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The Role of Hoda in the Jamatias - an overview

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ABSTRACT- The paper describes in detail about the customary law of the Jamatias. Tripura is a small state of north-east Indian state. Tripura has mixed population of tribal and non-tribal people. Total 19 tribes are there in Tripura but among them, Jamatia has their own unique social structures called Hoda.

This paper makes a critical analysis on the three social structures- Hoda (apex body) represents as whole, Moyal represents at the regional level and Chakdiri at the village level and how is social structure practice in the Jamatia community.

This paper shows that how is the role of Hoda Akra, Pacha's and Chokdiri at their level and how is these three organ playing the significant role for the protection and safeguard of their culture and practices.

KEYWORDS- Role of Hoda Akra, Pachai's and chakdiri.

Jamatia is one the important tribal group of Tripura. They speak kokborok language similar to that of Tripuris which is the language of Tibeto-Burman origin. Jamatia tribe mainly concentrated in Gomati and west districts of Tripura.

Jamatia is one of the third largest tribe of Tripura after Debbarma and Reang. "There is lot of controversies among the historians regarding the origin of the word Jamatia. The opinion of somendra Chandra deb barma and omesh saigal are also worth mentioning here in this connection. In the opinion of somendra Chandra Debbarma 'The Jamatias in the past served in the royal army of Tripura. The word Jamat means a group or a congregation of people. The army which was formed by them was called Jamat. Since then they have been known as Jamatias'.¹

In this context Omesh Saigal holds the view that Jamat in Urdu means an assemblage of persons. The former rulers of Tripura used to recruit his army from a class of tribals who were not only warriors but also had proven their loyalty to him. A fair proportion of his armed forces were drawn from amongst the Jamatias who formed a group in his army, and it was from this fact that they derived their clan name².

Some writers made endeavours to intermingle the term "Jamatia" with 'Garia'- the principal deity of the Tribes of Tripura. To them, Garia was brought by the Jamatias from the Kukis of Thanangchi. They, were, later on, ordered by the king to worship it in an assemblage of people. The appellation "Jamatia", therefore, came in vogue in course of time for worshipping Garia in an assemblage. The history, however, tells that Garia is not exclusively worshipped by Jamatias alone. From the olden days, other tribes like Tripuris and Reangs also have been worshipping "Garia". But they were not called Jamatias. Then why should they be singled out just for worshipping Garia. This thesis or proportion seems neither historically proved nor convincing³.

The apex social body of the Jamatias is termed as Jamatia Hoda and the whole Jamatia community is governed by their Hoda (the supreme council of their traditional social system) and it is the highest council of the Jamatia community. Therefore, jamatia Hoda is non-political, social organization, independent which exercises the administrative and judicial powers of the Jamatia community. Jamatia Hoda is an important institution of the Jamatia community which looked after the social, political, and religious rites of the community.

It is believed that the social structure of the Jamatia community existed a long time ago. Earlier Jamatias Hoda Okra (chieftainship) is nominated by the royal families. It is proved that under the leadership of Jamatia Hoda Okra Parikshit, a revolt is taking place due to the misinterpretation of Oakhirai, the corrupt officials of the king Birchandra Manikya Bahadur. Therefore, Hoda Okra is given a rope by the kings of Tripura. The powers and position of the Hoda Okra is recognized by the kings of princely state Tripura. Hoda Okra held the full responsibility to maintain the law and order of the Jamatia community like the IPS/SPS officer. But with the passage of time, the system for the nomination of Hoda Okra is changed. Yet, Hoda Okra is selected through election and even the position of Hoda Okra is not hereditary.

