

Development Model in Rural Assam: An Analysis of the Rabha Community in Baksa District, Assam.

Dr. Bidisha Bora

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science,
Radha Gobinda Baruah College, Gauhati University, Assam, India.
Email - saikia_bidisha03@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The Schedule Tribes of India are considered to be backward in context of economic, social, political and educational spheres. They reside in rural areas which are full of resources and are virgin. There have been various efforts of the government through implementing policies to bring in development amongst them. Unless and until, they try by themselves to develop their conditions, there is no fruitfulness of these policies which will remain dormant. So it is important for both the parties work together i.e. governmental policies as well as initiatives of the Schedule tribes to achieve the planned development. This research paper has tried to highlight such an effort on the part of Schedule Tribe to bring development amongst them regarding governmental policies as well as self-development. This paper is an attempt to study the efforts of the Rabha Tribe of Assam and their self-sufficient model of development. The efforts undertaken by the Rabha Tribe which is a Schedule Tribe (Plains) community has immense futuristic opportunities to remain in the rural areas instead of migrating to urban areas. There are efforts in creating employment opportunities and be self-sufficient. This paper will also analyse the implementability of this model of rural development in other villages of India. It is possible for the rural India to develop their living standards being self-sufficient by using the available resources in the villages.*

Key Words: *Development, Rabha, Schedule Tribes.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Assam is a land of multi-ethnicity with vibrant cultures and communities mixing together to form the diversified unique identity. It is the gateway to the north-east India. Within this diversities resides unity in the land of Assam. The sweetness of the society of Assam has been in the fact that there resides Schedule Tribes and Schedule Castes along with the other categories of the society.

The origin of these people can be traced in the Mongoloid race migrating to the region at various times. “Successive waves of migration from the North, the East and North-East brought the Mongoloids to Assam” (Bordoloi, Thakur, Saikia. 1987. pg.86). They are known to be Indo-Mongoloids. In total there are as many as twenty-five ethnic groups of the Mongoloid race. “The Schedule Tribes (Plains), inhabiting both the Brahmaputra valley and the Barak valley, are the Barmans, Bodos or Bodo Kacharis, Hajongs, Singphos, Khamptis and Garos or Achiks. The Schedule Tribes (Hills), inhabiting Karbi Anglong and North Cacher Hills are the Chakmas, Dimasa, Garos, Hajongs, Hmars, Khasis, Jaintias, Shantongs, Pnars, Wars, Bhois, Lynggams, Kukis with 37 sub-groups” (ibid. Pg. 91,92). Therefore, they comprise the backbone of the Assamese society. Their development will lead to the overall development of the society. The concept of development is related to economic, political and social aspects. According to Weidner, “Development is a process directed towards socio-economic development and nation-building”. That means that the concept of development helps in nation building through socio-economic changes. Colin and Grieger opined that “development means change compelled with growth”. Besides, there are certain models of development such as-

- Western Liberal Model of Development
- Welfare Model of Development
- Socialist/Marxist Model of Development
- Gandhian Model
- Sustainable Model
- Democratic-Socialist Model (www.yourarticlelibrary.com accessed on 19/11/2019).

1.1. Objective:

The main objective of this research paper is to analyse the role of people’s participation in the development of areas mainly occupied by the Schedule tribes.

2. METHODOLOGY:

The methodology adopted for the purpose is the interview method. To collect data, interview schedules has been prepared. There is the usage of random sampling method to achieve accurate outcome. Besides, secondary sources such as publications, news etc. has been taken into consideration. The study area is No.2 Kataligoan, Baksa District, Assam. As per the Census 2011, the village code is 304511. It has a population of 945. Of the total population, 484 are males and 461 are females. The age group of 0-6 years is 97 which makes up 10.26% of the total population of the village. About 46 are male children and 51 are female children. It is a medium size village with 183 families residing in it. The average sex-ratio is 952 which is lower than the state average of 958. The child sex-ratio is 1109 which is higher than the state average of 962. The literacy rate of the village is higher compared to Assam. It is 73.11% compared to 72.19% of Assam. Around 85.84% males are literate and 59.51% females are literate. The number of main workers who are employed or earning more than 6 months is 528 which is 92.63% . The number of marginal workers is 42 who earns for less than 6 months constitute 7.37% of the total workers. About 496 are cultivators (owners or co-owners) while 0 are agricultural labourers.

