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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PROVERBS AND SAYINGS REFLECTED IN GIBI BITHAI

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Abstract

Proverbs and sayings are a form of verbal art. They enhance the appeal of speakers, singers, and authors, making them more intriguing and relatable by facilitating a stronger connection with their audiences or readers. Proverbs and sayings are powerful tools for sharing knowledge due to their interesting, relatable, and culturally meaningful nature. Although they are different, most of them are similar. One of the only epic works of the Bodos, "GibiBithai," has a large number of folklore elements. "GibiBithai" is a verse relating to Bathouism, and there are many good examples of proverbs and sayings in various chapters. These are closely related to Bathouism and Bodo society. The study has been done through descriptive analysis with a close reading method. In "GibiBithai," the author BihuramBoro has used proverbs and sayings to enhance the quality of the epic or to make it attractive to the recipients or the reader. These are often said in a tricky or indirect way to make you think and help you understand. These are like wisdom puzzles that you have to think about to solve. The proverbs and sayings of the "GibiBithai" are collected and gathered from the Bodo society prevalent among them. These are mostly related to their daily conversations and different situations. They serve as timeless guidelines for navigating numerous elements of life and making ethical decisions. BihuramBoro has employed proverbs and sayings to improve the quality of his work by making it more appealing to the receivers or readers. Furthermore, by documenting these in the book, many forgotten and endangered proverbs and sayings have been brought back to life.

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Introduction:-

The proverb is a concise, traditional statement that transmits wisdom, cultural values, and practical advice from parents or elders of the society. Proverbs reveal a society's prevalent beliefs, customs, and collective knowledge. Proverbs contain universal elements such as wisdom, honesty, friendship, and persistence, which makes them applicable in a number of contexts. They serve to distil practical wisdom and provide guidance for everyday living, providing a concise manner of imparting major lessons and moral values in society. Proverbs are short and witty traditional expressions that arise as part of everyday discourse as well as in the more highly structured situations of education and judicial proceeding. Each proverb is a full statement of an approach to the recurrent problem. It presents a point of view and a strategy that is self-sufficient, needing nothing more than an event of communication

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to bring it into play. Proverbs take a personal circumstance and embody it in impersonal and witty form. Proverbs are nearly always stated in the form of a single sentence. (Abrahams, 119). Standard dictionary of folklore, mythology and legend explains that, Proverb is a terse didactic statement that is current in tradition or, as an epigram says, "the wisdom of many and the wit of one." It ordinarily suggests a course of action or passes a judgement on a situation. (Leach & Jerome, 902)

In contrast, a saying is a brief representation of a common truth or wisdom or cultural insights. It is a well-known phrase or statement that expresses something about life that most people believe is wise and true (Saying-OxfordLearnersDictionaries.Com). It is a sentence used by persons belonging to certain sects and enriching religious or ethical principles (Goswami, 85). Parents and elders in the Bodo community use proverbs and sayings to educate their children with morals, discipline, and religious and moral lessons. Frequently, these proverbs represent the values and experiences of a specific culture or civilization. It plays an essential role in communication, culture, and education, allowing civilizations to effectively transmit their knowledge, beliefs, and shared experiences. These may be summarized up in a few words, much like teachings or bits of advice.

Consequently, proverbs and sayings constitute a verbal art form. They enhance the appeal of speakers, singers, and writers by creating a better connection with their audiences or readers, making them more engaging and relevant. People usually state numerous proverbs and sayings in a smart or oblique way to provoke thought and improve comprehension of their contents. They are like wisdom puzzles that require some thought to solve. The Bodos have a large number of proverbs and sayings, and since time immemorial, these have played an important role in the verbal transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. In the Bodo language, the word proverb is known as "BathraPhao." The word "Bathra" means speech or utterance, and "Phao" means acting or gesture. Conversely, in Bodo, the term "Bwswn" refers to the act of imparting a moral lesson. Numerous proverbs and sayings circulate in Bodo society. They are applied according to the time setting and situation. Based on that, proverbs can be divided in many ways. Expert has classified proverbs into four different parts: positive equivalence, negative equivalence, positive causality, and negative causality, along with sub-genres like animal proverbs, weather and seasonal change proverbs, medicinal proverbs, legal proverbs, religious proverbs, and the like (Boro, 206–211). "Gibi Bithai," the only epic work written by Swrbang Subung Bihuram Boro (Iron Man Bihuram Boro), is a book written based on the traditional Bodo religion "Bathou and its religious and related social aspects." The book consists of rich folkloristic elements.

