CHAPTER-I

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1.0 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of Bodo language and its origin and development. The Bodo is one of the aboriginal linguistic community of North-East India. Their basic habitat is northern bank of the mighty river Brahmaputra and a little of them reside in the southern bank of the river. They are scattered in a large area in the length and breadth of Assam and its neighboring states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, North Bengal area of West Bengal and neighboring countries Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The Bodos of North Bengal are known as Mech and in Nepal as Meche for their habitation in the bank of Mechi River. In Bangladesh, they are known as Kachari. The language of the Bodos of Assam, North Bengal, Nepal and Bangladesh are mutually intelligible to each other. Previously they were known as Kacharis may be for their habitation in the Kachar area of Assam. However, today they introduce themselves as Bodos but not Kachari. The Mech or Meches also better like to introduce themselves as Bodos.

Racially the Bodos belong to Mongoloid stock and linguistically to the Tibeto-Burman group of Sino-Tibetan language family, which is the second largest family in the world. The family is quite extensive and consists of two main branches- Tibet-Burman and Siamese-Chinese. Himalayan, Tibetan, North-Assam and Assam-Burmese are four major branches of the Tibet-Burman branch and Bodo groups belong to Assam-Burmese group. In this group, several minor languages such as Garo, Rabha, Dimasa, Tiwa, Kokborok, Hajong etc. are included. These languages have enough similarities among themselves to call sister or cognate languages.

Many Linguists and Anthropologists have opined that the Bodo groups of people have migrated to North-East India from North-Western China. S. K. Chatterji has pointed out:

"The area of the characterization for the primitive Sino-Tibetan speech appears to have been North-Western China between the head-waters of the Huang Ho and the Yang-tsze Kiang rivers. Possibly very early off-shoots of the Proto-Sino-Tibetan speaking Mongolioids, before the language was fully characterized, came
down to South China and Burma, and from them were descended of the Man and Miao-tsze peoples of South China and the Karens of Burma-tribes or peoples which are Mongoloid in race but whose speech now appears to be rather distinct from other members of the Sino-Tibetan family." (Chatterji 1998:21)

Bhaben Narzi, one of the Bodo folklorist, in his book “Boro-Kacharir Somaj aru Sanskriti” (An Introduction to Boro-Kachari’s Society and Culture) has mentioned in the introductory part like this “the Mongoloid people came to North-East India through the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries for trade in silk, noted now a days as Endi-Muga in Assam.” (Narzi 2001:1)

1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aims and objectives of proposed research work is to collect suffixes and to discuss their use in the language. The data is collected from written as well as from speech corpus. For written corpus, it has been collected from early writings to contemporary period. Bodo language is a highly monosyllabic language and sometimes it becomes difficult to identify the suffixes in the lexical level because maximum words are formed by derivation. Therefore, a manual observation has also been made to collect the data. The structure of the language has been especially taken into consideration during data collection. This study is mainly based on standard form of the language but importance has been given to the dialectical form as well. Some suffixes are common in both standard and dialectical form but some have two or more forms and both the standard and dialectical forms represent the same meaning. Here an attempt has been made to study and analyze both standard and dialectical form of suffixes.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The proposed topic “A Descriptive Analysis on Bodo Suffix” has a great significance in Bodo linguistics domain in preserving and documenting these suffixes, which is in the path of extinction along with the development of society as most of the Bodo speakers are giving away to other languages leaving their own language behind. As far the knowledge of the researcher is concerned, no one has taken a strong initiative in preserving and documenting this precious wealth of the society except a few scholars who have tried to touch on this topic from outside. Therefore, it is hoped that this
research will help in the linguistic domain as well as in the academic sphere of the society.

1.3 Methodology

For the proposed work data has been collected from two different sources i.e. primary and secondary. For collecting primary data different informants of different areas and professions have been selected and an attempt was made to collect data from their normal conversation using observation method, writing down the suffixes when and where it is necessary and also by using tape recorder now and then. On the other hand, for secondary data different written documents like books, magazines, newspapers and others have been collected and have been tried to collect suffixes. For collecting secondary data, the researcher has visited K.K. Handique Library, G.U., Department of Bodo Library G.U., Bodo Sahitya Sabha Library, Guwahati and Kokrajhar and other village libraries to make the research more authentic.

