



The Impact Of Social Change On Traditional Folk Beliefs: An Analytical Study

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Abstract :

The following article discusses folk beliefs in Assam, defining them as behaviours individuals perform in their daily lives that lead to good and bad perceptions within a society. It explains that these beliefs are part of culture and have evolved over time across different ethnic groups globally and specifically in Assam. The study aims to highlight the changing aspects of folk beliefs among various ethnic groups in Assam, recognized a cause-and-effect relationship behind the creation of folk culture. It also to understand these shifts and their implications on the cultural fabric of Assam.

1.0 Introduction :

Society is the collection of individuals. Among the behaviors that individuals perform in this society, those behaviors that are acceptable in a society are a part of culture. Folk beliefs are the behaviors that individuals perform through their daily activities and among these behaviors that make good and bad perceptions in the minds of people. Such folk beliefs have been practiced in any region of the world, among any ethnic group and these beliefs have changed and enhanced over time. There are many such folk beliefs among the various ethnic groups living in Assam and these folk beliefs are also on the path of change. This study attempts to highlight such changing aspects of folk beliefs with reference to particular ethnic groups living in Assam.

1.1 There is a specific cause and effect relationship behind the creation of folk culture and folk beliefs. A social and natural environment is involved behind the creation of a folk belief. This is where the original lessons of folk beliefs come into play.

Marital, family, political and cultural links occur between different ethnic groups and between different geographical, natural and linguistic environments at different times and for different reasons. Such links also result in the exchange of folk cultures. As a result, a particular ethnic culture moves from one to another and from one to another. In other words, folk culture circulates. In addition to this migration, the basic culture of the ethnic group changes; This results in various translations.

In support of this view, the main statements of Julius Kron, the founder of the Historical Geographical Method of folk culture, and his son Karl Kron can be cited. They said that "Travel is a major religion of folk culture and it can easily cross the boundaries of country, time and culture." ¹

The same can be said of the ethnic folk beliefs of Assam. The ethnic groups currently living in Assam did not come to Assam at the same time. Mongolians are the largest population in Assam. However, there are also cultural differences among these Mongolians. They came to Assam by different routes at different times divided into different ethnic groups. Therefore, the cultural characteristics they brought with them and the cultural elements and characteristics of the peoples already living in Assam blend and integrate. For example, before the Ahoms came to Assam, various ethnic groups like Deuri, Mising, Boro, Kachari etc. lived in Assam. The Ahom came to Assam and married indigenous women

and adopted the indigenous language and culture of Assam. In this context, Yogesh Das says:

“The Ahom came to Assam and married indigenous women and adopted the indigenous culture. Yet they are their heritage did not abandon it altogether.”²

Therefore, the folk beliefs prevalent in Assam have been exchanged through the combination of different ethnic groups. Therefore, similarities in many folk beliefs have been found among them. However, many folk beliefs have similarities with folk beliefs in other parts of the world. For example, there are international similarities in folklore associated with cats, turtles, chickens, the moon, etc., and folklore related to birth and death. Cats are believed to be a symbol of misfortune in many parts of the world, just as they are considered ominous by various tribes living in Assam. The reason for such similarities can be attributed to the influence of the circulatory religion of folk culture. Although international similarities can be found among folk beliefs, it is not possible to find direct evidence of their origins. Careful investigation of particular folk beliefs with the help of historical geographical methods can go some distance but is not entirely successful. That is where the historical geographical method is flawed.

1.2 In the basic search for folk beliefs, some information has been found in ancient religious texts, but that information cannot be considered accurate either. It is difficult to say whether the stories of ancient religious texts are based on the folk beliefs prevalent in a society or whether folk beliefs are based on ancient religious texts. There are many folk beliefs found in the Indian Vedas, Upanishads, Epics and Puranas. It is also possible that these folk beliefs were recorded by the authors of religious texts from contemporary societies or later by other scribes. For example, it is ominous to shout bats and vultures, it is ominous to call someone from behind, and it is not allowed to marry in the family. Many such folk beliefs are mentioned in the Vedas.³ They came from the Vedas and spread to our society over time.

Many folk beliefs can also be born from various stories in religious scriptures. For example, you should not sleep with your head facing west. This folk belief is based on the story of the beheading of Ganesha and the attachment of the head of an elephant to his head.⁴ During the beheading of Ganesha, the head of an elephant lying on the west side was cut off and attached. These stories are very popular in the Assamese society. They are not allowed to eat rice with bowls or bowls. This folklore is also based on a story of Draupadi and Krishna in the Mahabharata. Some folk beliefs in ancient Indian religious scriptures have similarities with folk beliefs in other parts of the world. For example, the voice of a frog is ominous. This belief, besides being mentioned in the Vedas, is also prevalent among the Alabamans. However, it is difficult to say which is ancient.

