



A Study On The Different Paradigm Of Bodo People Of Aminkata Village In Gossaigaon Block Of Kokrajhar In Assam, India

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Abstract:

The Bodos are one of the major ethnic communities that settled early in the Assam state of northeastern India. Their custom, food habits, religion, faith, use of herbal medicines dresses, etc. are different from other people live in that state. They are rich in tribal culture. Bodo people in Bodoland Territorial Region (Eartswihle BTC) speak the Bodo (Boro) language which is not the same as the Assamese language. This language has Tibeto-Burmese origins and now it has become one of the official languages of Assam. The language has also an important affinity with the Sino-Tibetan language family which is now recognized as one of the Twenty-two scheduled languages in the Indian constitution. Bodo Sahitya Sabha, being an important literary organization has been working hard to protect and promote the Bodo culture, language, and literature. As a result, now the language has been recognized as a scheduled language. Bodo is one of the plain tribes living in Assam for a long time with a separate individuality, culture, and language of its own. The present study wants to explore some important dimensions of the Bodo Tribal community of Aminkata village. The village is 13 kilometers away from the Gossaigaon Block office and 30 Kilometres away from the District Head Quarter i.e. Kokrajhar. The village is located in a rural area with mixed and multi-culture and community villages and is well connected both in road and railway connectivity. This paper has emphasized studying the socio-cultural, customs, and livelihood of the people of Aminkata village in a micro-level study.

Keywords: *Bodo, Plan Tribes, Culture, Customs, Bodo Sahitya Sabha.*

Introduction:

The culture of the Bodos is very rich in Assam. The Bodo culture is found as a part and parcel of the Indo-Mongoloid culture that has greatly influenced the culture of Assam. The tradition of fishing, rearing poultry, piggery, and cultivation of rice are vital parts of their social life. Although there is a considerable change noticed in their traditional livelihood with the flowing of time yet there is still intact in various spheres of socio-cultural life. According to The Census of India 2011, 68.84% of Indians live in the village, i.e. rural areas which is around 833.1 million people live in 640,867 different villages. Among them, a significant population of the tribal community lives nearly 104 million people which is 8.6 % of the total Indian population.

The 'Bodo' is one of the indigenous habitats of northeastern India mainly in the Brahmaputra valley. The Boro also Bodo, both pronounced (boro:)is the largest ethnolinguistic group in Assam, India. They are an important part of the greater Bodo-Kachari family of ethnolinguistic groups and scattered across north-eastern India. They are concentrated mainly in the BTC (BTR) region of Assam. The Bodos were the prehistoric settlers who are believed to have migrated at least some 3000 years ago. They are some of the first communities to rear silkworms and produce silk materials that have a high demand in the local and global market. Generally, the word 'Bodo' means a man, in a wider sense Bodo language has importance with the Sino-Tibetan language family which is now recognized as a scheduled language in India. The present study explores the culture, lifestyle, language, livelihood, economic status of Bodos in the study area to give an idea about the community in a significant way.

Objectives:

To study the different dimensions of the Bodo people of the study area the following objectives are to be assessed:

- ❖ To explore the lifestyle, culture, customs, dresses, the language the Bodos follow.
- ❖ To investigate the socio-economic conditions of the people of Aminkata village.
- ❖ To understand the religious and cultural festivals and other related customs.

Methodology: The present study was carried out to explore the prevailing socio-cultural system in the Bodo tribal society. Participatory tools were used in collecting data where a homogeneous group of people was invited to participate. The present study is also based on some secondary data that are readily available in form of published papers and

some govt. and private documents preserved by some elderly people of the village of Aminkata.

Significance of the study: The paper has a great significance as the Bodo Tribal community is the oldest prehistoric community with a rich heritage and culture which is to be explored in the study to make the outer world acquainted with the lifestyle, culture, language, and festivals, ethnography, livelihood they observe which is different from that of other communities living in this area. The present paper aims to study the beliefs, rites, and ceremonies of the Bodos including major and minor festivals connected with the social and religious life of the people of the sampled village. As we all know that this community is the first developing community and contributing a lot the society in different fields. The pace of development has seen a drastic change after the formation of BTC which is again renamed and re-accorded as BTR as the after this administrative reformation in BTR the central government has been sanctioning huge financial assistance to uplift the community as these people had to suffer a lot due to their backwardness in many aspects of their lives. Both central and state governments set up many important higher Educational institutions like Bodoland University, CIT, Medical College, Engineering College, ITIs, etc which has boosted the educational atmosphere in the BTC region of Assam which has a major population of Bodo people. The present study has emphasized investigating the socio-cultural, religious, economic, and educational changes in the lives of the Bodo people.

