Gender in Bodo and Assamese Language: A Comparative Study

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Abstract: The comparative linguistics compares two or more different languages. It traces the evolution of languages and then establishes the relationships between them by comparing one with the other. Generally, this comparison is done between the languages that genetically related or the languages that are developed from one common source. The comparative linguistics may also compare between the languages which do not have their origin in the same common source.

The Bodo and Assamese language are not originated from a common source. Boro language is originated from Tibeto-Burman group of Sino-Tibetan language family and Assamese language and Assamese language is oriented from the Indo-Aryan group of Indo-European language family. Though both the languages are developed from two different linguistic stocks, yet they posses some common characters. Because the speaker of these two languages have been living together in a same geographical area from the earlier periods. They are living in Assam just like good neighbors. So the Bodo speakers have incorporated some elements from The Indo-Aryan Assamese speakers and the Assamese speakers have incorporated some elements from the Tibeto-Burman Group of Bodo speakers. These mutual influences are basically seen in case of Phonology, Morphology, Syntax , Lexis of vocabulary and other socio-cultural habits, and it helps to develop the socio-cultural integration in the region. Hence in this paper an attempt has been made to discuss the similarly characters in case of 'Gender' in both the languages. It is assumed that this paper will help the readers in observing the relationship between the Bodo and Assamese language and also help in bringing communal harmony as well as national integration, because difference or diversity enriches unity, the whole.

Key words : Comparative language, Bodo, Assamese, Gender.

1.0 Introduction:

Assamese language is oriented from Indo-Aryan group of Indo-European language family and is belonged to modern –Indo-Aryan sub groups. This language is spoken by the Assamese people in general and it is the link language for the people living in Assam and its adjoining states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland etc. The Mongoloid people living in the state of Assam also speak this language in the bilingual situation for their communication with the Aryan Assamese people. This language came from Sanskrit as its offshoot through different stages of development known as Prakrit and Apabhramgsa. Sanskrit itself is the language which

was used in the classical period throughout the northern Indian states by the Aryan people. It comes out from the Indo-European family through its different stages of development in different periods. Assamese language is the state language of Assam and is one of the 22 languages recognized by the eight scheduled of the Indian Constitution.

On the contrary the Bodo language belongs to the Sino-Tebetan family of languages which is occupying the 2nd place next to the Indo-European family of languages in the world. According to the classification given in the linguistic survey of India, the Bodo language belongs to the Bodo sub section of Bodo-Naga section under the Assam-Burmese Group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Tibeto-Chinese family. The Bodo speech community is now well spread throughout the North East India including Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Northern part of west Bengal, Bihar and adjoining areas of Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. The Bodo language is the associate state language of Assam and is one of the 22 language is recognized by the as an optional paper in IAS, IPS, IFS, ACS, APS etc. examination. As medium of instruction in the educational institutions Bodo language occupies the second place next to Assamese language in Assam.

2.0 Aims and Objectives of the study :

Though the Assamese and Bodo language are sprung out from the different root or sources, yet they posses some common features. Hence, in this paper it is trying to discuss the Gender system of both the language in a comparative manner. The aims and objectives of this paper are-

(i) To study the Gender system in Bodo and Assamese.

(ii) To discuss the similarity characters of Gender in both the languages.

3.0 Methodology :

As per methodology is concerned this paper is primarily based on the secondary information. The secondary information is collected from different sources like books, journals, souvenirs, reviewing books etc. Some personal observation and views are also added to analysis this paper.

4.0 Gender system in Assamese and Bodo language :

Assamese and Bodo are historically originated from two different language families, the first is originated from two different language families, the first is originated from Indo-Aryan group of Indo-European language family and is belong to Modern Indo-Aryan sub-group, and the second falls under Assam-Burmese branch of Tibeto-Burman group of Sino-Tibetan language family. But it is interesting to note that, though both the languages are developed from two different linguistic stocks, yet they posses some common phonological and morphological

features. Gender system is a morphological aspect in which both the languages posses some common characteristics.

Assamese language posses the natural gender system in which animate beings and in animate things are classified as masculine feminine or neuter according to their sex or lack of sex. But it should be noted that there is no difference in declension system between the words of masculine and neuter gender. Actually in Assamese animate objects only distinguish gender. As such Assamese possesses two genders masculine and feminine. Most of the nouns, few pronouns, few adjectives and classifiers denote masculine and feminine gender in Assamese.

