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Contextual Study of Assamese Proverbs: A Case Study of Kamrup District

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Abstract:

Proverbs are the sayings, identity of talent, of intellect, of depth of knowledge of a social group. The bearers of proverb disseminate their knowledge and guide the society through proverbs. Proverbs pour focus on different aspects of social life. It also shows human nature, character, and attitude. Moreover, they are the wisdom or insight of a community. Assamese proverbs are an interesting genre of folklore. In Assamese the terms like, phokora, potantar, jojona are in vogue for proverb. Proverbs are naturally straightforward as those are created by the straightforward folk. Proverbs are created out of long human experience and can play the role of light bearer of the community. Moreover, the context is one of inseparable parts of Assamese proverb to decode its meaning.

1. Introduction

Proverbs are the first-hand experience of an individual and social group. A proverb is *one man's wit and wisdom of many*. Proverbs are the wise sayings of the folk. The role of proverbs in a society is like an institution that educate the young generation who are taught in the school of life through the curriculum of proverbs. Proverbs are reflector of social history, social life. For example in folk society a son-in-law is considered as valuable rare kind of relative. Therefore the mother of bride does not bother if her son in law marries to a new bride after the death of his first wife, because it is unbearable for the mother to see her daughter as a widow.

According to Aristotle proverbs are *fragments of an elder wisdom*. Proverbs are universal and touch the heart of everybody. As human experience is similar everywhere therefore a proverb of a place is approximately similar in other places. Proverbs are the compressed or condensed form of the experience found throughout the centuries. It exposes social status, trickery and lives of the people. In Assam some proverbs give advices, some other proverbs are related to guest, women and children. Some other proverbs highlight the philosophy of *Vaisnavite* religion. Proverbs are one of the most easily observed and collected genres of traditional expression, yet one of the least understood. *Proverbs are the terse didactic and metaphorical statements containing concise homely truths on various aspects of life.* (A.H.Krappe, P-143). They are also the *essence of thoughts and philosophy that a group of people acquire through the ages.* (G.B.Milner P-353).

Lord John Russell described proverbs as *the wisdom of many and the wit of one*. They are in effect the capsule wisdom, the distilled knowledge of the people. They are also based on observation, experience or without either of these being first-hand, accepted as useful truism on a hand-me-down basis from the past.

Proverbs are also learnt and transmitted spontaneously through oral tradition from people to people and from generation to generation. Proverbs serve as a guide for standard of social behaviour and also sometimes for socio-economic reforms. It is a fact that they play a more effective role in the judicial system of certain communities. As for instance, in a Nigerian judicial system in the tribal area of Africa, the role of proverb is worth mentioning. It has been analysed in detail by John Messenger. He remarks that *proverbs are by far the most numerous and the most frequently employed of these forms of verbal art and are used in all manner of situations as a means of amusement.....as a method of gaining favour in courts, in performing religious rituals and association ceremonies, and to give point and add colour to ordinary conversation.* (Alan Dundes (ed.) P- 299).

Proverbs educate people in numerous ways. *They play an effective role in exercising social control in the villages*(William R. Bascom P-290).

Sometimes proverbs serve as a vehicle for social protest. Common people generally feel hesitation in making complaints directly against exploitation, oppression and injustice, but they will find some solace in folklore through proverbs as they may show their anger at the difficulties caused by injustice exploitation etc. of the ruling power. *They also play an important role in serving the communication of knowledge. Those proverbs related to weather, ploughing, manuring, weeding, irrigation, harvesting and omens provide good knowledge to the folk.*(Archer Taylor, P-903)

Proverbs also give advice on the conduct of life and social intercourse and so on. Almost in every community in the world there is use of proverbs. But, how proverbs originated nobody knows. Proverbs are the spontaneous overflow of the folk but not a deliberate lecturing. People expressed the inner feeling in a condensed style on some experience and with the passage of time it has lost the name of its composer but started to be used in a wide scale. Proverbs are not the sentences to show pedanticism. Proverbs may be created with a reference to a thing, a story a feeling and attitude; for example *Sei Ramo nai; sei Ayudha o nai* the English translation of which is "Oh the time; oh the manners". Here the reference is made to the mythological epic "The Ramayana" where Lord Ramachandra in

his regime created a heaven on earth. This is important to notice that proverbs cover all the stages of human life and such sayings must have to be recognized as the resource of common people. However, acceptability that is found in a proverb is not universal but partial.