Literature Review: The present study, as stated in the earlier part of the paper, is also based on some available related literature and some of them are as under:

Mochahary, (2017). The study by Brahma et al., (2017) elaborated on the marriage rituals of the Bodo community. Marriage being an important institution in human society also holds significant importance with the Bodo community. With well-established institutions of marriage, the Bodo culture strictly prohibits polyandry form of marriage. Although marriages are predominantly monogamous, under certain exceptional conditions polygamy is reported with the Bodo society. The different types of marriages that prevail within the Bodo society are *Swngnai Haba* (Arranged Marriage), *Kharsonnai Haba* (Girl flee away), *Gwrjiya Lakhinai Haba* (Groom staying with Brides family in their house), *Dwnkharnai Haba* (Elopement) and *Dongkha Habnai Haba* means (widow remarriage). Marriage within the Bodo community remains associated with various rites and rituals that date back to time immemorial.

Mochahary, (2019) investigated and observed significant changes in the cultural heritage despite its inherent richness. Despite the continuous attempt to preserve the

community culture, there has been an external influence that has led to some modification of the traditional cultural patterns both in terms of traditional beliefs and practices. Thus, in an attempt to adopt new faith the Bodo people have compromised on the preservation of the old traditional cultural traits resulting in the loss of many valuable rites and rituals from the society.

Talukdar,S (2012) assessed the role of women's education and economic development in the upliftment of the Bodo community of Assam. In this regard, results revealed that education for women played a major role in the advancement of the Bodo community. A distinct co-relation was reported between education and the economic and social development of a society. Education for women opened avenues for enjoying government-approved perks and benefits through banks, DRDA, panchayat, and many other governmental organizations. Since the main contributor to the economic development of the Bodo community is agriculture, the involvement of women in additional activities such as weaving, poultry, piggery business, service, traditional industries, and working as wage labor would allow the Bodo families to enhance their income. This would in turn positively influence the economic structure of the Bodo community.

Festivals:

Bwisagu (Rongali Bihu): In the words of Mr. Kamini Narzary, *Bwisagu* is a Bodo word which has origin the word *Bwisa*, means year or age and *Agu* means start. Hence, *Bwisa + Agu = Bwisagu*, or starting of the year of age. The Rongali Bihu is a festival that is observed with many rituals by almost all the communities of Assam. The Bodos also observe this festival like the other communities of Assam. It is a welcome ceremony of a new year of the Bodo Solar calendar. At this festival, they participate in different cultural dances with traditional colourful dresses. From the day of the end of the festival, the cultivators of the community participate in the preparatory works of new paddy cultivation which is the prime source of income for their livelihood. Alike *Bwisagu*, a mixture of oil, turmeric powder, and charcoal powder is prepared and smeared on the cow with a cylindrical bamboo. Different grains such as rice, sesame, pulse, lentils are fried and their mixture is chucked in the cowshed in front of cows. This festival is connected with their agricultural activities so this festival may also be called an agricultural festival. They also collect some meagre amount as contribution in groups visiting different households collectively and participate in group dances and singing and enjoy home-made rice beer and participate in different amusement programmes in this festival.

Domashi: *Domashi* is an important and popular festival that is related to harvesting. The word '*Domashi*' means the junction of two months. The festival is also popularly known as *Bhogali Bihu* in Assam. The festival is celebrated with much fun and frolic and with some rituals like enjoying different types of cakes, *pitha*, inviting and entertaining guests and

relatives with foods and drinks and enjoy dancing and singing in groups. The male members of the family believe in bearing more and more fruits if the fruits bearing trees are tied around with a cord of straws during *the Domashi* festival.

Kati Gasa Saonai (Kati Bihu): Kati Bihu, *Kati Gasa Saonai* in Bodo term, is a festival prevalent in Assam mainly in the time when the paddy cultivation is in the process of maturity and the farmers are in the stage of scarcity as the crops are about to be fully grown. So until the harvesting of the paddy, the cultivators have to struggle to meet the two ends. So the Kati Bihu is popularly known as the festival of scarcity (Kongali). In this festival, no feast is arranged as in other festivals. The light (*Gasa*) is lighted in the paddy field during this festival which is observed on the first day of Kati Month (Assamese month).

Amthisuwa Festival: This is also a crucial festival for Bodo people which is celebrated on the eve of accelerating the final phase of planting paddy in the field. On this occasion, they take a break for a week to concentrate energy for the final round of paddy plantation. This festival starts on the first day of Assamese month *Ahar* (mid-June) and the season of summer seasonal fruits like mango, jackfruits, jam, *lerkho*, *jolfi*, etc start rippling. The people visit the relatives and neighbours home in this festival to enjoy the seasonal fruits which is a tradition to promote harmony, cohesion, and brotherhood among themselves. During this festival, the villagers start engaging themselves in different sports and games.

