

Julah as a muslim migration of assam:a sociological study

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INTRODUCTION :

One of the important phenomenon of population movement in N.E. India is migration .There has been continuous migration of people to the region since long past . Ethno –cultural groups from all directions including foreign lands migrated and settled in the region . In the early days peoples Indo-Aryan origin ,of Negroites and Mongoloids came form North west and north east of the region respectively .There is a close relationship between the population migration and the resultant distribution of that particular group of people and both of these factors are responsible for consequent social and economic development of that group of people .(Tahar:1993)

Migration is a geographical phenomenon that seems to be a human necessity in every age . Since man has a tendency to leave the areas in which life is difficult he migrates to the areas where life may be easy and better .The word migration may be originally defined as the relatively permanent movement of persons to a significant distance (Bhuyan :1971). Migration may be permanent or semi-permanent . Migration may be international inter-regoinal ,iner-urban ,rural-urban .or intra-urban .The causes of migration may be numerous and these may range form natural calamities ,climatic change ,epidemics and drought to socio-economic ,cultural and political .

In the *Katha Guru charit*that 120 Julah families were there in Assam during the time of Pratapsingha (Ahmed D. 2009:360). Some of the Muslim weavers who were known as Jula also brought to Assam during the period of SwargadeoRudrsaingha along with other skilled artisans like *Akharkatia* ,*Gunakatia* , *Silakutia* ,*Nageria* ,*Darjee*, *Khanikar* and parsiparhia and were engaged in making of Royal dress and also for the soilders (Sattar .A. 1972 :48-50

).Beside these artisans the Ahom rulers appointed the Muslims also as Bora ,Saikia ,Hazarika ,Rajkhowa , Phukon , senchowaetc and all those Muslims along with the Julasand other artisans were assimilated in the Assamese society in such a way that most of them have nothing of their own but only the religion .

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER :

The objectives of the paper is to focus as to how the Julahs of Assam assimilated with the greater Assamese society .

AREA OF THE STUDY :

The present study would cover entire Julah community of Assam.TheJulah are not spreading all over the district of Assam , but they are mostly concentrated in Tinsuika , Dibrugrah ,Sibsagar , Jorhat , Golaghat ,Sonitpur , and North Lakhimpur district of Assam .

SAMPLING :

For the present study one exclusively Julah community inhabited village were purposively selected .

DATA COLLECTION:

For this study both primary and secondary data has been collected .The secondary data has been collected from historical records and books from the department of Historical and Antiquarian studies ,Govt of Assam ,based at Guwahati ,other published materials , like articles appeared on the leading dailies , Govt. publication and information gathered from the aged persons of the community who are taken as source persons for the study . The reason for taking source persons for this study is that there is a limited source of secondary data about the past of the Julhas and hence some source persons of the Julah were selected .

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE JULAH :

In the early part of 17th century A.D. India came into contact with Islam, when Arab Muslims invaded the Indian Land. In most of the History of Assam it was explained that land came into contact with the Mohammadans when Muhammad Iban Bin Bukhtiar, a military under Qutubddin Aibak of Delhi Sultanate, invaded the land in 1205/06 A.D. Accordingly, the Muslim invaders came to Assam on several occasions at different intervals. Usually the war captives were settled in different part of the land by the rulers of Assam, particular in the Ahom period and some of the Muslim soldiers preferred to live in the basis of their working skill. According to Ahmed .M. during the region of Swargadeo Pratapsingha, Mumai Tumali Barburah established some people of various Khels in Opar Daiyang and two Muslim families were included among those Khels, one of them was Goriya and other was Jula who were skilled in weaving and he claim to be the descendent of that Goriya family. It was also mentioned in *khota Guru Charit* that 120 Jula families were there in Assam during the time of Pratapsingha (Ahmed .D. 2009:360). Some of the Muslim weavers who were known as Julah also other skilled artisans like *Akharkatia, Gunakatia, Silakutia, Nageria, Darjee, Khanikar and Parsiparhia* and were engaged in making of Royal dresses and also for the soldiers (Sattar.A. 1972:48-50). Beside these artisans the Ahom rulers appointed the Muslims also as *Bora, Saikia, Hazarika, Rajkhowa, Phukon, Senchow*a (officials of Ahom kingdom) etc. and all those Muslims along with the Julah and other artisans were assimilated in the Assamese society in such a way that most of them have nothing of their own but only the religion.

