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The Language of the Road: Exploring the Social Functions of Vehicle Writings

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Abstract:

This study examines the social functions of vehicle writings, a form of folk speech, in Assamese, Hindi, and English. Vehicle writings are influenced by regional spoken language and culture, reflecting folk beliefs, religion, and social consciousness. Through observations, this study analyzes the various social functions of vehicle writings, including communication with drivers, emphasis on safety, and provision of guidelines for passenger awareness, entertainment, health knowledge, and environmental awareness. The findings highlight the significance of vehicle writings as a resource for folk speech, conveying messages and values that shape societal attitudes and behaviors.

Keywords: Communication, Folk Speech, Safety Awareness, Social Functions, Vehicle Writings

Different words, phrases, sentences, etc. are written on different parts of the vehicle. Sometimes there is a combination of language and image. All such linguistic resources written on vehicles can be referred to as 'vehicle writings'. This study attempts to study the social functions of vehicle writings. Vehicle writings are mainly influenced by the spoken language and culture of a particular region. This is mainly based on pronunciation characteristics. Therefore, if you judge according to the rules of grammar, you may find errors in many parts. However, these cannot be directly called errors from the point of view of folk speech. Vehicle writings express various aspects of folk beliefs, religion, and social consciousness of the cultural aspects of a society. Vehicle writings can express the psychology of the driver and vehicle owner as well as the psychology of a society. These writings are created in folk society. They can be discussed as folk speech resources because they were created in folk societies. There is no special academic study on the language of vehicle writings in Assamese. There are examples of studies on this subject in Bengali. An article entitled 'Bani Taba Dhay' in Pabitra Sarkar's book *Loka Bhasha Sanskriti Nandantattva* (2014) discusses vehicle writings (Sarkar, 180-194). However, the analysis of linguistic aspects is not found in Sarkar's study. Folk culture has various social functions. Folk speech is a major part of folk culture. Therefore, vehicle writings as a resource of folk speech also has different social functions. Nabin Chandra Sharma discusses various such aspects in his book *Loka Sanskriti* (Sharma, 266-284). This study is based primarily on primary data. The data required for the study have been obtained through observations. This study analyzes the social functions of vehicle writings based on data available in Assamese, Hindi and English.

1. Communication with Drivers



Some of the vehicle writings play a role in a driver communicating with another driver. Such communication is primarily concerned with security. There are various signs written on the back of vehicles to avoid accidents. For example, 'Blow Horn', 'Use Dipper at Night', 'Keep Distance', etc. These allow the driver of the vehicle in front to communicate with the driver of the vehicle coming behind. 'Keep Distance' tells you to drive slowly or keep a certain distance. 'Druta Gatit Majaa Aase Kintu Gharat Eta Pariyalo Aase' (there is fun at a fast pace but there is also a family at home, Fig. 1) suggests security, but unlike the previous examples, this statement is not straightforward. This indirect style of speaking makes the sentence interesting. Four other sentences written in such a style are: 'TEST YOUR AIR-BAG HERE', 'One Mistake Game Over', 'Keep Distance EMI is Pending!', and 'Dada Lahe Solaok Swargot Thai Kam Aase' (Brother, drive slowly, there is little room in heaven).

2. Pay Attention to Pedestrian and Driver Safety

The signs on the rear of vehicles emphasize the safety of drivers as well as pedestrians. Everything written to communicate with drivers is related to driver safety. The term 'Waite Side' emphasizes pedestrian safety. When waiting for passenger vehicles, it is a safer way for passengers to stay a little further from the main road. That is what it wants to tell passengers.

3. Provide Guidelines for Passenger Awareness

Passengers have a direct relationship with passenger vehicles. Therefore, there are some awareness guidelines written on the inside of passenger vehicles for passengers. These guidelines relate to passenger safety, security, behaviour, values, etc. Some examples are: a. Safety and Security: 'Nijor Boy-Bostur Prati Nije Chaku Dibo' (take care of your belongings yourself), 'Bahiroloi Hat-Mur Nuliyabo' (do not put your hands and head outside); b. Behavioral: 'Aapunar Byavaharei Aapunar Parichoy' (your behavior is your identity), 'No Smoking', etc.; c. Values: 'Bayojyesthasakalar Babe Surakshito Sthan' (safe places for the elderly), etc.

4. Entertainment of Passengers and Pedestrians

A major social function of folk culture is entertainment. As a folk speech, vehicle writings also serve to entertain passengers and pedestrians. But behind such entertaining statements there is also a message. In other words, some statements written in vehicles convey messages related to safety, health, etc. with the help of entertainment. Below are photographs of two such examples:



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Another example of entertainment and security resources is 'Road Pe Chalti He Meri Hasina Chuna Mat Ban Jayegi Ye Nagina'. This actually asks pedestrians or other vehicles to keep a certain safe distance to avoid any road accident. This phrase contains elements that can entertain pedestrians. Sometimes you can see some songs and poetry written on the back of the vehicles. Such resources also serve to provide entertainment to pedestrians and travelers. One such example is 'Moina Tumi Jui'. This line found on the front of the vehicle is taken from a popular Assamese song of the present time. This phrases do not have any special meaning or provide any instructions but can supply entertainment to passengers and pedestrians.

5. Provide Health Knowledge to Passengers and Pedestrians

Vehicle writings can also play an important role in communicating drug prevention messages to the community. For example, 'No smoking', 'Do Not Drink and Drive', etc. For effectiveness, however, such messages must be engaging and easy to understand. This type of knowledge is sometimes conveyed directly and sometimes indirectly through entertainment (Fig. 2).

6. Creating Environmental Awareness

There is also social awareness in vehicle writings. In this case, statements on environmental awareness can be mentioned. Examples of such statements: 'Save Rhino Save Assam', 'Save Trees They Will Save You'. In addition, the importance of women's education is also reflected in the vehicle writings: 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao', 'Beta Ko Zindagi Do Magar Bike Nahi! Beti Ko Siksha Do Magar Mobile Nahi!' Vehicle writings serve as a unique form of communication, conveying important messages and values that reflect the cultural and social context of a region. Through their various social functions, vehicle writings play a significant role in shaping societal attitudes and behaviors, making them a valuable resource for understanding folk culture and language.

There are various opportunities to study 'vehicle writings'. The following summarizes the possibilities for future studies related to vehicle writings:

- Expression of folk beliefs in vehicle writings.
- Socio-cultural expression in vehicle writings.
- Influence of Hindi and English languages in vehicle writings.
- Comparison of vehicle writings in two regions.
- Vehicle writings as a medium of mass communication

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