



A Study Of Kokborok Proverbs

Sahil Debbarma, Assistant Professor, Department of Kokborok, Rajarshi College of Education and Skills, Bagbari, Lembucherra, Tripura

Abstract

Kokborok literature can broadly be classified into two major forms: oral literature and written literature. Oral literature consists of various literary forms that are transmitted verbally from one generation to another. Among these forms, proverbs occupy a significant place. It can be observed that every community possesses its own literary tradition, and similarly, every language in the world has its own literature. Folk literature represents one of the richest cultural components of Kokborok literature and is known by different names in different communities. Within Tripuri society, folk literature constitutes an essential and integral part of Kokborok literary tradition. Literature plays an important role in daily life, as it is used to express emotions such as happiness, sorrow, sympathy, and shared experiences. For this reason, literature becomes an inseparable part of human life. Every literary form, even the smallest, carries a deeper meaning and cultural value. Literature does not originate solely from individual expression; rather, it emerges from collective human thought, experience, and social interaction. Proverbs, in particular, gain their identity through continuous social use and communication. Without regular use in society, such expressions cannot be considered proverbs. Over time, literary works, especially those preserved and developed by writers, attain recognition and establish their significance within the literary tradition.

Keywords: Literature, Folk literature, Proverbs, Society.

Introduction:

Among the various communities of the world, the Tripuri community possesses a distinct and rich tradition of folk literature. Folk literature constitutes an important component of Kokborok literature and reflects the cultural identity and collective wisdom of the community. Proverbs, as a significant form of folk expression, have been transmitted orally within the community since ancient times. From early stages of life, individuals are exposed to and gradually adopt proverbs, using them in diverse social and cultural contexts. Literature

exists in all parts of the world and serves as one of the most powerful mediums for expression and communication. Through literature, societies interpret and negotiate both the simple and complex dimensions of human experience. Consequently, literature plays a vital role in social life and remains an essential element in the cultural practices and communication systems of communities.

Aim and Objectives :

The primary aim of this study is to explore the development and relevance of folk literature in the contemporary context. The study seeks to examine the role of proverbs within folk literature and their functional use in society and community life. It also aims to emphasize that folk literature plays a crucial role in shaping cultural identity, and that the absence of such literary traditions may result in a loss of cultural recognition within a community.

Furthermore, the study intends to highlight the importance of revitalizing endangered or declining proverbs for the overall growth of society. By encouraging their use through cultural, educational, and social activities, folk literature and proverbs can be preserved and meaningfully integrated into present-day social practices.

Review of Literature :

In the field of literature, particularly kokborok proverbs, the availability of written sources remains limited due to the scarcity of published works. Even today, the number of individuals actively engaged in writing and documenting literature is relatively small. However, a few notable contributions have been made by writers such as Rabindra Kishore Debbarma, Radha Madhab Debbarma and Naresh Chandra Debbarma. Despite these efforts, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive written texts specifically devoted to Kokborok proverbs. Within society, folk literature continues to exist largely in oral form, and no single authoritative or extensive book on the subject has been found.

In Kokborok proverbs, a limited number of books address language and literary aspects. Kumud Kundu Chowdhury's 'Kokborok Bhasa O Sahitya' (1999) provides an overview of the Kokborok language and proverbs. Radha Madhab Debbarma's 'Dalok Mislok' (2014) includes references to Kokborok proverbs elements. Rabindra Kishore Debbarma's 'Kokborok Luku Kokrwbai (2007) mentions a few proverbs, while Nitai Acharya's 'Saral Kokborok Byakaran' (2010) discusses proverbs alongside Bengali explanations. Additionally, Radha Kishore Debbarma's 'Kokborok Prabad Bakya Tripurar Luk Jiban' (2015) and Krishna Das's 'Adibasi Tripurar Luk Kotha Luk Giti Prabad Probochon O Dhandha' (2000) focus on kokborok proverbs and folk expressions.

However, most of these works present proverbs only in the form of isolated sentences, without detailed explanations, interpretations, or contextual analysis. As a result, there exists a significant research gap in the systematic documentation and critical analysis of Kokborok folk literature, particularly proverbs. This paper aims to address this gap by providing explanation, interpretation, and scholarly discussion of proverbs within Kokborok folk literature.

Method :

The present study adopts a qualitative research approach, drawing on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through fieldwork conducted in several villages, with particular emphasis on the Khowai region. Elderly members of the community were interviewed, as they are regarded as primary custodians of oral traditions and proverbs knowledge. Data were gathered through direct interaction during village visits as well as through telephone interviews with elderly villagers. Although some written sources were available, many proverbs were found to be inadequately recorded or entirely absent, which necessitated reliance on oral sources.

