



The Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (TJMDR)

Content Available at www.saap.org.in

Online ISSN: 2583-0317



Research Article

Open Access

Discourse analysis of cultural assimilation and composition of assamese muslim society special reference to sivasagar district

Masumma Zaman

Research Scholar, Dibrugarh University, Assam, India

Article History: Received: 11 June, 2021 Revised: 27 July, 2021 Accepted: 30 August, 2021

Abstract

This work is about the cultural elements assimilated within Islamic community and aboriginal ethnic community of Brahmaputra Valley. The cultural elements are including language, literature, women, beliefs and ideologies, customs and traditions. Muslims who come to this valley married to local women is rare to and historians were assimilation Assamese Society. It also deals with the assemblage of Muslim community in Assam and how they adopted the customs, traditions and culture of the Brahmaputra Valley and established an intermixed culture.

Key words: Proselytization, Encompass, Filibustering, Anchylose, Conjecture, Arsenal.

Corresponding Author

Masumma Zaman

Email: sujaan90@gmail.com



How to Cite

Zaman, M. (2021). Discourse analysis of cultural assimilation and composition of assamese muslim society special reference to sivasagar district. *The Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(1), 23-27. <https://doi.org/10.37022/tjmdr.v1i1.231>

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International license.

Copyright © 2021 Author(s) retain the copyright of this article.



Introduction and Historical Background

Muslims were first come into contact with Brahmaputra valley in 1206 A.D. during the invasion led by Bakhtiar ibn Khilji. After this, another some invasions led by Muslims during the rule of Muslim rulers in India and it open the way for Muslims to come to Assam [1]. Gradually the Muslims stayed in this valley permanently. The number of Muslims also increased with every successive attack on this region during the reign of the Mughal rulers in India. One of the descendents of Muslim known as Gandhela Goria later took a prominent part in 1665 in repeating attack on the Ahoms [2]. Some of the them had also acquired the confidence of the Ahom kings and were given titles of officials such as 'Phukan', 'Barua', 'Saikia', 'Bora', 'Hazarika', 'Khanikar' etc. The conflict between Muslim India and Assam, ultimately settled down here by marrying local women thus a new chapter on the status of such women can be said to have started since then [1]. These local women had their own cultural and religious background and after marrying the Mughal soldiers they had to accept the Muslim customs and thus a mixture of both cultures influenced their status in the family as well as in the society. Major impact of the Muslims could be seen in the social life of Assam. The Assam aristocracy under Ahom-Koch rulers was much influenced by

the Mughal food habit dress and other aspects of culture. Thus, the later part of 17th century and after many items of men wears such as shoes, head dress, clothing for both men and women were developed imitation of the Mughal nobility. Items of food, such as ghee, various kinds of spices, dal, potato, pulao etc. popular in the society. A considerable number among these Muslims married Assamese women and along with them, some aboriginal Hindus become Muslim by proselytization. They accept Assamese, language, literature and culture and they have assimilated into the Assamese society. In a sense, Azan pir may be described as an embodiment of the assimilation of the people of Assam. Srimanta Sankardeva with his religious and socio-cultural reformations assimilated and integrated the different sects of Hinduism into the main stream of Vaishnavism and thus bestowed upon the Assamese people a definite identity. In the same way, Azan Pir anchylose Islamic ideas into Assamese culture and tradition and likewise, he brought the people of different communities nearer to each other [1]. Such assimilations infused in the minds of the Assamese people. An attitude of religious tolerance and communal harmony is praiseworthy. Assam was the cradle of a number of major and minor religions and Assamese people were accustomed to various religious sects or communities. Islam was just another

religious group to these people and they did not mind its co-existence with other religions [2]. By this way Assamese Muslims continue their life after life in Assam and acquainted a fusion way of life. However, this cultural assimilation was affected after the advent of the British. There divide and rule policy gradually started a negative attitude among the people of Assamese society and it led to a gradual change.

Methodology

The methodology is an important part of social research. Primary as well as secondary sources are undertaken for this research purpose. In some cases Quran and Hadid were taken as a source to convey the basic ideas of islam.

The work is based on following methodologies.

- Field Work
- Interviews
- Content Analysis

Field work

The field work will be undertaken to collect the information of social as well as domestic life of women in Sivasagar and various culture prevalent among the women of Sivasagar. Observation is also made during the present time.