Objectives of the Study:-

1. To find out the proverbs and sayings reflected in the Gibi Bithai.
2. To discuss and analyse the proverbs and sayings of the Gibi Bithai.
3. To find out the importance of proverbs and sayings of the Gibi Bithai.
4. To find out the significance of the proverbs and sayings of the Gibi Bithai.

Methodology and data collection:-

The present study has employed a descriptive analytical methodology. The researcher has adopted the closed reading method to analyse the Gibi Bithai. The book Gibi Bithai is the primary source of data for the study, and all the relevant written and non-written materials that are available either online or printed are the secondary data for the study. A field study for the same study has been conducted to collect some materials and examine the authenticity of the text.

Discussion:-

Proverbs and sayings offer us moral lessons and traditional knowledge that have been passed down from our ancestors, or perhaps even from ancient times. This has been a crucial element in imparting knowledge and morals to individuals in an informal manner for generations. The proverbs and sayings reflected in Gibi Bithai are as follows:

Proverbs related to Marriage:

Naigwnsibinghari / Gwgnisobaihari / Zerwibwmwnthaobla /
Habakhowlagwnobla ||888|| (Gibi Bithai, p.192)
English:

Will see the relatives and kin / Will observe the conduct and behaviour / If everything is all right and worthy of marriage / Then will marry

This proverb pertains to Bodo society's view on marriage. To be successful in getting married, one must exercise caution in selecting a bride, and for those who are on the verge of getting married, it is imperative that they prepare a suitable dwelling for their future family. Bodo culture strictly prohibits the practice of marrying a member of one's own family and blood relations, as it is considered extremely Taboo. For this reason, they must first ascertain whether they are related to them before proceeding with the marriage preparations. In addition, prior to getting married, one must first observe the positive and negative behaviours exhibited by the prospective bride; it is believed that failing to do so will result in complications in the foreseeable future.

Proverbs related to Bodo customs:

Asarabinideona /Raokhowbwmwzangsana / Zeno mwiderdanthal /
Mai dublinizwnzal ||957|| (GibiBithai, p. 204)

English :

The customs are his boundary / Does not think anyone is good / As if a bad-tempered elephant / Destroys everything in the paddy field

This proverb trying to explain that, in society, customs are very important, as traditions play a vital role in shaping the fabric of society. It provides structure, fosters cultural identity, facilitates communication, strengthens social bonds, guides ethical behaviour, resolves conflicts, and promotes a sense of continuity and adaptation. Embracing and respecting customs is essential for building a well-functioning and inclusive society. Without the existence of customs in a community or society, a plethora of issues could potentially emerge, resulting in a deficiency of discipline and a surge in misconduct. This is because people would have no incentive to refrain from engaging in inappropriate behaviours, resulting in a complete absence of order and structure. In the absence of customs, individuals would lose sight of their relationships and their significance within the social framework. Everyone would act according to their own desires, eroding the foundations of a structured society as we know it today. It would be like a hot-tempered elephant rampaging through a field and destroying all the crops. Similarly, individuals within such a society might exhibit a disregard for established customs and norms, leading to chaos and the erosion of societal order. Therefore, the establishment of rituals and customs serves to define and demarcate the boundaries between individuals, preventing such a chaotic state from emerging.

Proverbs related to human Life:

Saokhalisingnisidanw dong danwgiya/ Zeno thasolainidwi/ Dangblanw golanggwnthagwnmwdwmalol/
Ranzringlangwnmwdwi ||50|| (GibiBithai, p. 27)

English :

Human's life in body is like alive now, gone next / Like water on a taro leaf /
With the slightest touch it slips away only the body lingers still / Even tears will dry

The life of our body is so enigmatic that it is impossible to predict, and as you are presently alive, you are unable to say the future. Our life is comparable to the water on a taro leaf, which can dissipate in a single instant. It is imperative that we refrain from being arrogant, selfish, or abusive of our position and power, as life is fleeting. It is important to revere others and appreciate our possessions without becoming arrogant. We must exercise caution when utilising our possessions and abilities, as they are transient. We should endeavour to be considerate and helpful to others, rather than endeavouring to accumulate more wealth or power.

