

Agro-Based Cultural Program of Hajong People

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Abstract: The dakshin kamrup area is the habitat of various castes and tribes. As it is habitat of various tribes, therefore, the impact of one is observed on another's society, culture and language. Since, they celebrate festivals with harmony without any discrimination, therefore, a bond of brotherhood is built among these different tribes among different tribal ethnic groups, Hajongs are also an important tribe who have rich culture. Traditionally, they have various cultural, religious and agro-based festivals. All these festivals introduced them s artists, cultures, and spirited tribe in the greater Assamese society. Though Hajong's traditional festivals are primarily classified into three categories, in this discussion, it is attempt to analyse the sub division of these categories which are agro-based by collecting data through field studies.

Keywords: Agro-based culture, Hajong festival, Tribe.

1. Introduction

The Hajong people are one of the largest branches of 'Bodos' living in Assam. Racially, they belong to the Mongols. They have been living in Goalpara, Kamrup, Darang, Nagao, Sivasagar and Lakhimpur district of Assam as well as in the plains of western Garo Hills of Meghalaya since ancient times. According to a legend, the Hajongs first settled in the HajoParaganas (peripheries) of Kamrup, and over time, the Hajongs migrated from the Hajo region and scattered to various places. Because they come from the Hajo region, that's why they identify themselves as Hajong, keeping connection with the name Hajo.

The main occupation of Hajong people is agriculture. It is said that the Hajongs who were skilled in agriculture, were given the name "Hajong" by the Garos living in the nearby hills at that time. The Hajongs did agricultural works with hardwork and dedication. Because of their close association with agricultural activities, the Garo people christened them as "Hajong". In Garo language, 'Ha' means 'land' and 'Jong' means 'Insects'; that means 'Hajong' means 'Insect of Land'.

2. Objectives of the Study:

The Hajongs are a small group of tribal people. They are an agrarian type. The agricultural activities of the Hajongs are performed throughout the year. With the agricultural cycle some worships, ceremonies and festival are associated. Hence, to reflect the agro-based cultural program of hajong people is the main objective of the study.

3. Research Methodology

While preparing the proposed subject, methods are taken as per need for studying social theories and traditional cultures. Since, this study is done by field study, theore, field studies are conducted at the Hajong habituated area. In these field studies, both primary source and secondar sources are taken to collect data.

4. Discussion of the Study

Due to the fact that the public life of Hajongs based on agriculture, various festivals, dance and songs have been created in the public life based on agriculture. Other agricultural activities popular among the Hajongs include the Chorkhela festival, Levatana dance, Jakoimara dance, ChaitoSangrani or ChotSankranti etc.

(a) *Chorkhela or Chormaga Festival:* Chorkhela is a popular festival of the Hajong Community. Like other north eastern tribes, the Chorkhela festival was also created with a focus in agriculture. Among the various communities of Assam, festivals like 'Baykho' of Rabha people, 'Kherai' of Bodos, 'Baittima' of Dimasas, 'Oangala' of Garo, 'Jongkhong' of Tiwas, 'Rongker' of Karbis, 'Sholong' of Adis, 'Ali AaiLrigang' of Missings, 'Nongkrem' of Khasis etc. are observed with a focus on agriculture. The Chorkhela festival, popular among the Hajong, is celebrated in the ninth month of the year, on poushSankranti, at the end of the month of Puh and the beginning of the month of Magh. On the day of Uruka, it is a traditional culture of the village youth to collect money by going from house to house in the villages after harvesting in Aghon to eat feast together. According to a legend, in ancient times, the Hajong young boys sang songs and secretly wandered around looking for the girl of his choice and from there, came the name 'Chorkhela'. This festival is more similar to the festival of 'Orimaga' of Goalpara district. From two or three days before Diwali, the young boys of village go to the houses in groups to play the Dhakee (Drum), flute and tal and ask for alms. Like Huchori, they sing for the well being of the householder-

- (b) Guli bhora goru huk,
Chang bhora dhan huk,
Ghar bhora hapal huk,
Kanchi shali hagi thouk,
Giri khilou bhala-bhouloui thouk.

(Das, Bhabesh: Hajong Loka Sanskriti, P. 186)

There is less number of Hajong villages in the locality of South Kamrup and because of this reason, the hajong people of this area have to go to the houses of their guests who live in Mاتيya, Lakhipur to celebrate Chorkhela festival. In ancient times, while going to long distanced villages, people used to send messages to the people of those villages. The rich people did a good preparation for their fooding and lodging after receiving the message. It is worth mentioning that this festival does not contain any fixed song and dance form. It is filled with various kinds of songs. Yet, we can see that some songs are still continuing in their traditional form. For example, some cultural programs are, Thuwamaga or Siva- Sivo, Lewatana, Dindhaha, Bakhhal Nach, Bhaluk Nach, Telenga Gahen etc.

