



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

# AN ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTE ON HAJONGS OF LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT, ASSAM

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### INTRODUCTION

North east India, a region rich with diverse natural resources that shares 4500 Km of international border with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China (Tibet) and Myanmar. It is the homeland of mosaic culture, tradition and miscellaneous population for which it can be considered as the living Anthropological Museum. Out of the total 461 tribal communities found in India more than 145 tribes has been living in North east India that constitutes around 12% of the total tribal population of India and 25.81% of the total population of NE India (Ali and Das, 2003). Assam is a state under the jurisdiction of North east India .It is the land of various tribes and caste which have their own ethnic identity, languages and dialects and belong to different racial stock and prevailing a great diversity regarding the wide range of regional, ecological, ethnic, socio-economic and cultural variation. However, despite of having ample opportunity to conduct numerous ethnographic researches in North east India, studies on tribes and their socio-economic status is scanty. Although there are a number of ethnographic studies conducted in different tribal population of India, hitherto studies on Hajong population is very hard to find. Therefore present study attempted to provide an ethnographic account especially in respect of socio-economic condition of Hajong population particularly inhabiting in Nakari Hajong village of Lakhimpur district of Assam.

As we know the Hajongs are one of the numerically small tribes of Assam and like most of the tribes of north-eastern India, they are of Mongoloid in origin. Their first settlement in India was in the Kamrup District of Assam and this was their home for a long time. They form a Sub-Section of the Bodo-Naga section under Assam-Burma, a group of Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. They are spread all

over Assam with main concentration in the lower Assam, across North-East India and Bangladesh. At present their population is more than 1,00,000 in India. Hajong population are mainly found in Goalpara, Dhemaji, Darrang, North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Cachar, Dhubri, Chirang, Nagaon, Kamrup and Tinsukia districts of Assam, Garo Hills in Meghalaya and Sylhet and Mymensingh districts in Bangladesh. The Hajongs also found in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. They are considered to be the native people of Assam, Meghalaya and Bangladesh; however, a massive proportion of them known to be migrated to India from their homeland in former East-Pakistan which is now known as Bangladesh. They have diverse cultural entity.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In this paper an attempt has been made to assess the socio-economic condition of the Hajong people living in the Nakari Hajong Gaon of Lakhimpur district, Assam. The paper also highlighted about their demographic profile, types of occupation and economic performance etc.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The present study was carried out among the Hajong population of Nakari Hajong Gaon, located in the Lakhimpur district of Assam. To get reliable and complete primary information a comprehensive field investigation was done by using Standard anthropological methods and techniques. The observation method, interview and household survey methods were particularly used for obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data. In depth personal interview method was used to gather the required data regarding economic status, daily income, standard of living etc.

## **A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY VILLAGE**

'Nakari Hajong Gaon' a small tribal village inhabited by exclusively Hajong population situated in the North-eastern direction of North Lakhimpur town. It is 5 k. m. away from the main town. The people of the village used to live in a very little land. Their houses are small in size and there are no personal house boundaries between the houses. The village people inform us that they have no agricultural land. Daily wage earning is the main occupation of most of the villagers. Both male and female work equally but sometimes their work is different from one another. They earn 120 rupees per day which is very less to fulfil all their primary needs. Women of the village under study rear goats, pigs, ducks, and hens etc., Hajong women are also expert in weaving. Moreover, manufacturing

goods by bamboo, wood and cane, preparing rice bear and dry fish, etc., are some other work done by the village people for their livelihood.

In the village there are no electricity facilities. The well which is locally known as cuwa is the primary source of drinking water. There is only one well for all the entire village people from where they carry water. Rice is their staple food. Moreover, they also eat chapatti (the flatbread) locally called asroti with tea as their breakfast, but this habit is rare to find. They served guest by giving a glass of rice bear.

The Hajong people of Nakari Hajong Gaon generally depend on "ASSA" for their health and regarded her as a local doctor. Only in the critical condition they prefer to go Saboti Medical. There is only one Anganbadi school (ICDS School) named primary Jyoti Kendra and except it there is no educational institution in the village.

The Hajong people of the village worship god and goddess according to their own traditional way. They have great regard for the Tulsi plant. Though Hajongs are Animist like most of the tribes of north-east India, however they consider themselves as Hindu. In the village there is a Namghar and one Siv Mandir. They performed Bashu Puja, Radha Puja, Kartik Puja, Padma Puja etc. They observed three Bihu like Assamese people. They prepare varieties of Pitha (made by the rice grinding powder).

The village is administrated by the Gaonbura (head of the village selected by village panchayat). Whenever he fails to take decision the village panchayat settle the problem.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table no 1 shows the age and sex wise distribution of the population under study. The overall frequency of female is found to be comparatively higher (51.95%) than the male Hajong population (48.05%). There are altogether 90 households in the village with a total population of 385. The overall sex ratio, i.e., number of females per 1000 males (as per Indian Census) in this present population is 925 which is considerably lower than the ratio determined by the 2011 census for the state of Assam (958). The highest number of male population 25 (13.51%) belong to the age group 26-30 and in case of female it is in the age group 21-25 years of age. Regarding the longevity of the present population, it is found to be slightly higher in male population as compared to female.

The educational status of Hajong population under study has been apparent from the table no 2. It reveals a poor educational profile of the study population. The frequency of population having higher secondary

level education is 5.45 percent, while the proportion of graduate and post-graduate level educated population is utterly very less (it is 1.04% and 0.25% respectively). However, it should be mentioned here that the overall literacy rate among the male are considerably higher (79.46%) than female (71.5%). The highest number of educated males are found in the category of V-VII (24.86%) and highest number of educated female are found in the category VIII-X(27%).

Table no 3 shows the types of family found among the Hajongs of Nakari Hajong Gaon. It is clear from the table that the inclination towards nuclear family is much higher than joint family. There are total 90 families out of which 81(90%) are nuclear families and only 9(10%) are joint families. There are 73(81.1%) families consist of 2-5 member and 3(3.4%) families consisting 9-10 member. (Table no 4).

The distribution of population according to occupation depicted in the table no 5. It is evident from the table that most of the village people are daily wage earner (39.22%) of which 42.16 percent are male and 36.5 percent are females. Only 3.12 percent Hajong population are found to have government service where interesting no female are found. Another mode of livelihood found among the Hajong population is some kind of small business (1.04%) and Driving (1.29%).

The possession of property by village people of Nakari Hajong Gaon has been apparent from the table no 6. The table shows that 26 families have bicycled and only 4 have scooter. Out of 90 families only 4 families use LPG for cooking. As a medium of communication 7 families have mobile phone, 7 families have TV, and 15 families have radio. Only two families have gold chain and ear ring.

Table no 7 shows the number of domestic animal found among the Hajongs of Nakari Hajong Gaon. It is clear from the table that there are total 296 domestic animals in the village under study; number of Chicken (120) is highest among them.

## CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is evident that Hajong population under study are suffering from poor socio-economic condition despite of having number of tribal development scheme. Lack of proper drinking water facilities, electricity facilities, health care facilities really reflects a devastating picture about them. Educational institution is also not available in the village. Thus for the development of their socio-economic condition and health status there is an urgent need to implement proper

tribal development policies.

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