



## Relation of Koiborto Community to Dravidian Culture and Civilisation: An Analysis

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**Abstract-** Assam is one of the seven states of North East India. The state is the melting point of various races and cultures. The diverse communities of the state live peacefully as the Assamese community inside the geographical location of Assam amid the picturesque beauty of the mighty Brahmaputra, and the mesmerizing exquisiteness of the mother nature.

**Keywords:** Dravidian Culture, Koiborto Community, Civilisation

### I. INTRODUCTION

The communities living in Assam represents a. Australoid b. Mongoloid c. Dravidian (Mediterranean race) d. Nordic (Aryans) race of humankind.<sup>1</sup>

Koiborto community is among one of the communities living in Assam. Worth mentioning that right from the ancient literature like Epics, Vedas, Puranas to the literature written in between 8th Century and 12th Century there is mention of Koiborto community that is enticing the attention of numerous scholars and researchers from ancient days to contemporary time. But it is yet to be unveiled from where the community came and spread in Kamrup or to which humankind or linguistics section the origin of the community rooted. In different times, the diverse historians put forward their thoughts on this topic. From the anthropological point of view, there are particularly two explanations about the original roots of the Koiborto community.<sup>2</sup> However, according to most of the historian, the Koiborto community of Assam belongs to the Dravidian race. Edward Gait, the author of Modern Scientific History is among the historians who advocate this opinion, had maidenly termed that Kaibarta community of Assam belongs to the Dravidian race without a doubt.<sup>3</sup> Kanaklal Baruah and Rajmohan Nath had supported the opinion put forward by Edward Gait. Apart from Mr. Baruah and Mr. Nath, scholars like Birincy Kumar Baruah, Nabin Chandra Sharma, Sashi Sharma, Debendra Kumar Baruah, Upen Rabha Hakamsa also stated that the native Koiborto community belongs to the Dravidian humankind. On the other hand, as per the second definition, a few scholars mentioned that the Kaibartas who came to North East India at first belongs to the Aryan community and those Koiborto s who came to Assam later belongs to the Dravidian race.<sup>4</sup> But the majority of the historian holds the view that “the roots of the Koiborto community belongs to the Dravidian humankind.” So we have taken this objective definition given by the intellectuals and with this definition trying to carry forward an analytical discussion about the relation of the Koiborto community to Dravidian culture and civilization. Following are a few points discussing the notable similarity between the culture and civilization of the Koiborto community to the culture and civilization of the Dravidian race:

Dravidian culture and civilization is known to all yet without an introductory note this discussion will be inadequate. Hence, let's discuss what is Dravidian culture and civilization. Worth mentioning that ,as per the reliable proof given by the linguists, the ancient land of the Dravidian community was the great island of the Mediterranean sea and the Lacia province of southern Asia minor. Later on, the Dravidian linguistic people spread all over the world from this land and also arrived to India. Nogen Thakur had depicted a few facts concerning this opinion.<sup>5</sup>

“Approx before 3000 B.C from the east Mediterranean area they entered Iraq, Baluchistan, Punjab, Sindh, etc., and with time they spread across the North and the East India. But in the subsequent period when the supremacy of the Aryan amplified then they centred around the southern part from the

northern part and with their unique linguistic features lived as a special community. In India apart from the four prime languages Tamil, Malayalam, Kannad, Telegu there are other languages like Tulu, Tod, Kota, Kurrand, Kurruk, Kui, Kulame, etc. which belong to this race, is still prevailing.”

But point to be mentioned that it is yet is a complex question from which route the Dravidian people entered in Assam and if they were in their pure form or mixed form, there is no straight answer to this question. But, we can form a view from the ancient history books that even if the Dravidian came to Assam in their original form but in the consequent period they mixed up with the innate communities.

Another important point is that when the Dravidians came to the Southeast part they established themselves in the nearby areas of a river or the plains near the river or thin forest.<sup>6</sup> However, to support this point there is requirement of ample research and supporting data.