Thuwa-Maga: Another popular festival of Hajong people is Thuwa-Maga which is very much similar to Mahoho of Kamrup or Orimaga of Goalpar. The Hajong young boys use to collect rice(raw), rice, money etc. by visiting the neighbours with a holy song(pray) in the season of 'Puh' from first sight of moon to full moon. The Thuwamaga group arrives at every yard and with knocking their sticks on land, they sing Thuwamaga song. This type of song is known as 'Eri' or 'Siva-Siva' in lower Assam. By the money gathered in Thuwamaga, the necessary equipments for Chorkhela like costumes, acting, appliances mask etc. are collected. The Thuwamaga song is as follows,

1)

Uttar dakshin gharara
Ghan ghanak ruwa
Bour korat je gireeghore
Bata bhora Guwa
Bata bhora guware
Manash idunashi khai
Manashi dunashi khaite khaite
Bagh bhaluk palay.
Napalaote bafu shagol
Tara kene palay
Ek Sikasa jaga dile
Aami pasha khelay
Pasha khelaite pasha khelaite
Jai gopal baree
Ek lakhya goirou terolokhya tero lakhya basur
Gai dakare hampa hampa basur dakare pene
Thubou Thubou.

2)

Thubou thubou
Thuboumaga Aailungre
Dash taka pailungre
Gai kinba gelungre
Gaiyer nam taramoni
Dudh deyo 18 hari
Raja khai proja khai
Ei dudh Furaya khai
Thubou thubou. 2. (Uttara Hajong, Goalpara)

(c) *Din-Dhawa*: In the month of Aghon, comedy songs are

sung at the time of reaping rice. During this song, some boys are decorated as jockey like bear by wearing black clothes of broken umbrella or dry leaves of banana. Therefore, it is also known as 'Bhaluk Nosuwa Geet' (Bear dancing song).

(1)

Pani ailore
Chagol dauraita
Pani ailore
Dauraita dauraita chagol
Gel gaas tala
Megh pani batalo
Jalega uriya.

(2)

Bhaluk jai Bhalukjai
Mati khokorai,
Bhalukbnach sai jodi
Dauri dauri aai.
Bhaluk nache bhaluk nache
Dhula unurai
Sawa sutu dekhbage
Dauriya aai. (3. Kamal Haong, Dhupdhara)

Lewa-Tana Dance: Among the Hajong community too, there prevails a Bihu dance named 'Lewa-tana' during the festival of Chorkhela. 'Lewa' means creeper and 'Tana' means Pull. According to a legend, the Lewa-tana song is created while the Hajongs spread their habitation by cutting the forests. The Hajongs used to cultivate at the valley side plains by cutting the trees and plants.

The Lewa-tana word is also found in the 'Baykhoo'pooja which is prime festival of Rabhas. After finishing the 'Baykho'pooja in the crop field, they arrive at homes and take the long-fat wild creeper that are kept at the mid yard at 'BaykhoHadam'. Then, by deviding the group into two, they pull the creeper at both ends, and thus they examine their physical strength. The Rabhas call it as 'LewaTana' or 'Lewa-BioKai'. According to 'Hemkosh' dictionary, 'Lewa' is a kind of tree. In Hajong spoken language, 'Lewa' is a kind of creeping herbs. Lewa creeper, climb like Love creeper whicj is used to pull and pull, but if it is pulled more forcefully, then it broken too. It is probably the reason why this song-dance programe name is kept as Lewa-Tana connecting with love and affection of young boys and girls. Lewa-Tana is a kind of symbolic dance. In reality, without presenting any creeper, the boys and girls use to play traditional instruments, decorated with their traditional costumes, and then first sing saraswati prayer, three lines "Ramai Ram" stanzas, and greet one another as 'Sajani'. They use to pray and sing these by holding one another's hand with handkerchieves, become a circle or forward-backward as couples, then they clap and thus finish their dance. 'Mudra' is clearly visible in their movement of hands and legs. Before this program upgrade to present on stages, it was a program of 'Choice-marriage' confined among the youths. Its clue is found in Lewa-Tana song.

Following are some stanzas of Lewa-Tana song-

Prayer: Prathame bandana kori
 Jona mago saraswati
 Ghur hole lewa tanatani
 (Ki ramai ram.....Sajani)

Girls: Linglinga gasote
 Mou baha lagise
 Dada moge pari dia khang
 (Ki ramai ram.....Sajani)

Boys: Dhari bago dala nai
 Hojo bage lewa nai
 Lewa sara pariba napay
 (Ki ramai ram.....Sajani). (4. Hakasum, Rabha, Upen. Assamor anajatiya sanskriti, page 201)

It is not easy to climb a straight tall tree to acquire honey. However, he cannot deny his girlfriend too, and on the other hand he cannot tell her about his inability to climb; therefore, he finds this way.

