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TIBETAN AND BORO PEOPLE OF ASSAM: AN ETHNIC AND CULTURAL RELATION

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Abstract:

The relationship between the Tibetan and Boro community of Assam is an ancient and can be traced back into history with long-standing of an ethnically and culturally connections between the two. Tibetan has always been in close connection with the Boro people, a resident of Assam. The Tibeto-Burman people are predominant in whole North-Eastern Region of India. The Boro community are one of the sections of the Tibeto-Burman family. They are belonging to the same race which shows a huge gap among them. The traditional skills like ethnic food-costumes, ornaments, handicrafts, travel and restaurant business etc. are the major sources for both the Tibetan and the Boro people. Religion and festivals are their strong religious background. This is because of the overwhelming influence of religious culture upon Tibet and its people in the course of history over the ages, and since Buddhism was brought to Tibet from India by its past history. Both the Tibetan and Boro people are struggling a separate identity to preserve their culture and ethnicity.

Key Words: Ethnicity, Brahma, Boro, Burmese, Baisagu, Bagurumba, Domasi, Kherai, Sijou, Bathou, Exile, Losar, Chang.

Introduction:

Ethnicity has been defined in a number of ways as its grasp ranges from sociology, anthropology and international relations. It is a study of the common origins of a group and their shared values developed with time. The Tibetan and Boro people have the history of the same ethnicity. The Boros are said to be the earliest settlers of Assam. The Boro people are a group of Tibetan-Burma branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. The Central Asian region must have been the original home of the Boro and Tibetan people. They are the descendants of the Mongoloid race who were generally inhabitants of Assam in north of the Himalayas and West of China. With the passage of time, they migrated to the Brahmaputra Valley and settled all over the Assam. They started demanding a separate state called Boroland in Assam within the Indian territories. Trade, commerce, industry etc. is the major source of both the communities. Kalicharan Brahma's religious movement brought social reforms and contributed a lot in the spread of religion, education, trade and commerce among the Boros. Both the Tibetan and Boro communities have been very awareness in the protection of their culture and identity. During 1959, when China invaded Tibet since then, some Tibetan people have been settled from Tibet to India. They were forced by the Chinese people to assimilate with them in their homeland and forced into exile from their region.

Ethnic Relations of Tibetan and Boro Community

According to A. D. Smith, "Ethnicity is based on the principles of a different group name in order to be recognized as outsiders and members; a shared faith in common descent and origin, the existence of ancient memories between group members, a unique shared culture, association with a specific region or state; and a sense of common harmony and common belief system. Ethnicity denotes the unity and common identity of the group members. An ethnic group or a community has a common culture, common history, common religion and identity as a group. Several ethnic groups (minorities) mostly live in the territory of a nation-state along with a majority ethnic group or majority nationality" (Ghai 2005: 391).

In relation to studying Tibetan identity in the People's Republic of China, Institutional approach bears huge influence in shaping of Tibetan 'ethnic' identity. On this perspective, state and its institutions play a dominant role in shaping of ethnic identity and how ethnicity is governed. As Ben Hillman argues:



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Ethnicity becomes institutionalized, or ‘sticky,’ in official discourses about identity, and in the institutions through which ethnic difference is managed, including through systems of regional autonomy, elections and political parties (Desal 2019: 116).

Tibet is located between the two most populous nations on earth: India and China. According to a ground breaking 2014 study published by the University of Chicago and Case Western Reserve University, the Tibetans settled on the Tibetan plateau some 30,000 years ago. The study concluded that a particular gene inherited from a certain cousin of Neanderthals, known as Denisovans, helped the Tibetans adapt to high-altitude life, allowing them to survive in a harsh environment where others would have perished (Mathur 2012: 1).

Tibet, the highest place on earth, is among least populated areas of China. It is currently the autonomous region of China. Tibet is also as the “Forbidden Land”. It has rich history and cultures that can witness through Buddhism in the area. Tibet came under the influence of many kings, priest, and dynasties. The Land of mountains, The Hermit Kingdom, monasteries and Monks, The Land of Women, Dogs and Dirt, the country of the great unwashed, The Roof of the World, etc., almost expressive of the land. In spite of this living on the Roof of the World, Tibet is a place of incredible for everyone as it has some real surprises for the travelers. As it may be the Cynic will say that the Tibet have advantages of being cut out from the society, it covered by the highest mountains of the world, which is shared with India on south Mongolia and China on the northeast and the east, Eastern Turkistan on the North, and Nepal and Kashmir on the west. Most of the significant sources of rivers are the origin of the entire earth’s surface in the Hermit Kingdom of Tibet. The Tsangpo river which also flows from west to east area of the country emerging in Assam which is known as the Brahmaputra River (Hedin 1988: 57).

Tibet is an ancient region covering much of the Tibetan plateau in Central Asia which is the top region on Earth, with an average elevation of 4,900 meters. The Mount Everest is the oldest height in Tibet which is Earth’s highest mountain growing 8,848 m (29,029 ft) beyond sea level. There are some other ethnic groups with the native Tibetan people. Tibetan identity historically has been indicated by various legends like Chiang, Mon, and Indo-European who are migrating from the north. The Tibetan mythological says that six tribes were the fundamental sources of the area of the eastern and southeastern of the Tibetan plateau is close to them (Srivastava 2009: 62).

There is no exact meaning to define a ‘people’ in the abstract, the Tibetans are without question a people by any meaningful standard:

The Tibetan people meet all the relevant tests of peoplehood. Tibetans are a distinct racial or ethnic group. Their language Tibetan, is a Tibeto-Burmese language distinct from the Indian and Chinese languages and dialects. Tibetans are bound by their religion (Tibetan Buddhism) which is inextricably linked to the people’s cultural, social and historic development. The Tibetans have a unique culture, passed down and developed through many thousands of years of separate and distinct history as expressed in the development of Tibetan fine art, literature, architecture, dress, dance, drama, medicine and the way of life. They have an identifiable territory, a geographically and geologically distinct from China (Dulaney, A. G. et al. 2017: 49).

There are several different explanations for how the name Tibet (pronounced ‘Bo’ in Tibetan) arose. Since the Bönpos spread Shenrap’s Bon religion in the Land of Tibet, it is said that the name of the religion was applied to the country, that is, through a corruption of the word Bon, it came to be called Bö (bod). But several other sources say:

Drigum Tsenpo’s son, Jatri Tsenpo was invited from the Land of Kongpo; his mother said, “If my son is the son of Drigum, then let the Tibetan government become stable”. When she said this, a voice from the sky proclaimed, “This son of yours will become victorious throughout this region”. Thus, not understanding what had been called out, Tibetans applied the supposed name of the king Puté Gungyel (pu te gung rgyel) to the country; “Purgyel” (pur rgyal) became ‘Bö’ (bod) (Shakabpa 2010: 5).



