

# Reduplication as a Stylistic Device in Bodo Folk Songs

Amula Boro<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Pratima Brahma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Bodo, Dibrugarh University

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Bodo, Dibrugarh University

## Abstract:

Reduplication persists for repetition of a word or a syllable. In addition, reduplication is an important morphological and stylistic feature in many languages including Bodo. In Bodo folk songs, reduplication functions not merely as a grammatical process but as a powerful stylistic device that increases rhythm, musicality, emotional intensity and aesthetic appeal. In this study, the researcher examines reduplication from a linguistic stylistic perspective focusing on its forms, functions, and expressive meanings in Bodo folk songs. The study adopts a descriptive analytical methodology within the framework of linguistic stylistics and folkloristics. Data have been collected from authentic Bodo folk song texts through fieldwork, published compilations and other relevant secondary sources. Both full and partial reduplication are identified and analysed to show how repetition contributes to emphasis, intensification, sound symbolism, emotional expression, and cultural meaning. The findings reveal that reduplication plays a crucial role in foregrounding stylistic features of Bodo folk songs and supports their oral transmission and performative effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Bodo Folk Songs, Stylistics, Reduplication, Oral Literature

## 1.0 Introduction

Folk songs is an essential part or component of the oral or folk literature of the Bodo community. Folk songs are very deeply rooted or connected in the social, cultural and especially emotional life of the people. Basically, the people performed during various occasions such as festivals, agricultural activities, marriage ceremonies, and other social rituals and so forth on human social life cycle. However, linguistically, Bodo folk songs exhibit distinctive stylistic features that differentiate them from everyday spoken language. Among the so many stylistics features reduplication take over an important place.

Reduplication is a common morphological process in the Bodo language, where a word or part of a word is repeated to take further grammatical, semantic or expressive meaning. In contrast, reduplication persists for reappearance or repetition of a word or a syllable. In addition, reduplication is an important morphological and stylistic feature in many languages including Bodo. However, in folk songs, reduplication goes beyond its structural function and becomes a stylistic device that enhances rhythm, musicality and emotional resonance. From a stylistic viewpoint, reduplication contributes to foregrounding, repetition and parallelism which are most essential characteristics of oral poetic traditions. Despite the importance of reduplication in Bodo language and literature systematic stylistic studies focusing on its role in folk songs remain limited. Most existing studies address reduplication as a grammatical or morphological phenomenon without adequately exploring its aesthetic and expressive

dimensions. This paper attempts to fill this gap by analysing reduplication as a stylistic device in Bodo folk songs. The study aims to demonstrate how reduplication functions as an artistic resource that reflects cultural values, emotional states and oral performance traditions of the Bodo community.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Study:

1. To know about the reduplicated words which is still in the hidden form used in Bodo folk songs.
2. To highlight the function of reduplicated word used in the Bodo folk songs.

### 1.3 Methodology:

In this study as the methods of data analysis the researcher initially has been applied two methods namely, Descriptive method and Analytical method. In contrast, in this study, as the source of data collection mainly two types of sources has been adopted these are primary and secondary source.

**Primary source:** Primary data were collected through field visits by using several research methods including interviews, observations and focus on group discussions. Besides, some relevant data has been collected from various informants using these approaches.

**Secondary source:** In this study, the secondary data were collected through a reading by carefully from the different sources, like some Assamese and English theoretical textbooks, Bodo textbooks, e-books, e-journals, magazines, various journals, library studies, articles of different languages and other online social media activities relating to the folk song of the Bodo.

### 2.0 Discussion:

Reduplication refers to the repetition of a word or a part of a word to create new meanings or grammatical functions. David Crystal describes reduplication as- "*A term in MORPHOLOGY for a process of repetition whereby the forms of a PREFIX/SUFFIX reflex certain PHONOLOGICAL characteristics of the ROOT*" (Brahma, 2013). In the Bodo language, reduplication is widely working as a lexical approach to convey nuanced or different meanings and expressive effects. Additionally, many times it functions as a grammatical device to indicate plurality, intensification, emphasis and semantic extension. Through reduplication new lexical items are also formed making it a significant derivational process in the morphological structure of Bodo. On the contrary, reduplication is a morphological process involving the repetition of a lexical base or syllabic unit. In Bodo, reduplication functions at both lexical and grammatical levels. Lexically, it contributes to semantic variation and expressive meaning, while grammatically it marks plurality and intensification. Furthermore, reduplication plays a crucial role in word formation functioning as an important derivational mechanism within the language.