3. THE RABHA TRIBE OF ASSAM- A DISCUSSION:

One of the Schedule Tribes in the plain district of Assam are the Rabhas. They are mostly settled in the districts of Kokrajhar, Sonitpur, Darrang, Kamrup and Bongaigoan. Besides, they are distributed in Meghalaya, Bangladesh, Nepal, West Bengal, Manipur etc. Regarding the Rabhas, different views are there about their origin, ethnic individuality and inter-relationship with other tribes (Das, 1962). Major Playfair opines that Rabhas came to India from the Tibetan region. Hudson opines they are a part of the Bodo community. Lt. Col. Wadel opines that Rabhas are Kacharis. Dr. Grierson views that “Rabha was a Hindu name of the Kacharis”. On the other hand, E. A. Gait and Rev. S. Endle views that Rabhas were known as Totlas and Dاتیয়াল Kacharis as mentioned in the Census Report 1891. Gait opined that “Rabhas were ethnically culturally a distinct tribe” (Bordoloi, Thakur, Saikia. 1987. pg. 120-121).

3.1. VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF THE RABHAS:

According to the renowned anthropologist L.P.Vidyarthi, the tribal people of India can be categorised into 4 categories (Mandal, 2019) :

- Himalayan India
- Middle India
- Western India
- Southern India

Almost four hundred fifty different tribes resides in the territory of India with distinct racial, linguistic, economic, social and religious categories (ibid, 2019). As far as the Rabha tribe is concerned, it has seven ‘sub-tribes’:

- Rangdaniya
- Maitoriya
- Pati
- Koch
- Bitliya
- Dahuriya
- Sangha

Gait has pointed out five sub-groups of the Rabhas:

- Rangdani
- Pati
- Maitory
- Dahuri
- Kachari

Dr. B. M. Das divided the Rabhas into the following categories:

- Rangdani
- Pati
- Maitory
- Totla

- Dahuri
- Bitla
- 1. Shangha
- 2. Hana etc. (ibid 1987, pg.120).

3.2. RELIGION OF THE RABHAS:

Rabhas are animists in their religious outlook. Though there is Hinduisation of numerous Rabhas, yet the fact of animism cannot be denied which is their traditional faith. No doubt they takes part in Hindu festivals such as Durga Puja, Ganesh Puja, Kali Puja etc., yet some of them have also joined the Vaishnavite school of religion (ibid 1987, pg. 127). Some of them are also converted to Christianity.

3.3. RABHAS AND THEIR LIVELIHOOD PATTERNS:

The main source of livelihood of the Rabha Tribes is agriculture. They mainly grow different types of rice. Their staple food is rice. Besides, they also rear animals and birds. There is a tradition of making rice-beer at home which they consumes mainly during occasions as it is their social ritual. They also eat pork and fish. They are basically non-vegetarian. The women folks of the Rabha community are expert weavers. They weaves their own apparels. The Rabha bride usually wears the clothes woven by herself. They have excellency in colour combinations and possesses knowledge about dying yarns. It is a source of livelihood for the Rabha women. But with the growing competence the Rabha weaving culture is almost dying.

3.4. THE DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF NO.2. KATALIGOAN (RABHA CHUPA), BAKSA DISTRICT, ASSAM:

The Development Model of No.2 Kataligoan (Rabha Chupa) has set an example of a self-made model village. It is situated in the Baska Circle of Baksa District of Assam which is under the control of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). It is situated in the Indo-Bhutan boarder. It is an eco-friendly village with greenery surrounding every nook and corner. It is indeed an eye's retreat. The village is connected with good roads but there is lack of transport facilities. The village welcomes the visitors with banners displaying the address of the village in both ends of the village. The first impression of the village speaks about the praiseworthy efforts of the villagers of this remotest place. The roads are very clean with dividers marking the roads into two halves and both sides of the road is adorned by display boards highlighting the importance of environmental protection and about following social rules. These slogans helps the people to develop awareness. Everywhere there are bamboo dustbins which are made by the villagers themselves. There is a "Club House" in the village which can accommodate any type of big functions. The villagers follow the Hindu religion mostly and speaks Assamese language.

