

International Peer Review Journal
ISSN 2321-7340(Print) & E-Journal Virson

মাটির সংস্কৃতির উৎস সন্ধান—

লোক-উৎস

(The Source of Folk)
E-Journal Virson
Vol.-1: Issue-1: 2022

মুখ্য সম্পাদক
ড. পরিমল বর্মণ

উপজনভূই পাবলিশার্স
মাথাভাঙ্গা * কুচবিহার

লোক-উৎস, ১ম সংখ্যা # *E-Journal_149*

Women, sexuality and fertility cult: a case study on portrayal of Rajbanshi women

ManashiMohanta, SACT

Dept. of Journalism and Mass Communication

Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri College

Abstract: Culture is life. Every society has its own customs and principles which can be considered as the culture of that society. The culture has evolved over time. This is a complex aspect of human existence. Culture is a way of life that has been practiced for generations. Culture can be said to the identity of human existence which grows with belief, attitude on a subject.

In this chapter it is try to focus how does fertility cult became an important part of culture and communication. How does women and sexuality portray their life with fertility cult in Rajbanshi culture. Rajbanshi are ethnic community of North Bengal, of West Bengal. Rajbanshi is the popular community of Northern part of West Bengal. They are popular with their unique origin, dialect, culture. After Independence their population enriched in Assam, north Bengal (West Bengal), Rangpur (Bangladesh), and Nepal also. By the time everything must have changed as Rajbanshi community has gone through many changes. More discussed and researched this population is a subject intense curiosity of everyone. They are many untold things about Rajbanshi community. Which is a wonder to all in previous era to present time. Rajbanshi community has also profound history which make many research work a treasure. They are identic for their society, language and culture. This ancient culture makes

debtor to our Indian history. Till today immense knowledge about Rajbanshi are under veiled to us.

Key words: Rajbanshi culture, fertility cult, communication, women portrayal, recent aspect.

Introduction: It is not easy to define in one sentence what is culture, it is a phenomenon which developed by the time and generation and age. In this context this paper tries to give a brief illustration of Rajbanshi culture, especially in the context of Cooch Behar district. The district was a princely state before 1950, it was independent or autonomous state. Under the rule of kings, the district was named Kamtapur. In the history in various time the district has many names like Kamrup, Pragjyotishpur. In our mythological text Mahabarat, Ramayan the name PragJyotishpur was mentioned, in Kalikapuran, Yoginitantra the Kamrupa name was mentioned. During the period of Hussain Shah reign, the name Kamrupa was also mentioned in the coin. China traveler Hiuen Tsang also mentioned the name of Kamrupa state. So, it is understood well that Cooch Behar district has profound ancient history from its very origin. But in this paper the researcher would not explore so much of the origin of the state here. The recent paper would try to portray more the cultural part of this heritage district. The large number of ethnic people of this district are Rajbanshis. They are considered as ancient community of this region. They are the popular community in the whole Northern region of Bengal. Amidst of all tribes and other community Rajbanshis are believed as son of soil of North Bengal. From pre-independence era they are known for their origin, unique culture, dialect and so many. After independence they are also found in Assam, Rangpur, West Bengal and Bihar, Nepal Region with their glorious identity. The primitive history of Rajbanshi community still yet to be explored. The rich culture makes scholar intense curious to work on it.

লোক-উৎস, ১ম সংখ্যা # *E-Journal*_151

Eminent writer, folklorist Ashutosh Bhattacharya stated that Rajbanshis belong to 'Indo- Mongoloid stock' (Bhattacharya 1982:10). 'Dalton' opined that they are 'Dravidian stock' (Sanyal 1965:11). 'This thought is also reflected in the remark of Linguist Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay- 'The masses of North Bengal areas are very largely of Bodo origin or Mixed Austric-Dravidian Mongoloid'⁸' (Ray 2016:20). So, it can be said the culture of Rajbanshi community is very diversified.