One of the favourite fruit of Hajong youth is 'Takalefol'. It is a plum-type fruit. This type of plant is found in valley sides of hills, besides streams and the wetlands that are covered with trees. One Hajong young boy propose girls to eat this fruit together by singing-

Boy: Takle baree ghopate
 Takle fol pokise
 Aai oi buini
 Takle khaba jang

Girls: Takle baree najai moi
 Takle folo nakhai moi
 Takle khale mukh kala hoi. (5. Ali Ibbat: Hajong Janagosti, page 140)

That means- I shall not go to Takle forest, I donot eat Takle fruit eithe, because face grow dark when Takle is eaten.

Thus, Lewa-Tana songs are created during hardwork in their agro-based lives and these songs became sources of hardwork.

(e) *Jakamara dance or Jakhamara dance:*

Jakhamara dance is a tradition among Hajong community. The Hajong women, with Jakoi-creel, use to dance by wearing a traditional red clothes Patin. The song sung during Jakhamara dance is as follows,

(a)

Cha- jang cha-buini jkakra mara jang
 Puila puila jatra karang koyjon jou you,
 Aabesh karang jakha marong idoui amla rang.
 Baisakh mash puilou megh kura bhora pani
 Jaka mara maas aniou bhaja putou khang
 Koto jater koto maas pagar khala bhora,
 Monda mala koi khali mari sang.
 Salak salak silkou din sipruk sipruk pani
 Taratari dorek buini khalai bore neng

Cha- jang cha- buini.

(b)

China kori bilbhai baowa mara hobo
 Aai aami huboui lokon jakha niyou jabo
 Din bhat bhala buji pani tota hobo aaji
 Puthi tengla marimujun hol langa hobo
 Jakha niya jabo. (6. Ali Ibbat: Hajong janagosti, page

125)

(f) *Kadongkhel's dance:* The Kadongkhel's dance among the Hajongs is a sign of following muddy cultivating process. Before ploughing the field by cow, the Hajong women form a group and then with the effort of Kafongkhel's dance, they made the field ready to harvest. This task that process among Hajong women is also known as 'Chakrakhela'.

Kadongkela is generally performed on first and last day of harvesting.

But, now this dance is extnguishing in South Kamrup area. The song sung during Kadongkhel is as follows,

Girighore mod sake kurkurkur kore
 Bakhar moun dikhile deng nadong kore.
 O burir mitha jheo mod bourouke di
 Chuka mod nachai moi mitha mod di
 O burir
 Chuka mod dile moi bera bhangabo,
 Mitha mod dile moi gaan gaowabo.
 Roychala tole tale nasa korise,
 Mod nai bhat nai gola hokase.
 O burir. (7. Lalmoti Hajong, Goalpara)

(g) *Chaito Sangrani or Chot Sankranti:*

The end of previous year and starting of new year of Hajong society is known as ChaitoSangrani or ChotSankranti. In spite of simultaneous time of observation, it has not any song-dance program, not any crazyness like other castes or tribes. The Hajongs use to plaster their houses on ChoitSangrani and on the first day of new year, that is on Sankranti, GaruBihu is observed. On that morning, oil-turmeric are rubbed on horns of cows, and in some places, the cows are bathed in river water, the horns of bulls are rubbed with fragrance and sindoor and then Pithas of rice are offered to eat. In the evening, smokes are spread all over the gateway and the cows are tied with new tether. Not only that, the Hajongs worship the cows as goddess Lakshmi on that day. On the other hand, they believe that we can away from illness for the whole upcoming year by eating five Neem leaves and five lentils every morning in the month of Bohag (first month of Assamese new year). They use to consume 'Satsakee' (seven leaves) on 7th day of the new year. In ancient times, they use to play wrestling, 'Humli' on Choit Sankranti and thus the exercise their bodies. Hajong people call Magh Bihu as Poukhnou or Pukhona Bihu. Though haystacks are build and feast is arranged on Poukhnou festival, yet in some places, various types of Pithas are made instead of feast. They

take dots of ash of haystack on their foreheads and it is believed that they can stay away from illness when body heated with the fire of haystack.

5. Conclusion

In addition to agro-based programs, the Hajongs also observe Pailarowa (At the time of starting of harvesting), Pailarowa Khaowa Lakhimi Adaraa, Na-Khaowa, Kasidhowa etc. with great spirit. They enjoy the feast and togetherness in this festival and this show a unity in their society.

It is worth mentioning that though these agro-based cultural programs were eminent, yet these are going to be extinct. These festivals are observed only in Goalpara and Meghalaya. On the other hand, many people of their community show apathy, yet due to the deliberate effort of some aware people, the Chorkhela program is observed as a unite by all the Hajong people from different parts of Assam.

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