

Agricultural Problems and Prospects of Char-Chapories of Mahtoli Panchayat under Kamrup District of Assam.

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Abstract

Mahtoli Panchayat is located on the Southern part of the River bank of Brahmaputra. Agriculture is the basic earning source of the people of this area. Bangali Muslims are the main inhabitants of this Panchayat. There are many char-chapories in this Panchayat. The people of Char-Chapori faced a lot of Problems including soil erosion over flooding, illiteracy, high population growth and organized hate crime against them. Due to over flooding Agricultural land of the Char-chapori of this Panchayat is damaged with crops and some other movable or immovable properties and the standard of living becomes very poor. On the other hand all the communication facilities and living sources becomes closed and the situation is named after the natural calamities. In this present topic it will be discussed the problems and prospects of the People of Mahtoli Panchayat.

Key words: River, Agriculture, rainfall, calamities, problems and prospects.

1. 1. Introduction: Assam is an Agricultural State of North-East India. The State is a full of natural resources like green forest, hills, water etc. The State of Assam has an extensive river structure .There are some small and Big rivers is flowing in Assam. The major important rivers of Assam are the Brahmaputra River, Kusiya River and the Barak River. An additional tributary also flows from these rivers. All rivers in Assam are prone to floods because they receive heavy rain falls within a short period of time. The rivers collect tremendous amounts of mud and debris, thus raising the river bed levels making it difficult for the main channel to handle vast volumes of water during the rainfalls. The Brahmaputra is the main river and the life line of Assam; it has thirteen tributaries. The rivers of Assam are of immense importance as they supply water for drinking, water for irrigation, flood, livelihood, etc. The rivers also act as waterways which are used to transport commodities and livestock and helps in communication too.

The present Analytical study is made an attempt to investigate the Agricultural Cultural Problems and Prospects of Char-Chapories of Mahtoli Panchyat under Kamrup District with the livelihood of the inhabitants of this area. The Bangali Muslims are the basic inhabitants of this area. There is also an attempt to examine their

socio-economic condition with the role of ecology and politics in the oppressive and marginalized social existence of this group of people and their contribution to the larger Assamese society of Assam.

2. 1. History of Char-Chapori:

The riverine areas (Island) of the river Brahmaputra, locally known as “Char-Chapori” cover about 3.60 lakhs hectares of land and population of approx. 24.90 lakhs (as per Socio Economic Survey 2002-03). The chars follow a peculiar pattern of migration. They are subjected to erosion on their upstream and deposition on the downstream, due to which they migrate downstream. This affects the geometry and location of the chars during floods almost every year. These remote areas have not seen the fruits of development in any significant manner, because of limited accessibility and consequent administrative and other constraints. While certain districts of the state have been declared as “Backward” or flood affected areas for the purpose of providing special incentives to attract industries, but in these districts, there was no systematic plan to remove backwardness to bring them at par with the rest of state. The physical, sociological and institutional constraints on development of Char Areas are many and complex. Such as virtual absence of all weather communication with the main banks, reliable means of intra and inter char mobility, inadequate growth of transport and basic infrastructure like surface roads, health and drinking water, delivery systems for farm inputs, marketing, agro-services electricity and education. 80% of the Char population lives below poverty line. The basic objective of the Char development programme is to augment development by adopting some special schemes to be implemented directly by the Char Areas Development, Assam during the Twelve Plan. This would be achieved by a set of inter related scheme of raising procreativity of crops, self employment and incentive for Cottage Industries and Education for Char Areas with focus on those below the poverty line for generation of additional employment opportunities and economic improvement.

The Brahmaputra and Barak river system is subjected to frequent heavy floods, drainage congestion and bank erosion resulting in extensive submergence of land, loss of life and property as well as disruption in communication system. At times the period of floods above danger level is 40 to 70 days. The impact of floods was not felt to the same extent in the past as is felt now. This is due to rapid increase of population and subsequent increase in the all-round activities of man. The flood plain is gradually occupied to meet ever increasing requirements of food and fiber and consequently the flood problem has been accentuated.

2.2. Definition and formation of Char-Chapori: Char-Chapori is an area of Brahmaputra River and its tributaries in the Indian State of Assam constitution of flood plain sediments.