However, "*reduplication is a morphophonemic process by which the root or stem of a word (initial, medial or final phonological part of it) is repeated*" (Parimalagantham, 2008). In addition, A. Parimalagantham stated- "*Reduplication is the process of all or part of the lexical item repeated as a syllable, morpheme or word within a large syntactic unit carrying a semantic modification*" (parimalagantham, 2008). Bodo folk songs encompass a wide range of categories including Songs of the Soil, Songs related to Ballad, Songs related to Heros, Songs related to Lullaby and Nursery rhymes, Songs related to Marriage, Songs related to Love, Songs related to Jocke or Humorous, Songs related to Bwisagu, Songs related to Religion. Such as Bodo folk songs so many Bodo reduplication words taking vital role as rhyming patterns.

Reduplication increases the melodic quality and aesthetic appeal of a song by adding rhythmic balance and sweetness to its expression. Through repeated sound patterns reduplicated words helps to rhyme couples that bind the entire song or individual stanzas into a harmonious pattern. These rhyming patterns,

created through reduplication intensify the musical effect of the lyrics and heighten their emotional resonance thereby strengthening the overall musical appeal of the song.

Morphologically, the reduplication can be found in two types in Bodo language. These are- (1) Complete Reduplication and (2) Partial Reduplication. These two types of reduplication can be found in Bodo folk song mostly. Complete reduplication is the repetition of entire word without any interchanging of a root word. On the other hand, Partial reduplication is “*partial repetition of a phoneme or a syllable of word indicating semantic modification* (Parimalagantham, 2008). Partial reduplication repeated or reduplicated only partial part of the syllable or a whole word.

### 2.1 Complete or full Reduplicated word in Bodo folk songs:

Complete or full reduplication refers to the repetition of an entire word without any phonological or morphological change. In Bodo folk songs, this type of reduplication is frequently used to enhance rhythmic flow, musicality and expressive emphasis. Full reduplicated forms often convey meanings such as continuity, intensity, emotional emphasis, or habitual action. Their repeated sound patterns pay to the melodic structure of the songs and help oral transmission by making the lyrics more memorable. Thus, complete reduplication plays an important stylistic and linguistic role in enriching the aesthetic and communicative value of Bodo folk songs. Such a kind of full reduplicated word has been discussed below-

Bar **siu siu** barduŋ

Phereŋa lanjai musaduŋ

Oua bijou dembaiduŋ

Ayo jaoisu seŋra

Hagadui bohora. (M.M. Brahma, 1960)

#### English rendering:

*The breeze blows gently;*

*The bird Fehu wags its tail;*

*The bamboo top is bowed down.*

*Oh, our young son-in-law*

*is full of phlegm.*

Above mentioned song, in the first line of the song the term “*siu siu*” is occurred or represented as a reduplication word. The term “*Siu*” is repeated or reduplicated two times in the song without changing any syllable and phoneme of the whole word. In this song, the term “*Siu*” is functioning as adjective which completely reduplicated. Furthermore, the song exhibits a rhyming couplet as a stylistic device. The final syllable “*duŋ*” appears consistently across the lines. It happens in “*barduŋ*” in the first line, “*mwsadduŋ*” in the second line, and “*dembaiduŋ*” in the third line. This repetition clearly establishes a pattern of end rhyme, reflecting a stylistic feature of the song. And the fourth and five lines of the song repeating the same pattern.

In other songs can found same ways-

uŋk<sup>h</sup>am **soŋ soŋ**

uŋk<sup>h</sup>ri soŋ soŋ

Ali **dan dan**

uruibw lama guia

Horuibuw lama guiya

T<sup>h</sup>u juuŋha k<sup>h</sup>aŋk<sup>h</sup>rai k<sup>h</sup>onohuini

Jono joŋno. (Narzi, 2019)

**English rendering:**

Prepare (cook) boiled rice,  
Do prepare curry  
Eat as much as you can  
Trace out a road to travel  
There is no thither  
Let us go to search out crabs.  
Ah! Let us go ahead.  
Du babu du  
Du raja du

In the song cited above, in the first line of song the term “*son̄ son̄*” is occurring and represents as child language. The word “*son̄ son̄*” means ‘cooking’. In this song, the word *son̄* is completely reduplicated without any phonological change. Similarly, the term “*dan dan*” also functions as a complete reduplicated form in the song. The expression “*dan dan*” word means ‘cutting something’. Thus, the both word “*son̄ son̄*” and “*dan dan*” are examples of complete or full reduplication in the Bodo language. Beside it, the given lines show the use of a rhyming couplet as a stylistic device. Similar ending sounds such as first and second lines “*son̄, son̄*” and “*guia, guiya*” make a pattern of rhyme, increasing the musicality and aesthetic quality of the song.

