

ENVIRONMENTAL ADDRESS IN BENGALI PROVERBS

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Abstract: Proverbs as the listed speech kinds play an indispensable role in the cultural system of a certain society. People especially native speakers expose their linguistic expertise and the eco-cultural knowledge by using suitable proverbs whenever they need. The present paper through descriptive- analytic method and content analysis aims to reveal the inscribed environmental discourses in Bengali proverbs. The results indicated that Bengali proverbs cover environmental elements such as fruits, nature, flowers, animals and even agricultural elements.

Key Words: Environmental Discourse, Bengali Proverbs, Anthropological Linguistic, Encoding

1. INTRODUCTION:

Discourse is a specific collection of ideas and concepts that are produced, reproduced and transformed into a particular set of practices; through which meaning is given to physical and social realities (Hajer, 1995:44). Dryzek also considers discourse as a common way of understanding the world in which the use of language facilitates the interpretation of information. Each discourse rests on assumptions that provide the basic terms for analysis in the environmental area (1997:8). According to him environmental discourse is the way in which we interpret and analyze environmental issues (Dryzek, 1997: 9). It is believed that the environmental discourse has two distinct meanings in environmental terminology. The first meaning emphasizes on traditional meaning, as textual and spoken interactions about the environment. The second, more recent approach utilizes the notion of environmental discourses as group worldviews towards the environment (Novikau, 2016). The present article will take the primary meaning of environmental discourse to investigate the realization of environment and its elements in the Bengali proverbs to see what are the environmental discourses inscribed in Bengali proverbs?

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

It is assumed that oral literature through its diverse forms provides a portrait of the life as experienced by the people who lived in that context. It is based on such approach that oral literature contains the indigenous beliefs, knowledge and values about nature (physical environment) and the people's place in it (Belay Adugna, 2014). Some consider oral literature as a source of artistic expressions that are commonly found in various cultures enhancing the desire for harmony and beauty engraved in humanity (Appell, 2012). Since proverbs are the elements that directly are connected with cultural background of the society (Fasold, 1990: 46). They are available in all languages different lexical, structural and meaning items are used to express the same or different ideas (Bhuvaneshwar & Hyderabad, 2009). Proverbs belong to the common knowledge of all native speakers who are living in a certain society and are very effective devices to communicate wisdom and knowledge about human nature and the world at large (Meider, 2004). Many worthy studies have been done in the area of proverbs around world but a few of them have covered proverbs from the view point of environmental discourse, thus the present study for the first time aims to investigate Bengali proverbs from environmental discourse point of view to draw attention to the crucial role of this perspective in understanding proverbs since proverbs are highly cultural linguistic units and adequate cultural understanding is required in order to comprehend them correctly and completely.

3. METHODOLOGY :

In this study in order to collect the data, author used content analysis method to collect the proverbs from Bengali proverb collections to i.e. Cultural History of Bengali Proverbs (2010). After collecting the data author analyzed them based on the environmental terms used in them.

4. DATA ANALYSIS:

Nature plays an essential role for human society and nonpluses them with its beauty. Bengal is a land of rivers, vast open fields and snowcapped mountains. The beauty of its nature has attracted litterateurs. The description of its beauty can be in poetry, music, paintings, rhymes, riddles and of course proverbs (Basāka, 2010:61). Basāka

divides the nature relating proverbs into two parts: (a) Ones that are related to plant life such as trees, creepers, fruits, flowers, (b) Ones that are related to the sky and planets.

4.1 Fruit proverbs:

This section analyses the proverbs in which a message has been conveyed by the use of a name of certain fruit. For instance in the proverb *phaler madhye amro pha jaler madhye gangajal*¹ (Bengali) mango has been considered as the king of fruits since national fruit in Bengal is mango (amro/amm) and their holy river is Ganga its figurative meaning is that nothing is comparable with these two things. There is also proverb for banana it says *kalapoda khao*² (Bengali) which literally means in the case of poverty in which you do not have anything to eat, you can grill unripe banana and eat. Another example is Jackfruit, it is a huge fruit with a thorny skin, which contains separate arils, from which the seeds are thrown out and the flesh is eaten. Jackfruit breaking is an extremely tedious and after that separating the arils from the main inedible parts requires time. In the proverb *kanthal kheyte laglo atha tel diye ghuchao letho*³ (Bengali) through its literal meaning directly instructs how to manage the sticky, gooey glue-like ooze of the jackfruit. Since this goo is mainly proteins, it dissolves in oil thus it's necessary to put oil (in most parts they use mustard oil) on your hands while you break open the jackfruit. Some proverbs give moral advice by the use of available process of the nature for example the proverb *gache kanthal gophe tel*⁴ (Bengali) indicates that jackfruit is still on the tree (unripe) and a person has already started to oil his moustache (i.e. to say making himself ready for consuming it). Thus, the said person is totally neglecting the time that it'd take for the jackfruit to ripen, or for him to break it open. Hence, this proverb means to expect positive results out of something that has not yet happened.