2. Assamese Proverbs

Assamese proverbs are as interesting as the proverbs found in any other places of entire world. At present the very notion of *phokora*, *potantar*, *jojona* have been mixed up. It is seen that in the modern Assamese society the use of proverbs have been drastically reduced. Keshab Saikia in an article named *Phokora – Jojona, Sathar* has written that sometimes human has to communicate through indirect sign and a new type of language is produced. For example a pig (*gahori*) is called as *nuk nuki pohu*, a cock is called as *ram paora* or an eel like fish is called as *pukhuri poria gobindai*. In *bhokotia Vaishnavite* society beetle nut is known as *gua pan*, rice as *saul muthi*. In fact to maintain the gravity, secrecy of religion such codes were used.

As that mostly the proverbs are the creation of the rural people and the urbanization is a later phenomenon. Even the expressive powers of proverbs are limitless. Proverbs possess the style of euphemism. For example:

aai ashe khai ja

aai nai shai ja.

Meaning: If you have your mother come, eat; if you have no mother look and leave. This proverb is the spontaneous out pour of love that a mother possesses for her children. In this proverb we see the love and care of a mother for her children and the value of her existence. If the mother is alive she never let her children to go away empty stomach.]

Proverbs are similar to the message of God. Proverbs have not been neglected at any period of human history by the folk. Proverbs have been being used by the people who are considered as wise persons in the society. Proverbs are being used ages after ages.

Even in older Assamese literature we see use of proverbs in the writing of Madhab Kandali, Haribar Bipra, Sankardeva, and Ram Saraswati. (Sarma, H. K. P-39)

Assamese proverbs are also the pulse of life. These proverbs carry a close relationship with real life situation. Generally Assamese people are excellent host. Proverbs, known as *yojana*, *patantar*, *prabasan*, and *dristanta* in Assamese community, are short, meaningful sentences which are easily remembered. Some proverbs might not possess aesthetic value but the inherent meaning that a proverb possesses cannot be neglected.

The context plays an important part to decipher meaning of each proverb. In this study the collected proverbs are found to be more or less similar to the proverbs prevalent in other parts of Assam with slight variation and difference in language and expression.

3. Classification of Collected Proverbs

3.1. Proverbs Related to Human Habit

- a) Eating
- b) Behaviour
- c) Character

3.2. Proverbs Related to Human Attitude

- a) Reprimand
- b) Fortune
- c) Expectation
- d) Relation
- e) Craving
- f) Fear
- g) Selfishness
- h) Affection

3.3. Proverbs Related to Human Beauty and Laziness.

- a) Parts of Body
- b) Past Glory
- c) Beauty
- d) Sceptism

3.4. Proverbs Related Social Status

3.5. Proverbs for Teasing and Sarcasm

3.6. Proverbs Related to Agriculture

- 1) Plough
- 2) Plant
- 3) Animal
- 4) Planning

3.7. Proverbs Related to Trickery

3.8. Proverbs of Counselling

3.9. Proverbs Related to Guest

3.10. Proverbs Related to Food Habit

3.11. Proverbs Related to Women and Child

3.12. Proverbs Related to Work

3.13. Sarcastic Proverb

3.14. Bhakatia Proverbs

3.1. Proverbs related to Human Habit

(a) Eating

- I) *roh kolle thoh kolle
bengana dile bhatat
thoh thoh koi gili pella
etao naral patot*

[Meaning: Showed displeasure initially but swallowed up everything to the very last morsel.]

Context: This proverb refers to someone who although did not feel like eating as because he was not satisfied with something but out of hunger and delicious quality of food ate up everything from the plate. *Thoh thoh koi gili pella* means to greedily fill the stomach with food with quick movement of hand.

