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ijirset@gmail.com

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The Role of Hoda in the Jamatias - An Overview

Madhu Chandra Jamatia

M.A. in History 2016, Gold Medalist, Tripura University (A Central University), SLET qualified, India

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 will represent three social structure of Jamatia Hoda- 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.

Key words- 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). It is the highest council of the Jamatia community. Therefore, jamatia Hoda are non-political, social organization, independent which exercises the administrative power as well as 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 believe that the social structure of the Jamatia community is existed a long past ago. Earlier Jamatias Hoda Okra (chieftainship) is nominated by the royal families. It is proved that the 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 king during manikya rule. The powers and position of the Hoda Okra is recognized by the kings of princely state of Tripura. Hoda Okra held the full responsibility to

maintain the law and order of the Jamatia community like the IPS/SPS officier. 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 jamatia at the community level and second, Hoda okra is to maintain the law and order of the Jamatia community as a whole. There was some conditions to become Hoda akra for which he should be good communication skills, good character and above 50 year of age. The tenure of the Hoda akra is only for five years. He is the guardian and chief of the Jamatia community. He can also be re-elected for the second term during the annual conference of the Hoda. He can also be removed if his action is found discretion at any time and in any work for the society then he shall be remove by the Hoda. Therefore, the Hoda okra can neither resign nor be re-elected without submission of annual report to the members of Hoda during annual conference.

Functions of Hoda Okra-

- Twin Hoda okra shall not be opposite to each other.
- 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 Jamatia without fail.
- The Hoda Okra may also collect subscription or chhada for the celebration of pujas which is further contributed to the work Jamatia Hoda.
- The Hoda Okra should protect and take the stand of the person who is being attacked while maintaining the rules and regulations of the Hoda as per the laws.
- The Hoda Okra may also collect subscription for the celebration of pujas which further 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 twin Hoda okra are the decentralization of power. The main function of the Hoda is to maintain peace and prosperity, abolition of evil practice, enhance the conditions of women and to bring all- round development of the Jamatia Community. However, the three-tier structures are the main organ and backbone of the Jamatia community. For instance, all the matters relating to the cases of divorce, abduction, eloping etc. is to be mitigated by them. In every sphere, Hoda okra is assisted by its members.

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 the tenure of three years. Therefore, the Advisory Committee shall be well educated and also be acquainted with the provisions of constitution of India. Therefore, minimum one member of the Advisory committee shall be present out of seven in each and every settlement of disputes and conflict by arbitration. If the member of the advisory committee failed to attend in any time for a period of one year then automatically his membership will be deemed as an invalid. The member of the Advisory Committee is to direct and assist the Hoda Okras in terms of legislative, executive and judiciary.

Hoda Working Committee is another important body of Jamatia Hoda. Its committee members consisting of 33 members and out of them about 1/3rd seats are reserved for women. They were General Secretary, Treasurer, Religious

Secretary and Cultural Secretary. To become a member of the committee a person shall have good knowledge about the rules and regulations of Hoda and also minimum the person shall be above 25 years of age. This committee shall hold the office for a period of three years. The President, Vice-president, secretary and joint secretary of Baba Garia Mission are the ex-officio members of the working committee of the jamatia Hoda. 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 have the powers and position to keep an eye in the society. Further, they also encouraged child education. Thus, no proposal can be passed by the committee without the approval of Hoda Okras but they could formulate rules and regulations regarding in any decision which is pertaining to the work of Hoda. 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 may be set up with Lukus nearly about 30-45 village. Overall, there are 13 Moyal of the Jamatia community. There shall be two panchais in the moyal who are being elected by the delegate of the Lukus during the annual conference of the Moyal. A Moyal panchay shall hold office for a term of five year. There are some conditions regarding the resignation and re-appointment. Therefore, he is the chief of the moyal. The member of the Moyal held the responsible for maintaining peace and order in the locality. Generally, panchais shall be nominated in the annual conference of the moyal that is why they have to keep a good bonding with Hoda Akras. Therefore, panchais held the full responsible regarding the settlement of disputes in matters related to women, divorce with the approval of the Hoda okras. Furthermore, moyal panchais shall submit annual report of his Moyal to the Hoda Akras without fail. The elections of Moyal panchays are held after every three to five years. The Moyal panchays have some judicial powers and acts as judge in his jurisdiction with sovereign and independent. However, the decision which has taken by panchais is not final that's why he may transfer a case to the hand of 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 in the Luku. In order to resolve the problems of the Luku, Panchais may select any Luku under his jurisdiction for solving the problems relates to the punishment to the accused without any fail. Besides, panchais shall be assisted by the members of Working and Advisory Committees for the upliftment of Moyal. He shall preside over the meetings of the working committee. He is the intermediate class between the Chakdiri and Hoda Akras. 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 the education of youngsters.
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 of 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 constituted with at least 25-40 family of the village. The chief of the luku is chakdri. He shall be above 50-60 years of age.

‘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 called Chakdiri which is selected by the adult residents of the village in its annual conference. The Chakdri held full responsible for maintaining the peace and order of the village. The Chakdiri take the major decisions in the affairs of the village as well as handle the cases of the village. The Chakdiri shall hold the office for a period of three years. However, the position of Chakdiri is not permanent as he was selected by villagers. The chakdri

shall be assisted by two adangs. The chakdri shall be responsible to send adongs in the meeting of moyal and Hoda. Therefore, two khandals are directed by Chakdiri to inform all the villagers regarding meeting, social gathering, social occasions and many others. For instance, if any member of each family is fail to attend the meeting, social gathering or any others of the village then he/she may imposed a fine of his/her absence but there shall be exemption for government employees. As a head of the village, a Chakdiri is fully responsible to resolve the disputes of matters pertaining to crime, theft etc. As per norms, the Luku committee shall meet at least thrice in a year in order to discuss the issues relates to the affairs of the village. The chakdri held responsible to formulate the plans and policies for the betterment of the society and also to maintain the peace and prosperity of the village. The Chakdiri has power to summon all the villagers by sending some people which is commonly known as kok-malaima. Furthermore, chakdari has to keep in touch with the panchais and Hoda Akras regularly. The Luku/village committee shall perform various kinds of puja such as Nakri, Raksha kali and ker puja 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 ih the sacred reivers fo Tripura. The names of the rivers in which the Jamatias pay reverence are as follows: a) Gomati river b) Bijoy river c) Khowai River.5

“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. Fromt he religious point of view the Ochai offers all the sacrifices chanting the mantras as an incharge of all the religious responsibilities.6

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 any other issues. It is worth to mention here that all family members of the village have to pay some amount of money and rice in cash and kind for the performance of funeral ceremony of the deceased which further helped village people if somebody is financially weak. Therefore, the duties and responsibilities of the chakdari are enumerated below-

1. Chakdari should perform Lampra puja in every month on regular basis.
2. He must wear white dhoti and sacred thread on his shoulder.
3. Chakdari shall resolve the disputes of the villages with the aid of elder people of the village.
4. Chakdari directed the khandal to collect the fund of the village whenever it felt necessary.
5. Chakdari shall submit his working details report and annual conference report in the annual meeting of the village.
6. He must abide the rules and regulations framed by the Luku.
7. He must abide the orders and instructions delivered by his superior (panchais and Hoda okras).

Suggestions

- There should not be miscommunication between three organs of Jamatias Hoda.
- Eligible persons should be appointed in terms of chakdari, panchais and Hoda Akra.
- All the three organs such as Hoda, moyal and luku should execute their duties effieciently without fail and there should be close coordination and deep boding among the three organs.

II. 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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