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The word ‘Bodo’ was first applied by B.H. Hodgson to a group of languages, which was confirmed by G.A. Grearson in his book ‘Linguistic survey of India’. The term ‘Bodo’ is related to all the Tibeto-Burman (Bodo) speaking groups of Sino Tibetan origin. Rajmohan Nath describes “Inhabitants of various parts of the Bod (Tibet) country were known as Bodo – Ficha or Bodo – cha (Ficha-Cha-Children) or the children of the Bod region, and were later known simply as the Boddo or the Bodo”. Thus Boddo > Boddo > Bodo is believed to have been derived from the name of ‘Bod’. According to scholars, the word ‘Bodo’ originated in Tibet. “In the Pre-Budhistic period, the land or country westwards of China and North-East of the Himalaya was known as ‘Bod’. Some parts of the Bod were named after the different groups of the Bod-people as Har-Bod, Kur-Bod, Bsti-Bod etc. The Bsti-Bod, the southern part of the great Bod (Homeland), was inhabited by the Bsti (Buddhist Lamas) and the part was later named after the name of the inhabiting people, i.e., Bsti (Buddhist Lamas) and Bod (country) which has now been transformed into Tibbot or Tibet. Hence the word ‘Bodo’ means its original national name Bod (As it was pronounced in the 7th Century A.D.)”. The view of historians concerning the advent of the different groups of the ancient Mongolians may not be acceptable in all cases because though the greater part migrated via Tibet, it is quite possible that some Mongolian groups migrated to India through Thailand or by the ocean (Mondal 2011: 8).

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It is believed that Central Asia must have been the original home of the Boro people. S.K. Chatterjee states that the places in the north of China in between the main waters of the Huang-Ho and the Yang-tzse Kiyang rivers were the original home of the Mongolian people from where they moved and dispersed in different directions. One of the groups of the Mongolian families moved into Tibet. It may be noted that the old name of Tibet was Ti-bod. It is presumed that the Mongolians who lived in Ti-bod were known as Bod, which later known as Boro”. In this context, S. Endle said “the Mongoloid features and general appearance of the seems to suggest that Tibet and China the two Trans-Himalayan countries to be the original homes of race”. The Imperial Gazatteer of Indian States “the upper courses of the Yyang-tzse Kiyang and the Huang-ho Rivers in the North-West China were the original home of the Tibeto-Burman race”. In this context, Ajay Roy writes that some physiognomic and temperamental similarity can be observed between the Boros and the present Kham Tribes of Tibet. The Boro people were originally warlike and ferocious in nature as the Kham Tibetans are the same in nature. Thus, on the above views it can be said that Tibet and China were the original homes of the Boro community from where they had migrated to India (Sonowal 2013: 26).

Tibetan were settled on the edge of the Central Tibet and some of them choose as an agriculturalist and others are pastoral nomadism for their daily life. Tibetan mythology says that the Mon were native people of the central area of Tibet who considered the Qiang as the foreigner. The population of Assam and Burma are very carefully related to the Mon people. However, it is known that they are the earlier residence of Himalayan edge, so it is possible that they are covering the area of southeastern and southern Tibetan plateau. In some history, it described that Mon narrated carpenters and smiths who served the name of Qiang knows artisans. The ethnic identity of the plateau also has relatively modern migrations of peoples of Mongolian ethnicity. The Tibetan mythological says that the six tribes were the primary fundamental sources of Tibetan identity, namely the Don, IDon, Ton, Soon, Se, Mu or Rum. The Se, Ton, Don, and Mu are their ethnic associates with very nomadic hunter-gatherers in character. The Don, Ton Se and Mu were the ethnic groups who migrated into the area of the eastern and southeastern of the Tibetan plateau whose identities have become similarity in nature with Tibetans (Warren 2008: 8, 82).



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In Tibet, the idea that the first Tibetan descended from Indian origin was initially given by an Indian scholar Sherab Gocha. In his work ‘Devatishyastotra’ – translated into Tibetan in the 11th century AD – he stated that an Indian King Rupati, having suffered defeat in a battle had garbed himself into female attires and fled to Tibet. Later on, his descendants formed the earliest ancestors of the present-day Tibetans. According to some Indian scholars, the incident of Rupati’s escape to Tibet was a part of the battle of Mahabharata. Historians like Buton Rinchen Dhondup after the 11th century started to maintain Sherab Gocha’s statement as the true account on the origin of Tibetans. The culture of Tibet is a glowing example of how the stream of Indian consciousness crossed the Himalayan frontiers and flowed into far-off lands, transforming them body, mind and soul into an eternity of love, peace and compassion through a community of ideals and institutions (DIIR 2018: 3, 26).

The Boros are said to be the earliest settlers of Assam. They had migrated to India from their original habitat during the pre-historic era. E. has said that they are the earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. They occupied the plains of Assam for a very long time and constituted the bulk of the population in Assam valley during the time of the Mahabharata war or even earlier than that (Sonowal 2013: 2).

The Tibetans are of medium height, of fair complexion, not without an olive hue. They are rather well built and simple of face and their beards do not grow. Their memory is good and they are clever, kind and courteous by nature good craftsmen and active (Filippi 1995: 87).

The Boro people of Assam are characteristically Mongoloid in physical features. They are migrated from Tibet. It is said that during Mahabharata time, the Boro people constituted the bulk of the population of Assam Valley, Northern and Eastern Bengal and surrounding Hills areas. B.N. Bordoloi mentioned that according to K.L. Borna, the Kacharis, Koachas, Ravas, Machas, Mikirs, Lalungas, Garos, Nagas, Kukies and the Chutiyas are the present-day representative of the Indo-Mongolian tribes speaking Boro languages. There is saying that Kacharis are closely allied to Koches. With the passage of time, they migrated to the Brahmaputra valley and lived there till the 3rd century. During the time they came to be known as ‘Dimasas’ which means ‘children of Great River’. In Boros the Brahmaputra River is called the ‘Burlungbutur’. Earlier the ‘Dhimasa’ came to be known as ‘Kacharis’ established their capital at Maibong and ruled over there 200 years (Roy and Banerjee 2010: 52, 61).

The indigenous people of the Bhutan mostly in the part east of the black highlands (called in general Sharchops) which are believed to be the earliest major residents for the time being in Bhutan. Of Indo-Mongoloid origin, they seem to be closely related to inhabitants of north-east India and northern Burma. The linguistic structure of the people in the eastern region is more diverse and complex, with the inhabitants speaking a number of dialects. Also, a certain degree of distinctiveness in dress, food as well as festivals, can be discerned between the people of the eastern and western region (Phadnis 1990: 39-40).

According to the historians, the Boro people a Mongolian race ruled the north-eastern regions of India for 4000 years. In the opinion of G.A. Grearson, “the Mech ruled for four thousand years and began to decline from the eleventh century”. It is said that the Boro people migrated into India through the Patkai Hills between India and Burma. Later they settle in Assam, Bengal, Nepal, etc. Kachari is also another name of the Boro. They were the earliest inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. In ancient times the Mongolian Kirata races enlarged and expanded their living space all the way to Punjab in the west. According to the linguist scholar Dr. S.K. Chatterjee, “Ancient Assam and its eastern frontiers were adjacent to the south-eastern China and the Kirata country comprised Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, Manipur and adjacent areas of these vast tracts of North-East India” (Mondal 2011: 18, 93).

On March 10, 1959, the Tibetan people reasserted their independence in the capital of Tibet, Lhasa, through a spontaneous uprising against the Chinese government, which they later crushed by military force. This date is highly significant for all Tibetans living in the diaspora since it marks the day when more than sixty thousand Tibetans, including women and children, surrounded the capital city of Tibet to protect the Dalai Lama from being taken away by the red



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Army of Communist China. However, ever since the initial Tibetan uprising of 1959, it has marked a shift in attitude among Tibetans, particularly among Tibetan youth who forced out of their homeland and settled in India (Wijer 2010: 71).

Thapa (2003) explains that on March 17, 1959, the Dalai Lama and some followers fled from the Lhasa. In the years immediately following the Dalai Lama escaped, nearly 15,000 Tibetans settled into exile India. Then, steady streams of an estimated 3000 Tibetans have crossed across the Himalayas into Nepal, Bhutan, and India. Since then, the Dalai Lama has been the leader for the people of Tibet and leader of a spokesperson from his exile home in Dharamsala. However, after the Tibetan revolution of 1959, it has marked a change among Tibetan youth who carry on an essential incident as the day of entire Tibetan who escaped out from their homeland.

