

Status of Minority Women at Baladmari Char No. 2 of Goalpara District

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Abstract

Women are said to be the backbone of the society. They are considered as the main potentiality for the all round development of society, nation, country in general and family in particular. So, all round development of women is most essential. A society can be said to be civilized if the status of women in that society is high. But we observe that in most of our community the scenario of the status of women is very poor. The present paper tries to present the status of minority women of Baladmari Char No. 2 of Goalpara District.

Introduction

Women are regarded as the symbol of love, beauty and politeness. We see that behind every successful man there is a woman. In ancient India women are worshipped as goddess. Possibly their status was high in the society. It is historical truth that women took part in every activity related to the state. They even participated in war. The women were a great force of freedom struggle. Without the active participation of women the independence of India would never have been possible. But with the passing of time the society faced many changes. Gradually the status of women is coming down in our society. Though the Constitution of India is not gender biased, in reality women are not given proper status. In most of the cases women are performing traditional gender roles as wife and mother. In the 21 century, we are speaking of women empowerment. No doubt in this new century status of women is upgrading in one hand and on the other hand harassment of women has reached its height. Specially woman of the minority communities are facing more problems. These women are still shackled to traditions, customs, age-old superstitions and belief, orthodoxy and dogmatism.

Aims And Objectives

To study the status of woman in every sphere (social economic, political, educational) of Baladdmari Char No. 2

To examine if the overall environment is suitable for the women's status. To show the total population of this area.

To make an attempt to give suggestions regarding women status that is prevailing in this area.

Methodology
Descriptive and field study methods are used in this research. Primary data are collected from the office of Matia circle and through field study such as observation and interview. Secondary data are collected from book, journals, etc. Four trips were made to the area. After the collection of data analysis is done.

Analysis

Baladmari Char No. 2 is situated on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. It is under the Matia Block in the Goalpara District. This area is located at a place 3 km. away from the district head quarter of Goalpara. The total population of the area is 7767, according to the census report of 2011. The number of women is 3767. 99.6% of the total population belongs to the Muslim community. The remaining population is schedule tribe. All these people have to work hard for their livelihood.

Women status depends mainly on their rights, privileges and the roles assigned to them most often on the basis of gender. Status is determined to a great extent in terms of socio-economic indicators such as income, property, education and skills that open up opportunity of employment, better health and the

ability to determine important events in life even when others are opposed to them. These indicators are also, vitally interlinked with the concept of power and position. It is widely acknowledged today that one can't hope for gender equality unless women have a share in the decision making process in the family and in the public sphere. We have made a study on the minority Muslim women of a char area called Baladmari Char 2 of Goalpara District. The purpose of the study is to find out whether the status of women of this area is well or not. This enables them to access the rights and opportunities provided to them by state society and socio-cultural institutions. The survey was sample survey. 80 women were picked randomly as sample.

Educational aspects

Education is the key input for the development of individual as well as the society. Equality of sexes has been treated as the basic tenet of modern democracy. Education is treated as an input for achieving such a status. But at the Baladmari Char No. 2 women are unaware of their rights. It is found that above 75% women are deprived of the right to education. Majority of the people are poor. The high cost of education causes the parents' inability to send their girls to higher educational institutions. The boys are sent to school but the girls are not sent. They can't afford their children. So they can't think to send their girl children to school. During our survey, it is also found that they have to end their education for domestic problems. Some of them are kept as housemaid. Girls are thought to be only for household works and reproduction.

Social aspects of women in this area

In our observation we find that most of the woman are still shackled to traditions, customs, age-old superstitions and beliefs, orthodoxy, dogmatism like conservatism, purdah system, dowry system, early marriage, widowhood are still a strong problem of women in this char area. They remain suppressed by their respective husbands, in-laws, spend most of their time in house hold chores and remain economically dependent throughout life and they also are viewed inferior in the male dominated society. In the joint families, they have no freedom, no privacy and no good treatment from the in-laws. As they are illiterate, they are ignorant of Domestic Violence Act. As a result, they have to solve their problem in the village court. They have to marry before nearing adulthood. They are also unaware of the schemes for women adopted by the government. In most of the cases, the funds fixed for these schemes are misused by the agents and political leaders.

