodo society.

3. "Gwswthwnai" (Love affair) Written by Prasenjit Brahma: Prasenjit Brahma was a famous short-story writer of 1950s. "Bobi" (The dumb girl), "Dogri" and "Gwswthwnai" (Love affair) are the names of famous short stories written by him. The story "Gwswthwnai" has been selected for the present study. Alaishri, Alaishri's father, Ramwnda, Onaru and Urbaishri are the various characters in the story, the main focus being on Onaru and Alaishri. Analysis of the story reveals that all the characters are well educated and are ambitious. While Alaishri is a Matriculate, Urbaishri (Alaishri's friend) is a college student. Ramwnda (Alaishri's younger brother) is a high school student and Onaru on the other hand is a graduate. It is observed that besides traditional occupations such as farming, weaving, silkworm rearing etc., these youths became interested in Government

funded jobs. While Alaishri joined as a primary school teacher, Onaru got appointment as a high school teacher in a private school in their own village. It can also be observed that the Bodo youth during that period even accepted non-traditional attires for special occasion such as dhoti-punjabi and other similar garments instead of more traditional attires. They also used other modern necessities for different occasions such as bags, shoes, umbrella and so on. They also became more efficient and travelled by train and other public transport facilities instead of walking or using bullock carts which was the main means of travelling in the past.

The transition of traditional society into modern society is also reflected clearly in the story by another incident. As Onaru and Alaishri loved each other, they didn't wait for their parents' consent. It is observed that Onaru directly goes to Alaishri's house and expresses his desire to marry her. According to traditional marriage customs, the parents accompany the groom to settle marriage ties. But here, Onaru goes alone for the purpose. Another noteworthy fact is that Onaru doesn't speak to Alaishri's parents, he speaks directly to her and asks her consent for the marriage. Hence taking into consideration the discussion above, it may be concluded that modern education within that period gradually converted traditional Bodo society into a modern one with newer outlooks and behavior.

4. Hagra guduni mwi (Deer from deep jungle), a collection of short stories by Nilkamal Brahma. Published in 1972, this book is considered as a master piece by critics:

The main characters of this story are Satyapriya, Sarmila and Urmila. Other characters include Khanthal and P.K. Langthasa. Sarmila and Urmila are daughters of Khanthal who is a contractor by profession. They are well-educated town-dwellers. Sarmila is a graduate and Urmila is a student of a school. It is noteworthy that Khanthal working such a challenging occupation is definitely because of the changing scenario in the society of Bodos in those days. Since they lived in town, they had to adapt to the changing environment and therefore use of imported materials became part of their lives. Traditionally, Bodos mostly used locally available products such as bamboo, jute, straw, leaves and so on for making tools, chairs, stools, beds and houses. But in this story, domestic articles such as factory-made sofa, kitchen wares and so on have been used by Khanthal's family members. It is also observable that instead of traditional rice beer, the family became used to drinking tea only.

Another character of the story, Satyapriya, is also an educated youth, a graduate and a high school teacher who teaches in the school where Urmila, Khanthal's younger daughter studies. Satyapriya is also depicted to have a progressive mindset because apart from teaching, he is also a short-story writer and a private tutor.

The story follows a unique situation wherein Urmila's elder sister, Sarmila, and Satyapriya were good friends. However, Satyapriya is depicted to harbor romantic feelings for Sarmila alongside a desire to marry her. He is hesitant to express his feelings directly to her due to not being sure about reciprocity in Sarmila's feelings. Although Sarmila is by nature a courageous and outspoken girl, it is difficult for Satyapriya to unravel her yearning. Hence the title of the story referenced in this paper is the same as the book, "Hagra guduni mwi", meaning her inner feelings are hidden and unknown to Satyapriya although they are good friends. Satyapriya doesn't dare to reveal his love for her because she is from a rich family, and he fears that she may decline his proposal. As he cannot understand Sarmila's feelings for him, he doesn't want to ruin their friendship and keeps quiet. She is like a deer in the deep jungle, and he is the hunter.

Previously, silkworm-rearing, spinning and weaving were practiced in every household. Women were expert weavers because women without such expertise were criticized by the society and discriminated against as unworthy for marriage and were called 'awhuri' (Good for nothing). Therefore, all women were compelled to learn these skills. Analysis of this story shows that Khanthal's family is very much modern with broader outlook. His daughters most of the time keep busy with their studies and spend their free times watching movies and reading magazines. Therefore, they have no time for learning traditional skills such as weaving, spinning and so on. Moreover, traditionally there were restrictions in socializing with people with other communities. But this story reveals that modern education introduced new ideas and thought processes amongst the Bodo youth, leading to change in their behavior. The carefree life led by Sarmila and her selection of partner from another community, P.K. Langthasa, with whom she eventually gets married is the evidence of drastic manifestation which may be socially regarded as a significant alternation caused by external influences and modern education. This story has great bearing in today's society as well. Modern boys and girls, men and women give more emphasis on individual preferences, emotional connections and mutual respect in marital relationship rather than traditional customs and beliefs. Therefore, the gradual change in the culture of Bodo society is beautifully illustrated through this story.

