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**INTER COMMUNITY
RELATIONS OF
NORTHEAST BHARAT-
PAST & PRESENT**



INDEPENDENCE DAY SPECIAL ISSUE



Government of Assam



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মুখ্যমন্ত্ৰী, অসম

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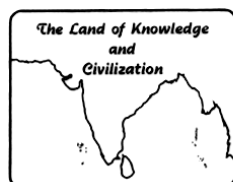
Inter Community Relations of Northeast Bharat – Past & Present

Independence Day Special Issue 2019

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INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONS OF NORTHEAST – BHARAT – PAST AND PRESENT

A FOREWORD

Inter-community relations amongst the people of Northeast Bharat is a very relevant area of study and it is indeed encouraging to find the Heritage Foundation dedicating the Independence Day Special (2019) issue of its monthly news bulletin *Heritage Explorer* to this important subject. The Northeast Bharat is indeed very rich in cultural-diversity and is home to a large number of ethnic communities. The relations between the different groups of people are marked by amiability, friendship as well as by hostility.

The term ‘Northeast India’ or ‘Northeast Bharat’ (Article 1 of the Constitution of India makes ‘India’ and ‘Bharat’ synonymous terms) is actually a geographical expression that for a long time included the seven states of Assam, Arunachal, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Presently, Sikkim is also being included in this conglomerate. The term ‘Northeast Bharat’ is generic and it must be acknowledged that this area is a repository of unparalleled diversity both in terms of biodiversity as well as culture. It is an area that forms a meeting ground of different bio-geographic as well as cultural realms. There are a lot of people who are averse to the use of the word Northeast Bharat as such term tend to homogenize or perhaps ignore the diversity of the vast region. It is for such reasons that adequate care needs to be taken to understand the diversity of the region and for all practical reasons not consider it to be a homogenous entity.

The moist tropical climate coupled with the altitudinal variations makes this area one of the most diverse habitat mosaics in the world. In fact, three different bio-geographic zones meet here in the North East Bharat – the Indian (Afro-tropic), Himalayan (Palearctic) and Indo-Malayan making the forests of the region among the richest terrestrial regions in the world in terms of biodiversity.

This multiplicity of habitats also meant existence of multiple zones for man-nature interaction. Over a period of time, such interaction might definitely have led to development of different cultural traits, customs and traditions that prolonged living in a particular locale normally entailed. This was a development that was slow and evolved through ages. This might have also led to creation of exclusive societies with cultural characteristics that differentiated them from the ‘others’. It is for such reasons that approximately 240 ethno-linguistic groups of humans live in this area, creating matchless diversity.

Northeast Bharat has remained a place of migration. To areas presently included within the territorial limits of Assam and the Northeast Bharat, migrations have taken place from the pre-historic times. Throughout history people have migrated to this area from all directions North, East, West and South, and there are significant evidences of such migrations.

The civilizational linkage between North East India and South East Asia is borne out by available material evidences. A number of archaeological excavations carried on across the North Eastern

region yielded a large amount of polished Neolithic tools and these have great affinities with the South East Asian tools including Myanmar. The use of shouldered axes and also cord-impressed pottery can be taken as examples. The Neolithic links between Myanmar and North East India can be dated between 2500-1500 BC. The stone jars of Laos and the Dima Hasao (former North Cachar Hills district) is another very important example of this eastern linkage. The stone jars are unique to Dima Hasao and the neighbouring area as these have no parallel in India except Southeast Asia as corroborated by the archaeologists of India.

Such evidence only corroborates that there have been movements of people from Southeast Asia to India and vice versa since ancient times. The Singphos and the Tai groups such as the Ahoms, Khamtis, Phakes, Aitons, Turungs and the Khamyangs moved to North East India from Shan state of Yunnan (referred to as Mungrimungram) and Myanmar. The Tai-Shans had expanded to the whole of Hukong valley and established there a group of states. The most powerful of these states was inhabited by the Mau branch of the tribe. The Ahoms (of Assam) refer this place as Mungmao while the Manipuris refer to it (i.e. mungmau) as the kingdom of Pong, which term sometimes denoted the entire collection of the Tai-Shan states in the Hukong valley. In other words, the Meiteis of Manipur and the Ahoms of Assam trace their ancestry from a common place located in Myanmar.

The Nagas, Kukis, Mizos, and the Lushais entered North East India through Burma. There are still a good number of Naga tribes inhabiting western Myanmar adjacent to the Indian state of Nagaland. It is believed that the Khasi people also migrated to India through Myanmar. These conclusions are drawn mainly through studies done by Anthropologists and social scientists that takes material culture as the basis of their analysis.

Northeast Bharat is situated in “one of the greatest routes of migration of mankind.” This migration took place from all sides, west, east, north and south - wherever nature permitted. There was also migration of people from other parts of India. The cultural influence in the material remains like temple architecture and sculpture is easily discernable. The influence of Hinduism on the belief systems of the people of Northeast Bharat is also quite evident. There was also the advent of Islam during the Medieval period and Christianity during the colonial period. There are significant linguistic affinities that suggest the influence of different language and language groups on the people of Northeast Bharat.

Thus it can be aptly stated that Northeast Bharat was convergence point of different cultures. Overall the cultural influence of mainland India was immense and the same flourished under different states that emerged during the course of history. The Ahom kingdom, the Koch kingdom, the Meitei kingdom – all patronized Hinduism in different ways. At the same time many of the older cultural practices also thrived making the cultural realm liminal. This continuity and change in Northeast Bharat also was marked by significant inter-community exchanges among people of different communities.

The advent of the British colonial forces in Northeast India in a way constitute perhaps the most violent and traumatic phase of history of the region. Migrations that took place in the pre-colonial era were gradual and did not lead to any radical social or economic disruption. The colonial intervention radically changed the demography, ecology and culture of the region. Introduction of the colonial economy that induced imperial extractions through revenue maximization and extractive practices

led to a total disruption of the old order. The lack of surplus population in the region to serve the British colonial enterprise eventually led to large scale migration of people to Northeast Bharat. The introduction of the plantation economy and the emphasis on more and more paddy and jute cultivation with the help of people drawn from outside Northeast Bharat only made the situation more acute.

At the same time, Northeast Bharat is considered as one of the most complex Conflict Zones in the world since the colonial era. Since India's independence in 1947, we have not seen a single decade of calm political atmosphere in the region.

It is under all these circumstances that any academic exercise on inter community relations becomes so significant yet so daunting. Scholars, academicians and activists have contributed to this Special Independence Day Issue (2019) of the *Heritage Explorer* covering on a range of issues and communities. Ranga Ranjan Das has tried to provide a comprehensive account of intercommunity relations in Northeast in his paper titled *Interpreting Intercommunity Relations: Redefining Heritage in Northeastern Perspective* including therein a historical and anthropological perspective. While Sumneibul Hrangkhoh has tried to provide an overall perspective on the *Inter-community relations of Northeast Bharat*, Abhishek Gupta and S. G. Momin has tried in her paper to highlight the intercommunity relationship of the Garos with others. Sodyong Kri's paper titled *Inter Community Relations – The Kman and Tavra Mishmis*, Alom Pangkom's paper titled *Inter Community Relations of Adi and Khampti Tribes of Namsai District, Arunachal Pradesh*, Dr. Watsen Bangsia's paper on *Inter-community Relations of North East Bharat with special reference to Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh* have touched upon intercommunity relations focusing on several important tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

There are also several papers included in this Special Issue that has taken up intercommunity relations of the people of Assam. *Inter Community Relations of the Karbis – Past and Present* by Dhaneswar Engti, *Relation of Miri (Mising) Tribe with other North East Tribes* by Madhuram Pegu, *Matrimonial Relations of the Abom kings with different Communities of North East India* by Tinamoni Rajkumari and *Inter-community Relations of the Koch-Rajbangshis of North-East Bharat* by Surajit Ray – all throw light on different dimensions of inter-community relations in Assam.

Sources are always a problem to reconstruct a history on intercommunity relations in Northeast Bharat from the early times. Material evidence, linguistics and oral traditions apart, literary sources can also help build up a comprehensive narrative on intercommunity relations. The inter-community relations of the people that came to the valley during the colonial and post-colonial era can also be another interesting area of academic investigation.

I congratulate the Heritage Foundation for their creative academic pursuits and for dedicating the Independence Day Special (2019) issue of its monthly news bulletin *Heritage Explorer* to studying the inter-community relations between the different groups of people in Northeast Bharat. It is expected that this publication will be well received by the readers.

Dr. Rajib Handique
Professor and Head
Department of History
Gauhati University

Editorial



Intercommunity relations – A mix of intellect and necessity

The emergence of anatomically modern human is the result of the evolutionary process of nature. Intellectual evolution also occurred hand in hand and finally the concept of mutual assistance and the moral senses in humans and other animals took shape due to the benefits shared by the members of cooperative groups, a suggestion that clearly parallels modern theories of social evolution. The social mechanisms responsible for the development and maintenance of societies in animals and man have fascinated and intrigued philosophers as well as scientists since classical times, the first systematic consideration of their evolution appeared in the *Origin of species* (Darwin 1859/1958). While citing examples of mutual cooperation Darwin pointed out that many animals live in groups and cooperate with each other and described how ‘wolves and some other beasts of prey hunt in packs, and aid one another in attacking their victims’, how ‘pelicans fish in concert’ and ‘social animals mutually defend each other’. Human, being superior in intellect, though acted similarly but they weighed their options with great care. Depending on the situation, they would either snatch what they need from the weak or barter with what they can give in exchange to the equals or stronger groups. These practices are not so stark in modern societies but in tribal societies especially those who still live in remote hills, plains or forested areas of north east, these were the norms in the recent past. The world is still not fully aware of their social behaviours, life style, traditions and practices. We, their brethrens living on the same land mass are also not aware of the inter-ethnic conflicts, warfare, feuds at different levels and dimensions. Is it not sad that though we share the same geographical territory and boast about ‘unity in diversity’, we remained willingly ignorant about our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual counterparts?

HERITAGE EXPLORER, the News Bulletin has been trying to find answers to many such vexed mysteries of co-existence of tribal and non-tribal communities, inter-tribe relations between tribes of different origins, for last more than ten years. In spite of its lengthy journey and honest endeavours, it has not been successful in exploring the authentic and proven historical details of the compulsions of co-existence that has turned north east region of our country into a melting pot of diverse communities. The perspectives which compelled the diverse socio-cultural groups of north east to live peacefully and maintain inter-ethnic relations are yet to be discovered, mainly due to problems of empirical data on heritage, tradition and culture of different tribal communities. Although many researchers and scholars have taken up ethnographic work to broaden our existing knowledge about north east’s tribal communities, but their choice of topics are few and far between. We need meticulous investigators and researchers, who will delve deep into the oral history and descriptions extracted from the oldest surviving members of the tribal groups as well as from the research journals, contemporary literature and scientific data collected from anthropological research documents. This

work sounds very easy, but has proved to be extremely difficult as most of the tribal communities of north east did not have any script of their own to have recorded down their evolution and progress of their communities. The only way forward is reconstructing the past based on oral history and available scientific data. Reconstruction of the past and recording them following the methodology integral to the social sciences is a very painstaking and laborious work. The prime objective of HERITAGE EXPLORER is to spur and inspire the new generation of researchers and students of anthropological sciences to take up this labour intensive scholarly investigation into the hoary past of the tribes of north east, in etic or emic manner, i.e., without excessively glorifying or neglecting smaller details of their own cultures and traditions and denigrating others. HERITAGE EXPLORER honestly desires to encourage such endeavours of going to the roots.

Before I conclude, I must apologise to our readers for not being able to present articles exclusively devoted to 'Intercommunity Relations', which was the theme of our August 2019 issue. This happened mainly because only a handful of writers submitted articles on the identified topic. The rest were non-topical but rich in information relevant to the topic, hence we decided to include those articles also as additional study material. We fervently request our readers to go through the articles and give their feedback so that we can rectify the errors and mistakes that crept in, before we initiate the process of publication of the articles in Book form.

Wishing you happy reading.

Romen Chalkraborty
Chief Editor

INTERPRETING INTERCOMMUNITY RELATIONS: REDEFINING HERITAGE IN NORTH EASTERN PERSPECTIVES

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

Heritage has many facets, narratives, definitions, expressions, conception, perception and interpretations put forward by many scholars, researchers, exponents, writers, intellectuals after examining diverse innumerable materials as explicitly come forward in one way or the other. Beyond categorical distinction of tangible and intangible aspects, one has the liberty to explore other ingredients that invariably evaluate and redefine heritage towards a new perspectives. One of my close associate often expresses, 'If I will able to stay alone, the hue and cry disturbs me, so I will be in peace, if I had the opportunity to stay alone'. There is perhaps one poem or a story where a man is kept confined to a solitary island where a bible and sheep is his only company. The mental anxiety and trauma he faces perhaps known to all. Conceptual framework of social evolution by Herbert Spencer turns into a full cycle during neolithic age when people start settling as a society. Switching of nomadic subsistence economy to production mode, interdependence, mutual cooperation, art of co-existence, being part of survival strategy initiate during the pre-historic period continues till post-modern period in a different shape, form and content. Mutual understanding and co-operation is the core factor developed at the micro level: family and its members and impact upon 'intra community' (within) relations. 'Intercommunity'

relations are a wider concept that has a descent past. 'Travellers', historians and ethnographers narratives testify various intercommunity relations among different native groups residing in the nook and corner of the globe. However, such accounts also reveal the inter-ethnic conflict, warfare, feud at different level and dimensions. Nevertheless, our prime emphasis is to explore the various perspectives, parameters, ways, process that has been adapted to maintain inter-ethnic relations in a positive way. Question of inter-ethnic relations arise in a heterogeneous setting and a pluralist context. Multiplicity of diverse socio-cultural groups sharing same geographical territory with a close proximity provides the extension to examine intercommunity relations from different perspectives. Various scholars argued there are various factors and forces responsible for developing the concept of inter-ethnic relations in historical as well as contemporary context. Under the backdrop of Indian context, it is easier to understand at different time frame from micro to macro level. While multi-ethnicity, multi-cultural, multi-lingual features transforms India a diverse or heterogeneous entity, with specified distinct identity for various indigenous groups at the same time, there are features of 'unity in diversity', oneness, as explicitly reflected in India's freedom of independence, a testimony where

massive participation irrespective of caste, creed and communities *per se* for a greater cause. Where a section belief religion divides the society, at the same time, other asserts religion unites as it brings different communities under one roof. Indian Constitution, as a guardian of the country helps maintaining inter-community relations. Nation unites where there is external aggression, natural calamities and sentiments. The most striking example is the sentiment associated with cricket at the apex level. At the bottom of the ladder there are other areas, factors, forces, historically as well as contemporary tested consequences that act as a catalyzing forces for maintaining inter-community relations at different levels.

This endeavour is an attempt to understand the intercommunity relations at different contexts in general and north eastern region in particular. This attempt will follow 'micro-macro' continuum in the line of Robert Redfield and Surajit Singhas' postulations on 'rural-urban' and 'tribe-caste' continuum. Micro-macro continuum is my theoretical postulation that focuses 'inter community relations' and its variables in empirical dimensions from a small neighbourhood to a country or vice-versa through intermediate phases of city, state and the region. Nevertheless, except the country, other emphasis hypothetically will examine 'inter community' relations since past revealing contemporary situation.

Likewise meaning of *intra* or *inter*, (within or beyond), there is anthropological meaning of 'community': 'mutually dependent families living and working together in a given area and usually in face-to-face association'; also village community, 'a group, comprising more than a single family, living in fairly close contiguity, and dividing the meadow area among the members. Such communities have been found over a good part of the world' ¹. However, the term

'community' is flexible to denote any socio-cultural group, tribe, and caste-based group, religious as well as linguistic group. Every group has own identity but there might be formation of a composite identity for intermingling and sharing common occupation due to migration and other historical reasons. Among Indian tribal groups, it is observed that there is close inter-community relations due to sharing common and adjacent territory, close contact and communication and inter-dependence. In agrarian and caste based economy, there is mutual interdependence. In spite of self-sufficient economy, there is always interdependence for one reason or other as shown by various ethnographic accounts. While at the larger context, emotions and sentiments being the prime factors for developing inter-community relation, at regional level other factors do the act of developing relations. There are multiple dimensions from diverse ethno-historical context. The level of relations can be examined at diverse socio-cultural perspectives in north eastern context. Regarding the region, S.T Das ² opines the cultural heritage of the diverse people inhabiting the hills and the plains provides an equally inviting texture of ethnic interest. The region with her diverse population speaking different languages and professing divergent faiths may be regarded as an epitome of India. It is in this land that waves of immigrants from Tibeto-Burman and Mongoloid stock have met and woven with the aboriginals a pattern of common tradition and heritage. The people of the hills and the plains have lived long side by side and followed common pursuits of life undisturbed. They have the capacity of living and working together for common objectives. Before the formation of five more states in greater Assam, it can boast of a happy synthesis of varied cultural streams. Up to

the twelfth century, several tribal chieftaincies- Chutiya, Lalung, Mikir, Kachari, Miri, Garo and others-thrived in the region. And due to the close association between varied groups and their interdependence in socio-economic aspects, there has always been a mutual borrowing of cultural traits and religious values, especially when such exchanges were helped by territorial proximity'. However, situation changed after coming of Ahoms and their dynasty. They had undertaken separate measures to maintain close relationship with different tribal groups.

Historical dimensions

The inter-community relations among different communities of this region are wonderfully narrated in the pages of history. It has been made since Ahom period. Historian wonderfully depicts the relations of Ahom kingdom with other groups. Asserting Ahom-Nocte-Wancho friendly relations in the web portal³ of Tirap district, it refers an interesting historical narrative, "There is a story that a Banfera Naga Khunbao (i.e chief) had made a close friendship with king Supimpha. His name was Karangpa. One day when Karangpa came to pay his tribute to King Supimpha, one of Supimpha's wives happened to see the Banfera Naga Khunbao from inside the palace and when the king went inside, the queen praised the beauty of the Naga Khunbao in the presence of the King. The latter was so incensed at this that he gave her to the Khunbao who took her to the Naga village. She was pregnant at that time and subsequently gave birth to a son in the house of the Khunbao. In the reign of the next king Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja, that boy used to come to pay tribute to the Ahom king. Suhungmung was struck by his high-bred appearance and conversation and learning that his mother was already pregnant before Supimpha

gave her to the Naga Khumbao, he took him into favour and as he was not the son of a queen of a higher rank so Suhungmung created for him the new post of Barpatra Gohain, which he made equal to those of the Burahagohain and the Bargohain. He named the boy Kangcheng Barpatra. As Kancheng was born and brought up in the Naga village, his family came to be known as Naga Barpatra's ghar or house. This incident serves as an eg. of intimate friendship with the Ahom king that was established by the Banfera Nagas". The Friendly relation between the Banfera Nagas and the Ahoms are also borne out by the fact that the Banfera Nagas sought help from the Ahoms repeatedly in 1549 A.D. and 1665 A.D. when they were attacked by another group of the Nagas called Banchang. The help was given and the Banchang Nagas were defeated ⁴.

History also reveals the conflict situation of Ahoms with the neighbouring tribes in this region. In order to overcome such situation Ahom kingdom had to make diplomatic arrangements for peaceful administration. Ahom King Pratap Singha or Susengphaa introduced a very interesting system known as *posa*. It not only solve a vex issue but neighbourhood relations were improved. *It* was a system of payment to buy off raids by tribes of hills such as Bhutias, Miris and Daflas. Under the system, certain villages in Assam plains were ordered to pay certain commodities to hill tribes. In return, the recipient of the compensation had to stay away from raiding plainsmen. *Posa* was an excellent system to deal with tribes of hill area surrounding Ahom Kingdom ⁵. Contemporary scholars have also shown keen interest to understand the genesis of *posa* system that became the milestone of Ahom, hill tribe and British relations. Tade Sangdo ⁶ exclusively pointed out facts and incidents related with this interesting system that

turn out to be a significant conciliatory policy as depicted in historical discourse. During their rule Ahom kingdom come closer to the various tribal groups residing in the hilly region (at present Arunachal Pradesh). Some of them were Nyishi, Aka, Monpa, Sherdukpen, etc. Sangdo noted Ahoms' assertion that these groups had the habit of coming down in the neighbouring plain territories and taken away whatever they founded before them. They raids and outrages and taken away their commodities. He asserts, "after each raid, the Ahom kings used to send their arm forces to punish the offenders but they failed to trace the offenders for punishment. Ultimately, the Ahom kings realized ineffectiveness of retaliating military expedition and having hostile relationship with the hill tribes". So posa was introduced to maintain good friendly relations. There was provision to provide paddy or other articles which was not available in the hilly areas. Ahoms arranged a selective mechanism for posa policy for certain specific groups according to their access due to hide out in difficult terrain in hilly tracts. For every group, they adopt separate policy for negotiation. He cites, 'Adi had mutual agreements with the Ahom and claimed absolute sovereign over plain land for fishing; similarly Nocte, Wancho and Tangsa claimed the plain land of their adjacent areas known as Nagakhat, Mishimi had good relation with plain people through trade, for Khampti and Singpho, it is easy to deal with them as they settle in foothills of plain land. So such groups were not entitled to posa rights'. At the same time, Aka, Monpa, Sherdukpen and Nyishi were provided posa rights due to their abode in difficult terrain. Among these groups, Nyishi who settled in the foothills of Lakhimpur and Darrang district of Assam, one of the groups entitled with posa right from Ahom as well as from the colonial

administrators. However, British governments made necessary amendments pertaining to posa. Earlier, "Ahom kings assign the paiks of the Duphla Bohotea khel to take the responsibility for posa payment to the Nyishi but British change this method of payments. They used to pay through their officers and stopped collecting posa directly from *ryots*. Posa recipients on the other hand had to promise for not providing shelter to the offenders or enemies of British". The posa system that prescribed payment of commodities was lifted by British during 1852. It transformed kind to cash. Further during 1878, British government issues a *bathbhatta* (hand written note) to every posa recipient where name of posa recipients' and amount fixed for each recipients' were written in the note ⁷. Indeed posa was one of the significant mechanisms that sowed the seed of close bonding of hill-plain relationship in this region.

In the present context, we have seen there is close proximity and sound relationship between plain and hill dwellers. British government believes in conciliatory policy for smooth administration in the north eastern region. Mackenzie's memorandum on the N.E. Frontier, 1869 ⁸ reveals, 'there is nothing in all this which further experience would lead me to withdraw or qualify. The policy of the government to the tribes on its North-East Frontier has, I again assert, been throughout in its main features a policy of conciliation, and not a policy of repression or devastation. It was indeed, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, for many years far too conciliatory to be either strong or altogether successful.'

While studying biological science, one of the important theoretical concepts, i.e 'ontogeny repeats phylogeny' fascinates me. It speaks all

about life cycle and evolutionary process. When there are many issues and concerns that often arise to destroy peace and amity among the different groups, at the same time our historical sound relations moved on in a different manner in the past. I am fortunate to come across some valuable information of my teacher which is not come across earlier. Prof AC Bhagabati, former VC, RGU was my teacher and has the opportunity to learn the nuances of Anthropology in a different manner. Learning and following his art and skill of working has been phenomenal for my professional as well as research carrier. His articulated deliberations and vast range of knowledge from international perspectives in general and north eastern region in particular will definitely enrich ones' aptitude to understand this region well. He delivered XIV Verrier Elwin Endowment Lectures in NEHU⁹ which was later on published in the Journal. His lecture on 'transformational process in north east India' has been quite consolidating to understand the societal formation as well as inter-community relations. His observations: "the hills and plains of the region had been occupied by different streams of Mongoloid people who came from north-eastern direction at different periods well before the onset of colonial rule.....it has for instance been surmised that long ago one section of the Indo-Mongoloids, namely the Bodo speakers, spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley, north Bengal as well as East Bengal which is today's Bangladesh, giving rise to various groups whom we today know as Bodo, Kachari, Garo, Hajong, Tripuri and so on. The diverse Mongoloid groups which eventually settled down in distinct habitats and ecological settings of the north eastern hills subsequently crystallized into distinct tribal societies" (2009, p. 2-3). This observation consolidates that many

groups have common ancestry in terms of origin.

In his third lecture, he wonderfully carves out hill-plain relation citing the example of Sherdukpens. He talked about ceremonial trade and commercial transactions. He narrated a situation of 1970s which is virtually extinct in the present context but has an overwhelming impact. Empirically, he expressed, '.....Sherdukpens of Arunachal Pradesh who lived in three main villages of Rupa, Jigaon and Shergaon besides satellite settlements of West Kameng and Monpa is their northern neighbours. The Monpas and Sherdukpens had their ceremonial exchange or trade relationship with people in the plains called Koch or Kachari. This relationship has somehow diminished today but it was extremely vibrant once.' Further, he adds, "Sherdukpens used to practice a type transhumance, i.e in the winter months they used to migrate to the foothills of Duimara near Goalpara. While staying for three months, they made very interesting and expansive forays into their neighbouring plain districts of Darang, which is now partly Sonitpur and partly Mongoldoi districts of Assam. These people came down with herds of cattle, goats and horses and went to the adjacent villages, sometimes several miles away, for a very unique kind of exchange. They went to particular families with whom they had ceremonial kinship relationship. The people in the plain called them 'Bhutia-Raja' and they called their respective families with whom they had traditional ties 'Bohotia', more or less meaning subject people. By evening a Sherdukpen would have reached the home of a particular family,.....he would be received with great ceremonial fervor saying 'Rajagira Hilina' meaning 'o you kings have come!'. And they quickly requested them to stay for the night,....food provided, fire lit,.....during the night, he brought out from the his own package

little packets of articles like spice, dried raddish, chillies, iron harps, circular tripods and a few other items and also discussed about harvest.... The next morning most amazing thing thing happened. The visiting Sherdukpens who knows the location of granary used to fill his sacks each of which actually contained about 15 kg of paddy without asking the family member, bid ceremonial goodbye and leave”. He pointed out that the items received as gifts though not possess any practical value, yet it has ceremonial value which Koch and Kachari assign as valuable and wait for the year. He found this exchange is a elongation of posa system that has relevance for inter-community relations ¹⁰.

Marital relations

Earlier, indigenous societies follow strict rule of community endogamy and clan exogamy for marital ties. Transforming society with an effect of various impinging factors has relaxed the norm of community endogamy, while marriage within the same clan is still prohibited. Freedom of selecting own life partners, inroads of modern education are some of the vital factor where community or society based specific organization cease to interfere. North eastern society is egalitarian and agrarian, however, there is also caste-based society living mostly in the plain areas. Bonding of inter-community relations is strengthened with inter-caste, inter-community marital relations. In the caste based Hindu society of Assam, there are many examples for inter-community marital relations, for example Assamese-Bengali marital relations. Ethnic groups of Arunachal Pradesh have been maintaining community endogamy since time immemorial. But in recent times, marital relations developed beyond own community that is also encouraged by the government. There is one concrete example. Nyishi and Apatani are two

major ethnic groups of the state. They have been sharing close proximity from the outset. In historical context, they have certain conflicts within. But in later phases, it has been nicely consolidated and aspiration for peaceful co-existence. They mutually agree for signing peace accord as stated. It was made in 20th September 2015 at Zero asserting ‘a new era of peaceful co-existence in the presence of Mr Nabam Tuki former Chief Minister, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. The accord for inter-community relations, peaceful co-existence, cohesion, brotherhood and social harmony was signed by Bengia Tulom, President, Nyishi Elite Society (NES) and Dr Hage Loder, President, Tani Supum Dukum (TSD) where members of both the communities signed as witnesses. Emphasizing the significance of such accord, former CM pointed out the other accord signed in between Nyishi Elite Society and Bodos settling in the border areas and Akas of West Kameng district respectively. He also declared an amount of Rs 50,000 for inter-tribe marriage ¹¹.

Traditional markets, weekly market, etc

Scholars have nicely elaborated that traditional markets or tribal markets not only suffice the economic needs in the form of seller-buyer nexus asserting consumerism in terms of exchange of commodities through cash, but it provides the platform to serve socio-cultural needs. It is the common meeting place for members belonging to different ethnic groups and share emotions, pains and joy. The multiple function of weekly market in the context of north east cannot be ignored. In various places of this region, weekly market also referred as haat is held. For some people, it still acts as an epicenter for direct contact. It is interesting to note that there are various markets situated in the juncture of border of two states. A weekly market is held near

Banderdewa area of Assam-Arunachal border. People from both the states participated as a seller and buyer. Inter-community relations develop at four different levels: as a seller, sharing same space for selling commodities, fulfilling each other demand as seller, fulfilling demand of buyer irrespective of community and buyer's physical interaction and friendship beyond community boundary.

Fair, festival, etc

Fair, festival celebration is part and parcel to relax mental tension, anxiety and to regain motivation, strength for re-involving survival strategy after a brief interval. The unique feature of certain fair and festival also help to maintain identity discourse to a certain extent. North eastern region, while shows diverse fairs, festival, revealing ethnic heritage as a marker of group identity at the same time, there are some fairs, festivals, worship that boost inter-community cohesion at different levels. There is persistent attempt from various state governments to patronize certain festivals that offers opportunities for inter-community relations. Nagaland has resonance echoed by vibrant heritages of different Naga groups settling since time immemorial. Colonial ethnographers' expressed elaboration on the conflict situation among them is just a remnant overshadowed by brotherhood relations in contemporary period as depicted by congregating different groups in a same place with a common mission to show their unique cultural heritage in Hornbill festival held annually in Heritage village, Kisama. Asserting festival as the external expression of social behaviour, Medhi and Zaman ¹² (2008: 267-268) wonderfully explore its' role and function: 'to achieve the desired goal undisrupted peace and harmony should be maintained amidst different societies, particularly among those

human groups who live in a compact geographical area. Fairs and festivals can perform amazing role to create such congenial environment. The pristine fairs and festivals observed in different parts of India have performed tremendous role in creating coveted environment among different racial and cultural groups of the country from the distant past. For survival, men have to struggle in clockwise precision throughout the year. Disease, distress, death, etc. always create hindrances in maintaining the peaceful life. In recent years, growing suspicion, malice and intolerance amidst the different communities have created obstacle in the maintenance of peace and amity among different communities of north east India. In such a vulnerable situation fairs and festivals can act as a strong catalyst to spread love and peace among the various groups of people of different racial and cultural identity.'

Fairs and festivals are no doubt a marker of identity. While there is rapid erosion of social fabric of traditional communities due to modernization and Christianity, at the same time the people in the process of searching their root makes attempt to revive their lost tradition by observing their festival with greater participation. This is also a process of re-unification and re-consolidating ethnic ties within. The nature of celebrating Chapchar Kut, the biggest Mizo festival at Lammaul during the month of February, this year is a testimony of it. The theme was 'Zofate Inpumkhatna' or 'unity for all Mizo tribes'. Depicting the unique Mizo culture the festival witnessed the presence of Zo descendants from Myanmar, Bangladesh, Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur ¹³. Sometimes common festival of different groups also becomes a tool for cordial relations. Lui-Ngai-Ni is one of the biggest festivals among the different groups of Manipur.

It include Anal, Mao, Maram, Poumai, Tangkhul, Zemei, Liangmai, Rongmei, Puimei, Moyon, Monshang, Maring, Tarao, Lamkanq, Chothe, Kharam, Chiru, Koireng, and Thangal Naga.

In Assam, we have seen the role of three major festival and *melas* (fair) in different set up and context, playing a major role in fostering inter-community relations. Rangali bihu, durgutsava (durga puja) and junbeel mela are still significant in the context of Assam. Narrative discourse for these three event though irrelevant, yet its' underlying essence in changing political dimensions possess real testimony and legacy of age-old process of bonding. Rangali bihu also known as *bohag* bihu, the heart and pulse of Assamese society as a folk festival turns a full-cycle since the inception of stage bihu transforming into a 'popular festival' over last five decades or so. Shift from folk to popular sowed the seed of harmonization among the residing ethnic, religious and caste group of Assam in one way or the other. Ethnic ethnography of the people of Assam explicitly asserts the presence of ethnic bihus with different names and their unique way of celebrations. In their village, rural and homogenous context, they are maintaining within the framework of own community norms, customs and time frame. But in a heterogeneous or cosmopolitan context mainly in an urbanite context, the situation is different from traditional set up. To overcome the jinx of anomy and atrophy, get rid of urban vacuum, people has always in search of alternative mechanism that provide certain avenues for refreshment and strengthening inter-personal contact by way of celebration certain festivals that bears common sentiments. While organizing *xaradiya* durga puja in a locality boost close ethnic ties among different communities at a religious level, at the same time organizing stage *bihu*

favours minimizing gaps in ethnic boundaries at secular level. There is overwhelming response and active participation irrespective of caste, creed and religion in a heterogeneous neighbourhood context. The testimony of communal harmony and ethnic cohesion is also exemplified during Manikut utsava held annually in Hajo. Irrespective of religion, gender, caste, creed, people participate in the rally.

Inter-community relations in Assam is remarkable if make a close look one of its' rare event held annually i.e junbeel mela. It has been major attraction for three main reasons: presence of a traditional Tiwa tribe kingdom (Gobha Kingdom), emphasis of ceremonial exchange of commodities or barter and bonding of participant ethnic groups from hills and plains. It is organized by Gobha Tiwa Deoraja Junbeel mela samiti at Junbeel Pathar, four km from Jagiroad in Morigaon district. It is held under the aegis of ceremonial king of Gobha Kingdom and trace back to 15th century. People from the hills of Meghalaya and Karbi Anglong belonging to Khasi, Jaintia, Karbi, Hill Tiwa used to come with their agricultural products turmeric, ginger, raw and dry chillies, pumpkin, gourd, lac, indigo, mats, sesame, etc for exchange of commodities like *pithas*, *sandah*, *laru*, raw and dry fish brought by Assamese caste population and plain Tiwas. This mela is significant for emphasizing 'barter' in the days where nation moves for digital economy. Another important aspect is the role of Tiwa community to strengthen inter-community relations for wider context. History reveals ¹⁴ the Jaintia king, after defeating the Kachari king extended his kingdom up to the Kolong-Kopili river and established 'pachu'- a small Tiwa kingdom headed by a chief known as Tiwa Deoraja. Gobha Deoraja was efficient ruler till the annexation to British rule in 1835. The Tiwa

people had migrated from the Jaintia Hills towards the plains and foothills of Nagaon and Kamrup districts, and divided into Hills Tiwas and Plains according to their place of inhabitation. During the process of assimilation with the Assamese culture of the Brahmaputra Valley, they felt the significance and importance of Bihu. Gobha Deoraja, after a discussion with his courtiers decided to celebrate the Bihu festival, but not during the *Sankranti* Bihu of caste Hindus. They fixed a Saturday and Sunday following Magh Bihu as their *Gobha Deoraja Bihu*. The *Jonbeel mela* is held as a pre-Magh Bihu festival celebration of the ancient Gobha Kingdom (now Gobha *mouza*) of Gobha Deoraja.