Language

Rita Mae Brown, an American novelist, poet and activist, has lucidly captured the importance of language in two sentences. She writes, “Language is the roadmap of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going”. Hence language is like a soul of the body; without it, the body is lifeless (Tibet Policy Institute 2021: 33).

Language is a communication. It is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols using which human being interact and communicate with each other. Like many other major languages of the world Tibetans also have their language which is known as Bod-Kad. It is the most commonly spoken language in Tibet. Officially, Tibetans did not have a written script (literature) until the 7th century, when Thonmi Sambhota began working on it. All Tibetans use only one language for written and spoken but there are several dialects, and it spread over the entire Tibetan region. There are various dialects of Tibetans languages such as the north-eastern (Am-Kad) and central (U-Kad), the eastern (Kham-Kad) since those times these difference dialects creates difficulties for their everyday conversation of life. However, U-Kad dialect worked as a generally used for some other dialects. Though the Tibetan language has been affected by different dialects, it still heard in its pure practice. The script of Bod-Yik which is developed from the Brahmin and Gupta writings of initial India (around CE 350) and used in all geographic areas of Tibet. But in South Asia, this language is seen as a decline in speakers as a percentage of the population. Tibetan language speaking also found in the neighboring countries such as Bhutan, Ladakh, Sikkim and throughout the Himalayan region. Though, the language family status of Tibetan is not without divergence. Despite the differences, it still believed that Tibetans language is part of the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Burman (Dolma 2016: 17, 42).

Language is considered to be one of the criteria by which the age and progress of a nation or race may be ascertained to some extent. It is a strong factor in consolidating the identity of a particular group of people. The Boro language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group. Upendra Nath Brahma, the father of the Boros was of the opinion that “The Boro language is certainly a scientifically acceptable language. The language and literature of the Boros are the only keys to the existence and survival of the Boro community”. Dr. S.K. Chatterjee the famous linguistic scholar of India and Dr. Banikanta Kakoti, the linguistic scholar of Assam stated that the Boro or mech language are related to the Tibeto-Burman sub group. In Assam some Tibeto-Burman dialects speeches groups are Boro, Rabha, Mech, Garo, Miri, Abor and Tipra. Tibeto-Himalayan was another branch from which developed two main divisions viz Non-Pronominalized and Pronominalized. Tibeto-Chinese had two main brances: (1) Siamese-Chinese and (2) Tibeto-Burmese. Siamese-Chinese gave rise to the Chinese, Kambodian and Ahom languages. Similarly Tibeto-Burman gave rise to the Boro language (Mondal 2011: 22, 204).

The Tibetan language is spoken through the Himalayan area such as Bhutan, Sikkim and Ladakh. Language is not only a communication but also indicates ethnic distinctiveness throughout the world. Such as various national and ethnic groups, all Tibetans speak a valued language identification known as Bod-kad. Nevertheless, linguistic family status of Tibetan is not without divergence. In spite of difference, it is generally believed that Tibetan belongs to the language families of Sino



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Tibetan or Tibeto-Burman. Beyer, a Tibetan linguistic scholar, in his ten-year study shows that Tibetan is more distantly related to Burmese than more distantly still to Chinese (Norbu 1991: 67).

The Boro language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group and it is not logical to look for the meaning of an Indo-Mongoloid word in Sanskrit merely because it has similarities of pronunciation with a Sanskrit word. The reasons why the word ‘Mech’ has been designated as an Indo-Mongoloid Boro word because the ancient Boros themselves gave names to rivers, mountains, streams, villages or the other places of the regions where they lived. As the region of the Mechi river valley was one of the ancient habitats of the Boros, it is not at all unlikely that the name was given by them. E.A. Gait has written Kachari are identical with the people called ‘Mech’ in Goalpara and North Bengal. These are the names given by the outsiders. According to Dr. K. Brahma, the Boro language “is said to have no inherited script at present. Bishnuprasad Rabha the famous artist of Assam said that in ancient times there was a kind of ‘Deodhai’ script among the Kacharis (Boro & Dimasa)”. Madhu Boro has also said that the Boro kings had a kind of Deodhai script, akin to Brahmi, to communicate with neighboring kings and inscribe on the stone, pillars, monuments, royal gates, stone slates and copper plates etc. The specimens of this kind of script may be seen till now in an indistinct state on those articles spread in wreckage form in the jungle areas of Khaspur, Maibong and Dimapur etc. (Mondal 2011: 42, 218).

The Tibetan belongs to the Sino-Tibetan speech family. Their language is a part of Tibeto-Burmese language, that is spoken by peoples of Tibet, India, Bhutan, Nepal and now by various Tibetan immigrant communities in various countries all over the world. It has several dialects and Lhasa and Shigatse people are speaks more dialects as spoken in Central Tibet, Amdo and Kham dialects spoken in Eastern Tibet, as well as other upper region dialects. Even though, the Tibetan language was spoken long before the formal Tibetan script came about only in the Seventh century during the reign of King Songsten Gampo. He sent his strong minister, Thu Mi Sam Bhota along with other young Tibetans to Nalanda University in India where they learnt several languages. The Sanskrit and Urdu are the more related that later formed the basis for Tibetan script. The ‘u chen’ script (printed text) was based on Sanskrit and the ‘u mei’ (written text) was based on Urdu. However, another view is that the Tibetan characters were based on the Gupta characters (Namgyal 2016: 3-4).

In Boro language Di, Doi or Ti means water. There are many rivers, historical places, areas names start with the Di, Doi or ti, for example Dihong, Dihing, Dikhow, Digaro, Dimapur, Dibrugarh, Maibong, Teesta, Koundil, Dimou, Doimukh, Doifang which is easily can identify as Boro names. The Aryans, who came much later than the Boros, also accepted these names. With their traditional language, the Boro brought their native religion during their migration (Sonowal 2013: 67).

There are slight connections between Tibetan and the languages of India, China, Mongolia, and elsewhere. There are also strong religious, political, trade, and other sorts of relations between those countries and Tibet. According to linguists, the Tibetan and Burmese languages are related. Not only do their dynastic histories say that the Burmese people are descended from Tibetans, but also within the last six centuries the people of Upper Burma have spent many years under Tibetan jurisdiction. Thus, there is a connection between the Tibetan and Burmese languages. Likewise, there are very strong connections between the 25 languages of Balistans and Tibetan. In the 6th and 7th centuries, it was under Tibetan influence. The spoken and written forms of Tibetan are closely related, although there are modest corruptions in the spoken form in widespread areas like Sikkim, Ladakh, Mönpa, Sherpa, Tamang, and so forth. Except for those areas, people speak the original Tibetan. The Uchen (dbu can) script is used to read religious books; even in Mongolia, sūtras, tantric texts, and philosophical books are written in Tibetan. Thus, its use is extremely widespread. Similarly, although there is one original language for the three provinces of Tibet and the regional accents have evolved. (Shakabpa 2010: 13-14).

Religion

Williams’ (1996) empirical study revealed that religion acts as a political resource. His analytical distinctions between “religion as culture” and “religion as ideology” are useful in analyzing the functions of Buddhism and Bon in Tibetan



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society. He argues that it is impossible to completely separate religion from culture and ideology given their interactive and correlative natures. This distinction is a useful analytical insight (Jia 2015: 162-163).

