

### ABSTRACT

The title of my research work is 'A Socio-Cultural Study of the Kaibartta Community of Nalbari District with special reference to Fish Lore and Fishing Practices'. The aim of the present study intends to discuss socio-cultural life of the Kaibartta people inhabited in Nalbari district in terms of fish lore and fishing practices. The Kaibartta community living in this district remain significant with their culture and tradition that includes beliefs, festivals, folk medicines, folk games, art and crafts, cooking, folk performances acquired by them in living their day to day social and occupational life. The beliefs, festivals, folk medicines, folk games, art and crafts and cooking of the Kaibartta community revolve round their social and occupational life which results in narratives of various kinds. The Kaibarttas nourish some common folk customs, art and crafts, folk performances, when they go for fishing, observe their festivals, practice their religion. They perform and celebrate some forms of oral tradition in terms of songs, dances and fishing related activities. Being influenced by traditions and customs, they observe several religious occasions, celebrate some festivals associated with various stages of life cycle like birth, puberty rite, marriage and death.

The Kaibartta, a constituent of fishing community, is an important caste of India. They have been engaging themselves traditionally in the fishing trade which is supposed to be their main livelihood. Like other parts of India, fishing is a caste based occupation in Assam and is traditionally practiced by Kaibarttas. A detailed study of the related literature i.e. newspapers, articles, books and documents show that the authors have already focused on socio-cultural life of several fishing communities in different states of India. Some of them also narrate the folk beliefs and social customs of the fishing communities of Assam. Yet, there is hardly any book, dealing with the fish lore and fishing practices of the Kaibartta community relating to their fishing contraptions, waterbeds, folk deities, mythical origin, customs, folk narratives and oral songs. In absence of sufficient number of adequate books and journals, comprehensive and minute study regarding the social customs, material culture, performing art form, fish lore and fishing practices of the Kaibartta community living in Nalbari district is

not found. So, Kaibarttas of this area and their socio-cultural life is lesser known due to the lack of comprehensive literature and studies of their cultural life. It is felt that there is still much necessity of in depth and systematic study on their socio-cultural life in terms of fish lore and fishing practices. Hence, this study aims at stating and discussing the socio-cultural life of the Kaibarttas in terms of fish lore and fishing practices taking Nalbari district as a study area.

The present study relies on data collected from secondary and primary sources bringing out a theoretical analysis of collected resources. This present work is conducted mainly on the basis of field work.

In the present study most of the data are primary in nature. Intensive field work is conducted to collect data and information in respect of socio-cultural life, fish lore and fishing practices. It has been carried out in the study area in several phases during the year of 2014 to 2016. Data have been collected from the field work employing various methods and techniques. At the beginning some beels along with the Kaibartta fisher folk, situated in the Nalbari district have been visited in order to gather information about the Kaibartta prominent villages. On the basis of their information the selected Kaibartta villages have been visited.

Secondary data is collected from journals, magazines, newspapers, bulletins of several departments etc. As far the library for secondary sources of data is concerned the researcher visits District Library of Nalbari, K. K. Handique Libraray, G.U., Folklore Research Department, G. U., Suren Das College Library of Hajo, Library of University of Science and Technology of Meghalaya and Assam State Archives, Guwahati-6.

Nalbari district is selected for the present study due to the population concerned. Besides, the district has sufficient number of fishery resources, such as Brahmaputra and its tributaries, Kapla beel, Monari beel, Kekankuchi beel, Khahimara beel etc. According to 2011 census, the total Kaibartta population of Nalbari district is 17539, of whom 8845 are males and 8694 are females. The study is confined to both male and female informants. For the present study 12 villages are selected by adopting purposive method. 30 informants are selected from each of these villages, of whom 15

are males and 15 are females. Thus 360 informants are taken into consideration for detailed study. These informants are selected by adopting the purposive method.

Mainly, interview method is conducted for collecting data. Information from the interview have been noted and recorded. Photographs have been taken while interviewing the Kaibartta fisher folk of the Nalbari district.

Interview method has been used in order to collect folk beliefs, festivals, folk medicines, games and recreations, material culture, folk performances, oral songs, proverbs, riddles, charms and folk narratives. For this method an interview schedule is prepared and survey is conducted with the help of a set of questionnaire in order to document the information of the Kaibartta community. While preparing this schedule, attempt has been made to cover all aspects of the study to be investigated. Interview method is very helpful to know a community life because those people who cannot read and write also furnish some valuable information to the interviewer through this method. Here both formal and informal interviews are conducted. Informal interview are made with the elderly men folk and women folk.