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In north eastern region, state border areas are

sensitive and at the same time there is also an attempt to maintain peace and harmony among the residing communities. Balipara of Sonitpur district of Assam is adjacent to Arunachal border. Saiduar, an area of this region is the melting pot of Nyishi, Assamese, Miri, Mishings, Aka, Garo, Bodo people. Nyakum festival is organized in Sariduar Nyakum playground with traditional rites and rituals by the Nyishis. Every community participates in the festival with joy and happiness and paves the way for strengthening inter-ethnic ties ¹⁵.

Other ways

While in Mizoram, there is an attempt to unite Zo descendants by Zofate Inpumkhatna' or 'unity for all Mizo tribes' during Chapchar Kut (*infra*), in Nagaland also, attempt is also made for unification of Naga groups with an eco of one people, one struggle, one solution ¹⁶.

Sankardeva and Madhab Deva played an important role to bridge the gap among different caste, creed and communities residing in the early Assam. Sankardeva's Neo Vaisnavite movement conceptualizing *ek sarana nam dharma* has percolate down beyond the ethnic boundaries. It is asserted that the Neo-Vaishnavite movement commenced in Assam in the first decade of the 16th century and reached its climax by the middle of the 17th century. It started on a missionary vision by working for the upliftment of the backward classes and minimization of the inclemency of caste distinctions. The peripheral groups including the so-called untouchables and backward classes and tribes were openly accepted in the new fraternity. The earliest attempts to bring the backward tribes, castes and classes into the fold of Vaishnavism were made by Srimanta Sankardev himself who accepted Govinda belonging to the Garo tribe; Paramananda,

belonging to the Miri (Mishing) tribe; Narahari, an Ahomman; Narottama belonging to the Naga community; Jayarama, a Bhutiya person and Chandsai, a Muslim person as his disciples. They all took part in the Bhaona performances and when required acted as guides to analyze the essence of *Eka Sharana Nam Dharma*. In his extraordinary work, Kirtana-ghosa, Srimanta Sankardev announces: there is no caste differences in Bhakti ¹⁷.

Another unifying force is sharing common language. In an essay published in Heritage Explorer regular issue, I have made to carve a nice linguistic heritage of this region. Many of the facts and circumstances with adequate references were highlighted there. I have mentioned about lingua franca. It is important to strengthen cohesion among different ethnic groups. Different Naga groups with their own culture, heritage and language are residing in Nagaland. Languages are so-different they cannot understand each other language. Colonial ethnography traces inter-community conflict in early period. Later on peace and amity was established through various ways. Apart from hornbill festival, Nagamese language plays a crucial role for inter-ethnic communications. Similarly, earlier narratives pointed out about Nefamese language prevalent in Arunachal Pradesh. However, Hindi becomes an important medium for communication in Arunachal in recent times. Assamese language is used as a mean of communication among different ethnic groups residing in Assam irrespective of plains and hills, except in Barak valley region. In this valley Bangali language turn into a unifying force among different ethnic and caste groups. Lack of script in other dialects allow Bengali a strong hold in the valley. Government Bengali medium schools are spread out nook and corner of the

three Barak valley districts: Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Most of the indigenous groups with comparatively less population having own dialect communicate beyond using Bengali.

From the above discussion it is observed that there are many forces and factors that act as a catalyst for maintaining cordial inter-community relations since remote past. This attempt, of course, made keeping the positive side of relations. Nevertheless, there are some reasons for the conflict and misunderstanding among different communities as highlighted by many scholars. In spite of that differences emerged from time to time, the people of the region is successful to re-define the term heritage in a different set up. Various scholars have different perspectives to interpret the situation of the north east in the pluralism and ethnic relations. Noted scholar Gangumei Kamei ¹⁸ cites, pluralism “as a system that embraces a multiplicity of social, cultural, economic and political groups and that does not permit the imposition of the ideas, values, culture or language of a single (dominant) groups on others”, In social and political thoughts, pluralism would mean ‘the autonomy’ enjoyed by different groups within a society of multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-linguistics and multi-cultural state. Pluralism has become a unique feature of both democratic and communist states and societies in modern times”. His observation is true in the sense amidst diversity, ‘there is unity’ by the feeling of inhabiting in the same region, i.e north east. It is believed that no external force will be successful to exert any influence to our age-old bonding. We are seven sisters and one brother. ■

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INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONS OF THE KARBIS – PAST & PRESENT

Dhaneswar Engti

Karbis are the principal tribal community living in the present Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts of Assam. The people of Karbi Anglong District, the then Mikir Hills District, saw the birth of a new district i.e. the “United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District on the 17th of November 1951 and it was formally created on the aforesaid date vide Govt. Notification No. TAD/R.31/50/201 Dtd. the 3rd November 1951. The Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council, the then Mikir Hills District Council, was formally inaugurated on the 23rd June, 1952. This was followed by bifurcation of the erstwhile district of the “United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District” into two separate districts named as “Mikir Hills District” and “North Cachar Hills District” in the year 1970. Further, the Mikir Hills District was again rechristened as “Karbi Anglong District” w.e.f. the 14th October 1976 Vide Govt. Notification No. TAD/R/115/74/47 Dtd. 14.10.1976.

The Karbis are also known as *Mikir*, the term given to them by their Assamese neighbours of the plains before the renaming of Karbi in due course of time. But the Karbis in general feel congenial to call themselves as ‘*Arleng*’, which means ‘*Man*’. Another meaning of the term ‘*Mikir*’ originated from the term – ‘*Meng-kiri*’ which means ‘searching of a cat’ in the hills during

migration period of this peace loving ‘hills tribe’ of North-East Bharat. But, some scholars try to establish the fact that the word ‘*Karbi*’ comes from the terms of ‘*Me-Akar Kebi*’ means - keeping of burning fire in a hut at the jhum field while some other scholars want to claim that, - the word ‘*Karbi*’ comes from the terms of ‘*Thekar Kebi*’ which means offering of benefaction to deities during family ritual performed by them.

The Karbis never call themselves as ‘*Mikir*’ but like to call themselves ‘*Karbi*’ and sometimes they also like to call themselves as ‘*Arleng Aso*’ which literally means, - ‘*son of man*’. The Karbi Langpi is the essence of Karbi life. It is the civilization and cultural heritage of the Karbis. The Karbi Langpi is the sorrow of humanity, the tears of love, the pangs of anxiety, and the joy of mankind; it is the symbol of unity and integrity. It is the songs of honesty and truthfulness of Karbi culture to be remembered for all times. It is the history of the racial affinity, establishment of original home and the early migration history of the Karbi tribes.

The Karbis, mentioned as the ‘*Mikir*’ in the Constitution Order, Govt. of India, are the major and most important ethnic hills tribes of the North East Bharat, India. On the other hand, they never inclined to call themselves as ‘*Mikir*’, but they generally prefer to call themselves as ‘*Karbi*’ and

sometimes they also like to call themselves as 'Arleng' which literally means - 'Man'. They believe that, the name of 'Mikir' was given to them by the advanced communities of neighbouring people of the plains of Brahmaputra valley. There is no mention anywhere of the nomenclature 'Mikir' in their folk-lore and folk-tales of the past and they never used the term themselves. According to E. Stack and C. Lyall, has state in their book "*The Mikir*", that "The name Mikir is given to the race by the Assamese; its origin is unknown."

At present, Karbis are found inhabiting in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts. Besides Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts, they also reside in some pockets of Dima Hasao, Kamrup, Nagaon, Morigaon, and Sonitpur Districts of Assam. According to available Karbi folklores, - Karbis once inhabited on the banks of the *Kalang* and *Kopili River* and the entire Kazironga area in the long past, while according to E. Stack and C. Lyall, - 'the original abode of the Karbis was the eastern portion of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills bordering on the Kopili River. A section of the Karbis remained in the Jaintia Kingdom; others moved towards Northeast by crossing the river Borapani, the tributary of the Kapili River and entered Rongkhang Ranges. Finally, the Karbis got a permanent place of living in that region and established their capital at a place called - *Socheng*.

According to some historians, - this migration of Karbi people took place at the beginning of the 17th century. The Karbis who migrated to the Ahom Kingdom had to endure intense sufferings in the course of the unfortunate Burmese invasion. In order to escape the inhuman torture and sufferings from the Burmese army; they took refuge in the deep jungles and high hills leaving

their hearth and home at one point of time in the lower slopes of the mountainous regions.

Nevertheless, Karbis are considered as the oldest inhabitants of the existing North East Bharat since prehistoric period of Assam. According to *Kolaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha*, the doyen of Assamese Culture believes the Karbis are the discoverer of Assam. Therefore, he would like to describe the Karbis as the *Colombus* of Assam. As a result of that, in one of his famous Assamese articles, Kolaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha wrote and rightly mentioned as follows: - "*...the Mikir were the aborigines in Assam. They were the first one to explore the hills, caves, rivers, plains and the forest of Assam. They were the Colombus, the discoverer of Assam.*" - (Bora & Das 2008, 934. Translated by the author). However, Joigyoram Gogoi, an eminent writer and thinker of Karbi Anglong had to say that - the Karbis originally inhabited in the hills called *Nongpilar*, which was located in the North-Eastern region of India, and from where they came down to the plains and settled permanently in the hills called *Lumbajong* lying between Dimapur and Diphu.

At the same time, B. N. Bordoloi and two other scholars, namely - G. C. Sharmah Thakur and M.C. Saikia, had mentioned in the book, (Tribes of Assam, Part – I), that, - "it is very difficult to trace the history of the early settlement of the Karbis bereft of any written documents and other evidence like archaeological remains, etc." But, G.C. Medhi had to assume that the early habitat of the Karbis was in the hilly region between the Nagaon and Sibsagar (present Jorhat) districts in and around Kajiranga forest. He further says that the very name of Kajiranga was derived from Kajir-Arong, meaning the village of the Karbi lady Kajir. In this regard, N.N. Barua also opined that the area between Dimapur

and the Kapili River called Hayong was inhibited by the Karbis in the course of their earliest migration.

a) Trade relations between various communities:-

The Karbis always kept good relationship with the plain people especially with the Assamese community since the beginning of their existence. They also keep good association with other hills communities like Khasi, Jaintia, Dimas, Tiwa and others. Therefore, the trade relations between various communities of the North-East Bharat had established very strong connection and it was a necessity to exchange various commodities for their survival since time immemorial. However, trade relations between various communities in the North-East Bharat existed during the pre-colonial economic structure and it was important to have an overview of it. There were many references of weavers, blacksmith, potters, workers in ivory, wood, dyes, hide and cane in the Karbi society. During those days, almost all people of the hills were self-employed and manufactured their wood and bamboo products at home for their own uses. There was little specialization and indigenous crafts formed an integral part of every household. Amongst the Karbi women folk, spinning and weaving, for instance, were a part of every woman's household work irrespective of social status in the hills. The name of Serdihun is still taken as the queen of weaving in the Karbi society who taught the Karbi women how to spin the yarn and weave to a cloth from it. By selling those homemade materials in the weekly market in the plain, the hills Karbis earned their livelihood every week days. During those days, each village was well equipped with a self-sustaining unit known as Jirkedam conducted by Riso-Aterang and its autonomy was generally

enjoyed by the Klengdun and Klengsarpo under the overall and supreme supervision of Rong Asarthe, the Village Headman, who had to play a significant role in this regard.

There was a cordial relationship between Karbi and Ahom communities during the reign of Rajeswar Singha and Jaydhaj Singha of the Ahom Kingdom. During the reign of Rajeswar Singha, an agreement was signed between Karbis and Ahome King for establishing peaceful co-existence and brotherhood in the region. Moreover, during the reign of Jaydhaj Singha, the Karbi king, (Karbi Recho), was conferred with title of 'Ronkhangpo' by the Ahom King through his Minister, Sandhiya Kai Barua as recognition and acceptance as Karbi king of Rongkhang Region. Out of satisfaction and honour, the Karbi king, (Rongkhangpo) also ordered to make five nos. of Karbi Dao and presented to the Ahom King as a mark of respect and honour to his suzerainty. It was briefly referred in the "Deodhai Asom Buranji", written by Dr. Surjya Kr. Bhuyan, one of the greatest historians of Assam.

Some writers opine that, during the reign of Ahom Kings, trade relations between Karbis and Mudoï community of Assam flourished tremendously in this particular region. These type of trade were booming through the Kolonga River, which is situated in the present West Karbi Anglong district. The Assamese community, especially the Mudoï community of Assam had made successful inroad into trading with the Karbi people of the hills along the river banks of Kolong River. Thus they could make necessary exchanges of food stuff and other commodities like textiles, salt and kerosene oil, etc. during those golden periods of Assam history.

b) System of judiciary to solve the inter community disputes:-

There is a traditional Karbi kingdom which exists in the present West Karbi Anglong District. The capital of this traditional Karbi Kingdom is called - Ronghang Rongbong, Rong Arak. This traditional Karbi Kingdom is divided into 3 (three) provinces. Those three important provinces are - 'Ronghang Rongbong', 'Chinthong Rongbong' and 'Amri Rongbong' and there is one Lindokpo for each province to look after the governance of their respective provinces. Those three provinces are ruled by the Lindokpos as per the Karbi Customary Laws. The 'Ronghang Lindok' is the chief of Ronghang Rongbong, 'Chinthong Lindok' is the chief of Chinthong Rongbong and 'Amri Lindok' is the chief of Amri Rongbong. But, among those three traditional heads, Ronghang Lindok is the supreme head and he is also called "Kong Lindok". He is the Karbi Recho, His Holiness, the King of the Karbi Traditional Kingdom.

Karbis of Karbi Anglong have got their own traditional self-governing institutions, and is a three tier system of administration. These traditional self-governing institutions are still found popular in the Karbi society and it is continually practiced in the three Karbi traditional kingdoms of Ronghang Rongbong, Chinthong Rongbong and Amri Rongbong in the present West Karbi Anglong district. It is a healthy practice of self-governance in the Karbi traditional kingdom which is still in vogue in the present West Karbi Anglong District of Assam.

The Karbi traditional system of governance is in fact monarchical in nature, whereby the traditional King or Lindokpo enjoys the power of administration at the Apex Body and it is

followed by Habai (Head of the region) and Rong Asar or Sarthe, the Headman of the village. The local level decisions are still attended by these traditional institutions, which can be considered as a Democratic Body and this Democratic Body can resolve all petty cases at their levels in egalitarian way.

The Karbis also have got a tradition of Bachelor Dormitory locally known as – 'Riso - Aterang'. Another important aspect of bachelor's traditional institution is – 'Jirkedam'. It is a training institution for all kinds of social activities under the leadership of 'Klengsarpō', the chief of the youths, which is appointed by the Basapo or Rong Asar, the village Chief.

The Traditional and Social Administrative System and Traditional Karbi Kings still exist in the Karbi society of Karbi Anglong. The customary Karbi King is also called as Lindokpo or Karbi Recho. It is a time honored customary institution of the Karbi tribe. The Lindokpo (Recho) or King has a strong control over all socio-cultural and religious activities within his protective jurisdiction.

Rong Arak, Ronghang Rongbong, is the capital of Karbi traditional kingdom. The present Capital (Rongsopi) of Karbi King is situated at Ronghang Rongbong, Rong Arak. It is located in the present West Karbi Anglong district of Assam, which is a few kilometers away towards south of Hamren town. It is a historical place of the Karbi kingdom where many past accounts could be unearthed from 'Rong Arak'. It is located at Ronghang Rongbong in the western part of Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Ronghang Rongbong is surrounded by green forest and ancient trees. It is a very beautiful and pleasant place to live in the heart of natural splendor covered with tall trees and innumerable wild

grasses all around the areas.

Three Tier Administrations:-

There are 3 (three) tier Traditional Self governing institutions in the administrative system which has existed in the traditional Karbi kingdom. In those traditional self governing institutions, there is the 'King' or locally known as 'Lindokpo' or 'Recho' at the apex body. His council of ministers are called - 'Pinpomar' and at the middle level there are 12 (Twelve) Habais or administrators; one each for 12 'Longri' (Regions) and at the bottom there is - 'Mei' or Village Council. All such petty cases related to customary nature are tried and settled by the village Headmen, called 'Rong Asar' by calling 'Mei' in the village Council's levels.

King/Lindokpo:-

In the present West Karbi Anglong district, there are three traditional local kings with their traditional territorial jurisdiction at Rongkhang, Chinthong and Amri territory. Locally all of them are called 'Lindokpo', meaning 'king'. Among them the 'Lindokpo' of Ronghang Rongbong, Rong Arak, is considered to be the supreme and thereby he is treated as 'Kong Lindok' or 'Karbi Recho', the Karbi traditional king of the traditional Karbi Kingdom. To become the Kong Lindok, or Karbi Recho, one must belong to the Ronghang clan, no other clan except Ronghang clan can become the traditional Karbi king or Kong Lindok as per Karbi Traditional Laws.

In a hierarchical design the Lindokpo or Kong Lindok (Karbi Recho) has got several subordinate Lindokpos. The King of Ronghang Rongbong, Rong Arak, has been treated as supreme among the other kings. There are three subordinate kings namely of – Rongchaicho

Lindokpo, Kiling Lindokpo and Rongpi Lindokpo. The King of Chinthong Rongbong has two subordinate kings namely- Nongloda Lindokpo and Nongphli Lindokpo. Thus, the King of Amri Rongbong also has got two subordinate kings namely of – Du Lindokpo and Nongkirla Lindokpo.

Power and function of Lindokpos:-

The power and functions of Lindokpos are governed by the Parliament locally known as 'Pinpomar'. The structures of the senior most functionaries are hierarchical as follows:-

1. Bordili: - Bordili is locally called as the Prime Minister of the Karbi traditional King or Karbi Recho. He is the primary functionary of the king or Recho.

2. Kathar Bura: - Kathar Bura is locally known as 'Priest'. He is the Royal Priest of the traditional Karbi Kingdom. He is responsible for performing an important ritual of "Botor Kekur" for invoking the goddess of rain for timely monsoon to the mother earth. He is also responsible for performing the ritual of 'Minu Kekur' for obtaining blessings from the goddess of wealth for the Karbi traditional territorial kingdom with bumper production of crops every year.

3. Pator:- Pator is also known as the assistant to the Kathar Bura; he has to assist the Kathar Bura in all activities including religious matters, like "Minu Kekur" and "Botor Kekur" rituals which are performed annually at Ronghang Rongbong, Rong Arak, with much pomp and gaiety. In those annual rituals, the participation of all Habes and Pinpos under the administrative control of Lindokpo or Kong Lindok, the traditional Karbi Recho, is absolutely mandatory.

4. Dengja: - Dengja is the adviser to His Holyness, the traditional Karbi king, Karbi Recho, in the matters of rituals and other religious activities. He advises the king regarding the religious matters. All the important religious activities are performed as per the advice of Dengja for the betterment of his subjects living in his traditional kingdom of Karbi Longri. Wophong Rongker is the one such important religious ritual which is performed by Dengja only, at least once in every five year's duration.

Functions of Lindokpo: -

The King or Lindokpo and his officials (Pinpomar) exercise several social and traditional administrative functions. The king alone cannot work thus it is the responsibility of the Pinpomar to assist him. All the posts in the Pinpomar have their own specific allotted functions and those allotted responsibilities are duly assigned to them by the Karbi Recho, the Karbi Traditional King of Ronghang Rongbong, Rong Arak.

Administrative Function: -

The King is the Head of the Administration under his Traditional Karbi Kingdom and all the Pinpomars have to discharge their assigned duties faithfully and they have to work loyally under this Council. The King and his council of ministers have been allotted with some administrative level of duties and they have to exercise the power and function on behalf of their king for upholding good governance in the Karbi Kingdom. It is the responsibility of the king to allot eligible persons to perform in different posts of Pinpomar. Being the head of the council, all the Provincial Heads, Headman of villages and Longris have been subordinated to him and also they have to obey the decisions given by him (the Karbi Recho). All the administrative activities are executed properly in the name of the Karbi king, called

Lindokpo or Kong Lindok.

Judicial Functions: -

The Lindokpo of Ronghang Rongbong, (Karbi King) has to attend to all the social matters and settle all disputes referred by the Habais or Habes and other Lindokpos of his subordinates. He is assisted by Bordili; the Prime Minister of the King, Karbi Recho and Bordili is assisted by Pator. If a case has been settled by the Habai, it is the responsibility of the Habai to inform immediately with a bottle of Horbong and Horlang (Rice beer) to the King (Karbi Recho). If the king is satisfied with the judgment given by the Habai, the case is considered as settled. If the King or Lindokpo is not satisfied with the judgment he may ask the Bordili to have a second look at it. If Bordili finds it difficult to arrive at a judicious decision then it is referred to the king and the judgment provided by the king is considered as final. Therefore, the decision of Karbi Traditional king, Karbi Recho, is accepted as the final law giver of the land.

But, at the same time, he is more of a symbolic figure head of the entire set up. He is not a dictator, since he cannot take any decision individually. It is with the advice of the Pinpomar and the Councilors of the wise men to take decisions in the judicial matters.

c) Common expeditions and inter-community social gatherings:-

There was common expeditions and inter-community social gathering in the Karbi society which is still prevalent in the Karbi hills. During those days, all Karbis are ready to join common expeditions in the forest for searching a suitable place for establishing their village and site selection for performing of jhum cultivation in the forest. Moreover, they take common

expeditions to the forest for collecting bamboo shoots for preservation of food in order to meet their requirements for the whole year. The joint collection of bamboo shoots from the forest has become a national festival of the Karbi tribe. Further, there are many inter-social gathering in the Karbi society. During the Chomkan Festivals, all sections of people irrespective of caste, creed and religion are invited to attend the Chomkan Festival. Apart from the participating team of Chom (Provincial Team) headed by Klendun and Klengsarpo from different villages, other non-Karbi communities are also invited to participate in the Chomkan Festival without any discrimination. Moreover, during the Hacha-Kekan, Chojun, and Rongker celebrations, all sections of people, irrespective of caste, creed and religion are allowed to join the celebrations without restraint. Other than Karbis, non-karbi communities are also cordially invited to take part in those festivals and they can enjoy the solace of all Karbi rituals with much pomp and gaiety. Now-a day, Karbi Youth Festival, organized by Karbi Cultural Society, Karbi Anglong, Diphu, is the biggest Cultural Carnival of the North-East Bharat. Many people irrespective of caste, creed and religion, take part with open mind in that Karbi Cultural carnival, which is held in the month of February every year.

d) Matrimonial relations in between different communities and its social or political impact:-

In the North-East Bharat, most of the marriage are governed by certain specific personal laws. In the Karbi culture, it has been stated that in respect of marriage clan exogamy is strictly followed by the Karbi society. The violation of this Karbi customary marriage law leads to ex-communication right away. Since it is rather a

severe law of punishment, this kind of marriage taboo is generally rarely violated. In the Karbi society, monogamy or marriage to one wife or one husband only at one time, is the most acceptable and prevailing marriage practice. However, there is no bar to polygamy or the custom of having more than one spouse at a time and the cases of polygamy are very rare to be found in the Karbi society. In the Karbi society, widow remarriage is allowed and the unmarried younger brother is required to marry the widow of his elder brother as per Karbi marriage law. However, the elder brother is not allowed to marry the widow of his younger brother under any circumstance. In the Karbi society, cross-cousin marriage is a preferential one; marriage by negotiation and marriage by selection of life partner are prevalent. There is another interesting system to notice in the Karbi society in regards to Karbi marriage law is - in case of marriage by negotiation the consent of the girl is a must and no one is allowed to marry a Karbi girl without her consent.

There are instances of matrimonial relationship in between different communities in the Karbi society. But there are certain social and political impacts exist in the Karbi society. The most faltering aspect is that, after marriage of a Karbi girl, she continues to use her surname of her father. But, the children assume the title of their father. After marriage, divorce is not allowed; it is rare in the Karbi society. However, it can be obtained through the approval of the village council and the council gives its approval only when it finds that the separation between husband and wife is absolutely essential. Like other tribal societies, there is no such system of bride price to be presented except offering of Bongkrok and Arak to the father of the girl. In this case, any non-Karbi who marries a Karbi girl

takes the title of a Karbi clan in order to avoid social and political clash. But, in today's society intermingling between people from different castes is taking place at different forums be it for education and profession at all levels.

Today's youths are quite receptive to the idea of inter-caste/inter-religion marriage; hence, Karbis are also not excluded from this modern mandate of matrimonial alliance and practice.

e) The effect of alien interventions to distort and disturb the peace amongst the communities of the North East Bharat:-

There is sufficient effect of alien intervention to distort and disturb the peace amongst the communities of the North-East Bharat. Because, north – east people are basically very peace loving nature and there is no such permanent enmity among themselves. They have been living peacefully with co-existence and mutual respect for each other since time immemorial. Moreover, their traditional beliefs and social practices are quite different from other communities living in the other parts of India. So, they always prefer to live in the loneliness and seclusion in the hills and they want to live without facing alien interventions at any cost. The people of North-East Bharat are a great lover of their own culture and traditions. They never want to lose their age old custom and self identity. They never appreciate the alien interventions to their traditional culture and customary practices in the tribal society. They never allow disturbances to take place in their ambit of peaceful co-existence amongst the different tribal communities of the North East Bharat. There is a glorious tradition of peaceful co-existence in the tribal communities in the North East Bharat since time immemorial and thus they try to preserve the very essence of Karbi culture forever.

f) Participation and contribution made by different communities in Indian Freedom Movement:-

During the Indian freedom movement, a few Karbi leaders from the Karbi hills participated and contributed in the 'Quit India Movement', but the names of those freedom fighters were not found in the history of Indian Freedom Movement. One such name could be mentioned is Late Barelong Terang who had participated in the 'Quit India Movement' in 1942. Barelong Terang, former MLA and Minister of Assam, was a long-term colleague of Samson Sing Ingti and a frontline leader of the Karbi Adorbar mentioned in his memoir 'Smritir Prabab' about the formation of a 'Mikir Students' Federation' prior to the 1942 Quit India Movement and a few of the Karbi students being arrested and suffering of police harassments. Terang however did not mention any names of the Karbi victims of police detention and harassments who took part in the Independence struggle. He had joined in the 'Quit India Movement' at the call of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi in 1942.

During his lifetime, Barelong Terang wrote one book named 'Smritir Prabab'. In that very important book, Barelong Terang clearly mentioned about his joining in the 'Do or Die' crusade during the 'Quit India Movement' in 1942. At some stage, Barelong Terang, former MLA and Minister of Assam, also joined the 'Quit India Movement' with a few members from the Karbi Hills in 1942. He joined the "Do or Die" campaign during the 'Quit India Movement' in 1942 with other 50 (fifty) members under the leadership of Shankar Barua and Bhadra Barua. His love for his motherland, India, and people of his country, had forced him to join the 'Do or Die' agitation during the 'Quit India Movement'.

in 1942 with his 50 (fifty) other active Revolutionary members.

Similarly, a good number of prominent Karbis, including Chatrasing Teron, former Cabinet Minister of Assam, Jaysing Doloi, former Chief Executive Member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, were members of the RCPI along with many unnamed cadres. Many of these cadres were often arrested and physically harassed by the Colonial Police. But due to the absence of any written records, any such named persons are difficult to be identified at present. It will require an oral survey of the few surviving members to identify such persons who faced Colonial incarceration during the Indian Freedom Movement.

g) How to revive that glorious tradition of peaceful co-existence:-

North-East Bharat is a model of peaceful co-existence. Peaceful co-existence of various ethnic cultures and traditions of the North-East Bharat is the motto of our glorious traditions. Ethnic tribal nationalism can be considered as a kind of cultural revivalism. Every ethnic movement in the North-East Bharat generally stimulates its ethnicity, re-defines and standardizes its cultural expression and also creates new set of cultural affinity. Karbi Anglong is the meeting place of diverse tribal cultures and traditions. Today, Karbi Anglong has become a sweet home to Karbi, Kochari, Bodo, Dimas, Rengma, Assamese and many other communities where they take breathe with mutual co-existence as brothers and sisters. All tribals living in the Karbi Hills have their own distinctive language, culture and tradition, although Assamese is the principal language of the state of Assam. For revival of our glorious tradition of peaceful co-existence, we should try to respect the glorious past of all

ethnic tribal cultures, customs and traditions.

Our glorious civilization, cultural distinctiveness and religious beliefs can provide sufficient opportunity to reviving our glorious past. The very ethos of love for humanity and peaceful co-existence can play a pivotal role for revitalizing the glorious peaceful co-existence of different communities in the North-East Bharat. We should try to encourage the tribal people to work harder for developing the traditional native skills, so that, they can improve the standard of their livelihood. They should apply new scientific methods for reviving their glorious traditions as per provisions of the constitutional rights which are required to be implemented in a right way and in a good spirit effectively.

Without education, no development can take place in the backward ethnic tribal dominated areas of North-east Bharat. Education is key spine for transformation of the poor and backward communities without which the rapid transformation of social and economic status of tribal people cannot pick up in the hills region. Primary education, good sanitation, good road communication, improved medical and health care, etc. should be provided with zero tolerance of corruption, so that, rapid transformation of progress can take place in the tribal areas.

Further, by improving their traditional institutions, socio-political set up and other economic reforms, the quality of their living standard can be improved. More than that, they can try how to restore their own glorious traditions and culture like – religious beliefs, age old customary laws and traditional festivals with certain additions and modifications with modern outlook to be incorporated in a scientific manner as per requirements of the time. They should try to restore their racial affinity, demographic

characteristics, age old economy, and tribal native skills for earning their livelihood. In order to restore their glorious tradition of peaceful co-existence, they have to restore traditional institutions, Village Councils or 'Mei' in the Karbi Society. For giving rural employments to the local unemployed youths and villagers, the traditional 'Batchelors' Dormitory', (Jirkedam), may be restored in the Karbi Society as a social movement for self sufficiency and economic liberty through which they can earn their livelihood smilingly. Moreover, the tradition of age old Gramin Bank (Kerung Amei), various tribal festivals and traditional tribal dresses including tribal ornaments and tribal dance and music should be restored, so that, they can feel proud of their own glorious past cultures and traditions. Above and all, all the tribal children living in the hills must get the light of modern education without which no nation can prosper in the North-East Bharat.

The Karbis are living within the jurisdiction of the Karbi Anglong district since time immemorial. They have got their own

Autonomous District Council which was created on 23rd June 1952. The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council is managed by the elected representatives of their own people through electoral process. In fact, the people of Karbi Anglong Autonomous District have been managing their own affairs of administration since 23rd June 1952 and they have a greater role to play in the planning and development process of their socio-economic life. There is a high hope of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council to play a pivotal role of progression and will surely enable them to develop themselves according to their own glorious tradition for establishing of peaceful co-existence in the North- East Bharat in the future as well.

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MATRIMONIAL RELATIONS OF THE AHOM KINGS WITH DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES OF NORTH EAST INDIA

Tinamoni Rajkumari

Marriage is one of the universal social institutions. It is one of the complex involvements of human relationships. But the marital relation between men and women are not the same as we see in the present scenario. As we can say marriage as an institution evolving over the time. The perception of marriage is different from society to society and caste to caste. In the Ahom period their matrimonial relations were mostly motivated by the political factors. The Ahoms did not bring any women when they migrate to the Brahmaputra valley. Therefore they had to marry with the daughters of the local tribes. The practice of polygamy was normal in the Ahom period. The Ahom kings in order to maintain a good political relations with the neighbouring tribes had kept matrimonial relations with them.

The marital relations of the Ahom kings reflect not only its political, diplomatic relation but also it provides valuable information about the social cultural relations of the Ahom kings with the other tribes. Due to political reason the Ahom kings had maintained matrimonial relations with Moran, Borahi Kamatapur, Gauda, Mughal, Koch Behar, Darrang, Jayantia, Kachari, Naga, Nora, Manipur. This paper aims to study the relationship between the Ahom and other communities from the view of matrimonial relationships among them. This paper also attempts to study the impact of

matrimonial relations on the state formation process of the Ahom territory.

Matrimonial relations with the Moran and Barahis :

Sukapha the leading monarch of the Ahom kingdom migrated to Brahmaputra Valley in 1228 A.D. It is said that Sukapha on his journey to Brahmaputra valley was accompanied by a few nobles, a few hundred followers, two elephants and 300 horses. Interestingly his group did not bring any women with them. At that time the Marans and Barahis inhabited the region between the Dikhau and Dichang river. Sukapha subjugated them with peace and conciliation. It was Sukapha who in order to make a sound relation with the Moran and Barahis he married four daughters of Thamithuma¹.

Matrimonial Relations with Kamatapur :

Sukapha was succeeded by Sukhrangpha. During his reign he engaged in war with the king of Kamatapur. It is said that the Kamata king in order to make a friendly relation with the Ahom king gave his daughter Rajoni in marry with the Ahom king. But it is recorded in the Assam Buranji of Harakanta Baruah Sadar Amin that Sukhangpha was married to two daughters of Kamata king, the elder one was Rajoni and the younger one was Bhajoni². But according to other

chronicles it was Sudangpha the grandson of Sukhangpha who got married with Bhajoni.

Sudangpha alias Bamuni Konwar (1397-1407 A.D.) got married to Khuntai, the daughter of Tipam Raja. But she had an affair with Taichulai who falsely made a complain to the King of Mukong (Nara State) that in Assam the king was not belonging from a Royal clan, which resulted in war between the two states. But due to the intervention of the two ministers of both states the matter was concluded by a treaty. Taichulai having failed in his motive sought help from the King of Kamatapur, but he also refused to do so. Instead the Kamata king made friendship with the Ahoms by giving his daughter Bhajoni in marry to the Ahom king³. But in the Buranji of Raibahadur Gohaiyinboruah and Harakanta Barua Sadar Amin it is mentioned that the son of Rajoni, Chaopulai or Taochulai conspired against the king as he could not become king⁴.

Matrimonial relations with the Kacharis :

Another marital relations of the Ahom kingdom with the local tribe of the Brahmaputra valley was occurred during the reign of Suhanpha (1488-93 A.D.) The Ahom king as a result of the defeat at the battle with Kacharis he concluded a treaty and gave an Ahom princess with two elephants and other female slaves to the Kachari King⁵. As a result the Kachari king gave Marangi region to the Ahom king. Another marital relation established between the Ahoms and the Kacharis during the reign of Ahom king Pratap singha and the Kachari king Bhimbal Narayan. When Bengal invader Sayad Abu Bakar invaded Assam and proceeded towards Bharali. The Ahom king in order to keep the Kacharis in his hand send envoys to his court to make a friendly relation. Amicable relations were established between the two courts.