India is the original home of some of the most major religious traditions in the world, such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Buddhism was born as a movement against the dogmatism of an old tradition. India was the home to Buddhism for over a thousand years, but gradually disappeared from India following the invasion of Muslim and Hindu rulers and it never was able to revive fully afterwards. Apart from Tibetan Buddhist communities, several smaller congregations of Indian Buddhists are clustered in India, but they could not restore the large-scale tradition of Buddhist philosophical studies and vibrant monastic system (Thokmay 2020: 122).

According to the writings of early Tibetan scholars, the name ‘Bod’ for Tibet had originated from the name ‘Pugyal’ long before the ‘Bon’ religion emerged. Others maintain that the name ‘Bod’ was derived from ‘Bon’ itself which is the name of the early religion of the country before the introduction of Buddhism in the seventh century. Yet another group of scholars maintain that the name Bod, orally meaning ‘fled’ was given to the country because the Indian leader Rupati and his followers fled to Tibet after involvement in war with the Pandavas. It is also stated that ‘Bod’ has no specific meaning and is used merely as a form of identification. The Indo-Tibetan border residents refer to Tibetans as Bhotias a name derived from ‘Bhota’ the Sanskrit name for Tibet. The modern name of ‘Tibet’ by which the country is known to the world, derives from the Mongolian ‘Thubet’ the Chinese ‘Thupan’ the Thai ‘Thibet’ and the Arabic ‘Thubat’ which are found in early works. In many poetical writings of Tibet, the country is referred to as ‘Khawachen’ or ‘Gangjong’ meaning ‘The Abode of Snow’ and ‘Sildanjong’ meaning ‘The Cool Climate Land’. Modern anthropologist claim that Tibetan belong to the Mongoloid race (Thapa 2003: 92).

In the case of religion there are different beliefs system among the Boro Community. The main religious beliefs are divided into two groups. One group is following the traditional religious practices known as Bathou and the other group is following the practices of Brahma religion propagated by Guru Kalicharan Brahma. The Christian religion is very less in number. The former group believes in the super power of Bathou which is similar to Sibrai or Siva of the Hindu Trinity. Most of the Boro’s family house is seen a planting Sizou tree along with a sampling of Jatراسي and tulsi in the northern corner of their home. But the religious belief and practices of Brahma follower are different from that of Boro who follow the Bathou religion. They do not practice any sacrificing of animals for the appeasement of Gods and Goddesses. But culturally both sections are similar (Roy and Banerjee 2010: 48).

Buddhism is known as the main religion of Tibet. The Buddhist monks move to Tibet from India, Nepal, East Turkistan and China and finally Tibet turns into a center of Buddhist culture. Tibet developed a different culture due to its geographical and climatic environments. The relations between Tibet with China afford ample evidence of Tibetan freedom struggle. The national identity of Tibetan revealed the battle with China. Buddhism has used a mainly strong effect on Tibetan culture. Buddhist missionaries generally developed from Nepal, India, and China. Buddhism has adopted a distinctive form influenced by the Bon tradition and other native beliefs (Yeh 2007: 268).

The expression “Greater Tibet” has been used by ancient Indian scholars to indicate the geographical distance of the parts of Tibet from India. The regions of Tibet which border with India or near it were called Tibet (Bhota) and the regions of Tibet which are far away from India were known as Greater Tibet (Mahābhota). In Sanskrit idiom, with reference to geographical area, distant places are usually qualified by the word greater. For example, the jungle which is near a town is called jungle (Arañya) and the jungle which is far away from the town is known as greater jungle (Mahāranya). Indeed, this expression doesn’t refer to size or quality but it connotes distance. In the ancient times, the Chinese and Tibetans, occasionally, used to refer each other as Great China and Great Tibet as an honorific word. But these were used referring to the whole of China and whole of Tibet not specifying the parts of the territory. Sino-Tibetan treaty of 821-822 also used the word Great Tibet and Great China. Later on, Chinese changed this honorific word from Great Tibet to High Tibet, which indicates high plateau rather than greatness. During the Ming and Manchu period, they coined different words to indicate different parts of Tibet such as familiar Tibet and unfamiliar Tibet to distinguish between Tibetan areas which



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border China and those which are far from China. However, Tibetans themselves have never used the word “greater Tibet” to classify any part of Tibet. There are traditional ways of distinguishing regions of the country such as upper, middle and lower or U-tsang, Kham and Amdo or the three Cholkas etc (DIIR 2020: 80).

In the beginning, the religion of the Boros was animistic in nature. Presently, the Boro people are followers of several religions such as Brahma Dharma, Bathou, Christianity, Satsanga (Joiguru) etc. The Bathou is the ancient traditional religion of the Boros. The term Bathou has a dual connotation. ‘Ba’ means five i.e., the five elements of nature and ‘thou’ means profound principles. The believers of the Bathou religion consider the five elements - Ailong (earth), Agrang (water), Khoila (air), Sanja Borli (sun or fire), Rajkhungri (sky) as sacred. The Bathou religion is closely connected with the numerical five elements. The following verse expresses the relation between the Bathou religion and the number of five elements are:

Thaigirni Bikhonga Khongba (The Ou fruit or dillenia indica has five rings)

Sijouni Siria Siriba (The Sijou plant has five ridges)

Bathouni Bandwa Bandwba (The Bathou has five knots)

Siphungni Gudunga Dwngba (The flute has five holes)

Bathouni Bwchwna Phongba (The Bathou has five principles).

The five principles of the Bathou are:

Gwthar Gsw Boihabw Thanangou (Everyone must have purity of heart)

Saithwni Gsw Boihabw Thanangou (Everyone must have truthful heart or mind)

Onnaini Gsw Boihabw Thanangou (Everyone must have a loving heart)

Nimahani Gsw Boihabw Thanangou (Everyone must have a forgiving heart)

Khouseni Gsw Boihabw Thanangou (Everyone must have the spirit of unity) (Mondal 2011: 221).

According to another Tibetan origin myth, the earliest settlers on the Tibetan plateau were refugees who escaped the conflicts described in the Indian epic poem Mahabharata. The Indian connection is important in this context because contemporary Tibetan histories develop a narrative in which India, particularly Indian Buddhism, was the main source of the development of Tibetan culture and China played at most a peripheral role. Shakabpa, for example, cites both of these origin myths and states that some anthropologists believe that Tibetans are related to Mongoloid races. He admits that this might be possible but he adds that they are a separate race and clearly different from the Han in terms of biology, culture and language. He does not concede any connection between early Tibetans and Chinese and consistently emphasizes Tibet’s connections with India (Bhatt 2013: 141).

Buddhism in Tibet began to spread to Himalayan regions in Ladakh, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, where Buddhism became their religion. P.K. Gautam, an expert at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis in New Delhi, argued, “the Indian state and citizens need to be made aware of these characteristics to nurture Buddhism in the Himalayan belt and beyond in Tibet” (Thokmay 2020: 122-123).

The Bathou altar is generally found in the north-east corner of the courtyard (sithla). The Sijou (*Euphorbia splendid*) is planted at the altar. Sijou is a living symbol of the five elements of nature. The word Sijou is a combination of ‘Si’ and ‘Jou’. ‘Si’ means ‘Swrjigiri’ i.e., the Lord or the Creator and ‘Jou’ means life. Thus, Sijou means Lord or Creator of life. The Boros address their greatest deity as ‘Afa Bwrai Bathou’. ‘Afa’ means Father, Bwrai means the ultimate being (male) and ‘Bathou’ means the unified power of the five elements of nature. In other words, the ultimate being incorporating the five elements is addressed as Father. Similarly, the name Siva evolved as the ‘Si’ of Sijou and ‘B’ of Bathou came together centuries ago. Thus, the name Siva evolved into its present form through several stages (Sijou-Bathou, Siu-Bathou, Si-u-ba then Siva). So, Siva literally means ‘the ultimate being - or the creator of life’ (Mondal 2011: 221).

