



KOCH-RAJBONGSHI PEOPLE AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NORTH-SALMARA SUB-DIVISION

Dr. Swapna Hazarika

Assistant Professor, Assamese Department

Indira Gandhi College, Boitamari

Email : swapnahazarika5656@gmail.com

ABSTRACT :

The Koch-Rajbongshi community constitutes one of the major ethnic groups of Assam and has played a significant role in shaping the socio-cultural history of the region. North Salmara Sub-Division, presently under Bongaigaon district, has historically been an important habitation area of this community and was once a part of the Great Koch Kingdom. This paper attempts to examine the historical background of North Salmara Sub-Division and analyze the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the Koch-Rajbongshi people inhabiting the area. It traces the political history of the region from the period of Maharaj Naranarayana to the Bijni estate and highlights the role of rulers such as Raja Kumud Narayana and Rani Abhayeswari in initiating socio-cultural and educational development. The study also explores the administrative evolution of North Salmara as a sub-division, its geographical setting, physiographic features, and climatic conditions. Further, it seeks to identify the causes of socio-economic backwardness of the Koch-Rajbongshi community, focusing on issues such as dependence on agriculture, low literacy levels, and traditional social structures. By combining historical analysis with field-based observations, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical processes and contemporary challenges shaping the Koch-Rajbongshi society of North Salmara Sub-Division.

Keywords: Koch-Rajbongshi community; North Salmara Sub-Division; Koch Kingdom; socio-economic conditions; historical background

I. Introduction:

North Salmara Sub-Division was a small part of Great Koch-Kingdom. At the very past the area was under the reign of Maharaj Narayana. Later, the area was under the reign of Bijni State. The first owner of this estate, Raja Kumud Narayana was the 12th descendant of Moharaj Narayana. It is seen that before the days of this Kumud Narayana the said area was not experienced with proper development in all respects.



It can be said that the time from which the new thoughts and assumptions about their legal right of fundamental prosperity and autonomy has been fermented and garmented and later it was seedling out to a complete sphare that we see today. Different kinds of organization for the ethnic group are now, on the road. From this point of view it can be said that more or less, the time from the first decade of the 20th century to the Pre-independence period, is sharing the conspicuous rising trend is socio-economic as well as cultural life of the Koch-Rajbongshi people of the stated area. However, the area is, presently complex on in case of its inhabitants in relation to their religion and custom.

Statement of the problem:

Koch-Rajbongshi people and historical background of North-Salmara Sub-Division is my groundwork problem. The Koch-Rajbongshi community is one of the major population groups of Assam. They are living, more or less in all parts of state. But the community is still regarded as very backward. These groups of people is generally settled in the plain areas of the state and based on primary occupation mainly on agriculture, Educationally they are much behind the main stream of the country. Their socio-cultural life is still based on tradition. The North-Salmara Sub-Division OF Bongaigaon district is a traditionally abode of this community. However, being a major population group, the Koch-Rajbongshi community is playing a significant role in the socio-cultural functioning of the state. Hence it is essential to know the main problems and causes of their backwardness and historical background of North Salmara Sub-Division to find out the ways and means to solve them.

II. Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the problems and causes of their backwardness and to find out the ways and emans to solve the problems.
2. To analyse the Koch-Rajbongshi community inhabited in the sub-division.
3. To analyse historical background of North Salmara sub-division.
4. To analyse the North Salmara Sub-division old and new structure



III. Methodology:

Hypothesis:

The following hypothesis are taken to be tested evidence of studying the problem.

1. The Prevalent traditional social-custom discourages new innovation and techniques.
2. The Koch-Rajbongshi community is carrying a big amount of manpower but no work.
3. Very low per-capital income is the main reason illiteracy and unhealthy living condition of the community.
4. Low quality of working force is the main cause of low per capital income.

Methodology and database:

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research approach to examine the historical background of the North Salmara Sub-Division. Both primary and secondary sources of data have been used for the purpose of the study. Prior to the fieldwork, relevant theoretical knowledge was gathered through an extensive review of books, journals, research articles, and other published materials related to the history and socio-economic conditions of the area.

Data collection, tabulation, and analysis constitute the core of the research process. A structured questionnaire was prepared and administered during the household survey to collect primary data from the study area. For a comprehensive understanding of the region, three principal sources of information were utilized: written records, field surveys, and survey maps. The written records include settlement reports, census handbooks, survey reports, and other official documents, which provided historical and administrative information essential for the study.

