

Correlative cultural characteristics developed among North-Eastern Ethnic People of India

Dr.Gitanjali Hazarika¹, Violina Deka², Mousumi Devi³

¹Associate professor, Arya Vidyapeeth College

^{2,3}Research Scholar, Assamese Department, Gauhati University

Email-id: ¹gitanjalihazarika72@gmail.com, ²dekaviolina1@gmail.com, ³ mousumidevi7@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The states Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura collectively constitute North-East of India. From administrative view Sikkim is also included in North-East India but for cultural view before mentioned seven states is taken as a subject for study. With time different ethnic people immigrate to this geographical periphery. These groups of immigrant lived their lives together for a long period and developed cultural connection between them. This paper tried to discuss various ethnic groups immigrated from various part to North-East India and also conduct a comparative and descriptive study about cultural characteristics they developed mutually

Keywords

North-East, Ethnic tribes, Cultural characteristics, Culture

Article Received: 10 August 2020, Revised: 25 October 2020, Accepted: 18 November 2020

Introduction

North eastern region of India is a place of solidarity for various ethnic people from pre-historic days. This oneness can be found in cultural field vividly. From cultural point of view these states of north-eastern region of India is also called the land of seven sisters'. These states are mainly Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. For administrative advantage Sikkim is included in the region from 2002. But according to geography above mentioned seven states are located in the north-east corner of India and thus they share a special relation in culture, economics and sociological fields showing their oneness. And therefore this study is limited to the cultural aspects of these seven sisters. It can be seen that in these seven states mostly Australoid, Mongoloid, Aryan and Dravidian tribes live. From pre-historic days various different tribes started living in different times in North-East India. Mainly these tribes had started living together for a long period and by mutual sharing they developed a new cultural environment. Thus these migrants frequently migrated to North-East showed characteristics of cultural correlation. Hence in this research paper we have tried to discuss cultural features developed mutually in ethnic groups of north-east India.

Methodology

The methodology followed in this study is comparative and analytical. Resources are collected from library and implemented with proper observation and analysis to conduct a fruitful study on the relevant topic.

Purpose of study

This paper aims at finding mutual cultural characteristics among different types of ethnic community of North-East India.

Scope

Habitat for different community and tribes North-East India is very rich in language and cultural diversity. Rather describing cultural characteristics of each tribe separately, this paper is limited to describe only the mutual characteristics of the tribes. Roots of every tribes of North-East India based upon mainly four ethnic groups and a hint for that is mentioned in the paper.

Four ethnic groups of North-East

North-East Indian has been a habitat of four ethnic groups for long period of time. That are-

- a) Australoid
- b) Mongoloid
- c) Dravidian and
- d) Aryan.

Most of the anthropologists tried to coin Australian groups as the oldest inhabitant of India. In epic Sanskrit books, Wrick-veda, Puranas represented them as Nishad (Hunter). According to anthropologist Austronesian speaking people are the first to migrate to north-east. These groups started living in hill areas. Khasi and Jaintia people contributed the most in these ethnic groups. Assam and Meghalaya are the states where these people live now.

Secondly Mongolian migrated to the land from eastern roads around Huang-he and Yangzi river of China. It is assumed that Mongolian group migrated to north-east in the period of 1st to 12th century. Mongolian is a larger tribe. Different Mongolian tribes are- Bodo, Rabha, Garo, Tiwa, Dimas, Karbi, Miching, Dewri, Sonowal Kachari, Tai-Ahom, Tai-Aitan, tai-Phake, Tai-Turung, tai-Khamyung, Khamti etc. of Assam; Tipra, Mizo from Lusai hill, Chakma of Tripura; Nagas, Kuki of Nagaland; many tribes of Arunachal like Aadi, Nisi, Galong, Apatani, Oka, Monpa, etc. Moreover Khasi and Jaintia people from Meghalaya speak Austronesian language but they are included in Mongolian group from anthropological perspective.

About 1500 years ago a large number of Caucasian people of Indo-Aryan tribe migrated to India through hill roads of west. Anthropologists say that Aryan people migrated to North-East India after they started living in North India. Aryan is intellectually advanced. Therefore they contributed in building up the plot for culture.

Habitation started in the land from pre-historic days and in different time Dravidian started living in North-East. But they were few in numbers. Some intellectual person pointed that British brought Dravidian origin people Kol, Munda as their workers in the tea gardens. Others pointed that Koch people show proof of Dravidian origin.

