



A Reflection Of The Mech Society Through Mech Folk Songs: A Study Of 'Demshi Methai'

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Abstract: Folk songs are a natural creative musical expression of the folks, composed by them to depict their lives and emotions. Thus, folk songs generally reflect the life, experiences and sentiment of the people of a society. The folk songs of the Mech society of the northern part of the state of West Bengal are no different as they too are bound to the lives, experiences and philosophy of the folks of the Mech tribe residing in this region. Among the Meches singing and dancing is an activity that accompanies many of the rituals and on special occasions guests are also welcomed with songs and dances. But of late this community is facing a gradual cultural loss due to modernization, competition and external influences. So, the practices that once involved the singing and performing of 'Demshi methai' has now been lost and forgotten by the people. This paper thus, attempts to relook at this forgotten practice particularly through the study of 'Demshi methai' and tries to study the reflection of the life and humour of the Mech people and their society in these songs.

Index Terms - Folk Song, Mech, Bodo, Demshi Methai, Daobo Khela.

I. INTRODUCTION AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MECH TRIBE

The Mech tribe of West Bengal's Duars were one of the early settlers in the sparsely populated terrains of the Duars. Their existence has been found in these lands long before it became a part of British India. Rev. Sidney Endle mentions in his book *The Kacharis* that the "Kachari race which lives in scattered hamlets along the foot-hills of the Himalayas in Northern Bengal and Assam, intermixed now with Hindu people who have intruded into what was once their undisputed home. In Assam proper the Hindus call them Kacharis; in Bengal they are known as Meches. Their own name for their race is Boro or Bodo." (xv)

The Meches are thus; Bodo people living in the northern part of West Bengal's duars and have lived there from the beginning and can also be termed as the original settlers of this region. In earlier times they used to lead a nomadic life and subsisted on jhum cultivation. But since, it fell into British hands they were made to settle down permanently on allotted tracts of land as much of the Duars was turned into tea plantations. The British administrators wanted to put an end to the practice of jhum (burn and slash) cultivation as they were in need of virgin soil for their tea plantations. The Meches not only cultivated rice and food crops but also produced cotton. Sujoy Debnath says "The 'autochthones' of Duars used to produce cotton, locally known as 'Khun or Foon' through shifting cultivation and used to make their own garments" (96). He further says that agriculture and handicrafts played an important role in the tribal life but cotton cultivation declined along with 'Jhum cultivation' after the Britishers took away lands for plantations and forests were made reserved stopping the tribals from using the forest as a resource.

Anirban Bhattacharya says that the tea plantations "involved the total disruption of older modes of living and livelihood among indigenous people- Meches and Lepchas for instance- with land acquisition, deforestation, demarcation and enclosure of reserved forests along with the new stress upon settled cultivation in place of traditional 'slash and burn' methods" (85). Many unwilling to settle down migrated into the eastern direction towards Assam, while those who stayed back in Bengal were pushed away into

further forest areas due to the British occupation of lands for tea plantations. The native Meches were thus, forced to settle down into an area permanently and so were settled into the jotedar and adhiar system.

II. MUSICAL TRADITION

Culturally the Meches are easy going, gentle and simple folks who have a developed oral language but does not have the language in written form. So, stories, legends, myths and songs have been passed down from generation to generation orally. Simani Boro mentions that folk literature was passed and composed in the unwritten oral form so folk songs are called 'Khuga methai' or 'subung methai'. 'Khuga' in Bodo means mouth and 'methai' in Bodo means songs. While 'subung' means 'folk' and 'methai' again stands for song. Boro points out that the Bodo village folks sang songs at varied events, occasions like marriage ceremonies, social festivals and other ceremonies of the village or at the work place-- at the time of paddy plantation, cloth weaving, fishing, picking vegetables, ploughing, or while grazing cattle in the fields. The same practice of finding music in everyday life was prevalent among the Meches of West Bengal too as these two tribes being the same share same cultural, ethnic, linguistic traditions and religious beliefs. The folk songs of the Bodos of Assam and Meches of West Bengal can thus also be the same, or similar with only slight regional differences and can be classified into varied genres. Boro points out that scholars have thus classified Bodo folk songs into various genres such as Haba methai (marriage song), Khamani methai (work song), Bwisagu methai, Laokhar methai (cowherd song), Gotho burkhainai methai (nursery rhymes), Gwsw thwnai methai (love song), Khela gelaiaio khonnai methai, (game song), Zwhwlao methai (Ballads), Bwidachi methai (philosophical song)

