People try to know their origin, it’s human nature. But the reason behind to know their origin varies from community to community. Sarania Kachari community also is trying to get their original identity. The Sarania Kachari community belongs to Mongoloid race and influenced by the Tibetan-Mongoloid culture as it is mentioned in the first chapter. They speak Assamese as their first language. These people are influenced by the upper caste Hindu culture; they took *Saran* with the help of a Brahmin, a process of being Sanskritized. They were known as Kachari prior to taking *Saran*; afterwards, they are known as Sarania Kachari. The Sarania Kachari community has evolved through the assimilation between Aryan and Non-Aryan. At different intervals of time, Mongolian people began to be attracted by other religion and due to assimilation with Aryan people, the formation of this community has started. Before the advent of Sankardev Vaishnav dharma, they have not known as Sarania and people of this community took shelter to a Brahman for entering into the Aryan culture and they were identified as “kshatriya” in cases of kings or Sarania in case of the general public. Hinduization from Mongolian group has more or less been stopped, but the descendant of “Sarania” people live with Sarania identity and take “*Saran*”. According to past law after marriage, they take “*Saran*” with the help of a “*Goshai*”. After some generations, this large community had compelled to identify themselves as “sarania”.

The “Introduction” covers introductory part, the importance of the study, objectives of the study, review of the literature, Methods and Methodology and Area of the study, limitations and scope. The introduction of this thesis emphasized how the
sub-national identities started ossifying, largely due to the historical events of the past. During ethnic movement, the leadership to achieve the goal of the movement and cope with its challenges presents one’s community history purposively.

The second chapter deals with the profile of the community. As mentioned in the second chapter for tracing the history of Sarania Kachari, the researcher relied on reminisces, recollections, memories, opinions, history books about Assam and the books on Shankardeva in the absence of written and documentary evidences. As such the primary source of reconstruction of this community’s history is the oral tradition of Sarania Kachari. The age-old process of Sanskritization homogenized the cultural lives of tribal people and Assamese people to a large extent. However, the diversification of this unified culture started with the process of demands of new ethnic identities.

The research has found that the Sarania Kachari, who were adopting other cultures were not able to get the same level of respect as the other Hindu communities. Soon the sense of deprivation grew substantially and they sought their prior identities. This reverse process may be termed as desanskritization. The tendency of being hinduized is general among the tribal people of Assam. Same is the case with the Sarania Kachari community of Assam too. In some villages, people from this community get assimilated with the Assamese community in such a manner that it is difficult to recognize their distinction barring their distinctive physical appearance.

In the third chapter, the relationship between folklore and identity formation is explained. Folklore reveals various ideas about the folk and their past. Folklore studies explore not only people’s way of life but also their survival strategies. When the way of life of a particular community comes into national stage, people belonging to different cultures value them differently. Folklore studies try to comprehend different
traditional networking systems and lifestyles and also emphasize the difference between changes and continuities. Folklore always changes as the folk changes; so lore is obvious to change, so folklore is always in the making. The sense of authenticity with the flexibility always keeps folklore relevant in ethnic identity movement. Folklore is developed as a major concern of ethnic identity movements with an attention to group’s self-definition. Folklore is connected with the way of life of the people and it extends support to the survival of the group. It stands for collective voice and the importance of folklore as a source of understanding the respective community in the context of preserving cultural diversity and protecting cultures of the people has increased to a great extent. Folklore links to a group’s common past, tradition, and identity that creates a positive feeling amongst the member of the community and make them strong in front of others. Folklore is recreated to be powerful, and attractive to manipulate the local powerless folk.

The evolution of Sarania Kachari community started from the Tupoliya Sanmilan (Goreswar, Baksa district) (Deka: 2002: 262) and before that this evolution was at a low speed. Due to feelings of exploitation and deprivation, the emerging educated class of this community started expressing their feelings in front of other on a large scale. This community was not satisfied with the existing administration system and the people wanted to follow the changes which can be occurred by moving against it. The Sanskritization, retribalization, innovation of folklore are the results of unsatisfied conditions with the existing administration.

The term folk can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. The linking factor can be a common occupation, language or religion- what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some
traditions, which it calls its own. (Dundes: 1996: 11) A member of the folk may not know all other members, but he will probably know the common core of traditions belonging to the folk, traditions which help the group to have a sense of group identity. It is difficult to understand how much of the population of Assam can be accepted as Assamese. In case of the Sarania Kachari community, the leaders are reinventing their folk music for distinguishing Sarania people from others and for making a strong different identity. Through identity, people try to group themselves with some people with whom they feel similarity and through identity people try to differentiate themselves from whom they want to be separated. National identity includes those characters that bring together as well as differentiate those people who live within the borders of a nation state. In Assam, most of the community imagines a separate identity with its goal of ethnicity and with its own ethnic boundary and government. Sarania identity is based on history and folklore. For making the identity, history is conceptualized. It was found that population’s opinion is also diverted.