On the other hand, The Jolhas are still living in Assam with their ethnic identity in the seven districts of Upper Brahmaputra Valley. The Modern Indian History also shows that a series of migration took place in Assam and the tea garden labourers were formed a major part of the immigrants. In the British period, with the opening of the tea gardens, labourers were brought to Assam to work in the gardens from Chotanagpur, Bihar, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and west Bengal (saharia.u.c. 2005:2). The influx of labourers i.e. Advasi communities may be describe as forced migration to Assam during the pre-independence period. These people came from different region of the States having different ethnic identity. The Jolhas were brought to the land from the districts of Bihar like

Hazribagh ,Dumka , Ranchi , Giridi and Purnia . Like their other Hindu and chirstian counterparts the Jolhas were also kept captives within the tea estate by the British planters and led to a sub human life .In 1840 A.D.Assam Company posted at Calcutta . These forced migrated people were very innocent, ill treated ,poverty stricken and belonged to the lower strata of the society who could not adjust the ecology of the selected area of Assam for plantation. First they were asked to clear the jungles which were full of wild species of animals ,insects, vegetables etc .where no human being could live in such an inhospitable surrounding s (Saharia .U.C.2005:2).

They were engaged here in the tea gardens as *Girmittia* or bonded laboureres. In course of time ,when they became free, some of them continued working in the gardens ,some of them returned back to their homeland ,most of them came back to Assam. Many of the Jolhas left the tea estate and settled down in nearby villages ,Government wasteland or plot provided by garden authority .

The present Researcher also comes across some of the areas named after Julas or the Jolhas . There is a *JulaGaon ,underGaurisagar Development Block of Sivsagor district but not inhabited by any Jula or Jolha people . We visit Julachuk of Melamati under Golaghat district where there in a few household of Jolha people inhabited along with the Kacharipeople ,there is a Jolapothar also in Golaghat district . There is a Masjid known as Jula Masjid in Gar Ali of Jorhat town and according to Ahmed .D.the Masjid may be constructed with the esteem help of some Jula people (Ahmed .D.2009:361)*

MEANING OF THE JULAH :

Before going to the past of the *Jolha* people an attempt is made here to clear the confusion regarding the term *Jula, Jolha* and *Juluha* and sometime *Julaha* that are being used in Assam to indicate these people whose occupation was only weaving in their original homeland .

The meaning of both the word *Jula* and *Jolha* is weaver . In the Assamese dictionary of Dr.MaheswarNeog ,NabakantaBarua the word *Jula* refers to *Tanti* i.e. weavers or a section of cotton pod . In *Khorta* (the dialect of the jolha people) also , the meaning of the word *Jolha* is weavers.The prime occupation of most of these people was weaving in Bihar , their original homeland and it was a male dominated profession there . The term *Jolha* denoted to a community whose occupation is weaving , but the jolhas of Assam is no more a weaving community but an integral part of tea community of Assamese society .It is worth mentioning here that the *Julas of Ahom period and the Jolhas of British period entered Assam maintain a long gap of likely 200 of years. So the Julas of Ahom period assimilated with the Assamese society in such a way that they have nothing of their own like language ,culture ,rite ,and rituals , their ancestral skiletc.but only their religion .It is very difficult to find out any difference between the Julas and other Assamese Muslims. On the other hand Jolhas are living in Assam maintain their ethnic identity . Though in the process of acculturation they have lost most of their ethnic feature ,they contributed a lot to form a broader Assamese society by embracing the language , culture and religious rites and rituals of the host society . The people who came during the British period known as Jolha in Bihar and they also give their identification as Jolha but in Assam the people pronounced the word as Jua,Juluha and also Julaha and popularly known as JulaMusalman. Saikia remarks that it seems that the form of Jolha comes from the word Julaha which in all probability was carried into Assam by the Muslim weavers and the spinners (Saikia .M. 1978:152) Though in Assam these people are known as Jula , Juluha , Julaha , they used to call themselves as Jolha .*

THE STUDIED VILLAGE SETTINGS:DHEMAJI.