Religion pervades most aspects of traditional Tibetan life and culture. The most dominant institutional religious system is Buddhism. The Tibetan Bon religion, in its organized, clerical dimension is a form of Buddhism, whose first human teacher, Tonpa Shenrap, is always referred to by the Bönpo themselves as a Buddha (sanggye) who lived long before



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Shakyamuni. Bon, like other forms of Buddhism in Tibet, embraces an encompassing sphere of cultural and religious activity, wherein elaborate traditions of ritual, art, and learning reflect in part the ancient religious matrices of India, Iran, and China (Kapstein 2006: 200-237). Buddhism plays a role in influencing the Tibetan, and there are also other social, cultural and political factors that shape their cross-border activities. Religion is an essential to the Tibetans and also has a strong impact over all phases in their surviving.

The traditional Tibetan Buddhism is literally called Vajrayana/Tantrayana, and in one way can be described as a religion of sacred symbolism with possessing enormous rites and ritual practices; hence it can be studied through different symbolic words and meanings. However, in a general sense these are to be called metaphysical symbols since they invariably derived their meaning from a realm that look larger than the universe in which all sentient beings are living their momentary lives in day-to-day chores (Namgyal 2016: 32).

India is well known to be the primary source of various fields of studies in the world. Major and minor fields of studies of Tibet also originated and were translated from India. Though aesthetic compositions in Tibet could be traced back to the 7th century, or even much earlier, the concept of comprehensive poetic theories was introduced in Tibet only after the translation of Kavyadarsha by Acharya Dandi (DIIR 2018: 26).

Religion is still the fundamental driving power in Tibetan social and political life, nothing worked without the religious institutions. Par Bataille notes: “Everything revolves around the monks. If someone, against the likelihood were to turn away from religion, he would still derive his meaning and his possibility of expression from the monks” (Norbu 1991: 85).

Culture

Ralph Linton (1945) defines that “The culture of a society is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation” (Haralambos and Holborn 2016: 727).

The word “culture” is derived from Latin and means cultivation of the soul. Tibetans developed a distinct culture under the geographic and climatic conditions on the Tibetan plateau. Professor Aditi Jha of the Foreign Language Department, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) expressed “Culture is externally expressed as clothing, food, ornaments and so on, while internally culture is personal identity, attitude, behavior, dignity, social norms and so forth...” As we know, Tibetans are traditional and culturally unique people whose culture and customs developed in high altitudes of the land of snow. Tibetan women traditionally wear gowns called chuba (phyu pa), a sleeved robe that is wrapped around the body and tied at the waist, when they work or in the summer. Professor A.K. Joshi (Head of the Sociology Department, BHU) remarked that “Tibetans have lived in India for three generations but still have not removed their chuba, they are cultural people” (Tso 2018: 143-145).

The concept of culture has been explained by E.B Tylor as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by as a member of the society. Its origin is linked to ‘cultivate’ and a list of definitions given in the Concise Oxford Dictionary (p, 134) begins with: till age of the soil, rearing, production of bees, oysters, fish, silk, bacteria; quality of bacteria; thus produced. This is why ‘culture’ for natural scientists is still commonly something found in a petri dish. During the seventeenth century, the word also began to be used in a metaphorical sense, to refer to growth of individuals or of human society. Particularly in Germany, by the late eighteenth century, culture (or Cultu/ Kultur) was being used in scholarly works on historical progress, and was also being employed in the plural to refer to distinct social groups. By the turn of the twentieth century culture had already become a concept with a complex of overlapping, but potentially different meanings (Gauba 2018: 448).

The Tibetan custom of drinking chang (bod chang) has a long tradition. The book “The Treatise of Tea and Chang Goddesses” gives evidence of this:



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During the inauguration of the Yumbu (*yum bu lh a khang*) Palace of Nyatri Tsenpo, and on many other occasions, the beverage of Deden Dutsi (*chang*) was taken by successive religious kings. Moreover, the famous special bowl (*khrung snod*) of the most incomparable king Songtsen is still preserved as a sacred object in the Great Palace. Thus, it is implied that there is a long history since the spread of this custom of drinking chang (Wangdu 2019: 85-86).

Cultural festivals are an essential part of the socio-cultural life of the Boros. Religious festivals and seasonal festivals are the two main cultural festivals of the Boro people. Religious festivals are those festivals which are connected with the performance of religious ceremonies. The 'Kherai', 'Garja' and 'Marai' are some of the important religious festivals of the Boros. They are closely linked with the 'Bathou' religion. The 'Kherai' festival is the greatest religious festival of the Boros. It is performed individually or collectively once or twice a year for the welfare of the people and for the good harvest. The 'Garja' festival is another important religious festival. The Boros perform the 'Garja puja' to purify and protect themselves and the entire village. All the major festivals are connected with agriculture and singing and dancing constitute some of the features of the festivals. The 'Baisagu' and 'Domasi' are the two main seasonal festivals. The spring time festival known as 'Baisagu' is one of the most cherished festivals of the Boros. It is celebrated in the month of Baisakh (mid-April). 'Baisagu' is formed from the words 'Bwswrni Agu' which means beginning of the year or New Year. The 'Baisag festival has some special features like 'Gwkha-Gwkhwi Janai' or eating bitter and sour vegetables on the day of Sankranti or the day before new year, cattle rites, worshipping the Gods and Goddesses and remembering their ancestors. The 'Domasi' festival is celebrated in the month of Magh' (January-February) for seven days. It is a post-harvest festival (Mondal 2011: 186).

As part of their national costume, Tibetan woman wear a multi coloured striped (horizontally) apron called pangden. It was worn in Tibet as a sign of maturity but now it shows the woman's matrimonial status that she is married. The belief is that if the wife does not wear the apron, it will adversely affect the husband's life span, probably causing his untimely death or at least some sickness (Chophel 2006: 11).

The origin of Losar (Tibetan New Year) can be traced back to the reign of the ninth Tibetan King Pude Gungyal, when an old woman named Belma introduced four seasons based on the phases of the moon and the movements of the gatherings. Calculating the day and the month, a whole year was believed to be completed when the apricot trees in Lhoka Yarla Shampo began to blossom with flowers after which the Spring Festival was said to begin and there is speculation that the celebration of the Losar began thereafter. However, the celebration of the Losar differs from one region to another, according to their regional customs, traditions and agricultural seasons. The Rooftop Smoke Offerings is an auspicious day selected during Losar, according to Astrological texts. As one of the major Losar activities, people climb onto their roofs in the morning to replace the old prayer flags with new ones and these are known as offerings to the divine spirits. After the old prayer flags are replaced with the new ones, the new flags are offered with smoke offering rituals and marked with butter-flour. In eight main and intermediate directions, butter-flour is sprinkled in the air while shouting in unison and repeating the phrase, "Victory to the gods" (lha rgyal lo), and at the same time entrusting the divine spirits to help in achieving prosperity in work and preventing obstacles in the New Year. Loved ones and their neighbors gather together to drink tea and chang, and to sing and dance traditional dances after the invocation and offerings to the divine spirits. However, in places like Lhasa, the celebration takes place on rooftops which are decorated with carpets and tables, a wooden tray of butter-flour, an abundance of tea, chang and snacks. In the morning the neighbors dress in their best costumes and ornaments and gather on the rooftop to perform the smoke offering ritual. Then people sit in order of seniority and engage in joyful activities such as drinking tea, chang, singing, playing games and engaging in conversation. The occasion of Rooftop Smoke Offerings is not merely an activity of putting up new flags and making offerings to the divine spirits. It is also an occasion to deepen one's relations with the neighborhood, and a means to emphasize the importance of mutual relationships. It also conveys a powerful message to overcome all obstacles between you and your neighbors by stepping forward to help and show concern for one another (Wangdu 2019: 62-73).