Bhimabal Narayan claimed for an Ahom damsel. Accordingly he was called to Singhaduwar and Saopet Buragohain was sent to him to give the daughter of Charingiya Handique. But Bhimbal Narayan did not come, hence the Ahom king sent an Ahom girl through the hands of Sitoliya Katak. The Kachari king accepted her⁶.

Matrimonial Relations with the Nagas :

During the reign of Suhungmung Dihingiya Raja (1497-1539 A.D) we find mention of marital relation between the Ahoms and the Nagas. Dihingiya Raja gave a serious defeat to the Aitoniya Nagas and the Naga king signed a treaty with the Ahom king by giving a daughter to the Ahom king. In the Account of J.P. Wade it is mentioned that the Naga king gave four princess belonging from higher dynasty and six elephants to the Ahom king Dihingiya Raja. Another matrimonial relations with the Nagas took place during the reign of Ahom king Gadadhar Singha. Gadadhar Singha sent Tancheng Phukan to fight against the Nagas, but Phukan could not find them. Then after a few days the Nagas discussed with the Phukan and they agreed to give two princess along with female slaves to the Ahom king⁷. But there is no evidence to prove either the Ahom king married to them or not.

Matrimonial Relations with Manipur:

The first marital relation between the Manipur state and the Ahom kingdom also occurred during the regime of the Dihingiya raja. The Ahom king gave a girl named Khukdang of the Lanmakhru khel to the Manipur King and the later king also gave a princess to the Ahom king. It is considered as the first matrimonial relations with Manipur⁸. Another matrimonial relations between two kingdom took place when the Manipuri king received help from the Ahom king Rajeswar Singha in 1768 A.D to drove away the

Burmese from his state. As a sign of gratitude the Manipuri king Jaysingha gave his daughter Kuranganayani to the Ahom king. Those who accompanied with the Manipuri princess were established at Magolukhat. Sir E. Gait mentions that after the death of Rajeswar Singh his brother Lakhmisingha took her as his consort. But when Moamoriays occupied the Ahom state their leader Ragha Moran took Kuranganayani and other consorts of the two kings. But Kuranganayani with the help of royal soldiers killed Ragha Maran and saved the Ahom kingdom⁹. Dr. J. P. Wade also mentions two Manipuri Princess Bhuvaneshawari and Rupavatee, who were married to Ahom king Rajeshwar Singha. Rai Chaheb Golap Barua mentioned that Ahom King Laksmi Singha married to the daughter of the elder brother of Manipuri princess Kuranganayani¹⁰.

Matrimonial Relations with Chutiyas:

Dr. J.P. Wade in his “An Account of Assam” narrated that there was a serious conflict between the Chutiyas and the Ahoms. In the year 1513A.D. Dhirnarayan of the Chutiya dynasty proceeded towards the mouth of the Dikhou river but he fled away when the Ahom king sent Saooseekhen and Taomoorelung. Dhirnarayan followed another way when the Ahom king returned to Dihing after the occupation of Habung and Panbari. The Chutiya king fled to Dihingmukh and then to Dibru. The Ahom king sent Taosoong and Keelong to catch him. After celebrating Rikkhavan ceremony the Ahom king accompanied by a group of military man proceeded towards the mouth of Sesa river. The Chutiya king fled to Ladhoopurrah and then reached Sadiya. Finally, the Chutiya king offered a proposal and in this regard he send gifts consisting of two golden necklace, two ivory mat

and some valuable goods. But when the Ahom king was informed about this matter he made demand to the Chutiya King for the Kuber given property, the golden throne, golden flag and the golden cat and Chuitiya queen with ten elephants. But the Chutiya king agreed only to give Chutiya queen with ten elephants and refused to send the Kuber given property and sent two golden worked cloth, two japi (hat), two pair of golden bracelet, two pair of golden worked paizar, two elephant, two ivory made mat, two horse and two knives inside the mat. When it was informed to the Ahom king that two knives were sent inside the mat, it was described as a sign of the enmity. The Ahom king sent army to destroy the Chutiya king. Accordingly the Chutiya king and his son met death and the Chutiya queen killed herself with a spear. After the battle the entire Chutiya country was annexed with the Ahom kingdom and a new official known as Sadiyakhwa Gohain was appointed to administer Sadiya¹¹.

Matrimonial Relations with the Koch Kingdom:

It was recorded in the Buranjis that Sukhampha or Khora Raja (1552-1603) engaged in war with the Koch kingdom but he had lost the battle at the hands of Naranarayan. But in the meantime Chilarai the Koch general was imprisoned in the hands of the Padshah of Gaur. Naranarayan then proposed for a peaceful alliance with the Ahoms to avert the coming danger from the Muslim invaders. Hence the Koch king sent a Koch princess to the Ahom King Sukhampha in order to maintain a good relation. In the Purni Asom Buranji it is recorded that Koch king Raghudev gave his daughter Maongoldoi to the Ahom king Pratap Singha. But according to the Buranji of Rai Bahadur Gohainbaruah after the end of the battle with the Kacharis, the Koch king

Parikshitnarayan in order to protect his territory from the Mughal invasion made a friendly relation with the Ahom king by giving his daughter Mongoldoi to the Ahom king¹².

Matrimonial Relations with the Nara State:

In 1524 A.D the Nara king entered the Bardeuniya village and indulged in war with the Ahoms. As he lost in the battle he gave in marriage his sister Bangkhamdang to the Ahom king Suhungmung to maintain good relations with the Ahom kingdom. Another marital relation of Nara kingdom with the Ahoms took place during the reign of Sukhampha or Khura Raja (1552-1611A.D). In the year 1576 A.D the Nara king invaded Assam. But the both party signed treaty instead of war. According to the treaty the Ahom king agreed to give 16000 rupees and the Nara king agreed to give his daughter to the Ahom king, but he gave his sister¹³. But the Deodhai Assam Buranji mentions that there was not any conflict between the Ahoms and the Nara king. But when the Nara king Mantara invaded the country the Ahom king fled to Khamjang and erected a fort at Pengera and send a marriage proposal to the Nara king through the Sirings and offered valuable presents. The Nara king accepted the proposal and gave his sister in marriage to the Ahom king along with one elephant, one horse, forty female slaves and other goods as dowry from Khamdang¹⁴.

Matrimonial Relations with the Jayantia State:

It was king Pratap Singha who first came into contact with the Jayantiyas. Dr. J. P. Wade mentions that the Kachari King Yasanarayan seized the Jayantiya King Dhanamanik along with his family members. But after the death of Dhanamanik his son Yasamanik was declared king and his mother and his consort were freed from the clutch of the Kachari king, but his sister was

kept with them. The Jayantia king Yasamanik in order to take revenge on the Kacharis cultivated friendly relations with the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-41) by contracting a marriage alliance. But in the Kachari chronicles it is mentioned that Kachari King Yasanarayan occupied the Jayantia state and the Jayantiya king Dhanamanik, his consort and his son were made war captive. After the death of Dhanamanik his son Yasamanik was made the King, but the queen of king Dhanamanik and his military men were not freed. The Jayantia King in order to make him free from the Kachari king agreed to give a daughter to the Ahom king if he was able to come across the Kachari state. But the Kachari king refused to give permission. The Ahom king ordered the Gohain to invade the Kachari state. In the meantime the Kachari king offered a proposal on the basis of which the Gohain made demand for Pabana elephant and Bhimbal Konwar. The Kachari king prayed for some days to arrange the demands. But at that time the Gohain came to know that the Ahom king had an affair with his wife taking advantage of the war. This incident made him heartbroken and consequently the Kacharis declared independence¹⁵. Another marital relations with the Jayantiyas as recorded by Dr. J. P. Wade that Darrangi king Indranarayan brought the daughter of Jayantiya King, Kampeswari to the Ahom king. But it is not known clearly who was the father of Kampeswari and to whom she was married. As mentioned in the Buranji of Rai Bahadur Gohainbarua the Ahom king appointed the Darrang king Indranarayan as Zamindar at the age of 5 .and he remained the Zaminder from 1682 to 1725 A.D. As we know Gadahar Singha ruled from 1681-96, Rudra Singha from 1696-1714 and Siva Singha from 1714-44. In the Tungkhungiya Buranji it is mentioned that

Gadadahr Singha after ascending the throne made the two Naga princess and the daughter of Paniphukan the chief consort. King Siva Singha gave the responsibility of his state to his three queens. Hence it can be presumed that it was probably Rudra Singha who married Kampeswari. Another source from Sir E.A. Gait reveals that during the reign of King Rudra Singha Kachari King Tamradhvaj declared independence and Barbarua was sent through the Dhansiri river along with 37,000 army and Paniphukan through the Raha and Kapili river along with 34,000 army to subjugate the Kachari king. Both of the Ahom General occupied the Kachari capital, Maibong. Kachari king fled to Bikrampur and sought help from Jayantia king Ramsingha. But Barbarua felt sick and he died at Demera. Paniphukan also returned to the Ahom king in his call. Taking the opportunity the Jayantia king kept the Kachari king under his confinement. The Kachari king somehow managed to send message to the Ahom king about his capture and sought his help. The Ahom king with the help of Barbarua and Barphukan took over the Jayantia state. The panic stricken Jayantia king discharged the Kachari king to the Barbarua and made his submission to the Ahom king. Both were presented in the court of the Ahom king and both king made their submission in front of the Ahom king. Kachari king was allowed to go his country. Jayantiya King died of dysentery. The son of Jayantia king was made the king and he gave two of his sisters in marriage to the Ahom king¹⁶.

Impact of marriage relations in society and polity:

The marital relations had a great impact on polity as well as society. As we say whenever the Ahoms come into contact with other tribes due to marital relations they had experienced a different culture.

They not only assimilate with them politically but also culturally and adopted new culture. Hence a kind of cultural exchange was occurred between the different communities. What is more important about the marital relation at that time it was used as weapon to alleviate the gulf between two parties. No doubt with the Matrimonial relations both state or community had some benefits like economically, politically, culturally and socially.

The matrimonial relations had a great impact on the Ahom state formation. It was not possible to the Ahom king Sukapha to build a state with the few man power he accompanied during his journey to Assam. Hence Sukapha by maintaining friendly relations consolidated the state power. They assimilated with the local tribes and community. A process of Ahomization by assimilating the local tribes into the Ahom community. Those whom the Ahom subjugated supplied various goods to the Ahom state. It is also mention worthy that each tribe had their unique style of livelihood, their agriculture, skills, technology differ from each other which strengthened the Ahom Administration. The Ahom kingdom accumulated different kind of commodities from different tribes. Those who were vassal king to the Ahom kingdom made regular supply of revenue both in cash and kind. Hence it made the Ahom territory economically strong. Moran and Borahis were the first tribe with whom Sukapha first came into contact. He subjugated Moran and Borahis and established marital relations with them. In the Buranjis it is metioned that the Ahom king appointed Moran as wood supplier and to look after the garden and the Borahis were appointed as woodcutter, Changmai (cook), Bharali (treasurer) and Bej (Physician)¹⁷. During the reign of Ahom king Sukhampha (1552-1603) he established a friendly

relation with the Nara king by marrying his daughter. Through this marriage he acquired one thousand Nara Bailing or Nara konwar as dowry with the princess. We also find mention that the Manipuri princess Kuranganayani who was married to Ahom king Rajeshwar Singha, brought with her a number of Manipuri people and they were established at Mogolukhat by the king. From the Buranjis it can be known that through the marriage relation the Ahom kings received a huge amount of valuable goods as dowry with the bride such as gold, pearls, ivory goods, precious metal made tools, weapons, animals, food items etc. Thus the Ahom state acquired not only man power but also they received valuable goods as dowry through the marital relations.

From political perspective the marriage relation were used to mitigate the gulf between the two rival parties. Sometimes in order make alliance with other ruling power against the enemy the Ahoms or other tribes established friendly relations through marriage. On the other hand sometimes defeated king made submission by offering marriage proposal and agreed to live as a tributary king.

The matrimonial relationship of the Ahoms with other communities of North East India is very important from socio cultural point of view. It was not possible for the Ahom kings to build the large Ahom territory without the cooperation of the other ruling tribes. The Ahom state did not form by the few people whom Sukapha accompanied with him, it was formed by the assimilation of different tribes and communities with the Ahom. Through marriage relations different cultured people came into the fold of the Ahoms. Hence it brought a revolution in the field of agriculture, economy, technology, dress pattern, food habits and livelihood etc.

In the Ahom period it was more important to protect the dignity of one's own territory, that is why we see that whenever situation demanded the princess or royal lady sacrificed themselves for the sake of the country. For instance we can mention about Chao Ching Kunwari, Ramani Gavoru, Jaimoti, Kuranganayani they played important role for the sake of the country. Ramani Gavoru was given marriage to the Mughal emperor when the Ahom lost at the hands of the Mughal invaders. Jaimoti Kunwori, consort of Ahom King Gadadhar Singha sacrificed herself to protect her husband and the country. But when we critically observe those marital relations we see that women were used at that time in the name of the country. The women of royal family were treated as property by the state. They were forced to marry against their will. Also the practice of polygamy in the Ahom society reduced their social status. These practices were really inhuman.

From the above discussion it appears that the matrimonial relations of the Ahoms with other communities had tremendous social and political impact. ■

Notes and References:

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² S.K. Bhuyan, *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, DHAS, Gauhati, Assam, p.96.

³ E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, EBH Publishers (India) Guwahati-1, Reprint 2017, p.85.

⁴ S.K. Bhuyan, *Deodhai Assam Buranji* DHAS, Gauhati, Assam, fourth edition 2001, p.12.

⁵ E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, EBH Publishers (India) Guwahati-1, Reprint 2017, p.86.

⁶ Dr. J. P. Wade, *An Account of Assam*,

Benudahr Sharma(ed.), North Lakhimpur, 1927, pp.73-74.

⁷ S.K.Bhuyan, *Tungkhungiya Buranji*, DHAS, Gauhati, fourth edition, 2012, p.26.

⁸ Sarbananda Rajkumar, *Itihase Soaura Chasabata Bosor*, Banalata Publication , third edition, 2017, p.89.

⁹ E.A.Gait, *A History of Assam*, EBH Publishers (India) Guwahati-1, Reprint 2017, p.197.

¹⁰ Dr. J. P. Wade, *An Account of Assam*, Benudhar Sharma (ed.), North Lakhimpur, 1927, p.150.

¹¹ E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, EBH Publishers (India) Guwahati-1, Reprint 2017, pp. 88-89; *Itihase Soaura Chasabata Bosor*, Banalata Publication, third edition, 2017, p.91.

¹² P. N. Gohain Barua, *Asamar Buranji*, reprint gauhati, 1976, p.89.

¹³ E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, EBH Publishers (India) Guwahati-1, Reprint 2017, p.104.

¹⁴ S. K. Bhuyan, *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, DHAS, Gauhati, Assam, Fourth edition 2001, p.41.

¹⁵ S. K. Bhuyan, *Kachari Buranji*, DHAS, fourth edition 2010 , p, S. K. Bhuyan, *Satsori Asom Buranji*, Bani Mandir, second edition, 2014, p.77.

¹⁶ E.Gait, *A History of Assam*, EBH Publishers (India) Guwahati-1, Reprint 2017, pp. 177-185.

¹⁷ S. Rajkumar, *Itihase Soaura Chasabata Bosor*, Banalata Publication,third edition,2017, p.52.

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INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONS OF THE KOCH-RAJBANGSHIS OF NORTH-EAST BHARAT

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Introduction:

North-East Bharat is a paradise of numerous *janajati* and *non-janajati* communities with their own distinctive languages, cultures, and traditions. Despite their characteristic differences, these communities have, since time immemorial, sustained a consistent and cohesive inter-community relation and built a solid bond of harmony through effective systems of communication for generations. The effective systems of communication had continued through various channels, such as matrimony, trade and other social transactions. The people living in hill areas have had constant business relations with their counterparts living in the plains. It is said that, the present city of Guwahati had once been an important market for betel-nuts. (Etymologically, 'Guwahati' consists of two Rajbangshi words: *guwa* means betel-nut and *hati* means market; hence market of betel-nuts). The Khasis from the hills used to come down to Guwahati to buy betel-nuts and thereafter betel-nuts came into being in the hill areas. This apart, the famous Joonbeel Mela, a three-day annual indigenous Tiwa community (a plains tribe) fair based on barter system, held at a historic place known as Dayang Belguri at Joonbeel, three kms from Jagiroad in the district of Morigaon of Assam and 32 kms from Guwahat, is a testimony to the long-standing multi-community social

gathering and trade relations between the people of the hills and the plains. The theme of the Mela is harmony and brotherhood among the indigenous Assamese communities and the tribes scattered in the North-East Bharat.

Understanding Inter-community Relations and Co-existence:

If one looks back through the pages of history, it would become evident that relations between different communities often have been characterised by conspiracy, cruelty, invasion and dominance that might lead to physical and linguistic enslavement, forced conversion, and genocide, etc. On the other hand, relations between communities, according to Kriesberg (2012), have also been characterised by respectful co-existence, equitable opportunities, and shared governance. It is a fact that relations based on mutual understanding, respectful co-existence and shared responsibilities are more durable than those cosmetic relations, based on coercion and well-thought hidden plans. History also testifies that influx of refugees from one territory to another with their strong socio-cultural and linguistic base has shifted and rather transformed the traditional socio-cultural and linguistic patterns of ethnic communities to a great extent. Thus, traditional communities become easily susceptible to the linguistic and social conversion of the culturally dominant migrant groups.

However, inter-community relations are not always static. Sometimes they become increasingly oppressive at times and increasingly equitable at other times. Generally, there are two factors: internal and external that contributes to the dynamic character of inter-community relations. Though human relations have a chequered past, the relations based on love, respect and mutual understanding are always long-lasting.

Human beings are basically peace-loving by nature. They make human relations with one another to love and to get loved, creating an atmosphere of safety, security, and confidence. Peoples, communities and societies are not unitary entities and this is increasingly felt in the twenty-first century. Humans are not complete in isolation. They are interdependent. To get smooth sailing in the day-to-day affairs of life, they must be on the networks of human relations.

As far as co-existence is concerned, as Weiner (1998) opines, it generally refers to an accommodation between people of different communities, who live together in an environment free from physical violence against one another. Co-existence, however, is not possible if one fails to have a sense of mutual tolerance and even respect. Apart from such personal considerations, individuals have to have an understanding that, great differences in economic conditions and political power likely to indicate that one group dominates another and the accommodation is not symmetrical. Hence, asymmetry in accommodations and unilateral imposition are usually regarded as impediments towards achieving peaceful co-existence.

The Backdrop:

The indigenous and tolerant Koch-Rajbangshi community is found not only in Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, and Bihar, but also in other countries, i.e., Bangladesh, Nepal, and

Bhutan. It is the largest trans-border ethnic community in South Asia. The community enjoys different social status in different states within Bharat. While they are categorised as OBC in Assam, their counterpart is recognised as SC in West Bengal, ST in Meghalaya. The Koch-Rajbangshis in Assam are tagged as Assamese; however, they are classed as Bengali in West Bengal. Thus, it is a single community with multiple identities. Though the emergence of modern nation States has divided this group of people into provinces and nations, yet their shared history, culture and many commonalities still tie them.

The present article is a humble effort to delineate the amicable and harmonious nature of the Koch-Rajbangshis in maintaining their inter-community relations over the years and the challenges they now face in re-affirming their (co)existence in the present socio-political situations.

The Koch-Rajbangshis and Inter-community Relations:

One of the traits of the people of this community is that they live an easy-going and simple life. Since time immemorial, the community has maintained a harmonious relationship with other communities by way of matrimonial and religious ceremonies. The people of this community cannot easily answer in the negative if anyone comes for help. They believe in peaceful co-existence with other communities. They are usually the people with a secular frame of mind. This can be supported with the following instances available in the history of the Koch kingdom.

In the first half of the 15th century, the Koch king, Biswa Sinha, the father of Naranarayan and Chilarai, had a council of 12 ministers in his kingdom who were drawn from 12 different major tribal families. The king maintained inter-

community relations by getting into marital relations with eighteen women of seven different regions such as Nepal, Gaur, Kamrupa, Kashmir, Kashi, Sonitpur, and Mithila. History also reveals that, Chilarai too entered into marital relationships with several women of different places. Out of them, the most prominent is his inter-caste marriage with Bhubaneswari Devi, alias Kamala Priya, daughter of Ramray, who was the cousin of Srimanta Sankardeva. The marriage was held at Satrasal, now in the district of Dhubri of Assam, bordering the Indo-Bangladesh international border, in the physical presence of Sankardeva. Thus, the marriage between the Koch General and the Kayastha girl took place. Moreover, Sankardeva, too, had approved the inter-caste marriage system in those days. Similarly, the princess, Gayatri Devi (1919-2009), daughter of Maharaja Jitendra Narayan of the Koch Kingdom, got married to Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II of Jaipur, Rajasthan. She became the third Maharani consort of Jaipur from 1940 to 1949. It is pertinent to mention here that the mother of the princess, Gayatri Devi was a Maratha princess, Indira Raje of Baroda, the only daughter of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III.

Apart from the above historical accounts, the members of the present Rajbangshi community are still found maintaining inter-community relationship by getting married to the members of other communities. The matrimonial relationship of this community usually takes place with the Khasis of Meghalaya, Bodos, Bengalis and other indigenous communities of Assam and West Bengal. In this regard, the people of this community are very flexible and open-ended.

In addition to matrimony, the people of this community have always sustained a harmonious relationship with other communities through religious, cultural, and other social events.

According to the Rajbangshis, the shrines of various gods and goddess are not only the holy places of worship, but also the place of opportunities for understanding and sharing each other, thus widening the circle of brotherhood, love, and trust among communities. They believe that such holy places of worship solidify and intensify their intra-and inter-community relations, promoting inter-cultural harmony. The Bishuwa, the annual community festival of the Koch-Rajbangshis, is one such unifying factor towards integrating inter-community relations.

The Rajbangshi songs, popularly known as Goalpariya folk songs, have always bonded the hearts of the people of this region, irrespective of their community, because of their universality. The songs sung by the masses across the communities reflect the common feelings, emotions, and aspirations of the people. The inner and subtle meaning of the songs touches upon everyone's heart that softens it from its core, thus guiding the spiritual journey and giving the ultimate truth of human life.

Question of Co-existence:

The discussion made so far sounds agreeable in the sense that, right from the times of the Koch kingdom to the present times, the people of this community have believed in the inclusive ecosystem of harmonious co-existence. However, the present socio-economic and political situation for this community, which had once ruled the Koch Kingdom (Kamatapur) from the 15th century till merging with the Dominion of India in 1949, encompassing a huge part of Assam and West Bengal, is now quite adverse to their efforts in keeping up their existence and ethnic identity. The situation has reached to such an extent that it often raises an interrogative mark over their rightful demands for existence.

Since the independence of Bharat, the Koch-Rajbangshi community has been struggling to uphold their socio-cultural, linguistic and historical identity. After the merger of the Koch Kingdom with the Dominion of India in 1949 and its subsequent split into Assam and West Bengal, as a result of reorganisation of Indian States in 1956, the corrosion to the Koch-Rajbangshi language and culture and the obliteration of its history ceremoniously started. The Koch-Rajbangshis became the worst sufferers due to separation of their homeland and finally became the victims of identity crisis. The erstwhile integrated Koch-Rajbangshi community came to be segregated into the Assamese and the Bengali, thus losing their own language, culture, and history. Today, the socio-cultural and historical identities of the Koch-Rajbangshis are getting wrapped with a black shroud after its failure to get a due recognition from the academia of Assam and West Bengal.

As already mentioned above, if efforts are ever made to assert the socio-cultural, linguistic and historical identity of the community, a section of the mainstream society of Assam appears to raise their question mark over their claims. The hegemonic attitudes of a section of them become clear from the writings of one of the intellectuals and media personalities Shri Bedabrat Bora (2013). He is of the view that, the people of the Koch-Rajbangshi community have been residing in Assam as second class citizens amongst the Assamese (Bora, 2013, p. 142). He further says that, the (high) caste Hindus of Assam look upon the Koch-Rajbangshis with a repulsive and aversive attitude towards them. They do not enjoy a respectable position in the Assamese society. The message Shri Bora wants to convey is that the Koch-Rajbangshis are not native of the land and they are at the lowest position in the social strata.

If this is the state of affairs as Shri Bora opines, Weiner's (1998) theory is highly applicable here in terms of accommodation of the Koch-Rajbangshis in the present socio-cultural setup of Assam. The Koch-Rajbangshis should now understand afresh that, they are no longer an indigenous community of Assam and therefore, a serious interrogative mark is sure to emerge over their claim to be the son of the soil. As Shri Bora means to say, so it can be understood that the desire of the Koch-Rajbangshis to exist and co-exist with other communities is similar to begging for fair accommodation in Assam. And, if this unfortunately happens to be the general attitude of the people of Assam towards this community, will it encourage the community to integrate into the mainstream society of Assam? Isn't such an attitude responsible for pulling back the Rajbangshis from sustaining cohesive and inter-community relations in North-East Bharat? This could possibly be one of the reasons why the peaceful co-existence often suffers a setback in North-East Bharat. It is high time; they sat together to repair broken bonds and fill up the deficit in relations.

Misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the socio-cultural identity of the Koch-Rajbangshis have silently played as a stumbling block in the recognition of this community in the North-East Bharat. Until recently, the Koch-Rajbangshis were considered Bengalis and sometimes as Bangladeshis given their linguistic and cultural affinities with the Bengalis. However, due to ethnic movements undertaken by various students and parents organisations demanding ST status and separate State, they are now gradually recognised as one of the indigenous communities of Assam and West Bengal.

As far as the linguistic existence is concerned, the language spoken by the Koch-Rajbangshis is

still narrowly regarded as Goalparia by the mainstream society of Assam. However, the educated and conscious Rajbangshis vehemently oppose this move, terming it an attempt to obliterate the linguistic identity of the community. While the language is spoken by the Koch-Rajbangshis inhabiting in the major part of lower Assam and the entire North Bengal, there is no justification to identify this language and the large linguistic group only by a name of a district of Assam.

The Koch-Rajbangshis are deprived of co-existence in relation to their representation in the academic space of Assam. It is needless to mention that, it was the Koch King Naranarayana (Malladev) at whose instance; his brother Generalissimo Chilarai (Sukladhvaj) reconstructed the Kamakhya Temple in 1565 AD. This apart, the Koch King and his brother provided a safe haven to the Vaisnavite saint-scholar Srimanta Sankardeva in their kingdom from where the Mahapurusha carried out his literary and religious activities, and later they set up a family relationship with that of Sankardeva. It is unfortunate that, the history of the Koch Kings and their kingdom hardly find an adequate space in the academia of Assam, for which the growing generations are made unaware of the glorious history of the Koch Kings and the kingdom.

According to Weiner (1998), if great differences in economic conditions and political power are the indicators of asymmetrical accommodation in a society towards achieving co-existence, then the Koch-Rajbangshis are deprived of symmetrical accommodation in Assam. Examples are galore in support of this. The demand for ST status of the Koch-Rajbangshis has remained unfulfilled for the last more than six decades. The demand for

constitutional safeguard of their socio-economic, political, cultural and linguistic identities through ST status has brought nothing for the community, except lies and deception from the successive governments at the centre. Besides, the constant oppositions from the current ST communities towards according the same status to the Koch-Rajbangshis have added further woes to the community. Such repeated deceptions from the government and the constant resistance from the communities have created a lot of dissatisfaction and grievance among the Koch-Rajbangshis which will definitely pull them back from associating with other communities, creating an undesirable social environment of animosity and resentment among them.

The Chilarai Park at Amingaon in Guwahati, constructed almost six decades ago, had to face repeated encroachments, recently. Encroachment by the government authority upon the park, preceded by a private Construction Company, by setting up a Police Watch-Post inside it, has posed a serious threat to the historical identity of the community. However, the encroachments are now supposed to be cleared from the park after the intervention of the Hon'ble court.

Conclusion:

To maintain a harmonious and healthy co-existence among the different communities of North-East Bharat, it has been imperative for each and every individual to sustain a respectful and mutual understanding with a forbearing attitude with one another. In order to cultivate and harvest reciprocal altruism and inter-community understanding with tolerance, they must study each other's real history that might help them to learn each other's past better. Study of each other's history has the potential to rediscover their present that can dispel their misunderstandings towards forming a harmonious society, based on

brotherhood and interactive peaceful co-existence among all the communities of this region. ■

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INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONS OF NORTH EAST BHARAT - PAST AND PRESENT

Sumneibul Hrangkhoh

The present scenario of inter community relations of the Northeast Bharat is not good. The existence of different insurgent groups, frequent occurrence of ethnic clashes, absence of matrimonial alliance, religious intolerances, absence of social get togethers and cultural exchange programmes, lack of Lingua-Franca (common language) and economic backwardness are some of the main problems.

The existence of different insurgency groups has hampered the inter community relationship of the Northeast Bharat, because their modus operandi seems to be on communal lines. They have no common political goal and welfare objectives for the people of the region. As a result of this frequent ethnic clashes between the communities are taking place, such as the Naga-Kuki conflicts of 1990's, the Dimasa-Hmar conflicts of 2003 and so on. In this respect, Manipur, the small state of Northeast Bharat have faced the worst.

In the past, the people of this region had faced the same fate under the regimes of different kings and fiefdoms. Killing, conquering and looting were the main occupation of the kings of the past. During the days of Rajas some matrimonial alliances did take place to promote good relationship and understanding, but now-a-days matrimonial alliances among the people of Northeast are in a diminishing trend which is not

a good sign for a healthy society. Moreover, communalism also stands as an obstacle in this regards.

Religious differences are another drawback for poor relationship among the people of Northeast Bharat. The entire region is dominated by three major religious groups i.e the Hindus, the Christian and the Muslims. The Hindus are the largest majority population. There are Hindus among both non-tribal and tribals, viz., the Bengali, Bihari, Assamese, Bodo, Dimasa, Rieng, Karbi, Mishing, Rabha, Ahom, Hrangkhoh, Halam, Debbarma, Nepali etc. They have different faiths, beliefs and practices. Further, many of them does not have any sacred or holy book. They have no common religious prayer and practices. As a result the Hindus are divided community. Under such circumstances, the Hindus are the weakest section of the society in respect of religion. The present status of the Hindus of Northeast region is far from satisfactory. Now it has become a cause of grave concern for the Hindu Tribal people because large numbers of its population has embraced Christianity as their religion. This unabated religious conversion is still a menace for the indigenous people of the region. The religious unity of the Muslims of Northeast region is also not less than other parts of the country. The illegal migrants or intruders from Bangladesh is a threat to the demography of Northeast India specially

of the areas bordering Bangladesh where indigenous people are becoming minority day by day. Such is the status of Tripura. So it is a matter of serious concern for the people of this region.

Moreover, linguistic differences are also other important factors for the poor inter community relationship. It has no Lingua-Franca (common-language). It is also known that nearly 220 different languages are spoken in the Northeast Bharat. It is a mix of Tibetan, South East Asian and East Indian Cultures. The region is mainly comprised of 8 (eight) principal linguistic states. They are Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim. In order to bring the gaps of good communal harmony, cultural exchange programme, conferences, community fests etc. should be organized on regular basis, so that, every section of the society can be involved in it for the greater interest of the country and imbibe in them the feeling of oneness.

The slow growth rate of economic enterprises and industries of the region is also a major cause of concern. Due to its backwardness, the Northeast people are moving in lakhs to different

parts of the country in search of jobs and livelihood. In spite of being rich in mineral resources the region is still neglected and their main occupation is agriculture. In business sector the percentage of indigenous people is very poor. As a result the backbone of Northeast Market is in the hands of non tribals. Another important occupation of the people of Northeast is Horticulture. It has a great market potential but due to lack of storage, marketing and publicity, it has not got its due weightage in the market as it should have. To promote Horticulture, different innovative steps should be taken like the Orange festival of Dambuk of Arunachal Pradesh. This type of initiatives will not only attract larger markets but will also promote tourism.

Last but not the least, past or present, the inter community relationship in realm of trade, business, social, political and economic endeavours seem to have remained stagnant. Irrespective of caste, creed, language and tradition; economic development is the only ray of hope for everlasting peace, prosperity, good relationship and friendly inter community relations between the people of Northeast Bharat.



RELATION OF MIRI (MISING) TRIBE WITH OTHER TRIBES OF NORTH EAST

Madhura Pegu

North east Bharat is predominantly inhabited by many distinct Tribes such as Nagas, Mizos, Khasis, Garos, Bodos, Kacharis, Mising (Miri), Adis (Abors), Karbis, Nyishis, Dimasas and many other tribes. Miris are a Tibeto-Mongolian tribe which migrated from the hills of Arunachal Pradesh to the plains of Assam. In Assam they are living in the districts of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Majuli, Biswanath, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, and in the districts of East Siang and Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh. Now-a-days many Mising families in Assam migrated from the 9 districts mentioned above to different localities like Tezpur, Guwahati, Delhi, Mumbai etc. Misings had no separate kingdom in early Chutia and Ahom Kingdoms.

According to the oral and accepted traditions amongst the Mising Tribes, initially the Pegu-Doley group from AADI (Abor) tribes migrated from a place called Pegu-Siyang of Karko-Yingkiong locality of upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. From Pegu-Siyang they migrated via Pasighat-Mebo of East Siang district to Doyit Pumi, the confluence of the rivers of Siyang, Dibong and Lohit. Thereafter they spread to Sadiya and Doyit Pumi areas such as, Dorkang, Kaplang and downwards to Dibrugarh. During that time these areas were under the Chutia Kingdom. It is believed that since the little-known Miri-Chutiya war, Miri people started co-existing peacefully. Gradually Mising tribes of Sadiya and the North

bank of Brahmaputra became parts of the Chutia Kingdom. After the downfall of the Kingdom they accepted the rule of the Ahoms.

Gradually many other groups from Pasi, Padam, Panggi, Minyong, Bori, Bokar, Milang, Galo, Tagin, Nyishi came down by different routes to plain areas of Assam and spread over both the banks of Dehus Abung (Brahmaputra) and majority on the banks of many other tributaries of the river, particularly between Arunachal hills and Brahmaputra river starting from Abor hills to Bhalukpung/Jia Bharaly. Though these groups had different “semi-tribe” identity in Arunachal hills, after migration to the plains of Assam, they all assimilated to the greater Mising tribe as belonging to the same family. So, the Mising tribe could easily play the role of mediator between the inherited Abor brothers and Ahom and the British counterpart as well. This was the reason why the Ahoms and British governments accepted Mising as Preferred subjects.

Mising people, who were associated with Trade and commerce, were known for their foremost stature in the society they belonged to. Thus the Miri society grew on both the banks of Brahmaputra. Trade and commerce were carried on river routes from Sadiya to Tezpur. Before the beginning of the British Raj, Miris started trade and commerce. Later on along with the arrival of the Biharis and Marwadis, commercial and economic activities in the region were enhanced.

