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QUEST OF SURVIVAL OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF THE BOROS IN THE FACE OF CHANGING WORLD

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ABSTRACT:

Being a tribe inhabiting in the part of North-East India it may be acknowledged that the Boros have a lot of contributions to the cultural sphere of India. At the same consequence they are receiving various cultural traits from other linguistic communities due to mutual correspondences and social relationship. The most sensitive and contemporary scenario is that the verbal art, traditional religion, material culture, performing arts and all of the traits of the cultural complexities are slowly and unknowingly gone astray from the social context. It indicates vanished of traditional knowledge of the community. Thus it means the undercurrent of threat to the culture and traditional knowledge of the society. It happens due to consequence of modern civilization growing in the phase of global cultural ecology. The present cultural ecology of the Boro society is configuring with heterogeneous traits that may be mutually conceived from multicultural context. In spite of this, in the area of material cultural and the performing arts the archetypical feature is also still prevailing among the peoples. The village people

are still interested in preservation of traditional form of culture, as they believed, which is the key of racial identity and measure of safeguarding within the traditional context. At the same time most of the village organizations like religious and socio-cultural organizations are taking keen interest and active initiatives for preservation and safeguarding the cultural properties within the multicultural settings of global perspectives. A threat to the traditional culture is the threat of extinction of linguistic properties. Therefore all of the cultural and linguistic properties are need to preserve. This particular issue has been discussed in this paper.

KEYWORDS: Racial identity, threat, measure for safeguarding, traditional knowledge, cultural and linguistic property.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

The people inhabiting in the context of agro-based village life are still aware of their racial heritage; and still innately enthusiastic in traditional way of living. Even majority of the people are so much conscious in theological



practices and customs; and other related practices to the material cultures in the form of traditional costume design in particular. Another point is that the traditional arts form particularly practicing in the form of dance and music are still performing in classic mode. The dance and musical instruments are both inevitable part in fair and festivals particularly during the ritualistic ceremony known as Kherai worship which is performed for good harvest and welfare of the village people. The dance forms are handing down from generation to generation and performing till date in a vibrant mode. The peculiar types of musical instruments are made of wood, bamboo and brass metal. It is observed that practice of costume designing, traditional knowledge system concerning to the material culture; and lots of texts of the verbal arts which identify the community innately as nature lover human species. How the mass people are practicing instinctive knowledge system acquired from the setting of cultural ecology is very surprising and inspiring. Keeping in view the topic has been analyzed to highlight all about necessity of preservation in terms of knowledge; on the other hand it has been raised a sensitive question why and how ethnic cultural property needs to preserve and validate for prosperity of cultural heritage of the Boro community. And this is also a right insight in mind that why and how the rich cultural heritage of ethnic community is facing threat of extinction this is also a matter of serious discussion.

1.01 SOME VIBRANT CULTURAL HERITAGE

It is simply easy to identify the verbal arts, art of costume design, as performing arts dance and traditional musical instruments, agro-based festival and theological philosophy are most important aspects of cultural heritage. Among them in the present day society as performing arts the traditional dance form and the costume designing are most vibrant cultural heritage which are still using within changing setting of the modern world view. These are the strength implications for validation of cultural traits. Without proper care and practices cultural traits cannot be validated from generation to generation. But the younger generation has no more curiosity for caring the traditional knowledge of the artifacts that have been handing down from generation to generation. In case of the Boro society this kind of circumstances is occurring in a speedy mode. The traditional and innate knowledge are now a day off tract among the new generation. Is there any way of preservation that may be adopted at least for documentation and validation of knowledge of the society or for augmentation of the racial identity? This striking issue has been discussed in this paper.