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The main festival of Boro people is the ‘Baisagu’ or Bihu. They have two other Bihu, namely ‘Dhomasi (Bhogali Bihu) ‘Katrigasa’ (Kangali Bihu). The festivals begin with cow worship on Sanskranti (last day) of Chaitra. The Baisagu dance is being celebrated for all men and women. The traditional musical instruments for dance such as Kham, Jotta, Sipung, are being used. Kherai puja is also another annual religious festival for the Bathou worshiper of Boro people. The usual time of holding Kherai festival is the month of Kartic (October-November). It is believed that propitiated to Mainao, the goddess of harvest, during that time will produce good harvest. The Boro society is primarily monogamous. There is no class or clan distinction among them. The Brahma follower follow the Vedic culture and perform Havan or Yogah (Roy and Banerjee 2010: 87-88).

The Tibetans are celebrating some festivals on occasionally. On the first day, in the early dawn, the housewife of the family runs to collect the year’s first bucket of water. She burns incense at the water source, ties a scarf around the tap, and sets out an offering of the first portion phye mar and chang to appease the nagas (subterranean serpent beings) and spirits. On reaching home, she serves boiled chang porridge while awakening every member of the family, bidding them “Tashi Delek.” Then all, now quite awake after relishing the chang porridge (and some perhaps already a bit soused), attire themselves in their best costumes. After performing their devotions before the altar by making prostrations, reciting prayers, lighting lamps and the like, they take their seats, lined up according to seniority within the household. The housewife then serves phye mar, chang phud and sweet rice, followed by tea, sweet soup, boiled chang porridge, and a set of khab se called dkar spro. When this formal family ceremony is over, the household members run off to their next-door neighbors’ houses, chewing phye mar and chang phud while shouting “Tashi Delek”. Children especially love to fill their pockets with sweets and show off their new outfits. On this day people neither socialize extensively, nor spend money freely, for it is believed (with or without reason) that if anyone were to do so, the fortunes of their household would diminish (Rigzin 2006: 3-4).

The traditional instruments of the Boros are the Serja, Gongona, Sifung, Kham, Jotta, Gangreeng, Binju, Thorcka, Jekprking etc. The Serja is a kind of violin. It has four strings and is traditionally played by a small bow made of bamboo strip. The Gongona is the Jew’s harp. It is a small wind instrument used by the Boros. In the ancient times it was made of bamboo but nowadays metallic Gongonas are available. The Sifung is a long-sized bamboo flute having only five holes. The Kham is the Boro musical drum. It is big and long in size (Mondal 2011: 187).

Christopher Jencks (1993) describes culture in this sense as ‘all which is symbolic: the learned.... Aspects of human society’. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2004) takes a different view; she argues that there is a developing global culture, but it cannot simply be seen as involving homogenization – a process in which culture becomes increasingly similar across the globe. The idea of a homogeneous global culture is usually based upon the increasing dominance of Western culture. Pieterse sees this as misleading. Instead, she argues that there is increasing hybridity in culture (Haralambos and Holborn 2016: 727-728).

Although killing of living beings is forbidden by their religion, the cold climate makes it necessary for people to eat meat of yak, mutton which is eaten cooked, roasted or dried. Tibetans usually do not eat fish as they consider it sinful to kill it. However, they relish meat of yak, goat and sheep. The Japanese traveler Ekai Kawaguchi mentions that near the great monastery of Drepung “There is a place reserved for the slaughtering of animals for the table of Dalai Lama as he does not want to be thought that these animals are killed for him (Thapa 2003: 42).

The Boros have a rich tradition of dance and music. Some of the important dances are the ‘Kherai’ dance, Bagurumba, Baisagu, Raijw Janai, Habajanai, Satraili or Dhal Thungri Sibnai dance etc. The Kherai dances are associated with the Kherai festival and are ritualistic in nature. There are mainly eighteen types of Kherai dances which are divided into two groups, the primary Kherai dances and the secondary Kherai dances. The primary Kherai dances are the Dhal Thungri Sibnai Chhagwla Bwnai, Kheijema Phonai, Thungri Gongnwi Sibnai, Gandeola Bwnnai, Khwmao Barkhwnai, Badali Birnai, Mosougelenai, Bathou Gidingnai, Naobhasainai, Mufur Gelenai, Mainao Borainai, Mwchagelenai, Mufur Gelenai, Naojaonai, Goraidabrainai. The secondary Kherai dances are the Deodini angkharnai, Lajjam Bownai, Bathou Tharnai,



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Jaraphagla, Thenthamali, Charanisla, Neolai Mwsanai, Langtha Gurji, Dawang Bathua etc. In the ‘Dhal Thungri Sibnai’ dance the Deodini (priestess) holds a sword in her right hand and a shield in her left hand during the dance. The Haba Janai dance is related with the marriage ceremony. The ‘Raijw Janai’ dance is based upon the daily lifestyle of the Boros. The ‘Baisagu’ dance is performed during the spring festival. The ‘Bagurumba’ dance is one of the most attractive dances of the Boro community. It is a graceful and captivating dance full of rhythm and vivacity. At times the dancers give the impression of fluttering butterflies. The Bagurumba dance was acknowledged as a national dance of India since 1957 (Mondal 2011: 186-187).

For many Tibetans, the Tibetan nation is embodied in culture rather than territory, since the spiritual leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama, is still in exile. Therefore, considering the Dalai Lama’s centrality to cultural nationalism in particular, it is important to note that the Dalai Lama’s broad influence on the Tibetan movement, as he has come to symbolize the religious-cultural version of Tibetan nationalism (Dreyfus 2002: 88).

B.H. Hodgson has described the Boros as “amiable, intelligent, decent and free from prejudices, honest, truthful in deeds and actions. They are steady and industrious and peace-loving people. They stay away of all violence towards their own people and their neighbors. They are free from arrogance, revenge and cruelty. They have respect for women and consider everyone is equal and are hospitable to their own people and never averse to strangers”. According to the historians, the ancient Boro led a peripatetic nomadic life. During those times, the nomadic tribes would wander over wide regions in a world as yet free of all later day restrictions in search of food and shelter. With the passage of time, due to political, geographical and social necessities they settled permanently in the region which is now known as Assam (Mondal 2011: 44, 93).

Tibetan language education plays an important role in the reconstruction of Tibetan culture, especially in the sense that teaching Tibetan in schools provides a venue for the expression of a common Tibetan identity. Yet, one of the primary goals of education in Tibetan and other minority areas is to consolidate “ethnic minorities” (Ch: shaoshu minzu) and persuade their children to become patriotic members of the all-inclusive family of China. Education is directed toward disseminating CCP ideology and officials of the educational system still state that the goal of minority education is to maintain socialism. More importantly, the educational system aims to subordinate local ethnic identities to national unity and at the same time convey the message that the minorities are backward (Ch: luohou) compared to the Han (Kolas and Thowsen 2005: 93-94).