The Jamatia Hoda has three-tier levels of social structure-

1. Hoda (community level council) is headed by Hoda Okra.
2. Moyal (regional level council) is headed by panchai. Moyal is the bridge between Hoda and Luku.
3. Luku (village level council) is headed by chakdiri

Thus, the three-tier levels of social structure of the Jamatia Hoda are discussed below-

1. Hoda- It represents the community level council and it is headed by Hoda Okra. It is the apex body of the Jamatia community. The first and foremost of the Hoda Okras is to implement the resolution and decisions of the Hoda. Thus, there are two Hoda okras- first, Hoda okra is looked after the community level and second, Hoda okra is to maintain the law and order of the Jamatia community. There are some conditions for the eligibility of the Hoda Okra are- good in communication skills, above 50 years of age, person belonging to Jamatia community, good moral character and so on. The Hoda Okra is elected for a period of five years. He is the guardian and chief of the Jamatia community. He can be re-elected for the second term. He can also be removed if his actions are found discrepant in any work for the society during the annual conference of the Jamatia Hoda by 2/3rd members of the Advisory Committee and also working committee including the majority members of the panchai. Therefore, the Hoda okra can neither resign nor be re-elected without submission of annual report during the conference. There are two Hoda Okras in the Jamatia community and their duties and functions are not specific. Two Okras are appointed for the smooth functioning of the Hoda.

Functions of Hoda Okra-

- The twin Hoda okra shall not follow opposite and contradictory policy in their role.
- Hoda Okra shall be responsible for the implementation of policy, practice, rules and regulations etc.
- The Hoda Okra shall preside over the meetings of Advisory and Working committees of the Hoda.
- The Hoda Okra should protect the person who is attacked while maintaining the rules and regulations of the Hoda as per the laws.
- The Hoda Okra preside over all meetings of the Hoda for the holistic development of the Hoda.
- The Hoda Okra may collect subscription for the celebration of pujas and the others which contributed for the growth of the Jamatia Hoda.

Generally, Hoda Okra is the head of the Jamatia community. The main aims and objectives of the Jamatia Hoda are determined by the twin Hoda okra for the decentralization of power. The main function of the Hoda is to maintain peace and prosperity, abolition of evil practice, to enhance the conditions of women and to bring all-round development of the Jamatia Community. However, the three-tier structures are inter-related and they are the main organ and backbone of the community. For instance, all the matters relating to the cases of divorce, abduction, eloping etc. are to be mitigated by them. In every sphere, Hoda okra is assisted by its members. It is worth to mention here that all the important decisions of the community are vested on the hands of Jamatia Hoda. The okras shall arrange submission of detailed financial report of all the assets of the Jamatia Hoda in addition to immovable and moveable properties during the annual conference of the Hoda and also okras shall operate the bank account of Hoda with General Secretary and Cashier of the Working Committees accordingly. Hoda okra

may incur expenditure not more than 2000/- in matter pertaining to the welfare of Jamatia society. To aid and advice of the okras, the committees of Hoda such as Advisory committee, a Working Committee, and an Audit board are constituted at the annual conference of the Jamatia Hoda.

The Advisory Committee is also an important body of the Jamatia Hoda. The Advisory committee member consisting of seven members and shall hold the office for a period of three years. Therefore, the Advisory Committee shall be educated and be acquainted with the provisions of constitution of India. At least, one member of Advisory committee shall be present out of seven in every settlement of disputes by arbitration. If a member of this committee fail to attend in any for a period of one year then automatically his membership will be cancelled. The member of the Advisory Committee is to direct and assist the Hoda Okras in terms of legislative, executive and judiciary. If the members is not satisfied with the work of Hoda Okras then the can make complain against Hoda Okras. It is the duty of the Advisory committee to keep an eye and ensure the trials of any cases are proper and Judge.