This research has been preceded using descriptive analysis method to analyze the data.

1.4 Scripts and Literature

The history of writing Bodo literature started from the early 20th century with publication of "Boroni pisó ó áyen" by Gangacharan Kachari in 1915, "Bathu Naam Baikhaguni Gidu" by Prasanna Kumar Borokhakhluary in 1919. These books were written in Goalpara dialect of Bodo language using Bangla scripts. The original history of literature started with publication of a magazine "BIBAR" (manuscript form in 1919) published in 1920 edited by Satish Chandra Basumatary. This brought a renaissance in the history of Bodo literature. This magazine was written in Bodo, Assamese and Bangla languages and two scripts Assamese and Bangla. This magazine created an era known as BIBAR era and it produced many writers who led the literature in the coming days. "Köntó-Meló" (1923) by Rupnath Brahma and Mada Ram Brahma, a collection of poems and songs is another addition in the kitty of Bodo literature. Accordingly "Boroni Gudi Sibsa Aru Aroj" (1928) composed by Mada Ram Brahma and other books followed one after another to enrich the granary of Bodo literature and today this granary is filled with different genres published from time to time.
The history of Bodo literature became stronger after the formation of apex body of the Bodos i.e. - Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952, introduction of Bodo language as medium of instruction from May 18, 1963, as MIL under Gauhati University in 1977, Postgraduate certificate course in 1985 and MA course under Gauhati University 1996. Today it has MA course at Gauhati University, Guwahati and Bodoland University, Kokrajhar.

The Bodos have not their own script and from beginning of the literature they have shifted to different scripts as per their convenience i.e.- they have shifted from Assamese and Bangla scripts to Roman and then back to Assamese from time to time. But after the script movement under the banner of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1974-75 they have stuck to Devnagiri script and till then this script is continuing in formal and informal occasions.

One of the legendary figure of Assam, Bishnu Prasad Rabha said that there was a kind of Deodhai script among the Kacharis (Boros and Dimasas) but there could not be found enough specimen to develop the script. (Bhattachrya 1977:14)

1.5 The Religion and Culture of the Bodos

The aboriginal religion of the Bodos of Assam is Bathuu i.e. five deep philosophies having resemblance to Panchatatta of the Hindu philosophy representing - soil, water, air, fire and sky (ha, duii, bar, or and okhraq). For worshipping Bathuu they plant Sizuu (Euphorbia neriifolia I) and worship the God nearby the plant which they believe as NIRAKAR (without form/shape). Along with the development of time and due to the influence of Hindu and other desi and foreign religions, they have shifted from their traditional religion Bathuu to other religions like Ek Charan Nam Dharma preached by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva the two Gurus and also to Christianity, Rupamani, Brahma and even Bodos (Mech) were converted to Muslim in 13th century. (Choudhury 2004:16)

The Bodos mostly like to reside in the places where one can gather free edible things like fish, meat, green leaves, arum and others. Previously they lived on fishing and hunting but slowly they shifted to wet cultivation and settled in a particular area than shifting from one place to the other. They are rich in culture related to life de passages and other traditions.
1.6 Demographic Composition of the Bodos

The Bodos of Assam are scattering in a large area where they are occupying 2/3 population of total Tribal population of the state. They can be almost found in every districts of the state though they are very thin some of the districts. The densely populated districts are Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri in the North bank of the Brahmaputra valley, which have been included in the Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts. The overall Bodo population in Assam as per 2001 census is 12,96,162.

