

Folk Language of the Dalu Community : A Study

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Abstract

Our research topic is: Folk Language of the Dalu Community: A Study This paper discusses the linguistic status and characteristics of the Dalu community, a very small ethnic group residing in Northeast India. It is noteworthy that the Dalu community is an extremely endangered group in Northeast India. Due to migration, assimilation, and cultural integration, the people of the Dalu community have gradually lost elements of their ancient Indo-Mongolian language. With this perspective in mind, this research paper has been prepared focusing on the folk language of the Dalu people.

Keywords: Dalu , Folk, Language

1. Introduction

The Dalu community is one of the prominent indigenous groups of Assam and Meghalaya. From a historical perspective, it becomes clear that once, along the Garo Hills in undivided greater Assam, a powerful civilization developed around the Bhogai River. We can refer to that civilization as the Dalu Civilization.

Evidence of this ancient civilization can still be seen today in the stone ruins of Dalukilla, located on the Meghalaya-Bangladesh border. It is easy to determine that these ruins were part of a fort or stronghold. This rock fortress or rock civilization carries the ancient heritage of the Dalu people.

Centering around this fort, the entire region became widely known as Dalukilla in pre-historic times, beyond the reach of recorded history. Taking Dalukilla as the central point, the Dalu Civilization spread across a vast stretch of hills and plains, establishing itself as an independent civilization.

The expanse of the Dalu Civilization extended from Meghalaya, covering the Bhogai River, up to a large

area including Gerapacha, Mandalipara, Nalitabari, and Hatibandha in present-day Sherpur and Mymensingh districts. From that time onward, the Dalu people began to assert their identity as a distinct community.

From an anthropological perspective, although the Dalus are a people of the Mongoloid race, a look at their prevailing festivals and clans makes one thing clear: the Dalu Civilization was actually a part of the larger ancient Austroloid civilization that had influence across India.

The clans or dafas of the Dalus are determined through the maternal line. This characteristic clearly proves that Dalu society was once part of a matrilineal Austroloid civilization. Matriliney is a key feature of Austroloid societies.

Moreover, deities worshipped by the Dalus such as Kamakhya and Chanugopal are not mythical figures at all. Rather, they are regarded as ancestors of Dalu society. That is, the Dalus are ancestor worshippers. From this perspective too, the Dalus can be identified socially as a group belonging to the Austroloid, the oldest ethnic group in India.

It is also accepted that if we examine their physical structure and ancient social customs, clear elements of both Mongoloid and Austroloid civilizations are found among the Dalus. Because of this, it is most appropriate to refer to the Dalu community as an 'Austro-Mongoloid' group from an ethno-cultural viewpoint.

Considering all these aspects, we can arrive at the conclusion that the people of the Dalu community are an ancient group of India and of the Northeast. The antiquity of this group's existence is undoubtedly linked to the rock-civilizations of the Northeast.

There is evidence that the Dalu people had an independent melodic language since the time they lived in Dalukilla. This independent language was widely used by the Dalu people living in the hilly regions of Meghalaya. As people from border areas, the Dalus eventually began to emphasize this language as a connecting language. They have been practicing that composite linguistic form as a 'pidgin' for generations, allowing it to acquire the form of a connecting language to the present 'creole' level. Over time, Dalu was heavily influenced by the linguistic dialects of several neighboring languages for social, cultural and political reasons. It is worthy to be mentioned that, there are also some similarities between the spoken form of the Dalus and the Rajbongshi, Banai and Hajong languages.

2. The Lexical Aspects Of The Dalu Folk Language: Some Of The Distinctive Addresses Of The Dalus:

Atai (father)Aui (mother's mother), Ajwo' (mother's father), Moi (maternal aunt), Piai (paternal Aunt), Bunu (brother in law - elder sister husband), Tutui (Aunt - paternal uncle's wife), Nunu (younger brother).

