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Chandubi festival

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Abstract

The Rabha is one of the aboriginal tribes of Assam. This paper is study that focus on festivals of the Rabha tribe which celebrate at Chandubi , district of Kamrup, Assam, India. This paper tries to examine Rabha people use traditional food habit, Dress and music of their festival.

Key words- The Rabha, Food, Dress, Music

Introduction-

Chandubi Lake is situated at Rajapara village under Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council, Kamrup (Rural) district, Assam. It is about 35 kilometers away from Mirza main town. The history of creation of the Chandubi lake is 12 June 1897 earthquake. Now it is a peaceful place surrounding by green forest. The lake is a reservoir for many species of indigenous fishes, turtles, birds, amphibians, algae and several migratory birds. The Rabhas started this festival celebration here from 2010- 2011 and it continues now. Festivals are part and parcel of human culture which is celebrated by the people in each and every part of the world. Many communities across the world have their own festival that are mostly deep rooted in their religious faith and beliefs that are celebrated according to their own cultural norms and tradition. The word 'fest' implicates 'joy and celebration'. People celebrate festivals with rituals, songs, dances, hymns, fasts and feasts, wearing traditional dress and ornaments. Festivals are special occasions where people perform certain traditional ceremonies and rituals in a particular period of time. Festivals may be regional or national in characters which are celebrated irrespective of caste, tribe and community. Dance and rituals are performed in the festival by wearing traditional costumes and jewellerys' and use traditional foods.

Methodology

The proposed study is covering the Rabha dominated area of Chandubi, Kamrup district, Assam. In collection of information, the standard anthropological methods and techniques such as observation – participant and non-participant, individual and group interview (structured and non-structured), life history were applied. For interview, qualitative research approach was adopted for selection of subject related topics. This method can be use to obtain intricate details about phenomenon such as feelings, thought process and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through conventional research methods. A narrative case study methodology is employed; as such studies are useful for obtaining background information. For documentation of various foods, photographic aid was used. Besides these, the proposed study is rely upon multiple sources of secondary data's are form of media reports, available literatures, videos, photographs and related documents.

The people

The Rabhas are distributed in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Dhubri and Kokrajhar of Assam. Besides Rabhas are also found in the Garo hills of Meghalaya and in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts of West Bengal.

The Rabhas belong to the family of Bodo group and their language is under the Assam Burmese group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the great Sino- Tibetan family languages. The Rabha community is divided into eight endogenous sections such as Pati, Rangdani, Maitari, Dahuri, Baitlia, Totala, Hana and Kocha. Various writers have shown several sections of this group. Eminent anthropologist Das (1960) classified the sections as Rangdani, Pati, Maitari, Totala, Dahuri, Baitlia, Shunga, etc. He also said that the Rangdani, Pati and the Maitari used to enjoy superior status compared to other sub groups like Totala, Dahuri, Baitlia, Shunga, etc". Generally Rabhas use to live in plain areas of Assam. The habitation of the different sub- groups of the Rabhas are scattered in various places of Assam. In this festival different groups of Rabha people come from different place and celebrate it full of enjoy. The Rabha people are sound of their traditional culture. In the Chandubi festival the Rabha actively follow their traditional culture. Like dress and ornament, food, traditional music etc.

Food

Food is an important part of festival and it also main source of nourishment for human body. Nutritious foods provide energy to human body. People select their foods not only for biological needs, but also for pleasure, good taste and for celebrations.

Traditional foods are consumed locally or regionally for many generations. Traditional foods reflect cultural inheritance and they identify their society. Like other tribes of Assam, rice is the staple food of the Rabhas. Vegetable or non-vegetable dish is taken with cooked rice. Dry fish is a very delicious item of Rabha people. In cooking, they rarely use oil; but boiling and roasting are common processes. In big celebration time they prepare boiled items also. Salt and oil were found to be used as condiments in cooking vegetables and curry to increase the taste and delicacy. Boiled cooking, alkali (*khaar*) a locally prepared liquid is used to enhance the taste of the food.