1.3 Some folk beliefs are also based on historical events. For example, brass bowls are not allowed. This belief can be said to have originated only after the arrival of the Ahoms in Assam. The Ahom kingdom was frequently attacked by various enemies during the reign of the Ahoms. The trumpets were blown from the royal house to warn the people during such enemy attacks or in other dangers. Therefore, it is believed that the sound of the trumpet created fear or danger in the minds of people.

1.4 All people on earth have the same human feelings. Therefore, it is possible for similar folk beliefs to be born in similar environments. This is where the polygenesis theory of anthropologists comes into play. The basic statement of this theory is that 'similar cultures are formed completely independently in similar environments. Therefore, it is possible that similar thinking arises among the ethnic groups. There are similar folk beliefs among the Ahom, Deuri and Mising people living in Assam because they share similar thoughts. These folk beliefs have influenced their minds.

1.5 The ideas of any society in the world are shaped by its surroundings or natural environment. This regional natural environment influences the social environment. As a result, different folk beliefs developed in different regions. There are also similarities and differences among the folk beliefs prevalent in Assam. The reasons for this are —

- (1) Effects of the natural environment
- (2) The influence of group cultural characteristics
- (3) The influence of group thinking and education.

The Ahom, Deuri and Mising ethnic groups living in Assam live in almost similar natural environments, but the Deuri and Mising live in somewhat remote and inaccessible areas compared to the Ahom. The Deuris and Mising are somewhat deprived of modern facilities compared to the Ahoms. Therefore, some folk beliefs are more common among them. For example, it is reflected in folk beliefs about witchcraft, folk medicine and folk medicine.

There is cultural integration between the Ahom, Deuri and Mising but the three ethnic groups also have their own distinct cultural characteristics. For example, the Deuris think that when they are guilty of Dandaria, they think that they are guilty of Bandeu and worship Churdeu as a remedy. This is not the same as the Ahom or Mising people.

The Ahom hold Jaleshwari Sabah or Jalkosh Apeswari Sabah on the banks of ponds or rivers on Saturdays or Tuesdays if the daughters' menstrual cycles are not regular, if they are not menstruating or if they are not prosperous. The Ahom people have their own cultural identity with the Me-Dam-Me-Fi ceremony, which worships their ancestors.

The Mising festival 'Ali-Aye-Lrigang' and related folk beliefs are not similar to those of the Ahom and Deuri.

1.6 Folk beliefs have been practiced in all parts of the world since before history. Scientists have discovered many mysteries about life and the universe. Although people's education, communication systems, economic conditions, etc. have changed radically, the value of folk beliefs and the attitudes associated with these beliefs have not changed much in society. This is because folk beliefs involve long-standing thoughts and behaviors of folk life. Science has not been able to influence people's minds to completely refute their thoughts and behavior. On the other hand, modern education and technology have not advanced enough to erase superstitions from people's minds. "Folk beliefs will also have value until society changes naturally."⁶ In this context, Ray B. Brown mentioned that – "Today we are still interested in popular beliefs and practices, because we too understand their value as indexes of peoples thought and behavior."⁷

1.7 Folk culture is resilient to a great extent, but it is not entirely resilient. This is because with the change of era, new ideas, education spread, lifestyle changes and these

changes also change the traditional folk culture. This results in the abandonment of some aspects of traditional folk culture and folk beliefs and the transformation of traditional culture with the addition of new ones.

The Ahom, Deuri and Mising cultures are not immune from the influence of this era. This change in the social life of Assam affects all the ethnic groups living in Assam. As a result, these changes have also been seen among the ethnic groups. Such changes in social life have also brought about some changes in the folk beliefs prevalent in the society.

1.8 In the past, the Ahom, Deuri and Mising peoples built their houses with bamboo, wood and straw readily available in the forests of Assam. Currently, due to population growth, government forest conservation policies, etc., there is a shortage of bamboo and wood for building houses and modern concrete is being used. The Ahom began to build houses on the plains and use modern concrete long ago. The long durability of concrete is one of the reasons for this. Currently, the Deuris and Mising who live in non-flood areas or in high and left places are building houses on the plains instead of chang houses. Many of them follow the tradition and build a small hut at the back of the main house. They use that as a kitchen. Even in flood-prone areas, many people use bamboo for the walls of their huts but the poles are concrete instead of wood and tin instead of thatch on the roof. This has resulted in the disappearance of some traditional folk beliefs in both societies. For example, with the use of concrete poles in the Deuri and Mising societies, the possibility of pigs getting caught in the two poles of the chang and the belief that bad luck would flow if pigs caught in the gaps between the two poles of the chang disappeared. Because the previous two pillars have now been replaced by one. However, this folk belief is still followed in the case of bamboo and wooden huts. There are folklore about the Chang ladder; They have also changed with the introduction of concrete ladders. In the past, they built their houses facing east and west. Nowadays, that tradition is also changing. When a ladder breaks, it is shared, but such folklore is obsolete in the case of concrete ladders.

