

5. Communities Culture, Festival and Livelihood in East Jaintia Hills

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Abstract:

Activities associated with culture, changes in cultural practices can be viewed as adaptability of every community. Several festivals were held in preservation of cultural heritage. Accordingly, livelihood of the people in this community defers from region to region. This paper contributes to the recognition regarding the culture, festival and livelihood in East Jaintia Hills. It highlights the distinctive development that has been influenced by the Western world as well as the broadening perspectives of people in terms of education and society. Moreover, there is a dynamic power of culture, festival and livelihood on the daily domesticity of the community. It then emphasizes the influence of the western world on the very culture of the community.

Keywords:

Culture, Community, Livelihood, Festival, Generation, Living, Tribe.

5.1 Introduction:

Jaintia Hills is one of the regions in the State of Meghalaya. Jaintia is the name of a Tribe among the three tribes of Meghalaya. It is also acknowledged for the geographical part of the division of the communities of people belong to this region. People belonging to Jaintia Hills are also called as Pnar Community. Gleaming in its abundance of region and communities, Jaintia Hills has become noticeable of its diverse cultural activities. Other than that, its communities are engage to various festivals which rises up from the community itself preserved on for this generation by the ancestral generation. Looking into the livelihood of the people living in the Jaintia community that was a cheer of good fortune as it almost appears like an eventful day to day activities with different source of income both for the educated as well as the uneducated. No matter how educated a person is, they still depend on simple way of gathering graneries like that of their great ancestors.

This paper represents three significant departures from much of the literature regarding culture, livelihood and festivals only within Jaintia Hills. While the need for development initiatives to deal comprehensively with the complexity of community differences has been acknowledge (Morgan, 2001), various aspects of culture and identity often remain compartmentalized, as with discussions regarding the impact of ethnic cultures on the livelihood in the community.

Moreover, this paper describes a gist of the type of culture exist in the region of Jaintia Hills, with specific indication of festive season. It extends to the application of concepts of identity, livelihood and culture as important community resources within social action at individual level of contribution to the community as well as empowerment of the Jaintia's Tribe.

Through making more apparent the multi-faceted nature of culture, livelihood and festival and complexities of associated dynamics, this paper aims to enable more precise and empowering approaches to be taken to the role of these three areas in development work with communities, particularly those at the economic and cultural margins.

Distinctively, this paper identifies potential opportunities for several changes that are likely to occur from time to time which is an associated challenges and also contributes to how cultural changes, festival changes and livelihood differentiation might be occur.

5.2 Culture of the East Jaintia Community:

The cultural backdrop of the Jaintia community dates back to almost ages ago prior to the coming of the British people in this region. Jaintia community has a large number of villages and each village is unique in its tradition, culture, dress and way of life. Most villages have their own languages, dialect though pnar is the principal language of the whole region. Therefore, the culture of East Jaintia is traditionally a hybrid one. The people of East Jaintia are intermixture of various racial stocks.

Its culture is a rich and exotic tapestry of all these races evolved through a long assimilative process. Moreover, there is a differentiation in the practice of various customs which vary from village to village. East Jaintia people are immense in their cultural heritage.

Their culture reflects the traditions, music, dances, art and crafts of Jaintia Tribe. They are also well known for weaving of carpet and silk and the making of musical instruments, jewellery and pineapple fiber article. There is a remarkable type of traditional houses nestled in the countryside of Jaintia Hills.

Significantly at this idyllic destination rice is the main staple food. People also eat meat and different kind of vegetables collected from forest like mushroom, tyrki, bamboo shoot, wild ferns, etc besides the regular vegetables available in the market. As a prominent culture, the attire of the people in Jaintia harmoniously includes ryndia stem, thoh saru, khyrwang, sapjat, kein shrooh/kyrchah, etc, for the ladies.

Iuslein pyniein, iuspong, ryndia tlem, etc. for men. It then exudes a sense of grandeur and sophistication with the different ornaments like paila, khoila(earing), khadu(bracelets), etc. are worn by women and also by men during festivals. Moreover, people in this region are fond of music. Through music the pnar people expressed their praise for the rivers, hills, valley, land, etc. traditional musical instruments include ramynthei, duitara, ksing/nakra, ramynken, shawiang, tangmuri, etc. East Jaintia is also a renowned testament of matrilineal society.

5.3 Festival in East Jaintia Hills:

East Jaintia is very well known of its spring and summer festivals. There are two main festivals celebrated in this region and these are Chad Sukra and Behdeinkhlam

5.3.1 Ka Chad Sukra:

Chad Sukra is a popular traditional dance of pnar people of Jaintia Hills. In this sense East Jaintia people also were among the people who celebrated this annual festival once in a year. This festival took place within the village area in a wide field where people can gather and witness the big event. As almost every culture, both ancient and modern, have some sort of ritual to commemorate the promise and fertility of spring Chad Sukra is a celebration signaling the start of the sowing season. Chad Sukra literally means dance with a joyful heart with health and vitality. It specifically indicates the time for planting and before ploughing the paddy field. This festival is celebrated every year in the Month of April every year. The date may vary from village to village but all the events should be completed within the month of April itself. The whole community use to come and gather together. On this particular day most of the people dress in traditional attire which also signify the tradition of the community. In the course of the event there is an entertainment through music, dance and drama. Music and dance occur only during the forenoon. Conversely drama is one of the essences which is indispensable during the night entertainment since through the art of drama the people of the community display an act that candidly represent the origin and the true meaning of chad sukra. In a nutshell chad sukra is one major festival of the East Jaintia community.