2.2.1. Char: Char is situated inside the river and it is covering by water of its surrounding areas. It is a small river Island. Due to over flood and speed of water flowing old char is damaged and new char is formed year by year. Char is a low land area than the Arban areas in which after cultivation the crops growing easily within very short

period due to good fertile condition. In fact, recurring flood and river erosion are menaces affecting the livelihood pattern of the cultivating people in general and char people in particular. Flood causes damage of standing crops and also harms washes away the livestock especially during the over flood period. Therefore, both the menaces often make the people landless as well as homeless which push such people in the grievances of poverty. And they are compelling to consider with their living standard and to fight against poverty.

2.2.2. Chapori: Chapori is situated in the outside of the river. It is located at the river bank. Sometimes due to flood-prone it is laying down with green crops, residence of the inhabitants and it becomes a char and the river enlarging day by day. Damaging the Char-Chapori is become like a natural phenomenon or natural calamities. Due to damaging the Char-Chapori peoples are become homeless, hopeless and disheartened. After destroying the habitation of the inhabitants with their locality and with their movable and immovable properties. The peoples are moving hither and thither and at last they are compel to take place either in social forest or in Govt. allotted reserve forest by purchasing or free a plot of land in any other place of the state only for live as natural animal. Then the homeless peoples are called as suspected foreigners or Bangladeshi by the Political and non-Political organization and by some other caste-communities. After newly settled they were evicted, massacred and the ultimate harassed by some organization and some caste and communities.

3. 1. Flood:

Flood the most frequent natural calamities faced by India. A relatively high flow or stage in river, marked by higher than the usual, causing inundation of low land or a body of water rising, swelling and over flowing land not usually covered by water is termed as flood. It is essentially a natural hydrologic phenomenon with a large volume of surplus water that inundates the flood plains, interfere greatly socio - economic condition. Studies shows that flood levels to the extent of 2 meters could be brought down and severity of floods could be substantially reduced in the rivers along with generation of hydropower of the order of 30,000 MW in N.E Region.

The main annual rainfall in the Brahmaputra basin is around 2300 mm. Internationally the Brahmaputra rank 10th in the world in terms of discharge. The water resources of NE Region have been assessed to be about 31 % of the country. However harnessing of water for irrigation and other beneficial purposes in Brahmaputra is 3%. Monsoon rainfall accounts for 75% to 80% of the annual rainfall. The flood problem has needlessly been continuing since time immemorial. This could have been overcome by the best utilization of huge water resources of the region for poverty alleviation and sustainable development which appear as disastrous flood in some part or other part of the region every year resulting in colossal damage.

3.2.1. Causes of flood:

Floods in the region occur due to variety of causes such as:

- River channel carrying flows in excess of the transporting capacity within their banks. This is due to excessive precipitation that occurs in NE-India. Backwater in tributaries at their outfalls into the main river because of non-synchronization of peak floods in them.
- Heavy rainfall in short space of time.
- Storm
- Aggravation of river bed.
- Inadequate waterways at rail and road crossing and encroachment in the flood plains.
- Degradation of catchment area in forms of deforestation, jhuming and loss of soil mantle in Himalayan friable watershed.

The rainfall induces drainage problem occurs in naturally low land is severe and acute in this part of the country. The drainage congestion is caused due to heavy precipitation of short duration and higher flood level in the main river, which doesn't allow the water to drain in to the main river quickly. Drainage congestion is also caused due to construction of road, rail and embankments, which obstructs natural flow and encroachment in the riverine areas due to population pressure. The lack of sufficient capacity of drainage channel and natural bowl shape topography of land resulting from defunct river courses also contribute to drainage congestion problem.

The extent and magnitude of flood problem is assessed in terms of different types of damages caused by flood. The floods of 1988 and 1998 of the Brahmaputra basin were unprecedented which completely shattered the economy of the state. Comprehensive studies have been undertaken to go into the various aspects of floods and flood control. Various aspects both structural and non-structural measures that are considered for formulation and implementation (M.U.Ghani).

3.2.2. Rainfall:

Bulk of the water in the State, both surface and groundwater is obtained from rainfall. Assam experiences the predominant influence of the south-west tropical monsoon which reigns from April to October with occasional winter showers. The average annual rainfall in the State varies from 1780 to 3050 mm. 2.2 Surface Water Availability Water resources of the State as a whole are substantial. About 82 51 sq km, which is 10.5% of the total geographical area of the State, is occupied by surface water bodies. Of this about 6503 sq km is occupied by the river systems including the mighty Brahmaputra and 1748 sq km by natural wetlands including seasonal and permanent waterlogged and marshy areas and man-made 2.3 Groundwater Availability. The Annual Groundwater

Draft is estimated as 5.44 billion cubic metre of which 4.85 billion cubic metre is for irrigation and 0.59 billion cubic metre is for domestic and industrial uses. The overall Stage of Groundwater Development in the State is 22% - with the lowest figure of 2% in Cachar District and highest 56% in Bongaigaon District – and has been categorized as 'safe'.

