

Folk Dance Performance Of Ethnic Community: A Case Study Of Moran Community In Assam

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Abstract: *This paper proposes to offer the information about the traditional practices, beliefs and performance of folk dance 'Bihu' amongst the oldest ethnic community Moran of Assam during Bohag Bihu celebration. Assam, a land renowned for its magical beauty and richness of ethnic diversity comprising both tribal and non-tribal communities, has contributed immensely towards the treasures of Indian art and culture. The main objective of the study is to know the indigenous cultural values of Bihu songs and dances and to study the performance of Moran's Bihu songs and dances of Assam. A case study method has been applied for the study and based on both primary and secondary data. For primary data, participatory observation, interview and contents analysis methods are adopted and secondary data has been used from various sources of libraries, books, journals and e-sources. The field Survey has been carried out in the living areas of Moran community, Dirak, Kakpothar of Tinsukia district, Assam.*

Keywords: *Folk Music, Bihu, Songs, Dance and Ethnic.*

I. INTRODUCTION

India is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic and culturally very rich country and it is considered as the second largest populous nation in the world. The social pattern of India today is the result of many ancient ones and the way of life on this land has been woven fibers of different hues and textures. It is supposed that the Negrito races, the remnants of which are still with us were the most ancient in India. The Dravidians, Mongoloids and Aryans were later cultural incursions. And the music of India today shows this cultural admixture (Deva, 1976).

The people of Assam are the descendants of the following stocks e.g. 1) Mongoloids, (2) Austroloid (3) Mediterraneans i.e. Dravidians and Nordic (Sarmah 2006). The Non tribal Assamese Hindu mixed with the tribes and many tribal groups moved towards the Aryan Assamese Hindu society with the process of integration, assimilation and acculturation. Assam one of the state of North-Eastern region of India, is renowned for its magical beauty and richness of ethnic diversity comprising both tribal and non-tribal communities. It is also known as the "folklorist's paradise" for its rich verities of folk

or traditional culture. Various tribal oral literature and folk arts are playing a pivotal role in spreading the messages to the mass people very quickly for its traditional well-known nature and belief, even after increasing the use of modern mass media as it is the heart of communities. Each and every ethnic communities of this land have its own vibrant art and culture including folk performing arts consists of folk music, dance and drama. Assam has contributed significantly towards the art and culture of India especially in the sphere of folk media. Folk song *kamrupee lokageet*, *Goalparia lokageet*, *tokarigeet*, folk drama *bhaona dholia bhaona(skit)* and different traditional dances *Bihu*, *Bagrumba*, *Gumrag*, etc. are playing a pivotal role in the cultural heritage of the country. Among these the spring time festival Bohag Bihu of Assam, is famous for its colorful performance of folk dance by playing of traditional musical instruments *Dhol*, *Taal*, *pepa*, *Gagona* etc' during the celebration.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to bring into light how the oldest ethnic communities of the state perform the folk music the *Bihu songs and dance*.

II. MEHODOLOGY

This study is based on qualitative approach and adopted the case study method for which selected the Moran community of Tinsukia District. Primary and secondary data are used for the study, for primary data participatory observation, formal and informal semi structured interviews, group discussion as well as recorded and live media contents analysis were conducted and secondary data has been used from various sources of libraries, journals, magazines e-sources. The field Survey has been carried out in selected villages during Bohag Bihu season of 2014 in Tinsukia districts of Assam.

III. STUDY SITE

The study is carried out in the villages- Dirak Gonsai gaon, Somgaon of Dirak, Bardirak and Tongona of Kakopothar area under Tinsukia districts of Assam. The study site were selected not only because of the community has been living and perform the Bihu songs and dances but the people of the areas are very rich in traditional dance form and folk culture where still some original live performances are held.

The areas are in the eastern most part and border of Assam located in between latitude 24⁰ and to 28⁰ North and longitude 89.49⁰ to 97.26⁰ East. The total area of the state is 78,438 kms. and its capital is Dispur, Guwahati, situated at Kamrup (M) District, which is also considered as the main gateway of North-East India. As per census of 2011, the total population of the states are 31,205576.