5.3.2 Behdeinkhlam:

In the East Jaintia, people generally think of Behdeinkhlam as a festival of chasing away the demons of cholera. Eventually this festival became an integral part of the pnar community to the present generation although cholera has already ceased. This festival annually held in the month of July just after the sowing festival. Behdeinkhlam festival is also an invocation to God, seeking his blessings for an abundance harvest. There is a series of religious rites which is being performed by the Daloi (chief). During this festival, young men make a symbolic gesture of driving away of the evil spirit, plague and disease by beating of the roof of every house with bamboo poles. The climax of the celebration is the fight for a large undressed beam by two groups of people in opposition to each other. This leads to the heavy beam get across a muddy ditch called wah-eit-nar. A lot of horse play enters into this part of the event, when mud is smeared by the participants on each other. During the event there is an expectancy of rain as rain is a must for the celebration as rain is regard as blessing. This festival is by far the most popular festival ever celebrated by the East Jaintia community. It was initiated by the ancestral era of pnar community with the involvement of every farmer and head of the house which is a male member. They put to use traditional handmade drums. These drums were made of beef skin and there should not be a drum without a beef-skin. The more the drums the better the celebration, as drum is the only musical instrument allowed to be played during the event. That being the case, Behdeinkhlam is a type of festival which entail the whole community to contribute, cooperate and have a hand.

5.4 Livelihood:

The East Jaintia people are considered to be forest dwellers living in harmony with their environment. They depend heavily on plants and plant products for food, forage, fire, construction of dwellings, making household implements, etc. However, because of the rich non-renewable resources that exist in this region most villagers depend their source of income regarding occupation and livelihood from coal mining and exporting of coal to other state, and other country like Bangladesh. Some of the inhabitant of the Southern part of the district are in between the border area of Bangladesh and Assam and in the view of this fact, people sustain their livelihood by bettle-nut plantation. Other than that, some villages also depend their livelihood on agricultural crops like paddy, maize, ginger, turmeric and vegetables. With the advanced influence of modern lifestyle, many have migrated to the other state and even settled in the foreign country in order to match the source of income with the new skill and new type of occupation which does not exist in the village area. Education is one of the paramount instruments which create an immense shift in the means to earn a living. Hence it does have an impact on the process and way of earning a daily livelihood in the East Jaintia pnar community. Predominantly, each and every village is now engaged to the importance of education and they have shifted their perspective from the traditional way of earning to the modern way offered with the help of education. Therefore, the livelihood of people in this community varies with the changing time.

5.5 Influence of Western World in the Culture, Festival and Livelihood:

The striking combination of lifestyle between the East and the West forthrightly sway the traditional lifestyle of the people of East Jaintia in Meghalaya. Consequently, there is a weakening in the language usage, the recipe in the dish, the attire and even in the renowned traditional houses. All these drops in with the coming of technology, TV Shows, films, social media and the wide range of unlimited utilization of internet. In an instant there is a transformation of community streets, houses, and even in family planning. On one hand, it exudes a sense of grandeur changes however on the other hand it has brought a decline in the traditional lifestyle of the people.

Regarding culture, the western world has revamped the art of simplicity and crushing down the pure perspective of the people. Notion like love for one's own motherland has ceased from the minds of the people that they incline towards being offensive in the usage of these phrase. It's a natural flowing for millennia to forget their roots and swerve towards western culture like, music, dance, food habits, language, attire, means of communication and the manner of greeting one another in the community. Huts are replaced with remarkable building, candle and lamp with fashionable lights, organic food with fast food, rice with bread, mother tongue with second language, rivers and falls into tourist spot and forest into cleared land for modern agricultural plants which barely pays off the cost of the lost.

As to festival, several shifted have taken place from the gathering of the people in an open field to the compact of community hall, from the making of circle to the putting up of stages. Western music got a place during the festival which is actually against the tradition of the festival. In this way festivals were celebrated just for the sake of remembering but not the actual ritual required for the real meaning of the festival. It has then become a source of

entertainment instead of representing the tribe's tradition. This actually worsened the roots of the people to where they really belong. Thereupon, livelihood is no surprised even if all the traditional means is totally forgotten in the process of obtaining a daily bread for oneself as well as to feed the family as modernization has captured each and every village with the trend of technology, media, entrepreneur, influencer, blogger.etc. New source of income has gone ridiculously very soft. There is no more of a true value of being a hardworking and respectable background in the area of vocation. Nothing comes easy. Hence one should go back to the concept of the firm ground of earning which will be beneficial to the community rather than just individually. The new millennia have had it so easy.

5.6 Conclusion:

Ultimately, as every culture, tradition, festival and livelihood of the community has gone through various revision, transition and modification, it is the same with the East Jaintia Community. It turns out to be both on the favor and the deprivation state. No doubt, preserving one's own culture is a precious ruby to be kept but it is only worth it when it is preserved along with the authentic essence of value and substance of its own tradition. There should not be any piece of the West, neither should be any innards of the integrated way to celebrate any festival. It should be purely accustomed to historic events and sat a classic elucidation about any roots of the community.

5.7 References:

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