Words that means small children:

- Khentaa chaw (baby), Kenteleka (newborn), tempa-tempi (young children)
- Terms associated with household appliances:
- Salun (sieve), Saow Salun (small sieve), Bar Salun (Big Sieve)
- Bain/Banai (ways used in making bamboo pots and pans) , Duli (big storage pots)
- Dalma (Large Duli), Don: A bamboo tool for measuring paddy. Dulli Shao: Bamboo base used at weddings.

Words related to house construction:

- Dhananna: Bamboo spread out when building a house Pair: A long bamboo

- Mukhshani: A method of using straw in reverse when building a house. Tui Suni: A rule of tying straw on the roof., Haitna: Porch, Airo Ghar: The house for married women. Jataka Ghar: (house for childbirth)

Words associated with folk sports:

- Dangbari, Gaittabari, Gangikhel, Eli Dairabanda, Baulikata.
- Words related to diet:
- Buknibhat, Bisibhat, Lekavat Sepa.
- Lebashak Khuijuri Naillapatachoura Huwar Machang Surai Machang Panipitha Indurpitha Pushnapitha Khuigura Dhankhui

Terms associated with weaving :

- Bana : Weaving loom
- Bana Garani : Weaving work
- Kerka: Neothani - (weaving equipment) Lach : Rach (weavingequipment) Abong: making jali(weaving work) Gandhi: Tolotha(weavingequipment)
- Ichoni : An equipment used in weaving instead of goroka.

Traditional weaving tools

- Beo: A tool made of wood from the Chao (Chewa) tree Patani: Dalu women's clothing
- Sarpa :Custerd Apple
- Swear words :
- Fichuinni: Raksasa / violent (in women) Fichuinna: Raksasa / violent (in male) Hatchara : An oath to become ill fated
- Rasataleja : An oath to go to the bottom of the abyss Suwarer Batcha : Swear someone compared to a pig .

Terms associated with agricultural implements

- Ich: A part of the plough
- Pusi: A wooden nail in a plough JanglaDari : An agricultural utility. Haolwa Laathi : Farmer's stick Kuti: The hand-held part of a plough Binda: An utility to pull Garbage
- Mui: An utility to make the ploughed land even.

Some other words in the Dalu folk language:

- Tukku : Hello
- Nanda ghar : Kitchen Khengkhari: Dry jute stalks
- Burung :An utility used in fishing Bhairo : One-sided utility used in fishing Vitnabon : Crow foot grass
- Uli poka : Termites
- Kiring : A drain that carries water Payung : Feet
- Ghugiga : Crab catching Maukcha : Fisherman
- Resounding words: Tak Taka, HitingHatang, Lingling Langlang, Dhurum-Dharam Similar pronunciation: Tongtanga, Bhangbhanga

Words associated with the traditional numerical calculations of the Dalus:

There is an ancient system of calculation among the Dalus. According to the rules of their traditional method of counting, they counted the numbers orally in words of their own language. At present, these

traditional countable words survive only in the field of their folk sports. Some of the words associated with the census of the Dalus are as follows:

Eri – One, Duri - Two Thiri - Tini Sour – Four, Cheneka - five Det – Six, Chut - Seven Atti - Eight Bamboo – Nine, Bhangbhanga – Ten

3. Elements Of Folk Language In Terms Of Pronunciation:

A folk language is an oral language spoken by a nation or community. Since oral expression plays a major role in folk languages, pronunciation aspects have also gained special importance in the study of folk languages. The same applies to the folk languages spoken among the Dalu people. This pronunciation aspect can be analyzed in a phonological context.