Verbal Interview and Written Schedule

Verbal interview and a written schedule had been prepared by interviewing some elderly ladies and written schedule had been given to some literate and cultured personalities of Sivasagar and the other parts of Assam to explore the view on the issue of changes and for the purpose of this research. In order to examine the gradual change of Assamese Muslim women social life an extensive interview was constructed researcher.

Content Analysis

Source materials preserved in the different libraries and institutions have been consulted. Articles, reports which were related to Islamic religion, Muslim society and Assamese Muslim society have also been analysed.

Area of the Study

The present study is proposed to be confined to the Sivasagar districts of Assam which was formerly known as Sibsagar. The study area covers both present Sivasagar district and erstwhile Sivasagar district. The erstwhile Sivasagar district comprised three subdivisions namely- Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat. The Britishers created Sivasagar district after the annexation of Assam during the reign of Purandar Singha in 1839. British rule brought a major administrative set up like formation of districts. The Sadar headquarter of Sivasagar was at Jorhat during 1912-13. In the year 1983, the undivided Sivasagar district was divided and Jorhat district was formed. In the year, 1987 Golaghat district was also separated from Sivasagar district. The last part of the study is mostly confined in the highly Muslim populated area of present Sivasagar district like Hatikukh, Amguri, Na-Ali, Darbar Road, Dhai-Ali, Boniyabari, Jengonikotiya, Mornoikinar, Kukurapuhiya, Disang Majgaon, Ghilaguri, kardoiguri, Babupatty, Mechagarh, Hingha Duwar, Nazira, Naumati, Galeki, Santok,

Sengelibari, Namti Char Ali, Mezenga, Misajaan, Samoguri etc.

Composition of Muslims in Sivasagar

Unity amidst the diversity is one of the chief features of the Assamese society. The society is an intermixed of various culture of different communities. The Muslims of Assam have been playing a very significant and positive role in the formation and development of the Assamese society. They first came to Assam in 1206 A.D. during Muhammad ibn Bakhtiar Khilji's the invasion. With the passage of time, they stayed in Assam permanently. They adopted Assamese customs, traditions, language, behaviour etc. So Sihabuddin Talish mentions in his *Fatiha-i-Ibria* that "The local Muslim in Assam are nothing of Islam except the name. They adopted manners and customs of Assam people" [2]. Since 12th century, this community has evolved gradually over a very long stretch of time. However, the history of the origin, growth and development of the Muslims of Assam can be attributed to four different major development.

1. Various Muslim Invasion.
2. Propagation and Conversion.
3. Invitation to Muslim Artisans and Learned men by the Ahom rulers.
And
4. Immigration.

After a few years of conquering North Bengal and West Bengal (Nadiyah) in 1198 AD Muhammad ibn Bakhtiyar Khilji set out on a filibustering expedition to the North and invade Kamrupa with a view to conquer Tibet, [2] and on this was actually the first Muslim invasion of Assam. But he was defeated and most of his soldiers lost their lives due to unfavourable circumstances. H.C Ray and N.K Bhattasali also hold that the campaign led by Muhammad Bakhtiyar in 1202 A.D. to Tibet was annihilated in Assam [3]. This victorious incident was inscribed on a rock, known as '*Kanai Barasi Buwa Sila Lipi*', found in North Guwahati. Although Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji was defeated severely and most of his soldiers died, it can be conjectured from the fact that some of the Muslims who survived preferred to stay in Assam instead of going back with their defeat general [3]. They may be regarded as the first batch of Muslim settlers who decided to stay in Assameven the advent of the Ahoms to this land. In this regard the name of 'Ali Mech, a Local chief of Kamrupa who guided Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji in his expedition is very significant [3]. It indicates that from this time or even much earlier to it, the Muslims had established contact with Assam and considerable section had accepted this region as their homeland. It has been stated that the Muslim religious preachers like *pir, fakir, ulema, darvesh* etc came to Assam much earlier i.e. between 11th and 12th centuries. Although the Muslims of Assam did not identify with caste, they had caste-like divisions based on family ancestry e.g. Syed, Shiekh, Gariya and Moriya. Syed s claim that they were descendants from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Sheikh and Gariya was formed by the descendants of invading Muslim soldiers who married local Assamese girls, some of whose relatives also converted to Assam. Moriyas are descended from the captured Muslim soldiers who came with armies of

