

Socio Economic Status and its Impact on Cultural Activity of Barak Valley

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Abstract

The present study is the explains of Manipuri culture and traditions which are going to be in a diverted way, but people of the society are very much aware of to save the dignity and honour and customs in the same in extent way like earlier. This attempt will be save customary traditional way life to keep unchanged scenario in the society. People of the Manipuri society is now in a way of transition period of modern process of living with materialistic world and with colourful ultra modern and dynamics of the new economic forces had been forcing in the activity which are not authorize by the community law.

Moreover this work attempted to construct a reliable socio economic history and its impact on the culture of the Manipuri community of Assam and Tripura. Especially in the field of social events and ritual activity, if we find that un necessary expenditure and objectionable many things are likely to introduce un-authorizely in the every ritual rite.

Introduction

Originally concentration of Manipuris in Assam is mainly in Barak Valley from the immemorial time. In the contemporary periods Manipuris were wide spreadly distributed to other districts of Assam specially in Nowgong, Kamrup and Sibsagar etc. The outlook of Manipuris has considerably been changed. They are no longer home-sick. Mobility in socio-cultural, educational, and professional contacts has become a new temptation. The Manipuri culture is keeping its rare images in Assam till to day.

Manipuris constitute at present a linguistic minority of the Barak Valley, but in the 19th century they were with a distinct socio-cultural identity. In Cachar their eminence was even more than the Bengali Hindus. In rural Cachar the Burman, the koch, the Assarnese accepted the Manipuri cultural superiority and unhesitatingly followed instructions of the Manipuri Brahmins in their religious ceremonies and it is the Manipuris who kept the wheel of Hindu ceremonial functions going on according to the rules of rituals.

Cachar was virtually under the Manipuri princes Marjit, Chaurjit and Gambhir Singh Since 1819 till the British Forces launched the offensive (1823) against the Burmese force under the overall command of general Mingimaha Nand krodeu, the Military Governor of Assam, from Nowgang, advanced to Jaintia and entered Cachar. The king of Cachar the dejure sovereign already deposed by the Manipuri became a political non-entity. Gambhir Singha who had his base camp at Tilain hillock near Cachar- Meghalaya border offered unsuccessful resistance to the Burmese invaders. During the Critical juncture of Cachar's history no Community other than the

Manipuris had the girth to withstand the onslaught of the mighty Burmese invaders.

The political importance of the Manipuri was acknowledged by the officials of the East India Company. According to the Section 4 of the Badarpur Treaty on 6th March 1824, David Scott, the agent of the Governor General of India on behalf of the company agreed to the maintenance of the Manipuri Princes who were the defector rulers of Cachar. Marjit the father-in-law of Krishna Kishore Manikya the ruler of Tripura, living near Hailakandi had huge establishment.

The mandarins of Fort William aware of the martial qualities of the Manipuri and settled then on the frontiers of ~ Cachar and Sylhet to ward off the Kuki incursions and they discharged their duties faithfully.

Cachar and Manipur had been neighboring Kingdoms with traditional link for better Understanding of the subject an idea about Manipur and her rich Cultural history is indispensable.

MANIPURI LANGUAGE:

The present Manipuri language, evolved out of the traditional Meetei Language, the speech of the politically dominant group. Legends, songs and Manuscripts found in this language evidently prove a long and sustained existence of it. The" Aryans considered their language as a manuscripts found in this language evidently prove a long and sustained existence of it. The Aryans considered their language as a manifestation of the divine voice, so did the Meiteis. The early people of this land were enterprising and at the same time gifted with a fertile mind and sensitive. Equally were they endowed with the keen propensity of expressing their experiences, feelings and hobbles thoughts. All this helped the growth of a rich language. Another notable factor for its richness was the extrusive contribution of other groups of people and clan-dynasties in terms of additional vocabulary from their dialects and moving legends. It appears that though Meitei language was the lingua franca of the different groups, each spoke a separate dialect and as a result of the proximity with one another or of the subsequent amalgamation, many words from those dialects have been taken over and introduced into the main language. It is common to find use of double synonyms placed together for the sake of emphasis, ornamentation or for pure musical effect in early compositions. In such arrangement many of the synonyms have been derived from other dialects and connotations of such newly acquired words are provided in the texts whenever found proper. By the close of the 17th century, Manipuri came into Contact with other Indo-Aryan languages and when many of the vocables of the latter have been adopted, their too has been mostly in the pattern of simultaneous placing of two synonyms as in the old practice, that is a Sanskrit or Bengali word followed by its Manipuri equivalent. And those newly borrowed are more or less confined to words of abstract significance only. Thus, the impact of other advanced languages was negligible specially in Barak Valley' the borrowing of other words of Bengali language and Assamese language in Bramhaputra Barak Valley quite significance since long. Even there are certain sentences where 500% words are borrowed words from other languages and 50% are Manipuri words, but it can reflect full meaning. Beginning with Houghton Hogdson many scholars have placed Manipuri in the Tibeto-Burman group of language. G.A. Grierson says that its affinity with other TibetoBurman languages is more keenly

observed in relation with Kachin.

The Meitei language had its own script which has an apparent semblance to that of the Tibetan. In regard to its origin, some English officers held extreme individualistic views : G.H. Damant asserting that it was brought from Bengal by 1700 A.D.

CASTES AND MARRIAGES

The Manipuris were divided into many tribes and sub tribes and they were again subdivided into several clans and sub-clans. There had-been occasional feuds narrowed down in the years to come 1 and the message of oneness of mankind should not be lost in the thick myths. The cultural distance of the civilization of the state is juxtaposed cursorily with the universal enunciations of human rights in the context of cultural achievements. Vaisnava faith had the spin offs of removing the conflicts. The Hindu priests recognized the Manipuris as Kshatriyas. There are also Brahmins and Apokpa followers, (Those who are followers of Laininghan Nauria Phullo). Numerically, the Brahmins were a minority Among the Brahmins there are two groups who came earlier and those who came later. The division of Manipuri society into two broad castes led the brilliant cohesion of Manipuri social structure. The social tension in consequence of castism which was very much evident in other parts of India were comparatively absent despite the fact that the Manipuris's were v. conservative Hindus. A Manipuri Brahmin had been a highly respected person irrespective of his age and academic attainment The marriage system of the. Manipuris after conversion of the Vaisnava faith of Bengali order closely follows the rituals of Bengali Hindus of Nabadwipa School. They follow the 'Brahma Bidhan' and the Vedic rules. The father, grand father, uncle or elder brother sampradaus (gift) the bridge to the bridge groom. The Manipuri marriage comes under the purview of Dayabhaga School of Hindu Law. There is no child marriage among the Manipuri's but the marriage bond was comparatively lax specially in the 18th and 19th century. The husband infrequently left his wife to the lunch. In such cases the estranged wife had no financial remedy like the Kuki or Naga women. The marriages was normally arranged Marriage proposal was known as Haijaba. But elopement (chenba) was quite frequent. Divorce was permitted and remarriage of the widows were not uncommon. Manipuri' s were normally monogamous but the nobility followed polygamy With the enforcement of Hindu code Bill polygamy has become forbidden to the Manipuris like all other Hindus.

STATUS OF MANIPURI WOMEN

The Manipuri women enjoy a special status in the society. They are strong, fair and beautiful they are hardy and industrious. Most of the household works are being done by them, In comparison Manipuri male is lazy and passes his days in sports and past time. The women discharge their duties a thorune and also in the field. They sow the saplings and cut the paddy and even do the thrashing works. Eighty percent of the total agricultural works is done by the Manipuris women. Manipuris women are experts weavers the cultivation of cotton, its harnessing into threads finally weaving and the colouring, in short, the entire process of the cotton industry is the, product of the hard labour of the Manipuri women the marketing and sell of the cotton goods come under the Parameter of their netcrprise. The same is applicable to the

silk industry also. The Manipuri women are lovers of beauty. They keep the house heat and clean. They plant many flower plants in their county and to decorate the house. They also decorate' their hairs with flowers. The Champa flowers is a very favourite flower of the Manipuri women and i) almost household a Champa plant is found. The women are also great connoisseur of colour and in a Manipuri garden one notices the riot of colours.

