

Religious Universe of the Deoris of Assam

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Abstract

The Deoris are one of the scheduled tribes of Assam inhabiting mostly in the Plain areas of Upper Assam. The entire Deori tribe is divided into four broad divisions or khel on the basis of their places of origin. They are – Dibangiyas, Tengapania, Borgoyan and Patorgoyan. Of all the four divisions of the Deoris, the Dibangiyas have preserved their socio religious organisations almost along with their indigenous dialect known as duan. The Dibangiyas mainly propitiate Kundi-Mama also known as Burha-Burhi or Gira-Girachi as their chief parochial deities. They have a common place of worship known as Midiku,, also called it as Deoshal or Deoghar, Kundiku , which means the abode of the supreme deity, Kundi-Mama. The Dibangiya Deoris observe various rites and rituals in connection with the principal events of life as well as for the welfare of the community as a whole and to propitiate their different pristine God and Goddesses. But at contemporary times due to the influences of other religious beliefs, specially the influence of great traditional Hinduism of neighbouring caste Hindus, some impinging factors have been percolated in their indigenous belief system. In this present endeavour an attempt has been made to know about the traditional belief system of the aforesaid ethnic group in a rural context.

Keywords: Deori; Kundi-Mama; Deoshal; Deo Utha; Dujan Labiduba; Suje; Caste Hindus.

Introduction

The term religion is generally used to denote a man's relation to supernatural powers and various organised system of beliefs and worships in which these relation have been expressed. Religion as a social force exerted influence in both preliterate and literate societies. It provides the vital force for making up the foundation of society through ages. Religion has been marked as a dominant concern of mankind because it can only be realised, conceptualised and even feel the essence. Due to the dynamic and elemental characteristics, the word religion is very hard to define in an appropriate and concise manner. It comes from the Latin word 'religare', which means 'to bind together' or from the word 'religere' which means 'to rehearse, to execute painstakingly', suggesting both group identity and ritual

(Yinger, 1957). Thus, literally religion is a principle of unification and harmonisation. It is a universal institution which is deeply rooted in man's social and biological world.

Anthropologist Wallace (1966) defined religion as 'a set of rituals, rationalized by myth, which mobilizes supernatural powers for the purpose of achieving or preventing, transformations of state in man and nature'. Behind this definition it is recognized that when people cannot solve serious problems through technological or organizational means that cause them anxiety, try to solve by the manipulation of supernatural powers or beings. This requires rituals, which according to Wallace is the primary phenomena of religion, or 'religion in action'. Its major function is to reduce anxiety and keep confidence high, which serve to keep people in some sort of shape to cope with reality (Haviland, 1990). Religion specially Tribal religion is a topic, on which

there have been dozens of monumental works done by various renowned anthropologists like Tylor(1871), Frazer(1911), Durkheim (1912), Srinivas (1952), Malinowski (1954), Redfield (1965), Vidyarthis (1968), Zaman(2010,2015), Medhi(2012) and others.

Objectives and Methods

The present study is mainly concerned with— (i) the beliefs and practices in relation with the supernatural ; (ii) the place of worship and the religious specialist; (iii) the pristine rites and rituals of the Deoris; (iv) the rites and rituals observe in relation with principal events of life;(v) the changing trend.

The empirical data for the present study is collected from a homogenous Deori village named Bahgora Deori Gaon of Lakhimpur District, Assam. Standard anthropological field methods like non participant observation, household survey, in depth interview and case study are employed for the collection of first hand ethnographic data. Data collected from one individual is cross checked with others for authentication of the same. Some of the secondary source materials have also been consulted to know about the community as well as about their customs in relation to the present study.

The Micro Field

Assam is a confluence of diverse ethnic community. Each ethnic community in this state has its own distinctive cultural and religious beliefs and practices which are often associated with their day to day activities like festivals, birth, initiation, marriage, death and so on. Here tribal religion basically is a community religion that involves active participation in the religious beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community. However in contemporary times the tribal groups of Assam have been found in transition from primitive to modern stage of social development. Some tribes here lost their culture and the original beliefs and rituals had also undergone changes due to the impact of other religion like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism etc. Yet there are some tribes which are found to retain their own pristine traditional customs and practices. The Deori, a plain scheduled tribe of Assam, is one such community. This paper attempts to study the indigenous belief system practiced by the Dibangiyas, a sub-group of Deori tribe inhabiting in the plains of Assam. For the present discussion a study was made on a village, Bahgora Deori Gaon of Lakhimpur District, Assam. The materials collected

for the present discussions were collected during the month of December and January, 2015-2016. The study village is a homogenous one, inhabited by the Dibangiyas Deoris only.