Khilji 1206 and Turbak of Gaur (1532). They were engaged with bell metal works. In the conceptualizing hierarchy one can take the position of the Syeds as the highest ranks. The Gariyas and the Assamese Shiekh Muslims themselves next to the Syeds followed in that order by the Uzanis and the Bhatiyas and the remaining caste-like groups of lower stratum. The Gariyas are considered as indigenous Muslims and claim superiority to the Uzanis and Bhatiyas with regard to hierarchy. The Muslim who stayed in Assam permanently and married to local Assamese indigenous Muslim claim that women were among the responsible for assimilation and perlocation of local folk culture. The Muslim of Assam not only practiced some of the local (Non-Muslim) customs and usage but also respect local saints and heroes prominent in local myth and superstitions. They had observed local festivals and participated non-Islamic ceremonies as well. One gets a vivid picture from various sources including the accounts written by historian about the Muslims Of Assam regarding their association with many local festivals ceremonies [3]. Azan Pir the Sufi saints who came to Assam in about 17th century came to realize that the local Muslim didn't know the genuine course of Islamic life. The overall political, social, economic, religious and cultural conditions of Assam during the Ahom rule were favourable for the spread of Islam and the settlement of the Muslims in Assam. The Muslim preachers were patronized in many ways by the Ahom rulers to engage in the missionary work to propagate Islamic faith in Assam [2]. In the beginning, the converted Muslims had the freedom to practice their original customs and practices but in course of time these converts started follow the Islamic doctrines, ceremonies and rituals [4]. In the administrative enumerations of 1891, some converted Muslims of Assam were labeled as the Koch caste among the Hindus. This was because in spite of their newly adopted faith, they still retained many non-Islamic customs and practices. Hunter refers to these people as Musalman Koch [11].

A large number of Muslim artisans and learned men were brought by the Ahoms rulers and were appointed in various departments of the state during the medieval period. These Muslims were mainly employed in the professions in which possessed special skill, like- embroidery, engraving, wood carving, cannon-casting, sword-making and similar fine works. Muslim artisans and craftsmen were incorporated in the *Khanikar Khel* or the guild of artisans under the superintendant known as Khanikar Barua. Musfika Zaman daughter-in-law of Fatima Zaman is belongs to Khanikar Barua family .At present, they live in Rajoi of Jorhat District [4]. A large number of muslims live in Sivasagar. Muslim constitutes second largest religious in Sivasagar. The ancestors of Ajjur Rahman (first Muslim graduate from Nazira) were Kaivarta [4]. Likewise Rupahi da –Dhara during the reign of Pratap Singha, was ancestor of Moyidul Islam Bora [4]. Juggeswar sardar Bora Kerken Bora, Fulkonwor Bora are Family lineage of Moyidul Islam Bora .Wherease Daula familywere appointed by the Ahom king to perform nagara a special kind of drum during some Hindu religious festivals at the campuses Joy Dol and Shiva Dol.

Historical Sources provide us some information about the influential high position acquired by the Assamese Muslims. The Accounts of Rupai Goriya, A Muslim officer of the royal arsenal of the Ahom king , the glorious career of Bagh Hazarika, the Muslim Captain under the Ahom general Lachit Barphukan etc. Here we would like to place example: Shah Hussain Khan RamjanKhan held the post of Hilaidari Barua or the officer commending in the artillery forces of Ahom army. At present some descendent of Hilaidar Barua family are living in in Sivasagar Meteka-Amguri and Na-Ali. Even today there are large number of Assamese Muslim in Sivasagar, who like the other section of the people of the state, use the surnames Barua, Hazarika, Saikia, Bora Borbara etc, which signify that their forefathers were holding these high offices in the Ahom Government.

