

SOCIO – POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ITS SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF DEORI TRIBES OF ASSAM- A SOCIO- POLITICAL NOTE

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Abstract

Deori is one of the plains scheduled tribes of Assam. The scheduled tribes of Assam are divided into two group viz., hill and plains tribes. Nine (9) ethno- cultural communities have been scheduled as plain tribes by Indian constitutions and Deoris is one of them. Deoris has settled in different places of upper Assam both northern and southern part of Assam. The original abode of the Deori was at Sadiya. At present times the Deoris are found to be inhabited in different places of six Districts of Assam viz., Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh Tinsukia, Jorhat, and Sonitpur. They have their own social system viz., language, culture, family, marriage, religion, economy, education and different Socio-Political organization and these all social institutions are very important for them.

Key Words: *Deori, economy, education, family, institution, language, marriage, religion, tribe.*

Introduction:

The north- eastern part of India in popular as well as in constitutional parlance consists of seven states viz., Assam, Arunachal, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura. Through this area is inhabited by different tribal groups having their distinct structural, culture and linguistic identities. In these seven states there are many tribes and ethnic groups inhabited in both the plains and hills areas of each states, Dubey(1978:1-2). Among these states, Assam is one of the states in north –east region and this state has many tribes and their sub groups spreading over(the Assam) both upper and lower, plains and hills, southern and northern parts of Assam.

Coming to Assam leaving aside the earlier history, as per schedule cast and schedule tribes, as per tribal Amendment Act of 1976 there are nine(9) schedule tribes(plains) and fourteen(14) schedule tribes(hills) were recognized. The schedule tribes (plains) are generally found mostly in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. Plain schedule tribes are namely, Barmans of Cachar, Bodo-Kachari, Mech, Mising, Rabha, Lalung, Deori, SonowalKachari and Hajong of Assam. Among these plains schedule tribes the Deoris are also included as one of the plains scheduled tribal community of Assam. Thus the Deoris are one of the distinctive and major (plains) scheduled tribes of upper Assam on both southern and northern bank of Brahmaputra river.

Deori has settled in different places of upper Assam both southern and northern part of Assam. The original home of the Deoris was at Sadiya and at a latter times due to disturbances caused by the neighboring hills tribes of present Arunachal Pradesh like *Mishimis, Khamitis* and *Singhphos* Bordoloi (1987:23) commented that they moved westward and started spreading their inhabitations in different reverie areas. At present times the Deoris are found to be inhabited in different places of five Districts of Assam viz., Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Jorhat and

Sonitpur. Among the five Districts highest concentration of Deori villages are found in Lakhimpur District of Assam, which is situated in northern part of the river bank of Brahmaputra valley of upper Assam.

Now we have discuss in this article about the ‘Socio-Political organizations’ of the Deori community of Assam, because it is very important to know about the Socio-Political institutions and systems of the Deoris and these are as follows-

1.Village Council:

Village Council is important Socio-Political organization and it is known as ‘*Mel*’, the council of elders and it was among the Deorissince time immemorial. In communities there are mainly two types of Socio-Political institutions. Among them one is priestly council called ‘*Chari Deori*’ and other village headman by the *GaonBurah*. Singh(2003:192) refers that ‘Mel plays an important role in the smooth functioning of welfare works and during their socio religious festivals. But before independence priestly council known as ‘*Pujari Parishad*’ have took and significant role at all village level activities. Village council has settled different social cases, like, social disputes, family disputes, social crimes, criminal cases etc. and village council could give punishment to the criminal persons.

2.Village Headman:

Village headman is one of the chief administrators known as ‘*Gime*’. In past times he was all in all of the village. The village headman of Deoris occupies a significant position and his regarded as chief of the village administrator in contemporary. After independence of India powers and functions were transmitted to the village level and power provided to the *GaonBurah* called village headman and from that time he is chieftainship at the village level who is becoming a powerful and active person among them. The village headman take care every aspect of villagers social as well as corporate life. He is the nucleus around whom all the senior of the village gather for smooth running of the day to day affairs of the village. At the present time the headman is selected by the Government and he is governed under Government rules and regulations. Apart from the village headman priestly council is having importance in the village life of the Deori tribes. It may be mentioned that village headman and priestly council as having importance in managing Deori society. But in certain cases the village headman as a government representative has to solve problems relating to villagers like social disputes, crimes etc. Basically at this level he settles village level disputes, personal crime committed by a villagers etc. In addition to the above stated functions the village headman is a representative of the Government who collects house tax, keeps records of birth and death, keeps total population records, total households, and total areas and communicates the directives of the circle officers to the villagers as stated by Bisth and Bankoti(2004:355). Hence, the headman is a powerful government representative to the village and also an administrative person for the village. Without village headman the villagers do not settle any criminal cases by alone. In addition to these, presently the village headman provides any identification certificates to the villagers and without village headman proof the government officers do not accept or receive any document.