PLACE OF MANIPURI RAJKUMARS AND RAJKUMARIS

Manipuri believe that Rajkumars are the descendants of pakhangba, the divine kings the Manipuri king Garibnewaj had many . wives and through them he had several male issues polygamy of the princes and the nobility had the sanctions of the society. A Rajkumar or a Rajkumari need hot be a son or daughter of a King. If a person is descendent of Garib Newaj through the male line is sufficient to entitle a man to be a Rajkumar and a women a Rajkumari. The Rajkumars and the Rajkumaris are a privileged people like Brahmins in the Manipuri society. Even the British Government recognized it and exempted them from forced labor and conscription Major Maxwell, a British military officer, later on the political Agent kept a Manipuri princess as his mistress at Imphal. The, act of high handedness outraged the religious sentiments of the Manipuri'. There are large numbers of Rajkumar and Rajkumaris Barak Valley. The fugitive princes carried several Rajkumars and Rajkumaris piggy back to the place of Cachar and subsequently to Tripura and Sylhet. Marjit Singh, the fugitive prince had his three daughters married to Krishna Kishore Manikaya, the king of Tripura had a retinue of wives in his harem and many of his off springs become settlers in Cachar. Gambhir Singh, however remained unmarried till he was made the king by the East India Company in 1825. But he had many Rajkumars as his followers in Cachar.

The Dowger Queen Kurnudini Devi. the window of Gambhir Singh Migrated to Cachar for a political asylum along with his son Chandrakirti, a number of Rajkumars and Rajkumaris also accompanied her. Thus when Edger carne to Cachar as its Deputy Commissioner there were a fairly large number of Rajkumars and Rajkumaris in Cachar.

THE DEITIES OF MANIPURI'S

The Manipuris before their conversion to Hinduism warshipped ancestors as God. That tradition of ancestor worship still continues. Every clan had its own deity and fixed place of worship. This is some what different from the Kukis and Nagas. The principal deities of the Meiteis are Koubru reigning in the north-west, Loiyar Kappa reigning in the West, Thanging in the South West, Wanghren in the South, Maring in the east and chingkheiningthou in the North-East. After every consummation of marriage .the Manipuris offer puja to these deities invoking their blessings for the success of the Marriage.

The other deities are:

- a) Umang Lei (Jungle god or Vanadevta) during the annual festivities, Lai haraoba, the people in large number gather near the Umang Lei.
- b) Laining thou Khoriphaba.
- c) Konthaujam Lairembi.
- d) Khamlariba,

- e) Ibudho u Panganba.
- f) Heisnam Panthoibi.
- g) Lai Eshing Chaiba.
- h) Thongak Lairenbi.
- i) Lai Khurembi.

The Manipuris living outside Manipur like their counterparts in Manipur worshipped the above deities even after their converting to the Hindu faith. May be strange coincidence, there lies a close resemblance between the pre-vaisnva Manipuri conception of supreme-being with the conception of God in Gita.

IMPORTANCE OF MANIPURI DANCE AND RELATION WITH RITUAL FUNCTIONS

Manipuri dances are world famous the dances demonstrate the brilliance of Manipuri Culture. The distinct individuality the dances acquired is the product of the century old traditions permeated through the effort of successive rulers in the past. The art-form reached its zenith during the rule of Bhaiga Chandra.