The People

The Deoris are one of the important indigenous scheduled tribe of Assam. They are one of the offshoots of Mongoloid stock and linguistically they belong to Tibeto- Burman family. Centuries ago this tribe has migrated from North East Asia i.e., from Chinese and Mongolian territories to the Brahmaputra valley and made Assam as their traditional homeland. Since then they began to settle in different parts of Assam and now they are concentrated in the upper Assam districts like Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat , Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sonitpur and Golaghat. Besides Assam the Deoris are also found in other areas as well. Most of the relics and remains of the tribe still exist in Arunachal Pradesh. They are mainly found in two districts of Arunachal Pradesh, i.e., Lohit and Changlang.

Multiple theories exist to explain the meaning of the term 'Deori', however one could not provide a proper definition of the word 'Deori' till date. Generally a person who has a better knowledge about God and Goddesses and can appease them are known as the 'Deoris'. According to the Deori language, 'De' means great, wise etc., and 'o' and 'ri' denotes male and female respectively. Thus the word 'Deori' means great or wise male or female being (Deori,2002:9-10). Kakati(1989:62) wrote that the word 'Deori' is originated from the Sanskrit word 'deva-grhika', meaning 'in charge of temple or a priest'.

The entire Deori tribe is divided into four divisions or khels on the basis of the places of origin. The Deoris who were believed to reside near the bank of the river Dibang are known as Dibangiyas, those near Tengapani and Barpani or Bargang are known as Tengapania and Bargaya respectively. The people who inhabited in Pat Sadia were named as Patarganya. The Dibangiyas are one of the major divisions of the Deoris. Of all the four divisions of the Deoris, the Dibangiyas Deoris have preserved their traditional socio religious organisation almost along with their indigenous dialect known as doan. The Dibangiyas like to call themselves as 'Jimochanyan' which is derived from three morphemes and each one carries different meaning. According to their belief 'jim' means 'Cold water', 'chan' means 'Sun' which actually personifies male and 'yan' means 'Moon' which personifies female. The Dibangiyas

believe that they were originated from the union of mother 'moon' and father 'sun'. They worship Kundi Mama also known as Burha Burhi or Gira Girachi as the supreme deity and also the creator of the complete universe. The religion of the Dibangiya Deori consists of beliefs in a multitude of benevolent and malevolent spirits. The Dibangiya's have twelve exogamous clans (jaku) viz., Sundariya, Patriya, Kumataya, Airiya, Chitigaya, Chugrangaya, Charia, Dupia, Murangya, Lagachiya, Teliya and Kalia-Chakuya. The Jakus plays an important role in selecting the functionaries of the priestly council. Among the different functionary of the Dibangiyas, the chief priest is called the Bardeori who is invariably selected from Sundariyo clan only. Next to him, who assists the Bardeori is known as the Sarudeori who only comes from Patriyo clan. Again there are other assistant priests, viz., Barbhorali and Sarubhorali who are selected from Airiyo clan.

A typical Dibangiya residential house consists of a structure built on piles. The family of the Dibangiya society is mostly a joint one. Rice is their staple food; along with the rice they take locally produced vegetables, wild floral parts, meat, fish, etc. They also prepared a locally brewed rice beer (suje), which is considered to be a prestigious item for entertaining the guests. Their society is patrilineal in nature and monogamy is the ideal form of marriage prevalent among them. They are mainly agriculturalists. They are also found to be engaged in other subsistence economy like fishing, weaving, wage earning, etc.

Results and Discussion

Religion plays an important role in the socio-cultural life of the Deoris of Bahgara village. Religion may be termed as any set of attitudes, beliefs and practices, rites and rituals related to supernatural powers, that power may be force, spirits, ghosts, god, demons and others. Religion is considered as the beliefs and patterns of behaviour by which human beings try to deal with the important problems that cannot be solved by known technology or organisational techniques. To overcome these limitation people turn to the manipulation of supernatural powers. Supernatural powers or forces are those powers which are believed to be not human or not subjected to the laws of nature.