III. DEMSHI METHAI

This paper focuses on a particular type of folk songs called 'Demshi methai'. 'Demshi' means boy and girl and 'methai' means songs. The term 'Demshi' itself reveals that this folk song is sung usually in a duet by 'banda bandi' (boy and girl) but sometimes few songs are sung in chorus ('hanja') and usually contain light hearted humorous elements meant for laughter and merry making. 'Demshi methai' were sung and performed during 'Daobo khela' - ritualistically it is a game of songs and dances in celebration of the worship of Goddess Lakshmi, whom Meches equate with Goddess Mainao. The Daobo khela was performed by a group of Mech men who visited people's houses in groups and performed- songs and dances as a part of celebration. In return they were given token of money, food and drinks as a part of the festivity. The songs sung during these performances are called Demshi methai.

Mahesh Chandra Narjinary mentions that in the past the Meches living in West Bengal used to play 'Daobo Khela' during the month of Kartik on Lakshmi Purnima. A group of 10-12 men used to gather, out of which few dressed as men (banda) and women (bandi) and also consisted of instrument players known as 'damgwra'. Along with this group went a 'minihwgra bwiragi', a comedian, also known as 'Kholai'. This 'minihwgra bwiragi' or 'kholai' used to sing, dance, tell jokes and perform comical acts to make people laugh in between the 'banda bandi' singing and dancing. The instruments used during singing included 'kham' (an elongated drum), serja (string instrument), jotta (bamboo tongs), shiphung (flute) and harmonium.

The Demshi songs majorly consist of themes of love, infatuation and jest. The role of the 'dahana' or 'dahwna' (servants) and 'rouathi' (maid servants) in the celebration of 'Daobo khela' and performing of the Demshi methai was a major component since the workers were the ones who sang and danced mainly. But this tradition has completely vanished and the only vestige left are the Demshi songs which are sung still today.

Mech folk songs though have been divided into various types based on their themes, the 'Demshi methai' involves a mixed genre which includes songs of varied themes like love, teasing and funny banters, description of daily life, work songs and many more. The unique trait of Demshi songs is that it is usually marked by light hearted humour through playful music and dance. The Demshi singers also dress up in parodical ways to create fun, jest and laughter. Thus, the element of humour being predominant theme of fun and jest is abundant as can be found in the song '*Urbashi jengreb*'. Urbashi is the name of a maiden who is 'jengreb' meaning slim and the dialogue between her and a forest ranger who is out hunting ducks and birds has been depicted. The song follows the usual 'banda bandi' form.

Bandi- Bwbou thangw ada renjen shilaiwala
Banda-Thanga khwilwi aagwi Urbashi jengreb
Nwlw dobyao hangshw shilaryshw gaonw thangw.
Bandi- Mapchhe mwnkhw ada Renjen shilaiwala
Nwngni hangshw shilary gaonai aa lai
Banda-Mwnna khwi lwi aagwi Urbashi jengreb,
Nwjwr hwnai aaonw hwrrashw birkhang langdwng.
Bandi- Hangshw shilary gaonw thangbla dorshe hablang
Ada chaha lwnklang Renjen shilaiwala.
Banda-Habbai thale aagwi Urbashi jengreb
Shan aa shw mwana langbai. (JDBS 10)

