

A study on the different dimensions of Bodo tribal community of Dalbari village in Barama block of Baksa district in Assam, India

Saswatik Tripathy

Post Graduate student in 2 years Diploma on Develop Management. B.Sc. Agriculture Rural and Tribal Development
The DHAN Academy , Madurai, India
Email – tsaswatik.st@gmail.com

Abstract: *Bodo is one of the plain tribes of India, which staying with the Aryans for a long time but still can maintain their individuality and culture. There are stresses of Bodos in Indian mythological history also, they are known as the kirata. Assam is the north eastern state of India where a good population of Bodos are living through generations. Bodos don't have different caste combinations but they have their clans among them. According to the works the clans are made. They follow the Batho religion. And speak the Bodo language which is belonging from the Sino-Tibetan language group. This study is focusing on the Bodo ecosystem in the village Dalbari by addressing different dimensions of their life viz. cultural, Social, economic, environmental and political. It was conducted through different participatory tolls, interview and closed observation through staying in the tribal house for 40 days. The key findings and cream of the study is discussed in the article.*

Key Words: Bodo, Tribe, Assam, India, Socio-economic.

1. INTRODUCTION:

A village is a geographically distinguishable place which is habitat of some human beings who lives in groups called family are socially, culturally and economically interrelated with each other. According to the data of conscious 2011 of India, 68.84 per cent Indians are stayed in village which is around 833.1 million people live in 640,867 different villages. Among them nearly 104 million people which is 8.6 per cent of the total Indian population is belonging from the tribal community.

The term “tribe”, derived from the Latin tribua, originally meant a political unit, and was later used to refer to social groups defined by the territory they occupied. Tribes are generally stayed either in forest of hilly region which is little detached from the main stream society. But there are some few tribes who lives in the plains nearer to the main stream abut still maintain their own culture, tradition and individuality. Bodo tribe is one of among them.

Bodo is the one of the indigenous habitat of the north eastern India mainly in the Bramhaputra Valley of Assam. The word Bodo derived from the word Bod which means Tibet. It is identified that they are the origin of from the Indo-Mongoloid stock belonging to the Tibeto-Burman Language family. This Indo-Mongoloid group had close cultural assimilation with the Negritos, the Austro-Asiatic, the Nordic and Mediterranean races of India due to their close contact as established by history of civilization. But in spite of these the Bodos have maintained a distinctive identity The Boros prefer to call themselves as Boro or the Bodo or Borofisa. The term Boro indicates a race or a speech community speaking the Sino-Tibetan Boro language. They are one of the Indian tribes who lived in the plains according to the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution

The state of Assam is in reality divided into four more entities, viz Bengali dominated Barak Valley, Dimasa tribe dominated North Cachar Hills now known as Dima Hasao, Karbi tribe dominated Karbi Anglong and finally Bodo Kachari tribe dominated Bodoland. Bodoland is the entrance gate to the beautiful North Eastern Region of India, which was created very recently in the year 2007 by curving out some area of eight districts of Assam namely Kokrajhar, Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darang and Sonitpur. It is an autonomous Administrative unit constituted under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India covering an area of 8795 Sq. Km (Provisional). Judging from the wide range of extension of their language, the Bodos appear first to have settled over the entire Brahmaputra valley and extended west into West Bengal (in Kochbehar, Rangpur and Dinajpur districts) they may have pushed into North Bihar also. The present Bodo population in the state of Assam is 52, 49,937. (Approx, figure as prepared by ABSU HQ, Kokrajhar). As the present work has a link with the ‘Bodoland Movement’ which ultimately resulted in the creation of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), a separate homeland for the Bodos within the state of Assam in the design of District Council (under 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India).

