

The Concept of God in Sonowal Kachari Tribe -A brief insight

Nayanjyoti Boro
PhD. Research Scholar
Department of Philosophy,
Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam, India.

Abstract: The Sonowal Kacharis are the ethnic tribal group of Assam. They are very rich in culture. There are numerous religious beliefs prevailing among this tribe. But in this paper the focus is given only on the religious God, believed by the Sonowal Kacharis. Their beliefs regarding the God are not different from other tribes. As a primitive religion, ancestor worship is prevailing in their society, many of their faiths and beliefs are derived from supernaturalism and animistic nature of belief. They worship all the natural phenomena, for example tree, rock, road, water, sun, weather, plant, river, etc. The Sonowal Kacharis worship many God and goddesses but among them Khring Raja, God of Sonowal Kachari is called greatest God. He is superior to all other God and goddess.

Index Terms - Sonowal, Kachari, Baitho, Khring Raja, Bhuruli habuki, Haidang Geet.

I. INTRODUCTION

Assam is a north-eastern state of India. It is a homeland of various tribes and community, each community has a different lifestyle or way of living. Among them Sonowal's are one of the indigenous tribes of Assam who are the third largest tribal community of Assam. Basically the Sonowal's are ruralities living in villages which are spread all over the upper part of the Brahmaputra valley. Ethnically, the Sonowal belong to the Mongoloid stock of human races. The Sonowal Kacharis are a branch of Bodo Kacharis of Assam. According to Sir Herbert Risley in ancient time the tract between the river Brahmaputra and the river Kosi was known as Kachar. The people who lived in this tract were known as Kachari or Kasari. It is said that the Sonowal Kacharis are descendents of the Kirat tribes. The Kirats afterwards were known as Kacharis. They got the name Sonowal because they were experts in extracting gold dust from the rivers the word 'son' means gold.

It is fact that like other Indian philosophical traditions, indigenous religious philosophy of tribal people across India remains less debated due to less effort. Even the academic journals, magazines often not discuss such topic in their contents. So far as less availability of primary text is another difficulty. I think if our thinkers and scholars can create an ambiance to converse about such unexplored areas then there might be a chance of enrich. For that we need a clear vision and constant effort on these particular non explored issues of indigenous group. Some irrelevant things must be set aside because irrelevancy creates contradiction in our mind.

II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVE

To introduce multi dimensional religious belief and practice of Sonowal Kachari community to a greater perspective is the sole motive of this study.

2.1 Method

In order to carry out the said research the some methods are adopted. The basic methodological approach to this research is empirical, Analytic and historical incorporating the dependent variable from anthropology, historical record .This research has been supported by interviews with a cross section of scholars and people in Assam.

2.2 Sources

In order to carry forward the research work we have studied some scholarly works on this area which concentrates religious life of Sonowal Kachari community in social and individual sphere.

III. CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS GOD OF SONOWALS

In the Sonowal Kachari tradition they performed many worship for welfare to their daily life. Among them Baitho worship is the great worship of the Sonowal Kacharis. Baitho is signified with 'Siva' in Hinduism. This puja or worship is to be started on a Sunday evening and continued up to the next Tuesday in the month of month of March. A head priest known as Baithori, who conducts this ritual. 'Mantras' or hymns have no place in this puja and the worship is primarily ritualistic. 'Haidang' is a folk song of Sonowal tribe that describes the origin of the universe and world and it is an essential part of the 'Baitho puja'. A popular belief is that after Baitho worship it precludes of all impurities of the Sonowal Kacharis and after worship they survive a good and healthy life. Some indispensable elements of this worship are animal sacrifice, nature worship and emphasis on fertility. The Sonowal Kachari makes rice-beer as Prasad during this Bitho puja which is another characteristic of tribal religions across the state. They sacrificed cock or a male domestic bird in this puja.

On following day especially in evening begins the main function of Baitho puja and individual sacrifice is held on that day. This function begins at the altar of the 'Baitha' which is nothing but a pillar of 'Jamuka'(a kind of tree) that symbolizes 'Baitho Devota' or the supreme God Baitho. The pillar is higher by a few feet than the roof of the 'Than' to help the deities, as the

devotees, belief to descend from heaven. They offer betel nuts and leaves, rice-beer, salt, rice most of these items are found easily in their land. The sacrifice is performed in three stages. First, for the people in general, secondly for the individuals of the village and third, for the individual person to protect men and cattle in the coming Assamese New Year day.

