



Impact of Modernisation, Globalisation and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) on Sonowal Kachari Tribe of Dibrugarh, Assam

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Abstract: The process of Modernisation, Globalisation facilitated by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought tremendous social change and transformation all over the world. Sonowal Kachari which is one of the oldest tribes (Schedule tribe) of Assam is not an exception. They are of Tibeto-Burman origin and mainly inhabitant of Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, North-Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat and Golaghat district of Assam. The headquarters of the Sonowal Kacharai Autonomous Council is located in Dibrugarh. In this paper we have selected nine Sonowal Kachari villages of Dibrugarh District of Assam, for understanding social change among Sonowal Kachari tribe. The villages undertaken in the study are namely: - 1. Dainijan village, 2. Kakati gaon, 3. Duliya gaon, 4. Duliya Kuhiyarbari, 5. Lepetkata Sonowal Kachari gaon, 6. Changmai goria gaon, 7. Dhamal gaon, 8. Tepor gaon, 9. Gajai gaon. Nine (09) village headmen, Nine (09) ASHA workers, Nine (09) Teachers and Ninety (90) villagers (10 each from each 9 villages) were taken as respondent which were selected by purposive sampling method. A total of 117 respondents were taken into account. The study is based on both primary source which include interview and observation method and secondary data are collected from journals, books, magazines, newspapers and internet sources etc.

Received : 30 March 2023

Revised : 25 April 2023

Accepted : 10 May 2023

Published : 30 June 2023

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Sarma, P. 2023. Impact of Modernisation, Globalisation and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) on Sonowal Kachari Tribe of Dibrugarh, Assam. *Skylines of Anthropology*, 3: 1, pp. 51-58. <https://doi.org/10.47509/SA.2023.v03i01.05>

It has been found that there are changes in the road and infrastructure development in and around the selected villages, changes in the education, health scenario, changes in their culture, lifestyle, family system, dressing habit and food pattern and so on.

Keywords: Impact, Modernisation, Globalisation, Social change, Sonowal Kachari tribe

I

Sonowal Kachari Tribe is one of the oldest tribes (Schedule Tribe) of Assam. They are of Tibeto-Burman Origin and mainly inhabitant of Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, North-Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat and Golaghat district of Assam. The headquarters of the Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council is located in Dibrugarh Town. The process of Modernisation, Globalisation facilitated by information and Communications Technology (ICT) has brought tremendous social change and transformation all over the world and Sonowal Kachari Tribe of Assam is not an exception.

Binita Barooah in her monograph 'The Sonowal Kacharis of Assam' (1998:1) mentioned that "... the Kacharis had no written records or history in their languages and references of them can be had only in the Buranjis (Histories) of Assam. The Origin of the term 'Kachari' is very difficult to trace and the term seems to be unknown to the people themselves. The Sonowal Kacharis are a branch of Bodo Kacharis of Assam. It is said that during the reign of the Ahom King some of the Kacharis were engaged in washing gold particles from the sands of river and therefore the prefix 'Sonowal' (Gold Washar), was added to signify them." Also they were engaged in collecting gold in the 'Subansiri' river and therefore known as Sonowal Kachari.

In the words of N.N. Acharyya (1996:82) "The origin of the word Kachari is difficult to trace. Different scholars and traditions have put forward various opinions regarding the matter. Moreover, from their physical features and general appearance, they seem to be of Mongolian type, and this would point to their original home being somewhere in Tibet or China. According to Garo tradition, their forefathers the offspring of Hindu and Tibetan blood, came down from the northern mountains and after a halt at Cooch-Bihar made their way to Jogighopa, and then across the Brahmaputra to Dalgoma, and so finally into the Garo Hills. Sir Edward Gait was of the opinion that Kacharis are very closely allied to the Koches and also, so far as the language is concerned (they

are close) to the Chutias, Lalungs and the Morans of the Brahmaputra Valley, and to the Garos and Tipperas of the southern hills. Having regard to their wide distribution and to the extent of country over which the Bodo language is still current, it seems not improbable that at one time the major part of Assam and north-east Bengal formed a great Bodo Kingdom. C.A. Soppitt says that the Kachari race originally inhabited the hills and slopes to the north of the Brahmaputra, and then gradually extended through central Assam to the Mymensingh district, the headquarters of the Raja being established at Guwahati."

Similarly Rev S. Endle opined that Kacharis were the original settlers of Assam. To Endle, two great immigrations were there from the north and north east into the rich valley of Assam. The first was from the valley of the Tista and Sankosh and here they established the powerful kingdom of Kamrup. The second one was through the Suhansiri, Dikong and Dihong Valleys into Eastern Assam. Moreover from Limbu tradition it is said that some people came and settled in the 'Khachar country', the name was given by the Nepalese to the tract at the foot of the hills between the Brahmaputra and Kosi rivers. Probably the name Kachari has originated from this name.