During the study of different dimension it is clear that their culture is totally different from the Assames in the state. They are very aware of their culture. They are the plain tribes and very closely living with the other cultures like

the Aryans, but still they don't lost their individuality. They maintaining it throughout the generations. Their culture is one of the richest culture of India. The word Bodo derived from the word Bod which means Tibet, its shows that they came from Tibet. They follow the religion named Bathoism. Ba means five and tho means deep. They believe that the world is made of the five element. They believe in five traditional gods, Viz. *Ailong* (god of earth), *Agrang* (god of water), *Khoila* (god of air), *Sanjaborle* (god of fire or light), and *Rajkumbre* (god of sky). They are the worshipers of their forefather known as Obonlaure. At the initial period when the whole universe is a void he was the only one in the universe. After a long time living alone he became bored to live like that as shapelessly. So he decided to live in a body of blood and flesh. Then he created human and started to live in earth. Now they worship the Shijou plant as the God. It is the symbol of their God. Its branches of that plant have 5 ribs which signify the five elements and each rib has two row of thorns which signify that God creating creatures through couples. Women have the specific role of performing religious rituals in dance form like *Kherai* dance. In addition to that, women, particularly girls, use to share in many other social dance forms like *Baisagu Domahi*, and *Haba Janai* along with the boys with their traditional instruments like *Khum*, *Sifung*, *Jotha*, *Sherja*, *Gogona* etc.

2. METHOD:

This study was done to explore the existing systems in the tribal society. Mainly the participatory tools were used to collecting the data. Where a homogeneous groups of people were invited and the optimum ignorance was followed.

3. DISCUSSION:

Caste

All the villages are habitat of only Bodo tribal people who are belonging to the same caste. All of them are Schedule Tribes.

Clan

Bodo tribal group is divided in to some clans i.e. Ramchiary, Borgoyary, Mosahary, Narzary, Khakhlorly, and Basumatary etc.

Practices

They use to worship the Shijou tree every Tuesday and Saturday. There is a particular place in every house which is protected with the bamboo poles and fancying. They use to worship their ancestor what is called BathoiBahunai. On that day they take four bowls pour some rice and local liquor into that. Then they offer some little clothes to the ancestors. In case if there is some illness in the domestic animals they think it is an effect of evil spirit which is entered into its body, so to remove the spirit they took bath and do some special worship of Batho and sprinkle the water upon the animal and magically it became well. Very rarely it happen the incident of late monsoon, but in such cases they take two frogs one male and another is female and arrange their marriage for the monsoon. The Bodos believe in rebirth. They perform certain rituals before cremation of the deceased. Of course, all these traditions of the Bodo society have undergone changes with the passage of time. With the advancement of education, a modernized life style has come in the social life replacing various traditional social culture and practices by the modernized one, particularly, amongst the younger generation. This has brought in a rapid changing trend in the overall social life of the community.

Marriage:

The marriage in the Bodo culture is a very important part of life. They think that the God made everything in pair, so marriage is that auspicious moment when one meet his another part. The average age of the male for marriage is 18 and for the girls it's nearly 16-17. The arranged and love marriage both is prevalent in their culture. In case of arranged marriage the groom use to go to the bride's home and marry him in front of Shinjou. There is no one such a special priest for any worship or marriage. Any aged person who know the process is requested by the bride's father. In case of love marriage is the both families are agree then they follow the same process otherwise the groom just take the bride from his house and the family of bride do not so that much problem in that. Then they marry and stay together. If there is some financial problem then both of them can stay together and when they can arrange money they do the marriage. There is no such social rigidity about marriage as it's already determined by Batho itself. In a negotiated marriage the girls have little say in the selection of boys. In Bodo society separation is permissible and polygyny has also the social sanction. They observe certain rituals with the birth of a baby. Male child has no added preference over the female child and both are equally preferred.

Food Habit:

The main staple food of Bodo is rice. They take three times rice. They are purely non-vegetarian group of people. Except beef they eat every part of every animal, fish and birds. In their food habit the rats, fox, snake, lizard, even porcupine is also included. They do not know the use of pulses. They make dal with rice powder only. In that also they add some small fishes. There is a culture of eating the dried fish and even dried meat also. They are a good consumer of pork. Pork is the favorite meat of the Bodos. In any happy moment it is common to cook the pork. If someone is having some financial problem that time they bring the intestine and other parts of the digestion system of a pork. There is high use of Kholrabi as a vegetable, otherwise they eat some green leafy vegetables called Lailafa what is basically the jute leaves. They are a good consumer of fish also. They prefer the sweet water fishes. Rohu, Katla, Mrigala are the indigenous major carps and the grass carp, silver carp and common carp are the exotic varieties which are preferred by them. Other than Chang, Bata, Puti, Koi, Morola are the minor carps usually taken by them, and the Magur, Singi, Kocho and one high breed Magur from Thailand are the air breathing fish which are usually eaten by them. They prefer the chicken but only the country breeds. Bodos take eggs very rarely, actually they left it for hatching. Mutton is not preferred by them due to its high cost in market. Other than this they take seasonal fruits like mango, litchi, jackfruit, banana, orange, pineapple etc. There is an unique dish I have observed called Khar. It is made of water which is filtered after shocking the ash of the dried banana stem into it. They cut the banana stem in very thin layer and dry it in the sun. Later they burn it in a very low hear. And then they took the ash into a coconut shell and start to pour water droplets on it. At the bottom of the coconut shell there is a hole from where the droplets come what we have to collect and stored. Later we can add it in any curry veg or non-veg. But where we add khar there tartaric powder should not be added. Otherwise the curry became red like blood. It is actually a basic solution what is good for health and work well against gastric and acidity. They have a habit of eat betel leaves with areca nut. They use the areca nut in raw condition do not dry it. There is a high consumption of tea and local rice beer.

Festivals:

Magh Bihu: It is one of the famous festival of Bodos. It is mainly organized on the last day of Pous month naturally in January. This is also called the Bhogali Bihu. On this day they make small huts made with bamboo and paddy straw called Bhalaghar they organize feast and cook there and burn the house on the next day. On this day they first open the new harvested rice and make some sweet preparations with it called pitha. There are so many types of pitha like tilpitha, Tel pitha, Vapa pitha etc. on this day Bodos drink lots of rice beer made in their house and do some play like Pot breaking and bull fights.

Batho Puja: It is the worship of Batho. On this day if the Shinju plant is become old then they uproot it and plant a new one and do some special worship. This is often come in the month of February.

Holi- The holi is the festival of colours. On this day they use to play with colour powder. Usually its happen on the month of march.

Rangoli Bihu- Rangoli Bihu is the festival use to come in the month of April. It is the main festival of Bodos. It is the welcome ceremony of new year of Bodo solar calendar. On this day they dance a lot with colourful dresses. From that day farmers start to prepare land for new rice cultivation.

Bihu Karma- This is the worshipping of the Mother Nature and forest. It is organized during August.

Durga Puja- This is a festival which is celebrating on the celebration of victory against the demon. It is a 5 days festival where the goddess came to her father's house with her two sons and two daughters.

Kati Bihu- This is held during mid-October. It is the time when the rice in its maturity stage, and the farmers are in empty hand. On this day they light the earthen lamp in the foot of shijou for the protection and wellness of maturing paddy.

Livelihood:

Main livelihood of Bodos is farming. They are the first who cultivate rice and silk in Assam first. They are also good in animal and birds rearing. They mainly rear the cows for milk and plowing, Pigs for meat, hen for meat now a days some people also rear goat as their livelihood. Every Bodo people have water bodies in their houses. They are very well trained for inland fish farming and fish hunting from the river. In the village I observe a unique technique for fish hunting. They flow the DC current to the river water what make the fishes paralyzed for a few moment and then they catch the fishes. They are good in waving in handloom. There are some landless Bodos also they either take the land from others as rent or work as daily wage labour. Now a days some people get government job like teacher and Army. They do not have agricultural labour in their own land. Either the family members do it own or they call some relative, neighbor or friend for help in return they will get a non-veg meal and local liquor. If someday the neighbor want help then the host have to come for helping them.

Panchayat:

This area comes under an autonomous body of BTC (Bodo territorial council). So there no panchayati raj system. There is VCDC (Village council Development Committee) what is also a three tire system what is decentralized its power into Village, block and cabinet level. 4-5 villages according to the population form a VCDC. From every village there will be a representative in the board of members of VCDC. No mass election is done for the chairman post. It is the members of VCDC who select one member among them and make him chairman. Now the BPF (Bodo People's Front) and BJP (Bhatia Janta Party) come to alliance to form the government. BPF is the main political party.

