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TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFTS OF BODO COMMUNITY OF ASSAM

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Abstract: Traditional knowledge gives information, knowledge, skill and technology together with standard management practices, which are defined through the cultural systems. The knowledge of skill is continually handed over or transferred from one generation to a different and also between communities mostly verbally and visually. Handcraft grows out of inevitability to satisfy the everyday life of the people. This study will help in identifying various traditional crafts used by the Bodo community.

Key words: Crafts, Traditional knowledge, Culture, Bodo.

I. INTRODUCTION

Assam is that the north-eastern state of India. It is the homeland of assorted tribes like Boro, Karbi, Lalung, Rabha, Dimasa, Mishng, Garo etc. Among them Boro are the foremost aboriginal tribes of Assam. They belong to Indo-Mongoloid race and have their own language "Bodo". They have their own rich culture. The Boro people mostly reside in village or rural areas. Their primary source of income is from agriculture. They know to do all kinds of work such as cultivation, household activities, poultry farming, gardening etc. They are very expert in handicrafts works, spinning and weaving activities. They mostly used cane and bamboo in making household implements, weaving accessories, musical instruments, construction of dwelling houses and fencing etc. These skills are passed from one generation to a different generation. According to J.P. Tavernier, the "kingdom of Assam is one of the best countries in Asia, for it produces all that is necessary to the life of the man without there being need to go for anything to the neighboring states".

II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:-

- To spotlight the traditional handicrafts of the Boro tribes.
- To understand the role and status of Boro tribe involves in handicrafts production.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study relies on both primary and secondary sources have been used in collection of data. The secondary source is based on Books, journals, articles etc. The present paper has been adopted descriptive method.

IV. DISCUSSION

Handicrafts have occupied significant place within the culture of various tribes. Bamboo craft in Assam are not confined to at least one place or region. It has not been an exclusive work of a community and its spread all through Assam across its villages. In Boro society also handicrafts is considered as fine traditional genre work. They used bamboo, cane and wooden materials. Bamboo and wood are the two most remarkable resources which are used in the daily lifestyle of Boro people. Earlier, Bodo people were depended on the resources of nearby forest. In many Bodo folk songs it has been mentioned that men were used to go in jungles to cut the trees and gather bonfire. At the time of going to cut the trees, woodcutter sings a variety of song and womenfolk also sing various songs to encourage them. So, these folk songs are called as *Badari Metai*.

The bamboo and wood are utilized in construction of traditional dwelling houses. They have great artistic knowledge. The traditional Bodo house is one-storied surrounded by the wall of bamboo split which is plastered with mud and cow dung. The roof is made of *thuri jigab* (thatch) fastened by cane and the floor is also plastered with the mud and cow dung. This house is called as *Nomano* (main house). Among the dwelling house, they also build *bakhri* (granary), *goli* (cowshed), *oma gondra* (piggery house), *dao gogra* (poultry house) etc. They also make a variety of products such as agricultural implements, household commodities, weaving materials, traditional loom, furniture, fishing implements and musical instruments etc.

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for the Boro people who reside in rural areas and processes of cultivation are supported by the primitive tools. The traditional agricultural implements made of bamboo and wood, which are utilized by villagers or farmers are *nangal* (plough), *jungal* (yoke), *mwi* (harrow), *khopri* (U shape umbrella), *chili* (water lifter), *hukhen* (strainer) etc. Boro people also used a grain storage tool which is known as *Duli*. It is made from woven split bamboo sticks in the form of large and big basket. The height of small *Duli* measures approximately 75-80 cm in long and 80-83 cm breadth and the bigger *Duli* measures almost 185-213 cm tall with 100-110 cm in width. The fishing tools those are prepared out of bamboo and canes are *Sen* (trap), *Zekhai*, *Kobai* (fish storage), *Pholo*, *Jong*, *Khokha*, *Patha* etc. A number of the important household commodities prepared by Boro people are *songrai* (winnowing), *sandanga* (bigger sieve), *sandri* (small sieve), *khada* (basket), *janta* (conical or cylinder shaped sieve), *gisib* (hand fan), *baksu* (wooden or bamboo box), *oua hasung* (bamboo pipe), *sagong* (blender), *Kadau* (bamboo ladle), *darha* (mat), *thopsi* (wooden grinder), *Ual/gaihen* (wooden mortar & pestle) etc. Besides these, they make traditional furniture which is called as *Khamflai* (stool). It is made with wood without using nails which measures 7-10 cm height and 10 cm width. In past days, it is used to seat while dining.