When the Dravidian came to ancient Kamrup or Assam they carried with them their unique culture and civilization. These cultures and civilizations amalgamated with the colorful culture of Assam as a knack. If we minutely analyze this contribution then we can notice the impact of this culture and civilization in the native Koiborta culture of Assam, which is a part of this Dravidian people. Another point to notice that, just like the Dravidians who initiated their culture and civilization from the Indus valley, the native Koiborta of Assam also initiated their journey from the river valleys. As per Article 6 of the Constitution where the Schedule Cast list is included, we can find the different names of the communities in that list. As per the census of 2001, there are 16 scheduled cast communities like Basfor, Bhuyanmali, Brittial, Baniya, Dhubi-Dhuba, Hira, Jalkeot, Jalu, Kaibarta, Lalbegi, Mahara, Metoor, Muchi, Nama Sudra, Patni, and Sutradhar; among all those from the statistical point of view the Koiborta community of Assam is recognized as one of the enormous humanoid cluster apart from being one of the huge communities of Assam. As per the census 2001, the population of Assam is 2,66,55,528 and among this population, the scheduled cast population is 18,25,949 where the population of the Koiborta community is 5,81,559. Here the male population is 29,7,433 and the female population is 58,509.<sup>8</sup> In Assam people from this community living right from the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley to Gomti valley and various river banks of Assam from an ancient period. The livelihood culture of this community relies on fishing hence wherever they find river, lake, other water bodies there they initiate their livelihood through fishing and other related work like preparing the fishing net, manufacturing the boat, doing business through the boat, and manufacturing other essentials for fishing. Besides, this hardworking and simple community also engage themselves in the agricultural work in the river banks with expertise. Another point to be noted that as per the ancient fact Dravidians are experts in manufacturing boats likewise Koiborta are also specialists in this sector. They are very close to the water and their livelihood depends on fishing or doing business by boat hence boat is an essential component of their daily régime.

As per contemporary social scientists, the Dravidian culture has pioneered the urban civilization in India, though this fact is dubious one thing is sure that the origin of the word “pur” lies in Dravidian literature. With this suffix in Assam, various nouns which denotes places have been created. Most of these nouns are created to designate the places where the Koiborto community live in – “ Tezpur, Tamulpur, Bahmpur, kampur, Pamilapur, etc.” There are various places in Assam with the suffix “pur” where the Koiborto community lives. Moreover, the Assamese words like “Juri, Guri, bheta, etc.” also originates from the Dravidian language.<sup>10</sup> Notable that, these suffixes like Juri, Guri are associated with villages like Dimoguri, Upadimaguri, Namdimuguri, Bheleuguri, Amguri, Himoluguri, Samorguri, Sonajuri, Balijuri, Bhetapara, (Ada), etc. – all these villages are in Nagaon district of Assam where the number of Koiborto community is the highest.

The Koiborto community is originated from the Dravidians and probably for this reason there are so many similarities. Some other related similarities are there, in Dravidian culture which is primarily matriarchal, where mothers are kept in a high position,<sup>11</sup> where women have equal rights like men, just like that in the Koiborto communities of Assam there was equality in between the male and the female in ancient time.<sup>12</sup> In this community also the women were independent.<sup>13</sup> Without any hesitation the women also willingly used to adhere to the responsibilities of the family just like the males and therefore, apart from doing their household chores sincerely they were used to engage in fishing, selling, manufacturing the fishnet, boating, doing agricultural work, associated with the various social festival, religious work. They used to take leading roles in all of these works,<sup>15</sup> where the economy of the family also relies on the women like the male members. But in middle age, certain glitches arose. To avoid the humiliation, ascend from the social structure for being regarded as the lower cast and untouchable a few Koibortos tried to follow the upper cast with the hope to earn a reputable position in the society. But as a result, the women of the community had to go through oppression like wearing the veil just like the upper cast Assamese

females where they live within the four walls of the house. The Koiborto female society blindly followed this tradition. Though as of now the impact of this tradition is indifferent yet to some extent it is still predominant in the society.

Besides, there are certain unique rituals of the Koiborto communities of Assam for example, breaking the 11 days of fasting by eating fish in the Shrad (death ceremony), welcoming the religious leaders by wiping the feet using hair, using flowers in the morning prayer (actually using flowers in Assamese culture is also coming from the Dravidian civilization); organizing a fishing competition in Bihu, organizing boating competition, community fishing irrespective of age and organizing feast following the fishing event, etc. are prevailing years after years in the community.

Thus, if we compare the culture and civilisation of the Koiborto community of Assam to the Dravidian culture and civilisation we can notice even though not fully but partially there are certain mutual resemblances between these two communities. From where we can conclude that the culture and civilisation of Koiborto community of Assam which is a comparative fragment of Dravidian culture and civilisation is merged in the colourful ethos of Assam and accomplished its exclusive place.

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