Common cultural characteristics among different ethnic community of North-East

In North-Eastern land mainly Australoid, Mongoloid, Aryan and Dravidian people lived together for a long period of time and it was natural for them to develop some common characteristics in language and culture. By sharing their own culture these ethnic people shined with a new form of culture. Therefore this mutual characteristics of culture can be discussed as follows-

Shelter: It is traditional process for mankind to create a house with the things available around them. North-East India is rich in wood, forests. Therefore bamboo, cane, hay, woods are easily available. People made their houses with these. These ethnic groups can also be divided as tribal and non-tribal. Tribal people are very good in building houses. Two types of houses are made by them, houses on the ground and Sang Ghar (Houses above the ground). Houses on the ground are small but clean. There is only one door in those houses. Prepared with traditional processes these houses do not have any window or verandah. The plane and courtyard is burnished with cow-dung. Bamboo and tree made walls are also burnished with cow-dung.

Again houses above the ground are prepared for saving themselves from natural calamities and wild animals. Usually Sang Ghar is made in hills or tall trees. However some tribal people living in lower valley also made this type of house as their shelter during flood, they made a platform above the ground with woods and bamboo and live on that platform.

Non-tribal or Aryan people of North-east India lived in their well prepared houses from long ago. These ethnic people also made their houses with woods, bamboo, cane, hay but their houses were comparatively larger in size. They gave different shapes to the houses made of woods, bamboo, cane, hay like- drawing room, living room, and room in front of the living room for women etc.

Food-habit: In North-Eastern region of India rice is produced enormously. Along with plane valley people cultivated paddy with Jhum cultivation process in high land from long ago. Rice is the main food of this land. It can be observed that apart from rice they also cultivate vegetables and fruits. Banana, sugar-cane, coconut is included in their food list. People are non-vegetarian irrespective of tribes. In different places of India Aryan origin upper class Hindu people do not eat meat. But their Assamese lineages are socially independent of eating meat. Roasting is special process of their food habit. Non-tribal people are also affected by this habit of tribal and like to eat potato, fish and

meat by roasting. They also learned to prepare food by adding spice on it; they acquired this process of cooking from Aryans.

In most of the tribal people of North-East drinking traditional local drink or consuming alcohol is a common practice. Almost all the tribes make their drink by their own process and consume it with respect adding to their food list. Apong, Laupani, Jo, Harlang are some of their traditional local drink. It has its own social and religious significance.

Attire: One of the prominent character of these ethnic people's dress is they have different attire for male and female according to their community. Difference in their costumes irrespective of the tribes brings a cultural variety to the land. Tribal people love present themselves beautifully. Despite having difference in their costumes one thing that is common in them is they weave those cloths by their own hands. Dakhana and Arnoi of Bodo; Pini, Pakok, Wamkok of Karbi, Gale of Galong etc. in their traditional attire they love to weave colorful designs by their own hands. Effect of western culture can also be observed in these tribes. But in social events they loved to wear their traditional cloths.

Religious Believes: In North-Eastern India people of different religion Hindu, Islam, Christian, Sikh, Jain, Buddhism lived with endurance and symphony from long ago. Moreover tribal people have their own religion like Bodos have Bathou Religion. In showing religious behavior North-eastern people are kind and tolerant. Respect to other religion is one the finest characteristics of these people. Majority of the people are Hindu, Christian and Buddhist but minority people can also practice their religious work freely. Religious anger and intolerance is less in the region. **Festivals and events:** Different festivals are celebrated in the land of seven sisters' throughout the year; these festivals can be categorized as follows-

1) **Festivals based on farming:** Farming is one of the major occupations for most of the people in the region. Thus all the tribes celebrate farming based festivals with different names and rituals. For example: Assamese Bihu, Boisagu of Bodos, Sogramisawa of Tiwa people and Bisu of Dewri people, Nacter Laku, Rengmar, Pi-Pe festival, Mapin etc. are some of the farming based festivals.

2) **Seasonal Festivals:** Farming based festivals are mostly seasonal. Bihu of Assamese people, Bisu of Dewris, Soijabu Choiraowas, Aran of Aadis, Boisagu of Bodos, Ali-Ai-Ligang of Miching, and Poichangken of Khamtis etc. are celebrated in spring season; though they are of different names the main purpose of celebrating these festivals is to enjoy and dance based.

3) **Religious Festivals:** Apart from Durga Puja, Eid, Christmas; Ahom people celebrate Me-Dam-Me-Phi, Khasi people celebrate Nokrem, and Tripuri celebrate Madan Puja and Manipuri celebrate Laiharuwa festival. All the festivals are celebrated with joy and devotion.