English rendering-

Girl-Where are you going big brother ranger gunman?
 Boy-I did not go anywhere yet young sister slim Urbashi
 I had gone to the small stream and pond to fire my duck gun.
 Girl-How many did you catch big brother ranger gunman
 with your duck gun fired.
 Boy-I caught nothing younger sister slim Urbashi,
 the moment I laid my eyes on them they flew away in a rush.
 Girl-When you are out to fire your duck gun come once to my house
 To have some tea big brother ranger gunman.
 Boy-I will not visit your home now young sister slim Urbashi
 The sun has gone down

Further teasing and banter between a man and woman is visible in the song 'Thaiditguriao gan nainw' which in literal translation means 'In Thaidiguri to watch songs'. The usual 'banda bandi' form is present in this song too.

Bandi- Thangnaichhwhi anglai
Thaiditguriao gan nainw.
Banda-Shalia gan naibai
Shalia shan jowjachhe undubai.
Angkhama jabai thaoa phunbai
Shalia khapalao tika thubai.
Shalia gami giding giding chhengra
khaobla fwrkhow jongkhai baibai.
Bandi- nwng shwiya bla gwswhwabla
thangnaichhwi hwi anglai Fereng
gamiao kharshon hwinw.
Banda-Dohai dohai shona mainao
Angkhai bungnaikhwnw ou shanbai na ma.
Jongkhainai phao khownw thik shanbai.
Shalia dasw bod mwnbai.
Shalia dasw thela mwnbai. (JDBS 24)

English rendering-

Girl-I will go to Thaiditguri to watch songs
 Boy-Girl watched the song
 Girl slept till late in the morning with the sun risen overhead
 She ate some rice then applied some oil
 The girl drew a dot on her forehead
 Then the girl roamed around the village
 Joking and flirting around with the village blokes.

Girl-If you do not like what I do then
I will run away to Fereng village
to some man's house and become his bride.

Boy-Have mercy dear darling
Have you taken to my words seriously?
You took my jokes to be real.
Now the girl realized.
Now the girl understood.

The comic element is more prominently present in the lines of the song '*Hinjaoni Khapala*' meaning 'woman's fate'. This song does not follow the usual 'banda bandi' form as it is expressed only by the woman and she sings:

Hinjaoni khapala gengshar jwbma
habab gengshar jwbma.
Ayo habab gswthwnai khow
mwnblabw daha jwbma,
Ayo habab hwa jatialai
ma ese mwjang jananwi nwnghora.
Bikhou naibla habab jerba phangdang,
thanghang fwihang gsw angasang
gaoni fishai khownw jachhwi ang
garhang garhang.
Ayo habab hinjaoni khapala gengshar jwbma
Ayo gengshar jwbma,
Ayo habab gswthwnai khow
Mwnblabw daha jwbma ayo
Daha jwbma. (JDBS 12)

English rendering-

A woman's fate never blooms.
Alas even if we get our heart's desire
Our sorrows never end.
O lord the race of men
How nice and handsome they look
Seeing this the heart races fast
Skips a beat and the mind goes askew.
I then desire to leave my own husband
And throw him out.
O lord a woman's fate never blooms.
Alas even if we get our heart's desire
Our sorrows never end.

The above mentioned songs depict the comic situations of life observed by the Mech people as in the first song the ranger with a gun is a failure at hunting yet he is seen strutting around with a gun and his description of the flying away of the ducks when he tries to hunt them is jocular. In the next song the lover teases his lady but ends up getting threatened by the lady's joke to leave him for another man and in the next song the women joke about how their hearts flutter at the sight of handsome men even if they have been married to the men they wanted to be with. Thus, jest, humour and silly banters characterize Demshi methai.

Demshi songs also includes the themes of description of women's beauty along with love. In the following song 'Dwikhorao dwi khaonai' which translates to 'Pulling water from the well' is sung in chorus (hanja) to depict the beauty of a woman.

