

# Number And The Processes Of Pluralization In Bodo And Rabha Language Of Assam: A Comparative Study

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**Abstract:** *This paper is attempting to discuss and analyze the numbers and the processes of pluralization in Bodo and Rabha language. As in other languages Bodo and the Rabha language has two kinds of numbers i.e. singular and plural number. Singular numbers are pluralized in both the language by suffixation, reduplication and by using multiple denoting noun words. The study is trying to discuss the singular and plural numbers in Bodo and Rabha language along with it is going to analyze in this paper the processes of pluralization in a comparative as well as contrastive manner. The main objective of this paper is to analyze the numbers and the processes of pluralization, whether these languages bears the same processes or characters or not, as these languages belongs from same linguistic family.*

**Keywords:** *Number, Singular, Plural, Pluralization, Suffixation, Reduplication, Noun Multitude*

**Objectives of the study:** *The main objective of this study is to discuss the Number system and the processes of pluralisation of Bodo and Rabha language. A comparative study has been made to find out the similarities and the dissimilarities between the Bodo and Rabha number system.*

**Methodology:** *As per methodology is concerned, this paper is based on a combination of Primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected through field study, observation and interpretation with native speakers Bodo and Rabha language. On the other hand, secondary data have been collected through reviewing books, journals etc. An analytical and comparative study has been made to analyze the collected data.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Bodos and Rabhas are the tribal ethnic communities scattered all over the Assam and some contiguous states of Assam. Racially they are mongoloid and linguistically they belong to the Bodo-Naga sub section of Assam Burmese section of world's second largest Sino-Tibetan linguistic family. The main concentration of Bodo and Rabha linguistic community is found in the North-eastern regions of India, Particularly in the state of Assam and some contiguous states like North Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya and West Bengal. Majority of the Bodo community is found in the districts of Bodoland Territorial Area Districts. Besides their concentration is found in almost all districts of Assam both in the Northern and the southern bank of the

Brahmaputra river. The majority of the Rabha community is found in the southern Bank of the river Brahmaputra. Lots of enthusiastic personalities have carried out a huge number of literary work in Bodo language. In present day context Bodo language is one of the constitutional language, which is recognised by the 8<sup>th</sup> scheduled of Indian constitution in 2003 via 92<sup>nd</sup> amendment of the Indian constitution. But in present day perspective, Rabha language is a little known as un-save language in India. Lots of enthusiastic writers, linguists are taking sincere initiative for enhancement of literary works, and trying their best to enlighten this linguistic community around the world. Though both the languages are different in their word level, they bear the same Tibeto-Burman linguistic characteristics in their structure.

## II. NUMBER

Number is a morphological category in Bodo and Rabha language. In Linguistics, NUMBER is a grammatical category of nouns, pronouns, adjective and verb agreement which expresses count distinctions such as “one” or “more than one”. Both the Bodo and Rabha has two kinds of numbers.

- ✓ Singular Number: singular number is number that expresses one member of a designated class. Example – Bodo: *mansi-man*, *musuu-cow*. Rabha: *kai-man*, *masu-cow*. Mass noun or uncountable nouns may be expressed by singular number. Example – *sika-water*, *nu-milk*. These singular forms of numbers can be pluralized by suffixation, reduplication and by adding multitude denoting words after the singular form.
- ✓ Plural Number: Plural number is number that expresses the quantity which is more than one. Examples – Bodo: *buurmap<sup>h</sup>ur-goats*, *rammun-Ram* and others, Rabha: *kaibizan - men*, *ram<sup>h</sup>ur-Ram* and others etc.

## III. PROCESSES OF PLURALIZATION IN BODO AND RABHA LANGUAGE

Pluralization in Bodo and Rabha language is realized by the following processes-

- ✓ Pluralization by the Use of Plural suffixes
- ✓ Pluralization by using Nouns Multitude
- ✓ Pluralization by reduplication

### A. PLURALIZATION BY THE USE OF PLURAL SUFFIXES

In Bodo and Rabha language singular numbers are pluralized by the use of plural suffixes after the nouns, pronouns and adjectives. Both the language has mainly three plural suffixes. i.e.

- ✓ Bodo : *-sur*, *-mun*, *-p<sup>h</sup>ur*
- ✓ Rabha: *-r<sup>h</sup>ur*, *-ta<sup>h</sup>ur*, *-bizak*

In Bodo *-sur* is added after second person singular number *-nun* and third person singular number *-bi* of personal pronoun and with */bi/* and */bui/* demonstrative pronoun. Similarly in Rabha language *-r<sup>h</sup>ur* plural suffix is added after personal pronouns and demonstrative pronoun.