Rajbanshi Culture: The agrarian community practice their culture which they inherit from their ancestors. Many of their practices still reflect the primitive culture. In this paper there is no much opportunity to discuss in detail about culture. So, the researcher tries to depict some of its notable folk practices here in a very brief manner. Their folk song and dance, folk rituals, folk literature, folk drama and many more diversity make our Bengal culture debtor. By the time of reigning many kings, the community was gradually developed. There is a rigorous religious impact on the community. This religious impact also developed the Rajbanshi culture. In this context their worshipping of deities is very unique. Significantly Bhawayia song and dance, MoishalBondhurgaana, marriage song, various brata or vows for deities such as Bishohori, Hudum Deo, birth rituals etc. Their food habit, various occasion, their attire, family structure, living style all depict such a unique culture till today. Some of their ancestral practices reflects a matriarchal aspect in culture as well as the society. But by the passage of time Rajbanshi culture has gone through various changes which reflects patriarchal influence.

Fertility cult: it is a religious practice. Sometime it is considered as black magic practice in many places of world. In the whole world the fertility cult is familiar practice. In our country in many states, it has been practiced from the ancient period to till today. West Bengal is not exceptional in this

rites practice. In North Bengal, especially in Cooch Behar district Hudum deo puja and byang r biyao (marriage of frog) is considered as 'seasonal rites. Hudum means nude, deo means God. This rite is absolutely women centric.in the monsoon time for better harvesting, to overcome drought women worship the god of rain. The agrarian society mainly practice this rite. Rajbanshi women do this brata or vow in the dark night in a nude way. No male person is allowed at that time of worship. Not only that no male person can watch curiously or peep. It is believed that if any one does so then evil would not spare him. In the field study the data was collected from those women who professionally do the rites still in modern times with such full devotion and reverence. In the end of the whole process women do the rituals of marriage of frog. Here it can be said frog represent the rain and its marriage can be thought as a process of fertility. In North East India, Karnatak,Bihar, Uttar Pradesh the fertility rite has been practicing from the beginning of modern society. According to Dr. Nihar Ranjan Rai mentioned this rite also practiced in Diorira village of Australia, Abbyssinia, Java village,Macedonia, Greek community of Tesla, South Russian Village, Caucasian ethnic group of Georgia, Batavia, Tirio, Chin, Japan all these practice such practice.

Culture as Communication:Communication means the way of transmission. The fundamental elements of communication are language, sign, symbol, human action, anything through which the whole world can express everything towards us. Culture itself a way of communication process. This continuous process which develops culture in a regular manner and society grows. The paper illustratesfertility cult as an important part of Rajbanshi culture which play a role of elements of communicate as rites toget rid from water scarcity or drought and establish a belief that the

rites can save the society. Eminent scholar of communication and sociology Prof. Dennis McQuail opined 'perhaps the most general and essential attribute of culture is communication, since culture could not develop service extend and generally succeed without communication'.

Women portrayal: the main purpose of the paper is the portrayal of Rajbanshi women in their culture. As a case study fertility cult, namely Hudum deo worship in Cooch Behar district. Here particular groups of women do these folk rituals in villages. In the field study some exceptional data came up that firstly, those women were familiar in the particular area in a negative way. They were not accepted with a prestigious reputation in the society. Secondly, generally women from ordinary family do not come to them who do this rite. Those women are considered by the ordinary people as tantrik or black magic practitioner or witchcraft expert. Thirdly, women who are related to those folk practice, are more powerful, brave, independent in both way -socially and economically. Fourthly, despite all they are not the decision maker in the village, cannot play a role like sarpanch or panchayat or village head. Lastly the cult practice engages with women sexual appeal in the whole process of worshiping towards the rain god. where they recite the sloka or sing song from the midnight to the dawn, as the mores happen till its rain. The brata or the particular folk lore are not permissible to recite in front of any common people in the society because sexuality depict here by using erotic words. In this cult women body represent the harvesting land or the thirsty soil and when the rain god impress by the sensual appeal it will rain which delineate the ejaculation from male body. In this ritual the women body is objectified and