The exact nature of supernatural differs from people to people and society to society. For some supernatural may be constituted of ghosts and spirits, for others it may be manifested through a pantheon of anthropomorphic gods and goddesses,

or a single high God, and so on. The villagers of Bahgora Deori Gaon referred their religion as 'kundi'. Kundi Mama is the chief parochial deity of the villagers and the word 'kundi' has its root in the name of the principal deity of the Dibangiya Deori. According to them Kundi Mama is the creator of the entire universe. The word Kundi Mama is indispensably related to god and goddesses where Kundi and Mama represent Purush(male) and Prakriti(female) respectively. Kundi Mama is also referred as Burha Burhi or Gira Girachi. They also worship Balia Baba or Pichadema and Tamreshwari or Pichachidema, who are believed to be the eldest son and daughter of the same supreme God. All these deities are worshipped for the well being of the masses and also for agricultural improvement. Traditionally the Deori society is devoid of any idol worship.

Religious rites and rituals are performed in a place of worship where people offer prayer to appease the supernatural for the benefit of the self as well as for the whole community. The place of worship plays a significant role in the socio religious life of a community. The Dibangiyas of the study village also have a common and permanent worshipping place for the deities, known as Midiku which means the abode of deity. The people shows great devotion and respect to the Midiku. The site of the Midiku is located on the eastern side of the village. The Midiku consists of four structured houses. The house which is erected at the centre of the Midiku is the main house which is the abode of Kundi Mama and is known as Kundiku which is constructed in two different parts. In one part the supreme deity is propitiated by the priest by offering items like soaked gram, banana, sugarcane, betel nuts, betel leaves, incense stick, earthen lamp, etc. Only uncooked food are allowed to offer in that place whereas another part of the main house is the place where sacrificing of birds and animals takes place to propitiate Kundi Mama. The machete for sacrifice is kept at the main house of the shrine. The machete is considered to be a sacred object and is believed to have great power and religious value.

On the left side of the Kundiku is the abode of goddess Tamreshwari or Pichachidema known as Pichachiku, and on the right side of the main house, another house known as Pichademaku is constructed to appease Balia Baba or Pichadema. The house which is situated in the compound of the Midiku but separated from the abovementioned houses is known as Morong. Morong is a hall constructed for congregation, where members of village assembled to celebrate religious functions. It is the place where sacrificed birds and animals and other food items

are cooked and consumed by the members after the performance of community rituals.

The propitiation system at the shrine is principally performed by the priest. In all societies, there exist individuals, whose job is to guide and supplement the religious practices of others. Such individuals are skilled at contacting and influencing supernatural beings and managing supernatural forces. Among the Deoris of the study village the religious duties, rites and rituals are conducted by a set of religious functionaries, namely Bardeori, Sarudeori, Barbharali and Sarubharali, invariably selected from four different clans. It has been already mentioned that the Bardeori is selected from Sundariyo clan only, Sarudeori from Patriyio, Barbharali and Sarubharali from Airiyo clan respectively. The priests among the Deoris are always a male and each priest is entitled for different duties to carry out. Bardeori is the chief priest and also the most respected person of the village. He is a full time ritual specialist as well as custodian of the Midiku. For the selection of Bardeori the person concerned should be healthy, honest and a man of good character. He should not be a person mauled by a tiger or bitten by snake earlier, nor excreta of a vulture or crow should have fallen upon him. The Bardeori alone can enter into the main house of the shrine and worship the deities by singing hymns and reciting incantations. He is also entitled to perform sacrifices of birds and animals related to different rituals. The second in the hierarchy of priests among the four is Sarudeori. He assists the Bardeori during the performances of rituals and sacrifices. He is also entitled to perform all the rituals in Midiku in the absence of the Bardeori. The duty of Barbharali is to collect dues of the temple and to provide animals for sacrifice. After sacrificing animals or birds it is the duty of the Barbharali to collect the blood of the sacrificed animals for offering to the deities. The last in the hierarchy of priest is Sarubharali who act as an assistant of Barbharali for management of assets of the shrine.

In addition to the four priests there are some other officials to look after the activities of the Midiku. They are Bora, Barik, Pariya, etc. These office bearers are needed in all the rituals held in the shrine. The duty of Bora is to employ special workers to clean the shrine premises and to arrange the objects for rituals. Barik announces the news about the ritual date to the villagers a day before it is to take place and he also assist the priest on the occasions of the rituals. The duty of the Pariya is also to assist the priest in conducting rituals at Midiku as the probationary pupil of the priest.