The Kachari tribe in fact ruled over an extensive territory west of the Moran and the Borahis on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. They were one of the earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley. It is believed that before the advent of Ahoms in Assam in the early part of the 13th Century, the boundary of the Kachari Kingdom in the east extended beyond the Dikhow river.

II

The objectives of the study are :-

- (i) To trace the origin of Sonowal Kachari tribe of Assam.
- (ii) To Comprehend the impact of Modernisation, Globalisation and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) on Sonowal Kachari Tribe of Dibrugarh District of Assam.

In this paper we have selected nine Sonowal Kachari villages of Dibrugarh District of Assam for understanding the process of social change among the Sonowal Kachari tribe. The villages undertaken in the study are namely:

1. Dainijan village situated in Dibrugarh West subdivision of Dibrugarh district and is located around 9 Kms away from Dibrugarh Town.

2. Duliya Gaon is located in Dibrugarh West subdivision of Dibrugarh district in Assam and is situated 13 kms away from Dibrugarh Town.
3. Duliya Kuhiyarbari village is in Dibrugarh district in Assam and is situated 16 kms away from Dibrugarh Town in the west.
4. Kakati gaon which is again located in Dibrugarh west subdivision of Dibrugarh district in Assam and situated 17 kms away from Dibrugarh Town.
5. Changmai Gorla gaon it is located in Dibrugarh west and is about 14 kms away from Dibrugarh Town.
6. Lepetkata Sonowal Kachari gaon, is situated at 15 km away from Dibrugarh town in the west circle of Dibrugarh district of Assam.
7. Gojai Gaon is Located in the west circle of Dibrugarh district of Assam and is about 18 kms away from Dibrugarh Town.
8. Dhamal Gaon is located in the west circle of Dibrugarh district of Assam and is about 19 kms away from Dibrugarh Town.
9. Jamirah Tepor Gaon village is located in the west circle of Dibrugarh district of Assam and is about 20 kms away from Dibrugarh Town.

It is a fact that all the nine Chosen villages of Sonowal Kachari Tribe in Dibrugarh are located in the Borbaruah Block under the Dibrugarh West Circle and are placed at a distance from 9 to 20 kms apart from Dibrugarh Town. These villages were chosen because their maximum numbers of population belongs to the Sonowal Kachari Tribe where one can comprehend their culture and its changes over the time.

The respondents of the study were taken from all the 9 villages of Dibrugarh district of Assam. Nine (09) village headmen, Nine (09) ASHA Workers, Nine (09) Teachers and Ninety (90) villagers, Ten each from each nine villages were chosen as the respondents. They were selected by purposive sampling method. A total of 117 respondents were taken into account. The study is based on both primary sources which include interview and observation method and the secondary data are collected from journals, books, magazines, newspapers and internet sources etc. Though we have chosen 117 respondents and taken interviews of those respondents as well as used observation method but in this paper we do not intend to quantify data. We have focused on certain approaches and views of scholars like Arjun Appadurai, Daniel Lerner, Anthony Giddens, Manuel Castells, and Samuel Huntington etc. We have tried to find the applicability of their ideas with the scenario of the Sonowal Kacharis inhabited

in the selected villages. We have attempted to analyse how things are changing in their life due to the process of globalization, modernization and also due to impact of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in their life.

III

The word 'Impact' means 'any significant or positive changes that solve or at least address Social injustice and challenges.' In this paper, we have tried to analyze the impact of modernisation, globalization and information and communications Technology (ICT) in bringing Social change on Sonowal Kachari Tribe of Dibrugarh.

In the words of Anthony Giddens, Social change is the "Alternation in the basic structure of a Social group or society. Social change is an ever-present phenomenon in social life, but has become especially intense in the modern era." On the other hand, Daniel Lerner in his book –The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernising the Middle East (1958) highlighted three main attributes of his model of modernization which are Empathy, Mobility and High Participation. It 'Symbolizes a rational attitude towards issues and their evaluation from universalistic not particularistic point of view.'

Again Anthony Giddens writes that 'Globalization' is the "Growing interdependence between different peoples, reasons and countries in the world as Social and economic relationships come to stretch World Wide." Similarly one can say that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is one aspect which makes the whole world a global village. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is "The convergence of computing, Telecommunication and governance policies for how information should be accessed, secured, processed, transmitted and stored."

Over the years in these selected villages, tremendous changes have been noticed. The villages have been connected with motorable roads and highways with several infrastructural developments that have taken place. Their houses as such have electricity, drinking water facilities, sanitation facility, educational institutions, health facilities, radio, televisions, mobile, and internet connectivity and so on. It was found in the study that most of the people in the villages are engaged in agricultural activities and most of them are cultivators. Some of them are doing business and engage in governmental Services like working as teacher, in the Army, in public as well as private sector jobs. Quite a few numbers of the citizens belonging to this tribe also have migrated to different parts of the country as well as abroad. In this modern globalized world, small to small inventions or discoveries made in one part of the world are slowly

penetrating to these villages. The impact as such is global and local in nature. Sonowal Kachari tribe has assimilated with the Assamese People and even they do not have their own language, Assamese became their language.