subordinated by the 'male gaze'¹⁰.The women centric rite practice is seemed to be glorifying womanhood but from the feministic angle male heterosexual approach of pleasure degradethe respect of women body. In this Hudum Deo folk practice body, sensual appeal and erotic words are the elements of communication. The sexual cultural perspective is widely practiced in all over the world as well as in India. In witchcraft the depiction of women, nude goddesses, uses of sensual words are ultimately male desire. Here women also unknowingly practiced the patriarchal approach of worshipping male rain god to satisfying him. Most of the women still believe the feelings of orgasm or satisfactory sexual appeal is only for male, not for women. Still women believe their body is not of them. This point is another main issue of radical feminist and their movement. They concern about sexual inequality in many of their basic theoretical discussion.

Recent trends:In recent time this HudumDeo puja and Byang r Biyao rites is only matter of practice in the villages. But village communities are now apathetic to restore the culture. The impact of popular culture makes the recent generation averse to practice all these things. Generation does many folk practices such as Bhawaiya song and dance etc. but they are unwilling to do such folk rituals. Still, most of the old women keep this rite alive with its group who basically do this brata or vow in every monsoon season religiously. Modern Rajbanshi women are now educated and they gradually understand socio cultural fact and representation of female image in society.They now can distinguish sex, gender, patriarchy, power and all.

¹⁰The term 'male gaze' was coined by scholar, essayist, film maker Laura Mulvey in 1975. She first used this term in her famous essay – 'Visual Pleasure and narrative Cinema'.

So, they are respectful to Rajbanshi Identity but reluctant to practice such nude religious culture more.

Conclusion: Each of the elements of Rajbanshi culture give us to re-search more and more things. There is vast scope to explore again despite more existing work on it. From the origin of Rajbanshi to identity politics to recent socio economic and political scenario every aspect needs to rethink about the particular society. It has numerous academic relevance from the aspect of many subjects.

References:

1. DevRanjit Cooch Behar JelarItihas,publisher Brookland, 2014
2. Ray Shankar Dr.Girija; UttarbangerRajbangshiJatirPuja Parbon;Desh prokashan,ISBN:978-93-81678-80-4;2015
3. DevRanjit; Uttarbangeritihash o sanskriti; published by Sahityasree; Kolkata-9; 2017
4. Dev Ranajit;Uttarbangerpujabroto o utsab; published by Renaissance prakashan; Kolkata;2015
5. RayJyotirmoy; the Rajbanshi Samajdarpan 2; Shee book agency, ISBN 978-93-83816-61-3;2016
6. Maciver R.M. and H.PageCharles ; Society – an introductory analysis; Trinity Press; 2014; ISBN 978-93-5138-081-8
7. ShanyalDr.Charuchandra, Uttarbanger Rajbanshi, Asiatic society, Kolkata, 1965.
8. KochbeharJela, a journal, published by Information and Broadcasting centre, West Bengal Govt, July 2006.
9. BhattacharyyaAshutosh, BanglarLokosanskriti, National Book Trust, 1982.

10. Ray Ranjan Nalini; Koch Rajbanshi and Kamtapur, The truth unveiled, published by CKRSD, 2007.
11. Deb Ranjit; Khan Amanatullah Ahamed Rachito-CoochebharerItihas; Parulprakashani; 2016; ISBN-978 93 86186 35 5
12. Dev, Ranajit; Rajbanshi SomajJibon O SanskritirItihas
13. McQuailDenis; Mass communication theory; published by SAGE; 2010; ISBN:978-81-321-0579-4(PB)
14. ErasovBoris; Singh Yogendra; The Sociology of culture; Rawat publication,2017;ISBN 978-81-316-0025-2
15. Butler Judith; Gender Trouble – Feminism and the Subversion of Identity; published by Routledge; 1990; ISBN₁₃: 978-1-138-23636-3