Hoda Working Committee is another important body of Jamatia Hoda. Its committee members consisting of 33 members and 1/3rd seats are reserved for women. They are General Secretary, Treasurer, Religious Secretary, Cultural Secretary. To be a member of the committee a person shall have good knowledge of the rules and regulations of Hoda and shall be above 25 years of age and also does not hold any position in the politics. This committee shall hold the office for a period of three years. The President, Vice-president, secretary and joint secretary of Baba Garia Mission shall be ex-officio members of the working committee. The main function of the committee is to aid and advice to the okras regarding the keeping of documents and accounts, to lay down the usage, customs and practices and many others. They shall the powers and position to looked after the society and also they encouraged the child education. No proposal can be passed by the committee without the approval of Hoda Okras but they can formulate regulations for implementation of the decisions, approved rules and regulations efficiently. Besides, there shall be an Audit Board to maintain the accounts of Hoda. The Audit member consisting of five members and shall be passed secondary stage or equivalent. They shall hold office for three years and be examine the account of the Hoda three times in a year.

2. Moyal (regional level)- It is the bridge between Hoda Okras and chakdari. A Moyal Panchai is comprises of 30-50 Lukus. Overall, there are 13 Moyal of the Jamatia community. In each moyal, there are two panchais who are elected by the delegates (Adangs) of the Lukus during the annual conference of the Moyal. A Mayal panchay is elected for a term of five years. A Moyal panchais may be a resident of the concerned panchais, strong believer of Baba Garia, observe all the social customs of Jamatias and so on. A Mayal panchay may resign and can be re-elected after the completion of the term if the electors wants. The member of the Moyal held the responsible for maintaining peace and order and development of the locality. Generally, panchais shall be nominated in the annual conference of the moyal and they have to keep a bonding with Hoda Akas pertaining to maintain peace and order and to enhance the social life of the mayal. A panchais have to submit annual report of his Mayal to the Hoda Akas. The election of Mayal panchays are held at an interval of three to five years during Gang puja and the expenses for performing of the Gang puja can be meet out of Mayal fund. The annual conference of the Mayal shall be assembled prior to the commencement of the annual conference of Hoda. The Moyal panchays hold some judicial powers and acts as judge in his jurisdiction. However, the decision of the panchais is not final and he may send a case to the chieftainship of Jamatia Hoda for final decision. The panchais are responsible to looked after the Moyal while any hindrances stood on the way of Moyal. For instance, Panchais may sort out the dilemma when the Chakdiri is unable to mitigate the problem of the Luku. In order to resolve the problems of the Luku, Panchais may select any Luku under his jurisdiction for solving the problems and they can punish the accused without any fail. Besides, panchais shall be assisted by the members of Working and Advisory Committees for the progress of Moyal. The function of the panchais is to report to Hoda Akas at least once in a month to discuss about the developmental works of Moyal in a magnificent manner. He shall preside over the meetings of the working committee. He is the intermediate class between the Chakdiri and Hoda Akas. That's why he issue directions to every Chakdiri of the Moyal to formulate plans and actions and to carry out the work for welfare of the Moyal. There are some duties of the panchais which is given below-

1. To carry out the decisions of Jamatia Hoda.
2. To spread awareness about education to the youngsters and create a favorable atmosphere.
3. To restrain society from any kind of dilemma which may adversely affected in the Moyal.
4. To submit annual reports to the annual conference in the Moyal.
5. Issuing certificates of residence, birth, marriage and death under his jurisdiction.