Many of them started opening shops at Mising villages, which is still evident. By taking the advantage of river routes as means of cheap transportation, habitants of both the banks of Brahmaputra expanded trade and commerce in the northern part of Brahmaputra valley and hill areas of Arunachal up to Tibet. Trade items of Miri tribe were Salt, Rice, Cloths produced in Assam and chilies, ginger, honey wax, beads of different colours collected from hill areas.

Miri – Chutia Relation:

According to traditional and historical belief, before the invasion of Assam by the Ahoms, the northern part of Brahmaputra from North Lakhimpur to Sadiya was ruled by Chutias where Miris also were a part of the Chutia kingdom. During that period Miris were believed to have migrated to Chutia territory, particularly Doyit Pumi. As per tradition, there were not any notable conflict between the Miris and the Chutias. From Doyit Pumi the Miris spread to Sadiya and Dibrugarh along the banks of the rivers of Lohit and Brahmaputra. Many historical citations regarding Miri-Chutia relationship can be found. Although both the communities engaged in commercial and social activities, no evidence of Inter-caste marriage between the two communities can be found. It is said that during that time Chutias and Deoris came to know each other and started to live together as neighbours.

Miri - Deori Relation

It is believed by the Miris and Dearis that socio-economic relationships between the two communities started from the days of Chutia Kingdom. Deoris were said to be the priest of the temples situated at Kundil Nagar, the capital of the Chutia kingdom. Both the communities have been offering Puja to the temple deity. Miris and the Deoris live in raised house, popularly called Chang Ghar in Assamese. Both the tribes believe in joint family system. Hereupon, it can be assumed

that both the communities share almost similar traditions, e.g. livelihood, food habits etc except the difference of dialects. Many Mising families offer/sacrifice animals like buffalo, goats, ducks, and pigeons at the temples where Deoris were appointed as priests. Both Mising and Deori people perform Taleng Kyu/Indra Puja.

As already mentioned, Miris and Deoris share similar tradition and lifestyle, but marriage between the communities was not common. Occasionally if someone from the Miri community eloped with another from Deori community, or vice versa, then both the parties are expected to settle such marriages according to their respective clans. According to the marriage system prevalent in Mising societies there can't be marriage between people belonging to same clans of the community. For instance, a boy from Pegu clan cannot marry a girl from the same clan. Likewise among the Deoris, marriage between people from the same clan is restricted. Though Mising and Deori tribes are similar, but the origins of both the tribes are different. The Misings have more than 60 clans, all of which write their respective clan names as surname. But people from different clans of the Deori community share the same surname "Deori".

Miri - Ahom Relationship

Starting from the Ahom rule in Assam, Miri Tribes had a good relationship with the Ahoms. As neighbouring tribes Ahom rulers engaged in minor wars against Miri tribes, hill Miris and Abors (Adi) in northern boundaries. The hill Miris and Abors constantly raided plain people including Mising for beads, Yoksa On the fertile river banks of Brahmaputra River Mising Tribes became prosperous. Unlike Sonowal Kacharis, Miris engaged themselves as gold washers on Subansiri and other tributaries. The Brahmaputra River and its tributaries were inhabited by Mising tribes where a prosperous civilization grew. Trade and commerce were

carried on cheap transportation by River boats. The Misings were experts in boat making and rowing east to west and vice versa. Thus Miri tribes played important role in trade and commerce in Assam valley & Arunachal hills during Ahom Rule.

The Kahri Pegu, Rawa, pegu, Miri Handique, Samuas of Namsai, Mising Patgiris, Medhi Pegus of Lohit Mukh have similar historical past and maintained their titles offered by the Ahom Kings with pride.

The Ahom rulers engaged Miris to fight against Hill Miris and Abors (Adis) and used them as mediators. There was no bitter enmity between Miri Tribes and Ahom rulers. Ahom Kings and Miris had good relationship during the 600 years of Ahom rule. Miri people were employed to fight against Nagas and Muslim invaders as they were expert in arrow shooting and very courageous in fighting. Inter tribe marriage is not common between the Miris and the Ahoms except few cases.

Miri and Konch Kalitas

Unlike Chutias, Ahoms, Deoris and Sonowal Kacharis, Mising tribes happened to live neighbouring to Konch Kalitas. It is said that Konch-Kalitas migrated from the West of Assam where Mising tribes migrated from the North East of Arunachal hills.

Relationship between Miris, Satradhikar and Brahmins

Mising people are an ancestral cult worshiper along with adopted religions. They believe Donyi-Polo as supreme God. Donyi-Polo created benevolent Deities and malevolent deities. They worship both benevolent and malevolent (spirit) deities by offering drinks and meat by Mible Ayit Miri (priests), Ipak Miri and other experienced Miris.

After migration to Assam valley, the deployment of Miri/Mibus steadily weaned away and came under the influence Brahminical system

under Satradhikars /Sankardev's Vaisnavite movement. The Satradhikars started imparting various rituals, building of Namghar as every village enrolled Mising families under Satras. There are hundreds of Satras in Majuli and other districts, under which all Mising people joined as disciples.

Miri Sonowal Kachari Relation

Miri and Sonowal Kachari relationships are friendly and peaceful. They were neighbouring tribes and therefore their food habits are same. There is no record of war between Miri and sonowl Kacahri Tribes.

Relationship between Miri and Hill Tribes of Arunchal hills

The origin of Mising tribes belongs to hill tribes of Arunchal hills such as the so called Abors (Pasi-Padam, Menyong, Panggi) gaso, hill Miri (sarak), ghasi, Bhasi, Bori, Bokar, Milang Nishi, Tagin etc .Their traditional faith customs are same except the little difference of dialects. The language of Abor and Misings are similar to some extent. So, the Ahom rulers and British governments engaged the Mising people as mediators between Abors, hill tribes.

Inter caste Marriage

Though different tribes were living in neighbouring villages there was no inter caste marriage between Mising people and other communities. This Restriction was common to all tribes.

Trade and commerce

The Misings retained good commercial relationship with people in the plains of Assam, Arunchal hills and far north Tibet. Various valuable articles manufactured in Tibetan Belt were traded profitably.

Settlement of disputes

Inter tribe-disputes were settled by both tribes sitting together and negotiating in Kebang. ■

INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONS OF NORTH EAST BHARAT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TIRAP DISTRICT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Dr. Watsen Bangsia

Situated in the North Eastern part of India there are eight states which is considered to be the eight sisters due to their close relationship with each other since time immemorial. Each State has its own culture and tradition, dialect, belief system and religion for which this part is often considered as Mini India. North East India is rich in natural resources which have served as a source of livelihood for the people of the region since ages. More Agro-based and Forest-based industries are there than mineral based industries. Very few states of North East India is rich in mineral resources. Since time immemorial agriculture is the mainstay of the people besides hunting and fishing. People developed skills in these fields to sustain themselves and in the process learned the art of weaving, basket making, wood carvings beside various techniques of hunting and fishing. Most part of the North East is covered with hills and mountains where agriculture doesn't flourish much. Therefore, in order to sustain themselves in a difficult terrain people developed a good relationship with the neighbouring states where food products were in abundance specially the plains. The present paper is on the relationship of the people of Tirap with the neighbouring State of Assam.

In the land of rising sun Arunachal Pradesh

lies Tirap District, one of the oldest Districts of the State. It is situated in the South Eastern Part of the State. With its lush green hills and waterfalls cascading down those hills giving life to biodiversity, this land has its own unique beauty. In this beautiful District resides Nocte, Tutsa and Olo community at present after the bifurcation of Chanlang and Longding District from it. Nocte is an umbrella term under which come several groups like, Ollo, Phunsung, and Khapa. Earlier Tutsa also was under Nocte though they consider themselves different now. Hundreds of years back various communities of Tirap were not having friendly relations. Most of them were in war with each other for power and territory. The war continued for many years. The life of women folk and children were not safe as enemies used to attack the village and destroy everything. Thus, in order to protect the women, children and to guard the territory of village a group of young boys used to take turn in the 'Paang' (Dormitory) during day as well as night which still continues in some villages specially during festivals. Among the villages at Tirap two neighbouring village Saala and Thinnyan after settling down in their respective villages wanted to expand their political influence and in order to do it they started conquering villages either

through war or through other diplomatic means including matrimonial alliance. With time both the villages wanted to set their supremacy and in the process villages of the District were divided into two groups. One group came under Saala (Borduria) and the other group of people came under Thinnyan (Namsang). The relation of War continued for some years and during that period many lives were lost. During this period Tirap District was going through the dark phase where everyone was living in fear. Because of the war no development took place and people suffered from hunger and fear. War stopped completely only after the British from Assam came in the region. British wanted to establish their administration in this part but the communal war was not allowing to do so. Therefore, first thing they did was to stop the inter-village war. They with the help of Assam people called the chiefs of all villages and told them to stop the war by convincing them by telling them about the ill effects of the war. British asked the people to work for their own good instead of engaging themselves in war and slowly the war came to an end. But after the end of the war paying of Tax by people to the chiefs of Saala (Borduria) and Thinnyann (Namsang) known as 'cho-sey' or 'sey-ko' started where the allies group paid tax in the form of crops and rice beer for the so called protection they provided from the enemy villages. According to some elders the People also used to pay the tax in the name of road tax as these two villages are located on the way to Assam. 'Cho-sey' or 'Sey-koh' or tax was stopped by some educated youth of the area with the help of Government.

People after the end of communal and inter-village war started establishing a trade relationship with each other and with the plain region of Assam. Some of the villages of Nocte

like Khela, Longchang, Saala, Thinnyan, Thinpa, used to extract salt from salt well found in the area, locally known as 'Sum-Phong'. They used to trade salt with non salt producing villages within the community and with outside the community especially with Assam. During that period Barter system was popular hence people use to trade salt in exchange for rice, meat, ornaments, cloths, baskets, etc. Life in the higher altitude mainly inhabited by Olo and some Noctes is not easy due to rocky soil and hilly terrain. Crops don't grow well in rocky soil therefore people had to look for alternatives to survive. Their area is rich in bamboos and cane and thus they started using them to sustain their life through it. They made use of it to make household articles from it. With time they became expert in making Baskets and other household items with cane and Bamboo compared to middle belt and lower belt Noctes. Lower belt and middle belt Noctes need baskets and other items for storing their grains and also for their day to day life. Thus, the people of this belt used to trade the baskets and other cane and bamboo items with crops and other agricultural products. Sometimes they used to work in the field of lower belt Noctes for wages or for some amount of crops. Some villages of upper Nocte namely Dadam used to make the earthen Pots locally known as Titpoh or Mah-Tit which were used for cooking and storing purposes. These people did not make salt in their villages but they used to trade their crafts items for salt. Salt were mainly made by the people of Middle belt Noctes and lower belt Noctes. The villages having salt well have an advantage over the trade as salt was the most essential item of food. The relation of the Nocte with the outside territory can be seen in some of the historical document as well as in the oral history of different tribes. The documents such as Buranjis,

Government documents etc. give us an account of Nocte's relationship with outside territory. The Nocte people had a close relationship with the plain people. They used to go down to Assam to earn wages by doing manual labour and sometimes while going for work used to take some indigenous items to trade for food, clothes and other items. During the primitive period, the Nocte people sometimes used to plunder the plains people because of scarcity of foods in the hills. Gradually with the interference of Government after the introduction of Inner Line Regulation in 1873, in the non- interference area, the relationship between them began to normalise. They started a trade relation with the Assam people. Betel leaves, canes, salt, etc. were extracted from the jungles and were bartered for the basic needs such as food, clothes. Besides having trade relationship with Assam the people of Borduria village used to make partner in salt making but later on due to some problem the partnership terminated, after that the people of plain used to buy salt from Tirap. The cross border trade relation with the plains is the cause for the development and the integration of dialects. Many of the Assamese words were adopted by them such as Jat; Hondique etc. Besides this, the Nocte people became very fluent in speaking Assamese language. Furthermore, the history tells us about the relationship with the Ahom Kings. The Ahoms, who ruled in Assam and its eastern regions for nearly six centuries from 1228 A.D. to 1826, left a series of invaluable historical chronicles known as Buranjis which throw a flood of light on the late medieval history of Tirap.

With time Noctes came in contact with outside world and learned new techniques of farming,

weaving, basket making, wood carving etc. Slowly upper belt Noctes came to learn the use of their lands which were not suitable to grow crops to grow some horticulture products. They started growing crops like cardamom which they traded with neighbouring regions for cash. They started earning good profit from trade which had improved their standard of living. They now no longer wore as wage labourer anywhere or depend on selling of bamboo and canes items only. Items like salt which was once one of the most important items of trade now is a matter of history. Now very few people extract salt for self consumption due to availability of cheap common salt in the markets. The items which were important during past are becoming less important with each passing day. Now people use plastic and steel items instead of items made of cane and bamboo. Therefore, slowly the people too had stopped making items from cane and bamboo due to very less demand. Presently Noctes do trade of different items like cardamom, betel leaves, betel nut, spices like ginger, Booth julukia (Naga chilli), etc. With the help of education and technology people of different communities living in Tirap District started developing a sense of unity and brotherhood. The villages that were once in war with each other now consider themselves as brothers and try to help and support each other in every field. They now work together for the development and betterment of the District as a whole. At present they have a close relationship with Assam. People depend on Assam for market, medical support and for education and thus with each passing day they are developing a peaceful and friendly relationship with the neighbouring State Assam. ■

Items of Trade within the territory and outside the District

a) Household items made of cane and Bamboo which were used as trading items and is still use for trade



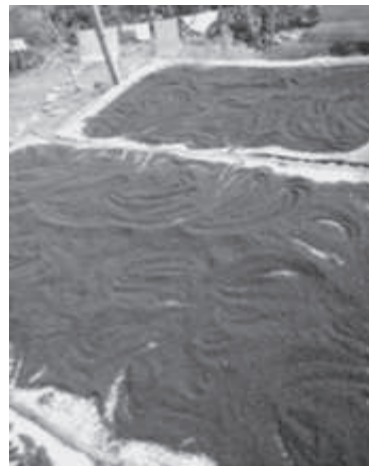
1. *Tum* used to store crops



2. *Din* used to carry crops



3. *Pha* used to separate grains



4. *Hum* used to dry crops



5. *Khok* used for storing ornaments



6. *wankhong* used for removing husk

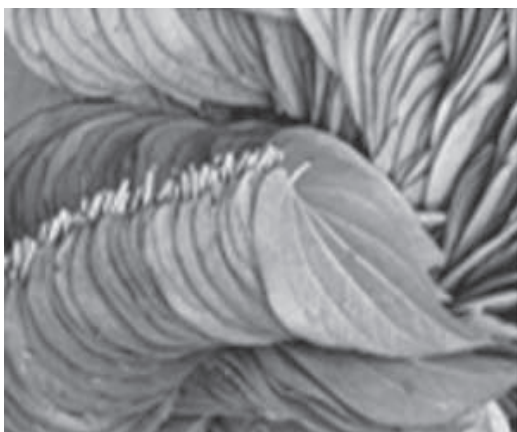
b) *Other items used for trade*



7. *Titpo*, mud pot



8. Betel nut



9. Betel leaves



10. Salt made from salt spring

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INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONS – THE KMAN & TAWRA MISHMIS

Sodyong Kri

Background:

Arunachal Pradesh is inhabited by the world's largest variety of ethnic tribal groups and subgroups numbering over a hundred and each tribe speaking their own-language and dialect. Their diverse and unique rich culture and traditional heritage constitute arts and crafts, fairs and festivals, social structure, folklores in the form of songs and dances that still remain fresh and well-preserved in Arunachal Pradesh. The blend of diverse culture and religion give ample scope for the people of Arunachal Pradesh to flourish in many respect. The State of Arunachal Pradesh represents a true mini India.

The origins of the tribes that are currently living in Arunachal Pradesh remain shrouded in mystery. Whatever little is known has been passed down from generation to generation via oral traditions. It is widely believed that the tribes who inhabit this land now, came from Burma (present day Myanmar) and Tibet, where Mongoloid tribal groups with similar cultures still live.

Over the course of these migrations, several inter-tribal feuds occurred, which resulted in the groups scattering across the region. In addition to that, natural calamities that had occurred in the area forced the tribes to take up different habitats and adapt to the nature of their geophysical surroundings.

When you're in Arunachal Pradesh, you will hear of stories about inter-tribal warfare, when tribes battled for supremacy and better lands. Although you can't see any fences, most of the tribal territories of Arunachal Pradesh are invisibly marked. Every tribe knows its territories and the rivers that come under them and which particular clan alone has hunting or fishing rights over that area. In order to maintain a distinct identity, each tribe used tattoos, headgears or nose plugs.

Every tribe has a village council. These councils solve issues pertaining to kinship, group activities, and set moral standards and necessary regulations. Most village councils also solve basic civil and criminal cases and play an important role in development activities. It is interesting to note that there was no police force in Arunachal Pradesh up until 1972 and the councils were responsible for maintaining peace and order.

Arunachal Pradesh has the highest concentration of scheduled tribes in India. Additionally, this region is probably one of the last remaining outposts in the country where tribes still live a primitive existence, seeking out a living from the land and maintaining a harmonious relation with nature.

The religious practices and lifestyle of the tribes share close ties with their surroundings. For instance the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Khamtis and

Singphos are essentially Buddhists who follow the Mahayana and Hinayana sects. The Nyishis, Apatanis, Adis, Mishmis, Tagins, and so on practice what can be called almost pagan or pre-Aryan beliefs, which is evident from their worship of trees, rocks and plants amongst other things.

Profile of the Kman & Tawrā Mishmi Tribe:

Out of 26 major tribes live in Arunachal Pradesh, Mishmi tribe is one of the major tribes having three Sub-tribes namely Kman, Tawrā and Idu Mishmis. The Kman and Tawrā mishmis are concentrating in Lohit and Anjaw districts whereas the Idu Mishmi tribe is inhabitants of Upper and Lower Dibang Valley.

The Kman and Tawrā Mishmis have been referred in some colonial literatures and official documents, but still remain largely unknown. The Kman and Tawrā Mishmis are popularly known as Miju and Digaru Mishmi by the outsiders. These sub-tribes were distinguished from other tribal brethrens by their attractive hard woven cloth and long hair twisted into a knot, secured on the top of the head by a wooden pin and covered with generally black turban. Varrier Elwin in his work describes the Kman and Tawrā Mishmis, “their weaving is probably the finest in the whole area and the Kman and Tawrā women are distinguished by their attractive land. “Woven cloth and the coiffure and silver ornaments which give them usual and striking appearance” (Elwin-1987.p.xvi). The Kman and Tawrā Mishmis differ only in dialect and are not easily distinguished (Elwin, 1958.p.xv) their spoken language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the main Sino-Tibetan family. The Kman and Tawrā Mishmis inhabitant area is bounded on the North by China, on the East by Myanmar, on the West Upper and Lower Dibang Valley and on the South by Changlang District and Assam state. The principal rivers are Lohit (Talloh), Kalung, Dav (Katuh), Dalai(Glai), Tidding (Krick), Tawong, Shang,

Hali, Sar, Chowoh, Kamlang, Kanjang, Lai, Dimwe, Dora Nallah, Digaru, Paya. Etc. It lies between 950 15 and 970 24’ East Longitude and 270 33’ and 290 22’ North Latitudes.

Inter-relations of the Kman & Tawrā Mishmi:

In light of the above background and profile, this paper is a modest attempt to enlighten the rest of the world about the relations of the Kman & Tawrā Mishmi tribes with special emphasis on - *Trade relations between the community; System of traditional judiciary to solve the inter community conflicts and Matrimonial relations in between these communities.*

Trade or Business Relation between the Communities: Since its inception of the community the trade or business relation between these people was very cordial and even today they have maintained the same tempo. Unlike other community, the Kman & Tawrā Mishmi community shares the local business each other. They do not take the form of business as rivals to each other rather want to grow together with a positive narration.

System of Traditional Administrative/ Judiciary to Solve the Inter Community Conflicts: Unlike many other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Kman & Tawrā Mishmi tribes had no organized system of administration, but it was not a lawless society. There was a strong existence of the arbitrary system commonly called as “PHARAI” by the Kman & Tawrā Mishmis, which can be said as administration system. Most of the disputes were brought and solved on bilateral negotiations. As a matter of fact, with the emergence of modern political machineries and political institution, the indigenous political system has dramatically changed in the Kman & Tawrā Mishmi communities, but then “PHARAI” (Arbitration) is still a strong tool for major cases like criminal cases, theft, allegation, etc. Through the

institutions such as the village council based on it, the leaders manage the internal affairs of the village. its interpretation of the reality around it or what can be called its philosophy, expressed through its customs, social relations and organisation, language, rituals, festivals, dress, ornaments and arts. It culminates in its identity.

However, it is an indigenous legal system of a tribe in a village level where all types of disputes are settled amicably except some serious crimes. The Kman & Tawrã Mishmi communities don't have any codified laws.

The village council or so called gathering of elderly or influential persons of the villages is called "PHARAI" by the Kman & Tawrã Mishmis. For the settlement of any kind of disputes there is a mediator as selected either by the convicted or the complainant for amicable settlement of a case and he is known as "PHARAI K•THAI" in the so called village council trial of cases like theft, adulteracy, bodily injury, killing of domestic birds and animals, stealing of ornaments, marriage affair, payment of bride price, damage of crops, etc. are held in accordance with their customary laws. The Kman & Tawrã Mishmis share the common platform of traditional judiciary system prevailing presently in the community.

Matrimonial Relations between the Communities : Regardless of its formal status, the Kman & Tawrã Mishmi tribes regulate their communities and social affairs according to the custom and treat it as integral to their culture and basic to their identity. This custom or otherwise law reinforce the tribe's age-old traditions and binds it together through normative rules by regulating the social and personal relations of its

members. As a matter of rule, the social structure of the Kman & Tawrã Mishmi tribes is endogamous.

The Kman & Tawrã Mishmis follow the same traditional administration in marriage and has to be invariably followed to give the marriage a social sanction. The procedure like *i. Selection of an Arbitrator, ii. Offering of the marriage gift (Mithun), and iii. Marriage Party are practised together in a very traditional gaiety by both the communities since times immemorial.*

Conclusion:

The elderly persons of the communities often talk of unity and diversity in the Kman & Tawrã Mishmis since inception of the societies. Their opinion about inter community relations is inviolable in past and won't be diluted in generations to come. So, in a nutshell, it can be stated that the relations between the Kman & Tawrã Mishmis is building a conducive environment in the community.

At the top of it all, a good understanding and cordial relation amongst the community people is need of the hour in nation building, which in turn will bring socialisation and improving human resources in the society. ■

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THE TIWA AND THE KHASI-JAINTIA RELATIONS :

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Raktim Patar

Tiwa is an Indo-Mongoloid tribe and descendent of the Bodo family of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan speech family. Settled in Morigaon, Nagaon, Kamrup, Jorhat, Dhemaji and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam and Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya, the Tiwas have long been referred to as “Lalung” or “Laloo” by other neighboring groups. The Buranjis¹ (Ahom chronicles) used terms like ‘Lalung’, ‘Garó’ and ‘Dantiyalias’ interchangeably to denote the Tiwa people. The people, however, call themselves Tiwa. They are divided into two socio-cultural groups: those who settled in the plains and speak Assamese and follow a patrilineal descent² system bearing Assamese patronyms, and those residing in the hills, speaking a Tibeto-Burman language of the Bodo-Garó group, that follow a matrilineal descent³ system. Thus, the Tiwas follow a bilateral descent⁴ system which recognizes that descent may be traced from either the father or mother, depending on the decision taken at the time of marriage. In most cases, the husband goes to live with his wife’s family (matrilocality), and their children are included in the mother’s clan. However, if the woman goes to live with her husband (patrilocality), the children take the name of their father. Thus, the Tiwa follow the ambilocal or biolocal marriage residence rule where a newly married couple is free to choose whether they will live with, or near to, either the parents of the bride or the parents of the groom.⁵

B.C. Allen⁶ also reiterates the point that a Lalung (Tiwa) woman may enter either her husband’s clan or the husband may enter the wife’s clan, but the right to property and lineage goes to the clan which was agreed upon at the time of marriage.

The Tiwa and the Khasi-Jaintia tribe of Meghalaya have been living side by side since remote past. Both the Tiwa and the Khasi-Jaintia have a long history of political and cultural relationship. Both the tribes have some cultural affinities. Despite the fact that the Tiwas speak a dialect of Tibeto-Burman language and Khasi-Jaintia speaks Mon-khmer, both the groups follow a similar descent system. Though the Tiwas have now been considered being follower of bilateral descent but the ethno history of the origin of the tribe suggests that they were matrilineal in the past. Moreover the Tiwa rule of inheritance also found to be identical with the Khasi-Jaintia. Among the Tiwa, the daughters inherit mother’s property and major share goes to the youngest one called Shodya. She is also called as Nomul or the inheritress as she holds the right to claim major portion of her mother’s property including the Nobaro (foundation house) of the family. However, if she decides to move away from her ancestral house, any daughter whoever lives in the parental house gets the major share. Among the Khasi the youngest daughter whom the Khasi refer to as Ka-Khadduh inherits all the properties including the Ka-ling Seng (foundation house).

According to the ethno history of the Tiwa, the political relation with the Khasi-Jaintia is very ancient. A popular legend on the origin of the Tiwa chief of Gobha mentioned that the ancestor of the Gobha raja was born out of a stone at a place called Thulimoslong or Timowflong. He was born in the Malewa Khul(Clan) and named as Soddonga raja. His successors were also known by the same name. According to the story after staying for several years at Thinimoslong one the Tiwa king moved to Amsai and settled there. The legend further states that at Thinimoslong the 'Jaitha' raja (Jaintia) was born from the ground and the 'Khrem'⁷ raja (Khasi king) was born from a hollow tree and thus these three political figures are considered as brothers. The Jayantia Buranji refers to a similar myth of the Jaintia king. The appearance of Soddonga/Suttanga as a prominent figure in both the Tiwa and Jaintia story undoubtedly tells about the parallel origin of both the Jaintia and Gobha raja.

Because of the cultural and historical relationship with the Khasi-Jaintia, the Gobha chief used to invite the Khasi chief of Khyrim state as the chief guest of the annual Jonbill fair held at Jagiroad. According to Deepsing Deoraja, the present incumbent of the erstwhile Gobha principality, the Jonbill fair was started by his ancestors in the 13th century in order to bring both the Hill and Plain Tiwa in a common platform to exchange their love and affection through bartering of goods. The Khyrim chief use to come for the fair by a trail through Kutusi-Mokoidharam near the old village of Amsai in the West Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Continuity of the tradition of attending Jonbill fair by the Khyrim chief is evident from the fact that at Kutusi Mokoidharam twelve megaliths were erected where he used to take rest while going down to the Plains to the fair. Until recently the Khyrim Chief was the chief guest during the opening day of the Jonbill fair. A documentary⁸

produced by the Tribal Research Institute, Assam in 1984 filmed the Khyrim chief Balajied Sing Syiem as the chief guest of the Jonbill fair. Such a narrative shows the close socio-economic and political relationship between the Tiwa and Khasi-Jaintia people.

Another very important historical relationship between these two tribes is the continuity of megalithic traditions. Both Tiwa and Khasi-Jaintia people has been practicing the tradition erecting large stones for commemorative and religious purposes since a very remote past. It is to be noted that no research has been done on the megalithic traditions of the Tiwa except one paper published by the author in the Proceedings of North East India History Association. Our fieldwork on the megalithic tradition of the Tiwa suggests that they have been practicing it since the inception of their settled village life. On the other hand there has been a lot of research on the Khasi-Jaintia megalithic tradition. During our research we have come across a very interesting story associated with the megaliths of Nartiang in the Jaintia Hill district of Meghalaya. One of our informants shared a popular story connected with the Laloo clan of the Khasi-Jaintia. According to the story once the Jaintia king wanted to erect huge flat stones at Nartiang to propitiate their deity. But it was too heavy and hence they could not erect even after many attempts. Later the king came to know about the Tiwa of Amsai whom they called Laloo who were expert in erecting big stones. Hence he sent messengers to meet the Loro (village priest) of Amsai for assistance. However the Amsai Loro didn't show much interest and gave the messenger a pumpkin creeper to pull the stones up. The Jaintia king got angry after he discovered that the rope send by the Amsai Loro was just a pumpkin creeper. Then he ordered his messengers to covey the Amsai Loro about the serious consequences if the he does not provide necessary assistance. When the messengers again

came to the Amsai Loro, he asked the messengers, whether they offered sacrifice and played drums while erecting the stones? The messenger replied that no such offerings were made. Then the Loro said that without giving offerings and playing drums nobody can pull the stones and erect it. Hence he sent some ojha or divination man along with a rope made of the bark of the odal tree and few drums to be played during the installation of the stones. Accordingly Tiwa ojhas made it possible for the Jaintia king to erect the megaliths at Nartinag. Consequently the Jaintia king requested the Tiwa of Amsai whom they addressed as Laloo to remain within Jaintia territory. Later these people were incorporated as a Laloo clan of the Jaintia. According to our informants till 1952 when the Amsai was separated from the Khasi-Jaintia Hills district and brought under the Karbi Anglong district, the Tiwa of this village used to visit Nartiang every year and offer one odal rope and some flat rice to the Jaintia chief. While travelling they used to spend one night at a place called Patta Laloo or the place where the Laloo (Tiwa) used to take rest. This story suggests that both the Tiwa and the Jaintia had the tradition of megalithic culture and technical knowledge of erecting megaliths.

Bibilography:

¹ S. K. Bhuyan (ed.), *Deodhai Asam Buranj* (4thedn.), DHAS, Guwahati, 2001 and S.K. Bhuyan(ed.), *Jayantia Buranji* (3rdedn.), DHAS, Guwahati, 2012

² Patrilineal descent is traced only through the male and the children of both sexes belong to the kin group of their father

³ The Tiwa living in the hills of West Karbi Anglong district of Assam and the Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya follow a matrilineal descent pattern. According to oral tradition maintained by the hill Tiwa, there were twelve sisters who were the progenitors of twelve original clans of the Tiwa, suggesting that the Tiwa were originally a matrilineal society. However there has been a drastic change in the descent system of the hill Tiwa since the early part of the 1980s primarily because of the impact of their patrilineal counterparts in the plains. Moreover improved means of transport and communication and establishment of markets in the areas dominated by the hill Tiwa are also responsible for the changes in their descent system.

⁴ The term 'bilateral descent' has been defined by Thomas R. Williams in his book *Cultural Anthropology*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1990, p. 267, wherein he writes, "...if descent is recognized culturally as taking place more or less equally in both the male and female line it is called bilateral descent".

⁵ Thomas R. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

⁶ B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol X: The Khasi Jayantia Hills, The Garo and the Lushai Hills*, Allahabad, 1906, p.62

⁷ The hill Tiwa pronounce Khyrim as 'Kbrem'.

⁸ Documentary on *Jonbil Mela*, directed by Upakul Bordoloi, produced by Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati, 1985.

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INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP: THE CASE OF CHIN-KUKI-MIZO IN BANGLADESH, MYANMAR & INDIA

Dr. Lal Dena

One of the worst victims of British Imperialism and perhaps the most misunderstood ethnic groups are the Chin-Kuki-Mizo (hereafter CKM) who are scattered today in Bangladesh, Myanmar and India. In India's North East alone, the CKM are scattered in all the seven states. Naturally, they are known by different nomenclatures to their neighbours. Those who live in Myanmar are called Chin. The same group of people who live in different part of North East India and Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh are known as Kuki or Mizo, while a dozen of tribes inhabiting the present Mizoram are collectively known as Mizo.

Though divided by International and state boundaries and called by different nomenclatures, the CKM are one and the same people having common myth of descent, common homeland, common historical memory, common language, common religious beliefs and cultural practices. There is a common belief regarding the original home of the CKM. One belief was that they originally came out of a place or cave which was known as Sinlung to Hmar, Chhinlung to Lushai, Khul to Thadou, Paite, Vaiphei, Simte and Zo; Khurpui/Khurpi to Aimol, Kom, Koren, etc. This place is now located somewhere in and around the stone forest near Kunming in Yunnan

Province, China. It is believed that the decline of Nanchao's rule in China marked the first major dispersal from Yunnan Province sometime in early 9th century AD and the second wave of their migration started between 13th and 14th century AD (L Keivom). Still moving further west and following the Chindwin river, they began to spread over the Arakan and Chin Hills as far as the Kabaw valley in Myanmar where they perhaps lived for several decades. The earliest migrants from Myanmar to different parts of North East India were called Old Kuki and the later migrants New Kukis. According to 1931 census, Old Kuki includes Aimol, Anal, Biete, Chiru, Chothe, Kom, Koran, Hmar, Lamkang, Moyon, Ronte, Tarau, Tikhup, and Viaphei. While the New Kuki includes Gangte, Paite, Ralte, Simte, Sukre, and Thadou.

Opinions differ on who really was the first ancestors of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo. According to some scholars, Zo (Chhuahzova) or Zosanga was the first known ancestors of the CKM. The Hmar oral tradition however maintains that Manmasi was the first known ancestor (Hranglien Songate). C Chawngkunga, ex-Minister, Government of Mizoram, however, argues that the first common ancestors was Zo, and in support of his view got published a very

detail “Genealogical Tree of Mizo” covering all the major tribes under CKM in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The exact population of CKM now spreading over the North East India, Myanmar and Chittagong Hill Tracts (now Chittagong Division) of Bangladesh cannot be ascertained due to various reasons including the remoteness of some parts of the region and the constant churning of ethnic conflict where every imaginable tribe or community has at one time or the other claimed and fought for separate identity and in the process swallowed up by the most aggressive and organized groups from outside their parent community. For example, the sizeable community from the CKM fold in Manipur had already declared themselves as Naga for political expediency and sheer survival. For some people political brotherhood is thicker than blood.