- II) *kha buri kha
lotuh buri
kothiai moril ja*

[Meaning: Eat old woman, eat when all the seedlings destroyed.]

Context: When everything is lost and there is no hope for growth then people speak this. Now there is nothing to eat upon, everything is lost even though very seeds are damaged. Here '*lotuh buri*' means a very old woman, who seems to be very gluttonous. Only because of such gluttony everything is lost. There is another Assamese equivalent of this proverb, which is found in written or standard Assamese language viz. *sandah khoa bali tal gal*.

b) Behaviour

- I) *oi pan bota, bharit bindhil kota
khaj kahriba naro lage sendel jota*

[Meaning: Thorns has penetrated on the toe, require sleepers to walk.]

Context: This proverb ridicules the effect of being sophisticated in a rural society where in rural life most of the people cultivate food on fields. People go to field for cultivation barefoot. But there are some youngsters who are dandy and do not wish to go anywhere without wearing sophisticated clothes and sleepers. In order to expose the nature of such coxcomb, people speak the proverb.

- II) *alei tamuli, bele pan
khopar bhitarat kotari khan*

[Meaning: *alei tamuli bele pan*, here the two words *alei* and *belie* is used only to make a rhythm referring to the importance of beetle and beetle leaf in a rural society. The cutter is kept there inside the bun.]

Context: The speaker tells this proverb to refer to someone whom he knows very well, in fact a busy body and does nothing. She only does one thing that chewing of beetle nut which is a common practice of rural Assamese community. She takes a cutter thrashing into her wavy haired bun as to show that she is always busy with the day to day activities but in reality she does nothing.

- III) *bagh dekhli agoi
bora dekhli pasoi*

[Meaning: Looking a tiger goes forward and looking a boar retreats.]

Context: When a person is uncertain while taking a decision, thinking about an impending consequence, one can use this proverb and can use referring to such circumstance. The proverb show the inherent cowardice nature of a person who runs away or retreat if he comes across a tiger. The proverb shows the sceptical nature of a person who react differently with different situation and with people of different status.

- IV) *tini dal man suli
khopa bandhe tuli
ghan ghan koi ghatot jai
gorki lagog buli*

[Meaning: Only with thin hairs one does hair style, goes to the public places frequently to get engagement.]

Context: The proverb is satirically used to expose the vainness of some maids who always want to be married off. The village elders while referring to some wanton girls use this proverb and expose that the girl has no beauty still she decorates herself and frequently visit public places to be courted by a male counterpart with whom she can tie her nuptial knot. The proverb pour focus on the practice of the community to fetch water from far away water body as because during that time there were no tube-well or public health system.

(c) Proverbs Related to Character

- I) *bogalie jota pai tota khai
npali thake sudha pete*

[Meaning: A heron eats up everything that he finds, if there is nothing to eat the heron remains empty stomach.]

Context: This proverb refers to the nature of some persons who never think about future but only live in present. He eats up whatever he gets and if there is nothing to eat then he goes empty stomach. Here *bogalim* metaphorically means such human who are not serious about high thinking.

- II) *ghumtir bori bakra*
bhokhar ponta jokra

[Meaning: A sleepy person keeps no difference of a bed; a hungry person too keeps no difference of food.]

Context: when one feels sleepy, one can sleep at any *bori bakra*, that is mound or erected place even on bare floor; similarly when one feels hungry, one can satisfy hunger even eating *ponta jokra* that is stale food.

Necessity is the root of all desire. Without need a tiger too does not kill a tiger. If anybody does not feel hungry even the most delicious food has no value for him in the same way a sleepless person cannot sleep even if he is provided the most comfortable bed.

- III) *sukut thaki bukut khoa*

[Meaning: To hurt on the very bosom, where one lives, showing no compassion.]

Context: This proverb is used to refer to a person who is a traitor, who often behaves as a friend, take opportunity and in some convenient time harms the person who once offered him shelter.

- IV) *bostu khali panda*
khai dei uthi chanda

[Meaning: If offered enough food he remains gentle and cool.]