The methods of preparing of these local specialties have been passed from generation to generation and have become a part of the fabric of life in the community. Food is inseparable from festival. Distinct and unique food is used in occasion's like- Chandubi festival.

For cooking and serving they use earthen pots, iron cauldron, aluminum bowls etc. But in the Chandubi festival food is served on traditional material culture. Like bamboo tube is used to drink and tree leaf to serve the rice etc. like- banana leaf is commonly. They take rice along with varieties of items like- vegetables, pork, mutton, chicken, fish; meats etc. Meat and fish delicacies are a part of these festive meals.

These food items are seen in the Chandubi festival. Besides, Rabha also prepares some special cuisines. Some of them are - (a) *Sidal* - The Rabha not only like fresh fish but they also have special preferences for the dried fish. Dried fish is a favorite item of traditional food. From dried fish they prepare special food item known as *Sidal* a unique dish prepared by grinding smoked fish mixed with leafy vegetables and the mixture is kept in a sealed bamboo cylinder. After a long time to preserve it, they eat boiled in local alkali or simply boiled from other vegetables. This food is available in this festival. Another special item is (b) *Pithali*, gravy made by mixing rice powder along with some leafy vegetables and this mixture is cooked lightly in local alkali and spices. (c) *Sukati*, it is prepared from dry jute leaf boiled in local alkali. (d) *Gaja* or *jimtenga* another delicious traditional food of the Rabha is made from bamboo shoots (*Gaja* or *jimtenga*). Bamboo shoots are made into small pieces and dried, then it is known as *gaja*. If the bamboo shoots are allowed few days to decompose in a little water then it is called *Jim*, which is sour in taste.

Rice-beer is the most favorite drink of the Rabha people, in their language it is known as *jonga*. Without rice beer no domestic or social function can be performed. It is also used in this festival. The rice-beer is prepared in traditional system by the women. Before preparing *jonga*, a medicine *bakhar* which is essential for preparation of *jonga* is called *bakhar*. The *bakhar* is made by the women. To make this item they use rice powder, some pieces of *seniboon* (a kind of wild plants roots or leaves) and chilly. All these things are grinded together and the dust is mixed with water and then it is shaped into small-

small cakes. Cakes are allowed to dry in dark place and it kept distance from the sunlight. After three or four days the raw cakes become fully fledged *bakhar* which is ready for use. Then the rice is cooked and it is placed to cool, where the dust of the medicine *bakhar* is mixed with the cooked rice. Then it is stored in an earthen pitcher which is called *jonga*. After three or four days the cooked rice is ready to consume as a rice-beer. They rather use it as a kind of nutritious food. But some of people avoid this drink and from their children.

During festival time the Rabha people prepare different types of traditional food items such as flattened rice (*chira*), puffed rice (*carai, muri*), powdered rice (*gura*), popped rice (*khoi, pitha* and *laru*). They also consume different types of seasonal fruit which are available in their immediate surroundings. But betel nut and coconut have a definite place in the festivals. Betel nut is the first thing offered to the Gods and guest. It is an item of honor which is recognized by Rabha people. They also consume a combination of betel nut with betel leaf.

Dress and Ornament

The Rabha have own colorful traditional dresses. Basically in festival occasion's time, they use to put their traditional colorful dresses. Generally their dresses are full of floral designs and those are made by the Rabha women themselves on their looms. The Rabha men and women have their basic characters that they do not like to put fancy dresses. The Rabha women are expert in the art of weaving. They create folk tales in the clothes. Spinning and weaving is major work of the Rabha women. They are very expert in both spinning and weaving. Normally they prepare their own apparels, including male dresses. The Rabha weaves clothes in traditional and modern patterns. From a business point of view various colorful and attractive patterns and interesting color combination and contrasts are designed. With the help of various geometric structures and colorful pattern of flowers women use to make various garbs. In the festival time the Rabha women remain busy at their weaving for preparing their traditional dress and a few of those are used and some are used for selling purpose.

