

## **Chagramisawa: The Popular folk-festival of the Tiwa**

**Prarthana Phukan**

Dept. of Assamese

Research Scholar

Cotton University

**Bhriuttam Borah**

Dept. of Assamese

Research Scholar

Gauhati University

### **Abstract**

'Tiwa' is one of the ancient tribes of north-east India. It belongs to the Mongolian tribe and it has been living both in hills and plains. As the majority of the tribal people live on agriculture and as a result of this agriculture production the Tiwa tribe follows some social folk customs related with agriculture. 'Chagramiswa' is one of the most popular festivals of the Tiwa tribe, celebrated in the springtime. It is generally celebrated by the tribes living in the hills including the central Assam who lived in plain.

In this paper, the investigator tries to highlight the celebration of 'Chagramisawa' by the Tiwa tribe of Assam.

**Keywords:** Hill, Tiwa tribe, Celebration, Rites and Rituals, Folk festival

### **1.00 Introduction**

The Tiwas are the people of Mongolian tribe and they have been living in the North-East region since a very long time. They are living both in hills and plains and from the linguistic point of view they belong to the Chino-Tibetan language family and they belong to the Asom-Burmese section of people. Presently, they are being living in the districts of Morigaon, Nagaon, Kamrup, Karbi-Anglong, Dhemaji, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and Jorhat.

The Tiwas are very rich in their language and culture. There are many myths and legends regarding the migration of the Tiwa and it has been decided that they were the early inhabitant of Tibet. But it is not out of controversy. According to many scholars' view "They were the inhabitant of Allahabad in the bank of river Yamuna. They were sent towards the North side of the Himalayas by the Aryan. After living there for a long time they migrated to Pragjyotishpur and established a kingdom there and when Narakasur became the king of Pragjyotishpur, they were again sent to the north of Pragjyotishpur where they settled themselves in the banks of Kapili River. The name of the first country was 'Tribeg' the geographical boundary of this Tribeg was within Barapani-Yamuna and Kapili River. (Rajbangsi etc), 2003, P.103)

In another myth it is stated that the Tiwas once lived in Kashi (Baranashi) and their king was Harichan (i.e. Harichandra). Earlier they spoke Sanskrit and they belong to the Kshastriya caste. When Parashuram attacked the Kshatriyas, they escaped and hid themselves in the Lailung hill situated in the north of river Brahmaputra. They lived there for a long time and forgot their origin.

The Tiwas were earlier known as 'Lalung' but they like to introduce themselves as 'Tiwas'. Scholars have shown different arguments regarding 'Tiwa' and 'Lalung'. According to scholars view 'Ti' means water and 'wa' means high land. That means River and people live higher above the water. (Pator 20, p-10).

Some people forwarded the view that the word Tiwa may be derived from 'tiwa'. Accordingly, it means people of the land where bamboo and water are very much available. (Pator, 2013, p-10). Like Tiwa, the word 'Lalung' has also been focused by different scholars. According to Pramod Chandra Bhattacharyya the origin of the word 'Lalung' may be described as follows:

'Once mahadeva was very much addicted with excess dose of liquor (Laopani) and fall in the road side. At that time some liquid comes out from his mouth and from this liquid substance two persons were born. The people came to be known as Lalung as they were born out of the Lelawati or 'Lal' of the mouth.' (Bhattacharyya, 1997,p- 175)

Another myth has been associated with Lalung that is they were the subject of demon king Bali. Bali was the devoted to Lord Krishna. The king wanted that all the subjects should worship the Lord Vishnu as he is the prime devotee of Lord Vishnu. But a group of people opposed the advice of king Bali and thus they were given red 'tilak' in their forehead, and were driven out from his country. The people to whom the red tilak in their forehead was given by the king, the same group people came to be known as Lalung in the later times.

Like other tribes of the state many myths and legends have been seen above the origin and migration of the people. As the Tiwas are basically agriculturist, they organize many agricultural festivals around the year. In this paper, the author tries to focus about the spring festival of the Tiwa known a 'Chagramiswa'.

### **1.01 Purpose of the study:**

The main purpose of the study is to focus about the spring-festival 'Chagramiswa' of the Tiwa community of Assam. It is a very popular festival which follows with a number of rituals from the beginning to the end. This paper deals with the rituals followed in the process of celebration of the Chagramiswa festival and the dresses and ornaments used by the Tiwa youth while they perform the festival with dances and songs. It will also discuss about the habits and customs of the Tiwa social system, their religious faith, fairs and festivals and so on. This is the purpose of this research paper.