#### (a) Bodo

Singular	Plural	Translation
<i>nun</i> (you)	<i>nun-sur</i>	you
<i>bi</i> (he)	<i>bi-sur</i>	they
<i>be</i> (this)	<i>be-sur</i>	these
<i>bui</i> (that)	<i>bui-sur</i>	those

#### (b) Rabha

Singular	Plural	Translation
<i>na<sup>h</sup></i> (you)	<i>na<sup>h</sup>-r<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	you
<i>u</i> (he)	<i>u-r<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	they
<i>i. e</i> (this)	<i>i-r<sup>h</sup>ur, e-r<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	these
<i>u. ui</i> (that)	<i>u-r<sup>h</sup>ur, ui-r<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	those

Besides in Rabha language *-r<sup>h</sup>ur* is largely used with the nominals and kinship terms in order to pluralize the singular terms. Example –

#### (c) Rabha

Singular	Plural	Translation
<i>dadan</i> (name of male person)	<i>dadan-r<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	<i>dadan</i> and others
<i>bibi</i> (elder sister)	<i>bibi-r<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	elder sister and others
<i>mome</i> (brothers and others)	<i>mome-r<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	brothers and sisters
<i>baba</i> (father)	<i>baba-r<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	father and others

*/-mun/* is added after the kinship terms and the third person singular number (honorific term) */bit<sup>h</sup>ur/* in Bodo language. There is a little similarities of using */-ta<sup>h</sup>ur/* in Rabha language to pluralize. */-ta<sup>h</sup>ur/* is used as a plural suffix in Rabha language after the kinship terms and agent nouns. It is used after the names of animals when comparing someone with animals and expresses the scolding meaning.

#### (d) Bodo

Singular	Plural	Translation
<i>nun<sup>h</sup>ur</i> (you - Honorific)	<i>nun<sup>h</sup>ur-a-mun</i>	you
<i>bi<sup>h</sup>ur</i> (he - Honorific)	<i>bi<sup>h</sup>ur-mun</i>	they
<i>ada</i> (elder brother)	<i>ada-mun</i>	elder brother and other
<i>ai</i> (mother)	<i>ai-mun</i>	mother and others
<i>abu<sup>h</sup>i</i> (grandmother)	<i>abu<sup>h</sup>i-mun</i>	grand mother and others

#### (e) Rabha

Singular	Plural	Translation
<i>sabra</i> (son/daughter)	<i>sabra-ta<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	<i>Son/daughter</i> and others
<i>buribra</i> (daughter in low)	<i>buribra-ta<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	daughter in low and others
<i>lak<sup>h</sup>ur</i> (cowboy)	<i>lak<sup>h</sup>ur-ta<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	cow boy and others
<i>doraj</i> (adult/mature girl)	<i>doraj-ta<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	mature girl and others
<i>suyba</i> (reputed person)	<i>suyba-ta<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	reputed person and others

again *-ta<sup>h</sup>ur* is also used after the names of animals and compares with someone to express scolding meaning with . Example –

#### (f) Singular

Singular	Plural	Translation
<i>ki</i> (dog)	<i>ki-ta<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	dogs
<i>makra</i> (monkey)	<i>makra-ta<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	monkeys
<i>mada</i> (bear)	<i>mada-ta<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	bears

The plural suffix */-p<sup>h</sup>ur/* in Bodo language is used after the human and non-human animate nouns words and also used with the demonstrative pronouns. On the other hand *-bizak* is after the human and non-human animate noun words. Again it is used after the words which already have taken the */r<sup>h</sup>ur/* and */-ta<sup>h</sup>ur/* plural suffix in Rabha language.

#### (g) Bodo

Singular	Plural	Translation
<i>mansi</i> (man)	<i>mansi-p<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	men
<i>alasi</i> (guest)	<i>alasi-p<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	guests
<i>bizab</i> (book)	<i>bizab-p<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	books
<i>mauzi</i> (cat)	<i>mauzi-p<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	cats
<i>be</i> (this)	<i>be-p<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	these
<i>bui</i> (that)	<i>bui-p<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	those

In Bodo */-p<sup>h</sup>ur/* is used to express the scolding meaning by adding after the names of animals when comparing some with animals.

#### Singular

Singular	Plural	Translation
<i>suima</i> (dog)	<i>suima-p<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	dogs
<i>muk<sup>h</sup>ra</i> (monkey)	<i>muk<sup>h</sup>ra-p<sup>h</sup>ur</i>	monkeys

#### (h) Rabha

Singular	Plural	Translation
<i>kaj</i> (man)	<i>kaj-bizan</i>	men
<i>nuk</i> (house)	<i>nuk-bizan</i>	houses
<i>baj</i> (father)	<i>baj-bizan</i>	fathers
<i>na</i> (fish)	<i>na-bizan</i>	fishes

masa (tiger)      masa-bizan      tigers  
minku (cat)      minku-bizan      cats

Sometimes, /-bizan/ is used in Rabha language after those words which are already pluralized by the addition of /-rɔŋ/ and /-taŋ/. Example –

(i) Singular	Plural	Translation
urɔŋ (they)	urɔŋ-bizan	all they
rab <sup>h</sup> ataŋ (Rabhas')	rab <sup>h</sup> ataŋ-bizan	all the Rabhas

In Bodo and Rabha language some adjective words are also pluralize by adding plural suffixes. Example –