The History of the development of Manipuri dances and music may be divided into two parts. The first part covers the period preceding the entry of Hindu cult into Manipuri while the second covers the Hindu period. Each has its own glory. The occasion of dances is the changing of season. The well-known festival of Lai Haraoba mostly performed between the spring and rainy season is the most comprehensive feat for dancers. The term Lai Haraoba, literally as well as actually, means the festivity of gods. The performance of Manipuri dances by the Manipuris maintain uniform rule by every Manipuri of the world till to day. Manipuris of Barak Valley also maintaining the traditional path since ancient time till to day. The festival is performed with great pomp and grandeur in different localities during the said season, before the temples.

The Lai Haraoba formed important annual religious festival of Manipuris. The Kings and members of the court and the regional chiefs took active part in those festivals, along with the common people not only as spectators and promoters but as actual participants. There are various kinds of dance presented in the course of a Lai Haraoba. Presentation of solo or duet or group dance, as separate items of the festival, covers the appearance of kings and queens, husbands and wives, boys and girls in an undeclared competition. But the most essential part of Lai Haraoba is the enactment of the drama of the entire creation, in the open arena by the vast congregation through the medium of dances and music. The meeting between God and Goddess, sowing of the human seed in the womb, birth of the child, growing of the child into manhood, struggle for the fluffiest of the material needs of mankind the process of cultivation, weaving, house making and the various art of discharging human obligations to God and to his. Fellowmen are enacted, one by one, with meticulous care lest any mistake occurs. The popular belief is that in case any mistake occurs that would have far reaching consequence on the society. The prayers sung in the Lai Haraoba festival are mostly for the welfare of the welfare of the king and his subjects.

The role of priests in this ritual is played by a team of Maibis who are either men or women living a life dedicated to the practice of some spiritual discipline. The "Lai Haraoba"

festival also was instrumental for the promotion of sport and several athletic events. The ritual dances are followed by sports and games when the able bodied young men and women participate. The Manipuris love games and sports in the past. Some of the old games and sports continue to be practiced by the present generation also. They are polo, Mukna Kangjei (Manipuri style of Hockey), Mukna (A kind of Wrestling) and kang (A game played on the mud floor of big outhouses), which consists of hitting targets fixed on the floor with hard smooth oblong shaped flat instruments, known as kangs. There are categories of dance which are of tremendous value and relevance. There are: i) Lai Haraoba Category of dance, ii) The Ras Dance, and iii) The Cholom aspect of the Manipuri Nat Sankritana. Whether the Lai Haraoba groups of dance are classical or not remains unsettled. The Ras Leela has its origin in the vision of Bhaigachandra after the installation of the image of Gobindji Rajarshi hurried with his plan to perform a Ras Leela. As the image of Radha was yet to be installed, the role of Radha had to be played by a young girl, while the image of Gobindji was placed in the middle of Ras Mandal during the performance. Bimbabali the young daughter of Rajarshi played the role of Radha. She was later known as Sija Laioibi (Child Goddess).

The first Ras performance must have created lasting enthusiasm for the king and his team of dance teachers. The Ras tradition grew from strength to strength in the hands of succeeding rulers.

The central scene of Ras include among other the solo dance of Krishna, Radha, Brinda, Chandrabali, group of dance and sometimes duet presentations of Radha and Krishna. Ras Leelas performed in Gobindaji's temple consist of only the Gopis, as the role of Radha and Krishna are played by the images of Radha and Krishna are played by the images of Radha and Sri Gobindaji respectively. During the performance the sacred images are taken out in the Ras arena. The above generalisation of the solo dances does not apply to Gobindajit's temple. In some other dances all the characters need not be present uniformly. For instance, the role of Chandra Bali is not to be found in Nitiras. The music aspects of the costumes also play an important part in the development and maintenance of the Ras tradition. Manipuri Ras can't be studied in isolation from the Nata Sankritana which provides the musical and several other fundamental aspects of the dances. A San.kritana may be divided into two aspects, viz, the musical aspects and the cholom aspects. Both aspects have their own respective importance. One is complementary to the other. The cholom aspect may further be sub-divided into two, viz, palacholom and pung-cholom. Pala cholom is a form of dance by the participants in a Nat Sankritana. It is a harmonious blending of vigor and softness. Pung-cholom is by Mridange-Artists. This also is a unique and harmonious combination of masculine vigour and Vaishnavic humility.