The opportunities available to Tibetan women were in all events far more limited than those open to men. We must recall too, in this context, that the opportunities for men were themselves severely restricted. Skilled trades, such as medicine, fine art, and astrology, were essentially male preserves, though one does sometimes learn of women belonging to families that specialized in such areas who were trained to continue the heritage. Similarly, higher religious education was exclusively developed in the monasteries, and nuns seldom were encouraged to go beyond learning their prayers. Nevertheless, within particular lineages it was sometimes possible for women to excel. Women who excelled within the Tibetan religious world were often associated with the orders and lineages that emphasized practical mastery of ritual and meditation, rather than the scholastic dimensions of Buddhist formal learning. Tibetan society was, moreover, generally open to the acceptance of great female adepts, even if ordinary nuns were severely disadvantaged (Kapstein 2006: 200-237).

Marx argued that human culture has a social origin and cannot be seen as deriving directly from nature or from innate instincts in human beings. Culture comes from humanity’s creation of the first societies. Unlike Durkheim, Marx did not see culture developing in terms of primitive classification systems that derive from social structure. Instead, he believed that culture had a material origin in human labor (Haralambos and Holborn 2016: 731).

Since China invaded Tibet in 1959, the Tibetan youth have supported in an ongoing protest for their independence. For many of them living in exile they have had no direct experience with their homeland. On March 17, 1959, the Dalai Lama



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and some followers fled in India from Lhasa. However, in India, his party had reached by the end of march. In the years immediately following his escaped, nearly 15,000 Tibetans settled into exile. Then, steady streams of an estimated 3000 thousand Tibetans have crossed across the Himalayas into Nepal, Bhutan, and India. Since then, the Dalai Lama has been the leader for the people of Tibet and leader of a spokesperson from his exile home in Dharamsala India. However, after the Tibetan revolution of 1959, it has marked a change among Tibetan who carry on an essential incident as the day of entire Tibetan who escaped out from their homeland (Thapa 2003: 27).

On the other hand, the Boro community have faced an identity crisis as well as socio-economic exploitation by way of cultural identity, land alienation, poverty, indebtedness, unemployment, political oppression and subjugation. So, they have been demanded a separate state of Boroland. With the continuous struggle the first Bodo Accord was signed on 20th February of 1993 to create Boroland Autonomous Council (BAC). But most of the Boro leaders were not satisfied with the accord so they continued its mass democratic movement. After the agreement of the Boro Autonomous Council (BAC), there is an additional conflict due to the different ideology and different political organizations which emerged divide within the Boro people. Therefore, some Boro people had started the movement. After a long struggle the Boroland Territorial Area District (BTAD) was created as per the memorandum of an agreement among the Government of India, Government of Assam and the Boro Liberation Tigers in February 10, 2003. The whole Boro area has not been covered within the BTAD region. Some organizations support the BTC agreement while others support for a separate Bodoland state. Hence, again, the All Bodo Student Union (ABSU) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) fighting for a separate state of Bodoland. After years of negotiation, a comprehensive Bodo Peace Accord with the nomenclature of “Bodoland Territorial Region” Accord was signed on 27th of January 2020. This paved the way for new dawn of peace as all the four factions of NDFB, an armed struggle organization and UBPO signed the accord along with All Bodo Students Union (Voice of ABSU 1990).

Agriculture

The Tibetan are an agriculturalist ethnicity, some of them choose agriculture to live or survive in their day-to-day life, and others were becoming pastoral nomadism for their daily life. Tibetan mythology clarified that the Mons were native people of the central area of Tibet who considered the Qiang as the foreigner. Historically, it is precise that they are covering the area of southeastern and southern Tibetan plateau. In some history, it described that Mon narrated carpenters and Smiths who served the name of Qiang know as craftspeople (Warren 2008: 12).

The Boro people are closely connected with the nature. They are mainly cultivators and introduced silk rearing, spinning and weaving of silk clothes in their region. They were woven by them in their handlooms to produce warm wrappers, dress and so on which had always a very good market not only in Northeast India but also outside like Tibet and China. They had maintained trade link with the bordering hill areas on the north and through that they maintained the trade relations with the Tibetans and Chinese (Sonowal 2013: 47).

The Boros are an agrarian community. Agriculture occupies a major role in the life of the Boros. They cultivated different varieties of rice, fruits and crops like mustard, castor plants, cotton, areca-nuts, betel leaves, bamboo etc. But the exclusive dependence on land later proved to be their greatest disadvantage. Apart from agriculture, the other economic activities of the Boros included animal husbandry, the culture of Endi worms, manufacture of Endi cloth etc. They paid attention to cattle breeding to enhance their income. The manure from the animals was used to increase the fertility of the soil. The cattle were used for ploughing, transport and food. In the early times, sufficient meadows ensured enough supply of fodder for the cattle. But later when the grazing lands came under cultivation, they had to reduce their huge herds of cattle. In the ancient times hunting was not only a favorite sport among the Boros but it was also looked upon as a means to add to the family income. The barter trade system facilitated the growth of trade in the early times. During the ancient and the medieval period, the Boros engaged in border trade activities. They maintained trade links with the bordering hill areas on the north with the Tibetans and the Chinese traders. The place in the foothills through which several passes opened upon the Indian plains were known as Dooars or Gateways. Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma and the Christian



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Missionaries played a significant and pioneering role in spreading education among the Boros. Schools and colleges have now been established for taking care of the educational needs of the people. Initially the Boros were mostly dependent on agriculture, they did not feel the need for theoretical knowledge. But with the passage of time, they realized that without education the community would not be able to progress. The Boro Chatra Sanmilani (Bodo Students Union) which was formed in 1919 took up the issues of general improvement for the language, culture and educational facilities of the Boros (Mondal 2011: 198-199).

Traditional craft skills come naturally to many Tibetans that enabled the settlements to engage in local and global economies. From carpet weaving and incense-making to silver working and tailoring, several settlement communities especially those in the north with little land have revived traditional hand-crafts, taught each other the techniques, and established successful businesses. Much of this work is organized through own co-operatives and societies. The Central Tibetan Relief Committee (CTRC) works together with these local groups to increase productivity and find new markets for the products. Many Tibetans belongs to an agrarian life. It was nature for them to take up agriculture in their new homes but they had to adapt their old methods suitable to the high, arid climate of Tibet to environments in low, hot tropical region. With aid from international agencies like the Swiss Technical Corporation they introduced conventional agriculture and helped farmers to grow and varieties of maize and rice. They worked with the co-operative societies in each settlement to purchase tractors and improved varieties of seed and hybrid dairy animals. They helped plant orchards where viable, so the farmers can grow economically valuable agricultural crops. Tibetan even helped establish grain-processing centers to increase the value of agricultural exports and still continue all these works (Central Tibetan Relief Committee 2003: 17-18).

The Boros are used brick and stone in the construction of houses, buildings royal palaces and gates with advanced architecture ever since pre-historic period. The ruins of Tezpur, Kamrup and various Shiva temples in different parts of north-east India and also the ruins of Dimapur city still bear witness about their advanced civilization. On the other hand, being agricultural base ethnicity, the irrigation system of the Boro is another example of their civilizations. It is believed that they were the first agricultural nomads to have entered in some parts of the north-east India. They were the first to introduce irrigation system and to teach the autochthonous groups of this region how to domicile themselves to plants it. Their agricultural expertise had been profusely praised by the British officials and the American Missionaries who worked among them during the early 19th century. As Captain Butler describes them as the best cultivators. They irrigate their lands to a great extent from the hill streams (Sonowal 2013: 2).