1.9 With the development of modern mechanical civilization, the Ahom, Deuri and Mising societies living in Assam also used modern machinery such as bicycles, motorcycles, cars, radios, telecommunications, etc. This results in the application of some traditional folk beliefs to these objects. For example, when the Ahom, Deuri and Mising buy animals such as cows and buffaloes, they wash their feet at home. This belief is now being applied to the purchase of new vehicles. When they buy a new vehicle, they wash the wheels of the vehicle with water at home on the first day. They burn incense and serve the devotees. With the introduction of modern transportation in all three communities, Vishwakarma Puja was also introduced. Thus, the change in material culture has radically changed many of the folk beliefs prevalent in society.

1.10 The Ahom, Deuri and Mising have been practicing traditional methods of agriculture but are also using modern mechanical tractors. With the introduction of these mechanical ploughs, plowing was relaxed. Traditional cows follow the plowing belief only when ploughing; Not in the case of mechanical ploughs. This is the result of the change of era.

1.11 With the spread of modern education in the ethnic society of Assam, some folk beliefs have changed. For example, in the past, the Ahom, Deuri and Mising believed that going outside during the eclipse brought bad luck. Currently, people are forced to go to

schools, colleges, businesses, government jobs, etc., so people go out even during the eclipse. However, pregnant women still follow this belief. The Ahom celebrate the Jasingpha or Saraswati Puja. The Deuri and Mising communities also celebrate Saraswati Puja with the introduction of modern education. This is the result of the change of era.

1.12 The Ahom, Deuri and Mising used to make yarn at home and weave their own garments for men and women. Nowadays, besides producing yarn at home, they are also using yarn and fabrics produced in domestic and foreign industries. As a result, there has been some relaxation in traditional folk beliefs about dress. Homemade clothes are not cut on Saturdays and Tuesdays. However, there is no restriction on buying clothes from the market on Saturdays and Tuesdays. In such cases, the traditional rules of folklore have been relaxed. The traditional diet of the Deuris and Mising has not changed but they are also using a variety of foods available in the market.

1.13 Since the introduction of modern medicine in the Deuri and Mising communities, it has influenced traditional medicine. One of the reasons for this is the extinction of folk medicines required for traditional medicine. For example, with the extinction of bears in the forests of Assam, the use of folklore surrounding bear fur has declined. It is being replaced by modern medical methods. Currently, the Deuri and Mising communities practice modern medicine alongside traditional medicine in some cases. The areas inhabited by the Ahoms have better modern facilities and medical facilities than those of the Deuris and Mising. Therefore, the use of folk medicine and folk medicine is less among the Ahom than among the Deuris and Mising.

With the change of era, some aspects of folk beliefs have changed in the Ahom, Deuri and Mising societies, but many folk beliefs remain unchanged. Many areas inhabited by the Deuri and Mising ethnic groups have not yet undergone much improvement in transportation and modern education and medical facilities have not been adequately expanded in those areas. As a result, people living in those areas have to resort to traditional medicine and witchcraft. In this context, some folk beliefs such as 'witchcraft beliefs' have often disrupted social order in both societies.

Conclusion : Culture is for people and people are the birthplace of culture. This also applies to folk beliefs. The folk beliefs prevalent in the Deuri and Mising communities must be able to meet the social needs of both communities. With the change of era, it is desirable that the folk beliefs prevalent in the Ahom, Deuri and Mising societies also change. In this context, it is worth mentioning that Leela Gogoi said --

“Artwork that is thoroughly creative

There is beauty, there is humanity, that is culture.”⁸

There is a need to avoid folk beliefs prevalent in Ahom, Deuri and Mising societies that have destroyed social order, harmed humanity and brought social unity, social order, helped to preserve humanity, benefited individuals and society; Such folk beliefs are welcome. It is also necessary to survive in such a society that benefits folk beliefs.

The society of Assam is surrounded by different languages and cultures. Therefore, although there are some differences in language and culture among the different ethnic groups of Assam, there is a common language and culture among them.

Reference :

- 1 Soumen Das: 'Lokasanskriti Sarsar Tulanamulak Padhati', 'Lokasanskriti Sarsar Methodology, Varun Kumar Chakraborty (ed.), p. 163.
- 2 'The Ahoms, they had to take local women as wives and also adopt the local cultural life, thought they didn't entirely discard their own background' Jogesh Das : The Floklore of Assam, p.47
- 3 Jivesh Nayak: Lokosanskriti O Lokasahitya , p. 134
- 4 Varun Kumar Chakraborty: Lokbiswas and loksanskriti, p. 27
- 5 Soumen Das: mentioned, p. 164
- 6 Jivesh Nayak: mentioned, p. 127
- 7 Ray B Brown, Popular Beliefs and Practieces from Alabama, introduction.
8. Leela Gogoi : Axomor Sanskriti, p 8