Thus from the above discussion it is clear that the village headman is occupying a significant position among Deories. He is government representative to communicate with any administrative branch of government.

3. Priestly Council (Pujari Parishad):

Priestly Council is another important Socio- Political organization of Deories. There are total twelve (12) Nos. of Priest of the Deori tribes. The name of such Priestly Council consist of *Bordeori* (Chief Priest), *SaruDeori*, *Borbhoral*, *SaruBharali*, *Borah*, *Barik*, *Randhani*(*Cookman*), *Telia*, *Dupia*, *Chakoni or Chakia*, *Pariya*etc. Amongst the member of Priestly Council, there are mainly four Priest and these four Priests they called 'Chari Deori'(Four Priest). They have governed all the Socio- religious and also Socio-Political function of the village. Although, other Priests also takes roles in the performance of Socio- religious functions, yet these four Priests regards as chief religious Priest among them. Priestly council not only engaged in religious activities, but also engaged in administrative activities of the village. In past time the village administrative system was based on Priestly Council and they governed all village level activities, judicial activities, social crime, social disputes and other different criminal cases also settled by the Priestly Council. Primarily Deori (2005:47) states that 'duties and responsibilities of *Chari Deori* (main priestly Council) related to the settlement of disputes of the villagers and all complains have to be field before the '*Bordeori*' (Main Priest) who is regarded as the chief of the Priestly Council'.

4. Youth Dormitory:

Youth Dormitory is one of the outstanding Socio- Political organizations of Deoris. In Deori language youth dormitory is called '*AlengAchcho*'. It is a youth organization of Deoris. It is a traditional and major youth organization of the Deoris in past. Youth dormitory was powerful an important youth organization of Deori community. Youth Dormitory performed some defense and other village administrative work. Youth dormitory controlled both social and political behavior, discuss different kinds of problems of the village, protection from outsider enemy or invaders etc. Thus it was understood that youth dormitory was also the most important socio political organization of the Deori village which performed various function as in the village in the past and present.

5. Community Level Organizations:

There are many community level organizations of the Deori community. These are most important for them. Among these organizations, *All Assam Deori Sanmilan* (1936), *Pujari Sanmilan*, known as *Jimo Chaya Pomiya Chengchcha*, *Deori Sahitya Sabha* known as *Deori Chchu Chcheba Chchengchcha* (1965). It is a major Socio- Political organization of Deori community. *Deori Sangram Somittee* is another active Socio- Political organization of Deoris. *All Assam Deori Student Union* is one of the important organization of Deori tribes which is established in the year of 1959 and also a National level as well as community level organization. The another Socio- Political organization is found namely *All India Deori Student Association* of the Deoris. All the above community and Socio- Political organization has placed several demands since its inception for there ethlic identity and development of their community.

6. Deori Autonomous Council:

Deori Autonomous Council is a new Political organization of Deori community. Deori Autonomous Council was granted as a result of constant demand and pressure since 1982 by different Deori organization viz., *All Assam Deori Student Union* and other Deori organizations. The government of Assam by memorandum of settlement known as Deori record with had given

certain executive and legislative power in Deori dominated regions covering the Deoris of Assam by the Hon'ble Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi of Assam recognition as Deori autonomous council. Deori autonomous has provides different facilities and opportunities to the Deoris and they under taken different development scheme. In case of Deoris, Deori autonomous council was given due to impact of Political ideology, democratic ideology and feelings of tribal development are emerging among them and that is why they are being conscious about their community problems and they are trying solve the same and to improve themselves in every walks of life.

Summary and Conclusion:-

From the above discussion it is clear that we have found different forms of Socio- Political organization as well as community level organizations by which all aspects governed to the Deori community. There are many Socio- Political organizations viz., village level, regional level, State level and National level and they governed all aspect as of their community life. These are maintained of the traditional Social systems. But due to new Political organization and system have emerged and changes are noticed among the Deoris and such changes are remarkable change in the History of Deori of Assam. The influence of such type of new community level organizations and system completely visible among the Deori community. But Deoris are maintaining the traditional of priestly council, village headman, youth, dormitory and as such they are maintaining their tradition since past to present

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