



A CASE STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF MORIA COMMUNITY OF ASSAM

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to know about the socio-economic status of Moria community of Assam. The study has been undertaken among 300 households of Moria community of Assam. The field work will be undertaken to collect the information of socio-economic aspects of Moria Community of Assam. The study has based on both the primary and secondary data. The primary data has collected from 300 households of Moria community of Assam. The study presented in this paper demonstrates that the Moria community has very insignificant fraction of their population has skills, knowledge and informations to engage them in gainful economic activities. Since the area they mostly inhabit has tremendous potential for agriculture and other related activities, opportunities for their development are vast. Thus new institutional innovations and adequate government initiatives are required to help them to grow socio-economically. This could be achieved through the development of interlinkages between their active participation in production and market institutions like cooperatives, mutual self-help groups etc. This requires investment in their education and health so as to make them capable to engage themselves in production and earning activities.

Keywords: Moria Community, Socio-economic, Assam.

Introduction

Muslims were first come into contact with Brahmaputra valley in 1206 A.D. during the invasion led by BakhtiaribnKhilji. After this, another some invasions led by Muslims during the rule of Muslim rulers in India and it open the way for Muslims to come to Assam. Gradually the Muslims stayed in this valley permanently. The number of Muslims also increased with every successive attack on this region during the reign of the Mughal rulers in India. One of the descendents of Muslim known as GandhelaGoria later took a prominent part in 1665 in repeating attack on the Ahoms. Some of the them had also acquired the confidence of the Ahom kings and were given titles of officials such as „Phukan“, „Barua“, „Saikia“, „Bora“, „Hazarika“, „Khanikar“ etc. The conflict between Muslim India and Assam, ultimately settled down here by marrying local women thus a new chapter on the status of such women can be said to have started since then. These local women had their own cultural and religious background and after marrying the Mughal soldiers they had to accept the Muslim customs and thus a mixture of both cultures influenced their status in the family as well as in the society. Major impact of the Muslims could be seen in the social life of Assam. The Assam aristocracy under Ahom-Koch rulers was much influenced by the Mughal food habit dress and other aspects of culture. Thus, the later part of 17th century and after many items of men wears such as shoes, head dress, clothing for both men and women



were developed imitation of the Mughal nobility. Items of food, such as ghee, various kinds of spices, dal, potato, pulao etc. popular in the society. A considerable number among these Muslims married Assamese women and along with them, some aboriginal Hindus become Muslim by proselytization. They accept Assamese, language, literature and culture and they have assimilated into the Assamese society. In a sense, Azan pir may be described as an embodiment of the assimilation of the people of Assam. Srimanta Sankardeva with his religious and socio-cultural reformations assimilated and integrated the different sects of Hinduism into the main stream of Vaishnavism and thus bestowed upon the Assamese people a definite identity. In the same way, Azan Piranchylose Islamic ideas into Assamese culture and tradition and likewise, he brought the people of different communities nearer to each other. Such assimilations infused in the minds of the Assamese people. An attitude of religious tolerance and communal harmony is praiseworthy. Assam was the cradle of a number of major and minor religions and Assamese people were accustomed to various religious sects or communities. Islam was just another religious group to these people and they did not mind its coexistence with other religions. By this way Assamese Muslims continue their life after life in Assam and acquainted a fusion way of life. However, this cultural assimilation was affected after the advent of the British. There divide and rule policy gradually started a negative attitude among the people of Assamese society and it led to a gradual change.

While Goriyas, Moriyas and Julhas trace their roots to upper and middle Assam, the Deshis hail from lower Assam, in what used to be the undivided Goalpara district. Their ancestors are said to be converts from the Koch Rajbongshi kingdom in the early 13th century. "What we know is that a tribal chieftain called Ali Mech converted to Islam. His followers converted too. The Deshis speak the Deshi language, which is very similar to the Koch Rajbongshi language, and are approximately 20 lakh in population. Due to the lack of documentary evidence, many Assamese Muslim individuals often find it difficult to pinpoint which group they can trace their lineage to.