B. N. Bordoloi mention that, according to K.L.Borna the Kacharis, Koachas, Ravas, Machas, Mikirs, Lalungas, Garos, Nagas, Kukies and the Chutiyas are the present day representative of the Mongolians or the Indo-Mongolian tribes speaking Boro languages. Boros were mainly cultivators and introduced silk rearing, spinning and weaving of silk clothes in their area of settlement. It is believed that Kacharis are closely connected with Koches. So far as their language is concerned, the Chutiyas, Lalungas and Morans of Brahmaputra Valley and the Garos and Tipper of the Southern hills have some similarity. Indo-Mongoloid group seems to have established their kingdom in the North Bengal (Roy and Banerjee 2010: 12, 14).

The Boro people had trade and commerce relations with the Himalayan border areas. It needs to be mentioned that having migrated from the Sino-Tibetan border regions through numerous mountain passes, the Boro people settle in the northern foot-hills regions of Bengal and Assam. They maintained trade links with the bordering hill on the north. And since then, the Boros kept a business transaction with the Tibetans and the Chinese traders. Several trade routes through these passes existed throughout the ages between Tibet and northeastern part of India. The places in foothills through which these passes opened up to the Indians plains and are still known as Kachari-Dooar (Gateway opening to the Kacharis). Several such dooars existed on the northern foothills of Jalpaiguri in North Bengal and Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Barpeta, Kamrup, Darrang and Sonitpur district of Assam. These dooars were often controlled and operated by the Bhutan and Tibetan authorities. The most famous trade route among them was the Lhasa-Tawang-Udalguri route which saw a considerable volume of exchange trade between the Tawang Hill tribes and the Boro tribes of the Udalguri region. The



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trade link even extended to the interior of Tibet and China. The items imported through this route into India were Chinese silk, ponies, musk-wax, rubber and gold dust, whereas the items exported were rice, cotton, yarn and cloth, silk yarn dried fruits etc. The Bhootias (Bhutan's people) used to come during the winter season through these routes and make barter trade relations in the Boro region. The exchange trade helped the Boro people's economy substantially (Sonowal 2013: 23).

Handicraft production activities provide major source of employment to many who live in the settlements and is important source of income for the cooperative societies of the settlements as well. However, most of the settlements located in remote and far-flung rural areas find it difficult to market their products to buyers who are mostly located in urban areas. It also conducts market research on changing tastes and trends in handicraft products and accordingly advises the various handicraft production centers. Today a new problem much of the land which once produced well is now infertile, over-stressed, devoid of organic matter and requires ever-increasing inputs just to maintain stable output. Conventional agricultural methods worsen the effects of drought and may not be sustainable for small, family-run farms. New agriculture development programs aim to introduce the best organic and natural farming concepts with an emphasis on soil and water conservation and developing the natural fertility of the land. This unites well with the continue efforts to improve efficiency, provide irrigation, and increase the value of agriculture products through basic processing. At the same time, this approach returns to traditional culture, combining the way sustainably managed lands for generations back in Tibet with modern understanding and knowledge (Central Tibetan Relief Committee 2003: 18, 20).

Dr. Kameswar Brahma explains "The Boros were the dominant rulers of the entire state of North Eastern Region. Some of the rivers, streams and hills name of Assam can be proved of their ancient history. They are habituated in living together in villages formed by themselves following their own social customs and traditions". The reign of the Boro kings came to an end with the annexation of the territories ruled by the last Boro king Govinda Chandra and the army general Tularam Senapati by the British in 1832 and 1854 A.D. After the Indian independence the Government of Assam constituted the Belts and Blocks in order to safeguard and protect their native land from alienation and encroachment by other communities. Gradually a consciousness grew among the plains tribes that they enjoyed minimum constitutional safeguards whereas the tribes living in the hill areas of Assam and other states enjoyed the right to protect, preserve their customs, traditions and identity under the provisions of the 6th schedule (Mondal 2011: 93).

The Boro women are expert in weaving. They reared varieties of silk worms and produce Endi Muga Silk. Through their handlooms they produce warm wrappers, traditional dress, muffler, scarf and so on which is a good market in India, Tibet and China. They had maintained trade link with the bordering hill areas on the north and through them they connect with the Tibetans and the Chinese. They exported rice, muga endi, cotton, yarn clothes and so on and so forth. It implies that after their settlement in Assam they introduced some new kinds of economic system and new trade links with the bordering countries of the North East India. Throughout the centuries after their settlement in Assam their life surviving remained mainly an agrarian economy. They are also engaged in animal husbandry. Another economic activity in which they had expertise is sericulture (Sonowal 2013: 38).

There is no denying of the fact that scholars from both India and China subscribe to the view that their countries are the cradle of civilization and they can work together on several issues in the global landscape. But the border issue and the way the Dalai Lama is viewed have made the matter contentious. Whereas Indians consider him as a spiritual and religious leader, the Chinese consider him to be a political person herein further complicating the Tibet issue.

Agriculture is the main production base of the Boro people. Most of the households has their own traditional handloom. They are in practice of weaving their own clothes known as 'Dhokona' (Local women garments) and 'Gamsa' (local men garments). Their clothes production is also trading links with the markets. Besides, sericulture and handloom they have large potentiality of the development of other cottage industries. The agro-based cottage industries include dairy, carpet making, wood-crafts, house designing printing, bamboo products, fruits-based manufacturing, paper and stationary products etc. They have their own traditional skills (Roy and Banerjee 2010: 46).



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Conclusion

The challenges of recognition for a particular ethnicity and nation-building are a very complex among the society, economy, polity and power structure. The study shows that an important ethnic relationship existed between the Tibetan and Boro community of Assam throughout the centuries. They maintained trans-border trade relations since the early centuries. Accept any other northeastern community Boro people are more culturally and ethnically similar with the Tibetan people. The trade relations of the Northern Himalayan regions are able to made stronger in the cultural and economically strong between them. The textiles industries produced by machines were made easy for their surviving of life. To complement training initiatives for the Tibetan people, the Central Tibetan Relief Committee are supporting the establishment and growth of new businesses and skilled laborers in India. The Central Tibetan Relief Committee are exploring new methods to electronically connect some of bright youths with the high-tech economy, increasing opportunities for them to use their newly attained advanced skills. When particularly difficult conditions strike, they often help the local co-operative societies and farmers with emergency funds and low-interest, long-term loans. Religion is an important aspect in both the Tibetan and Boro people in every aspect of life. They are conscious of their rights. They both have a history for fighting their identity. Tibetans are supporting to their independence movement in exile through helping of NGO and some social workers. The Chinese government must respect and protect the rights of the Tibetan peoples and their cultural beliefs in the sanctity of the sacred mountains, lakes and rivers of the Tibetan plateau. The principle aim of the preservation of Tibetan ethnic identity is to fight against the Chinese claim of Tibet territory and liberate Tibet from the Chinese colonial rule. Tibet as a nation with their distinctive culture, language, religion and history which have every right to claim self-determination. At the same time, the Boro people are also demanding a separate state in Assam which is known as Bodoland. A separate state within the Indian territories, not separate from the Indian Union. Due to the existence of such diverse notions regarding the Tibetan ethnic identity, finally there arises the matter of what Tibetans and Boro community is. The Boro and Tibetans had a strong cultural and ancient traditional relations, which evolved over the period of time, coexisted with their unique lifestyles, and gave the environment in the world a religion of peace, compassion and non-violence.

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