
A BRIEF ANALYSIS ON HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF MORIA COMMUNITY OF ASSAM

DR. SNIGDHA MAHANTA.

Associate Professor. Department of Assamese.

Dhing College, Assam.

Abstract

The current study on the Moria community of Assam gives a much needed study from the social, cultural and geographic point of view. Beginning from the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the area, the study shows the proper analysis of the historical distribution Moria population and their social, demographic, and cultural characteristics. The study has observed that Moria community has taken almost every sides of common life of the Assamese people where they reside. The main objective of this study is to know about the historical and cultural aspects of Moria community of Assam. The study has based on both the primary and secondary data. The primary data has collected from 250 households of Moria community of Assam. The primary data has collected with the help of interview method. The Muslims though a minority group of people occupied a significant role and place among the society and its people of Assam. Moria among them got assimilated soon with the Assamese people of the State, adopting their mode of living, sharing their superstitions and social rites, speaking their language, and accepting their land as their motherland and contributing whatever they can towards her development. But for their socio-economic upliftment the government and other non-government organizations should also take proper initiatives to empower them socially, politically and economically for the greater interest of this community.

Keywords: Moria Community, Socio-cultural aspects, Assam.

Introduction

The Indian Nation is the culmination of various regional identities with the Indian Muslims, too, not constituting a single, monolithic or homogenous identity, and in fact, enveloping all the differentiating features that characterise Indian national society. According to historical accounts and the popular narrative, the beginnings of Muslim settlement in Assam can be traced back to the thirteenth century as mentioned in the Kanai Barashil Bowa Sil inscription found in North Guwahati issued after Bakhtiyar Khilji's invasion referring to Muslims as 'turushka' (Saikia,2017). This armed movement was also followed by the trading groups, which led to new Muslim settlements in the Brahmaputra valley, especially in the Western part of Assam bordering Bengal. Consecutive census reports of 1891, 1901 also mention the 'Moriya' Musalmmans, classified as a low-class Muslim Group which settled here in the 15th century. Yasmin Saikia (2017) traces the presence of Muslims in Assam Valley, especially to the Sufi khanqah dating back to the

thirteenth century and to references of Muslims as Yavanain the Vaishnava literature of the sixteenth century.

Apart from the normal Shia-Sunni divisions, historical sources and accounts of several authors throw out groups like the Gariya, Mariya, Miyan, Sheikhs, Sayyids, etc. These divisions have acquired new meanings in post-colonial Assam, and even in tracing structured historical narratives of migration from mainland India, categorical stress on their “Axomiyaness” is seen not only in works of Muslim writers but also their Hindu counterparts. Writings of several early Assamese Muslim writers in Assam Valley signify this trend. As early as 1917, when the first Assam Sahitya Sabha meeting was held, a significant topic of discussion was the Contribution of Muslims to Assamese literature (Annals of ASS, Maheshwar Neog, 1976). It is to be borne in mind that not all Muslims were outsiders; there were various sections of people from the indigenous origin who converted to Islam as well. Sufism propagated Islam to a great deal across the globe, leading to what is known as ‘soft’ conversions to Islam.

Objective

The main objective of this study is to know about the historical and cultural aspects of Moria community of Assam.

STUDY AREA

The study has been undertaken among 250 households of Moria community of Assam. Assam is known as the land of Red River and Blue Hills. The region has been blessed with the vast fertile river valleys.

Data and Research Methodology

The study has based on both the primary and secondary data. The primary data has collected from 250 households of Moria community of Assam. The primary data has collected with the help of interview method. The secondary data are collected from books, journals, research papers, various census reports and government documents. Primary data of the study area and the Moria community particularly have been collected from some other important secondary sources like Moria Association’s census, Government records and article in edited books and newspapers and from other reliable sources. The study will help not only the academicians and research scholars but at the same time it will act as a very useful account to the planner’s administrators social workers and others. This study will give to the readers much needed information about Moria community of Assam.

Discussions and Findings

The current study on the Moria community of Assam gives a much needed study from the social, cultural and geographic point of view. Beginning from the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the area, the study shows the proper analysis of the historical

distribution Moria population and their social, demographic, and cultural characteristics. The study has observed that Moria community has taken almost every sides of common life of the Assamese people where they reside. The history of the Moria people tells us that nine hundred Muslim invaders were taken as prisoners at Sibsagar District of Assam by the Ahom King after a series of encounters. According to Assam history tells, these people were originally warriors; it was during the battle of Hatbor and Dui Muni Sila of Silghat in 1532 AD, the Muslim invaders were repulsed by the Ahoms and their General Turbaq was killed. In that battle the Ahoms captured 900 Muslim soldiers. The king had given them in different kinds of employment opportunities but due they failed to engage themselves in these jobs due to lack of their knowledge. Finally, the disgusted king released them and under this new physical setting social situation and economic conditions they ultimately settled down permanently about four hundred and fifty years ago forming a new Muslim segment the Morias who were braziers by occupation. Presently they are distributed in different villages in different districts (mainly in nine districts) of Assam.

Tradition says that they were at first ordered to cut grass for the king's elephants, but found quite unfit for this work. They were next employed as cultivators, but their ignorance of agriculture was so great that they stole mud from other people's paddy field and carried the stolen mud to their paddy field instead of ploughing land and planting the seedlings in it. The field (Khat) where the Moria people carried mud (Boka) for cultivation is now known as Bokakhat and the area from where the mud were collected is known as Moria Hola. Later, King came to know about their skill in machine works and employed them as cannon and gun maker in which they showed fine craftsmanship. They started manufacturing household and decorative brass items. Thus brass metal work gradually flourished with royal patronage and became a traditional occupation of Assamese society. Brass and bell metal works were highly developed throughout Assam in the past. Brass metal work is the ancestral occupation of the Moria Community people. With the development of science and technology, rapid urbanization of 20th century world, a drastic change in the world economy came into existence. As a consequence of globalization, many ethnic groups are compelled to leave their ancestral occupation to cope with the changed economic structure. People switched over to other economic activities which can provide them a better socio economic life. Moria Community has also been facing the phase of occupational shifting while struggling to cope with the changed economic situation.

Considerable degree of blood and cultural assimilations have been observed between the Morias and the neighboring people particularly the Assamese Hindus in their life cycle like pre natal birth adolescence marriage death festivals and superstitions. Blood assimilation took place by way of marriage with the Assamese Hindus from the very long past. They observe the Bihu and the other festivals like the Assamese Hindu caste groups. They also believe in superstitions and black magic. In this book their economic conditions also have

been discussed considerable degree of assimilation has been observed among the Morias in respect of culture language food habit dress personal adornments etc. with the neighboring Assamese Hindu society. Their common language in Assamese. At present their original language Duan has become obsolete and a few of them can speak in Duan to some extent among themselves. It is urgently required to make systematic plans and policies to improve the economic condition and the spread of higher education among the Morias. Development schemes should be based on their present socio economic situation for their betterment. Emphasis should be given on the development of their economy and education.

Conclusion

The Muslims though a minority group of people occupied a significant role and place among the society and its people of Assam. Moria among them got assimilated soon with the Assamese people of the State, adopting their mode of living, sharing their superstitions and social rites, speaking their language, and accepting their land as their motherland and contributing whatever they can towards her development. But for their socio-economic upliftment the government and other non government organizations should also take proper initiatives to empower them socially, politically and economically for the greater interest of this community.

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