



A STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF HAJONG WOMEN

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Abstract: The Hajong are one of the numerically small Mongoloid Communities of Assam. They reside in North – Cachar Hills District, Karbi- Anglong district and in Garo Hills of Meghalaya. Only a small number of Hajong Tribe lives in different districts of Assam i.e. in Goalpara, Dhemaji, Darrang, North –Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Cachar, Dhubri, Chirang, Nagaon, Kamrup and Tinsukia. The present study is based on the data collected through analytical methods from remote village viz. Kadam Kakoi Gaon located in Lakhimpur District of Assam. As we know that women are the part and parcel of the society. Hajong women are hard workers with compare to Hajong men and they contribute a lot towards their development of family as well as society. In this study, an attempt has been made to assess about the socio- economic status of Hajong women of Kadam Kakoi Gaon, Boginadi Block near Kakoi river of Lakhimpur district, Assam.

Key words: Hajong Women, Socio- Economic Status, Problems.

1.0: INTRODUCTION

North – East India is a homeland of diverse tribal groups with their distinct ethnic identity and is a land of varied socio-cultural elements. The Hajongs are a small tribal group of North – East India. Originally, Hajongs are a branch of the great Kachari groups of people. According to census report of 1881, there are 12 sub-groups of Kachari race. Those are Kachari (including Boro, Sonowal etc.), Mech, Lalung, Hajong, Garo (Plains), Rabha (Totiba), Madhahi, Mahalia, Saraniya, Chutia, Konch and Rajbanshi. So from this list, it is clear that, the Hajongs are a Sub- Tribe of the great Kachari group of people. Hajong Tribes are inhabited in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Tripura, Jalpaiguri, Dandakaranya of Madhya Pradesh, Post Blair of Andaman, Mymensingh & Sylhet districts of Bangladesh etc. At present, their population is estimated at 2 lakhs. In present Assam, they are predominantly inhabitants of Goalpara, Dhemaji, Darrang, North- Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Cachar, Dhubri, Chirang, Nagaon, Kamrup, Nalbari, Barpeta, Sonitpur, Kokrajhar and Tinsukia district

The family tree of Hajong Tribes includes five major clans, Doskina, Meshparia, Sungsungya, Barohazari and Korebari. The Hajongs follow a matrilineal family structure but the line of descent is traced through the father. In the family system of Hajong, father is regarded as the Head of the family. The Hajong have great faith in religion. Like most of the tribal people of North-East India, the Hajong believed in animistic religion. In recent

times, they have faith in Hinduism. They believe in some evil spirits like Machang Deo, Jarang Deo, Bhut, Maila, Zukhini, Daini etc. Bastu Puja and Bash Puja are important religious ceremonies of the people performed by Deoshi (traditional priest). At present, patriarchy influenced among Hajong society instead of matriarchy. Within Hajong culture, love marriage and widow marriage is allowed but Dowry system is absent among the people of Hajong society. Widow Remarriage among Hajong people is called as Hang'a or Sang'a.

In the present study, an attempt has been made to assess the socio- economic status of Hajong women living in Kadom Kakoi village of Boginadi Block near Kakoi river of Lakhimpur district, Assam. The present study highlighted their social, educational, political and economic status of Hajong women.

1.1 RATIONAL OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Women constitute almost half of the total population of the society. The development of a family, society and the nation as a whole depends upon the development of both men and women. Therefore, it is very much important to develop men as well as women. Hajong women are a very small proportion of the total population of the country and they are marginalized from the society in many aspects. Different provisions made in the Indian Constitution have brought about changes in their position but still they are confronted with a number of challenges. Hajong women are hard workers with compare to Hajong men and they contribute a lot towards their family income. But their income generating sources are very limited. Due to their lower status of education, their awareness level is very low in respect of different socio-economic condition. The need of the study is to find out the socio- economic status of Hajong women and challenges they faced and will take strategies to overcome the challenges successfully.

1.3: STUDY AREA

The present study was undertaken in Assam, situated in the Himalaya foothills, the land of blue hills and red rivers with the area of 78,438 square kilometers and it represents 2.39 percent of the total land area of the country. Assam is surrounded by international boundaries extending up to nearly 3200 km. The mighty river Brahmaputra flows through it, serving as a lifeline for its people settled on both of its bank. The state, being T – shaped, is situated in the heart of the north – east corner of Indian subcontinent. The area of Assam extends from latitude 24'10 N to 27' 58 N and longitude 89'49 E to 97' 26 E between the foothills of eastern Himalayas and the Patkai and Naga ranges. Assam is

surrounded by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh on the North; Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh on the East; Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura on the South; and Bangladesh, Meghalaya and West Bengal on the West. The total population according to 2011 census is 3, 12, 05,576, comprising 1, 59, 39,443 male, and 1, 52, 66,133 female. Only 6.85 percent of state's population comprises schedule caste whereas schedule tribe comprises 12.41 percent of total population.