5. "Botholse jou" by Manoranjan Lahary: "Botholse jou" (A bottle of rice beer) is a famous short story written by Manoranjan Lahary. Boripot and Tarapod are the main characters of this story. The marriage customs of ancient Bodo society is vividly depicted in details in this story. According to this story, the earliest form of Bodo marriage is called 'Hathasuni khurnai' which is held in the bridegroom's house. This ceremony is held on the very day of the arrival of the bride. On this auspicious day of the 'Hinjaw gwdan lainai' (Fetching of the bride from her house), most of the family members along with relatives and neighbours accompany the bridegroom. Amongst the accompaniment, the most important person in the marriage ceremony is the

‘Barlangpha’ (an elderly person who is responsible for negotiating the marriage from the beginning till the end). He leads the wedding party with the bridegroom performing special marriage dance. In the ancient past, Barlangpha was required to tie a piece/cake of soil along with a pig/a body part of a pig while leading the marriage procession. However, the analysis of this story reveals that the wedding ceremony of Baripot’s eldest son takes place in the bride’s house (that is, Tarapod’s house in Daulabari village) as well. It is observed that Baripot from Simbor village had no objection in arranging celebration of the wedding of his son in brides’ house also. The marriage ceremony took place according to the Brahmanic marriage system. Therefore, the marriage ceremony was performed by a Purohit following Vedic rites, associated with some traditional rituals and customs. It may be mentioned in this context that, in the first decade of 20th century, Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma introduced Brahma Dharma among the Bodos. Therefore, new customs and marriage rituals emerged among the Bodo societies in due course of time. Furthermore, thorough analysis of the text in the story reveals that Baripot did not serve traditional food items to the guests. Entertaining guests with rice-beer and pork is compulsory during marriage ceremonies of Bodo people. However, in this marriage, tea replaced the rice-beer and betel nuts and biris were provided along with modern factory-made cigarettes. Refraining from use of rice-beer indicates that Baripot wanted his daughter’s marriage ceremony to be without any untoward incidences. Since he was a follower of Brahman religion, he definitely discouraged intoxicating drinks in social gatherings. It may be observed that he is the symbolic representative of those who practically wanted to bring a reformation in the traditional marriage customs and rituals among the Bodos. He wanted to convey the message of ill-effect of such drinks to the society as a whole and hence he took such a bold step without caring for criticism from the conservative people of the society.

In earlier times, demanding of ‘Phon-taka’ (Bride price) was a compulsory part of the wedding customs among the Bodos. As there was no limit of this phon-taka, the demands used to sometimes exceed even 1000 Rupees. However, the phon-taka demanded by Tarapod in this was only one Rupee coin and a bottle of rice beer. But Baripot only offered him one rupee coin and made it clear that if he has to offer rice-beer, then Tarapod cannot accept his daughter as his Daughter-In-Law. In this context, it may be mentioned that, in present day Bodo society, demand of phon-taka has almost disappeared except in some remote places (Basumatary, Phukan Chandra and Chainary, Swarna Prabha, 2017).

Among the Bodo society, people used to partake in merry-making during the marriage ceremony by dancing with the tunes of traditional Bodo musical instruments such as *Serja* (a string-instrument), *Kham* (a big drum), *Sifung* (Flute), *Jotha* (Cymbal), and *Gonggona* (a small musical instrument made of bamboo which is played by using mouth and the index finger). However, instead of these traditional musical instruments, Baripot arranged a ‘Band party’ who received the bridegroom party by playing modern tunes. This act of Baripot definitely brought significant transformation on the traditional customs of Bodo marriage. It is seen that with changing time, many other electronic instruments have been introduced such as key boards, guitar, modern drum, saxophone and so on as accompaniment for singing modern songs and dance to entertain the guests during the Bodo marriage ceremonies. In some marriages, even such physical performances are entirely absent. Only modern songs of different languages are played through electronic devices and speakers. The relatives of the bridegroom and other people simply dance with the tunes of the series of different types of songs for their amusement and to entertain the guests.