Bodo languages also the possess the natural gender system in which gender distinction is maintained among animate objects only. There is no gender division of inanimate objects as found in Hindi or other language. As such Bodo also possesses two genders-masculine and feminine.

5.0 Gender Distinction in Assamese and Bodo Language and their Similarity characters :

In Bodo and Assamese language, the distinction of sex may be expressed mainly by the following three ways:

 5.1 By using separate noun bases for male and female beings.

5.2 By using separate qualifying words before or after common nouns.

5.3 By using different suffixes.

5.1 Separate noun bases for male and female :

Both the languages possess varieties of separate noun bases which indicate male and female status. Most of the nouns of relationship fall under this category e.g.

Assamese:

Deutâ father   Ma 'mother
Kâkai 'elder brother'   Nâbâu ' elder brother's wife '
Dâra ' Bridegroom'   Kâina ' bride'
Kâka 'grandfother'   Aita 'grandmother'
Lorâ 'boy'   Soâli 'girl'
Khohur 'father-in-law'   Khâhu 'mother-in-law'
Bhindeu 'sister-in-law'   Baideu 'elder sister'
Khura /dodai ' uncle'   Khuri 'uncle's wife'

Bodo:

Âpha 'father'	Âi 'mother'
Âdâ 'elder brother'	Bâjwi ' elder brother's wife'
Huwâ gwdaan 'bridegroom'	Hinjâo gwdaan 'bride'
Âbou ' grandfather'	Âbwi 'grandmother'
Sengrâ 'Boy'	Sikhlâ 'girl'
Bihâo 'father-in-law'	Bikhunzw 'mother-in-law'
Gumwi ' sister-in-law'	Bai 'elder sister'
Âdwi / dadawi 'uncle'	Mâdwi 'uncle's wife
Âmai 'mother's brother'	Ânwi 'mother's brother's wife'
Bwrâi 'old man'	Burwi 'old woman'

5.2. Separate qualifying words:

In Assamese language the qualifying terms or words are used before the noun bases. The qualifying terms are mata and maiki in Assamese and they are used before the terms which belong to common gender, e.g.

Assamese :

Matâ mânuh ' male person'	Mâiki mânuh ' female person'
Matâ Ma'h ' he buffalo'	Mâiki Ma'h 'she buffalo'
Matâ Haah ' he duck'	Mâiki Haah 'she duck'
Matâ kukurâ 'the cock'	Mâiki kukura 'the hen'

In Bodo language also, there are also, there are some qualifying terms which are generally used after the noun bases e.g.

Bodo :

Huwâ manswi 'Male person'	Hinjao manswi ' woman person'
Swimâ Bundâ ' male dog'	Swimâ Bundi ' female dog'
Mâwzi Bunda 'male cat'	Mâwzi Bundi 'female male'
Dâw zwlâ 'the cock'	Dâw zw 'the hen'
Phisâ houâ 'male child'	Phisâ hinzao ' female child'
Bwrma phantha 'he goat'	Bowrma phanthi 'she goat'
Omâ bundâ 'male pig'	Omâ bundi 'female pig'

5.3 Using different suffixes   :

Both the languages, Assamese and Bodo, possess some suffixes which are generally added to the masculine noun bases to indicate feminine gender. This suffixes are called feminine suffixes. The feminine suffixes in Assamese are – I, Ni, Ri . 'Ni' suffixes have three more extended allomorph, that are – ani , ini, uni . and 'Ri' suffixes also three extended allomorph , that are- ari, eri, uri . Therefore Assamese language has nine suffixes – 'I', 'Ni', 'Ani', 'Ini', 'Uni', 'Ri', 'Ari', 'Eri', and 'Uri'. These suffixes are some phonologically conditioned and some are morphologically conditioned.

There usage are –

-'I' : Is added after the word ending in consonants and vowel e.g.