In the Chandubi festival the Rabha females wear different garbs. These dresses mainly consist of *riphan* or *ruphan*, *patani* or *lemphota*, *kambung* or *kambang*, *khadabang* or *khakha* etc. *Riphan* or *ruphan* is a piece of cloth which the women tied from the waist and hangs down to the knee. This is normally three feet in length and two feet in breadth. It may be smaller or bigger in size according to the age and size of the wearer. *Patani* or *lemphota* is wider than *Ruphan*. This cloth is tied around the chest and hangs down to the knees. The Rabha female likes to wear red *patani*. *Kambung* or *kambang* is a piece of cloth which is three feet in length and one foot in breadth. It is wrapped by the women to cover the chest, keeping the shoulder naked. *Khadabang* or *khakha* (*paguri*) is a piece of cloth whose size is three feet length and one foot breadth. The women use this cloth to cover the head.

The Rabha males also use to put colorful traditional dresses in the festival. They wear *pajar or gamsa, khachne or khapang, buk chil or bak chali* etc. *Pajar or gamsa* tied from the waist and hangs down to the knee. Its size is 5 to 6 feet length and one to one and a half feet in breadth. The principal garment of the man is multicolored *phali*. It may be smaller or bigger in size according to the age and body of the wearer. *Khachne or khapang* – it is used on the head like a turban. It is three to four feet in length and one foot in breadth. *Buk- chil or bak-chali-* is a short sleeved jacket made indigenously. *Pajar* is put on the neck especially the male. The Males put on coloring *phali* tied in the waist and it hanging to the knee. In upper portion use formal shirt with traditional jacket and in the neck they use traditional *pajar*. The aged people of the society use *turban* on their head. It is seen that in the Chandubi festival the small boys wear formal shirt, pant etc and small girls wear frock, top- skirt etc.

Ornament

The Rabha women are extremely fond of ornaments. They use a good number of ornaments basically in festival time. some of which are mentioned below:

Nambri: This ornament is inserted in to the hole of lobes both the ears. It is made of either gold or silver.

Naka-pati: Rabha women inserted this ornament into a hole in the left petal of the nose. It is made of gold or silver.

Chan: It is a solid bracelet. The Rabha women put on this ornament in the wrists of both hands. It is made of gold, silver or copper.

Bala-nambri: This ornament is worn by the women in the upper parts of both the ears. It is also called *kanbali*. It is made of gold or silver.

Khuchmakrang: It is an ornament used by married women in the knot of hair tied in the head.

Chandra-har: It is a necklace made of silver usually worn by the women.

Bali: This ornament is inserted into a hole in the lower part of nose. It is made of gold or silver.

Hancha or Hacha: this ornament is put in the neck. it is made of silver.

Siki or Suki: *Siki* means coins. The coins are stringed as a garland and put in the neck.

Mal-kharu: This ornament is put on the wrist of the hand by the women. It is made either by gold or silver.

Har –gulai: It is used in the wrist of the hand. It is made of gold or silver.

Hat-baju or kanta-baju: It is a kind of bangle used in the wrist of the left hand. It is made of silver.

Banti: It is a kind of bangle, worn in the wrists of both the hands. It is made of copper.

Rubak or rubuk: It is a girdle of seven strings made of ivory. It is worn around the waist.

Mayar-ching-chap: It is put on in the wrists of both the hands. It is made of gold or silver.

Chasi -tam: It is a ring. It is worn in the finger of the hand. It is made of gold or silver.

Khuli –mutha: It is made of silver. It is used in the wrist of left hand.

Jinjiri: It is a kind of necklace made of silver.

Bhari-kharu: This ornament used in the ankles of the feet. It is made of silver.

Bhari-chela: It is also used in the ankles of both the feet. It is made of silver strings.

Gota-kharu: It is made of solid silver, worn in the wrist of the hand.

Phapla-kharu: It is a kind of hollow bracelet. It is used in the hands wrist. It is made of silver.