The Deori priests are conferred with highest honour in the society. Rigid taboos are observed by them in their day to day life. As for example they should keep themselves pure by abstaining from having food prepared by other men and women of the village, they can take food prepared only by the members of their family, and are also debarred from cutting hair during the priestly life.

The Rites and Rituals

Observances of religious rites and rituals are integral to every community. Rituals are the means through which a person can relate to the supernatural. Ritual practices are often an expression of the belief that supernatural powers can be made to act in certain ways through prayers, sacrifice and various ritualistic activities. The Dibangiya Deoris of the village also observe various rituals throughout the year. In every rite which are performed in the village shrine, the deities are worshipped by the Bardeori by reciting incantations. The incantations and the spells are in oral form and they carry special meaning which is difficult for the common people to understand. The incantations can never be published or brought into written form as they believed that anyone trying to do so will face ill consequences.

While performing ritual in the Midiku, different offerings are made to the deities. Generally three types of propitiation system are followed while performing rituals in the shrine. They are Sattwaki, Rajasiki and Tamsiki. In the first phase known as Sattwiki, uncooked food and other items like soaked gram, banana, sugarcane, betel nuts, betel leaves, incense stick, earthen lamp, etc., are used for offerings. To appease the god and goddesses different sacred incantations are recited by the Bardeori inside the shrine. After the completion of the first phase, the second phase Rajasiki starts. In this phase after presenting the wishes of all the villagers attending the rituals, the priests take a mark in their forehead with chandan (sandal wood) and give similar mark to all the people and after that they start the decapitation of the birds and animals offered to sacrifice. Generally goats (black or white in colour), duck, pigeons (in pair), etc., are sacrificed. In the third phase i.e., Tamsiki, the flesh of sacrificed animals are cooked along with other dishes in the morong. After offering to the deities, a community feast is arranged where all the villagers take part.

The Dibangiyas of the village observe various rituals like Bohag Bisu, Magh Bisu, Chai-Labiruba, Makan Chiban, Saonia puja, etc. Wednesday is considered as the most auspicious day among the

Deoris for starting religious activity or any good work. Bisu is the main festival of the Deoris of the village and it has close association with their agricultural activities. The Bisu festivals are observed before starting the agricultural operation with unrestricted joy and merry making. They observe both Bohag Bisu and Magh Bisu every year which falls in the month of Bohag (April -May) and Magh (January- February) of Assamese calendar. Bisu is a community festival and a ritual called Bisu Puja is performed during Bisu in the village shrine. During Bohag Bisu puja all villagers irrespective of age and sex gather at the Midiku. The Bardeori with the three assistant priests offer prayer inside the Midiku and no one is allowed to enter the Midiku when the prayer is in progress. In the Bisu Puja sacrificing of goats, ducks, fowls etc., are made and after the puja and sacrifices all the villagers take part in the community feast.

The villagers also offer prayers to their ancestral spirits. They believed that the spirit of the ancestors never depart from the family but continue to live with the family in the form of a spirit. Therefore to appease the spirits they perform rituals for the welfare of the family members. During the day of Bohag Bisu, in the morning each family performs a puja called Mora Leruba to worship their ancestors. The puja is performed at the backside of the house where suje (rice beer) and kaji (a special curry prepared out of vegetables and flesh of fowls) are offered to the ancestors.

Another central aspect of Bohag Bisu puja among the Dibangiyas is the appearance of Deodhani where a particular man or woman is possessed by a supernatural power or spirit. That particular man or woman is considered as the personal communicator from a supernatural being who is directed to foretell about the future happenings of the village people and that is why all villagers respect this situation with awe and respect. In Deori society it is commonly known as Deo Utha. During the period when a person is embodied by a deity, offerings are made in the Midiku to propitiate them. The deities indicate their presence by entering inside the body and soul of some males or females. Under the influence of the deity some sort of extraordinary power and euphoria is generated which lifts that particular person to miraculous states of exaltation. The particular man or women even drinks the raw blood of fowls and goes into the state of trance and starts dancing with the tune of drum and cymbals. They generally predict ensuing events in the coming year in the village. Animal sacrifices are made to them and people worship them, offers prayer and sacrifices to gain favour.

Like Bohag Bisu, during Magh Bisu also a grand feast is arranged on the first Wednesday of Magh month, in the premises of Morong attached to the temple. The chief priest offers puja to the deities of the shrine and sacrifice of fowls is also performed.