There are three *samities* namely, Milan Samabai Samiti, Lakshmi Mahila Samiti and Chilarai Sangha. The word Samiti is an Assamese word for association. Almost all the adults are members of these samities. The women of the village plays active role in the smooth running of the society. They are well versed with the social and economic issues. These three societies left no stone unturned from cleaning the village to keeping a close watch on the rule breakers. Though it is a tribal community having the culture of consumption of liquor, yet anyone found of selling liquor is fined an amount of Rs. 10,000/-. The laws are that strict in the village. There is the practise of community fishing and the amount collected after selling the fishes are used for the development of the village. There is also the practise of selling rice as a community product and the amount so collected is used for the development of the society. The villagers believes in the concept of community development which has made the village a self-made model village. There is no household in the village who are deprived of the basic needs of food and shelter as the community fund takes the responsibility of providing the basic needs to the needy villagers which is really praiseworthy. Besides, the government also funds the village under various schemes of the GOI, but it is the community development model which has led to development and made the village occupy a remarkable position in the society. The youths have been trained as caterers so that the can have their earnings. There is a planning of opening up of catering services so that the youths get employed in the near future. There are initiatives by the government as well as the villagers to make the village a green village by planting ample number of trees. There is the plantation drive of Sal saplings so that the villagers can have good earnings in the future by selling the matured trees which has high market value. That way the village has developed their own development self-sufficient model which is quite impressive and an example for the rest of the society.

The future planning involves the opening up of the village to the tourists by arranging home-stays so that the tourists gets the opportunity to taste the essence of Rabha community and their livelihood practises. Further this will help the villagers to get more employment opportunities within the village itself. As a whole the development model advocates the concept of "community development" which is based on rural development and self-sufficiency.

As far as policy implementation is concerned, the village has got access to the various policies of the government at present. The various schemes for rural development in India has been initiated from the time of Indian independence. Following is the list of Rural Development Schemes by GOI (Government of India):

- 1952 Community Development Programme (CDP)
 - 1969 Rural Electrification Corporation
 - 1972-73 Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) Crash Scheme for Rural Employment
 - 1973-74 Drought Prone Area Programme
 - 1975 Twenty Point Programme
 - 1977 National Institution for Rural Development
 - 1980 National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)
 - 1982 Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)
 - 1983 Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP)
 - 1984 National Fund for Rural Development (NFRD)
 - 1986 Council for Advancement of People's Actions and Rural Technology (CAPART)
 - 1988 Service Area Account (SAA)
 - 1989 Jawahar Rozgar Yojana
 - 1990 Agriculture and Rural Debt Relief Scheme (ADRRS)
 - 1992 Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans
 - 1993 District Rural Development Agency (DRDA)
 - 1993 Mahila Samridhi Yojana
 - 1999 Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
 - Indira Awaas Yojana
 - 2000 Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana
 - Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)
 - Annapurna Scheme
 - 2001 Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana
 - 2005 Bharat Nirman Program
 - 2006 National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
 - 2009-10 National Livelihood Mission
 - 2011 Pradhanmantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY)
 - National Rural Livelihood Mission
 - 2013 National Food Security Scheme (Food Security Act)
- <https://m.jagaranjosh.com>ruraldevelopmentprogrammes> , accessed on 19/11/2019.

Initially, the villagers have taken initiatives of development themselves which are in practice even now. The various schemes like Pradhanmantri Adarsh Gram Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Yojna etc have been in implemented in this remote area. The concerned authority has taken special initiatives by planting Saal saplings in 5 acres of land. It is worth mentioning that these saplings after being grown into full trees will make the villagers earn lakhs of money. Besides the villagers have taken initiatives of planting 100 Neem saplings in the villages. At this time of global warming these initiatives will contribute a lot in reviving the greenery of the world.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The above analysis has led to the following conclusions:

- Community efforts is the main mantra to have development.
- Government policies is a boost in the process of development.
- Mahila samities play a vital role in the development process.
- Distribution of the community resources benefits the people to lead a dignified independent life.
- Draining out of residents to the other places in search of jobs can be stopped if development takes place in their own residing places. This helps in having sustainable development.
- Development is an idea and it is the individual and the community as a whole together involves in the process.

The development model rests on the hands of the residents of that place. No matter whether the place is remote or not development depends on the efforts of the individual as well as the community. Every single effort leads to development in all sectors if done with positivity and collectively. The study depicts that backwardness cannot be an obstacle of development. It is the efforts which counts in the process of development. Scientifically, the proper

channelization of individual and the community may lead to unstoppable development of the society. Besides, with a thought of holding hands together, no matter how big the obstacle, development is always the ultimate truth.

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