4.2 Flower Proverbs:

This section analyses the proverbs in which a message has been conveyed by the use of a name of certain flowers name. There is also proverb for rose it says *golap bage kukur shonka* literally means that it's very strange to see an evil smelling tree in a rose garden. Another example is lotus, *goborey padmaphool* it figuratively means that a potent person the same as lotus can flourish in any situation even worst situation like cowdung. Another example is champak, *champa phooler gandhe, jamai ase anande* literary means that fragrance of champak brings son-in-law in joy. As the bee is attracted by the flower's fragrance so is the son-in-law by the wife at her parents' home (Basāka, 2010:63).

4.3 Nature Proverbs:

This section analyses the proverbs in which a figurative or literal message has been conveyed by the use of nature elements such as tree, cloud and rain, river, sea, mountain, moon and sun. For example the proverb *bado gachhe jhad lage* (Bengali) literary contains the word tree and conveys the literal meaning that storm hits the big tree and figuratively means that the head of a family has to bear all troubles. Another proverb is *megh na chaite jal* (Bengali) which literary means that rain does not wait for clouds its figurative meaning indicates unexpected bounty. Another proverb is *khar naditey char pade na* (Bengali) which literary means fast flowing river has no sand bed arising its figurative meaning indicates speedy action fears no obstruction. A proverb by the use of term "sea" says *samudre petichhi shajya, shsishire ki bhay* (Bengali) which literary means the sea is my bed, why fear the dew drop? Its figurative meaning indicates immersed in troubled, small pinpricks do not matter. A proverb by the use of term "mountain" says *akande yadi madhu pai tabey keno paruate yai* (Bengali) which literary means if the akanda flowers give honey then why go to the mountain its figurative meaning indicates why go far if help is at hand. A proverb by the use of term "moon" says *chand kapale dirgha phonta mukh tar sarshe bata* (Bengali) which literary means forehead like the moon mustard paste in mouth its figurative meaning indicates good looking person with a harsh tongue.

4.4 Animal Proverbs:

This section analyses the proverbs in which a figurative message has been conveyed by the use of animals, birds and insects related elements such as tiger, parrot, crocodile etc. Since human beings consider animals, birds or insects as their friends and inseparable part of existence, in some of proverbs, the presence of them are noteworthy. For example the proverb *goru na biotei ghee* (Bengali) literary contains the word cow and conveys the literal meaning that asking for ghee even before the cow has given birth and figuratively means hoping a step ahead. Another proverb is *kukurer pete ghee shay na* (Bengali) which literary means that dog's tummy can't accept ghee its figurative meaning

¹ Mango among fruits is what the Ganga is among rivers (Basāka, 2010:62)

² Eat burnt banana (Basāka, 2010:62)

³ Jackfruit gum sticks to fingers get rid of it with oil (Basāka, 2010:62)

⁴ Counting your chickens before they hatch (Dutta, 2015)

indicates everything is not for everybody. A proverb by the use of term “cat” says *biraler bhagye shike chida* (Bengali) which literary indicates cat's good fortune that the hanging rope breaks and the food pot fall down its figurative meaning indicates good luck. A proverb by the use of term “tiger” says *yakhane bagher bhay, sekhane sandhya hay* (Bengali) which literary means everything descends where there is the fear of tiger its figurative meaning indicates danger comes when it is most feared. A proverb by the use of term “Cuckoo” says *kokiler bou chhele dhartey Jane na* (Bengali) which literary means mother cuckoo can't rear chicks its figurative meaning indicates the status of being inexperience. A proverb by the use of term “Ant” says *pipilika pakha hay maraner tare* (Bengali) which literary means when ant grows wings it dies its figurative meaning indicates that being ambition leads to collapse.

4.5 Agricultural Proverbs:

This section analyses the proverbs in which a message has been conveyed by the use of a name of agriculture since it was the main occupation in Bengal, it was natural that proverbs would be created around it. Some of the agriculture-related proverbs are following: *Lanka punto gundo, begun budo* sow chillies small, brinjals big. *narkeler goday mati suparir goda kati* Put earth at base of coconut tree, cut base of betelnut tree. Proverb on how the land should be *char aal unchu, majkhane nichu* high boundaries, low at middle. proverb on what to grow in which direction *pube hans pashchime bansh uttare kala dakshine khola* literally means duck pond in east, bamboo in the west Banana north, south open (Basāka, 2010:65).

5. CONCLUSIONS:

The heritage, ancient culture and customs of one society can be traced from its oral or written texts especially the proverbs of that language. Proverbs reveals the social life and its influence on language. Above mentioned proverbs through their words and structure and even figurative meaning reveal a lot about the cultural practices and the way of living in Bengal. The results indicated that Bengali proverbs contain environmental elements such as fruits, nature, flowers, animals and even agricultural elements. Further and more comprehensive studies should be conducted in this regard.

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