Secondary data were collected through an extensive review of existing literature to identify proverbs and interpret their meanings. Key texts consulted include 'Kokborok Luku Kokrbai' (2007) by Rabindra Kishore Debbarma, 'Kokborok Bhasa O Sahitya' (1999) by Kumud Kundu

Chowdhury, and 'Kokborok Prabod Bakya Tripurar Luku Jiban' (2007) by Rabindra Kishore Debbarma. In addition, relevant Bengali and English books on proverbs were examined to support interpretation and comparative analysis. The combined use of primary and secondary data enabled a comprehensive understanding of the role and significance of proverbs within Kokborok folk literature.

Kokborok proverbs :

An understanding of Kokborok proverbs necessitates an examination of proverbs, as they constitute a fundamental component of folk literature. Proverbs represent condensed forms of collective knowledge, derived from human thought, experience, and observation of social life. In the course of human development, literature has emerged as an accessible and effective medium through which knowledge, values, and social norms are transmitted across generations. Scholars and thinkers such as Francis Bacon said 'The genius, spirit and wit of a nation are discovered in its proverbs'. D Israeli said 'Neglected fragments of wisdom still offering many interesting objects for the study of the philosophers and historians' have emphasized the role of literature in shaping human intellect, moral understanding, and social consciousness.

Literature functions as a guiding force that cultivates thought and facilitates the continuity of knowledge. Society is a living entity sustained by relationships, shared truths, and collective experiences. Through literature, individuals establish a bridge between past traditions and future aspirations. The exploration of truth, emotional depth, and moral curiosity across generations contributes to a deeper understanding of life and social responsibility. In this manner, folk literature is preserved as a vital cultural resource.

Folk literature encompasses various forms, including proverbs, folk songs, illustrative examples, short imaginative narratives, and oral expressions. These forms serve as reflections of social realities and cultural values. Proverbs, in particular, occupy a central position within folk literature, as they articulate community-

based wisdom in concise and memorable expressions. Each literary form conveys knowledge shaped by the social structure of the community, and collectively, literature functions as a medium through which social values, ethical principles, and cultural traditions are taught, reinforced, and transmitted within society.

(1) Swi khitung wasungo dawibo pengya.

Swi khitung kokoi tei wasungkhai kepeleng . Aboni bagwino swi khitungno kepeleng khwlaina bagwi wasungo dawi naio. Phiyaba tikhwai khai teisa kokoi wngwi thango. Kok wngkha hodao borok hamya tei sitra kok khwnaya, sajagwibo rwngya tongo phwrwngwi kaham lamo tubuna naidi hodani borokrok hainohai agini tongmungno tongmung tongnai rwngyano tongnai .

(Translation -This proverb metaphorically represents human behavior in society. It suggests that certain individuals do not undergo lasting change despite repeated instruction, discipline, or social guidance, and eventually revert to their inherent nature.)

(2) Sindal bai sindal rignai thansa.

Hodao borok kahamrok kahambaino kwthao. Hamya borok eba tomung chayarak kubuni kubuni bwrwi kahamrokbai kwthawi tongna naibo borokbai tongna naibaiya. Tangwi hinmale borok kahamrok tomung chayarakbai tongkhe hodani lukurokni mokolo hamya sajakna kiriwi kebo tongya. Hamya borokbai hamya simi tongma nugo.

(Translation - This Kokborok proverb reflects the community's moral understanding of social relationships. It emphasizes that friendship is largely formed on the basis of shared values and character. The proverb also suggests that social association influences individual reputation, implying that prolonged interaction with people of bad character may result in social disapproval, even for those originally considered virtuous.)

(3) Dada sak nangya bachwi og nangya.

Kok wngkha chwng hodani borokrok jora tongsani eba jorani bising hodani hamarini samung khwaiwi narwkyakhai eba hodano chabwi tisane bagwi jorao saktharyakhai samung deranai tei samungni bwthai mangwlak.

(Translation - This interpretation of the Kokborok proverb highlights the importance of timely responsibility and leadership within society. It suggests that social success depends on the active participation and moral accountability of senior members. When elders neglect their duties or fail to guide society at the right time, collective progress and success are hindered.)

(4) Habani kokno rojongo berdi nokni kokno dogalam berdi.

Kok wngkha chwng nogo kaham hamya kokbitirok salaikhai buino tai tai ereng ta sadi hinwi samase Tei habao jesaphano kok salaikhai arono kok paiwi kabunani koknose sao. Hodao baksa tongo abohai samaya kokno sawi walai rimarok nugo.

(Translation- This Kokborok proverb emphasizes the importance of discretion and responsible communication in society. It advises individuals to keep internal matters private and discourages the practice of spreading information outside its proper context. The proverb reflects social wisdom against gossip and rumor-mongering, which often lead to misunderstanding, conflict, and quarrels among people. In many social situations, individuals intentionally or unintentionally pass information between others, thereby creating disputes and fights. The proverb warns against such behavior and promotes harmony and trust within society.)