Nilâz ' Shamelessman'	Nilâzi ' Shameless woman'
Burhâ/ Burâ 'Old man'	Burhi/ Buri 'Old woman'
Azalâ 'Simpleton man'	Âzali ' Simpleton woman'
Pâgâla 'Mad man'	Pagâli ' Mad woman'
Peha 'Fathers sister's husband'	Pehi 'fathers younger sister'

-Ni : It is added after masculine forms in a, â and i, e.g.

Grihastha 'House holder'	Grihasthani 'Wife of the house holder'
Baruâ 'male person bearing the Barua title'	Baruâni 'wife of Barua title
Nâti ' Grandson'	Nâtini 'Grand doughter'
Sakia 'Male person bearing the Saikia title'	Saikiani 'Female person bearing the Saikia title

-Ni has three allomorph 'ini' 'ani' and 'uni'

-Ini : -Ini is added after ending in a consonant and vowel 'a' e.g.

Bâgh 'Tiger'	Bâghini 'Tigress'
Mali 'Male gardenar'	Malini 'Female gardenar'
Mitâ 'Friend of groom'	Mitini 'Wife of Groom's friend'

-Ani : Ani is added after male form of consonant and vowels of the words as follows :

Phukân ' Male person bearing the Phukan title	Phukânâni 'Wife of phukan title'
Komâr ' Blacksmith'	Komârâni 'female Blacksmith'

Nâpit 'male barber'   Nâpitani 'female barber'

-Uni : -Uni is added after consonant and vowel ending bases morpho-phonemic change e.g.

Cur 'thief'   Curoni 'female thief'

Dhobâ 'deaf man'   Dhubuni 'washer woman'

Dom 'man person shedule cast of Assam'   Dumuni 'female person shedule cast of Assam'.

-Ri has three allomorph –Ari, -Eri, -Uri

-Ari: Kâla 'deaf man'   Kâlari 'deaf woman'

-Eri: Dekâ 'young man'   Dekeri 'young woman'

-Uri: Bengâ 'dumb man'   Benguri 'dumb woman'

Boro :

The feminine suffixes in Bodo are – 'i', 'u' and 'e'. Among them the most common suffix is 'i' which may change to 'e' particularly in addressive term. It may be mentioned that masculine forms in Bodo are generally vowel â ending e.g.

Nâblâ 'flat nose man'   Nâble 'flat nose woman'

Ludurgâ 'fat man'   Ludurgi 'fat woman'

Udlâ   'wide lipped man'   Udli 'wide lipped woman'

Bengâ 'deaf man'   Bengi 'deaf woman'

Zâmbâ 'simple man'   Zâmbi 'simple woman'

Hâithâ 'short man'   Hâithu 'short female'

Lengrâ 'limping man'   Lengri 'limping woman'

Honglâ 'man with big mouth'   Hongle 'woman with big nostril'

Orgâ 'man with big mouth'   Orge 'woman with big mouth'

Râjkhungur 'prince'   Râjkhungri 'princess'

Gonthong khândâ 'man with cut-nose'   Gonthong khandi 'woman with cut-nose

6.0 **Uniquely masculine and uniquely feminine gender** :

In both the languages Assamese and Bodo , there are some nouns which are uniquely masculine and uniquely feminine gender. The nouns which are always masculine (do not have corresponding feminine nouns) and always feminine (do not corresponding masculine nouns) in Assamese are –

Borolâ 'an aged unmarried man'

Nâmati 'woman skilled in singing songs'

Xipini 'woman skilled in weaving'

Râwani 'woman who plans paddy'

Dâwa'ni 'a reaper woman' etc.

In Bodo language, the nouns which are always masculine and always feminine are –

Badari 'wood cutter'

Barolampha 'a traditional folk dancer who participate in the marriage ceremony'

Laukhar 'cowboy'

Bokhali   'a baby's nurse'

Adungari 'an aged unmarried lady'

Soundaori 'a naughty woman'

Bazari 'vagrant woman'

Sangrema 'sterile woman' etc.

7.0. CONCLUSION :

From the above analysis it is clear that though the Bodo and Assamese language are developed from two different linguistic stocks, there are various similarities between the gender systems of both the languages. No doubt, these languages have various dissimilarity characters also. But the similarity characters prove that both the languages are influenced by each other. This has happened due to close contact of the two languages and helps to develop the socio-cultural integration in the region.

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