Finding Shows the Result of Cultural Assimilation

Assamese Muslims not only practice some local (non-Muslim) customs and usage, but also respected local saints and heroes prominent in local myths and superstitions. They observed local festivals and participated in some non-Islamic ceremonies as well. Muslims of Sivasagar performed un-Islamic rituals due to cultural assimilation. *Rati Hewa* function was one of the very important function performed by the assamese Muslims of Sivasagar , which is non-Islamic ritual. Kordoiguri, Jengonikotiya, Gargaon , Jutuliting near Bokota Nemuguri ,Patsaku, Bhadhora etc were the places of Sivasagar where several Muslim peoples were worshipers of *Thekeraphulia Rati Hewa fuction*. Few years ago, this function was prevalent among the Assamese Muslim of Jutuliting in the form of *Jaar Phuk*. At present this function is rarely prevalent among the Assamese Muslims of Sivasagar. The Muslims with various rites,customs and rituals celebrate Bihu, the Folk Festival of Assam. Bohag is first month of the Assamese calender. The ancestors of Muslims after having been associated with the Assamese agricultural system adopted Assamese customs of celebrating Bihu [4]. In the morning ,the villagers' give a bath to their cattle in the nearby river or pond, and the same time, beat with *dighalati pat*.After the ceremonial bath, they come back and eat seven kinds of *tita* (bitter) this customs have become extinct among Assamese Muslims of Sivasagar. In the first day of Bohag Bihu every women of Assam irrespective of Hindu and Muslim family prepare the recipe the of *Akho Atiya Hakor Khar*, which is still prevalent among the Assamese Muslim of Sivasagar. In the second day every Assamese Muslim women put *jetuka* on their hand as Assamese Hindu women do for prevention from some diseases like pox and *Kumotia* (a type of skin diseases).

However, now a few people follow it. The Muslims of Sivasagar also observed *Bohagar Dimahi*. *The Magh Bihu* or *Bhogali Bihu* is highly celebrated by Assamese by making various food items.on the previous day of the Bihu, *a meji* or *young boys and cowherds make bhela ghar* (a house type stack bamboo) made. In this evening in each household special dinner is prepared. The boys generally spend the night besides *Bhela ghar*, and at the eve of dawn, they take bath in a nearby river or pond after bath return quickly and set fire on the *bhela ghar*. These functions are not allowed to attend by

the girls. In the morning of the Magh Bihu as a breakfast all the member of the house hold at various types of *pithas* and *doi sira* with full satisfaction. In fact, everyone is entitled to eat with pleasure whether invited or not. In the Kati Bihu Muslim peasant families put Saki (oil lamp made by clay) in the farming field. However, at present this rarely prevalent among the Muslims of Sivasagar.

Muslims adopted the customs related to childbirth, death, and upbringing of female, puberty celebration of girls etc.. Azan Pir utilized aboriginal songs, customs, culture and tradition to attracting the minds and to spread or disseminate the religious knowledge . It was the beginning of the *Zikir*, which is recognized as one of the precious of Assamese of culture. Azan Pir did not stick to the Arabic Quran or Hadith for conveying the message of Islam to the non-literate people of his time, but caught hold of opportunity for fulfilling his mission through the favourable local conditions of that period. Having well acquainted with Islamic education, the Muslims of Sivasagar are familiar with Zari. The Zari or Morsias are composed by the Muslims of Assam long before the advent of Azan Fakir. The *Zari* or *Morsias* are sung or performed on the Arabic month *Mohoram*. These related with the tragic happenings of *karbala*. The tradition of offering *sharbat* after the end *Zari's* is prevailing in some villages of Sivasagar district. Similarly, some people of this district offer some special kind of Muslim dishes such as *Halwa, sewai, pulao, Haniki Pithar malita*, in the last day of *Mohoram*. The functions like *Tin Diniya, Doh Diniya, Bosorekiya* after the death of a person was observed by the Assamese Muslim which was part of un-Islamic culture adopted by the Muslims of Sivasagar. The food habits of Assamese Muslims are almost same with the Assamese Hindus. Muslims are non-vegetarian. In case of non-veg except, turtle and pork, locally found most food items were eaten by Assamese Muslim. *Doi, Sira, Muri, Murir lado, Akhoi, Handoh, Gutkorai, Dewabhoja, Pithaguri, Kumal Sawal, Til Pitha, Khulasoporiy Pitha, Tekeli Pitha, Fetha Pitha, Jokai Pitha, Nangol Pitha, Sunga Pitha* etc. were taken as a food with great satisfaction. Besides it *Kasundi, Kharali, Patot Diya Maas, Pani Tenga, Khorisa, Posola Tenga Torkari, Kosujola, hukoti* etc. are the favourite food items of Assamese Muslims taken with rice. This led to make significant impact in Assamese culture.