Dhemaji is one of the mostly Jolha (extea people) inhabited area of upper Brahmaputra valley . The greater Dhemaji village is considered of three Jolha inhabited area viz. DhemajiKaibarttagaon ,Dighalipam and DhemajiMiriGaon including 300 Jolha household . In DhemajiKaibarttagaon the Jolhas people live with 53 household of Kaibartta (one ST Community of Assam and their profession mostly related to fishing) people .In Dighalipam they live along with Kaibartta

and general Assamese people .DhemajiMiriGaon inhabited by Jolhas ,Kabitra and Mishing (another ST community of assam).

The Jolha of Dhemaji started to settle in the area during the time of the second World War .

Dhemaji is a Jolhas (ex tea people) dominated village of Golaghat district . In the administrative jurisdiction ,Dhemaji is situated under Dergaon police station and falls under Golaghat sub-division of Golaghat district . The village is situated at a distance of 2.50 Kms towards northern side ofDergaon town of Golaghat district and the area of the village is 2 sq.km.

Dhemaji is situated at a distance of 2.50 kilometer on the northern side of the National Highway No.37 .

CONCENTRATION OF THE JOLHA POPULATION :

The Jolhas are onhabited in seven district of upper Brahmaputra valley .It is mentioned in anterior paragraph that after coming to Assam through they were settled in tea garden areas ,gradually they started to spred in different villages and sometime in nearby urban areas too. Presently they are found to have settled in 63 tea gardens and 61 ex-tea garden area or villages of the seven districts of upper Brahmaputra Valley .

The district wise Distribution of of the Julah population:

1. Tinsukia 1,952.
2. Dibrugrah 1,654
3. Sibsagar 9,156
4. Jorhat 24,820
5. Golaghat 25,635

6. Sonitpur 2,456

7. North Lakhimpur 3,550 .

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS :

Cultural transformations as a result of assimilation:

As a result of concentration of Julah in different districts of Assam ,they came into the contact with different ethnic groups of greater Assamese society .Under the process of assimilation and under the influence of ecology of the newly settled areas ,the cultural aspects of Julahs have transformed in significant manner .The cultural transformation can be pointed in the following head .

FAMILY :

*Regarding the family ,marriage and kinship both joint and nuclear family were found .

*Joint family was prevalent in the past while at present nuclear family is popular .

*Every head of the family is considered as supreme authority of the Julah Family.

* Division of Labour in the Julah family is limited .

MARRIAGE AND KINSHIP ;

*Two types of marriage are found among Julah-Negotiated and Non –Negotiated.

*Non-Negotiated marriage is more popular among the Julah .

*Cross –cousin marriage is found among the Julah.

*Since the settlement of the Julah at the Brahmaputra valley is on the assimilation process.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES :

*In the traditional period religious beliefs and practices of the Julah were similar to Assamese Muslim legend says that they were performing the same religious beliefs and practices of Garden and ex-tea -Garden people .

*In the religious beliefs and practices in the contemporary period changes occurred and it has been noticed that now a days they perform the religious rituals like other Muslims ,through remnants of the synthesis of traditional Assamese Hindu culture .

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES :

*The traditional economy of the Julahs were primarily based on weaving and tailoring .with the passage of time this has been gradually fading away .

*Now the Julahs are giving up their traditional occupation and accepting the modern diversified occupations e.g. hawker ,driver ,teacher , labour ,semiskilled worker etc.

CULTURE :

*The culture of the Julhas are synonymous to their Assamese Muslim counter part .

*The customs relating to food and diet of the Jolhas are the outcome of the synthesis of greater Assamese culture .

*The beliefs and practices of the Jolhas are also same as that of the Assamese counterpart .

* The Jolhas have some proverbs in their language but those are not in use in their conversation .

*The Jolhas have a dialect known as Khortha .

The Jolhas have dresses and ornaments are same as that of their Assamese Hindu counterpart .

CONCLUSIONS :

To conclude it may be pointed out that the state of Assam is the melting pot of diverse races and cultures as different points of time ,the people of different racial groups along with their own customs ,traditions ,and culture penetrated here and with passage of time they got assimilated into greater Assamese society . The above stated Julhacomcommunity is a glaring example in this regard .

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