Linguistically too, the CKM people are one and the same people. When the Linguistic Survey of India conducted by the British between 1894 and 1928 under the direction of G.A Grierson, the CKM group was classified under Tibeto-Burman family. Kuki-Chin and Burma Groups under Volume III Part III. Therein, their total number was estimated at between 600,000-1,000,000 which included 240, 637 Meteis. As per B Lalithangliana’s “Mizo Chanchin”, the Tibeto-Burman groups recorded in 1901 census were; Tibetan 235,229; Himalayan 190,585; North Assam 41,731; Bodo 594,411, Naga 247, 780, Kachin 125,585, Kuki-Chin 624,149; Burman 7,498,794. Following the Linguistic Survey of India” Lian H Sakhong in his book “In Search of Chin Identity” has made further divisions as given below: the Northern group; Thadou, Kamhau, Sukte, Sizang, ralte, Paite; the Central group; Tashoo (Thaisun), Lai (Pawi), Mara (Lakher), Lushai (Mizo), Bawmzo and Pangkhup in Bangladesh; the Old Kuki group; Hrangkhawl,

Koren, Kom, Puram, Hmar; and the Southern group; Chin-me, Chin-bok, Chinpun, Khyang (Asho, Bangladesh), M’ru (Khumi), Shendus (Yundu) and Walaung. (Lian H Sakhong, 2003-17)

The CKM people can also be broadly divided into two linguistic groups; those tribes having “R” and “T” (tri) in their alphabets and those other tribes who do not have “R” but use “G” instead. For example, tribes falling under “R” and “T” (tri) group are Aimol, Anal, Bawmzo, Biete, Chawrei, Chiru, Khumi, Khyang, Kom, Koren, Hmar, Hrangkhawl, Lai, Lushai, Mara, Ralte, etc. Accordingly Zoland is pronounced as Zoram. Under the “G” group come Gangte, Paite, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zo, etc. and Zoland is pronounced as Zogam. Despite these minor differences, the CKM people are one and the same people ethnically, linguistically and culturally. So the language is not a barrier among them. Even a few day’s stay among any community enables one to communicate to one another in one’s own dialects easily. Pick up few hundred vocabularies of the languages of these CKM, you will find more than sixty similar words and this speaks of their oneness. Shakespeare, an authority on Lushai Kuki clans, also concludes thus, “There is no doubt that the Kukis, Mizos and Chins are all of the same race. “ (Shakespeare).

Majority of them settled in Manipur, Mizoram, Assam and some section of them entered Tripura from Thanangchi forest during the reign of Raja Manikya in 1490 AD and still further down in Chittagong hill tracts and its surrounding areas in Bangladesh as mentioned before. According to Nathan Loncheu, a Bawm scholar, the migration of Kukis in Bangladesh took place in three phases. He contends that the first phase was believed to have taken place around 80 AD. In the second phase, the Kuki group moved down

to more fertile land and hills by practicing shifting cultivation and tending to animals due to mautam or thingtam which broke out around 14th century. In the third phase, the other Kuki tribes along with Arakanese came to Chittagong Hill tracts in around 17th AD (Nathan Loncheu) The CKM tribes in Bangladesh, according to Lancheu, are Bawm, Chak, Chin, Khumi, Kyeng, Lakher, Lushai, Mru, Pangkua, Thangchaya, etc. Surprisingly, the language of Bawm and Hmar are most similar. Now, these tribes are seeking closer integration with the mainstream Kuko or Mizo in India.

On the other hand, the allied tribes in Tripura who once belonged to CKM are gradually drifting away to form themselves into more cohesive group to identify themselves with more powerful ethnic group for political survival as it happened among the Old Kuki group in Manipur. Initially, they were collectively grouped under the term “Halam”. But now they are realigning themselves as Borok which includes Bongeher, Choroi, Darlong, Debarma, Jamatia, Halam, Hrangkhawl, Kaipeng, Koche, Kolo, Rupini, Twipra, Ichui, etc. One significant development among this group of people is the gradual emergence of Kokborok as common language.

Recently, pro-integrationist intellectuals among the CKM began to feel the need for having one common nomenclature which has become an endless debate till today. Vum Kho Hau, former Burmese ambassador, opting for Zo lamentably remarked that , “ Had the word Kukis been changed to Zo, at the time of the right word for calling the various tribes and clans of the Zo race inhabiting the areas joining Burma (Myanmar) East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and Assam would have been answered a long time ago” (Vum Kho Hau 1963- 297). Dr. Vumson Suantak, a Sizang (Siyin) by tribe from

Tiddim township in Chin state and a scientist by background tried to convey in his book the oneness of CKM peoples and the title of his book is called Zo History. L Keivom, an IFS (retired) in his paper “Towards Zo-unification” has also used the term “ZO” and traced the history of Zo people from pre-historic time to present time by emphasizing the need to promote “emotional integration by constantly reminding themselves (CKM) of their common ethnic and ancestral root, historic homeland, common myths and historical memories, culture, language, hopes and dreams. By further emphasizing the need to unite into a more cohesive force under a common nomenclature with a common language, he warns that if the CKMs do not heed the writing on the wall and continue to maintain fissiparous tendencies, they will not have a chance for survival as an ethnic nation.(L keivom). The identity of Zo ethnic group is now more or less ensured in the formation of the state of Mizoram in 1986. Dr (late) Vumson who did not speak Duhlian (Mizo) goes to the extent of saying that if at all there should be a common language for the Zo people, the Lushai (Mizo) dialect is the ultimate choice (Vumson Suantak, 1987-:20-21) But L. Keivom is very pessimistic. To quote him, “The core state of Mizoram has began to slowly abandon its role model as a forerunner of Zo Integration and has become less and less accommodating. Increasing intolerance shown to non-Mizo speaking Zo community within and outside Mizoram by the Mizo speaking community has caused ripple effects on the progress of Zo unification and put the process of integration in a reverse gear.”(L Keivom, *ibid*) The issue of CKM integration has now been taken up by the Zo-Reunification Organization (ZORO) since 1988 to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

(UNPFII) in Geneva and New York several times. This is an ongoing peaceful movement and it has at least succeeded in bringing emotional integration among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo peoples irrespective of the countries they belong to.

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MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS TO TRANSFORM THE STATE INTO NEW ARUNACHAL



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BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENTS

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- Kamle, Pakke-kessang, LepaRada and Shi-Yomi districts have been created to decentralize governance and equitable development.
- Deputy Commissioners have been empowered to prepare district specific plans and implement them as per the felt needs focusing on bottom-up planning.
- Potin-Pangin stretch under Trans-Arunachal Highway, which was struck for last five years has been sanctioned with a cost of 4000 crore in 3 packages.
- With laying of foundation stone for Construction of Hollongi Airport by Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, and its clearance through the extraordinary effort of Chief Minister Shri Pema Khandu, the decades-old dream of having own Airport will be realized.
- Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Science (TRIHMS), the first medical college of the state has been started.
- To strengthen Health services 208 posts of specialist and 108 posts of GDMO have been created and ambitious Chief Minister's Arogya Arunachal Yojana (CMAAY) has been launched.
- Arunachal Rising Campaign- a comprehensive campaign to disseminate information on major state as well as Central Flagship program to the grass root level was launched.
- 50 Health and wellness centers have been inaugurated.
- Foundation stone for construction of Sela Tunnel and permanent Campus for Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) were laid.
- To raise the morale of Police force, 1535 police constables who were not promoted for long were promoted to the rank of Head Constables.

The Government is committed to implement the following major policies and schemes which have been announced in the Budget 2019-20.

- To achieve food security, large scale revamping, re-orientation and Innovations in various sector of agriculture are taken up. Besides, the incomes of over 90000 farmers' will be doubled by 2022.
- Rs.289 crores has been earmarked for major schemes and projects of health department to ensure quality health care to the people.
- To ensure quality, affordable and inclusive education for all, Rs.189 crore has been earmarked for various schemes and projects under Education department.
- CM Yuva Kaushal Yojana (10 crore), Deen Dayal Upadhyay Swavalamban Yojana (10 crore), Establishment of Aqua adventure centre (10 crore) are some of the major schemes of the Government under Skill development and employment Generation sector.
- Arunachal Haat in Itanagar, Pan Arunachal Festival, Multi-purpose Cultural complex at Pasighat, Chief Minister's Paryatan Vikas Yojana and District Tourism Society are some of the major schemes to boost tourism in the state for which Rs.38 crore is earmarked.
- The 3446km of road under PWD including 150 kms under Capital Complex, district arterial roads and all roads connecting Circle and ADC headquarters will be improved for which Rs.100 crore is earmarked. Besides, Rs.30 crores is earmarked for repair and maintenance of PMGSY roads of the state.
- Rs.25 crore has been earmarked for construction of common complex of all the Directorates, and the offices of Commissions and Lok Ayukta at Pachin Colony.
- Rs.60 crore has been earmarked for Urban Development sector for ensuring proper waste management.
- Rs.30 crore earmarked for peripheral works of Hollongi airport with commitment to complete it within 3 years.
- The Twin city, Naharlagun-Itanagar to have Mini buses fitted with GPS system so that it reaches the bus stop in designated time. An additional allocation of 10 crore is earmarked for procuring new buses.
- To overcome water scarcity problem and provide water to all, Rs.170 crore is earmarked.
- To ensure electricity connection to every household and street lighting in urban townships, a sum Rs.55 crore has been earmarked.
- The very popular schemes -Chief Minister Rural Housing Scheme and Chief Minister Adarsh Gram Yojana will be continued with allocations of Rs.50 crore and Rs. 60 crore respectively.
- Rs. 15 crore is earmarked for construction of High court building and other new Judicial infrastructures.
- Chief Minister District innovation and Challenge fund will be continued with allocation of Rs.40 crore.
- Rs.180 crore is earmarked for construction of Mini Secretariats in all the district and Divisional Headquarters including the newly created districts.



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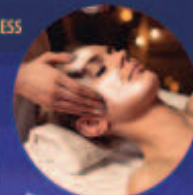


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SOCIO-CULTURAL BLENDING OF THE ZEME NAGA, DIMASA KACHARI AND SEMSAS/NCHAIKUIME OF DIMA HASAO, ASSAM

Nakaulang Nriame

Considered as the fertile field for ethnographic study, North East India is home to many colourful ethnic groups. It is also known as the mini-Asia because of the existence of many different ethnic groups in the area. The numerous ethnic groups each with their own distinct social and cultural traditions and colourful dresses added to the beauty of the North East India, which is bestowed with enchanting natural beauty. If the entire North East India is mini Asia, the Dima Hasao District (erstwhile North Cachar Hill) of Assam can be considered as mini-North East India. There are around 13 (thirteen) ethnic groups inhabiting the district. Of the different ethnic group, the Dimasa Kachari are the largest ethnic group followed by the Zeme Naga. The Semsas; who are very much akin to the Dimasa, are the least numerous group. These three groups are closely connected in terms of their social and cultural life. These ties seem to have been evolved out of their close and prolonged friendship or alliance in the remote past.

The Dimasa are one of the ethnic groups of the great Kachari group of people in North East India. A look into the history of the Dima Hasao district and its people reveals that the Zeme Naga and Dimasa probably came into close contact with each other after the Kachari King

shifted their Capital from Dimapur to Maibang in the first half of the 16th Century. The Dimasa like their other Kachari groups trace their roots to the Sadiya area of Upper Assam from where they spread to different parts of the Brahmaputra Valley few of them spread as far as the undivided Kamrup in ancient times. In fact, some historians also think that they are the original inhabitants of the undivided Kamrup district of Assam. However, a look into the remains of Kachari relics in Sadiya and Dayang-Dhansiri valley in Upper Assam and Dimapur areas seems to point to the fact that Sadiya area was their original dispersal point. A temple dedicated to *Kechai-Khati Gosani* of Sadiya was the tutelary deity of the royal family of the Kacharis. All these points to the fact that they were original inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley in the remote past.

On the other hand the Zeme Nagas are highlanders who never had any history of Kingship or subjugation by any King. As described by James Scott; while referring to the people of the hills of South East Asia including North East India, the Zeme Naga like the other counterpart hill tribes is 'non-state' people. They live in the 'villages state republics'

free from any state control. The early history of the Zeme could be constructed with the help of their oral accounts and to some extent the archaeological remains. The Zeme Naga trace their roots to Makhel and Makuilongdi (both in Senapati District of Manipur) from where they spread to their present inhabited areas. The recent study on the remains of 'Stone Jars' in Western Zeme areas of Dima Hasao, the remains of the Siamme '*Kipung*' i.e. the old village site of the Siamme (people of Thai ethnic group) in Zeme areas and the story of *Kephume* (Burmese) salt traders and the two brothers '*Asa and Misrung*' pointed to the fact that, the Zeme lived with the Siamme group, who migrated into the area in the remote past. According to some Archaeologist, the Siamme migrated to the Zeme inhabited area probably following the ancient salt trade route that passed through the Zeme area. Archaeologist also believe that the stone Jars found scattered across South East Asian countries and those found in Dima Hasao area are the creations of the Thai/Siamme ethnic group. They are probably the burial or ancestral bone repository of these people. The story also goes that, the Siamme were expert in bead making, therefore Zeme forefather used to open the seals of the Stone Jars looking for bead or iron objects that are deposited with the dead by the Siamme. These stone Jars and their date are significant to unravel the timeline of Zeme habitation in the areas. These stone jars are dated back to the era before Christ, which also means that a section of Zeme have been living in the area since the era before Christ. Unlike the Dimasa group, the area of the Zeme cycle migration is also very limited.

The Zeme Naga and Dimasa are, therefore, two different ethnic groups who came into contact

with each other in the present Dima Hasao area of Assam during the 16th Century. Although the Dimasa are much stronger and united in term of politics due to the centrally organized state control by their King, there is no account of political subjugation, imposition or atrocities by the Dimasa King on the Zeme Naga. Instead, a look into the accounts of their cultural life reveals a close tie between the two groups as well as the Semsas.

A close observation into their traditional religious practices reveals many similar practices of the three tribes. During the post reformation era; i.e. before the religious reformation measures by Rani Ma Gaidinliu, the Zeme Naga ancestors used to worship numerous gods and goddesses. Some of the pantheon of Zeme God and Goddess are *Kechingpen*, *Mishniu*, *Chiprai* or *Herawang*, *Helu*, *Nrak*, *Mekhang*, *Heransia* and *Hechawang* etc. All these Gods are son of *Hezale* the Daughter of legendary *Banglawang*. The accounts of the birth of these multitude of Gods are mentioned in the story of *Banglawang*. Similar to the Zeme Naga, the Dimasa also has the story of *Banglawang*. They called him *Banglajaja*. The Dimasa traditions, however, have only six sons of *Hejale* namely *Sibrai*, *Dilao Raja*, *Naikhu Raja*, *Waraja*, *Gainyung Graiung* and *Hamiadao*.

Another interesting relation between the two ethnic groups is the story that surrounded the ethnic background of the Semkhor Village. Semkhor is a village named after a 'salty spring' of the village. The salt of the spring is used as a substitute for salt by the villagers. The village name is also derived from it. In Dimasa dialect *Sem* means salt and *Dikhor* means water well pond. Hence *Semkhor* means a salt-pond. The people of the village are called *Semsa* by the

Dimasa and *Nchaikuime* by the Zeme. *Nchaikui* in Zeme also mean a salt pit or a salt pond. Very interestingly, almost all the Semsas are tri-lingual. They speak *Semsa* dialect, which is very much akin to the Dimasa dialect; they also speak Dimasa as well as Zeme dialect.

Another interesting fact is the Semsas' festivals, dances and songs. Their rites and rituals are very much same with the Dimasas but most of the songs they sing during the festival are in Zeme dialect. While they sing a song in Zeme dialect, the dance forms are those of the Dimasas. This is really an interesting aspect of culture blending between Zeme Naga, Dimasas and the Semsas. There are certain occasions which are considered incomplete by the Semsas without singing a hymn which are composed in Zeme dialect. As practiced by the Zeme and other hills people, the Semsas also sing a song during community work in the village field. On such an occasion it is considered incomplete without singing a hymn which is in Zeme dialect. While the Semsas are very close to the Dimasa group in terms of similarity in dialect, dress etc. but they also

adopted many elements found in the Zeme villages. Oral accounts tell us of the Semsas being the mixed blood of the Zeme and Dimasas. There are also accounts of the certain Dimasa clan whose ancestors are from the Zeme group. There is certain *Daulagupu* clan of the Dimasa group, whose forefathers were once from the Zeme group.

Mutual respect is the first step towards a peaceful co-existence and peaceful coexistence is a must for development of the Nation. As 'Unity in Diversity' is the sole mantra of India's strength as a Nation, such accounts of the mutual respect and peaceful co-existence of our ancestors, which resulted in the evolution of close social and cultural ties between different ethnic groups give us hope for peace and mutual respect in multi-ethnic areas like North East India. As we celebrate the 72nd Year of our Freedom from colonial rule, let us take a peek and be inspired from such accounts of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect of our ancestors.

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KHAMPTIS UNDER THE LIGHT OF CULTURAL DIFFUSION AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

**Dr Biplab Tripathy and
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“Man is by nature social animal; an individual, who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally, is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes individual.....”

This very popular saying by legendary Greek scholar Aristotle clearly emphasise the social image of man. Man makes society and his role for a social formation is absolutely inevitable. He cannot escape his contribution to the environment he lives in. But again when he is abstracted from his very own association, a struggle for existence and identification would become a fateful experience proving the inseparable bond between humanity and civilization. This is where the concept of cultural diffusion fits in. A diffusion of culture is a phenomena of spreading and amalgamation of cultural beliefs and customs from one cultural group to another. This induces the value of tolerance and co-existence.

North-East India which has been known as the home of myriad tribes also becomes the stage and platform for many kinds of tribal culture and customs. Some of the tribes which have migrated from outside of Indian Territory brought a very diverse manner of heritage. Thus when the essence of the olden land meets the crisp aura of a newly known exclusive tradition, we get to see the magic of diffuseness which balances the tribe,

their community and custom with the immediate co-existing ethnology.

Arunachal Pradesh has witnessed this acclimatization among the diversities since time immemorial. The state being an abode of typical ethnic assortment, homes 26 major tribes and 100 sub tribes. Being recognized as one of the major tribal group prevailing in Arunachal Pradesh, the Tai Khamptis are the sub group of the ‘Tai’ People who managed to preserve their ‘Shan’ identity despite witnessing a serious cultural diffusion after being isolated from their motherland in Northern Myanmar. Namsai is their present homeland where they are a majority populace. Other than Namsai the presence of Khampti neighborhoods are spotted in Changlang, Lower Subansiri, and Tirup District of Arunachal Pradesh as well as Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Tinsukhia, Cachar and Dhemaji Districts of Assam. This tribe is considered as one of the peaceful communities inhabiting North-East India, inciting harmony among the denizens. Keen Theravadists the Tai Khamptis lead a life based on strict principles related to their values and beliefs instilling the virtues of peace, tolerance, cooperation and kinship.

Once an outlander the Khamptis made a lengthy yet remarkable journey to India. The

Odyssey started from a push from the imperial China in 6th century AD, establishing kingdom in Northern Myanmar to finally settling in North-Eastern India. When the first batch of 100-200 Khampti soul crossed the Patkai Range and entering the vicinity of Sadiya in 1751, the tribesmen were like alien to the existing aboriginals. It is believed that the then contemporary chief of Ahom, King Rajeshwar Singha (1751-69) permitted them to settle. Since then, North-East India became their native soil. A beautiful instance of cultural adjustment is endorsed, where reflections has been offered and also accepted. The tradition had bent itself to decorum of liberality and approval. This acknowledgement is well projected in every sphere of their life. From spirituality to daily chores, the flavour of cultural dissipation is the very first wide eye perception. The approval for the admixture of opposite is well observed in their ritual and custom. In 1751, when Phra Taka, the son of the chief of Longking led the first bunch of immigrants; he carried with himself a 'firman' and an image of Buddha indicating the tribe's alignment with the Hinayana cult. But the ideology of '*Ariyo AmmbanEgiko Maggo*' (eight fold path) and the assertion for '*Phi*' (spirit) in the very backdrop is noteworthy. The contradicting faith through indulging into animism and polytheism under the subtle cloak of Buddhism is the first identified evidence of diffusion. Both the concept of non existence of god and soul along with credence of supreme creator and worshipping spirits goes hand in hand. Devotion for '*Phra Pen Chow*' (Buddha) and adoration of '*Phi Houng*' (house spirit) together is truly astonishing. There is an existing bipolar concept of heaven and hell, and also a consciousness regarding an unseen spirit world. Again a thirst for *Nirvana* and salvations of *Dana*,

Sila and *Favanna* is earnestly expressed along with pleasing '*Phi Noy*' (jungle spirit) and '*Phi Nam*' (spirit of ancestors). Assertion for Hindu denomination is ascertained as some of the typical North Indian fetes are solemnized. To an absolute wonderment few of the popular Hindu deities sneaked into their realm of exaltation. These gods and goddesses are cordially admired like other traditional divinities as '*Phra Upakut*'.

Incredibility is also noticed in the matter of observance of festivals and rituals. One of the most cherished celebration of Theravada faith is the 'Sangken', organized in the '*Nuen Haa*' month of the Khampti calendar. This is the festival commemorated both by the Khampti and the Singpho tribesmen. This day corresponds with New Year celebration of different ethnicities as '*Baishakh Sangkranti*'. The festival prevails for three consecutive days. The inter community bond is observed when people enjoy themselves by splashing clear water at each other, which symbolically represents the cleaning of the soul.

Poi Pee Mau is another festival which projects a global zest of intercultural communication. It reflects the rich heritage of Shan communities that even exceeds the territorial boundary. Arrival of delegates and priests from Thailand and Myanmar marks the onset of international flavor. When traditional foods are served with modern delicates, traditional sports are associated with contemporary dances, when Bollywood performers shares the same stage with Tai Bands and Troops, what we see is a true picture of affinity and unity.

Khamptis of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has been seen eagerly participating in Bihu which is recognized as the soul of Assamese heritage. This portends their genuine aptitude of absorbing the contrast in a constructive way. They indeed

have demonstrated an amicable retaliation to the culture and people who have also shown the generosity of acknowledgement.

The Khamptis uphold an amicable community status, which is mirrored in their way of living. Their activities are conducted in a way of obligation. Starting from religious occasion where the entire village visits the temple together to community feasts where men offer helping hand, the facet of interrelationship is conspicuous. Agriculture, which is the primary subsistence, is also subjected to this unconditional alliance. Rest houses are constructed near the paddy fields to aid the exhausted workers. They have intense sentiment and affection towards the profession which they solemnly respect. These consistencies are the fruit of invoking Buddhist doctrine in day to day life. Tai Khamptis lead a social life which merrily welcomes every contingency that come in their way crosses, yet they keep their core individuality intact. They have learned to be one with the environment but never let themselves carried away by the tide of westernization.

The new generation is forging ahead in the path of higher education. They are observing, learning, analyzing the attributes and differences, evolving, growing, and making certain what would make

difference. They know that they are no more part of any sedentary scrim. They are striving for progress knowing full well that they must carry forward the heritage their ancestors have left for them. They consider it as their fundamental duty to pass this inheritance to their future generations. This sub group of great Shan indeed won hearts and trust through assimilating traditional esteem with the sense of peaceful co-existence. The inclination towards inter community integrity, sentiment for resilience, passion for acceptance and concord have made them a real example of purposeful co-existence. ■

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INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONS OF NORTHEAST BHARAT - PAST AND PRESENT

Chandra Krishna Malsom

The Communities of Northeast Bharat:

A community is a small or large social unit in the form of a group of living things that has something in common, such as traditional norms, traditional culture, rites & rituals, common faith or religion, some moral values etc having a unique identity. Such communities often share a sense of place that is situated in a given geographical area like country, village, town, or neighbourhood or in virtual space through communication platforms. Durable relations that extend beyond immediate genealogical ties also define a sense of community.

People tend to define those social ties as important to their identity, practice, and roles in social institutions such as family, home, work, government, society, or humanity at-large. Although communities are usually small relative to personal social ties (micro-level), “community” may also refer to large group affiliations (or macro-level), such as national communities, international communities, and virtual communities.

In relation to our Northeast Bharat a good number of communities are there such as, Tripuri, Halam, Jamatia, Noatia, Kuki, Chakma, Lusai etc belonging to different Janajatis in Tripura. Besides, Non-Janajati community Bengali, Manipuri and some others in Tripura.

The Janajati communities like Boro, Dimasa, Chutia, Sonowal, Mech, Tiwa, Garo, Rabha, Sarania, Hajong, Tripuri, Deori, Thengal, Hojai, Koch, and others like Tea-Tribes etc are there in the State of Assam. Moreover, larger number of other communities like Assamese, Bengali, Muslims are the important components of the State population.

The major Janajati communities of Manipur State are the Nagas, Kukis, Zos and others. The Nagas in Manipur are further sub-divided into sub-tribes like Anâl, Liangmai, Mao, Maram, Maring, Poumai, Rongmei, Tangkhul, Zeme, etc. whereas the valley (plains) is mainly dominated by the Meiteis, Manipuri Brahmins (Bamons) and Pangal (Manipuri Muslims). Bishnupriya Manipuri etc.

The Janajati people make up the majority of Meghalaya’s population. The Khasis are the largest group, followed by the Garos then the Jaintias. These were among those known to the British as “hill tribes.” Other groups include the Hajongs, the Biates, the Koches and related Rajbongshis, the Boros, Dimasa, Kuki, Lakhar, Tiwa (Lalung), Karbi, Rabha and Nepali.

The Lushei (or Lusei), Paite, Lai, Mara, Ralte, Hmar, Thadou, Shendus, and some others. These Janajatis are sub-divided into numerous clans, and these clans are further sub-divided into sub-clans, for example the Hmars are divided into Thiek,

Faihriem, Lungtau, Darngawn, Khawbung, Zote and others. The Bru (Reang), Chakma, Tanchangya are also part of the population of Mizoram State.

In the State of Arunachal Pradesh, the communities like Mishmi, Tai, Singpho, Tangsa, Naga, Monpa, Nyishi. Apatani, “Adi” with many sub tribes including Padam, Pasi, Minyong and Bokar, Idu, Miju and Digaru, Tai Khamti, Theravada, Singpho and Tangsa, Nocte and Wancho and others are the important fabric of state population.

The majority of Sikkim’s residents are of Nepali ethnic origin. The native Sikkimese consist of the Bhutias, Lepchas, who are believed to have migrated from the Far East. Tibetans reside mostly in the northern and eastern reaches of the state. Migrant resident communities include Bengalis, Biharis and Marwaris, who are prominent in commerce in South Sikkim and Gangtok.

The states of Northeast Bharat is inhabited by the largest variety of ethnic groups consisting of Janajatis and Non-Janajati communities along with their different sub-groups numbering over a hundred and especially each Janajati community speaking in their own-language and dialect. Their diverse religious faiths like Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim etc., rich culture and traditional heritage constitute arts and crafts, fairs and festivals, social structure, folklores in the form of songs and dances that still remain fresh and well-preserved in this state. To maintain their livelihood people in rural areas chiefly practice diverse trade and profession including Jhum and Wet rice cultivation, horticulture, fish farming, carpet making, wood curving, breeding of Mithun, Yak, Sheep and other livestock

The people in urban places comprise of educated and semi educated persons, most of them in government employment, social workers,

contractors, town dwellers and traders. The blend of diverse culture and religion give ample scope for the people of Northeast Bharat to flourish in many respects. The region of Northeast Bharat represents a true mini India.

Inter-community relations:

Inter community relation is such a relationship amongst different communities irrespective of Janajati or other larger communities; which exist between two or more communities in term of livelihood, business, matrimonial relation, religious, social, political, administrative, economic activities etc. Each of the community somehow has relation with others more or less for different reasons in day to day life. A good and positive inter-communal relationship helps to promote political development of different kinds and ensures that concerned communities participate in issues related to the development of the community.

Inter community relations help in promoting peace and unity in the environment. It will help to unite community members towards the development of the community. When there is a good relationship between different communities, it becomes easy for inter-communal marriage to take place. Positive inter-communal relationship will enhance willingness for the communities to give out their sons and daughters to others from another tribe. A responsible and positive inter-communal relationship will enhance peaceful atmosphere and strategies for each other or business like inter-marketing strategies etc. This factor may play a major role in communal harmony in the region and enhance peace, tranquility and prosperity at large.

Inter-community conflicts in the Northeast Bharat:

The Northeast region of India comprising of eight states – Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal

Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim— a region poorly connected to the Indian mainland by a small corridor, and surrounded by many countries such as Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and China, is the setting for a multitude of conflicts that undermines the idea of India as a prosperous and functioning democracy.

The Naga insurgency, which started in the 1950s, known as the mother of the Northeast insurgencies, is one of the oldest unresolved armed conflicts in the world. In total, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and Tripura have witnessed scales of conflict that could, at least between 1990 and 2000, be characterised as low intensity conflicts. Most of the states in this region are affected by some form of conflicts, except for Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Sikkim in which the situation is at the moment relatively stable. The reasons for the respective conflicts are wide ranging from separatist movements, to inter-community, communal and inter-ethnic conflicts.

The conflicts in this region has been an all pervasive phenomena, and in its violent form, it has not only affected the territorial and political sovereignty of the Indian state, but also the life of the various people living in the region in incomprehensible and inexplicable terms. However, amidst the widespread sense of helplessness, there is also an overwhelming desire and force to be free from such a situation of conflict which cripples the people from all sides.

To gain a holistic understanding of the problem that has historical and contemporary dimensions, it is important to assess and understand the various facets of the problem that interact with each other.

Potentiality of development in the Northeast Bharat:

The Indian government's past and ongoing processes of national integration, state-building

and democratic consolidation have further aggravated the conflict scenario in this region. For instance, the eight states comprising the Northeast is populated by near about 40 million inhabitants who vary in language, race, tribe, caste, religion, and regional heritage. Therefore, most often, the clubbing of all these states under the tag of 'northeast' has tended to have a homogenizing effect with its own set of implications for policy formulation and implementation; not to mention local aversion to such a construct.

The politico-administrative arrangements made by the Government have also been lacking. Such as, the introduction of the Sixth Schedule Autonomous Councils (currently there are ten such Councils in the region and many more demanding such status) ended up creating multiple power centers instead of bringing in a genuine process of democratization or autonomy in the region. Moreover, as per Para 12 (A) of the Sixth Schedule clearly states that, whenever there is a conflict of interest between the District Councils and the state legislature, the latter would prevail.

The AFSPA was passed on 18 August, 1958, as a short-term measure to allow deployment of the army to counter an armed separatist movement in the Naga Hills, has been in place for the last five decades and was extended to all the seven states of the Northeast region in 1972 (with the exception of Mizoram). The AFSPA became a powerful measure for the central and the state government to act against actors challenging the political and territorial integrity of India.

Thus, the Indian army for the first time since independence was deployed to manage internal conflicts. But, instead of resolving the problem, it led to an ongoing escalation of the conflict by bringing it on a military level. The regular

violations of human rights has led to a radicalization and militarization of the region and weakened also the supporters of a political solution.

According to the Human Rights Watch Report (August 2008), “The Act violates provisions of international human rights law, including the right to life, the right to be protected from arbitrary arrest and detention, and the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. It also denies the victims of the abuses the right to a remedy.” A fact-finding commission, appointed by the government in 2004, complained that the “AFSPA has become a symbol of oppression, an object of hate and an instrument of discrimination and highhandedness”.

Conclusion:

The Northeast Bharat is geographically situated between mainland India and Southeast Asia is supposed to have had immense developmental benefits as a result of this initiative and hence, have synergy effects on reducing poverty in the region; as well as on insurgency and armed conflict. The region’s various natural resources, rich bio-diversity and enormous hydro-electricity potential, among others, could also help to overcome the widespread feeling of backwardness among the inhabitants of the Northeast.

But there is also increasing argument made that the impact of increased introduction of market imperatives in the traditional society of the region would have irreversible impact on the

people’s culture and life and it would also lead to increased settlement of mainland people to the northeast. Thereby it is of high importance, that the announced opening will take place in a regulated frame and through cooperation with the local people, otherwise it could aggravate the tensions between the center and the region.

The government has also faced criticism in the way in which it has been looking at the Northeast as an issue of territorial security rather than development per say. The fear of a growing Chinese influence, as well as, increasing cross-border terrorism (Myanmar, Bangladesh) in the region are some of the factors cited as reasons for limiting India in its attempt to open the region.

The Northeast is an important component, focuses mainly on the Northeast region of India and aims to support, facilitate and contribute to civil society engagement, participation, and intervention in the region with regard to conflict prevention. Thereby, facilitating intermediation between the various stakeholders involved in the diverse conflict constellations in the region, be it the public, civil society activists, state representatives, journalists, academicians and researchers; and contributing to the promotion of integration and socialisation into a democratic political culture through dialogue and civic education.

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THE RABHA COMMUNITY AND ITS RELATION WITH OTHER ETHNIC COMMUNITIES OF ASSAM

Charumohan Rabha

The Indian state of Assam is home to so many castes and ethnic communities. Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Jain-all live here. It may be called a micro edition of India. There are more than one hundred ethnic communities in Assam. Among them Bodo, Karbi, Tiwa, Sonowal, Deuri, Mising are prominent. The Rabha is one of the prominent ST communities in Assam. Rabha people are largely concentrated in Goalpara, Kamrup, Kokrajhar, Sonitpur, Baksha, Odalguri, Dhemaji, Golaghat, Bongaigaon of Assam. Apart from this some Rabha people reside in Meghalaya and West Bengal as well.

Modern time has brought lots of changes. Rabhas have been maintaining their traditional social system in modern times as well. Rabha community has faced hurdles; has been victimized in the past. But they have maintained their own way of life. They have contributed to the greater Assamese society while maintaining their unique identity.

The Rabhas have always maintained cordial relationship with other communities. Through peaceful co-existence with other communities and mutual co-operation, the Rabhas have been contributing to enrich our national life. A section of the Rabha community is engaged in business activities. In the Rabha community women are entitled to equal rights and opportunities with

their male counterparts. Women can also engage themselves in business etc. Rabha women are marching ahead in the field of education, business and politics.

The Rabhas have their own unique culture and language. But in communication with the rest of the Assamese society they use Assamese as the medium of communication. Almost all the ethnic communities in Assam communicate in Assamese.

The Rabha children don't take the title of the father; they take the title of the mother. Marriage is prohibited between the same titled persons. Inter community marriage was prohibited in Rabha community. But along with the passage of time some flexibility has been visible. Now a days, inter community marriage is seen among the Rabhas as well. However, there has been still some strict restriction in having marital relationship of the Rabhas with some communities. Preference is given to marriage within the community.

The Rabhas have been able to establish themselves in the field of law, medical science, engineering etc. Education is the pillar of success. To move ahead in life, education is essential. The Rabhas have progressed a lot in the field of technical education. However there is need to do more in the field of education. Nobody should

left out of education.

The Rabha community maintains strict code of conduct on certain aspects. No unethical act is permitted in the Rabha community. For example, according to the rules which are enshrined in their community's codified document, if a wife maintains secret relationship with another person or if the husband maintains a secret affair with another woman, then there is a provision for penalty. The wife who maintains an affair with another person has to pay a fine of Rs 50,000 and if the husband indulges in an affair with another woman, the husband has to pay a fine of 50000 to the head of the village. Because of such strict rules, there is no adultery in the Rabha community.

Earlier when the Rabhas were lagging behind in education, market economy did not evolve in the Rabha community. There was no market in the nearby to sell different products. Communication was difficult. People had to travel for a long time to reach the town where they could sell their products. In 4/5 villages there was only one cart to carry their products to the market in the town. They faced huge problems in buying and selling their products, mostly

agricultural products. The barter system was prevalent in the Rabha community.