Proverbs related to six emotions:

Thamsilibikhasao /Musungkhwikhadugazraol / Gwswnimwndozaba /
Bosojwbwbiswrba||933|| (GibiBithai, p. 200)

English:

Anger Greed Infatuation / Sigh Violence Arrogance leads to downfall / When these six emotions cloud the mind /
Unchecked, they will cross society's boundaries

Thamsi (Anger), Libi (Greed), Khasao (Moh or Infatuation), Musung (Sigh), Khwikha (Violence in a taunting manner), and Duga (Arrogance/Imperious) are the six emotions of human beings. It is intended to convey that the focus is on the negative aspects of human behaviour and emotions. It suggests that individuals who succumb to negative emotions such as anger, greed, infatuation, sighs of discontent, violence or provocative, and arrogance are more likely to experience a decline in their lives. These emotions can impair a person's judgement and lead to actions that are detrimental to the individual and society as a whole. Furthermore, it underscores that when these six emotions overwhelm the mind and remain unchecked, individuals may stray beyond the bounds of socially acceptable conduct. Essentially, it is a warning about the destructive effects of giving in to these negative emotions and desires. Therefore, we must maintain control over all emotions.

Proverbs related to five senses:

Laobalaoswmkhaobakhaoswm / Ada gswm tuiaobarswm ||748|| (GibiBithai, p. 164)

English :

With the five gyanendriya or sense organs & with the karmendriya or five organs of action/ Oh dear brother with the black hair pleasedive into the ocean of life

Laoba, The five gyanendriya, or sense organs, such as Khwma (ear), Gonthong (nose), Megon (eyes), Salai (tongue), and Bigur (skin), respectively. Khaoba, The five organs of action, or karmendriya, which include the hand (Akhai), foot (Aitheng), mouth (Khuga), anus (Khibu), and genital organ (Athwn). These are the human body's senses and actions, and it is important to listen to or follow the body's directives. The term "Ada Gswm" refers to an individual who is an elder sibling with black hair. The term "tuiao" means "in the water," while "Barswm" means "jumped into." Hence it implies that one must enter social or conjugal life at a certain point in time, as it is too late to plunge into the ocean of life once time or age has passed. Overall, this assertion shows that one must marry according to the life cycle to ensure lineage continuity. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to engage in social activities with a positive outlook.

Proverbs related to practical lesson and wisdom in life:

Dersinmwiderabwgadlenw / Pondidnisalaiyabwbungdulunw ||20|| (GibiBithai, p.19)

English :

The mightiest elephant also falls / So the tongue of pandit also slips

The passage suggests that everyone makes mistakes in life, regardless of their status, whether they are a guru or a pandit (scholar). The lesson is that we should not judge or dismiss someone solely based on appearances or their errors. Everyone deserves the opportunity to demonstrate their true knowledge and value. This aligns with the English idiom, "don't judge a book by its cover." Even the lion, who is the king of the forest, can fall into traps or require the help of a small mouse to escape. This illustrates that despite one's power or position, they are not exempt from challenges or mistakes. Therefore, we should avoid dismissing people based on superficial judgements and instead recognise their inner qualities and potential.

Sayings related to Religion:

Daoboalaiswmakhwi/ Daokhayalaifurakhwi/ Dwimadwisanionthaialai/

Daokhwnanwibwhwiyakhwi ||1279|| (GibiBithai, p.264)

English :

The white crane is not yet black / The black crow hasn't turned white yet/
The rocks of the rivers/ Arenot flowing upwards

The proverbs of the Bodo religion aim to convey the timeless or universal principles of the Bodos. The Bodos have been worshipping Bathou, their supreme deity, as part of their traditional religion since time immemorial, and they continue to do so today. The Bodos continue to practice the Bathou faith, despite the passage of many peoples and decades. The author employed a crane to demonstrate that it has not undergone a transformation from white to black, as it has in the past. In the same vein, the crow remains black, and the river stones continue to descend with

the water rather than ascend. Therefore, all the Bodo sons have not forgotten to worship Bathou yet. They are still worshipping BwraiBathou, as they have since time immemorial.

Sayings related to senses:

Khwikhakhwisarithamsi / Musungkhwmsidorsi / Gaswibwhudlunhusi /
Garnangwobisibisi||1041||(GibiBithai, p. 220)

English :

Spiteful envy, entrap, anger / Sigh or sadness, darkness / All these things /
Should be tear apart and thrown away

These speak of the negative emotions that can burden a person, such as spiteful envy, entrapment, anger, sighs of sadness, and darkness. The poem suggests tearing apart and casting away all these harmful feelings. The poem's message suggests that one must distance themselves from these destructive emotions to live a happy life and receive love from others, as they only bring harm and negativity into one's life. The poet emphasises the importance of shedding these toxic influences to achieve inner peace and happiness.