IV. INDIAN FOLK MUSIC

The music of India is perhaps one of the oldest in the world. It is also a major system of music that is essentially melodic (Deva, B.C.1974). Indian music broadly divided into two categories- uncultivated and cultivated. Tribal and folk music fall under category of uncultivated, while cultivated music means classical music. The Indian classical music also developed from the ritualistic music in association with folk music and other musical expression of India's extended neighborhood, developing into its own characteristic art (Raj Kumar, 2013, *Essay on Indian Music*, Google book). "Indian music is now undergoing rapid change, mainly due to new ways of thinking and living as a result of contacts with the West. Technological devices with consequent urbanization and an enormous increase in the extent of media of communications have brought new trends." (Deva, B Chaintanya.1974).

V. BOHAG BIHU

Bohag Bihu or Rongali Bihu is the most popular out of three Bihu, celebrated by all communities of the state on set of Assamese New Year in spring seasons. This starts on the last days of the chaitra or Sankranti for seven days mainly with

first day as garu Bihu(Bihu for cattle) and second day called Manuh Bihu(Bihu for Man) and as on. It is performed with wearing of new clothes and folk songs, dances and music particularly in upper Assam.

In Bihu song.....

Bihu Bihu Bihuti oi

Amar Bihu tiniti oi (we have three no's of Bihu)

Kati Bihu Kongali (Kati calls Kongali)

Maghar Bihu Bhogali (Magh calls Bogali)

Bohagor Bihute ami karu dhemali (we play with dancing and singing in the Bohag Bihu)

But in lower Assam also it is performed like Bhatheli or Domahi. The folk songs and dances associated with the Bohag Bihu perform accompaniment of folk musical instruments called 'Bihu nam' and 'Bihu nass' in the modern days call as 'Bihu geet' and 'Bihu nritya' also.

The ethnic groups non-tribal and tribals like Moran, Motok, Ahom, Deuri-Chutia, Bodo, Rabha, Missing, Dimasa, Tiwa, Karbi, etc along with the Aryan communities of the states celebrates this in many ways with different names or pronunciations. As 'Baisagu' bu Bodo-Kacharies, 'Bisu' by Deuri-Chutias, Busu by Dimasas, whereas "by the process of acculturation the missing people have fully accepted the Assamese Bihu "(Datta, Sarmah, Das, 1994 ABILAC) the celebrates as 'Missing Bihu' with songs and dances with their own flavor. The Buddhist people also celebrates as Poi-Chank-Ken festival or 'Sankren' from the days of Goru Bihu for three days like other south-east Asian countries.

VI. THE MORAN COMMUNITY

Assam, the land of red rivers and blue hills, where several tribal and non-tribal communities embrace each other and a land which beholds the rising sun, is known by names 'Pragjyotishpura' and 'Kamrupa' in the olden days. The present name 'Assam' is comparatively recent origin associated with the *Ahom* who entered the Brahmaputra valley of the land in the beginning of 13 century and ruled for six hundred years or derived from 'Asama' means 'unequalled'.

"Various tribal communities--mostly of Indo-Mongoloid Tibeto-Burman affiliation—in different stages of acculturation, integration and assimilation with the Assamese-Hindu fold live in the hills and plains of the state." (Dutta1999). Among them the Morans, the Motoks, the Bodos, the Misings the Kalitas, the Chutias, the Deuris, the Tiwas, the Konch- Rasbonsis etc. are the more prominent in the plain areas and the Karbis and the Dimasas in the hills. Generally, they have been living together in peace and prosperity and maintaining communal harmony, but it has also witnessed from time to time, a number of instances of communal tension and conflict.

The Moran community is an important and one of the largest branch of ethnic communities, Indo-Mongoloid stock of Assam. According to Historians and Anthropologists they belong to Bodo groups and had an independent kingdom with their king Badousa in the upper region of Brahmaputra valley prior to the establishment of the Ahom Kingdom in early thirteenth century. It is believed that the 'Moran' a section of the Matak family had played a dominant role during the

Moamariya rebellion were the first tribe (they have been fighting for a long time demand of schedule tribe status, but still it is not fulfilled) to whom Sukapha had to encounter in his march to the 'Soumar pith' of the Valley, but Sukapha won and had become son-in-law of Badousa. After that he had taken the power of King and established the Ahom rule in Assam. Some time the word 'Moran' and 'Matak' are used synonymously. 'There is a great difference of opinion regarding the origin of the word 'Matak' and its actual interpretation. The term is also confused with those of 'Moran' and 'Mayamariya' or Moamariya and often used in an identical sense with them' (Dr. Dutta. S). They had accepted the Hindu faith, customs, beliefs and Assamese language during the Ahom rule and also have been patronizing for the development and promotion of our culture.