Health aspects

Health is one of the factors that determine the status of woman in a society. Looking at the different health indicators of Baladmari Char No. 2 women status is in bad shape. During our survey we find that 90% of women are deprived of proper living condition including water, basic facilities of health and hygiene. Proper living condition means having a healthy environment with the other creatures. 85% women are suffering from anaemia. The causes are lack of nutritional food due to extreme poverty, illiteracy and lack of awareness, etc. There is no facility for health centres. They are also ignorant of family planning. In this period of globalization they are receiving traditional medical treatment from kabiraj.

Political aspects

Though there is 50% reservation of women in the Panchayati Raj System, most of the women of Baladmari Char No. 2 don't have contribution to the local politics. As a result, they are used as vote banks.

Suggestions

If, we want upliftment of women of this area the government should take step to remove the obstacles for political, economic and social development.

The government and NGOs should arrange awareness camps among women to provide information about different scheme of government, the laws about marriage and domestic violence, dowry, right to property, criminal law, etc.

Human rights are rightly and universally regarded as a fundamental value in life. Human rights are those fundamental rights without which no power can live with dignity and freedom. So, to

ensure human right of this area's women the government should adopt sufficient policies like implementation of respective

law and policy, by providing proper reservations in politics and public life, ensuring the education and training, ensuring the equal opportunity of employment, etc.

Conclusion

Though women are said to be the backbone of the society, they are considered as the main potentiality for the all round development of the society, a nation, a country in general and a family in particular. But women status of Baladmari Char No. 2 area is very poor in all aspects.

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8. North-East India is well known for its rich cultural heritages which gives it an extraordinary cultural identity not only in India but all over the world. One of the most diverse regions in Asia, the North East is prominent for its diverse cultural elements of different tribes that constitute a composite culture enhancing its magnitude and attraction. Standing as a true frontier region to the easternmost part of India, the North-East is ethnically distinct from the rest of India since it has a peculiar connection with South-East Asia, China and Inner Asia and Burma from pre-historic times. North-East Indian tribes have their origins with the ethnic groups of Indo-Mongoloids, Tibeto-Burmese and proto Austrioloids which represent the Asio-Austic Culture. This cultural confluence contributes most of the ethnic and cultural ingredients to this region and enriches its large cultural casket. The region is the setting ground for many ethnic groups where they flourish their varied cultural elements and as a consequence a grand cultural assimilation is built up by these heterogeneous elements. Under a geomorphologic location which divides the region into the hills and valleys inserts the tribes in the seven states commonly known as 'Seven Sisters' and Sikkim. Besides Sikkim North-East India comprises Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. This is a region which attains a unique notification due to its integrity in diversity in cultural aspects in spite of its political disintegration and demarcation. Being renowned for millennia this region is an epitome for cultural integrity despite its ethical, linguistical, geographical or ecological discrepancy. More than 166 different tribes reside in the North-East region in diverse atmosphere and prepare a multicoloured embroidered tapestry by stitching their colourful cultural threads. The cultural trends of the different tribes of North-East India can be marked by their distinct festivals, customs, songs and dances, art and other social occasions.
9. ost of the festivals of the tribes of the North-East region are associated with agriculture since these tribes are basically engaged in agriculture and farming. Agriculture is the main source of their livelihood and therefore, they are rooted heart and soul with this occupation throughout the year.
10. The harvest festivals are celebrated either as pre harvesting or post-harvesting festivals. The main objective of this paper is to highlight the major agricultural or harvest festivals celebrated by North-East Indian tribes. After giving a bird-eye view on the major harvest festivals of the region an attempt will be made to bridge a synthesis of the different elements prevailing in these harvest festivals.
11. Arunachal Pradesh is renowned for its rich festivals and popularly known as the state of festivals. The people of Arunachal Pradesh celebrate their different festivals including the major festivals like Losar,
12. Saga Dawa, Choekhor, Torgya, Monpa and Mioko festivals. During the months of January and April, they celebrate the spring festivals and these festivals provide much scope for them to feel entertainment, joy and relaxation. Through these festivals they get a chance for reunion with the members and relatives scattered in various villages and also they offer gratitude to the Almighty for providing a good and abundant harvest.