4.1. Problems due to flood:

The main problems due to floods are inundation, drainage congestion and bank erosion and consequence is damage to property. The problems depend on river system, topography of the place and flow phenomenon.

The space borne satellite Remote Sensing technology is found to be an effective tool to disseminate the proper information in near real time basis.

The issues related to floods in the Brahmaputra are:

- Narrow size valley (80-90 Km)
- Highest rainfall (average nearly 2600 mm)
- Tributaries are within the close range
- Peak rainfall profile ranging from mid-May to mid-September
- Settlement in vulnerable areas

Source: For preparation of Environmental Atlas of Assam, ASTEC

5.1. About Mahtoli Panchayat:

The Mahtoli Panchayat is a small part of the Kamrup district of the state of Assam .The Panchayat is located in the Southern part of the River Bank of Brahmaputra including some Char-Chapori. Mahtoli is a Village in Chamaria (pt.) Tehsil in Kamrup District of Assam State, India. It is located 54 KM towards west from District head quarters. 74 KM from State capital Dispur Mahtoli Pin code is 781136 and postal head office is Pachim Samaria. Mahtoli is surrounded by Goma phulbari Tehsil towards west, Goroimari Tehsil towards East , Boko Tehsil towards South , Chenga Tehsil towards North Barpeta , Barpeta Road , Goalpara , Nalbari are the nearby Cities to Mahtoli. This Place is in the border of the Kamrup District and Barpeta District. Barpeta District Goma phulbari is west towards this place .Mohatoli (Mahatoli) 2011 Census Details Mahtoli Local Language is Assamese. Mohatoli (Mahatoli) Village Total population is 3323 and number of houses are 598. Female Population is 49.0%. Village literacy rate is 41.4% and the Female Literacy rate is 18.8%.

Census Parameter- Census Data

Total Population- 3323

Total No of Houses- 598

Female Population %- 49.0 % (1628)

Total Literacy rate %- 41.4 % (1377)

Female Literacy rate- 18.8 % (625)

Scheduled Tribes Population % 0.0 % (0)

Scheduled Caste Population % 1.2 % (41)

Language: Basically two types of languages are uses by the peoples of this Panchayat, like domestic Language is Bangali uses as traditional language and Official language is Assamese uses as Mother Tongue.

Religion: By religion the inhabitants of this Panchayat is commonly known as Muslims.

Livelihood: Major portion People of this Panchayat associated with Agriculture. Because of their livelihood is depended on it.

Food: Rice is the main food of the inhabitants of this locality.

Crops in Agriculture: Paddy is the main crops of these areas. On the other hand some other crops are cultivated in this area. Like Potato, Tomato, Cucumber, Chilly, Sugar can, Seeds of Master oil, Banana, Brinjal, Cabbage, Carrot etc.

Agricultural Vehicles: Cattle is the main vehicle of the inhavitants of Char Chapories of the Mahtoli Panchayat.

Agricultural Tools: Nagol, Juwoli, Moi, Thona ,Dori , Nori, Itamugur , Nangila, Hatnangila, Kachi, Kodal, Pachi etc.

Health and Education: Health and Education facilities are so poor in the Char-Chapori areas. One Hospital was established at the Southern part of the river bank of Brahmaputra at Panikhaiti chapori by the Govt. of Assam but it is destroyed due to over flood and some other Govt. Institution already destroyed.

Source of water: Tube well, well, and flowing water of the river, Fishery are the main source of water. They have fulfilled their basic needs like bathing, drinking and washing etc. from these sources.

Road Communication: Road communication is too poor of these areas. For which peoples of this areas are unable to take the real value of their agricultural products. Although the Panchyat is connected with Sontali-Chamaria road but the Char areas are disconnected for flowing water of Brahmaputra.

Name of the eminent Char of the Panchayat: Borgol, JotiaDia ,Karattari, Lotora Dia, Naljuhi are the major char of the Panchayat.