(j) Bodo Singular	Plural	Translation
gazri (bad)	gazri-p <sup>h</sup> ur	bad ones
muzaŋ (good)	muzaŋ-p <sup>h</sup> ur	good ones
gudan (new)	gudan-p <sup>h</sup> ur	new ones

(k) Rabha Singular	Plural	Translation
nemsa (bad)	nemsa-bizan	bad ones
nemkai (good)	nemkai-bizan	good ones
pidan	pidan-bizan	new ones

#### B. PLURALIZATION BY USING NOUN MULTITUDE

There are some noun words in both the Bodo and Rabha language which denote uniquely a meaning of multitude. These types of noun words are used before or after other nouns having singular meaning. It is worth mentioning here that nouns of multitude are themselves independent word having independent meaning in both the Bodo and Rabha language. i.e. gubaŋ, burza, hanza, p<sup>h</sup>alu, mak<sup>h</sup>a are some of the independent multitude denoting words in Bodo language. On the other hand pal, zakri are used as noun multitude in Rabha language.

(l) Bodo Singular	Plural	Translation
mansi (man)	gubaŋ-mansi	lots of people
musuu (cow)	musuu-p <sup>h</sup> alu	herd of cows
na (fish)	na-zak <sup>h</sup> ri	group of fishes
bibar (flower)	gubaŋ-bibar	many flowers

(m) Rabha Singular	Plural	Translation
masu (cow)	masu-pal	herd of cows
pran (goat)	pran-pal	herd of goats
na (fish)	na-zakri	group of fishes

#### C. PLURALISATION BY REDUPLICATION

Reduplication of some noun, pronoun and adjective words are common in Bodo and Rabha language by which pluralization is realized. Complete reduplication of some singular words expresses the plural meaning in both the language. Example -

Pluralization by Complete Reduplication of Nouns

(n) Bodo Singular	Plural	Translation
nɔ (house)	nɔ-nɔ	house to house
dui (water)	dui-dui	water and water
lama (lane)	lama-lama	lane to lane
gami (village)	gami-gami	village to village

(o) Rabha Singular	Plural	Translation
nuk (house)	nuk-nuk	house to house
suŋ (village)	suŋ-suŋ	village to village

#### D. PLURALIZATION BY COMPLETE REDUPLICATION OF PRONOUNS

(p) Bodo Singular	Plural	Translation
sur (who)	sur-sur	who are
ma (what)	ma-ma	what are
bɔbe (which)	bɔbe-bɔbe	which are

(q) Rabha Singular	Plural	Translation
saŋ (who)	saŋ- saŋ	who are
za (those who)	za-za	those who are
atu (what)	atu-atu	what are

#### E. PLURALIZATION BY COMPLETE REDUPLICATION OF ADJECTIVE WORDS

(r) Bodo Singular	Plural	Translation
muzaŋ (good)	muzaŋ-muzaŋlugu	good friends
gudan (new)	gudan-gudangɔsla	new shirts
p <sup>h</sup> isa (small)	p <sup>h</sup> isa-p <sup>h</sup> isazunad	small animals

(s) Rabha Singular	Plural	Translation
pidan (bad)	pidan-pidaŋnɔk	new houses
nema (good)	nema-nemasabra	good boys
majsam (small)	majsam- majsamna	small fishes

There are some words in both the Bodo and Rabha language which are not the reduplication of entire words. Following are the examples of Rhyming reduplication and Ablaut reduplication accordingly.

Bodo	Translation
mudai-daudai	God and goddesses
gɔt <sup>h</sup> ɔ-gɔt <sup>h</sup> aj	childrens

Rabha	Translation
bai-sai	God and goddesses
sabra-sabri	childrens

#### IV. FINDINGS

Some findings from the analysis of this paper has been mentioned here under –

- ✓ Both the Bodo and Rabha language posses two kinds of numbers. i.e. Singular and Plural number.
- ✓ There are three main processes of pluralization in Bodo and Rabha language. These are –Suffixation, Reduplication and use of Multitude denoting words.
- ✓ Complete reduplication, Rhyming and Ablaut reduplication is found in both the language.
- ✓ Pluralization of noun, pronoun and adjective words have been noticed in both the language.

- ✓ In case of scolding someone by comparing animals /-*p<sup>h</sup>ur*/ in Bodo and /-*taŋ*/ in Rabha is used after the names of animals.
- ✓ Through the analysis it is found that though there are lexical variations between the two language but the processes of pluralization is almost similar.
- ✓ No dissimilarities have been found regarding the processes of pluralisation between the Bodo and Rabha language.

## V. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we can say that the number system of Bodo and Rabha language is almost similar as well as they bears some common linguistic characteristics. By the conclusion it is worth mentioning here that concerning the same Tibeto-Burman linguistic characteristics both the Bodo and Rabha language is characterized by suffixation, reduplication and use of multiple denoting independent words in the levels of word formation. The same has been noticed here in the field of pluralization. This paper is a primary

research work on the number system in Bodo and Rabha language. I hope that this may help the upcoming research scholars for better analysis concerning the same subject matter.

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