

## **BIRTH RELATED RITUALS OF SONOWAL KACHARI TRIBE OF ASSAM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Sonowal Kacharis are one of the scheduled Bodo tribes of Assam. They are indigenous ethnic group of the North East part of India. The Sonowals were offered non-tribal titles like Saikia, Bora, Hazarika, in their.....Bhoj, Bahoor Utowa, Kechaikhathi puza etc. Though there are no historical records, but like many other Kachari tribes, they nostalgically trace their ancestry from the Kachari Kingdom established in the eleventh century A.D. at Dimapur. Some even contended that in the middle of the ninth century a strong Kachari kingdom was established at Sadiya. After the advent of the Ahoms they shifted their kingdom to Dimapur in the thirteenth century. Nevertheless the Sonowal Kacharis are the offshoot of the Tibeto-Burman Bodo people who are scattered in almost the entire north-eastern region of India. They branched out from the parent group and spread over to Sadiya of Assam and contributed immensely in moulding synthetic Assamese culture. At present these tribe men are mostly concentrated in the eastern part of Assam. In this paper an attempt has been made to birth related rituals of Sonowal Kachari tribes of Assam. In every human society the birth of a child, be it a male or a female, is an occasion of joy after the family. The Sonowal Kacharis perform certain rights and rituals at the birth of a child. Generally five or six rituals are held on the birth of a child. They are- Rituals related to Pregnant Women, Rituals of Rebirth system, Mukloga rituals, Bajuliwa rituals, Sudhi Sabah Ceremony.

**KEYWORDS:** Ahom, Rituals, Sonowal Kacharis, Tribe

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Sonowal Kacharis were regarded one of the major developing prominent tribes of modern Assam. According to legend the Kacharis originally lived in the land called Kamruli (kamrup) by which followed a river in a great valley, they were driven out and went to a place called kundilo (kundil or Sadiya). Among the various tribal groups of Assam, the Sonowal Kacharis is the fifth largest plains tribal group of people. They are 'scattered in seven districts of upper Assam, viz, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Golaghat, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur. They are also scattered in the districts of Sibsagar, Jorhat, and Golaghat and in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh in North-East India, also. Their population is estimated at 2.5 lakh. This tribe is second in terms of literacy just after the Mizos.' In every human society the birth of a child, be it a male or a female, is an occasion of joy after the family. The Sonowal Kacharis perform certain rights and rituals at the birth of a child. Generally five or six rituals are held on the birth of a child. They are- Rituals related to Pregnant Women, Rituals of Rebirth system, Mukloga rituals, Bajuliwa rituals, Sudhi Sabah Ceremony.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The paper will analyze the birth related rituals among the Sonowal Kacharis of Assam.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Both primary and secondary data use in preparing this paper.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A few rituals discussed of Sonowal Kacharies in the following way:-

### Rituals Related to Pregnant Women

A number of own custom are prevalent in the Sonowal Kachari society in relation to pregnant women and newborn babies would be parents are to follow certain rules and customs to ensure the birth of a healthy baby. The male has to abstain from any kind of killing, hunting, theft and handling dead body or attending to funeral ceremonies etc. he is proscribed to enter directly into the bedroom while returning home from outside duties in the evening or night. Similarly, the female also to abstain from certain acts. She is not allowed to go out of home in the evening, visit a family where death has occurred recently. She is proscribed from sitting in the adjoining areas between verandah and courtyard. She has to abstain from listening to the news of accident, death, bad news, negative discussion etc. tour fishing net, thorny branch at the door.

### Birth Related Rituals

When the birth is imminent, the pregnant women or a Dhai looks after these activities. If the newborn baby is a male, the waiting people outside the house are informed by way or Uruil and, by thumping on the wall if it is a female baby. Nari is cut with a knife made of bamboo. The tongue of the newborn is cleaned with the bunch of hair tips of the mother and three drops of Rohi Mod is given on the mouth of the baby as a Prasad of God. The dried –up umbilical cord is kept carefully in the event of sickness of the child. A fire is burnt beside the mother and mustard seeds, garlic and Bose are burnt in the fire. A garland made with Bos and garlic is put around the neck of the child. It is believed that the evil forces cannot harm the child when the garland is with the baby.

### Rituals of Rebirth System

The Sonowal Kacharis believe in sprit of Atma and Punorjanam or rebirth. When a child is born, it is not known to which caste, religion, race or gotra the newborn baby belonged to in the previous life. Thus, they believe that the whole family became impure with the birth of the baby. They call it as Ahushi or Suwa loga or Jiya Suwa. The villagers do not dine with the family till the Huchikaran or purification ceremony is performed.

### Bajuliwa Rituals

When the navel cord falls male devotees are invited to whom ‘Mah-Prasads are offered. The mother then makes salutation and the devotees shower blessings wishing all good to both the mother and the child.

### Sudhi-Sabah Ceremony

The Sudhi Sabah a ritual is held after is held after twenty one days in case of male baby and thirty days in case of a female baby. On this day the child’s head is to be shaved by the father and the hair that are cut have to be preserved ceremoniously. On the occasion of sudhi Sabah, a few devotees are invited to hold Namkritan. The baby is blessed by the devotes so that the little one from that day becomes a real Kachari.

### Mukhloga Rituals

The Sonowal Kacharis believe that the newborn is saved from Mukhloga made from vermin compost and saliva of the mother is put on the forehead of the baby. Sometimes the newborn’s hand or foot is tied around with a disconnected

small thread. It is also believed that the baby on her lap. They believe that the impurity due to birth of a newborn is more than the impurity due to the death of a member of the family.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the above discussion it can be observed that birth related rituals gave more importance of the Sonowal Kachari tribe of Assam like other tribe. Agriculture, weaving, horticulture, rearing animals are their livelihood. Like other primitive community Sonowal Kacharis are not totally dependent on forest but they dependence with nature into some rituals and customs.

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