### **1.02 Method of Research:**

Analytical method of research will be followed while preparing the paper. At the same time, Description method will be followed to focus on some special aspects of the Chagramiswa festival, their religious performances and other rituals related with it, Field Observation method has been followed for collection of data along with the library material available as secondary source to come into conclusion about the theme.

### **1.03 Fairs and festivals of the Tiwas:**

Like other ethnic people, the Tiwa tribe have been celebrating different fairs and festivals during the year since a very long past. In general, the fairs and festivals of the Tiwa tribe can be classified into three different categories. That is – i) Agricultural festival, ii) Festivals associated with religious beliefs, iii) festivals related with life-cycle.

As the Tiwa tribe are mostly agriculturists, all the fairs and festivals celebrated by them have a closer context with agricultural farming. During the year they offer prayer to different agricultural God and Goddess, so that, keep their agricultural production without any harm from the insect as well as wild animals. They celebrate the three Bihu festivals in the traditional manner. They worship ‘Khar-song’ before starting their agricultural work. At the same time in different stages of agricultural farming like starting the seeds, collecting the paddy or wheat, starting new rice for using as food, they prayed their agricultural ‘Goddess Lakhimi’ and thus celebrate the ‘Yangli Puja’ festival according their traditional customs.

These are some religious festivals performed by the Tiwa tribe which according to them for the all round development of their village during the year. Such festivals may be mentioned here as Kalipuja, Burhi Gosani Puja, Sani Puja, Barseua, Bhagawati Puja etc. They also celebrate a few functions accustomed with their life-cycle i.e. birth celebrate such socio-religious functions according to the needs of their life. In all these fairs and festivals they follow a certain rules and regulations according to their tradition and culture and their folk belief. In this way the Tiwa people of Assam has been enriching the cultural as well as the social aspects of own society. Assamese culture is a composite culture consisting of different caste and communities and from the very ancient times it has been going through a process of acculturation, cultural assimilation and social change so as to come into the contact of global cultural mobilization. The culture of the Tiwas is also no exception to this.

### **1.04 ‘Chagramiswa’, the popular folk-festival of the Tiwas :**

It has already been mentioned that the Tiwa tribe are living both hills and plains and they have been celebrating different facts and festivals during the year with very festive manner. Among these the most popular celebration is ‘Chagramiswa’.

As agricultural festival, people from different section of the society are taking part in this festival. It is celebrated in the spring season. It is generally celebrated in the month of

February and March. It is generally celebrated by the Tiwa tribe living in the hills along with the plains, living in the central Assam. Majority of the tribal people celebrate their important celebration in the Wednesday. Accordingly the Tiwa people feels Wednesday as a good day for celebration and as such the celebration of the Chagramiswa festival in the spring particularly in 'falgun'.

The etymological meaning of the word 'Chagra' means 'all' and 'miswa' means 'dancing'. It means a dance where everybody takes part in the dancing. In other words, 'Chagra' is the 'goddess of dancing and they celebrate this festival to please their Goddess. (Pator, 2013, p-127)

### **1.05 Traditional rites associated with 'Chagramiswa'**

There are different rites for celebration of 'Chagramiswa'. The Tiwa tribe feel very happy before one month of celebrating the festival. For this purpose, different sections of people of the society, starting from young to the old, women and children all become busy in a festive way. They collect necessary food and other important materials for celebration and follow certain rules to celebrate the function. They clean their own house, don't kill animals, don't eat non-vegetarian food, don't plough in the field, etc. They clean the prayer place where the main celebrations will be performed and clean its surrounding. Chamadi plays an important role in celebrating the festival. It is the 'Dekachang' where the Tiwa youths were trained for social as well as cultural life of the Tiwas. The youths of Chamadi united themselves and they took necessary suggestions from the senior persons and the village chiefs.

They collect the essential conditions useful for worship, distribution of food-materials, collection of traditional dress 'Taglar' and others responsibilities to the 'Chamadi'. The youths organize the Chamadi, with consultation of the senior persons of the festivals. It is generally celebrated in the 4<sup>th</sup> wednesday of the month of Falgun. In the beginning they pray to their prime diety 'Mahadev' and asked him to forgive them for any mistake by offering an egg by the priest. It marks the starting of the festival. As per rule, in the first day of the celebration arrangement of a 'fire' is done and its responsibility to a group of 'phurakhe', a group of spy. Different rites are followed in this festival.

### **1.06 Dances and other musical festival**

From the beginning of the festival it begins with music and dances. They start this festival from the senior executive of Changdoloi, Chamangi and loro and celebrate it during these days.

After the dance is complete the dancers change their dress. In the next day of the celebrations, the musical instruments are being kept under 'Chamadi' custody. Following this festival it goes to the end of the celebration.