Sayings related to Good deeds:

Laifangaiywblasao / Dwilunangworwdayao||1005||(GibiBithai, p. 213)

English :

When you plant a tree on the ground / Give water to the root

When you are working on anything, it is essential to do it at the appropriate time, manner and in the appropriate environment. If you don't, you won't get any benefits, and your efforts won't produce any positive consequences. As a result, it is often best to carry out activities at the appropriate time and manner.

Sayings related to life cycle:

Uzibahabakhafalswmba / Khafalgeobaarwthiba / Bathouni be gwbrabbandwba / Bekheohayazebwabwzwbba||774||
(GibiBithai, p.169)

English:

If born, marriage is certain along with misfortune and sorrow / Even a lucky person will have to die / These five complex stages of Bathou / Can't explicate as this never ends

Birth, marriage, experiencing happiness and sorrow, and ultimately death—these are all parts of someone's life. The processes from birth to death are collectively called life's cycles. Every person who is born will eventually face death. They must also go through the experience of marriage and embrace both happiness and sorrow in life. The poet suggests that while the nature of happiness and sadness may vary from person to person, everyone must experience them. No one can escape death if they are born. Although everyone must face death, the experience differs from person to person. Therefore, life is not permanent; it can end in just a second. In this short time, there are many things to remember and experience that are impossible to fully describe in words.

Sayings related to ultimate truth of life:

Thwiblaraobwthwifaya / Fabkhowbwraobwbanfaya / Ha-hu, sa-su, zebwzeb /
Thathrolangwngaswibw||1036||(GibiBithai, p.219)

English :

If you die no one else die with you / No one will bear the burden of your sins / Your land, property, and all you have possessed / Will remain in this world

In this world, no one truly belongs to another. Each individual enters and departs from this world in solitude. One's actions, deeds, and knowledge are unique to them and cannot be passed down. It is important to recognise that all worldly possessions, including wealth and material belongings, are impermanent. No one can carry with them their wealth, assets, or possessions upon one's death.

Sayings related to the importance of Customs:

Acharanwzadwngbisow / Achargwyiyamwsow / Bekhownwmithinasubung /

Acharkhowzahwabung||1080|| (GibiBithai, p. 227)

English:

Customs are the foundation / Those don't have customs they are cow (uncivilised, impolitic) / You people, knowing all these / Let customs be filled around you.

Customs are an essential component of human society and culture. They contribute to the maintenance of order, the preservation of culture, the facilitation of communication, the provision of moral and ethical direction, and the promotion of social cohesion. Those who lack customs may lack the culture, tradition, and discipline necessary to govern society. For people to live in harmony within their communities and for societies to operate efficiently, it is essential to embrace and respect the customs.

Conclusion:-

Proverbs and sayings are oral expression genres that offer practical advice and solutions to common problems, providing guidance on navigating life's challenges. They are powerful tools for sharing knowledge due to their relatable and culturally meaningful nature. These can be drawn from a variety of disciplines, including human experience, history, and philosophy, and are essential for effective communication and engagement through attraction. The present study has discussed some Bodo proverbs and sayings from the book "GibiBithai." The book contains many folklore components. The book presents traditional Bathou religion, along with its laws and customs, using a scientific and modern approach. The proverbs and sayings of the book are collected and gathered from Bodo society prevalent among them. These are mostly related to their daily conversations and different social, cultural, and religious events. In the present study, most of the proverbs and sayings are related to the Bathou religion and its related customs. Here, proverbs and sayings related to human life, religion, senses and emotions, moral lessons, and marriage are studied. They convey essential moral lessons regarding living with purpose, accountability, tolerance, sincerity, ethical behaviour, trust, control over emotions and senses, and the obligations of marriage. They serve as timeless guidelines for navigating numerous elements of life and making ethical decisions. BihuramBoro has employed proverbs and sayings to improve the quality of his work by making it more appealing to the receivers or readers. Furthermore, by rewriting or including these in the book, many forgotten and endangered proverbs and sayings have been brought back to life. Additionally, some proverbs and sayings are nearly identical to those in neighbouring languages, such as Assamese, Bengali and Hindi proverbs and sayings. These may have percolated down to common usage as a result of literacy and cultural assimilation. All the proverbs and sayings that are discussed in the present study are sourced from the book "GibiBithai," yet many more proverbs and sayings remain unexplored in this study, presenting an ample opportunity for further research. Engaging in thorough discussions and analyses of the same can reveal their concealed meanings and emphasise their significance within historical and contemporary contexts. Consequently, the study of the proverbs and sayings incorporated in the GibiBithai stands as a crucial aspect of future folklore research and inquiry.

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