13. Assam is a wonderful urn where different ethnic communities preserve their rich cultural heritages in a majestic way. The different festivals observed by different tribes in Assam are a glorious fusion of the ancient heritage, rich glory and spirituality of sub-tribes and tribes with a grand aim to build up a great Assamese culture. The festivals of Assam are basically divided into three categories and they are respectively Agricultural festivals, Religious festivals, and Social festivals. Like many other community festivals 'Bihu' is a festival observed by all the Assamese people living in Assam who were tribal or non tribal irrespective of caste, creed, religion and language. The Bihu festival is called seasonal as well as agricultural festival. This festival is celebrated as pre-harvesting, mid-harvesting and post-harvesting festival. During the Rangali Bihu, there is the activity of sowing seeds in the field. The transplantation of saplings is celebrated with the Kati Bihu and the Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu which is fully related to harvest activities indicates the completion of harvest and fulfilment of the barns with crops. Similarly, the Bihu festival has its resemblance with the Baikho festival celebrated by the Rabhas in the spring season. The term Baikho means merriment bestowed by God and it indicates the same merriment enjoyed during the time of Bihu festival. In the Baikho festival, the Rabha people look nature afresh and pray God for the promotion of harvest copiously. The Bodo Kacharis observe the Bihu festival as Baisagu. They also observe Kherai festival like the Bihu festival with some rituals. This festival is observed as a symbol of fertility and reproduction. According to the folk belief the Kherai festival increases the fertility of the soil satisfying the mother Goddess after being celebrated with Bathou Puza and Kherai Dance. The Deories observe the Bihu festival as Bahagiyo Bihu. Likewise, Bishu is a post harvest festival celebrated by the Dimasa people with great pomp and splendid way. The Dimasas celebrate this festival offering their entire new paddy first to Brai Sibrai, the supreme God of Dimasa people, intending to bring peace and prosperity of the human beings. In this festival, they erect a decorated village entrance gate named 'Fangsla'; select a head to conduct the festival named 'Gajaibao'; prepare a communal feast and participate in the festive merriment wearing traditional dresses by singing and dancing.
14. One of the most important festivals of the Miris or Mishings is Ali-Ai Ligang –a spring time festival observed by the Mishing people every year in the month of Fagun or Ginmor Polo(February-March) on the first Wednesday known as Ligang Lange in the Assamese language. There is a significant meaning of the term 'Ali- Ai Ligang' which is closely associated with the pre-harvesting activities. The meaning of 'Ali' is roots and seeds; 'Ai' or 'Yai' means fruit and 'Ligang' means sowing or planting. The youngsters wearing their colourful dresses ' Ribigacheng' and 'Ribiyeg' conduct dance performances. They arrange feast with dried fish , pork, rice beer (Poro Aapong) and perform 'Gumarag' dance.
15. Another spring time festival 'Porag' is a post harvest festival celebrated by the Mishings after harvesting of the Ahu rice in each year. Another popular name of this festival is 'Nara Singa Bihu'. The young boys and girls wear their traditional dresses and merge themselves in the joy of dancing and singing. 'Ponunam Nu' is the closing dance of this festival.
16. The Karbi tribe observes Sok-Keroi festival at the end of every harvesting season with profound joy and ecstasy. 'Sok –Keroi' means 'carrying the paddy' from the field. 'Lunsepo' is the given name of a village person who is opted to conduct the whole festival. Again, the elderly male Karbi people celebrate their another spring festival 'Rongker' in the beginning of the New Year to propitiate different gods and goddess for the well being of the entire village community and also they pray for a good harvest too. Likewise, 'Hacha-Kekan' is another post harvest festival of the Karbis.
17. The literary meaning of Manipur is known as "A jeweled land" is rich in art and tradition and a melting plot of cultures. There are mainly four major tribes residing in the Manipur state and they are known as the Meities, the Pangals, the Nagas and the Kuki tribe. Apart from these tribes there are more than 29 different tribes live in this state celebrating their respective cultural trends. There are number of festivals observed by different communities in Manipur and the most famous of them are Ningol Chakouba, Yaoshang, Kut, Gang-Ngai, Chumpha, Cheiraoba, and so on. Among them the harvest related festivals are Kut, Chumpha etc. The Kut festival is celebrated by the different tribes of Kuki-Chin-Mizo of Manipur on the 1st of November every year. The festival takes different names, such as Chavang-Kut or
18. Khodou to thank for an abundant harvest. Likewise, Chumpha festival is celebrated by the Tangkhul Nagas for a period of seven days in the month of December. This festival is related to the post harvest activities of the tribe. The Zeliangrong community in Manipur celebrates Chakaan Gaan-Ngai, a post harvest festival every year. Along with the worship held to the god for the prosperity in the coming year they also commemorate their departed souls.
19. The state of Meghalaya is basically a land of farming and agriculture. There are three main communities: Khasis, Garos, and Jaintias in Meghalaya, all having them their own festivals and fairs. Most of the festivals indicate agricultural activities of sowing and harvesting. Nongkrem Dance is one of the most important festivals of the Khasis. In this spiritual festival, the Khasis offer their deep reverence to the Almighty for excellent yield, prosperity and peace of the society. The youngsters married or bachelors