The Bakat Makan or Bakat Moko Hareba ritual is a community ritual which is organised in the month of Falgun (February-March). This ritual is performed in the any Wednesday of the said month generally in an open area near the bank of river, pond or stream. Only male Bhakats and village priests perform this ritual by appeasing the deities for the well being of the village and community. Females are forbidden take part in this ritual. After the completion of the ritualistic activities the Bhakats and priests are offered with suje along with pork or meat of tortoise which are prepared by selected young males member of the village. After the feast the young boys perform Bihu dance and the villagers believe that only after performing the said ritual one can start dancing and prepare for the forthcoming Bohagiyo Bisu.

Chua Labiruba or Chai Labiba ritual is a ritual for purification which is performed before every ritualistic function. Before performing any kind of ritual at the shrine or before any household ritual, the Chai Labiba is performed. It is a simple ritual where few elderly male person (three or five) are invited who prays to the deities by sacrificing a chicken along with suje.

Saonia puja is observed during the month of Saon (July- August). This ritual is performed for paying tribute to God and Goddesses for better agricultural yield. During this ritual also the Bardeori of the village offers bananas, betel nuts, betel leaves, incenses, etc., to the deities and sacrifices fowls and pray for successful harvesting of paddy.

The Rites and Rituals in Relation with Principal Events of Life

The rites and ceremonies that mark the occasions such as birth, marriage, death etc., are often been called as rites of passage or crisis rite of an individual. Among most of the societies of the world, the performance of rituals on these occasions are found and all these are concerned with changes of status like at birth when a new person enters the society, at marriage when two persons unite and at death when a person leaves. Like any other community the Dibangiya Deoris of the village also perform certain kind of religious activities at the time of birth, marriage and death.

Among the Deoris a good number of beliefs and taboos are associated with the pregnant mother and

new born baby. A pregnant mother has to follow certain restrictions like she is not allowed to carry heavy objects, cannot take part in husking and grinding works, etc. After the birth of the baby, a sarai (disc on stand) containing uncooked rice, egg, betel nut, betel vine leaf, coins, etc., is placed as an offering near the bed of the mother by a women of the house for the well being of the new born baby. Till the period of releasing of the umbilical cord from the baby's body, the mother is thought to be unclean. This period is regarded as polluted period and the mother neither can enter the kitchen nor can she cook meal for any person during this period. Only after performing Hudi Labiruba which is a purificatory ritual, the household along with the new born baby and the mother breaks the impurity. To perform this ritual atleast seven members from seven different clans are invited as attendants for purifying the new born and the mother. A pig is generally sacrificed to mark the occasion. Miduji Jobura a curry prepared from wild arum leaves mixed with fish and black pepper is an essential item for the ritual.

Marriage is considered as an indispensable part of life of the Deori people. Clan exogamy is strictly followed in case of marriage. They have four different forms of marriage, namely Demasi Biya or Bar Biya, Sochibasi Biya or Maju Biya, Surubasi Biya or Saru Biya and Meloni Biya or Gandharva Biya. Bar Biya is an expensive affair as all types of customs, traditions of Deori marriage are observed in this type. This type of marriage is arranged by parents and it is continued for three days. Maju Biya is quite less expensive than Bar Biya, which is also arranged by the parents of the prospective couple and continued for two days. Saru Biya is completed in a day and the expenditure of such marriage is quite low. The most widely prevalent type of marriage among the people of the village is Gandharva Biya or Meloni Biya or marriage by elopement, where the couple concerned take initiatives. In this type of marriage the boy with the help of some of his friends elope the girl on an appointed date. No formal ceremony is observed in this type of marriage. However a simple feast is arranged by the bridegroom family on the same day or on the following day of elopement. It is believed that if the eloped couple do not perform the Meloni Biya their offspring are debarred from celebrating their marriage. The important items of required in the marriage feast constitute fish, pork, rice beer, rice, vegetables, betel nuts and betel vine leaf. Suje (rice beer) is the most inevitable item for Deori marriage ceremony.