Context: This proverb is used in the context of referring to a naughty child who is impatient before getting food but becomes mild after he is offered food.

The proverb is also used in the context of referring to some corrupted officials who shows unusual seriousness until and unless he is bribed.

3.2. Proverbs related to Human Attitude

a. Proverbs of Reprimand

- I) *hagber nai mati*
lage betak senguptar dhuti

[Meaning: No plot of land for defecation, but wants luxurious cloth.]

Context: This proverb is used as an irony to refer to someone who is poor but covetous. There are some persons who are not aware about their social status but want to live an extravagant life.

- II) *ahse kurma bohse silot*
Lor sor kolli morbi kilot

[Meaning: Oh, well the guest you have come, be sitted on the stone, if shake your body you will die off a blow of hand.]

Context: This proverb is used in the context of referring to the nature of guest. Here the reference may not be confined to guest but refer to anybody who possesses evil intention. If any person behaves beyond the social norms he may be threatened using these words.

b. Proverbs of Fortune

- I) *tokar nam joi ram*
tokai kore sob kam

[Meaning: The other name of money is God. Money does everything.]

Context: The proverb is used in the context if referring to the importance of money, fortune.

- II) *hon fonke pare pati*
ghumti nahe ore rati

[Meaning: The bed is laid with enthusiasm; but no sign of sleep.]

Context: The proverb is used in the context of referring to the desire that remains unfulfilled. While reffering to the expectation that is not fulfilled this proverb is used.

c. Proverbs of Expectation

- I) *ahibu joei katpo pat*
roi ja vinihi khai ja vat

[Meaning: Brother-in-law, wait till the arrival of the son in law who has gone to cut leaf.]

Context: The proverb is used in the context of referring to a situation which is unlikely to happen. The proverb symbolizes vain expectation.

The rural people used to eat food on the leaves of banana. This is considered to be a healthy practice. If any guest arrives one of the family members go to the garden to cut the leaf of banana to serve food.

- II) *hobo soli bulbu bap*
Tehe guspo manar tap

[Meaning: The child will be born one day and he will start to address as father and all my grief will vanish.]

Context: The proverb is used in the context of referring to a vain expectation or fulfilment of a remote expectation. It takes months to bear a child and this is a long process. The proverb is used to show the uncertainty of life.

d. Proverbs Related to Relation

- I) *masor neosan laopati*
kurmar neosan salpoti

[Meaning: Among fish *laopati* is the most neglected, among guests *salpoti* is the most neglected.]

Context: The proverb is used in the context of referring to the mutual relationship of *salpoti*.

- II) *joai nileo nia*
jome nileo nia

[Meaning: Whether the daughter is taken by the son in law or by the god of death *Yom raj* is a similar thing.]

Context: The proverb is used in the context of referring to the belief that the rural community keep for their son-in-laws and the status of a daughter in the family. Once a girl is married off the responsibility is over. The responsibility goes to the hand of the son-in-law. The son-in-law and the god of death are equalized. The proverb pours focus on the male dominated society.

e. Proverbs related to Craving

- I) *bap kalot nohol gai*
Koiria loi khiraboloi jai

[Meaning: He is out to milch the cow taking a bowl but alas! He has no cow in his entire descendants.]

Context: This proverb is used in the context of referring to excessive desire. There are some persons who want to get more than he deserves to mean such type of situation they use this proverb.

- II) *huri moril valei hol*
kani kapor morei hol

[Meaning: This is good that the old woman is dead, her belongings will be mine.]

Context: In the absence of someone if there lies any benefit than this proverb is used.

f. Proverbs Related to Fear

- 1) *sarute sape khale kesuloiko bhoy*

[Meaning: A man who has once been bitten by a snake is afraid of an earth worm.]

Context: The English equivalent of the proverb is that *a burnt child dreads the spark*.

g. Proverbs related to selfishness

- 1) *kar bhagne more kar hoi khati*

[Meaning: Whose loss is there when someone else's *bhagne* nephew is dead?]

Context: Nobody thinks about the troubles of others. Everybody is to solve their own problem himself. No one comes to help in the time of distress.