and females wearing the best of their customary attires celebrate Nongkrem Dance in the open air. The stress is given in this festival for a good harvest and production. Another festival named the Shad Suk Mynsiem means 'Dance of joyous hearts which is celebrated during the period of spring before the next sowing and planting and it has much similarity with the Bihu festival of Assam. Wangala festival is mainly a harvest festival observed by the Garo communities of Meghalaya held in every year in the month of November with great pomp. After the long toil when the harvest is over the people get rejoiced and pay respect to the Divine Sun: Saljong who sanctified them with splendid harvest. The Divine Sun Saljong is known for fertility. This festival is also known as 'Hundred Drum Festival'. The entire community get involved in wearing their traditional outfits and beating their cylindrical drums. The Jayantias observe their important festival Behdienkhlam every year in the month of July. A significant dance fiesta Behdienkhlam involves the youth generation in various activities to demolish evils and to promote unity among them. This festival is also a prayer to the Almighty seeking his sanctions for an excellent harvest.

20. The liveliness or vigorousness of the people of Mizoram is reflected through their various festivals and most of the festivals are connected to agricultural activities known as Jhum Cultivation. The Mizos have three major festivals and these are respectively Mim Kut, Chapchar Kut, and Pawl Kut. Among them Mim Kut festival is usually celebrated during the month of August and September, after the harvest of Maize and other crops is over. In this festival the Mizos get together and are involved in various activities like arranging sports, dancing and singing. 'Zu' is the name of a beer prepared from rice is served in this festival as a customary drink. This festival enthralls the agriculturist Mizo people tremendously. Then, the Chapchar Kut festival is one of the oldest festivals of the Mizos which marked its beginning in between 1450 to 1600 A.D. The word Chapchar means all the energetic and enthusiastic activities related to agriculture and Kut means 'festival'. This festival is celebrated in the second Friday of March or the advent of spring. By this time they slash down the trees and jungle, burn the trunks and leaves and prepare the land for Jhum cultivation. This festival is designed to have joy and happiness, to keep peace and communal harmony and to settle down all hurdles and conflicts among the different communities in Mizoram. Likewise, Pawl-Kut is a harvest festival which is celebrated during December to January after the completion of harvest operation. It is a festival of great joy and happiness and they engage in various activities like singing, dancing, hunting and feast. The purpose of this festival is to offer gratefulness to the Almighty for his kind providence in regard to a bountiful harvest.
21. Nagaland is a land of different colourful tribes and their festivals are basically related to agriculture. Almost 80 percent of Naga population is engaged in agricultural activities. Nazu is one of the most popular festivals of Nagaland celebrated by the Pochury tribe in the month of February prior to sowing of seeds. This festival connects Khupielilie dance which is performed by the women community wearing customary attire named Ascunyi. The Ao Naga tribe celebrates their agriculture related festival Suingremong in the month of July. 'Aos Suingrenmong' means god. This festival is performed to worship the god to keep their crops harmless after germination of seeds. Sakenyi is the principal harvest festival of the Angami tribe. It is celebrated during February by Western Angamis and in December by Southern Angamis. The objective of the festival is to ensure the health and well-being of the community for the coming year.
