

Children's Folklore of the Apatani Community of Arunachal Pradesh in the Process of Socialization

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Abstract

The tribes in Arunachal Pradesh have rich folk tradition, and due to unavailability of written script almost all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh follow the oral tradition. The interest in oral art is very old. It always existed and people have welcomed and sought information about the tradition, stories, and myths of the community. Children's folklore is one of the important areas of folklore studies as they are the fundamental unit of every society and universal symbol of future potentiality as well as the carrier of the heritage of the past. This paper is an attempt to comprehend the children's folklore of Apatani community of Ziro valley of Arunachal Pradesh and an endeavor to analyze its functions that plays a vital role in the process of socialization. This paper would give a deep insight that will help in understanding the children's world of the Apatani community and their perception towards the roles and responsibilities of the society through various games and plays.

Keywords: Children's Folklore; Socialization; Apatani Community; Arunachal Pradesh; Ziro Valley; Traditional Games

Introduction

Apatani is one of the indigenous tribal communities domiciled in Ziro valley in the Lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. The land of the Apatanis is located in the Ziro valley of Arunachal Pradesh at an altitude of 5,754 feet and surrounded by hill ranges in all directions. Watered by the river known as Kamala that runs in the middle of the valley from north to south. Apatanis are presently settled in different villages like hong, hija, duta, Mudang Tage, hari, Bula and Bamin-Michi. Apatanis adopt Donyi- Polo as their religion and are well known for their wet paddy cum fish cultivation. Apatanis are rich in various kinds of festivals, oral narratives, rituals, belief systems, customs and practices etc

The study of folklore is important in understanding the functioning of traditional societies. Children's folklore is one of the important areas of folklore studies. Folklore is necessary for Children's healthy development, helping them to acquire physical, social, cultural and cognitive skills. According to Sierra (1995), children's folklore is those that are passed from child to child, generation to generation, informally by oral communication. They come in a variety of forms and types. Osorina (1986) defines children's folklore as the sum of various forms of activities of a children's group that have a tendency to repeat themselves from generation to generation of children and that are intimately linked to the age and

sex related peculiarities of psychological development and to the nature of socialization of a children within the limits of a particular culture. Thus, children's folklore is a set of activities or body of knowledge which is orally transmitted from generation to generation and repeatedly performed by the children belonging to a particular region or culture, primarily for their own pleasure and entertainment. It consists of verbal and non-verbal plays, games, pastimes, stories, rhymes, jokes, riddles etc.

Social and cultural context of Children's Folk lore

The Apatanis are one among the tribe in Arunachal Pradesh who are rich in folk tradition. Children's folklore has been one of the important aspects segments of the community ever since the beginning which has been analyzed in this paper in the form of games that have been collected from the field and from the memory of the elders and from my own experience as being one among the community member.

In the Apatani society games and plays have been fascinated and traditionally attached since time immemorial. It has always been the best pass time during the leisure hour and tabooed days known as ditung-potung in apatani for both elders and children. As Marion D.Pugh (2010) had also clearly cited about the recreational activities; traditional games played by children as well as adults of NEFA, particularly focusing on the games of the Apatani community in his book Games of Nefa. But, since the paper is concerned and limited only to the children's folklore, traditional games and pass time for the children have been analyzed. The word used for playing in Apatani is Sosnii, Miimung, Soniinig.

Aloo Tapyo Parnii (Making of indigenous salt with sand): This game is played by both boys and girls of aged 3-8 years. This game is like a competition amongst the children who can make out the best shape of an indigenous salt (tapyo) that holds an important cultural context in the Apatani society with the sand. The game helps in shaping the cognitive development in the children about their culture and the importance of the uses of the salt in their society.

Ude – Ude Miiming Siining (Role Playing) : The game played during the leisure time when the parents are away in the field or work. In this game boys take the role of the father, the girls of mother and the younger one as their children. This game by the children is a clear illustration about how they perceive their roles and responsibilities they are going to inherit in the future.

Konchi Geniing (Dragon Fly Hunting) : Konchi geniing or dragonfly hunt is a traditional pass time done by the boys of aged between 5-10 years during their leisure time in the month of July - august when the paddy had grown tall and dragon fly starts flying in the paddy field. The weapon for hunting konchi is a long and thin bamboo which has a trap made of cane in its edge and is covered with a spider web so that konchi get stuck in the cane trap easily. Through this pass time the boys learn the technique of hunting.

Tiika Siinii or Cock Fight: This game is played by boys during their leisure time specially during dree anyo and after myoko festival when whole clan goes for the final ritual called kiile eaha nii. In this game a player stands in one leg hitting the other cock. One who manages to stand till the end is declared as winner. This game clearly depicts the strength and wit of the player.

The pig hunt or siire lasudu(pugh 1959,p-46): It is a lively game played by boys aged between 8-15 years. In this game the players divide themselves into two groups the hunters and the pigs. The game begins with the scatter of pigs and hunter trying to catch them. The pigs do not come in the trap of hunters easily as the pigs try their best to resist themselves by biting the hunters. The game ends when

all the pigs are caught and carried away. This game clearly depicts the hunting skill and the need of bodily strength as a male member in the society.

Most of the analyzed games are male oriented and closely connected to the tradition; even in children's game such gender distinction is visible if closely observed. The analysis clearly shows that how games are shaping the Children even while playing by creating awareness of their own roles in the society. Even the sociologists like George Herbert Mead (1972) and Charles Horton Cooley (1922) have also agreed that the cognitive development in the child takes place by imitating the action of those surround them which is clearly visible in the cooley's theory of 'Looking glass self' and Mead's theory of the development of self.

The children's folklore of Apatani community documented above shows the socialization among the children in the society through games, songs, rhymes etc. Mostly the games like Aalo tapiyo parniing(the making of indigenious salt), Konchi Geniing (dragon fly hunting), ude – ude miiming siining (imitation games or role play) etc clearly depicts that children are learning the societal job that is to be taken up by them after certain age.

Objective of study

The objective of this paper is to understand the functions of children's folklore in the Apatani society/community and how it helps in the process of socialization.

Methodology

The methodology of this study is both empirical and analytical in nature; it was done in the Hari village of Ziro valley. The primary source of this research have been collected through observation and interview method and by using reflexive method from the elders of the Hari village. The secondary source includes books, articles, journals and internet references on relevant topics. The books were referred from the library of Rajiv Gandhi University, Branch Library Naharlagun and the library of state museum of Arunachal Pradesh.

CONCLUSION

The paper clearly shows that the Apatani society too has a children's folklore like that of other tribal societies. In fact it serves as one of the basic unit which helps in understanding the community's socialization process. No doubt today the Apatani society is also experiencing changes in their culture, religion etc with the impact of modernization and technology. Dispite, such changes there are still children in the remote villages of Ziro valley who are seen to be following the traditional folklore. But no doubt if some steps are not taken soon to preserve the age old traditional children's folk lore it will extinct. It is the responsible of the parents, intellectuals, and learned scholars of the particular community to take necessary steps by collecting folktales, rhymes, songs, traditional games from the memory of some available elders as much as possible and introduce it in the primary section of education and publishing more books consisting of Apatani folk tales, rhymes, songs for children before they are all forgotten.

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