The present study was undertaken in Kadom Kakoi village of Boginadi Block near Kakoi river of Lakhimpur district, Assam. The village is located in a remote place. Due to their remote condition, the present study's village lack proper transportation and communication facilities. The roads of the village are *kutchra* (made of mud) and during rainy season they face many more problems. Postal services and telephone connections are not available. However in recent times, a few people have taken the opportunities of mobile phone. For conducting cultural function and other important festivals of the village, there is a small community hall where all the people of the village celebrate together. There is no primary health centre or sub-centre in the village.

The village have a government registered village Headman (Gaon Bura) who presides over the village. He plays a significant role in all village activities, festivals and ritual ceremonies.

1.4: OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To study about the socio-economic status of Hajong women.
2. To study about the different problems faced by Hajong women.
3. To study about the ways for improving the socio-economic condition of Hajong women

1.5: DELIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The study is delimited to –

1. Kadom Kakoi Gaon of Boginadi Block near Kakoi river of Lakhimpur district, Assam.
2. Respondents of that area
3. Hajong women only

1.6: METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in one remote Hajong village viz. Kadom Kakoi Gaon, homogeneously inhabited by the Hajong people, Lakhimpur district of Assam. Data was collected through anthropological methods viz. observation, particularly non-participant observation method, interview schedule, household survey methods and informal discussion with Gaon Bura. This study also based on secondary source of data i.e. books, journals, souvenir, internet etc. The collected data was sorted out, analyzed systematically with the help of percentage and frequency distribution.

1.7 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

In the present study the Hajong women are the population. The present study comprises of a sample of 550 Hajong women.

1.8: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1.8.1 Society and the Social Status of Hajong women

i) Social Life

Social life includes:

a) Family Structure

The family structure of respondents was found both Joint and Nuclear family. It is clear from the present study that the most of the families are living in the village in a Joint family. The percentage of Joint family is 92.6% and Nuclear family is 7.40%.

b) House Pattern

The house of a common traditional Hajong villager has a earthen plinth and to thatched roofs on both side. The walls are made of split bamboos and plastered with mud mixed with cowdung. Its family has normally a small house with three to four single rooms. In the present study area we mainly found three types of house- katcha, pucca, mixed.

ii) Food Habit

Rice is the main food habit of the Hajong like other communities of Assam. It is generally taken with vegetables and fish as a favourite item and occasionally with pulses twice a day. The wild edible plants or plant part(s) available in nature, which are taken as cooked vegetables. Rich bear brewed at home is a favourite drink but is taken occasionally.

iii) Dress

The Hajongs have their traditional dresses which are of course not found in varieties. The main dress put on by Hajong women is called as 'PATIN' which is used by them as Mekhela and it covers their bodies from the chest to feet. Patin is woven by women at their traditional loom called BANA where the use of two hands is only necessary. Traditional Hajong women don't use blouse instead of which a home woven cotton scarf with flowery designs called PASRA or ARGUN is used to cover the upper part of the body. Occasionally they use a piece of cloth around the waist is called KAMARBANDH.

iv) Festivals

The Hajong also observe three Bihus like other communities of Assamese society. They call Rangali Bihu as 'SAITA SANGRANI'. On the first day of this festival the cows are bathed and worshipped in the evening. 'LEWA-TANA BIHU' performed by the Hajongs during this festival is an important event. In this bihu two groups of marriageable girls and boys putting on their traditional dress and ornaments. The Hajong also observe Kati Bihu and Magh Bihu which they call KATIGASHA and PUSHNA respectively.

One of the important festivals celebrated by Hajong is known as Chorkhela. During this festival, groups of young boys and girls visit all the houses in the villages by enjoying themselves and play music. They sometimes obtain money and rice for their performance. The monsoon harvest festival known as Bishuwa is also celebrated by Hajong people. A traditional festival is celebrated in honor of the Bastu called as Bastu Puja in the month of Magha. The puzari of this puja is called as Dipsy or Nangtang. In Bastu puja, they celebrate another puja called Shiva puja known as Khetdeo, Lakhmi Puja known as paabni, Gopal puja (Barodeo), Ganesh puja known as yatradeo, Biswakarma Puja, Saraswati

Puja, Anadahara Puja, Domdomi known as Bendeo, Homhomi , Kali puja. The Hajong Tribes also celebrated Durga Puja and Kamakhya puja of Hindu.

v) Marriage system of Hajong Tribe

At present, patriarchy influenced among Hajong society instead of matriarchy. Within Hajong culture, love marriage and widow marriage is allowed but Dowry system is absent among the people of Hajong society. Widow Remarriage among Hajong people is called as Hang'a or Sang'a.

vi) Religion and religious beliefs

The religion professed by the Hajongs can be said to the Hinduism combined with their traditional religious practices. Most of them are Saktas although a few are found to be Vaishnavas also. The Hajong have great faith in religion. Like most of the tribal people of North-East India, the Hajong believed in animistic religion. In recent times, they have faith in Hinduism. They believe in some evil spirits like Machang Deo, Jarang Deo, Bhut, Maila, Zukhini, Daini etc. The Hajong tribe worship different Gods and Goddess like Kali, Durga, Saraswati, Kamakya, Manasa, Basanti and others. Kartik Puja among the Hajongs are known as Katka Puja and Manasa puja is known as Kanideu puja.