1.7 Literature Review

1.7.1 ESSAY THE FIRST on the KOCCH, BODO AND DHIMAL TRIBES (1847)

Brian Houghton Hodgson, a British Civil Servant, a pioneer Naturalist and Anthologist, worked in India and Nepal. The term ‘Bodo’ was first used by him in “ESSAY THE FIRST on the KOCCH, BODO AND DHIMAL TRIBES” (1847) which is written in three parts; (I) vocabulary, (II) Grammar and (III) Location, Numbers, Creeds, Customs, Condition, and Physical and Moral characteristics of the peoples. In the vocabulary part he made a comparative discussion on Koch, Bodo and Dhimal languages of North East India along with English rendering. He divided the vocabulary into several parts starting from Things and Beings to Proper names of Bodo males and females covering 92 pages (pp-11 to 103). In Grammar part, he elaborately discussed some aspects of Traditional grammar based on Morphology and Syntax. Starting from orthography to syntax, he tried to give general information as well as comparison on the three languages Koch, Bodo and Dhimal. In the last part, he discussed the Location, Numbers, Creeds, Customs, Condition, and Physical and Moral characteristics of the peoples of these tribes. He discussed on Bodo concentration and made census of these tribes. He drew a line on the location of the Bodos-

"The latitude and longitude of the Bodo country are the same with those of the Kocch country, to speak any affectation of a precision the subject does not admit of, and thus we may say the Bodo extend from 25 to 27 north latitude and from 88 to 93 ½ east longitude." (Hodgson 1847:152)

He also mention about the few distinct languages having similarities to each other for their habitation in the same locality.
"But the Bodo are still very numerous race, and extend, as foresters, from Surma to Dhansri, and thence, via Bijni and the Bhutan and Sikim Tarai to the Konki, besides occupying, outside the forest limits, a large proportion of central and lower Assam. In the divisions of Darang and Chatgari they constitute the mass of the fixed population: they bound in Chardwar and Noudwar: in Nouraon and Tularam's country, they are the most numerous tribe next to the Mikirs and Lalongs: in Kamrup next to the Dhekra and Koch; whilst in the marches or forest frontier of the north from Bijni to Aliganj of Morung, they form the sole population, except few Dhimals, who are mixed with them; and in the eastern marches from Gauhati to Sylhet, they are less numerous only then the Garos, Rabhas and Hajongs, not to mention, that the two last, if not all three, are but Bodos in disguise." (Hodgson 1847:151)

1.7.2 Outline Grammar of the Kachari (Bárá) Language as Spoken in District Darrang, Assam (1884)

Rev. Sydney Endle was a Chaplain of Darrang, Assam during the British regime and was interested in Kachari (Bodo) language and culture. The "OUTLINE GRAMMAR of the KACHARI (BÁRÁ) LANGUAGE as spoken in District Darrang, Assam" (1884) is the first Bodo Grammar by Endle and also the first Grammar on Boro Language and Linguistics. In the preface of the Book, he mentioned the origin and development of Bodos as well as the relations among the tribes of Bodo groups.

"This people, who once occupied so large portion of North-East India, and who still constitute at least one-third of the population of the Brahmaputra Valley, are known to us vaguely as Kacharis, but they rarely, is ever, use this mane among themselves. In Western Darrang and North Kamrup, they very commonly speak of themselves as "Bárá" and this title seems to be largely used by them in North-East Bengal. In Goālpāra they are commonly known as Méch (Més) a designation I have never known applied to them in this districts. In all likelihood this name was given to them in contempt by their Hindu neighbours- ("Mléch," "Mléchecha"- outcast, barbarian, &c.)" (Endle 1911:VI)

In this book, he added two research papers on comparative linguistics. These are -

(a) Note on the Relation of the Kachari (Bárá) Language to that of Hill Teppera and (b)
Hill Kachari compared with that Spoken in the Plains. Along with research papers, he included different aspects of Linguistics - Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and Miscellaneous Phrases. Besides that, he also included some conversation made with a Mauzadar and Bodo labors of the Tea Factory of Darrang. He also included reading lessons divided into three groups. Here is some specimen from the book -