Name of main Chapori of the Panchatyat: Bardia Nayapara, PaniKhaiti, Saru Arikati, Litora Dia NC.

Population: Char-Chapori bears maximum numbers of Minority Muslim those who are called as “Miays”.

Market: There is no sufficient market system to selling the Agricultural products. There is no any cold storage or store house in these areas.

6.1 About Char and the Inhabitants of this area in Assam:

This area can be described as tracts of land surrounded by the waters of an ocean, sea, lake, or stream; it usually means any accretion in a river course or estuary. These areas emerge and submerge in large river beds such as those of the Brahmaputra in Assam are uniquely vulnerable to disasters such as floods and cyclones.

The Neo-Assamese Muslims (Miyas) or the immigrant Muslims of the char area (or riverine islands) of Brahmaputra Valley of Assam constitute an important segment of the total population of Assam. As a social group of contemporary Assamese society they are often at the centre of many controversial issues mostly with respect to the question of survival of identity of Assamese speaking people of Assam as a majority community. However, very little is known about the socio-cultural and politico-economic life of this community.

6.2 Problems of Char-Chapories Areas, of this Panchayat:

The problems in the Char Areas are unique in nature, due to constant threat from flood and erosion during the rainy season. No mega developmental schemes can be taken in these areas. The land mass is segregated and cut off from each other, making it very difficult for taking any major scheme for road communication, irrigation, Power supply or setting of educational institutions.

The people of Char-Chapori faces a certain number of problems including soil erosion, over flooding, illiteracy, high population growth, health and organized hate crime against them.

- The ‘Miya’ community comprises descendants of Muslim migrants from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to Assam. They came to be referred to as ‘Miyas’, often in a derogatory manner.
- The community migrated in several waves — starting with the British annexation of Assam in 1826, and continuing into Partition and the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War — and have resulted in changes in demographic composition of the region.
- A char is a floating island while chaporis are low-lying flood-prone riverbanks. They are used interchangeably or with a hyphen. They keep changing shapes — a char can become a chapori, or vice versa, depending on the push and pull of the Brahmaputra.

- The community's cultural motifs and heritage are related to agriculture and the river. The community has a variety of songs (bhatiali related to the river, magangeet or harvest songs, noikhelorgeet or boat songs etc), instruments and equipment to catch fish, as well as different kinds of boats.
- They have an ancient performative martial art called the Lathibari. While the norm is to traditionally wear colourful clothes, their version has a white vest and dhoti, an Assamese gamosa on heads and waists.
- While identifying themselves as Assamese, the 'Miya' community feels that like other ethnic groups, they too should celebrate their own culture and heritage within the larger Assamese fold.

7.1 Socio Economic Status of the Miya(Muslim) Community:

- a. The website of the Directorate of Char Areas Development puts the population of chars at 24.90 lakh as per a socio-economic survey in 2002-03.
- b. Prone to floods and erosion, these areas are marked by low development indices. According to Government data, 80% of the Char population lives below poverty line.
- c. A UNDP Assam Human Development report from 2014 describes the char areas as suffering from "communication deficits, lack of adequate schooling facilities beyond primary, girl child marriage, poverty and illiteracy".

8.1 Agricultural Problems and Propects of Char-Chapori of Mahtoli Panchayat:

Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy and it is playing the vital role in the socio-economic development of the country. It is the largest sector absorbing country's population whereas more than half of the Indian populations are directly or indirectly dependent on it.

Assam is one of the backward states in the country. Basically it is dependent on Agriculture. According to statistical data of Assam- 2011, as much as 99 percent of the land mass of state belongs to rural areas and 86% of state population are dwelling in the rural areas majority of whom are directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture. The causes of Cultivation are that the lands are so suitable for agro-climatic condition.

The people of Char-Chapori faced a lot of Problems including soil erosion over flooding, illiteracy, high population growth and organized hate crime against them. Agricultural land of the Char-chapori of this Panchayat is damaged with crops and some other movable or immovable properties.

Although there are some good causes to cultivate the Agricultural sector of the said panchayat but it is not free from damage and some other bad causes.

9. Conclusion: From the above prolonged discussions it is found that the Agriculture of Char-Chapories of Mahtoli Panchayat is an issue and challenges. It is suggested that the local MLA, NGO and some other non Govt. organizations and Youth generations, they should have a keen interest and communicate with the local authority to solve all the above mentioning problems of the char- chapories of the said Panchayat.

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