They cultivate paddy, mustard, pulses, potatoes, ginger, vegetables, like brinjals, beans, cucumbers, chillies, banana, pine-apple, sweet gourds, guava, lemon, betel nut. The poultry is also a popular practice and rear hens and ducks, cattle rearing is also practice. Now they are using modern technology in their agriculture as well as in their poultry farms.

The traditional life of Sonowal Kacharis in those villages has several changes and adopting modern system of living, their living standard has risen a lot. Their style of cooking, where they are now using modern gas cylinders, style of dress pattern, food pattern etc are changing. At the same time they try to preserve their traditional customs and values.

The house in traditional period are mostly made up of materials like bamboo, wood etc but now concrete houses, (Pacca houses), semi-Pacca houses are in fashion. Rice is the main food of the Sonowal Kacharis but now there is impact of western foods items like burger, pizza, KFC's etc, which are becoming popular. In case of dress habit - western jeans, T-Shirts and other western wear for women are in the focus. Similarly Indian music (Hindi), western music is also getting its popularity. In case of sports, Cricket, Football, Badminton, Volley Ball and other global sporting events have become popular. So we can see the process of homogenisation, pluralisation, traditionalism and hybridisation.

The family structure is also changing among the Sonowal Kachari tribe. Those of them who are engaged in service or jobs usually stay in nuclear family and the trend is increasing to that extent that traces are seen even in the villages. In case of health, lot of improvement is seen and now the entire tribe visits the medical facilities available in their localities and go for allopathic treatments instead of practicing totally traditional medicine. Same is the case of educational status. We have found lot of graduates, post graduates, MBBS, Engineers, and Teachers from these selected villages.

The idea put forward by Social Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai is quite applicable in this regard where the process of globalization increases the pace and scope of inter connections crisscrossing the globe. The five specific 'scapes' or flows are visible as well in case of Sonowal Kachari tribe of Dibrugarh. In other words, (1) Ethnoscaples where students are studying abroad and others are working outside the villages or abroad and we visualize coming of tourists both local and foreign to such villages (2) Technoscaples which is true as they are

using different modern technologies (3) Ideoscapes - the notion of democracy sovereign human rights, welfare etc are popular among the Sonowal Kacharis. (4) Financescapes – electronic bank transfer, stocks exchanges, virtual currencies are becoming a fashion now and (5) Mediascapes where the Sonowal Kacharis are getting access to various forms of mass media, the platforms that create information which include electronic media as well as Newspapers.

Likewise, due to modernization process, as very well pointed out by Daniel Lerner, three main attributes like empathy, mobility and high participation along with rational attitude towards certain issues have been found in the life of Sonowal Kacharis of Dibrugarh. They have the ability to understand the point of view of others and empathise with others in the society. Similarly a lot of mobility in terms of occupation, migration, settlement and in their status can be identified. Also high participation is seen in case of different aspects of life like voting behaviour, trade and commerce, sports, and other services. The rise of network society is also apparent. They have spread out into different areas and their presence can be felt in different layers of the society spread across the globe.

Also the global cultural flows like cultural differentialism is seen where cultures are essentially different in different parts of the world. This is true in case of Sonowal Kacharis's who have their own indigenous culture. Identity Clash or other intense clashes may take place as opined by Samuel Huntington's Theory of Clash of the Civilizations. Hybridization process has also taken place in the life of this tribe as we have found the aspects of Local and Global cultures together in their Social Structure. Similarly the process of convergence has been found which stresses homogeneity.

Anthony Giddens stated that "the intensification of the world wide social relations which link distant localities in such way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa." The statement is correct in terms of the life of Sonowal Kachari of Dibrugarh, Assam.

IV

To conclude one can opine that in case of Sonowal Kacharis of Dibrugarh, it has been found that there are changes in the road and infrastructure development in and around the selected villages, changes in the education, health Scenario, changes in their culture, lifestyle, family system, dressing habit and food pattern and so on are observed.

In addition to that, the rise of network society, rise of risk consciousness, process of reshaping their life due to globalisation and the de-traditionalisation

where their day to day life becomes less and less influenced by their 'tradition for the sake of tradition.' As for instance their family structure, their Kinship and their marriage and religious system etc are undergoing great changes.

In words of Anthony Giddens who describes how globalization affects everything we do, propelling us into a global order that no one fully understands, but makes its effects felt on all of us. He further said 'that there is a new riskiness to risk; we do not know the risk level.'

Note

The earlier version of the paper has been presented in International Conference entitled Society, Culture and Social Change: Kashmir and Beyond Organised by Islamic University of Science and Technology and Indian Sociological Society on 6th and 7th September, 2022

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