"The short series of Reading Lessons given in the following pages, will afford the student some insight into the more prominent characteristics of the language when thrown into the form of continuous narratives. They may be divided into three groups: Nos. 1-8 are translation from a school-book which is highly popular in the Kachari village schools of this districts, the "Assamese Second Reader" published at the American Mission Press, Sibsagar; Nos 9-11 are translations of the Creed, The Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, the texts for translation being taken from the Assamese Version of the Book of Common Prayer; while the third group which is perhaps the most important, consists of original compositions descriptive of some of the more prominent features of Kachari village life, religious, social, domestics, &c. These last chapters (Nos. 12-17) have for the most part been compiled by J. Dhan Singh, A kachari native of Silputa mouzah, Chatgari Duar, in the Mangaldai sub-division of this (Darrang) district." (Endle 1884: 67)

In the last, he included Bodo Vocabulary with Assamese and English meaning systematically arranging from A to Z starting with Vowel to Consonant.

1.7.3 Linguistic Survey of India (1903)

Linguistic survey of India, Vol-III, Tibeto-Burman Family, Part-II, Specimen of the Bodo, Naga and Kachin Groups, compiled and edited by G.A. Grierson, an eminent scholar and linguist working during British India. In this volume he included a brief note on Bodo language and discussed about the historical development. He added some of Bodo vocabularies and also quoted some tales and fables from J.D. Andersons' "The Kachari Folk Tales and Rhymes". Here is some important excerpt from his book -

"The generic Term "BODO" was first applied by Hodgson to this group of languages. The exact sound is better represented by spelling it Báďá or Bářá. Báďá or Bářá is the name by which the Mech or Mes and the
Kachārīs call themselves. Like other tribal names in Assam, the name probably once meant a male member of the tribe." (Grierson 1903:1)

According to him, the Tripura language is an allied language of Bodo, which is similar to that of Bodo. In this regards he mentioned-

"In closely allied Tripura language bárā (k), still means a 'man' and the Kachari or Mech will call himself Bárā-fisā a son of Bárās, to distinguish him from e.g.- a Sim-sā, that is a Bhotiā, or Chin-fisā, a son of China. The Bodos are known as Mech by the Hindu neighbors, in this connection Grierson made a statement that the word Mech is a corrupted form of Sanskrit 'Mlechchha', which corresponds to the original meaning of our word 'Welsh' i.e.- foreigner, stranger." (Grierson 1903:1)

1.7.4 The Kacharis (1911)

"The Kacharis" is the second book written by Rev. Sidney Endle published posthumously in 1911. In this book he included social customs, law and order, religion, folklore, tradition and superstition of the Bodos. He also added a chapter on Bodo Grammar, two chapters on Tribes closely allied to Kacharis and Specimen of the Bodo Language. In the last, some photo specimen of the Meches of Goalpara district, Bodos of Kamrup district and a map showing areas occupied by the Bodos are included.

Regarding migration he mentioned like this -

"the Bodos were migrated from North and North-East into the rich valley of Brahmaputra, i.e.- one entering North-East Bengal and Western Assam through the valley of Tista, Dharla, Sankosh &c., and founding there what was formerly the powerful kingdom of Kāmārupa; and the other making its way through the Subansiri, Dibong and Dihong valleys into Eastern Assam, where a branch of the widespread Kachari race known as Chutiyas, undoubtedly held sway for a lengthened period." (Endle 1911:4)

The book has immense contribution towards the development of language, literature, culture and tradition of the Bodos. It is like a mirror of 19th -20th centuries Bodo society.
1.7.5 Outline of Tibeto-Burman Linguistics Morphology (1929)

The book "Outline of Tibeto-Burman Linguistics Morphology with special reference to Prefixes, infixes and suffixes of classical Tibetan and the languages of the Kachin, Bodo, Naga, Kuki-Chin and Burma Groups" written by Stuart N. Wolfenden and published by The Royal Asiatic Society in 1929. Wolfenden is one of the Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute and member of the Royal Asiatic Society, Burma Research Society and Linguistic Society of America. In this book, he made a comparative study on Bodo, Naga and Naga-Bodo group of languages. He discusses the affixes used in Bodo, Dimasa, Garo and Tripura languages and compared with the Naga language. The book has great importance in the field of Bodo language and linguistics.

