



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### IMPACT OF TIPIK SATRA ON MORAN COMMUNITY

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#### ABSTRACT

The Moran ethnic is the aboriginal people of Upper Brahmaputra valley (presently Tinsukia District) and they originally worshipped Kechaikhathi Devi in their traditional form of sacrifice. Under the influence of Mayamara Vaishnavism, they gradually gave up their old religious practices and adopted the rites and rituals of Mayamara Vaishnavism. The Tipuk Satra, a branch of Mayamara Satra, influenced their society in such a way that the tribal behaviours like jhum cultivation, sacrificing animals and scattered life style were gradually disappeared from their society. They entered to a disciplined life with the adoption of permanent nature of cultivation and establishment of social customs through satra culture

#### INTRODUCTION

The Mayamara vaishnavism, a branch of Kala Samhati order, originated by Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva is popularly famous for its unique characteristics and liberal outlook. Sri Sri Aniruddha Deva and some of his following pontiffs tried to uplift the lower classes of the society, especially in Upper Assam. They selected the region on the bank of Brahmaputra from Sonitpur to the eastern most Sadiya inhabited by people belong to different caste, creed and ethnic groups. These ethnic groups were most commonly the Morans, Barahis, Chutiyas, Kacharis, Laloongs etc. On the other hand Kaivartas, Keots, Kalitas, Kayasthas, Ahoms, Koches etc. were also the inhabitants of this region. Aniruddhadeva tried to assimilate those caste with an open mind and carried out the principle of defying casteism in the matter of religion. Aniruddhadeva simplified the religion in a very straight way without affecting their original cultural tradition. He always tried to uplift the aboriginal ethnic groups and to place them on equal footing with caste Hindu; but he never tried to make a drastic change within a few periods. So, he allowed the people to continue their rites rituals in their original form. For propagating religion in such remote areas, Aniruddhadeva had to make some sorts of relaxation of food habits also. There is a reference in "Buranji Vivek Ratna" (Chronicle compiled by Moniram Dewan) that Aniruddhadeva himself also accepted the food habits of the tribal people.<sup>1</sup> In "Bhakti Mangal Ghosa also, we get reference of defying casteism by Aniruddhadeva during the propagation of religion.

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Kirato Hunandha/ Pulinda Pukkha  
Avira Sukhma Javana  
Khasi Adi Kari/ Sadhura Sangata  
Hoe Ati Suddhamana." Verse -712<sup>2</sup>

In such a way, the ethnic groups of this area accepted vaishnavism and a gradual process of sanskritization also took place in this region. The aboriginal people of this region entered to a dignified life recognized by Mayamara vaishnavism. They cope up very easily with the new religious rituals along with the continuation of some of their own traditions.

**Objectives of the paper:** The main objective of the paper is to study the socio-cultural background of the Moram ethnic and the impact of vaishnavism in their society. The Moram people are the disciples of Tipuk Satra which has now many sub-branches and has created a separate order within the Mayamara vaishnavism. The influence of satra is so much deep-rooted in their society that the Moram people do not do anything without the conscience of their respective satras. There is a humble attempt in this paper to discuss the relationship between the Tipuk satra and Moran ethnic in several aspects and these are as follows:

- Influence of Tipuk satra on the religion of Moran ethnic.
- Influence of Tipuk satra in agriculture.
- Teaching of morality through satra.
- Attitude of satra towards women.