4) **Festivals related to life circle:** In entire North-East India festivals related to three phases of life birth-death-marriage are celebrated. With the birth of new child family members organize joyful events. In the occasion of birth of a new baby Ausas Kheda(Kind of ritual) event; Tiwa people celebrate 'Manashwa', naming festivals, Tonsure ceremony (Hair shaving), Grain initiation ceremony, Dimasa people celebrate 'Mising Jirawa'; all these are birth related rituals

or events celebrated in entire North-East irrespective of tribes.

In the same manner to give tribute to the demised soul is another quality of North-East India. In order to show tribute to the death people organize different events inviting people like Pasati, Doha, Shardh; these all are events related to death. These are organized with different names. Samakan of Karbi people, Me-Dum-Me-Phi of Ahoms, Maimutharwa of Dimasa are some traditional events for showing tribute to demise soul.

In marriage ceremony in presence of guests and relatives marriage ceremony is completed with different rituals. Social structure of North-Eastern region is strong. Ethnic people of this region follow their rituals and traditions strictly. By studying Birth-Death-Marriage related events one can notice that.

5) Social status of women: Women of North-East India have a high social position then rest of North India. Ladies of North-East India never witnessed curse of middle age Sati tradition. Prestige and dignity of women is conserved from old days due to the presence of Austrics, Monogolian and ethinc socio-cultural concepts. Matriarchy was present in Australoid community. According to this daughter inherit all the rights to the property traditionally. This affected other tribes and thus Sati tradition, dowry do not destroy social life. Except upper class Brahmins widow marriage is not restricted among other ethnic community. Moreover Pardah or Purdah tradition is also not present among North-Eastern ladies. They can take part in daily work with men without facing any restrictions. Thus women of North-East India live an unchained life comparatively to the other women of India.

Conclusion

North-East of India is a temperate are. Therefore the place is full of flora and fauna, rivers and is rich in natural resources. The area is covered with hills. Geographical this area has a different appearance then rest of India. Different civilizations and culture of different tribes and Aryan are blending in the land from long ago. In various times above mentioned ethnic groups migrated to the land. This immigration of ethnic groups brought some different cultural properties to this special and separate land of India. Like mentioned above with mutual sharing of own cultures of these ethnic communities a new common culture is developed in the land. At last it can be said that this mixing or blending of different culture developed prestigious North-Eastern culture

References

- [1] Barua, B.KA Cultural History of Assam, voll1.Bina Library, Gauhati.3rd edition, 1986.
- a. Bhattacharya, Pramod Chandra: Axomor Janajati, Assam Sahitya Sabha, 1962.

- [2] Borah, Debojit (ed.): Uttar Purbanchalar Jonagosthiya Loka-Sanaskriti, M.R. Publication, Gauhati. 1st edition, 2014.
- a. Borah, H.M.: Encyclopedia of North East India, Vol1, Mittal Publication, New Delhi. 1st edition, 2001.
- b. Chattarji, S.K. Kirat-Jana-Kriti, The Asiatic Society, Bengal, 1951.
- [3] Das, Girindra Nath (Ed.): Tribal Women and Development, Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati, 1st edition, 2007.
- [4] Gogoi, Lila: Axomor Sanaskriti, Banalata, Dibrugarh, 9th edition, 2012.
- [5] Gogoi, Lila: Tai Sanaskritir Ruprekha, Banalata, Dibrugarh, 4th edition, 1994.
- [6] Grierson, A.G.: Linguistic Survey of India, Vol1, Part II and Vol1, Part1, 1903.
- [7] Hakacham, Upen Rabha: Axomor Jonajatiya Sanaskriti, Bani Mandir, Guwahati. 2nd edition 2010.
- [8] Narzi, Bhaben: Boro-Kacharir Samaj Aru Sanaskriti, Bina Library, Kokrajhar, 1966.
- [9] Sarma, Nabin Chandra: Bharatar Uttar-Purbanchalor Loka-Sanaskriti, Bani Prakash, Guwahati. 1st edition, 2000.
- [10] Sarma, Nabin Chandra: Axomiya Loka-Sanaskritir Abhas, Bani Prakash, Guwahati. 3rd edition, 2003.
- [11] Son, Soumen: Folklore in North East India, Western Book Depot. Guwahati. 1985.
- [12] Verma, R.C.: Indian Tribes through History, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Govt. of India, New Delhi, 2002.