The original Moran religion was made up of beliefs in early period and offered 'puja' way of devotion to *Kesai-khaati thaan* of Sadia prior to conversion into vaishnavism (Dr. Baruah Sewarnalata). In present, Morans are the followers of 'Mayamara Vaishnava' religion introduced by vaishnavite Saint Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva a disciple of Sri Sri Sankaradeva who was the founder of 'neo-Vaishnavism' sect of Hinduism in Assam. According to Dr. Sristidhar Dutta, the Moran-Mataks were the first tribes in eastern Assam to be converted to Vaishnavism by Aniruddhadeva, the founder of the Mayamara Satra and his successors. They are mainly scattered in the districts of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia with a less number of in Sibsagar, Jorhat, Lakhimpur and border area of Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh.

VII. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Morans or Mataks, who spoke a Bodo speech but later adopted Assamese, (Das, J. 1972) are considerably very rich in oral literature or verbal art and culture. Most of the genres of oral literature are found in their traditional culture. A large number of these material found in Assamese language like oral songs, rhymes, proverb, riddle and narrative has been contributed not only towards the Assamese but Indian art, culture and literature. The spring time festival Bohag Bihu is celebrated by the Morans with traditional & religious beliefs and great enthusiasm. *Mridangia Gayan-Bayan*, a vaishnavite devotional group chanting performance with Mridangam & Cymbal or Manjira and other folk base songs are also sung and performed to the accompaniment of various musical instruments.

The Morans celebrate Bohag Bihu like other Assamese tribal and non tribal community but do not start on the last day of Chaita and first day of Bohag. It celebrate for seven days starting with Goru Bihu (for cattle) on the first Wednesday of 'Shaura' fortnight of Bohag month as per discussion with their Satradhikar (The head of Vaisnavite monastery). It was believed that before conversion into vaishnavism they had assembled together at *Kesai-khaati thaan* of Sadia on Tuesday for offering puja and sacrificed a healthy youth and later on buffalo on Wednesday the day which Bihu started.

In Bihu Song:

Hasati oi Chait, Bisati oi Chait
Budhe, Birasati Mongale Uruka

Bihu goi aachili kot.

The Impact of Vaishnavism and their earlier religious head is very prominent during the performance of Bihu dance:

Sri Saturbhuj O' hoi Ram

Domahi patile O' hoi ram

Bhakote phurishe gai Rama Hari

Gopalo Govindairam...

They are famous for the performance of 'Raati Bihu' (Bihu performance by boys and girls at night) and 'Gastalor Gabharu Bihu' (Bihu dance of girls under a tree). The girls offer bamboo clapper to boys to sung the songs:

Aamar Bihuloi Ahicha Kokaity

Tokati Jasisu luua

Deri Nokari guan naam esari

Nasu ghuri ghuri suaa.

VIII. CONCLUSION

During the study, I have noticed in the last day of celebration, i.e. Bihu close day, in Satra all the people of respective villages and tribal and non-tribal communities of surrounding areas have gathered to enjoy Bihu. It is remarkable that while tension was going on in the border of Arunachal and north bank of Assam then Arunachali people from border area have come to enjoy Bihu in Satra. Now the ethnic identity has become most precious to the people and most of the group sought for their status, own interests and power, as a result rises the confusion and conflict amongst the communities. In this situation it can be said Bihu songs and dance play a pivotal role in maintain of communal harmony. Due to modernity and mass media effect a rapid changes in folk culture and life of all section of people cannot be rule out, but it may be remarked from the study that in performance of Bihu dances the Morans have been maintaining the traditional values and belief and sung of rural folk songs as much as possible.

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