3. Luku:- The village level council is termed as Luku. It is the lowest level of the jamatia Hoda. 'Luku is an important socio- administrative unit among the Jamatias at the village level. A Luku is the ground level form of the society so to say, The chief is known as Chakdiri. Few families make Luku. Two or more 'Khandals' assists the chokdiri in all social activities"4. The chief of the Luku is Chakdiri who is selected by the residents of the Luku in its annual conference and he shall be responsible for maintaining the affairs of the Luku. The Chakdiri shall be a resident of the village council and be a good manner. The Chakdiri shall be capable to handle the cases of the village and he was assisted by two Khandals. The Chakdiri shall hold the office for a period of three years. However, the position of Chakdiri is a selective, not a hereditary. At the village level, there shall be a Luku Committee to aid and advice Chakdiri to execute the business of Luku, Village Council. The members of Luku committee shall be nominated by the elder members of the village. The two khandals are directed by the Chakdiri to inform all the villagers pertaining to the issues of the village such as meeting, a social gathering, social occasions and many others. For instance, if any one of each family is fail to attend the meeting, social gathering or any others then he/she may imposed a fine of his/her absence. As a head of the village, a Chakdiri is fully responsible to resolve the disputes of matters pertaining to crime, theft etc. In every Luku committee, there shall be three bodies- a Secetary, a treasurer and a cultural secretary. As per norms, the Luku committee shall meet at least three times in a year to discuss the issues of Luku and to formulate the plans and policies for the betterment of the society and to maintain the peace and prosperity of the village. Therefore, the Chakdiri has the power to summon all the villagers which is commonly known as kok-malaima. The chakdari has to keep a regular contact with the panchais and Hoda Akas. The chakdari shall be responsible to send delegates in the meetings of Moyal and Hoda. The Luku/village committee shall perform Nakri, Raksha kali and ker pura at least once in a year by itself. "The puja which is held in luku level is known Luku Samwng and he puja which is performed by house holder level is called Mkhung Samwng." (70). The Jamatias arrange this ritual collectively in the sacred rivers of Tripura. The names of the rivers in which the Jamatias pay reverence are as follows: a) Gomati river b) Bijoy river c) Khowai River5. "Besides, the other rivers and streams are also selected for the ritual. The sacrifices being made on the community level are expensive. The expensive animal like buffalo is purchased by subscription raised from all the families of the Jamatia villages. At some places we have noticed that the offering of betelnut and betel-leaves have been also included owing to the Hindu influence. From the religious point of view the Ochai offers all the sacrifices chanting the mantras as an incharge of all the religious responsibilities6. However, the Khandol shall perform the duties of the the chakdari, if chakdari fail to execute his duties due to some reasons pertaining to illness or otherwise whatever it may be. As per the norms of the village, each and every family members of the village donate some amount of money and rice in cash and kind for the performance of funeral ceremony of the deceased. Therefore, the duties and responsibilities of the chakdari are enumerated below-

1. Chakdari must perform Lampra puja in every month on regular basis.
2. He has to wear dhoti and sacred thread on his shoulder.
3. Chakdari shall resolve the disputes of the villages with the aid of elder people of the Luku.
4. Chakdari directed the khandal to collect the fund of the village when needed.
5. Chakdari shall submit his working details report and annual conference report in the annual meeting of the village.

6. He must attend the meetings of the Hoda positively.
7. He must abide the rules and regulations framed by the Luku.
8. He must abide the orders and instructions delivered by panchais and Hoda okras.

Suggestions

- Sometimes a wide gap is found between the three bodies - Chakdari, Panchais and Hoda Akras due to lack of communication. So this kind of activities should be removed.
- Eligible persons should be appointed in terms chakdari, panchais and Hoda Akras. Because sometimes it's found that these three bodies could not execute their duties efficiently.
- Chakdari must execute his duties and responsibilities because if the chakdari is failed to accomplish his duties then the upper two bodies would be erupted automatically.
- Luku at the village level should carry out their work efficiently then ultimately upper bodies- Panchais and Hoda Akras could be execute their duties positively.

CONCLUSION

From the above circumstances, it is clear that Jamatia Hoda is an institution which safeguard the rights and protect its community into three ways one Luku at the village level, second Moyal at the regional level and Hoda at the community level. Of course, Jamatia community is first tribal among the 19 tribes which receiving the Customary Law Act in 2017. But it is seen that Customary Law is not strictly followed among the Jamatia Community. In order to mitigate this dilemma, Jamatia Hoda had to work actively and may propagate their Customary Law among Jamatia community. It is mandatory for Jamatias to know about its laws but few people know about its community laws.

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