4. CONCLUSION:

From the above findings it can be concluded that the Bodos are belonging from a very rich culture which form their social structure beyond the level of so called civilized tag. Females are equally treated as male. There is no social discrimination among them. The four villages are the best example of sustainability in terms of economics and other dimensions. They are not dependent on out sider but solely interdependent. Any economic disaster or reforms cannot hamper the society. Their agricultural system is also sustainable. Still they do not buy seed. They preserve it and use next year. In case of animal husbandry also they are solely depend on the country breed. The traditional techniques of reproducing a new calf, chick or piglet is still remaining there. They do not eat egg. They let it to be hatched so that it can be a chick. The use of pesticide is still low. So the paddy fields or the small water bodies still have the natural system of carp ecosystem. They very often incorporate the fish seeds in ponds. All types of fishes, snail and crabs stay in the system what quench the need of protein and vitamins in the body of Bodos. They have their traditional medicinal believes what give them instant results but they are a good adopter of new modern medical also. The awareness built by the ASHA workers is so effective that unprotected or unsafe home delivery of baby is zero in the villages. They are well adopter of all the medical vaccination schemes. And even they are liquor attached they don't spend their earning on it. Produce the liquor in the house from a special type of rice fermented with a special yeast called *Bakhar* . In the study through FDG it is found that they are attached to liquor as a part of their culture but there are very few people who consume it daily and if someone consume the level of consumption is very low (50 ml hardly). Because according to them the total liquor consumption of any person throughout his whole life is fixed at the time of birth itself. So if someone's daily consumption is high he cannot drink more days but if daily consumption is low then the span of drinking will be long. May be they are alcoholic but with moral values. They have their own community banking. Salt and petrol are the two most important commodities among some few product for what they are depend on the outer world. Their production system is not mass production but the production by the masses. They are the dream of our father of nation.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

After observing all some suggestions can be given that:

- ❖ Commercial fish farming integrated with pig cultivation will be a good livelihood opportunity.
- ❖ They are well skilled to use bamboo if some training given for making handicrafts from bamboo it can be a livelihood.

REFERENCES:

1. Ahmed, M., Navy, H., Vuthy, L. and Tiongco, M., 1998. Socioeconomic assessment of freshwater capture fisheries in Cambodia: Report on a household survey.
2. Beteille, Andre 1992. Society & Politics in India: Essay in a comparative perspective, Oxford University Press, Delhi.
3. Daimary, A. J and Sensarma, 2017 A., An Introductory Study Of Bodo Culture, Religion And Its Relationship With Hinduism, *International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies*, 4(4), pp. 223-230.
4. Fernandes, W. 1995. Planned development and tribal deprivation. In Deogaonkar S.G. (Ed): Tribal panorama in India, Inter-India, New Delhi
5. Gare, G.M. 1983, Tribal economic development program, Published by Tribal Research Bulletin, September, TRTI, Pune.
6. Grünbühel, C.M., Haberl, H., Schandl, H. and Winiwarter, V., 2003. Socioeconomic metabolism and colonization of natural processes in SangSaeng village: Material and energy flows, land use, and cultural change in northeast Thailand. *Human Ecology*, 31(1), pp.53-86.
7. (http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/25489/10/10_chapter_02.pdf)
8. (http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/25901/9/09_chapter%201.pdf)
9. (http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/67904/7/07_chapter%201.pdf)
10. (http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/69820/9/09_chapter%202.pdf)
11. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adivasi>)

12. Tripathy, S and Khan, A., 2018. A Study on the *Bedia* Community of the Village Nagrabera, Jharkhand. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH CULTURE SOCIETY*, 2(10), pp. 32-37.
13. Mondal, A and Tripathy, S., 2019. A Study On The Different Dimensions Of Asur Community In Jobhipat Village, Bisnupur Block Of Gumla District In Jharkhand, India, *International Journal of Scientific Research & Engineering Trends*, 5(1), pp. 170-174.
14. Khan, A and Tripathy, S., 2018. Socioeconomic Study on Bediya Community of Burakocha Village, Jharkhand. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 3(9), pp. 425-430.