Now a days the system has improved a lot. New opportunities have come, market facilities are coming to the doorstep. Market economy has evolved. Business activities have developed among communities. This has contributed to cultural exchange among different communities. Internet facilities have made things smooth.

The Rabhas were much advanced in cottage industry since ancient time. From the cotton, the Rabha women could make cloth within a night. The women prepared shield from the cotton for their husbands.

Now a days Rabha girls don't need to work hard like they used to do. The Rabha women have mastery over the art of weaving. Till today, seven Rabha weavers have been able to win medals from the President of India. This shows the Rabha women's adroitness in weaving.

Let the Rabhas make their future brighter. Let them work hard and take the community to the pinnacle of glory.

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MATRIMONIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN JAMATIA & DEBBARMA COMMUNITIES

Sahiya Jamatia

Tripura is one of the eight North-Eastern States of our country. Among 19 tribes in our state, I will discuss about the matrimonial relations between only Jamatia & Debbarma Tribes. In Tripura Debbarma tribes have a large population. Their culture, tradition, food habits etc. as well as their marriage negotiations, marriage ceremony are different from other communities.

Jamatia Communities ritual: Day before the marriage, idol of god is placed at the house along with rice beer and Ochai (traditional Priest) utters Mantra for well being of Bride & Groom. On the day of marriage, in the presence of bride & Groom, Ochai (Priest) & Ochai Khitong (Assistants of Priest only for those days), Jogalia and family members of both Bride & Groom another puja is performed by Ochai (Priest). Aayo (Helpers of Bride & Groom), bring holy water from water bodies (river, lake, stream) and by this sacred water bride and groom are bathed. After that Randhinijwk (Two selected women's from the village) helps bride to get ready and puchni (Two selected Men from the village) helps Groom to get ready. Randhinijwk & Puchni helps bride & groom with all rituals of marriage. After getting ready, bride & groom comes to the courtyard. There is a custom in our society that on their way to ashana (pulpit) of 14 Goddess and the Haiya, feet of bride and groom should not touch the soil. So plantain leaves are placed

on their path to the ashana 14 Gods and the Haiya. Then the end portions of clothes of the bride & groom are tied into a knot (goth bandhan) by placing sukui (seed of scandens, Bakhla (myrobalam seed) and coins. The Bride bow down her head before the groom. After that they proceed toward the Ashana of 14 Goddess. The bride and the groom jointly bow down their heads before the 14 Goddess. Then bride and groom circle jointly the marriage alter thrice anti-clockwise and bow before it and another four circles are done only by bride. Then groom stands on the top step of the haiya and bride stands on the second step. First Ochai (traditional Priest) and Ochaijwk (Wife of the traditional priest) pour sacred water on the head of the bride & groom. After ochai and ochaijwk, Family members (older than bride & groom) from both sides also sprinkle sacred water on the heads of the bride & groom. All of them pour water by chanting mantra. The widows and widowers are prohibited from attending this ceremony. Then they take bride and groom to a secluded room. After that, bride and groom take part in rangchak ruphai ceremony. Rangchak (The red thread) and Rukphai (the white thread) are taken as a symbol of gold and silver. The Ochai (priest) utters a mantra over a new earthen pot. The bride and groom bring out the balls from the earthen pot while keeping their faces turned away. After that

bride, groom and aayos take their meals together in one plate.

In our culture bride and groom have to live in separate rooms for 7 days. Separate rooms are made in their main dwelling house by placing partitions for the newly married couple. This temporary room is called bengkabari. The newly married couple remain separate for 7 days. After 7 days, bengkabari (Partition) is removed. During these 7 days they light two lamps and keep them on both side of the door. This function is called Chati sokmani.

Debbarma Communities Rituals: It is said that people belonging to Debbarma community are blood relatives of the king of Tripura. The Debbarma people speak the Kokborok language. In the state of Tripura, the most populous tribe is Debbarma among the 19 tribes having different cultural practices. Debbarmas are spread all over this state because of which cultural differences among different groups of Debbarma tribes are seen in the State.

Pre wedding rituals include a formal meeting between the elders of the bride's and groom's families to formally agree on different issues of marriage. Both the bride and the grooms have to take blessing of the elders and elders give both of them some money as a token of blessings. Wedding ceremony takes place at the grooms house. Few people from grooms family along with Aayajwk (The assistant of the groom) goes to the brides home. The Aayajwk then uses Jari (Traditional pot to carry holy water for the wedding ceremony) to sprinkle on the bride to make her pure and then the priest of bride recites mantras to bid her good bye from parents home then feast is served to the grooms assistant and those who came to take the bride. The bride, bridesmaids and those who come with bride are welcomed with sweets and they are all taken to a

house nearby. Then the assistants of the groom and the bride usually sit and drink. The assistant of the groom dances until they are allowed to go inside the brides house where the assistant of the groom showers the water of the jari. Similarly the assistant of the bride perform the same ritual with groom. Then the assistants give new clothes to bride and groom to wear. There is a bedi (A yard used for wedding ceremony) in which the groom is taken first and then the bride is taken in front of the door of bedi, in which there has to be two doors. First the groom has to enter the bedi by paying some money as a ritual and the bride has to do the same after the groom and later the wedding starts. The groom steps inside the bedi first and sits in a place and the bride has to go 7 times around him and then performs the rituals of putting sindoor, exchanging of rings takes place and again both of them go around 7 times in a clockwise direction. After completing the rituals inside the bedi, they have to enter their new home by walking on the banana leaf without touching the ground. The last step of the ceremony is a game in which bride and groom along with their assistants of both sides, are required to find a special object from a container full of water and other things.

Matrimonial relation between Jamatia and Debbarma communities:

Not only Jamatia and Debbarma but people from tribes like Noatia, Kaipeng, Molsom, Reang etc do not marry a person from other tribe, even if they marry the male counterpart must adopt wife's surname and have to enter Jamatia community. According to Mwchang Nipen Debbarma and Mwchang Khana Ram Reang, the reason behind not marrying a person from other tribes is that every tribe has its own tradition, so in order to preserve their original identity one should not marry a person from other tribal

community. In the olden days jhum cultivation was the main source of livelihood of tribal people. All the members of a tribal family were required to work as an unit. Both male and female member worked according to their physical capabilities. They used to live in a group within their tribe only. They did not make contact with other communities. They were always so busy in their agricultural activities that they had no time to think about interacting with other tribal communities. So they married within their own tribe only. They further added that even in 1997 tribal people used to live in groups. They did not mix with other tribal or non tribal communities.

But now a day it is not so anymore. Now tribal people do not live in isolation economically and socially. They are in contact with other tribal and non-tribal communities. Due to the influence of outside world their outlook and attitude have undergone a remarkable change. Their present style of living represents a mix of tradition and modernity. Their present style of living has deviated far from their original tradition. In olden

days, if a non-Jamatia boy wanted to marry a Jamatia girl, he had to stay in the girls house for more than 1, 2 years. He had to stay there as their worker and had to impress the girl's parents by his work. And if the parents are impressed then only they accepted him as their son in law. If a boy was not able to satisfy girl's parents by his work then they did not accept him as their son in law and sent him back to his home.

In earlier days Jamatias were not allowed to marry a person from other tribes, they can marry within jamatia tribe only. In a later stage something happened that they started accepting girls from other communities and imposed a system of changing the surname to Jamatia after marriage. The girl had to come to the home of her husband. Now everyone can get married to other tribes or communities of their choice and they are no more bound to do as they were required to do in past. Although they have all the freedom now to marry according to their choice but marrying a girl or a man from their own community is still considered as a matter of pride. ■



INTER COMMUNITY JUDICIARY SYSTEM OF ADI AND KHAMPTI TRIBES OF NAMSAI DISTRICT, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Alom Pangkom

The word “NAMSAI” is derived from Tai Khampti dialogue. The term ‘NAM’ means “Water” and ‘SAI’ means “Sand” (i.e., water and sandy areas). Namsai is one of the newly created districts of the state of Arunachal Pradesh headquartered at Namsai which was created by bifurcation of Lohit District.

Since time immemorial, the district is homeland to the Tai Khampti – Singphoo and Adi tribes. The oral history reveals that these indigenous tribes had migrated from Mongolia in almost same era and settled permanently. Since then these indigenous people have been living together as brothers. Both Khampti and Adi tribes are peace loving people in the society. Agriculture being the main sources of livelihood along with some petty businesses. Hunting and fishing is commonly practiced by these tribes.

JUDICIARY SYSTEM OF KHAMPTI AND ADI:-

The Khampti tribe has a renowned traditional administrative system of justice. Therefore, it is imperative on the part of Social Scientists to identify and investigate into the traditional village council and village authorities in order to make a proper study of the system. The system prevailing in the district has proved to be important in the

socio-cultural context of the tribal people. The traditional democratic institutions, viz., the village council of the Khampti tribe is functioning effectively and their role in the society is still remarkable. The decision or verdict delivered by the council is duly respected by the people as well as by the administration.

The Adi tribe has also a strong traditional administrative system of justice named “Kebang” which is being practiced since time immemorial. It is the pillar of Adi society, and encompasses all affairs with regard to societal administration, maintenance of law & order and socio-cultural life. The genesis of the Kebang is spontaneous and highly participatory. There are 3(three) categories of institutions of Kebang viz.,

1. Dolung Kebang or village council is the body of village elders.
2. Banggo Kebang or area Kebang, is formed comprising several village.
3. The highest body of Kebang institution comprising several areas of communities is called Adi Baane Kebang (ABK), which is also an apex body of Kebang of the Adi society.

It is pertinent to mention here that the learned and the elderly persons from the community is

invited to attend the council meeting to witness the judgment by both the communities of the district.

Initially the matrimonial relationship between the Khamti and Adi tribe was negligible, but as of today many educated youths have tied up their nuptial knots with each other in the community; apart from this, they are very good friends, helping each other in need by sharing basic amenities etc. Besides these, they use to invite each other in social gatherings, special events and carry out business together.

The youths of both the communities jointly conduct various socio-cultural activities like

organizing inter-tribe sports competitions, inter-tribe cultural exchange programme to strengthen the relationship and friendship amongst the younger generation. Interaction with the people of both the communities with respect to the relationship between them, it is revealed that the matrimonial alliance has further strengthened the relationship between the communities. Moreover, youths are very active in building healthy relations with each other for building a good social environment in the district.

So, we can conclude that the inter-community relations between the Khampti and the Adi are cordial, friendly and happily co-existent. ■



Traditional House of Adi Tribes

INTERCOMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP OF GAROS WITH OTHERS – PAST AND PRESENT

Abhishek Gupta &
Smt. Silchina G. Momin

A brief history of Meghalaya as a state: Meghalaya, which literally means “abode of clouds” in Sanskrit, consists of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills. To the unfamiliar, communities living in Meghalaya appear to be homogenous ones. In reality, however, they are socially, politically and culturally not only heterogeneous but are also defined by distinct tribal and clan markers. Three major tribes, namely, the Khasi, the Garo (belong to the Bodo family of the Tibeto-Burman race and primarily settled in the western part of the state) and the Jaintia dominate the State. Each of them had their own kingdoms until the British rulers annexed the Khasi Hills in 1833, Jaintia Hills in 1835 and Garo Hills in 1872-73. With the conquest of the Khasi Hills, Shillong was made the capital of British Assam in 1864. These annexations brought about historic changes in the demography, polity and economy of the state with the gradual decay of feudal institutions and the rise of capitalist economic entities as witnessed in other parts of India. Northeastern region. Apart from the three major tribes there are several tribal populations settling in the state since its inception. They are Bodo-Kacharis, Hajongs, Hmars, Rabhas, Dimasa-Kacharis, Mikir, Mizo (Lushai) Tribes, Naga Tribes, etc. The non-tribal communities comprise of Bengalis, Marwaris, Nepalis and small number

of communities from different parts of India.

The state is the product of movement for the formation of Eastern Hill State consisting of all the hill areas and the contiguous areas inhabited by people of the same racial stock in Assam after India’s independence. When the tribal people in the Northeastern region began to take a more vocal interest about their own future as early as April 1945, the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo people also raised their voices. In 1969, the Indira Gandhi government intended to fulfill the long standing demands of the hill tribes by providing them an autonomous state within the state of Assam covering all the autonomous districts of Assam, i.e., the Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Mikir Hills (Karbi Anglong), North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasao) and Lushai Hills districts. However, the tribes in North Cachar Hills and Mikir Hills were not enthusiastic about the movement and preferred to remain within Assam. The Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act 1969 provided Meghalaya, which comprises the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills district and Garo Hills district, an autonomous state which came into effect on April 2, 1970. Subsequently it became a full-fledged state of India on January 21, 1972 with the passing of North Eastern Areas (Re-Organisation) Act, 1971.

The Garos:-

The Garos have a number of dialects and cultural groups. Each of them originally settled at a particular area of the Garo Hills and outlying plain lands are as follows: -

A·wes settled in the whole of Northern hills and the plains at their foot.

A·kawes: The plain Garos of Assam are known as A·kawes.

Chesak: Sub-tribe occupies the North Eastern Hills touching the A·wes in North.

Duals: Occupies the areas immediately to the south of the Chesaks.

Matchi: Inhabits the central valley of the Simsang River to the West Duals, they occupy the heart of the Garo Hills and were for the production.

The Matabeng or Matjanchi are found in areas north of the Simsang River. It is likely that they are mingling of the Am·bengs and Matchis.

By far the most numerous division of Garos is that of the Am·bengs. They occupy nearly half the area of the districts including Tura Town. They occupy the whole of the Western Hill and the greater part of districts of the south of the central range. There is also a land of Am·beng settlement in the south eastern most corner of the district.

The Chiboks live immediately to the east of the Am·bengs. They are few in number whose myth and general culture show considerable variations from those of other dialectical groups.

The Rugas reside to the south of the Chiboks in the low hills bordering on the Mymensing district. They are also a small and diminishing group whose general culture, dances and songs are different from other Garos.

The Ganchings live in the south of the district

bordering Mymensing along the dancing river. They are famous for their craftsmanship in sculpture and house building.

The Atongs forms an important division of the tribe. They occupy the south eastern portion of the Garo Hills bordering Mymensing. They have quite a different dialect from the other Garos. Their dialect is more akin to the Koch language than to other Garo dialects.

The Megams are found on the eastern border of the East Garo Hills and in the West Khasi Hills districts. They are called Lyngams by the Khasi and are fusion of Garos and the Khasis, can be taken as a hybrid race. Their appearance and customs resembles more closely the Garos but their language is more akin to the Khasis.

But though Garos are ridden with dialectical groups and varied cultural traits, their roots are basically the same and all of them have the same tribal consciousness. The Garo community is a very close knit society with true feelings for the community at large and lending a helping hand without any ego.

Inter tribal relations :-

According to the Indian Census of 2001, the population of Meghalaya was 23,18,822, which increased to 29,66,889 in 2011 Census. The 17 notified STs of the state consist of 2,555,861 persons in 2011, constituting about 86.1 percent of the total state population. The remaining 14.1 percent of the population is non-tribal. The Khasis constitute 49.54 percent followed by the Garos with 30.86 percent.

The relation between the three major communities and other smaller tribes in Meghalaya were relatively cordial till the first half of the 1990s. Ethnic tensions that erupted in the state since 1972 till 1992 were mainly between the indigenous tribals and non-tribal “settler”

communities. It is believed that the cause of such rising tensions was the fear of the major indigenous tribes, i.e., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos, of being swamped demographically, culturally as well as economically by the non-tribals. The Bengali migrants came in the Garo Hills along with the British between 1863 and 1866 to serve as clerks in the colonial administration. The Nepalese, also known as Gorkhas, constitute one of the other major migrants in Meghalaya. They were recruited in the British army, and also as watchman and peon to assist the colonial administration. After retirement from the British services many of them preferred to stay back and settle permanently.

The non-tribals migrants were encouraged to do business in the state. As a result within a span of few years they began to control business and occupy most of the important commercial areas, and governmental and financial institutions. During the colonial period there was no sense of any adversarial discord between the “settler” community and the “indigenous” community, on the contrary it exhibits an era of shared experiences coupled with common trade, friendship and a cultural space. Of course this might have been possible because the common “adversary” of the settlers and the indigenous members were the British and as such narration about that period depicts mutually desired and cooperative interactions between the settler and the indigenous members.

The period since 1993 has seen a relatively cordial relation between the tribal and non-tribal communities in the state. However, there emerged periodic estrangements between the tribal communities of the state. The causes of such estrangements range from minor incidents to policies adopted by the three major communities of the state, and which are, in most cases,

subsequently upheld by the state government to protect their economic interests, identity and land.

Major clashes between Garos and other tribes :-

Garo-Khasi relations

The tussle between the GSU (Garo Student Union) and KSU (Khasi Student Union) over the transfer of Meghalaya Board of Secondary Education (MBOSE) office from Tura to the state capital Shillong made GSU to openly demand for the creation of Garoland. KSU demanded the bifurcation of MBOSE with the appointment of a secretary each for Tura and Shillong, and a full-fledged chairman. The KSU called a three-day bandh on the issue between June 23 and 25, 2005 affecting normal life in Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The agitating KSU activists also torched government vehicles and properties. The protest by GSU over the Meghalaya government's plan to bifurcate MBOSE led to the death of scores of student protesters in police firing to quell the protest. With such tragic incident the Garo students believe that their interests would be protected and best served only with a separate statehood. The tussle ended with the establishment of MBOSE Shillong office but the scar of the tussle still lingers and haunts the social and political fabric now and then.

Garo-Rabha relations:

The two days bandh imposed by Rabhas on Christmas eve in December 2009 demanding Rabha Hasong state led to clashes between bandh supporters and Garo villagers resulting in one death. The Garo villagers, who were moving on foot to the nearby markets for last minute Christmas shopping, were obstructed and intimidated. The GNC (Garo National Council) questioned the bandh on Christmas eve stating

that such a strike is a serious insult to the Garo nationals residing in Goalpara and Kamrup areas of Assam and Meghalaya which has only one route between Tura and Shillong via Guwahati. The GNC also warned that continued provocations will lead to similar strike that can be reciprocated during the festivals of the Rabhas.

Conclusion :-

Conflicts in the Indian state of Meghalaya have shifted from the indigenous tribes and the settler communities to the indigenous tribal communities by the turn of the twentieth century, although the relations between indigenous tribes and the settler communities again continues to simmer in the recent years. The concerns of the tribals in the region like protecting identity, culture and land has to be done in other ways without restricting the movement of people across state borders.

Given that economic insecurity, especially employment opportunities in public sector, is the primary cause of tensions between the majority indigenous communities in Meghalaya,

Equitable distribution of economic resources would be one giant step towards reducing discontentment in the backward areas of the state such as Garo Hills. Since the new millennium various NGOs of the state intensified their movement to secure employment opportunities and check influx of people from Bangladesh and other parts of India, and increasing land alienation. Hence, while employment opportunities is the main determining factor in maintaining the relations between the three major indigenous communities; the relationship between the three major communities and other ethnic minorities centres around the retention and recognition of their ethnic identities and existence in the state. ■



You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul.

Swami Vivekananda

THE ROLE OF NALBARI DISTRICT IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT OF INDIA

Partha Pratim Mazumder

CHAPTER — I INTRODUCTION

Importance of the study:

Assam had also fully joined the freedom struggle of India against the British. After the Treaty of Yandabo (1826) the British supremacy was established in Assam like other parts of India. But the freedom loving Assamese people had fought against the British in different ways and in various phases. The first phase of the revolt was Gomdhar Konwar (1828) to Moniram Dewan (1857). After that the peasant uprisings of 1861 to 1894 was the prominent example of rising by the Assamese people before the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921-22. In 5 June, 1921, the Assam Provincial Congress Committee was established and after that till 1947 the Assamese people had fought against the alien rulers under the banner of the Indian National Congress.

“The Role of Nalbari District in the Freedom Movement of India”.

Historical research attempts to establish facts so as to arrive at conclusions concerning past events. The main purpose of historical research therefore, is to arrive at an accurate account of the past so as to gain a clearer perspective of the present time. Every country is divided into provinces or regions and the study of regional history is very important for the enrichment of

national history. The study of regional history is very important in the present perspective. So a critical study on Nalbari District is essential.

Review of Related Literature :

The review of related literature is a task that continued throughout the preparation of the thesis or dissertation. Once a topic has been decided upon it is essential to review all relevant materials which have a bearing on the topic. It is necessary to show how the problem under investigation relates to previous research studies. There were many works have been done in the national and state level, (specially Assam) on the freedom movement of India. But nobody has made specially any attempt to the study on the *Role of Nalbari District in the Freedom Movement of Indian*.

Following are the related studies and these studies helped the investigator to prepare the present study.

1) Sumit Sarkar's *Modern India* (1885-1947); is a important work on the freedom movement of India. From 1885 to 1947 he comprehensively discusses the important events of India. He also mentions the peasant uprising of Kamrup and Darrang. This book was very useful in preparing the present study.

2) K.N. Dutta's *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam* is also a very important book on the Freedom Movement of India. In this book,

the writer has described the role of Assam in the freedom movement of India. From 1826 to 1947 he discusses all the important issues related to the freedom movement of India.

3) Amalendu Guha's *Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle*

4) *Electoral Politics in Assam 1826 to 1947*, is another important book related to the freedom movement of India in the context of Assam. The view of Prof. Guha is more helpful for the planning of this research work.

5) H.K. Barpujari's *Political History of Assam (1826-1919)*, (Vol-I), is also very important book related the present work. This book reflected the political situation of Assam from 1826 to 1919. The Book also was very helpful in the research work.

6) A.C. Bhuyan & Sibopada De's *Political History of Assam (1920-1939)*, (Vol.II) and III, is a very authentic book on the freedom movement of Assam from 1920 to 1939. It is also a valuable related literature of the proposed research work.

7) Aran Bhuyan's *National Upsurge in Assam* (ed.) is a valuable book on the freedom movement of India in the context of Assam. It is a valuable related literature of the proposed research work.

8) Meeta Deka's *Student Movement in Assam* is a very sourceful book. In this book Dr. Deka mainly highlighted the role of Assamese students on the freedom movement of India. This book is very sourceful for related the present work.

9) Anuradha Dutt's *Assam in the Freedom Movement* is also very important related literature of the proposed research work.

10) Haren Kalita's (ed.); *Biyalliskar Nalbari* is a very important book and this book had highlighted the role of Nalbari in the Quit India Movement of 1942. It is very important related work for the proposed research work.

The analysis of reviews from various books,

articles and reports shows that the proposed research work "Role of Nalbari District in the Freedom Movement of India" is a very important topic in present situation.

Scope of the Study :

We know that, history is an authentic record of human achievement. It is not only a chronological list of incidents but an exact account of the relationships between persons, events, places and times. History is the mirror of the past, the lesson of the present and future. We generally use history to understand the past in the mirror of the present. The historical discussions may be indicated towards an individual, a notion, an excitement, or an institution.

By the term 'scope', we mean the breadth, comprehensiveness, variety and extent of learning experiences, provided by the study of a particular subject. At the old age, history was a mere collection of legendary stories, heroic ballads and folk talks, meant to be recited for their moral value and at the same time to delight the audience. But at present, no phase of human activity falls outside the field and jurisdiction of history. Today the subject of history includes not only a study of the political activities of man but also a study of his achievements in the physical, social, economic, religious, artistic, cultural and scientific fields. Like world and national history, the scope of regional history is also very important. The local events, persons and places can give a sense of reality and vividness to many topics of history. Hence, regional history can be made the foundation of the national history.

Our area of the study is Nalbari district of Assam. Among our study area it has been trying to highlight how the people of these two areas had actively participated in the struggle of freedom movement. I have realized in our field, there are various scopes. The open interview with the freedom fighters, old men and other persons

of outstanding personalities of villagers are an important source material of first hand study. The micro journals of the locality, periodicals of schools and colleges, souvenirs of silver jubilee, golden jubilee and centenary celebration of eminent persons of the locality is also very forceful data for every researcher.

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the study are proposed as following:

- 1) To study the political condition of Nalbari district.
- 2) To find out the social and economic consciousness of Nalbari District.
- 3) To examine the role of various uprisings towards national movement.
- 4) To find out the participation of the people of Nalbari areas in the freedom movement of India.
- 5) To draw conclusions on the basis of the study.

Methodology :

The scientific research methodology in collecting information is adopted in relevant matters. The data are collected from various manuscripts, records, gazetteers, Government reports of Assam State Archives and consulted various published books, articles and other relevant materials from various libraries. Moreover oral sources are used.

Sources :

The sources of study can be broadly divided into two categories :

Primary sources :

- i) Intensive fieldwork in the remote areas of Nalbari districts.
- ii) Contacts with old freedom fighters, academicians and village old man.

iii) Private papers, Government Records, Gazetteers, News Papers and Census reports

Secondary Sources:

- i) Book and folk literature.

Chapterisation:

In order to study the role of Nalbari in the Freedom Movement of India, the research work is divided into six interdependent chapters. In the first chapter Introduction, a brief description of the geo-political information about Nalbari district, the process of methodology of material collection and scope of the study are given.

In the second chapter, Participation of the People of Nalbari in the Freedom Movement of India, described how the masses of Nalbari area had been influenced by the Indian National Movement and how they fully participated in the three phases of movements, viz., Non-cooperation (1921-22), Civil Disobedience (1930-34) and Quit India (1942) Movement, and also emphasized on the direct and indirect support of the women also touched of these two districts. In course of discussion the impact of this great uprising and the response and interest of the common people living in these two districts have been focused on.

The third chapter is Conclusion and it focuses mainly the summary of the whole study. The highlight of this chapter also mentions the finding of the study. What was the important result came from the study by analyzing the facts.

CHAPTER-II

PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE OF NALBARI IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT OF INDIA

In this chapter we will mainly discuss the participation of the people of Nalbari in the Freedom Movement of India. Before discussing the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921-22,

discussion participation of Gandhiji in the Indian Politics in 1919 is very important.

Non-Cooperation Movement and Nalbari :

On 13 November, 1920 Nabinchandra Bardoloi had delivered his first lecture on Non-Cooperation at Belsor 51 of present Nalbari district. After Belsor Nabinchandra Bardoloi, Debendranath Uzir and Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury also addressed a meeting of the Kamrup Jatiyan Unnati Bisoini Sabha at Pokowa, (Nalbari) and in this meeting the non-cooperation agenda was discussed and people were asked to participate in the national movement. The meeting of Belsor and Pokowa had inspired the people of east and west Nalbari very rapidly. At that time, more, than 137 (approx.) persons had directly joined in the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921-22 in present Nalbari district. Many persons of Nalbari area give up the Government job and joined the movement. At that time greater Nalbari area had produced many state level leaders. Among them Joy Chandra Choudhury (B.L.) of Kaithalkuchi, Dr. Banikinkar Goswami of Nalbari, Aamrit Chandra Sarmah of Deharkuchi, Dharmarwar Sarmah of Deharkuchi, Chakreswar Sarma of Bihampur (Belsor), Mohidhar Sarma of Nalbari, Dr. Damodar Sarmah of Chandkuchi, Pandit Pratap Chandra Goswami of Nalbari Satra, Gaurikanta Talukdar of Chamata, Bandar Ali of Balikuchi, Bakuluram Kakati of Ulubari, Rajanikanta Goswami of Naptipara (Jagra) and Puma Chandra Talukdar of Sialmari (Tihu). In Nalbari, among 137 participators persons were arrested and left off, 6 persons were convicted and 35 persons were given rigorous imprisonment. All the students of Gurdon school left the studies and joined the Non-Cooperation Movement. From 1921 to 1926 in Gurdon School of Nalbari, there were no students. 55 Like APCC, in Nalbari Congress Committee had taken step against opium addicts. The Congress volunteers

had moved village to village to stop the bad habits of opium. They had organized meetings in the remote areas of Nalbari for fulfillment of this mission. Haricharan Barman of Nalbari arrested on 25.05.21 u/s 379/5111.P.C. for attempting to snatch Ganja for a purchaser. A famous poet of the Assamese literature Roghunath Choudhury had played a very key role in the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921-22 in Nalbari. He was arrested in 16-12-1921 and given one year rigorous imprisonment by the British. He has a great orator and social organizer. At that time many school students of Nalbari area had played very prominent role in the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921-22.

In greater Belsor area Dr. Lakshmi Kanta Barman of Nalicha, Balek Chandra Barman of Rupiabathan, Chakreswar Sarma of Bihampur, Mukut Ram Barman of Bihampur, and Pran Nath Bharali of Belsor had played a leading role for the course of the Non-Cooperation movement. In greater Tihu area Kandarpa Kumar Barman who resigned the Headmastership of Tihu M.E. School and joined the Non-Cooperation Movement, Ganesh Narayan Choudhury of Makhibaha Gajendra Nath Deka of Tihu and Pran Kanta Sarma of Mathurapur (Tihu) was the leading personalities in the movement of 1921-22- Like this in the other places of Nalbari area viz. Deharkuchi, Bahjani Pokowa, Barama, Tamulpur and Kaithlkuchi, the spirit of movement had upgraded by the local leaders.

Nevertheless, the role of Nalbari was very prominent in the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921-22. Mainly the message of Gandhiji was the main guideline of the masses of Nalbari. Many students of schools and colleges left their alien institution and joined the mass movement. In this movement in the production of Khadi the role of women were most prominent and indirectly they were boiling the movement by encouraging their husband. Actually, the movement of 1921-

22 was a movement of social reforms also. Gandhiji encouraged the people to give up the opium habits and in Nalbari area also a anti-opium movement had started. The acceptance of Khadi by the masses of greater Nalbari area was another achievement of this movement. It was a path of preparation for the future movement of 1930-32 and 1942.

Civil Disobedience Movement and Nalbari :

At the time of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-34 present Nalbari district was amalgamated along with Kamrup district. But the role of greater Nalbari area was very prominent in this movement. The Congress Organisation of various remote areas of Nalbari area was very strong. Bahjeni, Deharkuchi Tihu, Barma Chamata, Kaithalkuchi and greater Barbhag area had played a veiy dominant role in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-34. After the Dandi March of Gandhiji the wave of Civil Disobedience Movement had touched the people of Nalbari area and they had genuinely joined this movement.

On 26 January 1930 the flag hoisting ceremony had also held in the various places of grater Nalbari area viz, Nalbari, Chamata, Chandkuchi etc.

In 1932 one public meeting was held in Kalag Village and Tarun Ram Phukan, Omeo Kumar Das and Siddhi Nath Sarma had lecture in this meeting. More than hundred students had join this meeting and total participator was above five to six hundreds. After end of the meeting foreign cloths were bum in a burning ceremony.

In 1930 Mohidhar Sarma was the president of the Nalbari Congress. Other prominent leaders were Dr. Bani Kingkar Goswami, Dr. Lakshmi Kanta Barman, Amrit Sarma, Golok Goswami, Hussain Ali, Kanak Chandra Barman, Hem Chandra Mazumdar (Namdanga) Bhupendra Malla Buzarbaruah (Chandkuehi), Satish Ch.

Choudhury, Haladhar Chakravarty (Janigog), Surendra Nath Das (Barama), Sriman Prafulla Goswami (Nalbari Satra), Rajani Goswami (Bali Satrap, Prabhat Ch. Goswami (Nalbari) Boli Ram Koch (Khudra Sankora), Bishwanath Sarma (Budrukuchi), Nabin Ch. Sarma (Datra), Payodhar Sarma (Bahjani) etc.

The Congress workers of Nalbari had established their office near the Nalbari Railway Station and it was the head office of the North Kamrup.¹¹⁶ After the arrest of Gandhiji in 5 May, 1930 the Civil Disobedience Movement had spread all over the country. In Nalbari area also many students has left the school and joined the movement. At that time the total number of the students of the Government schools in Assam were 15, 186 and 3, 117 school students were left the Government school.¹¹⁷ The Congress workers had arrange processions and they had picketing before the shops of the foreign cloths and opium shops. In the time of picketing many Congress workers had arrested by the police. There were 219(approx.) people of greater Nalbari area had actively participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement.¹¹⁸ Among 219 active participators 34 persons were arrested and left off, and 74 persons were rigorous imprisonment.

The student community of Nalbari had also played a very key role in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-34. Students leaders like Sriman Prafulla Goswami, Gaurisankar Bhattacharjya, Priyanath Goswami, Mahendra Nath Deka, Maslesh Ali and Moni Medhi had played a very prominent role. The students of the Gurdon school left the studies and joined the movement.

After the arrest of Gandhiji on January 4, 1932, a huge procession was taken out on January 5, 1932, by the students of Gurdon School and they protested the arrest of Gandhiji by chanting slogan like 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai' 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai'.

etc. After end of the procession one public meeting was held in Nalbari town and student leaders of Nalbari Priyanath Goswami and Moslehuddin Ahmed had delivered their lecture before the masses. After the end of the meeting the police of Nalbari had arrested these student leaders.

The first phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement had ended in 1932 and from 1932 to 1934 was its second phase. The people of greater Nalbari area had fully participated in these two phases of movement. Relating this matter K.N. Dutta observed, — ‘Assam’s record of participation in this second phase of the Congress movement for freedom was thus kept high. The campaign dragged on ‘till May, 1934, when it was mutually abandoned by the Congress. Gandhiji’s visit to Assam in the same year on the mission of Harijan uplift gave an impetus to the constructive programme of the Congress which continued to be pursued in rural areas.

Quit India and August Revolution and Nalbari :

The Quit India Movement of 1942 was the last movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi under the banner of the Indian National Congress. Nalbari, one of the remotest part of India, had played a significant and heroic role in the revolution of 1942 aiming at achieving independence as per Mahatma’s call or die.

The experience of 1921-22 and 1930-32 had helped the people of greater Nalbari area to fully participated in the movement of 1942. Pokowa, Dharmapur, Upper Barbhag and Bahjani Mauza (fiscal unit) was the highly political conscious area of Nalbari district. At the beginning of the Quit India Movement, the Mauza Congress Committee had established in every Mauza of Nalbari area. 133 For the spread of the revolutionary ideas to the village area was the main duty of these Mouza Congress. To continue of the course of revolution

one Central Committee also established in Nalbari area and members of this committee was Bishwa Nath Sarma, Haladhar Chakravorty, Ghayashyam Goswami, Bhairab Sarma, Chandrakanta Talukdar, Umakanta Sarma, Prabhat Sarma, Dani Haloi, Dhoni Nazir, Surendra Nath Sarma, Suren Malakar, Pratap Ch. Goswami, Sarbeswar Goswami, Braja Gupta and Dharma Sarma. The president of this Central Committee was Bishwa Nath Sarma and secretary was Haladhar Chakravorty. This Central Congress Committee had controlled the movement in greater North Kamrup area and Bahjani was its head-office.