Handloom craft is the most preferred and important in every society also as within the Boro society. In *Fatayah-i-Ibriya* it is said that the people were very skillful in weaving embroidered cloth. Every evening a woman had to spin at least five '*sutalahi*', i.e. five conical ball threads. Boro communities have been maintaining their traditional technique of weaving. The women of Boro society can weave different kinds of garments in their loom. Earlier, it was considered that a girl who is not good at weaving was least fit for a marriage. In the past they weave clothes for the use of entire family members. They used different traditional yarns like the Muga silk, Eri silk, Path silk, Tusser silk and cotton to produce different textile items. They knew the art of dyeing yarn. They are expert in preparing sorts of natural colors for yarn. They used different ingredients and methods to dye yarn which are prepared from raw indigo and wild herbs. The Boro people used various raw materials for preparing colours which are totally from natural leaves, seeds, flowers, stem and roots of various trees. They used various ingredients such as flower of *Genda* (*Tagetes erecta*), bark of *Kanthal* (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) and *Haldwi* (*curcuma longa*) for yellow colour;

Thaikha (*Garcinia pedunculata*) and Bark of *Khwirw* (*Acacia Catechu*) tree for red colour; *Sambram Gwja* (*allium cepa*) for Magenta colour; leaf and bark of *Segun* (*Tectona grandis*) tree for chocolate colour; seeds of *Amlai* (*phyllanthus emblica*), seeds of *Selekha* (*Terminalia Chubela*) and bark of *Sumpram* (*Psidium Guajava*) for black colour etc. They grinded of these ingredients in their homemade wooden craft *Uwal* (mortar) with the help of *Gaihen* (pestle). After that they boiled these grinded ingredients with water then soaked the yarns for few hours to bring up colour.

Bodo people used traditional tools which are made by themselves with local resources such as bamboo, wood and cane. The weaving tools are divided into two categories: - i) Tools for spinning and winding tread; and ii) Tools for weaving. The tools used in spinning and winding the yarn are *Jenther*, *Swrki*, *Thaokhhri* (spindle), *Dangwa-natha*, *Phaneb*, *Nw-Hasung*, *Musra* (Bobbins). *Sal-Kuntha* (Post), *That* (sleigh), *Makhu* (shuttle), *Rasw* (reed), *Gorkha* (treadles), *Baleb* (flat bamboo stick), *Gandwi* (warp roller), *Gonshi* (round bamboo stick) are implements used in weaving. The most important traditional culture of Boro society is sericulture. Bodo women rear the silkworms on the eri leaves (castor-oil) at home. The cocoons of silkworms are used to obtain yarn. They spin out the yarn in their homemade tools called as *Thaokri* (spinning machine) and produce clothes. As per Rev Sidney Endle, he said that one of the chief industries, a very profitable one among the Kacharis, is that the culture of the silk worm known as eri cloth.

Boro women produced various types of cloths like *dokhona* and *fasra* (women wear), *gamsa* (men wear), *aronai* (muffler), *fali* (handkerchief), *sima* (bedsheet), *dokhona thaosi* (dress for bride), *endi si* (eri cloth) etc. They are very expert in putting agor (design) in their clothes which designs are mainly inspired by nature itself. The weavers kept name of such design as *Agor gubwi*, *Hajw Agor* (hill design), *Thaigir Bibar* (flower of Elephant apple), *Maoji Agan* (footprint of cat design), *Farwo megon* (eye of fowl design), *Daoutu godo*, *Mufur afa* (footprints of bear), *Daorai mwkreb*, *Lao begor* (seed of bottle gaourd), *Bwigri bibar* (flower of zuzube) etc. All of these designs are put in various clothes to create it more colorful and attractive.

The Bodo are rich in their traditional music and dances which are associated with their festivals and rituals. They used various traditional instruments which are prepared from bamboo namely *Siphung* (flute), *Thorkha* (bamboo clapper) and *Gongina* (jaw harp). *Siphung* is a traditional bamboo made flute. Its length may vary from 3 feet to 3.5 feet. The long sized traditional Bodo flute has only five holes. *Thorkha* is another traditional musical instrument. It is a piece of bamboo clapper which produces sounds of clapping. *Gongina* is also a vibrating reed instrument made from bamboo strip.

V. CONCLUSION:

From the above discussion it can be concluded that traditional handicrafts are an integral part of the Bodo culture. The Bodo community who reside in rural area has proficient craftsmanship in bamboo work acquired through generational transmission of information. They produced varieties of bamboo products like agricultural equipment, musical instruments, weaving and spinning tools and several others daily utilitarian items. The raw materials for the crafts are abundantly available within the nature like bamboo, woods, cane, thatch etc. At present, due to the advancement in technology handcraft tradition is gradually vanishing and also losing their traditional skill. Keeping all the new developments within the lifestyle of Bodo people they ought to also attempt to not forget the rich culture preserved by ancestor.

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