III. Discussion and Conclusion:

This study is conducted hypothetically with the concept that there is gradual transition in culture of Bodos with passing time. Extensive analysis of these short stories written by well known writers reveal that, there are remarkable socio-cultural changes in Bodo societies due to modern education, availability of modern goods due to new discovery, inventions and cultural diffusion. When a new idea, technology, or practice is developed within a culture, it brings about change in behavior or beliefs. The acceptance of new marriage customs and beliefs in the above stories by the elders and guardians of the families reveals the impact of the above mentioned factors. Due to modern education and exposure to different environments, remarkable cultural adaptation is observed among the young generations in these stories. Instead of traditional occupations for their livelihood, their preference for higher esteemed professions such as college and school teaching jobs clearly shows broader outlook of the youth. Encouragement of the parents towards their children in choice of partners on their own and their jobs further reveals the impact of modernity in the families and society as a whole. Anil Kumar Brahma writes that, “A spirit of self-awakening and enlightenment gradually came under the impact of western education and the enthusiasm created by the organizations like ‘Boro Chatra Sanmilani’ and ‘Habraghat Boro Sanmilani(Boro, Anil Kumar, 2012)”. Rupnath Wary (2026) mentions emergence of several other Boro organizations with new outlook and innovation to uplift the Boro Society which are Boro Maha Sonmiloni (Socio-religious organization), Boro Literary club (Socio-Literary organization), Boro Sahitya Sabha (All Boro Literary Organization), Boro writers’ Academy (Boro writers’ Organization) and All Boro Students’ Union and so on. (Rupnath Wary, 2026). He also mentions that Brahma religion is one of the major factors for which a

great change is seen in traditional Boro culture. Anil Kumar Brahma writes that “Kalicharan Brahma declared a crusade against illiteracy, social malpractice, habit of drinking and brewing country liquor”. Weaving, sericulture, farming are most important cultural assets of Bodos. The stories reveal that Bodo women in each and every household practiced weaving and sericulture. Therefore they were self-reliant and confident. This is very clearly depicted in Ishan Chandra Mushahary’s short story “Abari”. However, as depicted in the stories- “Hagra Guduni Mwi” “Gwmanai diary” and “Botholse jou”, with passing time due to education and modernity, young girls in these stories have no time for such traditional practices. However, Rishma Basumatary and Teresa Khawzawl (2024) mention in their research paper that ‘The enduring significance and sagacity of weaving among the Boros have not been diminished by the adaptation due to changing scenario of social, economic and political transformations associated with modernization. They are continuing to create classic themes and designs, but with modifications in the materials, threads and colors and arrangements of the patterns. Weavers continue to believe that these modified items are authentic manifestations of their craftsmanship. Moreover, in recent years, a substantial proportion of women have pursued and attained advanced level of education, actively contributing to the process of redefining and reaffirming the communal identity. These women exemplify the convergence of traditional and modern elements within the dynamic Bodo society.

The traditional Boro society, which met Christianity in the twentieth century underwent profound change that is visible in their outlook and traditional institutions (Phukan Chandra Basumatary and Rupnath Wary, 2026). Significant changes were noteworthy among the Boro people due to various missionary activities of Christian missionaries. They established schools and encouraged them to pursue modern education to become self-reliant, and also encouraged to pursue vocational arts; founded dispensaries and provided medical treatment, taught about cleanliness, hygiene and health. As mentioned by Sekhar Brahma, the spread of Christianity among the Boros has brought some remarkable changes among the Boros in their pattern of living, customs, habits, beliefs and values (Sekhar Brahma, 2011).

Considering the above mentioned factors, it may be concluded by saying that a gradual but massive cultural changes are observable among the Boros of today in terms of production, consumption, exchange and so on. The Boros of present generation (mainly educated) have imbibed new ideology and have accepted modern ways of life. It is befitting to mention that the writers of the above short stories vividly reflected these changes several years back. Their writings definitely represent farsightedness, striving to make people aware and help people survive future dangers of altered cultural elements and identity.

Recommendations: Key aspects of some approaches to prevent cultural change through cultural development are-

1. Actively promoting and revitalizing traditional practices, art forms, festivals and rituals to ensure their continuity within the community.
2. Language revitalization: Supporting the use and teaching of the native language to prevent its decline and maintain cultural communication.
3. Community engagement: Involving community members in cultural initiatives, decision-making processes, and cultural education to foster ownership and participation.
4. Documentation and archiving: Recording and preserving cultural knowledge, stories, and artifacts to ensure their accessibility for future generations.
5. Cultural education: Implementing educational programs that teach about the communities’ history, values, and cultural practices to instill pride and understanding.
6. Supporting cultural institutions: Providing resources and funding to cultural organizations like Museum, Art Centres, and community groups to promote cultural preservation and development.

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