At the first part of the August, 1942 the public meetings were held in the various part of the Nalbari area. In 9 August, 1942 one big public meeting were held in Barkuriha village and thousand of people were attended this meeting. In the last part of the August, 1942 the public meetings were held in Chamata and Kaithalkuchi. Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury was the president of the meeting of Chamata. After end of the meeting one big procession had started and this peaceful procession had going on to Nalbari. It inspired the people for joining the mass movement.

In Nalbari the Congress organization was very strong. Like Santi Sena, ‘Suicide Squad’ also organized. Women also joined in the Congress camp as the Congress volunteer.

In Barbhag area, Pabindra Nath Sarma, in Chamata area Gangadhar Choudhury in Belsor area Prabhat Chandra Sarma, in Barma area Surendra Nath Das and B.K. Bhandari had led the movement.

According to the Government record there were 513 (approx) persons had actively joined at Nalbari area in the Quit India Movement of 1942-43. Among 513 persons 133 persons were arrested and left off, 20 persons were arrested as trial prisoner and 54 persons were given rigorous imprisonment.

The several Congress camps had established in the remote areas of Nalbari. Among these camps Chamata, Belosr, Tihu, Barama, Bahjani, Deharkushi and Ajra were most prominent. The Congress volunteers collected rice and money from villagers as donation for national movement. Although at that time the economic condition of the people were not good, yet they donated small portion of their small treasury. For the production of Khaddar, the role of women of Nalbari were very prominent. They also played a very active part in the political meetings and processions. At that time almost all the male persons were joined the mass movement and the women were managed their home and their child. It was the noble contribution of the women.

The police atrocities against the Congress workers was very strong during the Quit India Movement. Against the police violence the Congress volunteers had played a very prominent role. In Nalbari area for protection of the police atrocity these Congress volunteers had always alert the villagers in any time.

In Nalbari area, for the progress of Quit India Movement some persons had played a leading role. Among them Bishwa Nath Sarma (Budrukuchi), Haladhar Chakravarty (Janigog), Dhaneswar Goswami (Bahjani), Ghyanashyam Goswami (Bahjani), Chandrakanta Talukdar (Bahjani), Krishna Sarma (Budrukuchi), Bhairab Sarma (Bahjani) Dharma Sarma (Nalbari), Balabhadra Goswami (Bahjani), Saraswati Majumdar (Bhadra), Naren Talukdar (Bhadra), Ram Chandra Sarma (Nandagram), Kripanath Sarma (Madhapur), Sarat Ch. Sarma (Nandagram), Dijen Malla Buzarbarua (Chandkuchi), Prabir Malla Buzarbarua (Chandkuchi), Lakshmi Kanta Sarma (Budrukuchi), Somnath Kalita (Janigog), Gopal Medhi (Bahjani), Paramananda Talukdar (Bahjani), Upendra Nath Sarma (Bahjani), Tryloka Mishra (Janigog), Rajani Kanta Sarma (Ajra),

Pasupati Sarma (Azra), Jit Ram Baishya (Janigog), Dehiram Barman (Pokowa), Lakshi Barman, Purnapati Dutta (Pokowa), Karuna Kanta Goswami (Bamarddi), Pratap Chakravorty (Bongaon), Ramani Deka (Barnardi), Chakreswar Sarma (Bihampur), Dr. Prabhat Ch. Sarma (Pokowa), Uttam Ch. Deka, Mahinath Goswami, Sriman Prafula Goswami (Nalbari Satra) Hari Charan Pathak (Japarkuchi), Gopi Goswami (Nalbari Satra), Bishwa Goswami (Nalbari Satra), Hem Barma Mazumdar (Nandgaon), Dr. Bani Kingkar Goswami (Nalbari), Baliram Tahbildar (Nalbari, Chock Bazar), Kalindra Kalita (Nalbari Chock Bazar), Dr. Harekrishna Goswami (Khudia Satra), Satish Ch. Sarma (Barmurikona), Kushal Kr. Sarma (Malikuchi), Gopal Goswami (Nalbari Satra), Samudra Pathak (Japarkuchi), Kanak Ch. Barma, (Barkura), Golok Narayan Goswami (Nalbari), Prabhat Ch. Sarma (Kakaya) Ganga Choudhury Chamata), Surendra Nath Sarma (Chamata), Panchanon Sarma (Chamata), Pushparam Barman (Chamata Surendra Nath Barman (Chamata), Pratap Ch. Talukdar (Belsor), Suredra Nath Malakar (Belsor), Bharat Sen Deka (Belsor), Tarun Sen Deka (Belsor), Chandra Mazumdar (Belsor), Gopal Das (Pipilibari), Lakshi Barman (Chamata), Bhabani Bhatta (Helosa), Prabhat Ch. Goswami (Kaihati), Alit Barman (Gamerimuri), Diparu Talukdar (Gamerimuri), Raghu Nath Bhattacharya (Tihu), Prasanna Pathak (Tihu), Sarat Ch. Talukdar (Tihu), Satyanarayan Deka (Tihu), Ganeswar Sarma Bhagabati (Makhibaha), Pabindra Nath Sarma (Barkuriha), Gopal Sarma, Keshab Deka (Samarkuchi), Dhareswar Sarma (Baharghat), Narendra Nath Choudhury (Sanekuchi), Krishnanath Sarma (Bamungaon) and Chakreswar Bhattacharya (Kaniha).

Nalbari and Individual Satyagraha :

Before the beginning of the Quit India Movement Gandhiji started the new weapon of struggle individual Satyagraha. In greater Nalbari area

some prominent leaders of Assam and local leaders had participated in the Individual Satyagraha.

CHAPTER- III

CONCLUSION

Assam came under the Burmese control from 1816 to 1825 and after the defeat of Burmese the British captured Assam from Burmese by the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo (24 February, 1826). The Treaty of Yandabo ended the long about six hundred years of the Ahom rule and established the British Raj in the annals of Assam.

The Assamese people hatred the alien rule and within two years of the British foot-hold in Assam the first resistance movement broke out in 1828 under the leadership of Gomdhar Konwar the nobles of the Ahom royal family. After this rebellion in 1829 another prince of the Ahom nobility had revolted against the British. The third attempt against the British was made by a group of nobles lead by Pealiar Bar Gohgain allies Dhanjoy in the beginning of 1930. The other persons of this rebellion were Jewram Dulia Barua, Rupchand Knowar, Haranath and Boom Singpho. But following all the rising had failed and it was suppressed by the British.

In 1857, the revolt of Maniram Dewan, Peali Barua, Sheikh Formood Ali and Bahadur Gaonbura was very momentum in the history of freedom struggle in Assam. The sacrifice of Maniram and Peali was the heroic example before the eyes of the every Assamese.

After the Great Revolt of 1857, from 1861 to 1894 was the period of peasant uprisings in the history of Assam.

The role of raij mel and peasant uprising was very significant for arousing the consciousness among the masses against the foreign rule. Before the freedom movement of 1921-22, it was the preparation of the people of Assam.

The birth of the Assam Association in 1903 was the important event in the history of 20th Century Assam. It was mainly a socio-political organization and for the political and educational life of the Assam, the role of this organization was very prominent. Manik Chandra Barua, Ghanashyam Barua, Jagannath Barua, Faiznur Ali and Raja Probhat Chandra Barua took the leading part in organizing the Association. After that public leaders and members of the legal profession including Tarun Ram Phukan, Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Kuladhar Chaliha, Chandra Nath Sarmah, Padma Nath Gohain Barua were intimately joined with it.

After the end of the First World War in 1918, the political base became agitated throughout the world. In India after the Great War, the start of Khilafat Movement in 1919 and the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-21 was the important event in the history of freedom movement of India. To counteract the movement, Rowlatt Acts was passed and Martial Law was promulgated by the British Government.

The year 1915 was very important in the history of India, because Gandhiji has returned to his homeland from South Africa. The participation of Gandhiji in the Indian politics was the very momentum event in the history of modern India. His policy of peace and non-violence was the main guideline of the freedom movement of India.

The Nagpur session of Indian National Congress was held in 1920 and this session the Non-Cooperation resolution had accepted by CWC. After that the historic Non-Cooperation Movement had started all over the country under the able guidance of Gandhiji. Assam had also fully participated in this calling of Gandhiji. In 1921, APCC had established and the people of Assam hardly joined this movement. People of Nalbari had also participated in this movement along the

people of Assam and India. Follow the call of Gandhiji like the other parts of the country, in Nalbari area also lawyers had suspended their practice and the students also give up their studies and joined the movement. Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Chandra Nath Sarma and Kuladhar Chaliha campaigned through Assam, Police atrocities were increased and the people were arrested and jailed. The campaigning was held against foreign cloths, Opium shops, liquor shops and Ganja Shops. In 1921-22 many Government employees resigned their jobs and joined the movement. Imprisonment and fines were the order of the day. After the "Chauri Chaura Incident" (5 February, 1922), the Non-Cooperation Movement came to be halted by Gandhiji in 1922. After that leaders like Chitta Ranjan Das, Motilal Nehru and Madan Mohan Malaviya, with a view to carrying struggle to the forum of the Legislature organized the Swarajya Party. Other leaders and Congress workers were devoted to constructive activities like Khadi and cottage industries. In Nalbari area also local leaders and workers of Congress had engaged himself in the development of the Khadi programme and prohibition of opium.

After a long gap, in 1930 next phase of the struggle started with Gandhiji's salt Satyagraha. At that time in Assam D.P.I. Mr. J.R. Cunningham issued a circular prohibiting joining of students in political activities. After this circular, the Assam Students' Conference giving a call to students to boycott the Government educational institutions and joined to the freedom struggle. The students of greater Nalbari area had also left school and joined the Civil Disobedience Movement vigorously. Although at first the picketing was held in the educational institutions, gradually it extended to the grass-root level. The students and Congress volunteers had picketed before the shops of foreign cloths, Ganja, liquor and opium. The jails of Assam were filled by the trial

prisoners. The movement continued till 1934, with a temporary suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement in 1931 from March to December as a result of Gandhi Irwin Pact on March 4, 1931. After that Gandhiji joined the Round Table Conference at London, but he returned from R.T.C. with empty hand and was arrested on his arrival which was a signal to the country to resume Civil Disobedience Movement. In May, 1934 the Civil Disobedience Movement was virtually abandoned by the AICC.

After the first and second visit (1921, 1926) in April 1934 he undertook Harijan tour and came to Assam as well. In his third visit, Gandhiji visited various places of Assam, viz. Dhubri, Barpeta, Tezpur, Guwahati, Nagaon, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. Gandhiji's visit had inspired the people of Assam for jumping the struggle movement very vigorously.

During the War-time the knocking of Japan at the eastern end of the country had threatened the situation of Assam. At that time all train were captured by the British military and for mass people there were no train for communication. So, for the welfare of the laymen of the country the Santi Sena were organized by the instruction of the Central Committee of the National Congress. In Assam also the Congress organized Santi Sena to build up morals of the people and maintain internal peace. The Santi Senas were trained in semi military pattern and organized training campus in every village. Thus, during the period of Quit India Movement, Assam was filled with training campus and flooded with Santi Senas. This programme was started in 1940 and it continued till 1942. During the course of the movement the Santi Senas had played a very vital role in all over Assam. At that time it was the aim of every one to hamper the British with war preparation. The Japanese Army gradually entering the borders of Assam and Assam was

partially going to a battle field. So, the British Government established Military Camps almost every important places of Assam. The Santi Sena, the students and the underground Congress workers influenced by the Jayprakash Narayan came out the hamper of the British War efforts. On 26 August, 1942 a organized attack were held at Sarbhog under the leadership of Brojanath Sarmah. Under Sarmah's leadership a group of people made a mid-night raid on the aerodrome at Sapna (a village) on the bank of the river Beki. The mob destroyed military dumps, the MES Office, labourers sheds etc. This attack was the challenge before the British Government. The death of Madan Chandra Barman and Rautaram Koch in Rehabari Police firings on 25 September, 1942 was a 'tragic incident' in the history of Freedom Movement of India.

In the last stage of freedom struggle of 1942-43, almost all the people men and women, students and peasants and leading persons of Nalbari region had fully joined hearty. Like Congress volunteers the Santi Sena of Nalbari districts had played a key role in the Quit India Movement of 1942.

Participation of Nalbari in the freedom struggle of India is note-worthy. The Nalbari district of Assam was not lagging behind from the freedom movement. It is quite very significant that the district was more active in the field of freedom movement than many more cities or towns in India. The people of the district was brave and courageous to face any kind of atrocities and danger. The students were more conscious to take part in any type of situation regarding taking active part in boycotting cloths, all the British law and order during the period of freedom movement. They had full support to their leaders under the guidance of Father of the Nation, Mahatmaji. Nationalist feeling grew in such a way that everyone marched together to obtain freedom for our countrymen irrespective

of caste, creed and religion. Only aim was to achieve the golden fruit of Indian Independence. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christians all united together with the only goal to achieve 'freedom' of India. Nalbari also followed same sentiment and innumerable number of people scarified their precious lives for our motherland.

In conclusion it can be stated with conviction that the people of Nalbari were highly motivated by nationalistic feelings and participated in the national freedom movement with indomitable courage without caring for their lives and personal interests.

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PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTION MADE BY DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES IN INDIAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BODO-KACHARI TRIBES FROM ASSAM

Pratibha Brahma

Participation & contribution made by different communities from northeast India in freedom movement of India against the British rule depicts rich tale of valour and courage to imbibe spirit of nationalism amongst youths of the region and render selfless service to the nation.

In Assam, the Ahoms ruled the entire Brahmaputra Valley prior to the advent of East India Company from 13th century onwards till the 18th century. Assam & the region almost remained independent from Delhi Sultanate or other external aggressors. Assam especially faced many incursions but it was thwarted by the proud people of the region. From the mid 18th century, Ahom rule was weakened due to internal strifes and the poor role played by weak rulers. The Ahom kingdom was therefore taken over by the Burmese who plundered and unleashed a reign of terror over the people of Assam. This compelled the Ahom king to approach the British via East India Company to help them restore the kingdom from the hands of the Burmese control. Subsequently, the British defeated the Burmese and on 26th February 1826 after the Treaty of Yandaboo Assam came under the British rule.

Initially, the British laid more emphasis on restoring stability in the valley than planned to bring the state of Assam under its rule. They made agreements with neighbouring tribal chiefs for ensuring security to the region. However, with passage of time they started showing their agenda of bringing the entire valley under the suzerainty of British government. Hence, they began mistreating the members of Ahom royal families and deprived the nobility of the social status they had enjoyed earlier. The Ahom Prince Gomdhar Konwar revolted against the British in 1828 and declared himself the king of the province but his attempt to challenge them met with suppression and he was put behind the bar for seven years.

In 1829, in the Khasi hills, U. Tirot Sing declared war against the British. In the beginning, he had given permission to the British to construct road from Rani in Kamrup to Sylhet through his territory. But he could read their hidden agenda and hence stopped their work and the Khasi tribe killed two of their officers along with some of their labourers at Nungkhlaio. The Khasis led by U. Tirot Sing valiantly fought against the British from 1829 to 1833 but their resistance finally succumbed to the British army

and he was taken to Dacca jail where he was confined till his last breath in 1835.

The Khampis and the Singphos revolted against the British in 1830 but their opposition was subdued with strong hands. Meanwhile, the Ahom nobles like Piyali Phukan, Jiuram Dulia Barua and few others made a secret plan to drive out the British from Assam making secret correspondence with the Nagas, the Mizos, the Jaintias, the Khampis and others. They planned to set fire on the British magazine at Rangpur on 25th March, 1830 but unfortunately were caught and awarded capital punishment for treason. Frequent resistance in Assam took a toll to British government and David Scott, in order to bring back normalcy reinstated the Ahom monarch Raja Purandar Singha in Upper Assam with the grant of payment of Rupees 50,000 as privy purse annually. He was however, removed on the ground of misgovernance and default in payment of the royal taxes as was agreed.

The British extended its rule and annexed Lower Assam, Cachar, Khasi Hills and the Matak kingdom and added them to their dominion. Simultaneously, the Naga Hills, the Lushai Hills and the Garo hills were brought under their control. Thus, Assam and almost all of northeast region were captured by the British. In the process, they introduced reforms in social, political & economic spheres keeping their interest in mind. They however ignored the local sentiments of people of region which included the royal family and the Ahom nobles.

Mr. A. J. Mofft Mills, the Judge of Civil Court at Calcutta in 1853 was compelled to take up an enquiry to understand the state of affairs of the Company when intensity of resentment of the people in Assam against Company administration reached to height of creating disturbance in the

region. Maniram Dewan, an educated Assamese noble submitted memorandum & appealed to Mr Mills to restore Upper Assam to Ahom King Kandarpeswar Singha which was outrightly rejected by him. Therefore, he approached the higher authorities in Calcutta on behalf of the Ahom King but in vain.

It was at that point of time, Sepoy Mutiny broke out in northern India and Maniram Dewan thought of taking up opportunity to revolt against the British and thereby wrote secret letters to the King to influence him to revolt. Unfortunately, his plans were caught red handed by the British and he was arrested and hanged at Jorhat jail along with Piyali Baruah on 26th February, 1858. King Kandarpeswar Singha was also arrested and confined in Alipur jail at Calcutta.

If we take a close note of freedom movement in Assam it was significantly confined to some individuals, nobles & elites until the Peasant Uprising at Phulaguri of Nagoan district in Central Assam that took place in the year 1861. The British did away with the traditional system of collection of tax known as the Paik system and a new agricultural tax on land was introduced which was not accepted well by the public of Assam. Hundreds of peasants marched to the district head quarters to submit their petitions to Deputy Commissioners raising strong voices against repressive agricultural policies of the British government. Tribals & non-tribals participated in this peasant movement. Abrasive & callous attitude of British administration infuriated the common public and on 18th October 1861, they attacked an Assistant Commissioner Lt. Singer and killed him when a police party led by him tried to disperse the revolting peasants. However, the armed peasants

couldn't withstand the British army and 39 peasants were killed, many wounded and 41 got arrested. Significantly, most of the peasants in Phulaguri upsurge belonged to the Tiwa & Kachari tribes, Koch & Kaibarta (fishing) community also took active role in the said peasant uprising. Kaibarta leader Bahu was interned to Andamans.

Another peasant uprising took place at Patharughat falling under Darrang district which rapidly spread to other areas of Darrang & Kamrup districts. Peasants stood against the repressive & exorbitant increase in land revenue by the British government in 1892-94. This peasant uprising was termed as 'Assam Riots' by the British because large number of peasants gathered and protested violently through "Rajmels" (mass gathering). Angered peasants pledged not to pay the land tax and hence the British tried to attach lands of defaulting peasants which was stiffly resisted by peasants and in skirmishes which followed British were forced to retreat back. But they returned with reinforced troops and suppressed the peasants movement thereby killing more than 140 peasants & about 150 were injured.

In Manipur, serious dispute for succession to throne in 1890 took place. The Company government interfered in the matter which was staunchly opposed by Prince Tikendrajit Singh. Mr. Quinton, the Chief Commissioner from Assam along with four British officers were killed but ultimately the Manipuri Prince & his associate General Thangal were captured and hanged publicly. Churachandra Singh was installed as the king depriving the legal claim of Surachandra which created strong resentment among the Manipuris.

When Indian National Congress was formed

in 1885, many associates were also formed in Assam simultaneously. Significant among them were Assam Association, Sarbajanik Sabha of Jorhat, Ryot Sabha of Tezpur, Nowgong Ryot Sabha, Shillong Association and Upper Assam Association which was formed in Dibrugarh in 1903. The educated middle class Assamese were actively involved in all these organizations. In 1916, the Assam Students Association was formed and the very next year in 1917 Assam Sahitya Sabha was also formed. These twin organisations galvanised the common people to take part in struggle for freedom movement against the British rule in Assam.

Partition of Bengal took place in 1905 and new province comprising of East Bengal & Assam was formed which was resented by Indians. People of Assam too protested against this move and Government was forced to annul the partition in 1911. Assam was hence, made a new province under Chief Commissioner.

Mahatma Gandhi visited Assam to attend public meeting held on 18th August 1921 and fervently appealed the people of Assam to boycott foreign goods and participate in Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhiji's magic created spell on mass people & they spontaneously participated in the movement in the entire province of Assam. Thousands were arrested along with prominent Congress leaders & jailed. In 1926, the 41st Session of Indian National Congress was held at Pandu which enthused people to participate in freedom movement in Assam Province. Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 & Quit India Movement in 1942 were responded well by people of Assam too and the clarion call to free the country against the British colony gained momentum engaging thousands of people to

take part in protests & demonstrations across the province. Leaders like Jyoti Prasad Agarwal played a critical role in guiding the movement. Kanaklata, Mukunda Kakoti, Bhogeswari Phukonani, Raota Boro, Thogi Sut became martyrs in the freedom movement.

Around this time, the Zeliangrong Nagas challenged the British rule under the leadership of Rani Ma Gaidinliu who was a young girl in her teens then. She asked the people not to pay taxes to the British and launched a movement against them but she was captured and imprisoned for life in 1946 while many of her associates were executed.

Period from mid-1940s was very crucial for the people of Assam. It was because of the indomitable statesmanship of leader like Gopinath Bordoloi that Assam stayed back in India which otherwise was wrongly grouped in Group C as a Muslim majority state and was therefore about to be merged with East Pakistan after partition. His untiring efforts was morally supported only by Mahatma Gandhi amongst the national leaders but nevertheless he was strongly supported by tribal leaders like Rev. Nicholas Roy & Rupnath Brahma & many others and he could finally save Assam to continue to be a part of India on 15th August 1947. It's for his immense contribution he was rightfully made the first Prime Minister of Assam and posthumously honored with the Bharat Ratna Award in 1999, India's highest civilian honour.

Contributions of the Bodo-Kachari Tribe in the struggle for freedom of India:

The Kacharis who are also known as Bodos are oldest inhabitant of Assam. By 1919 when the freedom struggle engulfed the entire country, people of Assam too participated in the movement. Accordingly, Bodos also joined in the

movement sacrificing their lives for the freedom of India. Government records in Assam show that many Bodos from districts of Goalpara, Darrang, Lakhimpur, Nowgong and Sibsagar participated vigorously during freedom struggle.

Some of them were even deported to Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Government records point out that Gongar Boro from Harangpara village under Barpeta district was deported to Andaman & Nicobar Islands in the year 1933 and was confined in Cellular jail for 14 years long. He was released on 15th August when India gained independence. Another hero by name of Harendra Nath Mech who belonged to Chiringhulla village of Dibrugarh joined Azad Hind Fauz and fought for the country.

Clarion call to participate in freedom movement against the colonial British rule enthused Bodo women like Ramani Bala Khakhary, Arena Kachari, Fadri Kachari, Faguna Kachari, Gabhi Kachari, Khobai Kachari, Lila Kachari, Lombha Swargiari, Udli Kachari, Bhadreswari Boro, Bimala Boro, Jaluki Kachari, Janaki Kachari and many more from Assam to fight for Indian independence.

From Goalpara district then, official records have names of Yudhisthir Hajoary of Khara Lalpara village of Dudhnoi, Galaram Mech, Gobinda Chandra Patgiri, Meghoram Brahma and many others in list of freedom fighters from Assam. Many Bodo freedom fighters like Gangacharan Patgiri, Jogendra Kumar Basumatary, Narapati Basumatary, Lafaram Kachari, Birendra Narayan Brahma Patgiri, Hakim Chandra Rabha, Nikunja Bihari Basumatary and others were arrested and jailed from Goalpara district during that period.

Similarly, Bodos of Kamrup district too participated in the freedom movement from

1919-20 as per official records. Adla Kachari, Raja Kachari, Dharmeswar Kachari, Manikanta Swargiari, Alaram Boro, Ahina Kachari & many more participated during 1919-29 period. Gongar Boro, Manikanta Swargiari, Kameswar Rabha, Prabhat Chandra Rabha, Maheswar Kachari and many others participated in between 1930-39 movement. In period between 1940-43 hundreds of Bodos participated in freedom struggle. From Kamrup district special mention of names recorded in the list are Raota Boro, Manikanta Kachari, Ghana Kanta Boro, Srikanta Basumatary and many others.

Darrang district too has mention of numerous names among the Bodo tribe in list who have participated in the freedom struggle. Bedang Kachari was arrested in 1920 and faced rigorous imprisonment for a month. Maniram Kachari, Bapuram Kachari, Khotip Kachari, Merga Kachari, Naren Kachari, Matiram Kachari, Khadaram Kachari, Norom Kachari, Suniram Kachari, Ratan Kachari, Maniram Kachari, Lerela Boro, Jwngsar Kachari, Rajendra Basumatary, Dalbir Kachari & many others took active part in struggle for freedom movement of Bharat.

Bodos from Lakhimpur district participated in freedom movement from 1920-21 as per official record. Laxman Prasad Mech, Kula Sonowal, Damodar Sonowal, Gambhir Sonowal, Harendranath Mech, Namal Sonowal, Rebati

Sonowal, Mekhar Mech, Jadav Chandra Khakhlari and many others joined the struggle for freedom movement of India.

From Nowgong district also many Bodos participated in freedom struggle of India. Special mention may be made of the names of Thuaram Basumatary & Powabar Kachari who participated in Quit India Movement of 1942.

Sibsagar district has recorded list of number of freedom fighters from the Kachari tribes. Madhabi Sonowal, Bhuban Sonowal, Ramchandra Sonowal, Bholbholia Sonowal, Bapu Kachari, Keshav Sonowal, Gerela Sonowal, Chandrabati Sonowal, Tilak Sonowal & Golapi Sonowal, Bhogendra Nath Dolakachari, Konoram Kachari, Ramoram Kachari, Kamal Mech, Dandiram Kachari and many other participated in freedom movement of India.

After independence, Central & State Governments awarded Tamrapatras to many freedom fighters for their contribution in struggle for freedom movement of Bharat.

Contributions of Bodo-Kacharis and other tribes from north-east Bharat during freedom movement have unfortunately been ignored as their names are not read in the history of freedom struggle of India or Assam. A time has come so that they get their due recognition for the sacrifices they have made in their lives for the freedom of India. ■



ROLE OF WOMEN IN COLONIAL RESISTANCE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAMESE COMMUNITY

Riki Gogoi

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of Ahoms and due to the tribal based society the status of women in Assam is different in comparison with the rest of India during Medieval time. But after the formation of feudal based society the status of women started to decline and the influence of Hinduism and Neo Vaishnavite movement put fuel on it. In 19th and 20th century social reforms came into existence under the privilege of educated intelligentsia to upliftment of condition of women. Education of women is one of the important agenda of this reform. Women education highly neglected at that time. The rising issues of women education made a self consciousness among the women. On the other hand Mahatma Gandhi in the war of independence make agenda for women education and for their welfare because he knew that without the upliftment of women condition India can't get complete freedom. The active participation of women like Girija Devi, Hemanta Kumari, Pusalata Das, and Chandraprova Saikiani among others symbolized the involvement of Assamese women in the freedom struggle. At first Assamese women were participated in those movement through the Assam Chatra Sanmilan and the Assam Sahitya Sabha, Assam Association Rayot Sabha etc. In 1914 Women's organization like Dibrugarh Mahila Samiti came to be formed And later it was followed by many organizations in

different part of the province to awaken the strength of them. With the influence of Gandhi's programs they attracted and participated in national movement enthusiastically.

ROLE OF ASSAMESE WOMEN IN COLONIAL RESISTANCE

With the formation of the Assam Mahila Samiti in 1926, that the women of Assam finally organized themselves at the provincial level under the leadership of Chandraprova Saikiani. The mass mobilization of women through the Assam Mahila Samiti in the 1920s and the 1930s was undoubtedly a major factor contributing to women's large scale participation in the freedom movement in Assam. During this period Nalinibala Devi, Hemanta Kumari Devi Snehlata Bhattacharya spread the motto of non co operation movement. They were the few women who participated in non co-operation movement in Assam .at the time of Gandhiji's Assam tour organized many meetings especially for women. He praised the weaving skill of Assamese women and commented that "Assam will rise to its bull height in the matter of Swadeshi. Its women can weave much more than enough for themselves". The works of women in national movement was taking up spinning and weaving, boycott of shops selling foreign goods and liquor, leaving government schools and colleges and propagating the use of Khadi. They also actively

participated in fund collection for the congress and in campaign against untouchability and popularization of Hindi, which was to be considered as the national language. Pramila Medak a lady belonged to Mishing tribe participated in non co-operation movement because of which she was excommunicated from her society. The non-cooperation movement along with the name of Gandhi had also cast its spell on the tea-garden workers of Assam. Infact, concubines of a few European planters of Darrang district generously donated funds in the name of Gandhi Baba'Mongri or Malati Mam a concubine of British planter was the first woman martyr of the non-cooperation movement in Assam. However, sadly enough, her name had not figured in the list of Martyrs of Assam.

During the period of Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 a women's procession under Guneswari Devi of Kaliabor also paraded the streets the same evening followed by a large number of people. The women's procession was cordoned off and a number of them were manhandled. The women processionists were further lath charged and many were injured. In 1932 Guneswari Devi was arrested again for participating civil disobedient movement. In Sivasagar Kamalabala Devi was arrested. Benudhar Sharma a well known historian called the Civil Disobedience movement as the "Movement of Women" due to the active participation of women. In Kamrup some girl students organized an association of girls named 'Mukti Sangha' to mobilize girl to participate in national struggle. The girl student associate with this association were Pushpalata Das, Saral Saxena, Jyotsna Mazumdar and Punyaprabha Barua. They signed with their blood to flee away foreigners from Assam because of which she was expelled from school.

According to the record of 1932 March number arrested women from Assam Valley were 54 and convicted women were 42 and in Surma Valley were 57 and convicted woman were 45.

Gandhi undertook a tour in Assam from 10 April 1934 for collection of funds for harijan welfare. People donated freely for the upliftment of condition of Harijan. In a women's meeting at Barpeta on 11 April, 1934, an amount of Rs.101 and some ornaments were collected and handed over to Gandhi During his presence in Jorhat Giribala Devi a orthodox Brahmin lady opened her private temple for the harijans. Swamalata Devi was called the called Kasturba of Assam due to her devotion of harijan work. Due to the constructive work of women many schools were established in the area of harijan.

The women of Assam acknowledged Gandhiji's concept of 'Do or Die' in their own way and joined in all kinds of actions during the Quit India movement. Many training centers were established in different part of Assam. In the Mass Movement of 1942 two types of programmes were taken constructive and destructive. Women were participating in both the programmes. Those who participated in destructive programme. They destroyed communication by cutting telegraph and telephone lines, sometimes even destroying bridges and railway lines and burning government buildings. But they did their work secretly. The Darang Congress Committee planned to hoist the national flag in police station and court building. The programme was led by Pushpalata Das in Dhekiajuli, Gahpur, Satia. The police opened fire on the peaceful processionists at Gohpur and Dhekiajuli. Kanaklata Barua, Khahuli Devi and Kamuli Devi died of bullet injuries on the spot and many others were badly injured. Tileswari Mahanta a brave woman successfully hoisted the

national flag on Bihali police station. Many women took revolutionary action in this movement. In Tiak Mudoijan Aikan Bhuyan burnt the Amguri High School. She also organized many secret meetings and pampered local youth to destroy government property. Madhulota Dutta and Sarbati Lahon handed over secret message from one place to another. Ratnabala Phukan was the member of death squad who left her house to give shelter revolutionist. Educated girls conveyed the secret circulars and bulletin. Buddheswari Hazarika took a lively part in reducing cargo boats carrying military supplies through the Brahmaputra river. British adopted all kinds of power to dominant revolutionary uprising in Assam. The women suffered all kind of brutality such as beating slapping killing; sometimes police forcefully entered in midnight and misbehave with them. According to the report of Bordoloi Committee Report on Atrocities in 1942 that 80 per cent of women from Brahmaputra Valley were suffered alone in the hands of police pregnant women were also included in this list. To protect themselves from police women used to keep knife dagger, they were also trained to fight with dagger and knife. In this way due to the participation of women in freedom struggle made their life miserable in some point. Despite exploitation of women during British rule, they struggled against British for the sake of independence of India.

CONCLUSION

Women power is regarded as a symbol of strength of a society since long. The participation of women in freedom struggle 1920 and subsequent phase grew larger. No women bow down before any military power of British rule. The male counterpart helped by the women participation emerged as significant at that time. Though it was a struggle but women of Assam got a chance to participate in public sphere emancipate them from the manmade boundary. They paved a way to create a platform for women which help them to strengthen and understand their own ability. It awaken them about their rights in social, economic and political sector and encourage them to be a part of it not because they are women but as an initial part of society.

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PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES OF NORTH EAST INDIA IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Nijara Brahma

The mid-19th Century saw the growth of nationalist sentiments in India. The Indian national movement is perhaps one of the best examples of the creation of an extremely wide movement with a common aim in which diverse political and ideological currents could co-exist and simultaneously continue to contend for overall ideological and political hegemony over it.

Colonial Rule, destruction of the old social and political order, rise of new social class, all contributed to the development of nationalism in India. The religious and social movements also contributed to the growth of nationalism. The sense of being oppressed under colonialism provided a shared bond that tied many different groups together. They discovered unity in the process of their struggle with Colonialism.

The forgotten freedom fighters from the Northeast played a significant role in the National Movement. Sadly, the stories of these brave hearts disappeared from the pages of the history of our freedom movement. Nevertheless the fact remains that they contributed just as much as the others. They fought equally hard but never got any share of the limelight because they simply never cared and our own historians did not feel it necessary to highlight their heroism.

Simple and unsophisticated by nature, the

people of Assam (now NE), have always evinced keen interest in any matter that affects them and are always sincere in whatever they do. So when the call for sacrifice in the freedom's struggle of 1942 reached their ears, even village women from 16 to 60, jumped headlong into the thick of the battle and laid down their lives for the freedom of the country. Not only in 1942, but in 1921 and 1930-31, Assam's part in the struggle for freedom was significant. The suffering and sacrifice during these years had been immense.

Kushal Konwar's name will ever remain imprinted in the hearts of the people. He was hanged by the British for the derailment of a military train at Sarupathar in Golaghat district in 1942. Though there was no conclusive proof of his complicity in the incident, yet relying on the statement of an approver he was charged and convicted.

Kanaklata Barua, aged only 17, was shot dead by the British at Gohpur in Assam's present day Bishwanath District while trying to hoist the national flag at a local police station on 20th September, 1942. On the same day, about 150 Kms away at Berhampur in the state's Nagaon district, Bhogeswari Phukanani, 57 years old, mother of 8, was killed for the same reason by the British police.

Tilak Deka Barapujia, who was guarding the village gate, was shot through his head and his offence was that he refused to carry out the order of the military officer who asked him not to blow his horn to warn the villagers of the approach of the military.

Thagi Sut – He was severely wounded by police firing while participating in a peace rally at Berhampur. He died at the age of 18.