In this song Another example from a song can be found as follows-

Aiya t<sup>h</sup>angdung **na na** lainu  
Ap<sup>h</sup>aya t<sup>h</sup>angdung **do do** lainu  
Husunanui lagp<sup>h</sup>uigun nung gabubla  
Ising k<sup>h</sup>onayao meu doṅ  
Bari k<sup>h</sup>onayao siyal doṅ  
Husunanui lagp<sup>h</sup>uigun nung gabubla  
Du babu do  
Du babu do.<sup>1</sup>

**English rendering:**

Go sleep baby  
Go sleep  
Mother went to fishing  
Father went to bring meat  
Cat is inside the corner of the kitchen  
Fox is inside the corner of the orchard  
If you cry, they will come to carry you  
If you cry, they will come to carry you  
Go sleep baby  
Go sleep.

In the song cited above, the word ‘*na na*’ and ‘*do do*’ occurring in the first- and second-lines functions as child language in throughout the song. Generally, ‘*na na*’ means ‘fish’ and ‘*do do*’ means ‘meat’. In this

<sup>1</sup> Informant: Samela Narzary, (F-57) Rangapara

song, both ‘*na na*’ and ‘*do do*’ are completely reduplicated without any phonological change. Therefore, both terms are functioning as complete reduplicated words in the song.

Furthermore, the given lines illustrate the use of a rhyming couplet as a stylistic feature. The repetition of similar ending sounds such as “*lainu*” in the first two lines and “*doṅ*” in “*meu doṅ*” and “*siyal doṅ*” creates a clear rhyme pattern. This repeated end sound increases the musicality and poetic beauty of the song.

## 2.2 Partial Reduplicated word as stylistic device in Bodo folk songs:

Partial reduplication is a process of word formation in Bodo language. In partial reduplication only part of a word that means only a syllable or phoneme is repeated instead of the whole word often just a portion repeats with a sound or phonological change like it as may be a vowel or consonant shift. It is contrast of complete reduplication. For example, in English-*ding-dong, willy-nilly* etc. A. Parimalagantham defines partial reduplication is a “*partial repetition of phoneme or a syllable of word indicating semantic modification* (Baro D. , 2019). So many such word can be found in Bodo folk song. Following are the examples of Bodo folk song where so many partial reduplicated words were used. Such as-

Gont<sup>h</sup>oṅ **joṅjir jir** ayui nuṅjamaduiya  
Janji **sert<sup>h</sup>e t<sup>h</sup>e** ayui nuṅjamaduiya  
Nainubla naip<sup>h</sup>ui ayui jumai lananui  
Nainubla naip<sup>h</sup>ui ayui nuṅjamaduik<sup>h</sup>ou. (Boro, 2010)

### English rendering:

Oh mother, your son in law  
Has legs with fact calves.  
His waist in contracted  
If you want to see  
Come wine in hand, Oh  
Come out with wine.

In the given above song, in this song two terms are can be found as partial reduplicated word. Among of these two terms one is ‘*joṅjir jir*’ another one is ‘*sert<sup>h</sup>e t<sup>h</sup>e*’. The term ‘*joṅjir jir*’ means ‘having slightly long nose or beautiful nose’ and ‘*sert<sup>h</sup>e t<sup>h</sup>e*’ means ‘narrow or having small size waist in the middle’. In the first example ‘*joṅjir jir*’ repeated only last syllable or last portion ‘*jir*’. In contrast, in the term ‘*sert<sup>h</sup>e t<sup>h</sup>e*’ occurring the same ways the term ‘*t<sup>h</sup>e*’ is a partial repeated word of ‘*sert<sup>h</sup>e*’. Both the terms *joṅjir jir* and *sert<sup>h</sup>e t<sup>h</sup>e* functioning as partial reduplicated word in the song.

From a stylistic point of view, the given lines show important features of repetition and parallelism. The reduplicated forms “*joṅjir jir*” and “*sert<sup>h</sup>e t<sup>h</sup>e*” create rhythmic accent and increase the musical value of the song. The repeated use of the phrase “*ayui nuṅjamaduiya*” establishes thematic cohesion and strengthens emotional expression.