*Dwikhorao Dwi khaonai lwi agwi
Goyshiri khanai banai,
Ash rifi rifi agwi laishiri (Beautiful) gang
ishwra swrji (Created) dwng nwngkhon mwjang
ash mihi lwi agwi khorao
Mainao gwnang
Ash mihi lwi agwi khanaiyao
Moho gwnang.
Dwikhorao dwi khaonailwi agwi
Dwishiri khanai banai. (JDBS 7)*

English rendering-

Pulling water from the well young sister
Goyshiri with luscious hair,
Delicate dear young beautiful sister
God has created you well
Beautiful young sister
On your head sits Goddess Mainao
Beautiful sister your hair is alluring
Pulling water from the well young sister
Dwishiri with luscious hair.

The theme of love finds expression in 'Sandung jwng rumulangnai' meaning 'golden and orange with the sun'. This song explores the theme of love through admiration of the lovers for each other.

*Banda-Sun dodereni sundung jwng rumu langnai
Agwi almari singaowni, rumuli khanai banai.
Gwjannaow nunaikhwi chinai-yakhwi mwn ang
Chhwr hinjaw bilai khanai banai,
Khathwi-yao nunanwichinai bai
Ang gwsu thwnai hinjaw sw be.
Sun dodereni sundung jwng rumu langnai
Agwi almari singaowni, rumuli khanai banai.*

*Bandi- Bibar sari-sari bagan bari,
Benw jabai angni hichanshali
Dorche hablang chaha lwnlang ada
Behel gamini jwhwlao jangila nwn.*

*Banda-Ang habma lwi agwi nwnгда raigwn.
Gamini manshifra gajri bungwn.
Sun dodereni sundung jwng rumu langnai
Agwi almari singaowni, rumuli khanai banai. (JDBS 7)*

English rendering

Boy- With the golden light of the setting sun became golden and orange
 Young sister inside the almirah, Golden orange girl with luscious hair
 Saw from afar so could not recognize her
 Who is that woman with luscious hair
 But after seeing from nearby I recognized
 She is the woman of my heart's desire.
 With the golden light of the setting sun became golden and orange
 Young sister inside the almirah, Golden orange girl with luscious hair.

Girl- Flowers in rows inside my garden
 This is my place of weaving
 Come inside for once and have some tea big brother
 Of Behel village so young and handsome you are.

Boy- I will not enter young sister your brother will scold me.
 Village people will also say bad things.
 With the golden light of the setting sun became golden and orange
 Young sister inside the almirah, Golden orange girl with luscious hair.

While the theme of love in 'Mai khainai' meaning 'paddy threshing', has been shown strongly between the lovers. This Demshi song in usual 'banda bandi' form explicitly shows how the lovers long for each other.

Banda-Mai khainai khwnw jrap garchhwi ang
Agwi nwngkhau gsw khangbla
Agwi lwi sona nareng guri ni
Dulia khanai banai.

Bandi- Angbwshw chhitla shibnai khwnw
jrap garchhwi ada Chekamari ni
joushrang nwngkhau gswkhangbla.
Mai jaonai khou bw shra batchhwi(baochhwi)
ada nwngkhau gswkhangbla.

Banda-Mai shibnai khounw shra baoyw
agwi dulai nwngkhau gswkhangbla,
agwilwi Narengurini dulia khanai banai.

Bandi- Angbwsw jambi gswwaa khanai khannai
Khownw shra baodwng ada Chekamarini
Joushrang nwngkhow gsw khangnang. (JDBS 15)

English rendering-

Boy- I throw my work of binding the hay thud on the ground
 Young sister whenever I remember you
 Dear young sister of Narenguri
 Dulia with luscious hair.

Girl- I too throw my work of sweeping the courtyard thud on the ground
 Whenever I remember you big brother
 Joushrang of Chhekamari.
 I also forget to sieve the husk from the rice
 Whenever I remember big brother.

Boy- I forget to separate the husk from the paddy
 Young sister Dulai whenever I remember you
 Young sister from Narenguri Dulia with luscious hair.