Brahma Dharma: In the studied village it is found that Brahma Dharma is a very important religion which is observed twice a month i.e. in every *Amabaishya* and *Purnima*. They also observe the Brahma Yoga on the eve of every auspicious occasion like the first day of Bohag month (Assamese Month), *Mahalaya* and Saraswati Puja. In every Saraswati puja, they organize the Brahma yoga collectively with community contribution from the villagers. Among all the other festivals the Brahma *Yogya* in this village is observed most enthusiastically and considered as a more respectable festival than that of others. But it is found in the literature review of some imminent researchers that Bathow is considered as the important festival of Bodo people in other parts of the BTC which is not common with the people Aminkata village which has a significance of its own.

Bathow Puja: It is the worship of Bathow. On this day if the *shiju* plant becomes old then they uproot it and plant a new one and do some special worship which is one of the major festivals of Bodos. This festival is often observed in February but the people of Aminkata village do not involve in the Bathow puja as this festival is not a part Bodo people of this village.

Bishwakarma Puja: Bishwakarma Jayanti is an auspicious day dedicated to Lord Vishwakarma which is known to be the divine architect and the creator of all the palaces of Hindu Gods and Goddesses along with their weapons and vehicles. It falls on the day of Kanya Sankranti which comes on the 16th and 17th September as per the Gregorian calendar. This festival is also observed in Aminkata village and participated by the people who own any sort of vehicle. They offer puja with a belief that they should be saved from any untoward incidents relating to their vehicle or any weapons.

Saraswati Puja: Bodo people also consider the Swarswati festival as the Goddess of knowledge and wisdom so they also observe this festival both at home and educational institutions. This festival is found to have become most respected among the students as they consider that if they offer respect to Swarswati Goddess they would be showered with wisdom and knowledge.

Lakshmi Puja: Like other festivals, Lakshmi puja is observed with much enthusiasm which is the Goddess of wealth. This festival is also observed in Aminkata village with much respect as the occasion is dedicated to Lakshmi i.e. wealth so they offer this puja with the hope of being prosperous.

Food Habits: Rice is a staple food for Bodo people in Aminkata village and which is supplemented by a plentiful supply of vegetables, sometimes they procure these vegetables from the forest area. Almost all Bodo people are fond of pork which is also obvious in them and they also love to eat the common dishes like *Daal*, fish, the flesh of goat frog, rat, and all the eatable vegetables which are available in the local market and sometimes they grow some vegetables at their kitchen garden. The favorite beverage is a kind of rice-beer known as '*madh*' or '*jau*' prepared by steeping rice in water for two or three days. Another liquor, *photika* or *phitica* prepared with same methods from *madh* or *jau* by distillation, is of a less innocent character which has some common flavour with strong whisky. The local rice beer has great importance in Bodo society and it is widely used in all kinds of social functions. The rice beer is justified in Bodo society in the pretext that it may relieve some diseases like a disorder of bowels, cholera, etc if it is taken as medicine.

Livelihood: Like the Bodos of other parts of Assam the people of Aminkata village also cultivate paddy, culture farming of piggery, fish, *muga* culture, handloom, and weaving, silkworm, bird rearing, etc. Presently with the advancement of education and scientific temper, the Bodo people are also being highly educated and getting engaged in different govt. and semi-govt. Jobs.

CONCLUSION:

The cultures are what make us different from others with a unique identity. So, it is a very important task that we understand the value and beauty of our culture and make them grow among ourselves and carry them to the outer world as well, thereby making our society proud. Our culture defines our unique beauty and we should do our best to preserve it. Preserving or dissemination doesn't mean disrespecting or abolishing other cultures, but we should adopt first our own. Although Bodos are maintaining the traditional cultural patterns including their traditional beliefs and practices, some changes have been noticed in their life and culture to some extent. As a result of adopting and practicing new faith, they have given up some age-old traditional cultural traits. It is seen that many valuable rites and rituals have already been lost from society. We have found that lots of changes and rare on their traditional socio-cultural practices because of embracing of different religious practices and the impacts of modernization. There may be a threat to their traditional socio-cultural practices within a few decades unless or until an active preservative measure is not adopted to keep it alive.

The current study attempted to explore in-depth the lifestyle, socio-cultural, and livelihood status of the Bodo people in the sample village. In this regard, it has been observed that the Bodos of Assam embark a rich cultural heritage that reflects the ancient beliefs and practices of the northeastern region of India. However, the lack of appropriate measures to preserve this cultural heritage has led to the loss of many traditions. Thus, there is a significant need for appropriate measures that would not only ensure the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Bodo community but also would make attempt to enhance the status of the Bodo people in all respect and the socio-cultural and religious lifestyle of Bodo tribes of Assam.

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