Hamaran Patar – He participated in the quit India movement and was shot dead at Jongal Balahugarh. He was also cruelly stabbed to death by the bayonet of the British Army.

Balo Sut – He was shot dead by police firing while participating in a peace rally at Berhampur.

Lakshi Hazarika – He was also shot dead along with Balo Sut and died in the same manner.

Gunabhiram Bordoloi – In August 1942, he was shot dead by the British near Jongal Balahugarh while participating in the quit India movement.

Harnaran Bora – He was also shot dead by the British police.

Kaloi Koch – He also died in Police firing at Bebejia where Harnaran Bora died along with him.

Kamala Miri – He participated in the Quit India movement and was sentenced for imprisonment for 6 months. He was imprisoned in Jorhat jail, where he was on strike as a token of respect for Mahatma Gandhi. He fell ill inside the prison and the authorities tried to persuade him to apply for release by signing a bond of not joining the movement in future. But kamala refused to accept the proposal of the British and died inside the Jail on 22nd April, one day before his formal release on 23rd April.

Rani Guidanlieu – She was a Naga Spiritual

and political leader, who led a revolt against the British rule in India and was also staunchly against the Naga religious practitioners of Christianity. At the age of 13 she joined the Heraka religious movement that her cousin had initiated, which later turned into a political movement that tried to drive the British away from Manipur and nearby Naga regions. She was 16 at the time of her arrest and was put to life imprisonment by the British. 5 years later in 1937, Nehru visited and promised to get her out and gave her the title 'Rani'. She was released in 1947 after which, she continued to work for the community. She was also awarded the Padma Bhushan.

Shoorveer Pasalta Khuangchera, the first Mizo leader to fight the British in 1890 died fighting them, as the British invaded Lushai Hills (present Mizoram).

Matmur Jamoh – He was a fighter from Siang district in Arunachal Pradesh. He had killed a British assistant political officer Noel Williamson in 1911 as he did not like the British interference in the people's day – to –day life, while his followers killed another British officer Gregeorson. He was soon arrested and sent to cellular jail in Andaman where he died in obscurity.

Freedom fighter from Assam's Dimasa tribe, Sambhudan Phonglo also took active part in the country's freedom struggle.

Arunachal Pradesh's freedom fighter Moje Riba was the first person to hoist the tricolor at Dipa village in Arunachal Pradesh on the Aug 15, 1947. He was arrested by the British Police for participating in Independence struggle and distributing pamphlets during the Quit India movement.

Tirot Singh, also known as U Tirot Singh, was the chief of the Khasi people. He was a hero among his tribe, as he died fighting the British

during their attempt to take over the Khasi Hills. He died in July 17, 1835 under house arrest in Dhaka.

Besides the Martyrs mentioned above, there were many unsung patriots of Assam, who took active part in the freedom struggle but they ended up being just a face in the crowd. No amount of repression could subdue the ardent zeal of these martyrs. We lost many precious lives and many people received injuries from gunshots, quite a large number of persons were wounded by lathi charges which were made intensively in the localities of North Lakhimpur, Bihpuria, Dikhow Ghat, Tezpur, Behali, Barpeta, Sivasagar, Nitai Pukhurighat, Teok, Nagon, Golaghat etc. Some persons were maimed and crippled for life as a result of injuries received from Lathi charges and guns.

History can't be distorted. A story well told is beautiful. The freedom struggle is a part of recorded history, yet there are a large number of selfless valiant freedom fighters whose contributions could not find mention or was ignored. The names of these martyrs will ever remain written in gold in the history of Assam's part in the freedom struggle. The supreme sacrifices and selfless spirit of our freedom fighters should have a niche in the annals of history. The study of India's freedom struggle is incomplete without these unsung heroes.

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Before you start some work, always ask yourself three questions - Why am I doing it, What the results might be and Will I be successful. Only when you think deeply and find satisfactory answers to these questions, go ahead.

Chanakya

THE LEPCHAS : A TRIBE FROM THE LAND OF MAYEL LYANG

Dr. R. M. Pant

Perched in the Eastern Himalayas, Sikkim the smallest state of the Republic of India is not only known for its serene beauty and bio-diversity but also for diverse cultural canvas characterized by people belonging to different communities living in perfect harmony. Colourful cultural practices, festivals and each community having its unique lifestyle grounded to their roots without conflicts makes this small state an ideal haven for a multi-cultural society.

'Denzong' (the Valley of rice) as aboriginals of the state call it, Sikkim is also called 'Sukhim' (Happy House) and Indra-khil (Abode of Gods). Predominant communities of Sikkim are Lepcha, Bhutia, Limboo, Tamang, Sherpa, Rai, Gurung, Kami, Damai, and many more, however broadly all these communities come under three umbrella categories i.e. the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalese.

The Lepchas: The Lepchas, the original people of Sikkim are also known as 'Rongpas' which literally means 'ravine dwellers'. Their homeland in the pristine Himalayan heights is known as 'Mayel Lyang', which truly represents its meaning 'the land blessed by God'.

Lepchas are expert hunters and live a nomadic life since time immemorial and exhibit high degree of adaptability towards changing realities and are settled mainly in Dzongu, Sikkim and Darjeeling region besides a sporadic population settled in

Nepal. Once a nomadic tribe now is showing little interest in migrating from their heavenly 'haven'. Their knowledge to survive in rough and tough terrains of Himalayas makes them comfortable even in the most adverse times as their traditional knowledge comes as their saviour all the time. Besides traditional knowledge they are also quick in adopting new technologies which enhances their adaptability to changing world.

The Lepchas; children of Fudong-thing and Nuzong Nyu: It is believed that the mother creator Ibtu-mu made this earth and heaven. She shaped the mountains and lakes and animals. Last of all she took pure snow from the top of Mt. Kanchendzonga, made a human shape with this snow and infused life in her creation Fudong-thing. To give company to this lonely soul, mother creator created a woman called Nuzong Nyu. First two humans lived in Ne Mayel Kyong, the ancestral home of the Lepchas that is believed to be in some inaccessible areas near Mt. Kachendzonga. Though commanded by Ibtu-mu to live as brother and sister, they entered in to physical relationship. The outcome of this forbidden union was emergence of offspring in the form of devils and evil spirits which are believed to be haunting the Lepchas even today.

Having learnt about this inauspicious union, the Gods ostracised this duo from their idyllic haven to the mundane world where they were blessed with children and this is how the Lepchas

came to this world.

The Lepchas and their religion: Originally the Lepchas believed in animistic/ shamanistic religion 'Mun' but influences of Bhutias made majority of Lepchas to adopt Buddhism. The 'Mun' religion which derives its name from the male priest basically focusses on 'warding off' the evil spirits and propitiating nature and spirits for the protection of its people against calamities and misfortune. Animal sacrifices at the altar of deities are performed to appease the benevolent spirits and various deities. With the passage of time, Mun and Buddhism has amalgamated in the region and the ceremonies of these two religions are performed simultaneously. Yet the Lepchas are keeping few of their basic values intact. Concept like asceticism and individual responsibility held high in Buddhism are alien to the Lepchas and for that reason, they are sometimes referred to as 'animistic Buddhists'.

Consistent and organised efforts of the Christian Missionaries have led to conversion of a good number of the Lepchas to Christianity.

'The Baptist mission went to the length of translating and printing in the artificial Lepcha script three books of the new testament. This seems to have been a work of almost complete supererogation, for the Lepcha script, never widely known, has completely fallen in to disuse; in order to read the scriptures Lepchas have to learn a new and otherwise completely useless, alphabet; most of them are far more familiar with Nepali', writes Gorar.

Despite having adopted Buddhism and Christianity, the Lepchas still practice 'animism'.

Culture: The Lepchas have their own script called 'Rong' and 'Lepcha' language known as 'Rongaring' or 'Rongring'. The development of Lepcha script is attributed to Lepcha scholar Thakung Men Salong, who is supposed to have invented it in the 17th century.

'Tendong Lho Rum Faat' is the main festival of Lepchas celebrated on August 8 every year. Legend goes that to stop a deluge that nearly swallowed Sikkim, Rum(God) had to intervene and saved Sikkim from drowning. To protect themselves from this deluge caused by heavy rains, Lepchas had to move to Tendong Mountain and spent forty days and nights atop. This festival is celebrated to commemorate that scary incident and Lepchas offer prayers to propitiate nature and to avoid such calamities in future during 'Tendong Lho Rum Faat'. 'Zxo-Mal-Lok' is a folk dance which couples perform to portray sowing and harvesting of paddy and 'Kinchum-Chu-Bomsa' is performed to describe the natural beauty of the region. While performing these dances males wear colourful dress called Thokro, Yenthatse (shirt), Tomu the lower garment, Shambo (cap) and Kom Bhankup (multipurpose knife) around their waist. Women wear Dumbun with Tago, loose blouse supported by a Nyamrek (belt). They also adorn Namchok (ear rings) and Gyar (bracelets).

The Lepchas; declining denizens of Mayel Lyang: The Lepchas are the original inhabitants of Sikkim and Darjeeling hills. Influx of the Bhutias started in the 14th century to their land of Mayel (ancestral land) and by the end of 17th century, the Lepchas had become their subjects. With this, the 'Red Hat' lamas converted majority of the Lepchas to 'Buddhism' and for next three centuries, the Lepchas were dominated by the Bhutias, the Nepalis and later by the British.

Influence of Tibetan Bhutias led to Tibetisation of the Lepchas in the 17th Century. Later with British annexation of Sikkim and Darjeeling in 1835, they became subject to British rule. Britishers brought large number of Nepalese immigrants to the region for construction and agricultural work which reduced these original inhabitants of Sikkim to a minority. As per Gazette of 1891, the Nepali

constituted 56 percent of the population, the Lepchas 19 percent and the Bhutias just 16 percent. In 1931 census, the total population of the Lepchas was 25,780, a fall of about five thousand from 1901 census. After a century, the number of Nepalis have gone up to 75 percent of the total population of Sikkim. Bhutias have more or less maintained the same percentage in the total population whereas the Lepcha population has declined to 9 percent and facing a severe threat of extinction. Along with the Lepchas, their rich cultural heritage is also facing a threat. As per 2011 census, Nepali population stands at 77 percent followed by the Bhutias and the Lepchas with their share of 16 and 9 percent respectively.

Dongu Lepcha Reserve: A continuous fall in their population made the Lepchas vulnerable to extinction which necessitated H. E. Chogyal, the King of Sikkim to convert one of his estates Dzongu as 'Lepchas Reserve' to protect 'pure blooded Lepchas' and ensure that this homogenous society lives undisturbed by alien influences.

Dzongu, a reserve area for the Lepchas spread over 15,846 hectares at the feet of mighty 'Kingtsoom Zaongboo Choo', yes, that's the Lepchan name of Mt. Kachendzonga. Only the Lepchas have the right to own land here and this policy has ensured that the Lepchas remain undisturbed from outside influence. *'but beyond the reservation of this piece of land for their exclusive use the society has not been interfered with, nor preserved as a piece of museum; it is still, in the state of constant modification'*, Gorer's prophetic statement made decades ago proved true as many young Lepchas are running many enterprises successfully and modernity has made inroads in this rather sleepy region.

The Lepchas the adapters in the time of change: When the change is happening at a fast

pace globally, the Lepchas are not lagging behind. The present generation of Lepchas is open to modern education unlike their ancestors who showed reluctance to modern education. Literacy rate among the Lepchas is rising in an impressive manner.

Agriculture continues to be the mainstay of their economy. Wage employment schemes of central government like MGNREGS have also opened avenues for income generation for the Lepchas of the region. Large cardamom, once a major cash crop faced decline in production due to diseases which need to be addressed with the help of experts. Market linkage is a weakness for marginal farmers and the Lepchas are looking up for governmental support. Traditional crops, livestock rearing is also a source of earning for these 'Ravine dwellers'. The Lepchas have deep connection with forests and since time immemorial, they are drawing resources from forest for their substance.

This 'Mayel Lyang' of the Lepchas has tremendous scope for promotion of tourism and this one single sector has the potential to 'turn around' the economy of the Lepchas. Off-late a few homestays have come up in Dzongu and growth of other allied activities is also remarkable.

Support from many government organizations like forest department, department of tourism, Rural Management and Development Department etc. and many NGOs is facilitating the Lepchas in their march towards development.

Conclusion: The Lepchas, the aboriginals of Denzong or present day Sikkim fell victim to situations that made them subjects of the Bhutias, the Nepalis and later by the British. It was a landmark intervention from the HE the Chogyal of Sikkim Kingdom to create a separate 'Lepcha reserve' to nurture 'pure blooded Lepchas' in

Dzong, which has helped this depleting highland tribe in sustaining their culture in its pure form.

With increasing government and Non-government Organisation's support and proactive generation of the Lepchas, this 'Mayel Lyang' or the 'Land blessed by the God' will once again ascend to the status of 'Ne Mayel Kyong', the original ancestral haven of the Lepchas created by the God for 'Fudong-thing' and 'Nuzong Nyu'.

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(The author of this article is presently serving as the Director of NIRDPR-NERC, Guwahati)



Never stop fighting until you arrive at your destined place - that is, the unique you. Have an aim in life, continuously acquire knowledge, work hard, and have perseverance to realise the great life.

- A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TRIPURA – FROM ANCIENT TO THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Dr Sourish Deb Barma

Once upon a time the boundaries of Tripura has been vast. During 15th century Khasi Hills in the north, Bay of Bengal in the south, Manipur and Arakan in the east and Meghna river in the west formed its boundary¹. It shrunk gradually in the early 19th century which has been referred to as “Hill Tippera” in the gazettes of British administration and Comilla and Noakhali collectively known as “Chakla Roshanabad” has always been the bone of contention between Tripura and Afghans and later Mughals. After the battle of Plassey when British East India Company seized the power in Bengal, in 1760 the company has been awarded with the provinces of Chittagong, Burdwan and Midnapur². Since 1760 East India Company replaced the Mughals as a new political adversary for Tripura. So a vast land with diverse language and culture coexisted under the Hindu Kings of Tripura for thousands of years. During colonial rule policies have been implemented in this area to change the socio-religious fabric forever.

Ancient Period

During the epic battle of Mahabharata it has been seen that every Kingdom of “Bharatvarsha” has taken the side of either of the groups led by Pandavas and Kauravas. According to the astronomical and archaeological evidence it has been deduced that the war of Mahabharata took place more than 5000 years ago.³ From the

Bhisma parva of Mahabharata (Chapter -87, Verse 8-9) we came to know that the most powerful Kingdom of the then northeast India region was Pragjyotishpur which is present day Guwahati area of Assam. Pragjyotishpur was ruled by Bhagadatta at that time. King Bhagadatta took the side of Kauravas in the battle of Kurukshetra. He was given the charge of general of an army comprising of Magadha, Kalinga, Pisacha, Mekala (Manipur), Traipura (Tripura) and Kosala.⁴ According to the Sanskrit royal chronicle of Tripura of early 15th century “Rajratnakaram” Maharaj Chitrayudh who is the 44th King in the geneological table of Manikya dynasty of Tripura has participated in the war.⁵ So where was then ancient Tripura located geographically?? From “Rajratnakaram” we come to know that it was Pratardan, the 25th King of Tripura who occupied a vast tract of land after defeating the Kirats in Kiratadesha.⁶ He then established his capital Trivega at the confluence of river Brahmaputra and Kopili river at present Nogaon district of Assam. Pratardan came from west of present northeast Bharat from his ancestral Kingdom located in the “Sagaradwip” in the Sundarban area of West Bengal. This incidence has been corroborated by many modern authors like K.L. Barua and R.M Nath.⁷ From Pratardan to Trilochan, for 16 generation ancient Trivega was the capital of Tripura dynasty. That

time Triveg comprised of Kopilli valley, north Cachar Hills and also perhaps the modern districts of Cachar to the west of Manipur.⁸ This Kopili valley or Trivega Kingdom identified with Devaka has been mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta of 4th century A.D as a “Pratyanta Rajya”.⁹ In order to conquer the eastern Himalayan Kingdom Arjuna came to Pragjyotishpur followed by Bhima, who conquered the whole of eastern India including Bengal, Bihar, Kamrupa, Tripura and the hill people living in the sea coast in the marshy region and subjected them to pay tribute. Indologist Pargiter has elaborately described this event of Mahabharata.¹⁰ In Vanaparva again we can see the name of Tripura being conquered by Karna during his eastward expedition (Chapter CCIII, Verse 9-11, Mahabharat). Historian R.M Nath is of the opinion that according to the tradition of Tripuris, Druhyu the founder of the dynasty married a Bodo princess against his father’s will and was disinherited by his father Yayati (the great mythological King of Lunar dynasty). Later on Druhyu preferred to live with his beloved and his progeny became the ruling race. Whatever may be the story it is well known that the royal dynasty of Tripura always claims to be a Lunar dynasty. This popular tradition has also been affirmed by Md. Quazim in his famous “Alamgirnama” and calls this ancient Tripura Kingdom as Hindu Kingdom. Later on Daitya, the successor of Chitrayudha of the Tripura dynasty extended his Kingdom upto Burma. Daitya’s son Tripur was a tyrannical ruler who neglected the due worship of Shiva. Due to his oppressive policies, people fled to the near by country of Hidimba. But the King of Hidimba could not render any service. When the oppressed prayed to lord Shiva to terminate the rule of Tripur, he listened to their prayer and killed Tripur with a promise to gift the country with a divine successor of Tripur.¹¹

Trilochan was the successor and was distinguished for his wisdom and piety at an early age. Trilochan opened a new vista of relationship with the neighbouring states after marrying the daughter of Hidimba King. Consequently Trilochan’s fame reached to the court of Yudhisthir. Yudhisthir invited him in his “Rajsuya yagna” and he was well received and was gifted with a throne and “Svetachatra” or royal white umbrella to this day which is considered to be the royal insignia of Kings of Tripura.¹² Trilochan died at an advanced age leaving behind twelve sons. The eldest son Drikpati was adopted by the heirless Hidimba also known as Kachari King and eventually inherited that Kingdom. According to the wishes of the people another son Dakshin inherited his father’s Kingdom. But Drikpati challenged this inheritance of Dakshin and a war ensued between two brothers, After having been defeated, Dakshin left Trivega to establish his new Kingdom at “Kholongma” in the Barak valley somewhere east of Silchar.¹³ According to K.L Barua “the ancient Trivega, Kopili or the Devaka Kingdom became absorbed in the Hedamba Kingdom and this took place around fifth century A.D”. Subsequently the Kamrupa King absorbed the valley within their Kingdom. According to R.M Nath one of the son of Trilochan married the daughter of King of Mnaipur and ruled peacefully over the many races of Kukis.¹⁴ Taidakshin, the son of Dakshin also married a princess of Mekhali (present Manipur) and set up a new Kingdom on the bank of Kushiara river called Chambulanagar.¹⁵ So from the above discussion it is not hard to extrapolate that Tripuris via their Kings had a wide socio political relation with other ancient tribes of the region such as Hidimba, Kachari, Bodo, Kukis, Meites as well as with the epic rulers of Bharatavarsha and powerful Kingdom of Samudragupta too.

Early Medieval Period (6th century-13th century)

After strengthening their foot hold in the Barak valley under the leadership of their mighty Kings, Tripuris had created a sovereign country that comprised of Cachar district of Assam, Lushai Hills, present Tripura, Chittagong, Sylhet and Noakhali district of present Bangladesh. According to the royal chronicle “Rajmala” a specimen of sanskrit literature and early bengali literature and popular tradition, in 590 A.D King Jhujharu Pha who is the 118th King according to the geneological list of Tripuri Kings captured some portion of eastern Bengal and south Tripura. To commemorate this victory King Jhujharu Pha started an era called Tripurabda of which 1429 year passed. In this victory Jhujharu Pha defeated “Lika Raja” whose capital was Rangamati present Udaipur town of Tripura and who had an army of 10,000 men, were Sanatan Hindu by religion¹⁶. According to the historians the so called Lika Raja and his countrymen might be a old Arakan-Burmese race now known as Moghs and Chakma’s. During this time Tripuri King’s were ruling the area of Cachar, Sylhet and north Tripura mainly. At that time severe drought hit the area of Sylhet and nearby area. King Adi Dharma Pa, fourth descendent from Jhujharu Pha organised a vaidik Yagna in 51 Tripurabda era i.e 641 A.D by Brahmins of Mithila belonging to five gotras. A copper plate inscription declaring the land grant to these Brahmins has been mentioned in the “Report on the progress of Historical researches in Assam - 1897”.¹⁷ The place where the vaidik yagna performed has been discovered by Sri Achyuta charan Tatvanidhi and described in his book “Srihatter Itivritti” in Bengali.¹⁸ The place now known as Panchakhanda in present Sylhet district of Bangladesh. King Adi Dharma Pha

was the contemporary of Mithila King Balbhadra Singh. The whole description has been mentioned in the text “Vaidik Samvadini” written by Sri Shyamsundar Bhattacharya who was the descendent of those five Mithila Brahmin’s. According to R.M Nath and K.L Barua Tripuri King Adi Dharma Pha was the contemporary of King Bhaskar varman of Kamrupa and after the downfall of Varman dynasty five batches of Brahmin migrated from Kamrupa to Tripura for refuge which can be evidenced by the fact that the copper plate grants of Bhaskar varman found in Nidhanpur near Panchakhanda of Sylhet. Whatever may be the cause of movement of vaidik Brahmins, it is clear that they came and settled in ancient Tripura Kingdom.¹⁹ Similar event of “Yagna” performed by Tripuri King Dharmadhar Pha in 1195 A.D.²⁰ This time also a Brahmin called Nidhipati was engaged to organise this “Yagna” who was the descendent of same Mithila Brahmin who came to Panchakhanda, Sylhet during Kinmg Adi Dharma Pha. By 13th century north India was already under seize by the Turkish and Afghan intruders from western border and reached Bengal at the beginning of 1200 A.D. The intruders overthrown the Sen Dynasty of Bengal and for the first time northeast was opened to those intruders. In 1240 A.D a fierce battle was fought between Tripura and the then rulers of Bengal. The battle was historic in the context of Tripura because it was lead by queen Tripurasundari popularly known as “Naithokbi” in oral traditions of Tripuri and she defeated the opponent in the battle. There is confusion among the scholars about whom she fought and defeated. Most of them say she defeated the Mohammedan intruders in the battle only person to differ was Sri K.P Sengupta who compiled the last edition of Rajmala, royal chronicle, in 1920 A.D. According to K.P Sen,

Maharani Tripurasundari fought the battle against the army of Keshava Sen of Sen dynasty of Bengal.²⁰ So from the above account we could see a complex situation was arising in the north east where migration of Nagar Brahmins from as far as Mithila could be seen to the arrival of intruders from west to the shore of northeast India.

Late Medieval Period (13th century -17th Century)

By this time Slave dynasty and Lodhi dynasty got installed on the throne of Delhi. In northeast India too many small dynasties were forming. The most powerful being the Ahom dynasty. Others were Koch, Kachari, Chutiya and ancient Kingdom like Jaintia which became weak over the time during this period. Tripura also rise to its glory during this period. In early 15th century a prince of Tripura Ratna Pha went to “Subarnagram” the then capital of Sultan’s of Bengal. Ratna Pha took the help of the Sultan to raise an army against his own brothers in Tripura which he invaded and became King by first half of 15th century. He brought along with him a big retinue of men and women from Bengal along with him to settle down in his state. They were referred to as “Nabasena” or the nine service caste to cater the nobility in his state.²¹ Ratna Pha was the first to use “Manikya” title which is conferred to him by the Sultan’s of Delhi dynasty and it was used by the successive Kings and thus the dynasty came to be known as Manikya dynasty.²² Ratna Manikya metamorphosed his whole administration similar to the Sultan’s administration. Later on powerful Kings like Dharma Manikya, Dhanya Manikya, Vijaya Manikya, Amar Manikya, Kalyan Manikya came who fought with the Bengal Sultanate and Mughals. The migration of Hindu Brahmins continued in Tripura as far as Kanauj from in north India and from Mithila and Odisha too.

During the time of Deva Manikya (1520-1528 A.D) a tantric Brahmin of Mithila influenced the King of Tripura and he inducted 250 Maithili men in the army of Tripura.²³ King Vijaya Manikya (1528-1562 A.D) was a very powerful King who has been regarded highly in Ain-I-akbari occupied a vast tract of land in the eastern Bengal reaching upto Brahmaputra.²⁴ During this time Chittagong sometime was under the possession of Tripura Kingdom. However a great development took place in the field of art, literature and music under the patronage of these powerful King’s of Manikya dynasty. In the vaishnav literature of that era name of Raja Dhanya Manikya was found from the archive of King’s of Nepal recently.²⁵ In 15th century we also observe frequent war between Koch, Tripura, Jaintia and Manipur. Tripura was at frequent loggerheads with arakanese over the possession of Chittagong port. Like Chilla Rai of Koch dynasty attacking Kamrup, Jaintia, Tripura and Manipur, Vijaya Manikya of Tripura went in an expedition in Bengal upto Koch Kingdom, Pamheiba of Manipur attacking Tripura etc. During this period it was a frequent phenomena in villages of Tripura and neighbouring Bengal that were being raided by Kukis and Lushai’s. Kings of Tripura made a friendship with the heads of these communities to prevent such plunder. It is seen that the Kings of Tripura inducted Kuki’s in their army and showed due respect to Kuki Chief in a yearly gala dinner hoisted during Vijaya dashami when all other tribal chiefs were also present. This big feast is referred to as “Hasam Bhojan” in regal Tripura.²⁶ This period also saw the visit of many European travellers in northeast India like Marco Polo, Ralph Fitch, Tavernier, Rev. Samuel Purcha, Matheus Vanden Broucke, Pierre du Jarric etc who shed an important light into the relations particularly between Mughals and

Tripura and Ahom Kingdom.²⁷ The general of Muughal Emperor Man Singh when he arrived in Bengal he wrote a letter and warned the significant principalities of the region which goes like this –”Tripur, Mogh, Bangali, Kak,Kak, Kuli,Kachali, Sakal Purush Metat Bhag Jao Palayi.....”.²⁸ From this we know that a chain of important principalities together were the adversaries of Mughals like Tripura and Koch. In the late 17th century it has been seen that Ahom King Rudra Singha was sending his envoy thrice to Tripura so that an alliance can be made between the countries of northeast Bharat to fight against the frequent menace of Mughal intrusions.²⁹ It has also been seen Assamese sanskrit scholar writing the slokas of famous Chaturdasha Devata of Tripuris in Kokborok language in assamese script, which shows the developing proximities among the societies.³⁰ On the other hand Tripuri Kings gave direct patronage towards literary activities in Bengali language for centuries. So a society of unity in diversity could be seen among the principalities of the region which is not artificial but due to inherent hidden sanatan culture of the people that cemented the ties. of the Later on matrimonial alliances too occurred between the erstwhile Kingdom of Ahom, Tripura, Manipur and Jaintia. Infact Tripura royals married princess from all of the three medieval Kingdom. From the account of Tavernier we come to know that trade of gold used to take place from Tripura to China via Kamrup.³¹ Further the migration of Brahmins and Kshatriya's from north India and Mithila had tremendous effect in shaping the social fabric of northeast India since ancient and medieval period. So definitely some relations always existed among the various communities of northeast India via politics, trade and sharing knowledge.

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THE SOCIAL LIFESTYLE OF THE WANCHOS

PAST AND PRESENT

Jatwang Wangsa

Introduction: The North Eastern states of India can be defined as the hub of numerous tribes. In other words it is a mini-India. When we observe their way of livelihood one may find a slight difference among each tribe. However, except attire the overall structure of tribal values, food habits, culture and tradition seems similar. The most common thing one can see among the tribes is that they prefer predominantly simple boiled vegetables and rice for food. They work together, Sing folk songs and dance for no monetary consideration. The sustainable tactics that has been adopted by people of North east India is one of the unique pieces under the sun that needs to be pondered upon. Team work is the basic principle of the tribal communities, just as ants in swarm work hard day and night in collecting their food. Stating an example of inter community relations in doing collaborative efforts for accomplishing any herculean task, there is tribe called “Wancho” on eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Wancho, one of the major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh live mostly in eastern side district of Longding. It shares the international border with Myanmar. It has 66 villages in the district. Wancho dialect is their lingua-franca. However, Wancho speaking people also live beyond the border in Myanmar region adjacent to the Indian side. The activities of Wanchos are worth mentioning. They never leave a single man

behind to handle it alone in daily walks of life, especially at the time of constructing the dwelling house for an individual. They work jointly enjoying the togetherness, for them any physical energy involving activities isn't merely a task but a kind of merry making or celebration. In simple way, one can easily understand that it is a classic example of living a wonderful life of ‘intercommunity relation’. Some of the deeds that the Wancho people do collaboratively in team spirit every time are; 1) House Construction, 2) Cleaning weeds in the farm, 3) Paa-Construction, 4) Crop harvest, 5) Log-drum installation, 6) Community fishing, 7) Bridge making, 8) Road cleaning, 9) Community hunting, 10) Death funeral, 11) Festival Celebration.

House Construction: In Wancho community, whenever a new house is to be constructed by an individual or being reconstructed in certain village, it is never a one man task to struggle and accomplish alone. It is always a collective responsibility of the entire village to build the house. The necessary housing materials like bamboo, leaves, woods, ropes etc would be collected by the villagers as helpful response to the intimation by the aspirant house owner. The physical labour support extended to the aspirant house owner by the villagers for house-building work is the rotational custom that can be seen year after year. This is indeed the priceless gift that has been inherited by the younger generations.

However, in case the house owner has capacity to feed the fellow helpers after completion of his work done, he can keep a lunch programme but not in a classy way but in a simple manner. On the other hand such feasts would never be expected from the poor person within the village, instead his/her house would be constructed at no charge with voluntary contribution of household materials from each villager. The Chief's house which is in fact the biggest one in the village is also constructed with the joint effort of all the whole villagers. Therefore, people in the villages of Wancho tribe hardly ever feel lonely. In the eyes of outside observers the life in villages may seem something else but the people there live very peaceful and contented lives in a civilized manner in contrast to the so called developed metropolis living style.

Cleaning weeds in the farm: Generally in developed societies, execution of farming is calculated as per the availability of capital in the hands of an individual farmer. Less money means smaller quantity of work. On contrary to that, the farming activities of villagers of Wancho community are distinctive in its kind. During the work of weeding in the paddy field, all the relatives and friends would come together at one particular farmer's farm and jointly do weeding-out process. There is no fix number of relatives in joining the work unless the farmer makes certain limitations. There was a time when more than fifty workers would work in the field on the basis of rotation or turn wise. The rotation of clearing the weeds goes on until they get-on to the last one. It involves no money for labour charge; however lunch has to be provided by the concerned land owner where the work has been done, so in that case he/she has to go through minor expenditure for very simple boiled rice and locally procured vegetables to feed his friends and relatives. Such type of sharing physical work reduces stress and work load. It also helps

strengthen the bond among their friends, relatives and family members. In so called developed societies, such trends of helping one other in need is rarely seen.

Paa (Male dormitory cum institution) construction: The 'Paa' is not only a hall of residence for young boys but it's indeed an eminent institution for every village of Wancho tribe. It is often termed as "Morong" by some north eastern states of India. The male teenagers learn the disciplined way of life in the Paa. It is the place where stories are told to younger boys by the elders, which has to be passed on from one generation to another. This institution builds up the strong relationships and mutual understanding among the male members of the village. Whenever the New Paa is constructed or re-construction is taken up, then that occasion becomes not merely collective task for villagers but it is considered as one of the grand festival. It is the responsibility of every villager to collect the construction materials and bring it on a single platform. The Paa is still build by eco-friendly materials like Palm leaves (Toko Patta), woods, bamboos etc. The erection of Paa is the outcome of efforts made by every villager especially male members. Grand feast and display of traditional dances and songs would follow up as soon as its construction work is finished.

Log drum: The log drum of Wancho tribe is biggest and heaviest sound instrument in the world. It is installed in "Paa" and the chief's residence. Boys are authorised to beat the log drum kept in the 'Paa', while girls are only permitted to beat which is laid in Chief's house. The focal point to observe here is, Log drum has got several beating sounds, depending upon the situation. Its beat sounds tell about the different occasion. For instance, during festivals it is played by many people at a time with some kind of rhythmic sound by which it acts as type of musical instrument during festive seasons. It has a beating

sound that tells whole villagers when an aged man or brave person from the particular village happens to expire. On the other hand it has also sound that alarms about life threats like fire accident, wild animal attack, worst accident case etc. The typical log drum sounds notify the people regarding of the occurrence of every event. Accordingly villagers come together and rush to the incident spot whatever it has occurred. The log drum of the Wancho is a wonderful instrument to communicate the larger number of people in the village. Thus it is kind of object that serve as inter communication link among villagers especially during happy moments and danger sensing times.

Bridge Construction: Just as invention of wheels in human history led the mankind to travel long distance, likewise bridge making over the forceful rivers by many hill-tribes is a major breakthrough in their lives. Having knowledge of bridge construction made the one community to intermingle with the other. Bridge making involves heavy collective efforts of people. It is a community engrossing work that had meaningful tale to pass on to future generations. Coming together to accomplish such a risky task made people to have close emotional attachment among them. Nowadays, where metalled roads and bridges have come, the story of hardships faced by people in the past has become merely like fables. However, bridge construction event served as one of the most significant means to develop inter community relationship among different communities.

Community road cleaning: In the present context it is sometime referred as “Social Service” when a certain community come forward and do some socially useful work in a public place. Nevertheless, in the villages of Wancho tribe,

community road clearing or cleaning has been in practice since time immemorial. In the villages, road cleaning work is done by entire villagers as a set responsibility of all, because clean and cleared roads to agricultural fields ensured safety and comfort to travel ahead. Every male member is usually made mandatory to stand up for the road cleaning work, failing which some logistic fine is being imposed by the village authorities upon the defaulters. Even today, such trend is still pragmatically prevalent. Thus, every male member doesn’t want themselves to be tagged as dodger and as a result everyone does joint hands to work together, letting themselves knew to the crowds about his presence. It is absolutely a positive and constructive part of Wancho custom, that built inter relationship unwillingly or willingly among the same community.

Conclusion: It is clear indication from the above that sharing of work among the community members is the exclusive key to uphold and inculcate the perception of “Intercommunity relations” to the younger minds. Work is not only worship but it also shows the way in connecting people of distant places far beyond our thoughts. No work means, no more expansion of knowledge and interrelations with rest of the world. Unfortunately it is felt that in these days the work culture seems diminishing day by day with the advent of mix culture engulfing the minority tribes from the majorities. Essentially it is worth mentioning that many tribal cultures have rich acumen of living a disciplined and civilized life which can be taught to the rest of the people in the world. Tribes’ men living behind woods in the midst of echo-friendly world can be underrated. People living in forest and hill tops carry far better moral values than people living in so called civilized cut-throat competitive society. ■



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