Girl- I too am a foolish mind who forgets to comb her hair
 Big brother Joushrang of Chhekamari
 Whenever I remember you.

In another song the man is ready to wed the woman whom he does not want to leave behind while pursuing his studies. The song ‘*Gongkhona la kwina*’ meaning ‘take the gongkhon’ is a desperate urge from the man’s side to fulfil the love between him and his lady.

*Banda- Gongkona la kwina gongkona la
O kwina gongkona la,
Gongkon layabwla mithika nwnghinjaw
Bonda lagaigwn ang.*

*Bandi- Bondakhow da lagai nwnghou-ya
Nwnghni gwswhow lo dangnai dwng ang.
Bondakhow da lagai nwnghou-ya
Nwnghni gwswhow lo dangnai dwng ang.*

*Banda- Ang mainari porai bwla,
Chhwrba chengra nwnghburkhai-ywbla,
Bekainw sandwngmwn ang
Nwnghkhow lafananwi mainari porai baownw.
Gongkona la kwina
Bonda lagaigwn ang. (JDBS 10)*

English rendering-

Boy- Take the ‘gongkhon’ girl, take the ‘gongkhon’
O girl take the ‘gongkhon’,
If the ‘gongkhon’ is not taken then know this woman
That I’ll fix a crook after you.

Girl- Do not fix a crook after me you man
I was only testing you

Boy- While studying ‘mainari’
If some man tries to approach you,
This is what I was thinking
Only after taking you I will study ‘mainari’.
Take the ‘gongkhon’ girl
Or else I’ll fix a crook after you.

Among the Meches ‘gongkhon’ refers to the ritual of presenting a coin as a token of proposal of marriage to the girl’s family. The coin is accepted when the bride’s family also agrees to the match but the coin is returned when the bride’s family refuses the match. So, the mention of ‘gongkhon’ reveals that the boy’s side has sent a proposal to the girl’s family and he wants the woman to accept it. The term ‘mainari’ on the other hand is a Mech/ Bodo term for minory which refers to the 8th or 9th standard at school. In earlier times education till minory classes were considered to be quite high so the mention of studying ‘mainari’ shows that the Meches believed in receiving education and readily accepted modernization.

In another song the theme of one-sided love and rejection is visible in ‘*Ang mainary poraibla*’ meaning ‘I have studied mainari’

*Bandi- Mainari porainai chhikri delai
swrkar hinjao anglai
ABCD khow rwngabwla anglai lakhathara
juli halua jamba khow.*

*Banda- Nwi lwi agwi ABCD rwngalabw nangol khodal
chika rowa khow pas janang thakhanai
halua lwi agwi halua ang lekha
rwngalabw jwrwibw akapaka.*

Bandi- Mainary porainai chhikri delai
swrkar hinjao anglai
lekharwngi khowlai lakhathara anglai juli.
Banda-Nwilwi agwi halua jamba labw lekha rwngalabw
Naei bidotnei angkham khobotchhe khow
jahwthargwn agwi.
Dokhna sadri khowbw ganhw thargwn. (JDBS 24)

English rendering-

Girl- I am a woman who has studied 'mainari'
 I will not marry a foolish ploughman who does not know ABCD.
 Boy- Dear young sister even if I do not know ABCD
 I have passed exams in the use of plough, spade and sickle.
 I am a ploughman dear young sister
 I am not literate yet I have mastered these skills.
 Girl- I am a woman who has studied mainari
 I will not marry an unlettered man.
 Boy- Dear young sister even if I am a foolish ploughman and illiterate
 yet I can feed you fish, meat and rice.
 I can also provide dokhna and clothes for you to wear.

The jest is visible through the banter between the 'banda' (boy) and the 'bandi' (girl) but at the same time it reflects the sensibilities of the Mech society where education is held to be superior as the woman is educated and has studied till minority classes. So, she is demanding a groom who is equally educated and modernized as her. Hillol Kumar Chakrabarti observes that education is seen as an opportunity of advancement by the Meches as they are open towards receiving and accepting education. But this song also brings forth the reality that uneducated people who lived through farming and ploughing were considered uncouth among the modernized Mech people.