**Socio-cultural background of the Moran ethnic and the establishment of Tipuk Satra:** The prominent Mayamara

Gurus like Sri Sri Nityanandadeva, Sri Sri Jadunandadeva, and Sri Sri Astabhujadeva initiated most the resident of Upper Assam within the period of 18<sup>th</sup> century. In spite of so many barriers like poor communication system, royal atrocities, foreign attacks etc., the relation between the Moran gurus and the disciples grew up day by day and every year a huge amount of people from Matak and Moran communities initiated themselves under the Mayamara satras. The center of attraction was Khutiapota satra at that time and it gradually expanded its religious arena up to the easternmost part of Assam. Several satras of Mayamara branch were established in the later period like Puranimati, Tipuk, Garpara, Dinjoy etc. During the period of Moamariya rebellion the Mayamara satra was so much powerful that it could stand against the Ahom royalty without any hesitation of their power. Although the Ahom king Rajeswar Singha was the administrative head of country, the religious head was Guru Asthabhujadeva who had ten to twelve thousands of bhaktas, eight to ten thousand salves, then to twelve khats and four to five thousand buffaloes.<sup>3</sup> That was the growing and sensitive stage of Mayamara satra and Guru Asthabhujadeva felt that the easternmost area of Brahmaputra valley was in great of specific Guru from Mayamara branch. During the last phase of 18<sup>th</sup> century, Asthabhujadeva (1748-1770 A.D.) decided to appoint a religious pontiff or Guru for the disciples of Upper Assam especially for the Moran people.

The Moran ethnic is the aboriginal people of Upper Brahmaputra valley (the present Tinsukia Dist.) and they originally worshipped Kechaikhati Devi in their traditional form of sacrifice. Under the influence of Mayamara vaishnavism, they gradually gave up their old religious practices and adopted the rites and rituals of Mayamara vaishnavism. The tribal behaviours like jhum cultivation, sacrificing animals, and scattered life style were disappeared from society. They entered to a disciplined life with the adoption permanent nature of cultivation and establishment of social customs through satra culture. Guru Asthabhujadeva nominated his son Kasinolia alias Bhabananda whose mother was a Moran girl named Dubari and advised the four religious heads of Moran community known as Ahom Burha, Kachari Burha, Kharowal Burha and Mudoi Burha to recognize him as their Guru. Kasinolia alias Bhabananda was renamed as Krishnabhujadeva after being Guru in the new satra named "Tipuk satra" and with the progression of time, the Tipuk satra had created many of its branches in the villages of present Tinsukia Dist. Among the Moran people. Now, almost all the member's community are the followers of Tipuk branch of satra.

**Influence of Tipuk Satra on the religion of Moran ethnic groups:** It is mentioned earlier that the Moran people were worshippers of "Kechaikati Devi" (Eater of raw flesh) from the earliest time. The temple of Kechaikati Devi was at Sadiya and also known as Tamreswari Devi" (Goddess of copper temple). According to B. K. Kakti, she was the same Goddess known as Dikkaravasini whom Kalika Purana describes as the presiding deity of North-eastern Assam. The area inhabited by the Moran ethnic originally known as "Saumara" (From Bhairavi to Dikrang River) i.e. the land of Dikkaravasini as mentioned in the puranas. The Moran people continued the sakti worship till the 16<sup>th</sup> century. During the initial stage of religious transformation after adoption of Vaishnavism, they could not give up their old rites and rituals of vaishnavism and saktism continued for several years.

Later on, the third Guru of 'Tipuk satra Sri Sri Sankarbhujadeva (1882-1897 A.D.) recognized the animal sacrifice in the vaishnavite culture by implementing 'Jagya' system in which living animal (generally duck) is offered as sacrifice. So, a unique system of sacrificing animal in "Jagya" is seen in some special functions like Tithi or Kaj. Now, almost all the members of Moran ethnic are the followers of Mayamara vaishnavism under the different satras of Tipuk branch. They initiated themselves through the system of 'Sarana' and 'Bhajana' and these systems are so much influential in their society that nobody could think any kind of exception to it. The Moran people feel dignified as a member of religious society after taking 'Sarana' of 'Bhajana'. In such a way the Tipuk branch of satras have united the whole disciples of Moran community and the disciples also feel comfortable with their religion under the guardianship of their Gurus.