1.7.6 Kirāṭa-Jana-Kṛiti (1951)

Kirāṭa-Jana-Kṛiti (The Indo-Mongoloids, their contribution to the History and Culture of India) is one of the popular works of Suniti Kumar Chatterji. Here he described the migration, habitation and the brief history of Bodo from the pre-historic era to the middle of the 20th century. He also discussed about the branches of Sino-Tibetan language family. He has discussed on various Mongoloid communities, tribes of North-East India, adjoining areas of China and Tibet. In his words-

"There is at present a strong movement among the Bodos of Assam Valley to establish their language as a language of literature and culture, and of instruction in schools and colleges. A modern literature is being created in Bodo, with collections and of folk poetry and tales, and with literary journals. The Bengali-Assamese script is used." (Chatterji 1951:46)

In this book Chatterji has draw a detail tabular representation of the speeches of the branches of Sino-Tibetan language family.

The book has a great significance where the Tibeto-Burman, Mongoloid families are discussed and trying to draw an attention towards these aboriginal communities, their language, culture and literature.
1.7.7 Sino-Tibetan A Conspectus (1972)

The book "Sino-Tibetan A Conspectus" is one of the masterpieces of Sino-Tibetan language and linguistics written by Paul K. Benedict, Visiting Professor, Colombia University. The book is based on field survey, which was done in China, Indochina and Siam. In this book he discussed Phonology and Morphology of Sino-Tibetan language family. He also classified the Sino-Tibetan language into different subgroups and discussed about the morphological constructions.

1.7.8 A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language (1977)

This is a book by Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya who dared to study the Bodo language after the Christian Missionaries. Here he tried to include all aspects of Bodo linguistics from descriptive point of view and also added some texts from Bodo tales, verse, prayer songs with phonetic transcription and English rendering. He also added some Bodo vocabularies with English rendering and arranged in a systematic way.
1.7.9 Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman (2003)

The book "HANDBOOK OF PROTO-TIBETO-BURMAN System and Philosophy of Sino-Tibetan Reconstruction" is one of the masterpiece of Sino-Tibetan language and linguistics written by James A. Matisoff, University of California, Berkeley. In this book, he discusses the proto-entities at the various points of the syllables, diphthongs, glides, prefixes, suffixes of entire Sino-Tibetan language families including Bodo-Naga groups.

1.7.10 Boro Raokhanthi (Bodo Grammar, 2006)

Swarna Prabha Chainary, she is one of the upcoming linguists, working in the field of Tibeto-Burman language and linguistics. In the book "Boro Raokhanthi" she discusses all the aspect of linguistics i.e.- Phonology, Morphology and Syntax. This is the first Bodo grammar written in Bodo where all the aspects of linguistics can be found. The book has great significance in the field of Bodo language and linguistics.

1.7.11 An Outline of the Meche Language (Grammar, Texts and Glossary) (2008)

One of the Japanese scholar Kazuyuki Kiryu of Mimakasa University, Japan writes the book "An Outline of the Meche Language (Grammar, Texts and Glossary)" in 2008. This book is based on Meche language of Nepal, which is mutually intelligible to Bodo language of Assam and Mech language of North Bengal. It is based on linguistics and all the aspect of linguistics i.e.- Phonology, Morphology and Syntax have been included. Besides that he added a glossary of a Meche story (Dutbir-Dudubir) which is transliterated and transcribed with English rendering. The book gives lots of information relating to the Bodo language and linguistics.

1.7.12 Bodo Grammar (2013)

The book "Bodo Grammar" (2013) is written by Aleendra Brahma. He is one of the upcoming young linguists among the Bodos. In this book he beautifully discusses all the aspect of linguistics i.e. - Phonology, Morphology and Syntax along with an introduction chapter on Bodo language.

The books that have been taken for review has great significance in relation to the research work. Though these works are related partially to the present research work, here it is trying to discuss the inflectional and derivational system of the Bodo language.