IV. Results and Discussion:

Historical background of North Salmara Sub-Division:

The North Salmara Sub-Division has been establish in 1983. When the newly formed Bongaigaon district came into existence. Earlier, this division as well as the district was a part of Goalpara district. Due to public demand and administration feasibility, the Bongaigaon district



and the North Salmara sub-division were newly formed under the Act of Assam legislative Assembly.

There are two views regarding the origin of the name 'North Salmara'. According to the first, the Lord Krishna, once, had killed one demon namely 'Salba'. From this killing of Salba demon the place was came to known as Salmara. Another view opined that this place was filed with 'Sal' tree. The people of this area, cut this thickly planted sal trees and made it inhabitable. By this way the place came to known as Salmara.

Another Salmara is there in the Mankachar area situated at South bank of river Brahmaputra, name of which is 'South Salmara'. As this Salmara area fall in the North bank of the mighty river Brahmaputra. So, this place has come to has come to known as North Salmara.

Historical changes of North Salmara Sub-Division:

The Present study area was once a broad revenue part of old Goalpara district. Presently, it is situated under Jurisdiction of Bongaigaon district and realised as a sub-division of the same in the year of 1983. The area was declared as sub-division on the Independence Day of that year by then Assam Chief Minister Hon'ble Tarun Gogoi, The area was demarcated with official regulation from Bongaigaon Sub-Division in north to river Brahmaputra in south and from Dhubri district in west to Barpeta district in eastern boundary. The area is being a zig-zag circular shape.

Rise of Koch-Rajbongshi people:

North Salmara sub-division was a small part of Great Koch-Kingdom. At the very past the area was under the reign of Maharaj Narnarayana. Later, the area was under the reign of Bijni estate. The first owner of this estate, Raja Kumud Narayana was the 12th descendant of Maharaj Narnarayana. It is seen that before the days of this Kumud Narayana the said area was not experienced with proper development in all respects.

In the first half of reign of Kumud Narayana, the general people of the area were shaken with a new motion of enlighten socio-economic life and it was bloomed in full in the last days of Raja Kumud Narayana. Sharing the marital life of Raja Kumud Narayana, Rani Abhayeswari



came into association with his as his second wife. Upto this point each plan or programme of Raja Kumud Narayana had a positive touch of his first wife Rani Sidheswari in his first days. But after having his second wife Abhayeswari, he was seriously opposed by Rani Siddheswari. This family turmoil of Raja Kumud Narayana had affected the people of his estate. Rani Sidheswari became almost all-in-all about the throne and started to be tyrannical. After a stormy fight for the Royal right Rani Abhayeswari had defeated Sidheswari and crowned ownership of the estate and it was the turning point of dreamly upliftment of the estate people's life. Setting the capital of Bijni estate at Abhayapuri during the ending. Part of the last decade of 19th century. Abhayeswari started her most valuable public welfare works to be performed in different ways of civil life. She established the first High School in the area in 1904 at Abhayapuri. In the same decade a Sanskrit Tol was also established at Abhayapuri under her guidance. Following these cultural motivation there were some other educational institutions in the next decades. These new experiences motivate the rural villagers towards the educated life. In a few decades of early 20th century the area, mainly around the capital Abhayapuri, which was highly settled then by the Raj-Bongshi people, had a great socio-cultural upliftment where the native people had gaining there new life expectation both in social and political stages. Renovation of Jamindari rules, re-orientation of different farming Acts and different favourable policies that taken by the ruler had influenced the poor people and hence the real developing scenario among the native crowds had been experienced. The local Raj-Bongshi people has also been organised in different ways for their ethnic and socio-economic developments and it was in a breeding trend which was later bloomed.

It can be said that this is the time from which the new-thoughts and assumptions about their legal right of fundamental prosperity and autonomy has been fermented and garmented and later it was seedling out to a complete sphere that we see today. Different kinds of organization for this ethnic group are, now on the road. From this point of view it can be said that more or loss, the time, from the first decade of the 20th century to the Pre-independence period is showing the conspicuous rising trend in socio-economic as well as cultural of the Koch-Rajbongshi people of the stated area. However, the area is, presently complex on in case of its inhabitants in relation to their religion and custom.



North Salmara is an old name but a new Sub-Division. It was declared a Sub-Division on 15th August 1983 and carved out from erstwhile old Goalpara district. The Sub-Division is situated in the Western part of the state of Assam and bounded by the Bongaigaon and Bijni Sub-Division in the North, Barpeta district in the east, Goalpara district in the south and Dhubri district in the west. The North Salmara sub-division falls within the latitude of 26⁰28' North and longitude of 89⁰ east to 90⁰58' east. The sub-division has a total area of 555.36² KM and support a population of 328961 persons. Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Rajbongshi, Hindi are the languages spoken by the people. The sub-division has 3 (three) development block i.e. Boitamari, Srijangram and Tapattari.