Along with this puja, another puja is held by them at the same place (Than) is known as 'Bhuruli sal' 'Bhuruli' is another name of Parvati, the wife of Siva in Hinduism. 'Sal' is known as the sacred place of holding sacrificial worship where a stone pillar; symbolizing 'Bhuruli sal' is seen. In this puja, a big fire is made and the devotees offer things to please such gods and goddesses as 'Bura-Buri', 'Balia-Baba', 'Saraswati', 'Barambahoo', etc and it comes to an end with the sacrifice of a pair of pigs. Two people called 'Deodhani' and 'Saikia' performed the ritual at the 'Bhuruli sal'.

After finishing all the rituals of Baitho puja and Bhuruli sal, all the people sing 'Haidang geet' and dance together at the 'Baitho than' campus.

IV. HAIDANG GEET

The oldest and first folk-song of the Sonowal Kacharis is Haidang Geet. In this song we find about the creation of the universe and it is divided into eleven sections. In the first section, we find earth, the sky, fire, air, water, land were created. In the second section, mystery of the creation of the creatures is discussed. In the third section, there is a comparative account on gods and devils and how they were worshipped by the primitive people is discussed in this section. In the fourth section, how the lineage of the Sonowal Kacharis with seven divisions and fourteen lineages were created is discussed. From fifth to eight sections how and whom 'Khiring' god (another name of Siva) married is described elaborately. In the ninth and tenth sections, a description of worshipping different gods along with "Lakhimi" a female goddess of wealth is found. In eleventh section, the prayer is offered to god 'Baitha' to pardon the people for any sort of mistake committed by them while worshipping different gods. They sing like,

*Ha ioh namu Narayan,
Ha ioh prithvi henu hojaise.
Ha ioh akakh henu hojaise
Ha ioh prokah henu hojaise*

The central meaning of the stanza is, the God or Baitho who is the creator of world *prithvi*, sky *akakh*, produce light for the welfare of human being he is all powerful, present in everywhere and possessor of all good qualities.

Sonowal Kachari people worship many gods and goddesses. Among them 'Khiring Raja' another name of 'Siva' is the greatest and among the goddesses 'Bhuruli Habuki' is great.

V. CONCLUSION

A religion is a socio-cultural system of having behaviors, practice, ethics and world views of a particular community that leads human being to a transcendental spirit. Thus the concept of religion is not a precise to discuss. Different religions may have different elements of faith. From above discussion it reveals that Sonowal people are very conscious of their religion. They believed on a supreme power like any other tribal as well as orthodox religion. They does not keep a big distance from the supreme power or creator, they identifies themselves as a son of Him like Christian and other Abrahamic religions. Sonowal Kachari community generally believes that the Khiring raja (god of Sonowal kachari) is also creator of the all living beings. In their tradition they believed or worship many God and goddesses but among them Khiring Raja is the greatest therefore they belief monotheistic religion. As they became a part of Hinduism after many years due to some sociological and biographical conditions though some inherent character like rites and ritual remain unchanged. Only few amount of literary resources which concerns about this topic.

In the age of globalization although they accept the modern tradition but never ignore their tradition, culture and religious beliefs. They practice those as it like in earlier.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bordoloi, B.N. and Sharma Thakur, G.C. (1987). Tribes of Assam, part-2, Director Tribal Research Institute, Assam, 1st edition
- [2] Debnath, L. (2016). Birth related rituals of Sonowal Kachari Tribe of Assam, International Journal of Humanities, Arts, Medicine and Science, vol.4,
- [3] Barooah, B. (1998). The Sonowal Kacharis of Assam, The Director of Assam Institute of Research for Tribal and Scheduled castes, Guwahati-781022.
- [4] Chetia, N. (2017). Role of Sonowal Kachari Haidang Geet as Folk Media. International Education and Research Journal, Vol. 3, Issue- 8, pp-87-90.
- [5] Das, F. A., Barua, I. and Das, D. D. (2008). Ethno-Medicinal Practices: A Case Study among the Sonowal Kacharis of Dibrugarh, Assam. Journal Studies on Ethno-Medicine. Vol. 2 (1).
- [6] Doley, D and Das, M.N, (1995). Plain Tribes of Assam, Assam Tribal Development Authority, Dr. R.P Road, Guwahati-787006.
- [7] Hazarika, R. B.(2000) Sonowal Kachari Dharmio Biswas Aru Puja Patal, The financial assistance from Assam Institute of Research for Tribal and Schedule cast, Jawahamagar, Guwahati-22.
- [8] Kalita, H. K. and Kalita B. B. (2017) Tribal Religion of Lower Assam of North East India. International journal of Management and Applied Science, ISSN:2394-7926.