1.01.01 TRADITIONAL DANCE FORM: IN FRONT OF SERIOUS THREAT

The dance form is closely related to ritualistic worship known as Kherai which is performed for welfare of the village life and paddy field. As myth recounted the entire dance forms have its own rhythmic and style of performance which is to be called sacred. It strictly follows religious tradition and ritualistic context. In the past the dance forms relating to the worship could be interpreted or performed only in the settings of rituals. It was regarded as sacred as the God Bathou. There are eighteen different kinds of dance forms. Each of the dance forms has some peculiar mode of expression and interpretation of ritualistic philosophy. At the time of worshipping while the woman shaman, known as DOUDINI begins to offering ingredients for the specific God and Goddesses respectively the God Bathou and his other followers, the woman shaman devotes herself for the supreme God and involved for dancing in freely hand and body gestures. The woman shaman plays vital role during the performance of worship. She is considered to be the association between the devotees and the God Bathou. The item of offering ingredients and mode of dancing of the woman shaman is the part of the Kherai worship and it has become traditional dance form of the Boros in course of time. It is known as Kherai dance. The dance forms have religious approach and implications though these are folk in the form of ritualistic texture. The dances are performed in the name of the God Bathou and his followers separately. Each dance form has distinct style and form in semiotic as well as paralinguistic features; and demonstrates metaphorical meanings. Some of the dance forms are known as the dance of BATHOU PHWTHARNAI (Purification of the Bathou Altar), MAINAO BORAINAI (Welcoming the Goddess Lakshmi), DAU THWI LWNG NAI (Having blood of Local Chicken), THUNGRI SIBNAI (Movement of Sword), KHWIJEMA PHONAI (Disordering of insects), BADALI GELENAI (Playing of Bat), MUPHUR GELENAI (Playing of Bear), NAO BWNAI (Drawing of Boat), KHAMO BARKHWNAI (Standing on Dram), BARDWI SIKHLA MWSANAI (Dancing of Wind Girl) etc. From the text and texture of the dance form it may be assumed that Boro dances are closely related to the nature worship. They have belief in the supreme power of the nature; and on the other hand it demonstrates a whole of social philosophy and traditional knowledge of the ethnic community. Keeping in view, Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma who was a preacher of Brahma religion in the Boro society; and later Padmashree Madaram Brahma and their followers had good faith to the traditional cultural heritage and taken utmost initiative for preservation though they

believed in Brahma religion and tradition. The first attempt to make mass acceptance of religious dance forms was initiated by dance guru Ustad Kamini Kumar Narzary in the decade of 50s of twentieth century and from that venture the religious dance forms have been maintained with a view to validate the theological principle of the Kherai worship. Since then a group of dance activists are doing enthusiastic job for popularization of this colorful performing arts. It has been exercising among the masses as part of the worship as well as entertaining the people in various social contexts. Though it has been performing there have a great lapse for up gradation of the dance as part of performing art forms and as the means of entertainment from a modern performing art view. It becomes due to lack of technical knowledge of the performers and the initiators. Above all there are many more lapses of planning and patronization from the respective agencies, organizations etc. that can look after all the steps of promotion of ethnic traditions. The government agencies like cultural affairs who can take more planning are found less importance to the cultural heritages. Therefore it seems to be threatened seriously to the coming period. It may be assumed that lost of ethnic dance forms leads lost of traditional knowledge. At least these can be preserved for the sake of knowledge of human being.

1.01.02 TRADITIONAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS: IN FRONT OF SERIOUS THREAT

The Boros have some traditional musical instruments which are typical in size and shape. These are identity of ethnicity of this community. The people have an immense love towards the folk musical instruments. The myth recounts that traditional musical instruments used in this community are regarded as sacred as the god; and have close relationship to the super-natural traits. Thus each of the musical instruments is associated with ritualistic functions which the people of this community pause to belief with a societal recommendation.

As prevailing among the community the major musical instruments are- Kham (a big size drum), Siphung (Flute having five perforation), Serza (a kind of string instrument specially made of wood) Zotha (Cymbal made of brass metal) Thorkha (Clapper made of bamboo) etc. There is also a kind of typical musical instrument known as Gonggwana, i.e made of two bamboo splits. Its length is almost 6-7 inches. Now a day, it is obsolete among them.