The loss of intermediate sounds is one of the characteristics of Dalu language. For example, the word Changma is pronounced as 'Chama' in the Dalu folk language. Sometimes, along with the loss of intermediate sounds, there is also a duality of final consonants in some contexts. For example:

Garoni>Ganni

Grihini> Ginni

Pronunciation-wise, it can be seen that the alpapranibhavana and dvitvabhavana of the intermediate mahapranasounds represent the identity of the speech of the Dalu language. For example:

Paddhati>Puddi

The issue of ending is particularly noteworthy in the phonetic discussion of Dalu. For example:

Hoptah> Hopta

There are many examples of the change of low-vowel sounds to high-vowel sounds and high-vowel sounds to low-vowel sounds in the pronunciation of Dalu. For example:

- Change of low-vowel sounds to high-vowel sounds : Dudh-Bhat - Dhudbhat
- Change of high-vowel sounds to low-vowel sounds : Dekhe> Deke, Nakh> Nak

Phonetic distortions are a very important issue in the discussion of folk languages. It has also been particularly important in the pronunciation of the Dalu language. For example:

Kapiya>Kaippa Gathiya>Gaitta

Looking at the Dalu folk languages, there is no significant difference in their pronunciation, retroflex and odontic sounds. There are also examples of the letter 'h' being converted to the letter 'ch' Like: Haah – hangcho

Examples of the conversion of the 'cha' (ছ) character to the ha (হ) character in the pronunciation of the Dalu language are sparse. For example:

Chagol (ছাগল) >Hagol (হাগল)

There is a change in the sound of the 'sh' (শ) to the sound 'ha' (হ) in the pronunciation. For example :

Shamuk (শামুক) >Hamuk (হামুক)

Shak (शक) > Hak (शक)

In Dalu society the sound 'ta' is transformed into 'da' . For example:

Dao koral baichda

Sor nil' thirida Thakl 'koida ?

Dalu folklore verbs and gender contexts:

From a linguistic point of view, the structure of verbs, inflectional suffixes, prefixes, compounds, masculine, adjectives, terms, etc. all naturally belong to the larger sphere of morphology. However, within the limited scope of this sub-chapter on the folk language of the Dalu people, only the distinctive verbs and genders of the Dalu language are discussed.

4. Verbal Context Of Dalu Language:

Dalu has two forms of verbs , singular and plural. Unlike Sanskrit, diphthongs are not common in Dalu folk languages. Nouns are followed by specific suffixes such as da, khan, jani, pata, man, etc. to form the singular. For example-

Manushda, Kitapkhon, Ekpata

Similarly, in the case of the plurals of the Dalu folk language man, gala, era ,ura, jak, etc are noteworthy. For example :

- Chorai Jak
- Manush Gala

The concept of speech in Dalu folk language becomes clearer while looking at the following sentences:

- Manushe Khay (man eats)
- Manuhda Khay (the man eats)
- Manush Gala Khay (people eats)

The following are some singular and plural forms:

Singular	Plural
Ami (I)Amra	(We) Mor
(My) Angre	(Our) Tui
(You) Togre	(You) Tai
(He/ She)	Tarai (They)

5. Gender Context Of Dalu Folk Language

There are two genders in Dalu folk language - masculine and feminine. In Dalu folk language, gender is usually determined by three rules. For example:

- a. Gender distinction is made in Dalu through the use of different masculine and feminine words. For example:

Male	Female Gender
Morot	Maipu
Atai	Ai

Kaka	Tutui
Bunu	Boin
Moha	Moi
Pisa	Piai

- b. The combination of specific suffixes also distinguishes gender in some cases -

Manshuda(AMan) - Manushjoni(a woman)

Garuda (Abull) - Gorujoni(acow)

- c. **In Dalu language, gender distinction is achieved by adding the feminine suffixes - i, oni and ni etc after masculine words. Like adding the suffix 'i'(ই) after masculine consonant words does not change the key word . such as-**

Nilaj (নিলাজ) - Nilai (নিলাজী)

Huur (হুউৰ)- Huuri (হুউৰী)

Sometimes, on the other hand, the suffix 'ee' (ঐ) is added after masculine a ending words to change the shape of the root form. such as-

- Chengra – Chengree
- Lengra –Langree
- Hoja - Hojee

The feminine suffix 'ani' is seen in Dalu folk language. such as-

- Tendar- Tendarani
- Rakhyash - rakhyashani

In some cases, the pronunciation of 'o' belonging to 'ani' disappears in Dalu language. For example:

- Bhakat - Bhakatni
- Hagal - Hagalni (in terms of abuse)
- Kukur - Kukurni

In Dalu language, masculine words are also turned into feminine by adding ni. such as –

- Dalu - Daluni
- Chor - Chorni
- Churui - Churuinni

In some cases, the addition of -ni to the root word changes the shape of the root form. such as-

- Bagh – Baghini
- Dhoba - Dhubuni
- Pola - Puri

The words 'marad' and 'maipu' are also sometimes used to make gender distinction in Dalu. such as-

Marad Manush, Maipu Manush.

Here gender distinction is made considering the word Manush as the main word and using the masculine word 'marad' and the feminine word 'maipu'. Similarly, the word goru is taken as the root and the words 'bolod' and 'gai' are used to distinguish the genders as bull and cow.

6. Folklore Elements In Folk Songs

Folklore is an excellent medium for the study of folk languages. Let us briefly observe how the folk language elements of the Dalus are found in their songs.

Dalugore puja puddi age hoteiache

Bichibhatmerakhaiadhakibaojainache

There are many ways to get a job in the field of architecture, but the most important thing is to get a job in the field of architecture. The word 'gare' in this song means 'all' It is a plural form used in the vernacular of the Dalus. The 'puddi' method, on the other hand, is a pronunciation variation of the word. This diversity is only visible in the folk language of the Dalus. Similarly, the word paddha at the end of the same song is a colloquial regional form of padma.

Dalugore puja puddi eimatrojani.

Mer banai puja kore nampaddhakani.

There are also many elements of folk language in the Maichari song popular among the Dalus:

“Ayo ayorechengragalajalabhanga jai

Pub korat ache jalajabo kai kai”

The word 'gala' in the song refers to the plural form of it. The two words 'jalabhanga' together form a compound form. It means picking up the seed. These forms have naturally given the Dalu language a distinctive form.

“Rowa lagakamlaisejalalagadake

Bhangbhongagondha ache jalaniyadigga age”

The above two lines of song give some insight into the pronunciation characteristics of the Dalu folk language. The word 'bhangbhanga' is a folk form of the word ten. The word 'Ganda' is naturally pronounced 'Gandha' by the Dalus. The verb 'to give' is called 'digga' in Dalubhasha.

“Hal baisekijingkajangbunuaar dada

Angretutuikonotodaine diya laga”

Positive words such as Hitinghatang and Kijingkajang are widely used in the folk language of the Dalu people. The word 'angre' means our. Tutui and Bunu are two addresses used in Dalu folk language.

“Aay sanni mama aay

Dhud diya bhatdimu

Chang tolot baina thomu

Rait puwale chaira dimu

Tukku tukku”

In the pronunciation of the Dalu folk language, the sound 'd' is sometimes pronounced as 'dh' For example, in the above lullaby, the actual form of the word 'dhud' is 'dudh '. In some cases, the word 'dudh' is also

pronounced as 'dud' For example, the Dudkhari Gach (a native tree) . In Dalu, the word tukku refers to greeting.

On the other hand, let us analyze the pattern of a sentence in the Dalu language used in the old mantras:

'Akoi makoidimrichakoi'

Here the word 'akoi' means calling someone. The word makoi means mother, the word dimri means offerings of worship and the word chakoi means to taste. The sound 'koi' (oi) is used repeatedly for the purpose of creating rhythmic or phonetic expression. The phrase used in the above sentence contains the ancient form of the Dalu language.

7. Conclusion

After analyzing various aspects of the folk literature and folk language of the Dalus, it can be concluded that the Dalu society is very strong in all aspects of folklore, folk songs, riddles, proverbs etc. Although the linguistic identity of the Dalus has faded, the linguistic form used among them as a folk language has naturally played a strong role in communicating with the people of Assam and other parts of the nation.

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