Similarly, besides mentioned above song can be found in following song too-

**Thaṅ k<sup>h</sup>alt<sup>h</sup>an** sal gabnai  
Habab ada  
Nuṅk<sup>h</sup>ou guusu k<sup>h</sup>annanui  
Agor ernaiyasu k<sup>h</sup>ana naṅbai. (Brahma L. , 1993)

### English rendering,

Thang khalhang sounds  
The loom

Oh dear,

As, I remember you

I forget to weave the beautiful designs.

In the song cited above, the term '*tʰaŋ kʰaltʰaŋ*' is functioning as a partially reduplicated word. In this song, expression of the term '*Kʰaltʰaŋ*' is a partial reduplicated form of '*tʰaŋ*' where '*kʰaltʰaŋ*' is partially reduplicated.

Such as another example of song can be found likewise-

Ok<sup>h</sup>ap<sup>h</sup>ur gaɔdan dan

Basu balonda p<sup>h</sup>enda laoga. (Brahma M. , 1960)

**English rendering:**

In gradual degrees

The moon is waxing stronger

Our Basu widower's thigh also

Is growing longer.

In the above example, in the first line of the song, the word '*gaɔdan dan*' is a partially reduplicated form. In this song, the final syllable '*dan*' is repeated from the word '*gaɔdan*', resulting in partial reduplication rather than the repetition of the entire word '*gaɔdan*'.

### 3.0 Conclusion:

It is to be mentioned here that, from the above discussion in so many Bodo folk songs reduplication word are found to function as adjectives form. In several cases reduplication word happens in both complete and partial forms has been taken completely and in contrast partial reduplicated form. Reduplication is a most important process of word formation which is a major branch of linguistics or constitutes a significant area of linguistic study. Initially, in Bodo folk songs, reduplication function as an integral component of the artistic and cultural as well as linguistic device of the Bodo folk song which contributing to both aesthetic expression and meaning.

### References:

1. Abrams, M. (2022). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Cengage learning India Private Limited, .
2. Baro, D. (2019). *Lexical Reduplication in Bodo: A Brief Introduction*. Journal Of Humanities And Social Sciens,vol-24, Issue 7.
3. Brahma, A. (2013). Reduplication in Bodo. *International Journal of Englis and Education*, 183.
4. Gogoi, A. (2022). *A Stylistic Analysis of Bhupen Hazarika's Selected Lyrics*. Jounal of Frontline Research in Arts and Science.
5. H.Ali. (2022). *Stylistics Analysis of the Poem Hope is The Thing with Feathers*. Journal of Reseach and Review. 3(5),18-21.
6. Imran, M. (2021). *Stylistic Analysis of the Poem "A Dream Within A Dream" by Edgar Allan Poe*. Ilkogretim Online- Elementary Education Online, Vol.20 Issue-6.
7. Latif, A. (2022). *A Stylistic Analysis of Robert Forest's Selected Poems*. Journal of Development and Social Sciences.
8. Lestari, D. A. (2021). *n Analysis of Repetition Used in Shawn Mendes' Selected Song Lyrics*. Ilmu Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, dan Budaya, vol-5, .
9. Maghamil, C. W. (2025). *A Stylistic Analysis of Visyan Contemporary Pop Songs*. Asian Journal of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Vol-8, Issue-2 .

10. Misra, P. S. (2012). *An Introduction to Stylistics: Theory and Practice*. Orient Blackswam Private Limited, New Delhi.
11. Mugair, S. (2014). *A Stylistics Analysis of "I Have a Dream"*. International Journal of English and Education 6 (3), 70-55.
12. Nwokoye, N. (2018). *Stylistic analysis of Igbo folksong: A case study of Mike Ejeagha songs*. Apostolate of Language and Linguistics: A Festschrift in Honour Of Professor Emmanuel Okonkwo Ezeani.
13. Ray, B. (2022). *A Stylistic Analysis of Tagore's Gitanjali*. Language in India, vol.22.5.
14. Shawa, W. A. (2015). *A Stylistic Analysis of Robert Herrick's to the Virgins, to Make Much of Time*. Journal of English Language and Literature, An Introduction Peer-Review Journal, Vol.2 Issue 4 .
15. Short, M. (1996). *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*. Longman.
16. Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics*. New York: Routledge.
17. Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Student*. Routledge, USA.