CONCLUSION :

The over all study reflect that the Manipuris of Barak Valley is agrarian based economy and percentage of engagement in agriculture is 25.72% directly or indirectly where as in North Tripura and Unakoti District is 42% which is less than state level percentage of engagement in agriculture sector of the two state i.e., Tripura and Assam.

In the Industrial sector engagement of percentage of households is 15% in Barak Valley but unfortunately in North Tripura and Unakoti District is only 1%. Peoples are living with a feeling just to pass the life.

In place of engagement in small scale business in Barak Valley its account is 10.61% but in the North Tripura and Unakoti is only 10% which is not a desire percentage.

In the service sector interestingly in North Tripura and Unakoti account 56% households but in Barak valley, it accounts only 34.69%. Moreover, it is also one of a notable thing that engagement in the defence and police service contributes a high percentage among the Manipuris of North Tripura and Unakoti Districts of Tripura.

It is also one of the unfortunate occasions that the engagement of household's percentage in place of Employment is small private Sector of Barak valley accounts 13.42% and North Tripura and Unakoti district accounts only 10%. Less percentage engagement in the private establishment is not a good symptom in the field of earning in this crisis period of state and central employments.

There are some traditional beliefs of Manipuris is that our people can't belongs to business class but due to unemployment problem in this modern world the qualified young generation started to join in the business to earn living. From the survey report it observed that both in the study areas engagement in the small business are less in percentage in comparison to other community. The engagement in business is very much essential in the present century because all the qualified and energetic young generation can't be provide white colour job in toto.

Engagement in agriculture activity was earlier a way of engaging himself or herself without having no alternative job but in the modern days if agriculture activity can be done in the proper way with proper investment through Bank finance people can live very easily.

In the present decade many things have been changed specially in the field of mobility in Socio – Cultural and professional contacts has been become a new temptation. Moreover another remarkable thing is observing in the participation in the field of ritual activities. The young generation is very much loyally participating for the concentration of the mind in the right path. Manipuris are expensive in nature and sense of saving is less with comparison to other community right from individual to family expenditure. Manipuri are not so much tide in the family budget. When we study in very much micro study of the Manipuris family it is rarely found divorce family and monogamy also less in percentage, freedom of women in the family society is also very much encouraging and excessive numbers of family is exclusive numbers of daughters and son are a rare in Manipuri B.P.L. or very much poor families in the society no doubt but it is also rare in percentage in engagement in un lawful activities and it is also rarely found the families those who do not perform his / her duties to old aged parents also with comparison to other communities from the field survey it is also found that the engagement of child labour also in nesty / risk work as wage earner is also very much rare in Manipuri society is surveyed area i.e. North Tripura and Unakoti District of Tripura State and barak Valley of Assam. Manipuris do not have any castism in the society and untouchability and under estimation they are completely absence in our custom.

Finally we like to conclude by suggesting a few things as remedial measures for some sort of things which is very much essential for rectification for our social up-liftmen process of the Manipuris of the both study areas Manipuris are very much reserve in the both study are specially inter caste marriage till today though a very few countable families are directly involvement in the socially or guardian are permitted to their son or daughters but unfortunately in Manipuri state accidentally social marriage among the inter caste but in North Tripura and Unakoti District and three district of Barak Valley till today no social marriage had not performed till today and it should be like otherwise the microscopic linguistic minority Manipuris those who living the both the state will be abolish one day in the field of culture.

Moreover, in the field of ritual, social activity expenses should be curtailed minimized specially in marriage ceremony, Shardha, Chaumba or Annaprasan, Birth day programme only the minimum requirement expenditure should be entertain in the name of all above mentioned functions and there should not be any type of competition in the expenditure. Finally I would like to suggestion to my community to prepare family budget and it should be increased from time to time and specially in field of Education, Health Care, and Entertainment etc.

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