Conclusion

The study shows cultural assimilation in every walks of Assamese life which is clearly indicate in language, art, architecture, dresses even in food habits. Difference could not be found between the Assamese Hindus and Muslims. In the cultural and social spectrum, no difference was seen as regards to the Hindus. Later on with the emergence of new context of identity several elements come out like spreading religious identity, perception etc. From few decades a major trend of change can be noticed among Muslims of Sivasagar in case of food dress code etc. Some people adopted Modern culture from the last decades and at the same time some people are becoming more religious. On the other hand, some people resonded to the popular trend of Islamic fundamentalism that was resulted in the emergence of the question of identity and they try to establish themselves as a

separate section of the society. However, except those few people who want a separate identity, a large section of Muslims like to identify themselves more as Assamese than as Musli.

Funding

No Funding

Conflict of In Intrest

Athor Decleres no conflict of intrest.

Acknowledgement

This work would not have been completed without the constant support and guidance of certain well wishers. At the outset, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr, Bipul Chaudhury, Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, Dibrugarh University for his help as well as suggestions. I am also grateful to other faculty members of Dept. of History, Dibrugarh University. I must aknowledge my gratitude to some prominent persons like Eli Ahmed, Syed Hakikur Rahman, Monirul Islam Bora. My special thanks goes to Muzammil Islam a local reporter of sivasagar for his constant support and helping me in collecting sources. I would also like to thank my mother in law Hewali Begum, my father in law Nazim Ahmed, my brother in law Muttaqui Hussain, my uncle Zakir Ahmed, Musfika Zaman aunty, my cousin sister Simi Zaman and my brother Minhaz Zaman for their timely help and support. Last not the least, I am grateful to my husband Masoom Ahmed and my parents Nurun Nahar Ahmed and Yusuf Zaman, other family members and friends whose constant encouragement inspired me.

References

1. Lihiri Banat Saragar Mukuta, edited by Daliluddin Khan, Sivasagar, 2006. P-62
2. Dev, Dr Bimal J and Lahiri, Dr Dilip K: Assam Muslims Politics and Cohession, Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1985.
3. Kasim Ali Ahmed: The Muslims of Assam, Eastern Book Hhouse Publishers (India), Guwahati, 2010. P-10.
4. Saragurir Ajan –an annual publication containing essays on the life, works, and teachings of Hajarat Ajaan Peer, edited by M. Imran Hussain and Md. Sofikur Rahman,, Parisalana Sammittee, Hajrat Ajaan Peer Dargah, 2008 . p-38.
5. Opcit. The Muslims Of Assam. P-46.
6. S.I. Baruah, A comperhensive History OF Assam, Mushiram manoharlal Pvt.Ltd, 1985. P-416 And H.K. Borpujari, The Comperhensive History Of Assam. Vol iii, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, 2007.p-177.
7. E. Gait, A History of Assam, 3rd Edn 11963. p-37 and G.H. Salim, Riyaz- us- Salatin(tr Abdus Salam), Delhi 1903. Pp 65-68.
8. Kasim Ali Ahmed: The Muslim of Assam, op.cit, pp 5-6.

9. B.M.Das, The People of Assam:Their Ethnic Composition. Guwahati, n 1985, p-7.
10. G.H. Salim:op.cit, p-31.
11. Haliram Dhekiyal Phukan: Assam Buranji, p-90,Gunabhiram Barua: Assam Buranji, p-200 And W.W.Hunter: A Satatistical Account of Assam, Vol-I, p-39.
12. Irsad Ali: “Influence of Indigenous Folk Tradition on The Assamese Muslims” The Assam Academy Review , Vol.2 1984-85, edited by DR.B. Datta, P-18.
13. Gopal, Ram: Indian Muslims: A Political History, 1959, p-10.
14. W.W.Hunter. op.cit, p-31.
15. Personal Interview with Musfika Zaman, 19th November 2015.
16. Oral Interview with Rimi Rahman Hazarika daughter in law of Ajijur Rahman.
17. Monirul Islam Bora, Bilator Pora Doctoret Butala Prathamjan Asomiya, Dibrugarh,2010, p-1