The above mentioned traditional ornaments are not found in common use these days. In the Chandubi festival the musical performance women use it and some aged female of the society use these at the time of ceremony like- marriage, festivals and worship time. The new generations are not interested in the use of these kinds of ornaments. They put on modern fashionable ornaments which are purchased from traders and jewelers.

Musical instruments

There are many traditional instruments used by the Rabha. It is used in different time in their life cycle but large number use in festival time, so it is also seen in Chundubi festival. Rabha, (2002:59) had classified the instruments in four types. They are-

- (1)*Tata*-type: Instruments such as, *Badung-duppa* and *Gamena*, etc.
- (2) *Bitata*- type: Instrument which is made of leather cover. Various types of drums like- *Kham* and *Tarsa* .
- (3)*Sushira*- type: Wind instrument such as- *Singa* and *Bahi*, etc.
- (4) *Ghana*- type: Percussion type instrument such as, *Daidi* and *Tal*.

The shape and making processes of these instrument are describe below-

- (a) *Badung-duppa*: It is made of tube of the *Kakowa* bamboo having two joints on both sides. Three strings are dug up from the surface of that bamboo tube. The strings are raised up on two wooden sticks of six or seven feet in length for producing sound.
- (b) *Gamana* or *Gamena*: It is a kind of musical instrument which produces sound when air is blown into it. It is made of bamboo or any kind of metal.
- (c) *kham- Dhak*: it is a kind of drum. Generally it made of *Gamari* wood. It covered both side with skin of either a deer or a goat. The ropes of drum are made of leather.
- (d) *Tarsa*: It is a kind of kettle drum. It is made of wood. This instrument is length six feet and two feet in diameter.
- (e) *Rusu-thop*: This instrument like a '*khanjari*' made of timber or clay covered with the bladder of a jog.
- (f) *Kham- naluk* or *chhota dhak*: It is similar to *kham* or *dhak* but it small then the *kham* or *dhak* . It is two and half feet long and two feet diameter.
- (g) *Singa*: *Singa* is a kind of horn. It is two kinds big and small. It is made of buffalo horn.
- (h) *Muk Bahi*: A kind of flute of *Nal-* bamboo. This instrument has six holes for tuning and fitted on the mouthpiece of the flute.
- (i) *Tinsur- Bahi*: It is made of *Nal* or *Deo* bamboo and it has three holes only.
- (j) *Satsur- Bahi*: It is also made of *Nal* or *Deo* bamboo and has seven holes.
- (k) *Kara*: A kind of flute which made of *Nal* bamboo. It is six or seven feet in length. No hole on the surface of the bamboo tube. It made for producing a sound and fitted a horn at the end of the flute for making a deeper and sweeter sound.
- (l) *Jhap kara*: It is similar to *Kara*. But this instrument has no sections.
- (m) *Lakhar Bahi*: It is made of *Deo* bamboo.
- (n) *Ganggleng*: It is a clay instrument of bulblike form about six inches long. It has two holes on one side of it and is played by blowing air by the nose into one of the holes.
- (o) *Gugu-mel*: It is similar to *Ganggleng* . But it is played on by air blown by the mouth.
- (p) *Buburenga*: It is made of *Bata* or *Taga* plant. A two feet long piece of this plant is sliced into two parts up to three fourth of its length. The rest of the one fourth lengths remain intact. Of the sliced part one is thinner out and a hole is made on it. While air is blown through the hole a kind of humming sound is produced. Normally it played by women folk.

(q)*Sanai*: It is like a flute made of wood. Its inner portion is pounded. Front side is somewhat broad. There is a hole on the mouth piece.

(r)*Pepa* : It is a kind of reed pipe. It made of *Deo*-bamboo. Here not joints on both sides. This instrument is played by mouth.

(s)*Daidi*: It is a kind of bell, made of metal.

(t) *Tal*: It is a kind of cymbal, made of metal.

Conclusion

Festival is a part and parcel of human society. It is not only joy but also it is a unity of society. The Rabha tribe of Assam has much knowledge about the surrounding environment and its importance, which is reflected in their culture, but with the influence of modernity. It impacts in their traditional culture.

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