

Life and Status of the Bodo Peoples of Arunachal Border Areas and their Worship: A Case Study of North Rangapara Area Under Sonitpur District of Assam

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Abstract

A close study of the Bodo community reveals their intimate relationship with nature prior to the coming of medical science. their intimacy with nature made them to worship deities associated with nature. To alleviate the pain and suffering some people resorted to use nature vegetation as medicine. In the process some of them could cure the ailments and were regarded as "Ojhas"(a medicine man who acts as an astrologer of suffering or happening of a person). Along with medicines they were also associated with the use of charm (tantric mantra).

The Bodo people of Assam however have their folk believed with connection of myths, legends, tales, songs, ballads and also tantric mantras, which have been functioning in their every work of livelihood. They have also doubt with each other in the remote area, and this doubting in the long run resulted in the superstitious belief.

Introduction:

The Kirata people of Assam before the coming into Assam of their kinsmen the Thai or Shan Ahom tribe from North Barman in 1228. Judging from the widely scattered groups of the Bodo People all over the state, appear to have been of the great Tibeto- Barman tribe of the Bodos who still number nearly a million as pure Bodo speakers unassimilated among the Aryan speaking people of the Assam plains. These Bodo were in all likelihood the dominant people of the Assam valley and the adjacent north hills and had spread also all over border of Assam basically Arunachal Pradesh.

The Bodos living in and around the Arunachal Pradesh Border areas under Chariduar Circle of Sonitpur district is very distinct and unique. They are believed to have settled here in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The Bodos of this region settled here at different periods of time. The Bodos of Chariduar, Chengelimara and Rangapara areas are believed to be the earliest settlers here. The Bodos of the Bhalukpong and the people living at the foothills of Balipara Reserved Forest Area came later and settled there around the early decades of the twentieth century. They came and settled here from different places. Most of them were flood victims. Some shifted from lower Assam like undivided Goalpara, some came from upper Assam like Dhemaji and Lakhimpur in search of a new place for their settlement. Some came from Dimapur, Nagaland and settled here a long time ago. As a result this areas became a meeting places of different social, religious and languages groups that exist among the Bodos. Diversity of linguistics and other social practices still exists among them to some extent. Some of them

speaks the Bodos dialect mostly prevalent in dudnoi areas of present goalpara district. Some use the Bodos dialects of present Udalguri district. Some use the Bodos dialects of presents of Upper Asaam and some use the Bodos dialects of Baksa and Chirang areas. A close observation of the day to day lives of these people shows their diverse linguistics differences. However the common written dialects made this people live together in a better way and bind them together as the Bodos culturally and socially.

The objectives of the studies:

1. A discussion of the life style and intra-border communication of the people living north Rangapara and Arunachal Pradesh border with a special reference to the Bodo people.
2. A discussion on the intimate relationship of the Bodo people with nature.
3. To find out the origins and reason of spreading Daina.
4. To find out the factors of the reason for believing the Daina among the Bodo community.
5. To find out the reason of increasing social evils among the Bodo community.
6. To find out the relation of religious worship and deities.
7. A brief discussion on the eradication of superstitious beliefs from the illiterate people.

Methodology:

For the completion of the project both primary and secondary data will be collected and analyzed. For the primary data the district library and college libraries will be visited. For the recent data collection villages will be visited and discussion with village headman and elderly people or senior citizen will be done. The relevant books will also be consulted for gathering the secondary data's.

The Bodo people of the border area mostly follow the religion of the Bodos. The Bathouism. Some follows the Brahma Dharma introduced by reformist Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. Some of the Bodos of this religion follow Sanatan Dharma propounded by Shankardeva. A little group of Bodos peoples of these areas also practice Christianity. As a result one witnessed varieties of religious groups among the Bodos in the border areas under Chaiduar circle. However there is no conflict among these diverse religious groups among the Bodos. They live in peace and harmony and share and exhibit the rich Bodo Culture.

The Bodos of Border area live a very simple life. They are very social and are eager to help each other at any moment. The base of the economy of these people is agriculture. Agriculture is the means of their existence and survival. However they rarely take up agriculture for commercial purposes. In other words they use agriculture as a means of of their sustenance and households maintenance. The economic status of the Bodo people living in and around the border area is not good. Most of the people are poor and daily wagers. Only a very few people are rich enough to maintain their expenditure smoothly. They are regarded as rich people in their respective areas. The economically better off people seem to exercise their opinion and manage the society. However the economic conditions of rural Bodos people have improved to a great extend recently.

The factors responsible for the poor economic condition of the Bodos living in the border areas of Arunachal Pradesh under Chariduar Circle are many. For a long period of time the people living near the border and the foothills of Balipara Reserved Forest have been deprived of the basic Government amenities. Until 2026 most of the Bodo people of these areas were not connected of electrification. The poor road communication system was a hindrance to the path of development in these areas. It affected them very badly and had a very adverse effect on the lives of the students of the region. They are the

also deprived of the Panchayati Raj, which is turn deprived them of the grass root development schemes of the Government even today. Besides all these the poor literary rate amongst them was also one of the root causes of the poor economy of the region. The lack of education might be regarded as the main cause of the superstitious beliefs of witchcraft among the Bodos of the Border areas. many cases of witch hunting in these areas have already been witnessed by the people in the past years. The poor rate of literary in the region adversely affected them in their social and religious life too. Lack of proper education prevented them from availing the various governmental development schemes and kept them aloof from rest of the world around them. They become more fronds to the superstitious beliefs, which is a threat to the development of the society. Lack of Hospitals among them is another cause of the existence of the superstitious beliefs existing among them. In the absence of the hospitals these people become the victims of the agents of the superstitious. This is not a single health center or a hospital in span of around 20 Sq. Kilometers in this area. This helped the village quakes and other village Ojhas (a medicine men who acts as an astrologers of sufferings of happening of a custom) to take advantage of the situations. These situations helped in the existence of superstitious beliefs among them.