**Influence of Tipuk Satra in agriculture:** Basically the Moran community is an agricultural community and originally they practiced jhum cultivation. But after being the disciple of vaishnavism, they gave up their old culture and they began to do permanent cultivation. 'Salidhan' (one type of rice) is the main crop cultivated by them. Now, the satra is so much influential that it regulated their agricultural activities by implementing different kinds of rites and rituals. In every step of their agricultural activities they have to observe some sort of rituals. As for example, they have to take proper permission from their Guru before starting their cultivation. Several religious functions like 'Hat Namowa Tithi' (function before ploughing), 'Gosa Lowa' (beginning of crop cultivation), 'Hat Era Sabah' (function after completion of cultivation) etc. are performed by the villagers during the period of cultivation with due permission from their Gurus. These thitis are generally performed in the village namghar and some of the functions like Lakhimi Sabha' are performed in the paddy field.

**Teaching of Morality through Satra:** In every society religion stands for the belief in a super natural body or power and the yearning of humans to be in satisfying and peace-giving relations to that being. So, every religion has some ethical point of view in its philosophy, by following which a person can proceed in the right way of life, in search of peace and happiness. The Tipuk satras always emphasize for the moral code of conduct through religious teaching. The Gurus are always in close contact with their disciples and give them the teaching of good conduct from the moment of initiation. 'Nam Aparadh' is one of the ethical concepts of morality that one takes initiation he cannot misbehave to any of his co-members of the saraniyal group. If such incident occurred he must be punished by the religious authority of the village. So, 'Nam Aparadh' means the sin. On the other hand, the disciples of Tipuk satra tie up each other very intimately from the moment of initiation and they are taught in group how to maintain a disciplined life and other code of conduct relating to social behavior. The village headman (Gaonburah) takes initiative in maintaining law and order in society through namghar. All the disciples rich and poor are considered equal in religious matters and everybody receives similar response from their Gurus. The disciples also take prior permission from their Gurus before performing any kind of religious activities.

**Influence on the folk-culture:** The folk-culture of the Moran community is always influenced by their religion. 'Bihu' is the main festival of the Moran society and the importance of the Bohag Bihu' is than the other two Bihus Kati Bihu' and Magh

Bihu'. The Bohag Bihu' is generally known as 'Budharia Bihu' as they celebrate it on Wednesday (Budhbar). The specific day of Bihu' celebration is always decided by their Gurus. The Gurus declare a day within the month of Bohag by arranging the days began with Tuesday as 'Uruka', Wednesday for 'Garu Bihu' (Bihu for the cattle) and Thursday for 'Manuhar Bihu' (Bihu for human being). Originally, when Moran people worshipped Kechaikati Devi', they had the ritual to celebrate festival on Tuesday and nowadays also they do not want to give up that specific day for celebration. According to another source, during the period of Moamariya rebellion their leaders were killed by the royal army during Bihu festival. So, the Moran people do not celebrate it general time postponed it for themselves as per Guru's declaration.

**Attitude of Satra towards women:** There is a liberal outlook towards women in Moran society. The Tipuk branch of satras always emphasize for the freedom of women. Women can take part in every religious function held in the namghar. Moran women enjoy a free life in their society where they can take decision about their marital life, even a widow can remarry without any hesitation from their society or religion. Gurus always recognize such marriages and there is no dowry system in Moran society. The Moran women can initiate herself under the satras as single also, even an unmarried girl can do the same me.

## Conclusion

Now, the whole populations of Moran community are the followers of vaishnamism as per the initiative taken by Tipuk satra. The satras are trying their best to upgrade the position of the Moran people. The socio-economic condition of these people is always influenced by the satras. In one sense, there is a very amiable and comfortable condition of these relationship between Moran people and their satras. The satras are the Centre-point of their society and the people follow the direction of the satras very honestly. The Moran people always consider their Guru as friend, philosopher and guide. Therefore the whole society is interlinked with their respective satras.

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