A series of rites and ritual are observed by the Dibangiya Deoris for the death of an individual as well as for the salvation of the disposed corpse. There

are two primary ways of disposal of the dead body. Generally men and women dying natural death are cremated. But the dead bodies of children, pregnant women and epidemic cases are buried. In case of a normal death the Dibangiyas cremates. However, there are differences in the funeral customs related with the deceased. Usually the differences are observed in per se with the social status of the dead. For example when a man or women dies the chita (the funeral pyre) is erected with seven layers and five layers of firewood respectively. When a priest dies nine folds of firewood is laid. The dead body is duly honoured by them. Before carrying the corpse to the cremation ground, the dead body is washed with water and is adorned with a new dress. An egg is broken in the forehead of the deceased by the eldest son which is known as dujan labiduba. The significance of this ritual is to detach all kinship relationship with the deceased. Usually the eldest son puts fire in the pyre but in absence of the eldest son any male member of the family can perform his duty. A social taboo is observed by the members of the deceased family. On the fourth day a funeral ceremony is held followed by a feast. The final mortuary ritual among the Dibangiya Deori is known as Daha where all the villagers and the priests are invited. The priests and the elderly persons perform Suje Luguruba ritual to satisfy the soul of the deceased. After the end of the ritual a feast is organised where large number of chickens, pigs, rice beer is required.

Conclusion

The social structure of the Dibangiya Deoris are interwoven and interrelated with their religion and every sphere of life of the Deori people is guided by rites and rituals of their religion. The Dibangiyas are still found to be maintaining their tradition of aboriginal practices. Kundi- Mama is the supreme God of this group of people, who is worshipped at household as well as in community level. Besides the supreme deity they also worship Balia Baba and Goddess Tamreswari. The deities are propitiated at the Midiku, which occupies a central place in their socio religious life. The propitiation system at the Midiku can only be performed by the priests. There are a set of priestly council for conducting the rites and rituals in the village shrine. The priests are considered as the chief intermediaries between God and human. Only the priests could offer prayers and sacrifices in the shrine to appease the deities. The cult of sacrifice is a dominant feature of indigenous religious practices of the people in the village. They

offer sacrifices to the deities to ward off sickness, sufferings and afflictions and also for the well being of the village and community. Suje (rice beer) is a part and parcel of the socio ritual life of the Deoris of the village, which is offered to all the deities, ancestors and other supernatural beings. Without these offerings no ritual can be performed, nor do any socio cultural functions become complete. The main occupation of the community is agriculture and every harvesting activity of the village starts with appeasing of deities of the Midiku. Bohag Bisu is the main festival among the Dibangiyas which has relation with agricultural activities. The most considerable aspect of Bisu is that it must be started by a puja which they termed as Bisu Puja. The Bisu Puja is generally performed at the village shrine. Besides Bihu, there are host of rituals which have been performed by the villagers in their respective households or at the shrine during different time of a year. They also observe various rites and rituals in connection with the principle events of life. As for example, when a child is born certain rites are performed to ensure strength, good fortune and to protect the baby from the influence of evil spirits. There are other rites when someone gets married and funeral rites are performed to ensure safe passage into the immortal world. The Dibangiya Deoris have been maintaining their pristine traditional socio-religious practices intact. However they are found to be influenced by the beliefs and rituals of the neighbouring Hindu population of Assam, as a result of which some of the customary rules, values, norms of Assamese society have glued to their social life. With the contacts with the neighboring caste Hindus the people of the villages become acquainted with the Hindu Gods and deities and as such relating their own indigenous Gods and Goddesses with the Hindu pantheon is noticed. As for example, Kundi-Mama the supreme deity is believed to be the parochial version of Lord Shiva and Parvati, likewise Goddess Mirushi (goddess of wealth) is believed to be Goddess Laxmi of Hindu pantheon. The rituals like Asthi bisarjana, i.e., merging the ashes and bones of the deceased person in the nearby river as water of river equals with the holy water of river Ganga, bathing the dead body with turmeric and black gram etc among the Dibangiyas are outcome of their interaction with the neighboring caste Hindu inhabitants. Likewise use of santijal (holy water) or water containing basil leaves in a copper bowl is also a new element. The basil plant is sacred and used in all ritualistic occasions by the caste Hindus. Putting vermilion mark on the forehead by married women and removing the same after the death of the

husband to mark the symbol of widowhood is percolated from the neighbouring caste Hindus of Assam. Though some changes can be seen in their contemporary socio-religious life yet the villagers have maintained most of the traditional elements in their day to day life. Although the influence of Hinduism is slightly visible among them yet the trend towards traditional indigenous beliefs and practices are still prominent.

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