The Present physiographic configuration of North-Salmara sub-division has taken its shape only during the geologically recent time. The geologic and tectonic base the area has given rise to a variety of land forms under varying climatic condition and geomorphic processes. The low hill ranges with hot and humid climatic and heavy rainfall concentrated to a few months of the year, experience solifluction, sheet erosion and landslides. Fluvial processes, on the other hand are significantly dominant on the sub-division where alluvial deposition takes place due to erosion of the higher surfaces by rivers and floodings in the region. However, the physiographic elements like plains, flood plains, hills, foot hills and rivers.

The North salmara Sub-division is a part of the Brahmaputra valley. The Brahmaputra valley is the major physiographic unit of Assam. The typography of the sub-division is generally plain. A few hills here and there covered the area. The general slope of the Sub-division towards south. The area is composed of alluvial soils which was farmed during the Pleistocene period. The area is composed of alluvial soils which was formed during the Pleistocene period. The might Brahmaputra river flows along the southern boundary of the sub-division. The tributary rivers such as Champabati. Ai and Manah flows through the Sub-division from North to South and joined the Brahmaputra.

The North Salmara sub-division is a land of rivers. By virtue of its unique geographical location amidst the northern hills and highlands, eastern and southern permanent river and humid tropical monsoon climate. North Salmara happens to be a land of many rivers and tributaries. The entire area is drained by the dense network of two rivers, viz the Brahmaputra and the



Manah. The river Manah flows in the eastern side of the North Salmara Sub-Division and is a major river of northern bank of Brahmaputra. In general, the Brahmaputra is very much extensive in North Salmara sub-division. The tributary rivers such as Champabati, Aie, Kujia, Kokila flows through the sub-division from North to South and joint the Brahmaputra.

The North Salmara sub-division lies in the regime of monsoon climate of sub-tropical belt. It enjoys heavy summer rainfall, winter drought, high humidity and relatively low temperature is normally characterized by orographic lows. During summer the area become hot and the air over the hills and mountains remains relatively cool. Local low pressure systems develop over the area and create a climate of humid sub-tropical type which is slightly different from the koppen's caw type i.e. the humid meso-thermal Gangetic type.

Under varying intensity of the wasther elements and resultant weather conditions North Salmara sub-division experiences four climatic seasons. Those are- (i) Pre-monsoon, (ii) Monsoon, (iii) Retrating monsoon and (iv) Dry winter.

The pre-monsoon begins in the early part of March and continues upto the end of May. Temperature starts rising gradually from the beginning of the season onward. Pleasant morning, hot and drying afternoons and occasional thunder showers are some of the important characteristics of the season. In this season marked atmospheric instability develops and severe thunderstorms occur. Sometimes preceded by dust-raising squalls. Rainfall increases both in amount and frequency as the season advances which greatly favours the cultivation of tea, jute and ahu rice.

The monsoon sets in by the last week of May or in early June and it lasts upto September or the first part of October. It is rainy season when the area received spells of continues ad moderate to heavy rains, June, July, August are the rainiest months. When more that 17% of the total annual rainfall occurs. This is the most important season during which Sali rice the principal crops of the sub-division is cultivated.

The South-West monsoon withdraws sometime in between the last part of September and first part of October. This season continues upto the middle of November, when fogs commonly occur.



The winter season begins in the middle of November and continues upto the end of February. The season is characterized by low temperature, regular morning fogs and very little amount of rainfall. December and January are the driest months and generally January is the coldest month.

The climate in the district is moderate to cool in winter. It is not and humid from May to October. The maximum mean temperature is 30⁰C and minimum is 13⁰C and monsoon starts in the area from April. The heaviest rainfall occurs during the month of May-June and August. The average rainfall is 250 cm to 350 cm.

V. Conclusion:

The North Salmara sub-division is situated in the western part of the state Assam. The study reveals the fact of the ecological setting and historical background of the district it is found that the flat topography with scattered small hill and tills' is almost all parts of the area and other natural resources like forests, fishes and available arable lands play a vital role in the evaluation of the community. From the study of socio-economic and cultural aspects of the people it is found out that agriculture being the mainstay of the people of responsible to a great extent for its stagnation in economy in one hand and slow growth of literacy in other.

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