Keeping asides all these, the Bodo people under the Chariduar Circle, living in and around the border area are very rich in upholding their rich cultural practices. Despites poor economic conditions they live happily and are very social to each other. They maintain a distinct village ruling system where the local Gaonburah and other village heads and elders of the society maintain a conducive village atmosphere for the rich and the poor to live together happily. It has come to light that most of the village conflicts are settled amicably by these village heads. There is a needs of awareness and literary among them to keep peace with the changing scenario of the progressive society. A lot more is to be done by the Govt. officials in reaching out the various Govt. Schemes for economically uplifting them and educationally enlightening them so as to free them from the clutches of the inherent superstitious beliefs.

Population pattern and witch Records:

Rangapara area is under the circle of Chariduar of sonitpur District. According to census report of 2011 total population is 343749 and out of which 176589 are male while 1671160 are female. In 2011 there were total 69674 families residing in Chariduar circle. These average sex ratio of chariduar circle is 947. As per census 2011 out of total population, 5.4% people lives in urban area while 94.6 lives in the rural area. The average literacy rate in urban area is 87.8% while that in the rural area is 61.3% also the sex ratio of urban area in Chariduar circle is 939 while that of Rural area is 947.

As per the population census 2011 data following are some quick facts about chariduar circle.

Sl no.		Total	Male	female
1.	Children (age 0-6)	49421	25027	24397
2.	Literacy	62.77%	60.39%	46.73%
3.	Schedule Caste	7114	3709	46.73%
4.	Schedule Tribe	50996	25695	25301
5	Illiterate	158989	69940	89.049

Source: Chariduar Circle Data.

Literacy rate in Rangapara under Sonitpur District:

The total literacy rate of Rangapara was 87.83% in 2011. Which is greater than average literacy rate

72.19% of Assam. Population wise, out of total 14,525 liter's male were 7855 while female were 6670. Also the male literacy rate was 92.03% and female literacy rate was 83.34% in Rangapara.

Table No. 1

Sl no.	Responses from illiterate	No. of People	P/C	
1.	(i)Superstitious only	60	76%	
2.	(ii)Social and Economics only	9	12%	
3.	(iii)Political only	Nil	Nil	
4.	Both (i) &(ii) only	Nil	Nil	
5	All Above	5	6%	
6.	No comment	5	6%	
7	Total	79	100%	

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation :

The above table is analysis on witch hunting by illiterate backward villages on causes shows that 76% peoples say superstitious, 12% peoples says social and economic, 6% peoples believes all causes and 6% peoples do not give comment.

Findings of study:

In the Bodo society some of unusual diseases, infant death, serial death are the provocations for detection of any handy work of necromancer in the same village. The villagers are accustomed, particularly the kith and kins of patient approach Ojhas when their prolonged illness does not come soon. And gradually their thinking is leaded to blame somebody and hunting of witch.

The belief on power of witch craft was originated along with the origin of Bodo society. So belief on such practice is not new in Bodo society. The purpose of witchcraft is to harm others, it's never aims for welfare of others. The witchcraft invites pre hatred, pre-curse from the peoples. In early period, the villagers had to depend upon the ojhas for their welfare of life and the ojhas could not good or he could do bad also. The bad works of ojhas developed the concept of witchcraft. So the strong folk belief on witch power is the base of its existence. Some particular religious festival are also seen which is witness of supernatural performance in the Bodo society. The Ojhas, Dhoudhini (female virgin having selected 20 diac). Dhouri(male promoter) are the key performers in kherai festival. The female virgin mediator of god gets transformed to powerful functionary after the influence of mantra by priest.

There are some common social causes for the hunting of witch in the village area. The personal enmity, jealousy over other, social forces etc. are seen social conspiracies for the murdering of enemy in the name of hunting of witch. The personality exploiter administers force belief on black magic to illiterate folk for personal scourge. The relatives or in law are always to attempts to grab the properly belongs to widow or helpless kith and kinds. We have seen that the widow is no longer loved by her in laws at home. Even the in laws are always in attempt to seize her property which is seen in Bod society.

Religion factors also seen in border area which is caused witch hunting. The conversion from one religion to other religion has been getting progress in tribal and backward society. Even the relatives also feel angry and restless on converted person, because he seems betrays the family tradition. In fact the enraged villagers get together and began to plan murder of him. So the converted people are to be

branded as practitioner of black magic and responsible of misery of some villagers. It's seen to be in border area and tribal area that are living in remote area.

Conclusion:

The traditional belief of witchcraft and with the hunting are key issued of the Bodo people of north Rangapara area. During last dead such incidents are frequently seen in the uneducated rural and backward section of the people of Rangapara in sonitpur district. We have seen in human being have the nature of love hatred, domination jealous, enmity, revenge etc. these factors guide to the villagers and internal human minds to seek evil power, thus it may give birth of witchcraft. Among the tribal peoples and the socio-economic educationally backwardness are the prime induces of blind belief, practice and witch hunts. The belief on which power and black magic are ethnically strong in Bodo society. The practice of black artist causes harm to other also has been prevailing since long period in Bodo society where they are not strong in mind set and living started is also equal to each other.

It may be said that measures should be taken to stop this evil belief, practice by awareness programme of some social organization awakening process of education and knowledge among the Bodo tribal people. Among the Bodo people of this area if the rate of proper education increased and awakening come in regard to the false divination made by the so called Ojhas of self-styled worshipers the blind belief of Daina may be shaped and out from the society.

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