In the present day society some of the cultural and religious institutions are taking attention for improvement of musical instruments and at the same time, effort has been taken to popularize the musical instruments among the community. It is observed that a few music composers are also taking keen interest in synchronizing folk music by playing folk instruments. Even folk artists and musical band of this community are keeping in touch in making musical instruments. Dularai Boro Harimu Aphad, an organization dedicated to the revivalism of folk music and instruments of the community is taking enthusiastic role since the last decade. They are trying to frame out and design systematic notation in an approximate and technical way which can be comparable to the Hindustani music. The effort of modernization of the traditional Boro musical instruments and its art of presentation is an enthusiastic sign for the sake of safeguarding inherent and traditional knowledge of the ethnic community. But on the other hand there is some other scenario which indicates the inner threat of extinction of traditional musical instruments. The upcoming generation of this era is neither interested nor exercised the traditional performing arts and the musical instruments of their own. If such a situation will be developing and increasing among the new generations and the society this will be certainly the factor of serious threat for the sake of safeguarding the traditional cultural heritage.

The traditional musical instruments prevailing in the Boro society have sociological significance besides its artistic values. These are not only the means of recreation but also a kind of code of social identity in which community experiences and traditional knowledge may be reflected to a great extent. The community has generating knowledge through their ways of living and it has been transmitting from generation to generation. Traditional musical instruments innately can focus an approximate ideas as well as social philosophy of the Boro community.

2.01 IN THE FACE OF CHANGING WORLD AND MEASURE OF SAFEGUARDING

- A serious threat is to be mentioned that the effect of the global context has been extended on traditional musical instruments. That is why these are getting extinction due to imperialism of popular culture of the present day globalization.
- Deconstruction of traditional cultural values and configuration of new ideas is forcefully becoming a vital and changing tool in the emerging trends of globalization. In this perspective small ethnic group like Boro has been subdued by global market economy. Even cultural values and traditions are also seriously marginalized by so-called

modern culture of the present day global context.

- The new generation feels proud of emerging values of globalization. In this context ethnic musical instruments are becoming obsolete day by day.
- Of course on the one hand, in spite of such a social context, a group of serious peoples and the native speakers of this community are taking serious initiative for preservation, documentation and popularization of traditional musical instruments. This is a hopeful symptom to the small ethnic community.
- For safeguarding the identity and traditional heritage relating to the musical instruments and dance forms many of the socio-cultural organizations and local musicians are taking intellectual effort to revive dance forms and traditional music based on the religious performing arts.
- Generally traditional dance forms are off-shoot of the religious worship i.e KHERAI WORSHIP where a woman performer has a vital role, she is known as DWUDINI. Every performance (event wise) has underlying code of ways of living of the Boros. And on the other hand the mode of playing of musical instruments signifies different notations depending upon performances of Doudini during the worship. To speak the truth, KHERAI worship is taking a very important role for validation of traditional dance form and musical instruments of the Boros; and even the source of theological philosophy is being extant among the Boro people. The Bathou religious group which is an emerging factor of the Boro social structure has been involving in motivation and preaching traditional religion keeping in view to the changing needs of modern world. Such kind of initiative will help the society to install the archetypical religious heritage.
- Traditional musical instruments can preserve traditional knowledge and cultural values besides its artistic form of values. Keeping in view it is very much necessary to safeguard and preserve the traditional musical instruments. To make functional and acceptable among the musicians and common people it needs to be redesigned its whole of the texture and mode of playing with a changes of attitude.

3.0 CONCLUSION

In this paper only a few remarkable aspects regarding cultural heritage such as traditional dance forms and the traditional musical instruments still prevailing in the social context and its social significance to a great extent have been focused on the basis of its need of safeguarding in the face of changing world. On the other hand a serious matter has also been focused on threat and challenges facing by the Boro community for the sake of preservation, validation and continuation. And it has been hypothesized that loss of cultural heritage leads to loss of traditional knowledge of a community. Finally it has been observed that traditional cultural heritages are the code of ethnic identity and the source of acquired knowledge of the society. Therefore these need to be persevered and safeguarded as the knowledge of the human being. This is also an enthusiastic point of view that teaching and learning attitude of traditional musical instruments are presently increasing among the peoples of Boro nationalists. In this way Boro nationalism is also thriving in the society. Really traditional musical instruments and the dance forms are embedded as the code of ethnic identity of the Boros.

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