The songs performed in the function are related with the love-affairs but along with it relates with the deductive. The songs have similarities with the Bangeets and the Bihu geets. These songs reflect the hopes and aspirations along with love and sympathy towards the people. The songs performed in this festival can be cited as follows:

#### 1.07 Love songs:

*Chal nawane dau dau janai nawane dau*  
*Amukhi walik nikhal tho yangth yankara dau*  
*Thasukhi walik nikhal tho janai lekha makhangblaow.*

It means look at the beautiful legs of my dear, her red and soft legs and shining face like the moon. In this way the attraction of physical beauty has been focused through the songs.

#### 1.08 Songs related with Prayer:

The Tiwas believe that Mahadev, in the form of 'Nataraj' is the main source of inspiration through whom the dances and dramatic performances have been focused. For example,

*Fid Fid Fid change chana nachaniye nem*  
*Fid Fid Fid rupha nachaniye nem.*  
*Oh, chanaching nachani khat lai tilapat*  
*Oh rughaching nachani magulai tilapat kharaiifar*  
*Nigarair hebe nemarga tagartei*  
*Tilangfar ligabi hebe chemgo.*

It means the nataraj culture in coming which increases the consciousness about our culture and tradition. (Pator, 2013, p-131)

#### 1.09 Traditional food performed in the Chagramiswa :

As it has been already discussed, the agricultural based festival is 'Chagramiswa'. In this festival, some traditional foods are provided. Along with the dances and songs, different types of food-items have been provided. The bhandari group has been given the sole responsibilities. The use of local liquor (sajpani) played an important role in all the tribal festivals. In the Chagramiswa festival also this kind of liquor has been provided according to the social status of the society.

Traditional musical instruments are used. These musical instruments are kept in the chamadi during the festivals.

#### 1.10 Dress used in 'Chagramiswa' :

The dancing girls wear the traditional dresses in the chagramiswa festival. The special traditional dress 'tagla' is highly used in this festival. A few dancing girl played the role of nartak by using separate dress use of mask is also used for this performance.

### 1.11 Role of Bamboo tree in the festival:

The Tiwa people feels bamboo as an essential part of the social and cultural tradition of their life. They used bamboo in different fairs and festivals. They prepare flute from the bamboo named bijulee. Before few days of the Chagramiswa festival the Tiwa youths goes to hill for collecting bamboo. They bring some essential material along with betel nut, wine and flute and offering these things under the bamboo so that they could collect the bamboo for the prayer. At the time they return towards home they throughout their old flute and later they start to prepare new flute and keep it in the mindaikham. This process of collecting bamboo is known as 'Pansitana'. In the same place, they rehearse for the festival.

### Conclusion:

From the above discussion, we may come to the conclusion that, chagramiswa is one of most important agricultural festival of the Tiwa communities of Assam. Like other tribal people of Assam, the Tiwa tribe also believe that wednesday is very pure and they celebrate their celebration from this. Traditional rites are followed in the celebrations of the agricultural festival with a festive manner. The chamadi has been given responsibility to arrange the programe with atmost care for collection of the essential commodities. Prayer of lord siva or mahadeva along with dances and songs, they celebrate the festival with great pleasure. Traditional food-materials are prepared for the festival and as such Bamboo plays an important role.

'Changramisawa' is a very popular festival of the Tiwas which united the people irrespective of the rich and poor and it aims at social organization and social mobility.

### Bibliography :

- Baruah, B.K . *A Cultural History of Assam*. Guwahati, Bina Library.1986. Print.
- Bhattacharyya, P.C (ed.) . *Asomor Janajati*. Guwahati. Asom Sahitya Sabha, 1992. Print.
- Duwara, Dharmeswar. *Asomor Janajatisakalar Utsav Anusthan*. Guwahati. Assam Tribal Research Centre. 2006 . Print.
- Nath, Prafulla Kumar. *Asomiya Sahitya Aru Sanskritir Ruprekha*. Guwahati. Bishal Publication. 2016. Print.
- . *Bharatiya Sahitya Aru Sanskriti*. Guwahati. N.L Publication. 2011. Print.
- . *Assomor Janagosthiya Aitihya, Sanskritik Binimoy Aru Sanghati* . Guwahati. Bookland. 2009. Print.
- Pator, Dhiraj . *Tiwa Loka Sanskritir Abhas*. Guwahati. Bandhab. 2013. Print.
- Rajbongshi, P (ed.) . *Asomiya Jati Aru Sanskriti*. Guwahati. Pragjyotish College.2003. Print.
- Singar, Ajit (ed.) . *Janagosthiya Prasanga*, Diphu Sahitya Sabha . 2014. Print.

\*\*\*\*\*