- 2) *kako dekhi randhe bare*
kako dekhi duar mare

[Meaning: Shows hospitality and feed some well and shuts the door with a bang against some other.]

Context: To show human partiality that exist in the minds of some individuals who behave differently with persons of different status one can use the proverb.

h. Proverbs related to affection

- I) *ekahan kasi jar*
Sang pathare tar

[Meaning: One sickle moves around the field.]

Context: Sickle is an instrument used by the cultivators to reap paddy. One who has only one sickle he takes that everywhere, similarly the family where there is only one child he enjoys all the privileges.

→ CLASS- III

3.3. Proverbs Related to Human Beauty and Laziness

a. Proverbs Related to Parts of a Body.

- I) *oh lukobi boh lukobi*
hopra jaoato kot lukabi

[Meaning: You can hide your age and beauty but how to hide that continuous thinning of your face?]

Context: This proverb is generally used in the context of showing the futility of beauty. However effort we take to look young but the time will snatch our beauty one day.

- II) *age aslu api sokale asil sapi*
etia halo tiri kaoiei nasai firi

[Meaning: When I was a girl all came near to me but now I have become a wife and nobody looks back to me.]

Context: The proverb is used to refer to the meaninglessness of human beauty.

3.4. Proverbs Related to Social Status

I) *namta gosai seng pora khai*

[Meaning: Unwanted guest is to be satisfied with ordinary reception.]

Context: This proverb refers to some people who are considered ordinary because of their low social position they do not get respect and have to be content with meager hospitality.

II) *ka buliba najne ratnawali pohraboloi jai*

[Meaning: Can't pronounce /K/ but dare to teach Ratnawali.]

Context: This proverb is used in the context of referring to some people who are haughty and wants to show off their limited knowledge. /k/ is the first alphabet of the Assamese letters, and Ratnawali is the name of a holy book written by saint Madhavdev. If one can't pronounce the first letter /k/ how can he teach the Ratnawali?

3.5. Proverbs for Teasing and Sarcasm

I) *ghun ghun jotare aaik nile motare
baideuke kandbe lagsi baltingar vitare*

[Meaning: Wearing fine shoes sister is eloped away. Elder sister is crying lurking into a bucket.]

Context: To tease some kids the grown-ups speak this proverb.

II) *hatir gat torar forpat*

[Meaning: To throw ball upon an elephant.]

Context: *Tora* is a kind of delicate weed found near water body. To attack an elephant throwing such type of weed is quite meaningless. This proverb is used to refer to the effort of an ordinary person trying to injure a powerful person.

III) *olei ashe shen
aha nai gan*

[Meaning: Still the childhood mucus or phlegm from the nose is blowing, wisdom is yet to attain.]

Context: This proverb is used to signify some youngsters who do not want to listen to the suggestion of the elders. It is in such a circumstance the grown up use this proverb to under estimate them.

3.5.1. Proverbs Related to Social Status

I) *paso angiulie khai
buhrai hesilehe jai*

(Meaning: All the five fingers take the morsel but the food goes into the mouth only with the help of the thumb.)

Context: This proverb is used to reiterate the importance of an old man in a house.

3.6. Proverbs related to Agriculture

I) *malbhug pura
bhitarote ghura*

(Meaning: *malbhug*, *pura* are the species of banana tree found in the rural villages of Assam. These fruits are very delicious and expensive.

Context: If a man grows *malbhug* and *pura* he needs not to go anywhere. He can move around within his yard. He will become rich.)

II) *rati hole sat hal*

pua hole ehala nai

(Meaning: In the evening one has seven ploughs, in the morning he has not one.)

Context: There are some people who exaggerate a lot about their power. They are always busy with some dreams which have no base and when the actual time comes the reality comes to the light.

3.7. Proverbs Related to Trickery

I) *jar johat sakha sindur
take kore gatar indur*

[Meaning: Owing to whose benevolence such bangles and vermilion, he is made a rat a dweller under hole.]

Context: This proverb is used in the context of referring to ingratitude. Most of the human being forget the benefit they obtain from there well-wishers but in return after the fulfilment of the need start to neglect them.