During field study, some of the interviews are recorded besides writing down the information. It should be noted that a phone has been used as a recording device during field work. During most of the interviews the informants are informed about the recording.

During field work, several photographs have been taken. In taking these snaps, a digital camera has been used. Photographs of fishing tools, fishing activities, rural house of the Kaibarttas are snapped.

A survey schedule which is consisted of questionnaires has been used during the field work. The sample survey schedule in its original form has been annexed with this research work.

This research work is consisted of seven chapters. The research output is presented in the following lines to give a chapter wise summary of this research work.

Chapter 1, *Introduction* deals with the introduction of the research work. Light has been focused on the Kaibarttas of Assam in terms of their origin, meaning and socio-

cultural life. Mythical origin of the Kaibarttas and Objectives of the study are stated in this chapter.

This chapter also discusses about the land and people of Assam. It describes how several communities, castes and tribes came to Assam and mingled with the aboriginals. This chapter also focuses light on the present population, language, boundary, festivals of Assam along with its agriculture and silk productions.

This chapter focuses light on the study of fish lore and fishing practices of Assam. *Fish Lore* throws light on the oral literature of Assam in the forms of oral songs, riddles, proverbs, charms and prose narratives of several castes and communities living in Assam. These oral traditions are discussed in terms of fishing occupation. *Fishing Practices* of this chapter is about the traditional fishing tools and methods of Assam.

Chapter 2, *Review of Literature* is about some books, articles and journals which throw light on the socio-cultural life, oral traditions, customs and beliefs of some fishing communities of India and outside are reviewed. Moreover, some books, articles, newspapers which deal with the socio-cultural life of the Kaibarttas are also reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter 3, *Research Methodology* discusses about methods adopted for this research work. It states about the field area selection and methods adopted for data collection. It also discusses about the primary and secondary sources adopted for this research work.

Chapter 4, *Results and Discussions* has focused light on the society and culture of Nalbari. This chapter studies the religion and festivals, institutions of folk performing art forms, education and literature and movements and industries of Nalbari district. It states about the *Rasa* festival, *Durga Puja* and *Shovas* which are observed by the people of Nalbari with the utmost interest and pleasure along with some *Devalayas* and religious places like *Kulbeelghat Razhuwa Shibalaya*, *Kubalaya Thaan*, *Basudeva Devalaya* and *Shova* and *Sri Sri Bilbeswar Devalaya*. Some performance art forms like *Ojapalai*, *Bhaona*, *Putla Nach*, *Khuliya Bhaona*, *Dhuliya*, *Bhaira* which are observed in Nalbari district are also discussed. Literature and importance of some

educational institutions, pottery art and about the communist movement in Nalbari are also discussed.

This chapter deals with the study of the society and culture of the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district. This chapter is divided into three main sections - *Social Customs*, *Material Culture* and *Folk Performances*. Section one - *Social Customs* throws light on some beliefs, festivals, folk medicines and games and recreations of the Kaibarttas in terms of their occupation, living in Nalbari district. Some occupational Pujas and rituals, like *Jal Dangariyak Thagi Diya*, *Ganga Puja*, *Bhel Diya*, *Nag Panchami* etc. which are celebrated and enjoyed by the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district are discussed in this part. Section two - *Material Culture* throws light on arts and crafts in making fishing tools, cooking and costume of the Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district. Section three - *Folk Performances* discusses folk drama, dance and music in terms of the occupational life of the Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district.

This chapter also deals with the study of the fish lore and fishing practices of the Kaibarttas of Nalbari. This chapter is divided into main two sections - *Fish Lore* and *Fishing Practices*. Section one - *Fish lore* throws light on some forms of oral literature like oral songs, riddles, proverbs, charms and oral narratives of the Kaibarttas, living in the Nalbari district. Their oral traditions are specific in terms of their occupation. Section two- *Fishing Practices* mainly throws light on their traditional fishing tools and methods. Moreover, it throws light on the fishing seasons in which they undertake fishing.

Chapter 5, *Summary and Conclusion* is the concluding chapter of this research work. This chapter is divided into two heads. The first part is about the summary of the research work. In part two, the findings of the research work have been highlighted. Besides, some probable research areas on fish lore and fishing practices have been also suggested.