The Demshi songs thus, mentioned above portray the theme of love in varying ways revealing the social conditions men and women live in. Meanwhile a glimpse of the rural Mech life is also visible in the Demshi songs. In 'Okhanaibwlanw' meaning 'the moment it's morning', the women sing in chorus about how with each morning they have to clean dishes and their day goes away into doing the chores. But the women try to find happiness in the beautiful nature around them and find strength to leave sadness and fear behind. The spirit of the Mother deity appears through the frenzied dancing girl and uplifts the mood of the village people.

Okha naibwlanw turshi lota
Jwngnw din thangw
Phwi hai lwgw shikhwla bwisaou
Barhang Birhang,
Bere sikhiriya geolang bibaraou
Bidwi Chhwbdwng.

Jengadasi ada jengadasi,
Be mulugao jwng jenna,
Be jwnwmao jwng giya.

Bardouli sikhwlani mwsanai-ya
Kanai aili jaili khuga-ao khodwi
Megonao mwdwi lananwi
Nuja fwidwng jwngni Anjali Bima-ya,

Honwi daoehen-na musurdwng

Dalai dalai birbai baidwng
Jwngni gsw-yajangkrikhangbai
Haila huila.

Bagurum ba bagurum ba bagurum ba
Bechheba somaina.
Hunthuchhe habru-yao mai gainai ada,
Okha Phiri Phiri hanai somao,
Beche somaina aiyo habab Maibra
Jwhwlaoni hal aeonai-yalai
Sari Sari. (JDBS 17)

English rendering-

As soon as morning comes the whole day passes away with plates, pots and utensils
 Come during your girlhood years
 Blooming and flying
 Bees and butterflies from the blossomed flower
 Are drinking nectar.

Don't be sad big brother don't be sad
 In this world we do not feel sad
 In this birth we are not afraid

The dance of the restless girl
 With unkempt hair, saliva dripping from the mouth
 With water in eyes
 Dear Mother has made herself appear to all of us.

There the bird is chirping
 Flying from one branch to another
 Our minds have become exalted greatly.

Bagurum ba bagurum ba bagurum ba
 How beautiful it is.
 In knee-deep mud I am sowing paddy big brother
 While it is drizzling slightly
 How beautiful looks the rows
 Ploughed by young man Maibra.

The song thus expresses not only the daily life of chores, cleaning utensils, finding life through everyday gloom and presence of Mother deity but it also shows the rural life of the Meches who being majorly agriculturists according to Hillol Kr. Chakraborty also portray the farming activities. The process of farming is also the theme and background of the the following song 'Mwidangshri ni mai gainai' meaning 'Mwidangshri's paddy sowing'.

Banda- Nwi Lwi Agwi Mwidangshiri
Nwi lwi agwi chhwmshiri
Mai-yalai gaido
Sunnalai sunjoubai urang pharang
Agwi sunnalai sunjoubai urang pharang.

Bandi- Nwi Lwi ada sona mainao
Nwi Lwi ada sona mainao
Halla Lai aeodo mabar
Sunnalai sunjoubai urang pharang

Sunnalai sunjoubai urang pharang.

Banda- Nwi Lwi Agwi Mwidangshiri

Nwi lwi agwi chhwmshiri

Mai-yalai gaido mabar

Sunnalai sunjoubai urang pharang

Agai sunnalai sunjoubai urang pharang.

Bandi- Huntuchhe habru-yao mai gaidwng ada

Okha Phiri Phiri hanai sommao

Huntuchhe habru-yao mai gaidwng ada

Okha Phiri Phiri hanai sommao

Beche Somai dwng ayo habab Maibra

Jwhwlaoni hal aeonai-yalai sari sari.