II) *nak katile ahibo bare bare
chuli katile ahibo kono kale*

[Meaning: If the nose is cut off, it will regain its old size after proper care. But if the hair is cut off, when will it come again?]

Context: It was Mr. Tarun ch. Kalita who has left for heavenly abode he explains the proverb by the following story. Many years before in the villages there was village court. One day a lady thief was captured by the villagers. The thief was presented in such a village court. The village head after discussion ordered to cut off her nose as punishment. There was a well-wisher who advised the

village head to cut off her hair instead of her nose, as the hair would not grow again, whereas the nose would soon regain its former size with treatment. The villagers believed the adviser, and the thief was released after her hair cropped.

3.8. Proverbs of Counseling

- I) *mati saba maj khal*
soali saba mak val

[Meaning: Select a plot of land the middle of which is low; select a girl for marrying whose mother is good.]

Context: A plot of land with a low middle area, do not allow the water to go out and that helps in cultivation because the notorious items are not swept away. In the same way a girl must be good as a wife if her mother was a good woman. In the context of marrying a girl and buying a plot of land the proverb is used.

- II) *pali sorei pelbi pakhi*
haoa vat nothfi rakhi

[Meaning: When you have caught a fowl break its wings immediately; when the food is ready to serve eat up without delay.]

Context: English equivalent of the proverb is, 'Time istide wait for none'. Life is uncertain. Nobody knows what is waiting for us in near future. So we should not wait and delay our duty.

- III) *bujak bujabi akare ingite*
nubujak bujabi dharasapare

[Meaning: Teach a meritorious through signs and symbols and teach an ignorant through big slap.]

Context: It is easy to teach a meritorious person but to teach an ignorant there requires punishment.

3.9. Class VII: Proverbs Related to Guest

- I) *kurma aru jal sabbis ghantai gondhai*

[Meaning: Fishing net and guest stink within twenty four hours.]

Context: The fisher man wash the fishing net after he comes back from fishing, if he does not wash the net it starts to stink after a few hours. Similarly in this modern age all the people have become busy, so if any guest come to stay in the home of relatives after a few hours the attraction reduces.

- II) *aa'ir kurma bhasura*
tirir kurma bapura

[Meaning: Guests of mother is ordinary. Guest of wife is a gentleman.]

Context: The proverb refers to the notion that differentiates the guest of mother and wife.

3.10. Proverbs Related to Food

- I) *toar much khek khek ,Moar mukh bahi*
toar digir Sali moar uthe ahi

[Meaning: Your mouth feels odd and mine is *bahi* (yet to wash after morning.) When I see to you I feel like laughing.]

Context: When a guest is not taken proper care of then to refer to such a circumstance the proverb is used. In the district of Kamrup, people have a tradition that after the tea is over a guest is provided a beetle leaf with beetle nut, but some family do not offer and the guest wait for that and such circumstance is presented in the proverb.

- II) *loan nohole sio mati*
jaluk pipli dilo boti

[Meaning: Without salt all is tasteless so black pepper and long pepper is grinded to mix with the context.]

Context: The proverb is used in the context of referring to the importance of spice.

3.11. Proverbs Related to Man, Woman and Child.

- I) *tirir mel kolor vel*

[Meaning: The gossip of the women is meaningless. This is as baseless as raft made of banana tree.]

Context: In the context of showing the fruitlessness of *mel* (conversation) of women the proverb is used.

- II) *sakor rakhibi pet oloa*
Tiri anibi dat oloa

[Meaning: Keep a servant who has a protruded stomach and marry a lady who has protruded teeth.]

Context: As I have been informed by the informant if one keeps a fat servant, people will think that he is taken proper care of and he has a good health. Similarly if one marries a girl with protruded teeth if she is angry still she will have smiling face.

- III) *ahok ba nahok bor, seota fali mor*
jio ba ahil bor, koina uthi lor

[Meaning: It's not a matter whether the bride groom will come or not but stay with a parting hair that is well groomed. Even though the bride groom has come the bride stood and take to hill.]