Objective

The main objective of this study is to know about the socio-economic status of Moria community of Assam.

Study Area

The study has been undertaken among 300 households of Moria community of Assam. The field work will be undertaken to collect the information of socio-economic aspects of Moria Community of Assam.

Data and Research Methodology

The study has based on both the primary and secondary data. The primary data has collected from 300 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

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 BarashilBowaSil* inscription found in North Guwahati issued after BakhtiyarKhilji'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 'Moria' Musalmmans, classified as a low-class Muslim Group which settled here in the 15th century. YasminSaikia (2017) traces the presence of Muslims in Assam Valley, especially to the Sufi *khanqahs* dating back to the thirteenth century and to references of

Muslims as *Yavanain* the *Vaishnaval* literature of the sixteenth century. The prevalence of Muslims in Upper or Eastern Assam in the sixteenth century, especially in the royal capital, around modern-day Sibsagar, began from the rule of SuhungmungDihingia Raja (Saikia, 2017). According to Kar (1990), Ahom's invited Muslim professionals from Bengal to undertake architectural and other projects in Assam, leading to the proliferation of Muslims in the region. Kar(1990) states that Hindu and Muslim men from other parts of the country were invited by the Ahoms, especially skilled workers like artisans, accountants, weavers, scholars, saints etc. He further adds that Muslims were appointed by the Ahoms for interpreting and deciphering Persian documents, minting coins, carving inscriptions, weaving, tailoring, painting, carpentry.

The presence of Muslim groups further increased during the early seventeenth century(1638-39) when Kamrup, including Guwahati, became a part of the Mughal Empire under Emperor Shahjahan., bringing the Mughals in close proximity to the Ahoms, who were ruling over Eastern Assam, thus leading to cultural exchanges between the two groups. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, colonial surveys, especially the census, accounts for a little over 19,000 Muslims in the Brahmaputra Valley. In terms of culture and traditions, the *AxomiyaMusalman* being the earliest Muslim settlers of the region, remain very similar to the Hindus of the region and can also be said to have a syncretic association with the indigenous fabric. YasminSaikia (2017) observes that this group has 'become one' with all in Assam. In fact, in contemporary narratives of identity, various historical sources are employed to stress the 'belongingness' of the Axomiya Muslim.

Based on the data collected during the field survey, the socio-economic status of the Moria community of Assam is found at a very low level. The main parameters included in this study are: (i) percentage of population living below poverty line; (ii) literacy rate (iii) female

literacy rate (iv) infant mortality rate (v) under five child mortality rate; and (vi) life expectancy at birth. On all socio-economic aspects, Moria community of Assam lag behind the other social groups, for example Moria population living below the poverty line is 54.55 percent. Similar is the case for literacy, female literacy, infant and under five child mortality and life expectancy at birth. The average literacy rate of Moria people is found as only 53.25 percent in the study area, while only 41 percent of female is recorded as literate. In case of health and other socio-economic status, the condition of the Moria community is lagging far behind compared to other social groups of the State.

Conclusion

In this paper an attempt was made to know about the socio-economic progress of Moria community since their settlement in Assam. The Moria community lags in development in almost all aspects and their socio-economic status is lower than the mainstream people of Assam. The 65 years of planned development has not helped them. They live in a backward economic condition. The study presented in this paper demonstrates that the Moria community has very insignificant fraction of their population has skills, knowledge and informations to engage them in gainful economic activities. Since the area they mostly inhabit has tremendous potential for agriculture and other related activities, opportunities for their development are vast. Thus new institutional innovations and adequate government initiatives are required to help them to grow socio-economically. This could be achieved through the development of interlinkages between their active participation in production and market institutions like cooperatives, mutual self-help groups etc. This requires investment in their education and health so as to make them capable to engage themselves in production and earning activities. This could help them to achieve much needed better social-economic empowerment of this community of Assam.

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