Observation:

In the present study, 550 female members of different age from 270 families were taken as a sample and it has been found that in the society they are able to get a good position. They prepared staple food and rice beer and they wore a rich traditional dress. They participated in the different religious festivals more than Hajong men. In religion, their position is equal as like men. Among Hajong society, no dowry system has not been found. In the present day context, Hajong women used LPG for cooking, handling Mobile Phone and they live pucca and mixed houses. They have right to take decision in their societal life.

Due to flood affection, the Hajong people of Kadom Kakoi village faced different problems like Poverty, Education problems of the child, Food Problems, Cattle Problems, Agricultural Problems, Breaking of Shelter, Problems of transportation & communication, Water borne disease problems, Facilities of medical problems, Problems of daily labour more than their primary needs.

1.8.2 : Educational Status of Hajong Women

Education is a process of human resource development. But the educational statuses of Hajong women are not good. The educational status of respondents has been found from

the study that 80% respondents studied up to lower primary, 85% up to upper primary, 50% have HSLC, 20% have HSC, 10% have BA etc. There is no respondent with a higher qualification like PG degree and also the percentage of BA degree holders is too less than it is required in the present society.

The total numbers of six public institutions in the village comprise of one Lower Primary School, one ME School and one High School. It has been clear from this study that total numbers of schools are less and there is no higher secondary level school in the village. Moreover one Siva Temple, one Kali Temple and also one Namghar are there in village.

1.8.3 : Political Status of Hajong Women

Generally, the level of political consciousness of an individual can be measured by his/her involvement in voting. The higher percentage of polling in an election, the higher rate of citizens' political participation would be. The Hajong women in this respect were found high participative. Almost all of Hajong women cast their vote as a right. Most of the respondents viewed that they cast their vote by their own choice but some respondents in case of voting pressurized by their husband and other leaders. A less number of women also follow party politics of recent times. Therefore we can safely say that the Hajong women were found highly participative in political aspects.

1.8.4 : Economic Status of Hajong Women

More or less the Hajongs are found to be settled as cultivators either in their own land or lands given by non-Hajongs on Adhiar system. Both male and female Hajong works in agricultural field like other tribes. They are also expert in making bamboo articles. A considerable number of Hajong 'Ojhas' and 'Kavirajas' has found in Hajong tribes who have been successfully plasticising with herbal medicines since time immemorial.

The Hajong women contributed to the family in the field of economic as like as male. They have participated in the different income generating activities. There are different types of activities undertaken by the respondents. It has been found that majority of them are involved in Agricultural activities, Weaving, Poultry, Daily Wage Labour, and Piggery. Hajong women are economically independent. But the source of income is very limited. At present, the Hajong women have joined many self-help groups and other non-governmental organization for their economic empowerment. Another important aspect of Hajong women in the part of economic empowerment is that they have a personal account in Bank and Post Office which help them in the time of economic crisis. But it has been observed from the study that they were not aware about policy like LIC/ SSA/ SBI Life etc.

1.9 : FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The following findings have been found from the present study:

- i. In social field, the statuses of Hajong women are comparatively good.
- ii. They are equal with male in respect of religious field.
- iii. Dowry system is very limited among Hajong women.
- iv. They actively participated in the festivals, ritual and other functions.
- v. They are politically conscious to cast their vote though sometimes influenced by family, husband and leader.
- vi. They contributed a lot in the field of earning income for family. Most of Hajong women work in different field for earning their livelihood. For example, Weaving, Daily Wage labour, Piggery, Poultry etc.
- vii. The educational statuses of Hajong women are very poor.
- viii. They are not conscious in various government schemes in the field of education, economic and political field.

1.10 : CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION :

The Hajong is a small tribal group of north- east India. From the study it has been found that the socio- economic status of Hajong women of Kadam Kakoi Gaon , Lakhimpur is not so well. The village is remote and almost backward as well as flood affected area. They are not getting better educational facilities and their health condition is not satisfactory.

Therefore, it is necessary for everyone to become aware of the problems created by flood and also other problems. The following suggestions should be taken care of –

- The scattered socio cultural organization of the Hajongs should take the initiative for bringing awareness in the community on education, society, politics, health care and economic development.
- Developing health consciousness through health education.
- Importance to be given on implementation of compulsory primary education in the village.
- Adult educational programmes should be arranged sometimes.
- The community should also need to be politically conscious and know about their rights.
- Mobile library service needs to be provided for literate people.

- Importance should be given on providing opportunities of information and communication technology.
- Transportation facilities should be improved in the village.
- Provide more employability to women.

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