Beche Somai dwng ayo habab Maibra

Jwhwlaoni hal aeonai-yalai sari sari. (JDBS 16)

English rendering-

Girl- Young sister Mwidangshiri

Young sister dusky

Sow the paddy

The sun has risen high in the sky and our minds are giddy

The sun has risen high in the sky and our minds are giddy.

Girl- Dear big brother

dear big brother

Plough the field fast

The sun has risen high in the sky and our minds are giddy

The sun has risen high in the sky and our minds are giddy.

Boy- Young sister Mwidangshiri

Young sister dusky

Sow the paddy fast

The sun has risen high in the sky and our minds are giddy

The sun has risen high in the sky and our minds are giddy.

Girl- In knee-deep mud I am sowing paddy big brother

While it is drizzling slightly

How beautiful looks the rows

Ploughed by young man Maibra.

Thematically the above song is a work song but the fun and jest of being a Demshi song is evident in the dialogue between the man and woman trying to playfully jab each other with remarks on being slow at sowing and ploughing.

In another song ‘*Dahwna thabla*’ meaning ‘stay as a servant’ the relationship between the owner and servants in the Mech society gets reflected in the song below:

Bandi-Dahwna thanaibla jwngneo tha fwi

ada Berlang jwngneo thafwi,

gamchha fali khow danang hwgwn ang

goi fatwi khowbw mwnjakhagwn.

Banda-Nwngou na ma agwi Rumuli khanai banai,

Thafwichigwn ang dahwna nwngni noao.

Banda-mai betwnkhow mwn da mwn agwi

Rumuli nwngni angkham chhongnai khow

Lo mwnjathwng ang shona.

Bandi-Dahwna thanaibla jwngneo tha fwi ada Berlang

*fali gamchha khow lai danang hwgwn,
goi fatwi khowbw mwnjakhagwn. (JDBS 13)*

English rendering-

Girl- If u want to stay as a domestic help then come to our house

Big brother Berlang stay in our house,

I will weave clothes for you

You will also be given betel leaves and betel nuts.

Boy- Is it so young sister Rumuli with luscious hair,

Then I will stay as a domestic help in your house.

Even if I do not receive paddy as a wage even then

Rumuli I will be glad to receive the rice you cook dear

Girl- If u want to stay as a domestic help then come to our house

Big brother Berlang stay in our house,

I will weave clothes for you

You will also be given betel leaves and betel nuts.

Thus, among the Mech the servants were never treated in a lowly way. They were accepted as a part of the family and in return of their services they were paid with paddy or money to feed themselves and their families. The Mech society in later years were made to settle down and some were given ownership of lands turning them into jotedars (landlords) who became the upper class while those who could not gain lands became the adhiars (tenants). So, the landed Mech households often kept servants to till the lands and do works related to the farm and household.

IV. CONCLUSION

All the above songs thus, give us a glimpse of Mech life and their society in the truer sense. Simani Boro too is of the opinion that the reality of a society gets revealed through folk songs and it reflects the socio-cultural condition of a society. So, the 'Demshi methai', exuding fun, jest and humour presents the life and customs of the Mech people and their society. The Bodo/Mech village is a place where men follow the social etiquette of not entering into a house where women are alone in order to preserve their dignity. Women too socially have the right to run into to her lover's house to become his bride through the custom of 'kharshonnai' and love marriages are accepted. Economically the Mech are dependent on farming and agriculture but they are also fond of hunting and fishing as meat, vegetables and rice form their main diet. The rural life though does not provide them many luxuries like the city life yet they are self-sufficient through weaving their own clothes, producing their own food and use of the forest resources. They also believe in the presence of omnipotent gods and goddesses and does not believe in harassing or looking down on people belonging to the lower class which finds proof through the treatment of the servants in Mech households. Rev Sidney Endle in his work *The Kachari* mentions that "On the whole it may perhaps be safely said that the social and domestic life of the Kachari is not without its pleasing and satisfactory features. It is probably for the most part far sounder and more wholesome than the life of great cities, whether in Asia or Europe" (23).

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