(5) Bolong tomsa khalwi je yasing pero.

Kok wngkha bolongni tomsarok jekhani tongwibo yasing perwi erwi chao . Chini borok munuisurokbo hodao tongmaba je thaio tongo hodani raida rwgwi ma tongo

(Translation- This Kokborok proverb highlights the value of self-reliance and independence. It reflects the community's emphasis on hard work, adaptability, and personal responsibility, especially in changing social and economic conditions.)

(6) Wasolokni chakhwi paptwi.

Kok wngkha chwng saimano wasolokni chakhwi tolkhe belai kwpwrap. Abohaino hodaobo abohai borok tongo nangmabo wngkha nangyabo wngkha jekhani khini nangma nukjago.

(Translation- This proverb metaphorically refers to individuals in society whose presence is widespread but whose practical contribution is limited. Despite their frequent involvement and continuous speech, their words often lack meaningful substance or productive value.)

(7) Damra huk tang chekhwra mung thang.

Chwng huk hogwi soksabaiwi damrabai mai kaiwi mai swkang tango , ulo mai munphurukhe chekhwrabai rao . Phiyaba oro sana naimakhe chwng hodano eba hodani hamkwraini samung khwlaikhe. Hodao baksa tongo chwngse swkang eba angse khwlaikhe ble hinwi mung wngna muchungjaknairok tongmani nukjago.

(Translation- This proverb metaphorically describes a social tendency in which certain individuals refrain from participating in demanding or preparatory work but become actively involved when recognition or benefits are to be received.)

(8) Sajwkno phwrwng hamjwk rwng.

Kok wngkha khebo khoroksa sajwkno hamjwk rohorkhe kaham kokbiti kwcharwi kaham tomung chamungbai tongna bagwi kwcharwi horo. Phiyaba chwng chini hoda dophano kaham samungni bwkhak yapiri senani bagwi sakhe eba lama kahamo twlangna bagwi kokbiti rwkhe kubun borokrok eba buini dopharoknose rwngma nukjago.

(Translation- Advice is often ignored by those to whom it is directly given, while others learn from it and benefit.)

(9) Mai bwtwise manya teise rangchakni ganthi sano.

Kok wngkha mai bwtwi chanase manya kwrwini bagwi teisa rangchakhai morok manwino manna muchungjago. Sana naimakhe chwng chini hoda hainose baswra teisa hodani bagwi manna muchungmani eba imang nukmanikhai kotor.

(Translation- The proverb conveys that expectations and demands must correspond to existing material conditions and resources.)

In society, proverbs and didactic expressions function as instruments of moral instruction and social encouragement, while simultaneously reflecting the collective character of the community. Society itself is constituted by individuals; therefore, its values, norms, and identity emerge from human actions and relationships. In the absence of people, society cannot exist, as social organization is fundamentally grounded in interpersonal connections.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the present study, several recommendations are proposed. First, kokborok proverbs should be clearly distinguished and systematically classified as a separate and significant component of Kokborok literature. Comprehensive documentation and scholarly analysis of folk literary forms, particularly proverbs, are necessary to ensure their preservation and academic recognition.

Second, sustained research efforts are required to understand social structures, values, and cultural practices through the study of Kokborok proverbs. Such studies contribute not only to literary scholarship but also to a broader understanding of society. For the development and enrichment of Kokborok proverbs, the formulation and implementation of structured guidelines and supportive cultural policies are essential.

Finally, literature functions as a reflection of society, and its effective study and preservation require collective efforts from researchers, writers, cultural institutions, and community members. Collaborative initiatives will facilitate the transmission of folk knowledge and enable Kokborok literature to attain greater visibility and relevance within both academic and social contexts.

Conclusion

Kokborok proverbs constitutes a fundamental component of social life and has been preserved worldwide through continuous oral transmission. Since the emergence of human communication, literary expressions have served as vital tools for conveying collective knowledge, cultural values, and social experiences. Like other communities, the Tripuri community possesses its own distinct folk literary tradition within Kokborok literature. Folk literature encompasses a variety of forms, including proverbs, poems, folk songs, and narrative expressions, each contributing to the preservation of cultural identity. Among these forms, proverbs hold particular significance due to their capacity to convey social awareness, moral guidance, and practical wisdom in concise expressions. Proverbs reflect lived experiences and provide insight into historical realities, social norms, and cultural values. The study highlights that the preservation and systematic documentation of proverbs are essential for understanding the past and guiding present and future generations. Therefore, the continued study and promotion of Kokborok folk literature remain crucial for sustaining cultural heritage and strengthening community identity. also suggests that social association influences individual reputation, implying that prolonged interaction with people of bad character may result in social disapproval, even for those originally considered virtuous.

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