Context: This proverb is used in the context of a vain preparation for something. A bride waits for the bride groom's arrival on the day of marriage. She parts her hair as the custom goes. Although she has no wish to be married still she has to wait but when the bride groom has come she has fled away.

3.12. Proverbs Related to Work

I) *sas hole sase jiek hole jase/pase*

[Meaning: The cutting instrument is used for scraping and smoothening, a daughter is asked to perform a tak.]

Context: This proverb is used in the context of reminding the role of a daughter. A daughter is born to obey the order of parents.

II) *an bone sosa moshā
pitha guri khundai gotai osar*

[Meaning: All other work is ordinary, grinding floor is only remarkable.]

Context: This proverb is generally spoken by the women in order to show the difference of homely works.

3.13. Sarcastic Proverb

I) *ek tiria lodor podor
dui tiria gator indur
tin tiria kathir kukur*

[Meaning: A man with a one wife becomes healthy, a man with two wives is like rat in a hole and a man with three wives is like a dog sitting by verandah.]

Context: This proverb is used in the context of marriage norms.

II) *bohu bidya jar, vat nimile tar*

[Meaning: English equivalent of the proverb is Jack of all trade masters of none.]

Context: This proverb is used in the context of referring to a person who is a busy body but he has no butter and bread.

3.14. Bhakatia Proverbs

I) *bara kuri borgeet, tera kuri fakara
tar majot somal mokra
sei mokorai bue bara hat jal
bara hat jalor tera hat futa
val marili baper beta
rau borali soroki gol
puthi kholihona pahe pahe rol*[Meaning: This proverb mystically refers to the *borgeet* (devotional songs written by Srimanta Sankardeva who wrote 240 *borgeets* and 260 *fakaras*). His disciples are compared to Spider *mokora* who have entered to understand and follow the sayings. While Sukdeva was telling the stories of Bhagabata to sixty thousands of saints who are labelled as *rou borali* only Sut a small boy *puthi kholihana* of lower caste was listening to the stories, attentively therefore he is called *baper beta*.]

Context: This proverb is used in the context of referring to the importance of devotion and meaninglessness of caste system.

II) *deuta adha serar bhakat
aru moi ek serar*[Meaning and Context: *Ser* in Assamese means kilogram. The story goes like this; Ramananda the son of Narayan Das went to Barpeta from Sundoridia and met Madhabdeva. When Madhabdeva asks about Narayan Das, Ramananda said that "My father is half saint, but I am a full vaishnavite saint." With this he means that he was born in a *Vaishnavite* family but his father Narayan Das met Madhav Deva and converted to *Vaishnavism*.]

3.15. Proverbs of Exaggeration

I) *bamun nahote pat katiba nalge*

[Meaning: No need to cut the banana leaves before the arrival of the Brahmin.]

Context: Some of the Hindus invite the Brahmins to accomplish religious ceremonies. Brahmins always need floral items to offer the gods and goddesses during worship. They keep everything ready before time. Banana leaf is one of the materials required in puja. But if the leaves are cut well advance the leaves will be dried up. Similarly if anybody prepares something much earlier in that context the proverb is used.

3.16. Proverbs of Worldly Wisdom

I) *papor dhan porachitat jai*[Meaning: English equivalent is *ill gotten ill spent*. Money got by unfair means goes in expiation.]

Context: In the context of referring to some corrupt practice the proverb is used.

II) *dukh nokkolli mukh nobhare*

[Meaning: If one cannot take trouble he cannot survive.]

Context: In the context of advising someone or encouraging someone to bear trouble to get a better result the proverb is used.

4. Conclusion

The paper has tried to present the proverb in the vernacular dialect of Kamrup district with tentative meaning and context where such proverbs are used. According to prominent folklorist Alan Dundes text, texture and context plays an important part in analysing folklore. To him, context is an item of folklore which records specific social situation in which that particular item is actually

employed. In order to know a proverb clearly one must know the context or social situation in the proverb is used. Last but not the least, we can conclude with the words of Malinowski "*The Text of course, is extremely important, but without the context it remains lifeless*".

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