22. There are some diversified cultural aspects in the festivals celebrated both by tribal and non-tribal communities in the state of Tripura -the second smallest state in India. Basically the Hindu community comprises the Tripura state and therefore most of the festivals are connected to the Hindu religion. Besides the Hindu festivals the tribal communities of Tripura celebrate their festivals with full rituality. The main festivals celebrated in Tripura are Kharchi Puza, Ker Puza, and Garia Puza etc. Though these festivals are not entirely associated with harvest activities but there are the elements like prosperity,
23. purification of the evils from the society, blessings from the Almighty, communal well beings, scarification to the deities and so on have the resemblance with the harvest festivals celebrated by the other communities living in other states of North-East.
24. Harvest festivals are the extraordinary cultural gems celebrated by various tribal or non tribal communities abide in the region of North-East India. They are the true vibration of their lives as they are primarily connected to the occupation of cultivation and all their economical and socio-cultural phenomena are related to agriculture. The multilayered and multifarious cultural heritages of these multiple communities witness the unique cultural unity of this region. The above cited major harvest festivals of the North-East states establish the truth that all the communities are engaged basically in harvest occupation and therefore, most of their festivals are revolved around agriculture. The entire year they are involved in the harvest activities and hence their harvest festivals are tied up in their lives scheduling as pre-harvesting, mid-harvesting, and post-harvesting. In the pre-harvesting session they get ready, energetic or enthusiastic for harvest operations and become cheerful and auspicious for the

forthcoming activities. In this period all the communities of the North-East become religiously and ritually dedicated offering their utmost devotion to their respective supernatural powers wishing an abundant harvest. In the mid- harvesting period after sowing seeds in fields some communities hold some rituals intending to request the Almighty to grow their crops luxuriantly and making free them from damages and evil aspects. The post-harvesting festivals are most significant because after a period of hard toil and shortage they get now time of leisure and respite and they become economically tension free. Therefore, they get fully rejoiced and express their joy, happiness and generosity partaking in the celebrations. They offer tribute to their respective gods for the fulfillment of their expectation since their barns are replete with opulent grains.

25. One of the most important features of these festivals is communal harmony. During these festivals each member of each community uses to get involved in the process and has a unique role in the preparation of the respective festival. A democratic feeling is noticed to build up throughout these festivals and all types of disputes, quarrels and conflicts are forgotten by each other unifying themselves in the grand occasions. These festivals are not revolved round in one community but all communities become involved with each other. The reverence held to the elders and seniors in these festivals with full sincerity and honesty by the juniors is a striking sign of sound society which is maintained by each community in the festivals. Arranging the activities like sports and games, performing dances, songs and music, and wearing traditional dresses each community celebrate their festivals with same ecstasy and enthusiasm. The festivals are enthralled with the number of feast and the various beverages including liquor that increases the spirit high of the members of the communities. Therefore, the harvest festivals celebrated in the North East bear a true cultural assimilation of the different elements of the communities and they are the colourful reflections of the people and their lives and provide a unique cultural integrity in diversity.

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