The difference in customs, traditions which are originated from folklore shape the distinct and rich culture of Assam and due to which the formation of disharmony occur. And every ethnic group nowadays is trying to enlighten their vibrant culture. Social identity is processed through interaction with others which constitutes symbolic boundary regarding us and other. (Chapter 3 of this study, p.)

For obtaining desired social and political goals, differences are created in cultural ways or in livelihood by the people who are in power. Seeking different identity is the result of suppression, issues of power and isolation.

The fourth chapter is about the identity of Sarania Kachari community. Once Hinduism influenced them and tried to introduce themselves as Assamese, now they
want to remain as Sarania Kachari. They were getting Scheduled Tribes certificates under the name of the more influential Bodo community until 2015. As mentioned in other chapters, this community is struggling for having Schedule Tribes status under the Sarania Kachari title. As found in the research and as mentioned by Nalini Deka, they have been included in the list of aborigine along with the Kacharis, the Rabhas, and others since the first census operation of 1871 till the year 1961.

From the 1971 census of Assam which includes the list of aborigines, the name of Sarania Kachari community was missing. So it is very difficult to estimate the actual population of this sub-caste. It is reported that Sarania Kachari people are not getting Scheduled Tribe status from 2014 as they are not fulfilling the Scheduled Tribes criteria. The different activities of the different organization of the Sarania Kachari community are engaged for the development of the community.

For a person, Identity begins with birth at his or her mother’s womb. With birth, one person knows what community it belongs. But for Sarania it is not that simple. Sarania people had a different identity in different time. Ethnic consciousness begins with political motivation. Other people get impressed by watching or hearing folklore from other community people. Trying to make the impression through folklore is sometimes a political weapon. Identity will be that what a person or a group wants to show to the other and what impression they can make. The fourth chapter is about the problems of identity Sarania Kachari are facing.

Some section of Sarania Kachari people were satisfied with their identity as Sarania Kachari, as they were getting Scheduled Tribe certificates because of the kachari title. But some of them believe that they took *saran* from Brahmin so that they
are no longer Kachari. The title of a community represents some uniqueness to the respective community. They would like to identify themselves as Sarania Kachari.

**Causes of Separation:**

A common complaint found among them is that Assamese do not give equal importance to all communities. The power of decision-making is handed only to some distinguished people of elite Hindu Assamese community. The people from Sarania community want to take part in the decision-making process. Sarania people are neglected in B.T.A.D. council though they are the second largest population in B.T.A.D. and there is no one from this community in B.T.A.D. council. Most of the Sarania Kachari inhabited places are maintaining their tribal culture.

According to the Indian constitution, any community can get Scheduled Tribe certificate after Hinduization even though they are hinduized ritually, but lifestyle is not developed. As the rights of a person belonging to a Scheduled Tribe are independent of his/her religious faith. (p. 197, chapter x1 special representation in services for sc/st definition and list of scheduled castes/scheduled tribes) Sarania Kachari people argue as they are not getting Scheduled Tribe certificate under their own title and the reason is unknown. On the other hand, other Sanskritized tribe such as Rabha, Sonowal, Mech, Thengal, and Lalung are getting Schedule Tribe certificates on their own respective title.

By supporting the ethnic movements by smaller identities, it can be concluded that this kind of activities should be encouraged only when they are engaged in the development of the society that is following a bellow standard of life in comparison to others. But in other words, it is not definite that by handing over the power to small communities will enhance their development. Multiple factors are responsible for the
development of a community. In the Northeastern part of India, the privilege and opportunities for different categories of territorial based group encourage to become other smaller identities for being categorized as a distinct identity. In this process, this encouragement creates new identities. It may be by transforming the old assimilated one assigning with a new culture. The actions of Central government, state government and local institutions of the ethnic groups play the role of an actor in defining the ethnic group. Assamese Hindu constitutes the central part of the political and economic elite and performs an influential role in all key institutions at the highest part. Assamese identity largely covers the form of dominant identity and is realized as such by Assamese and non-Assamese elite. After the devastation of the development council, the movement remains static, to some extent people stop reacting for their Sarania identity, but the activist or politicians are waiting for the next action of the Government. The allegation made by Bharatiya Janata Party was that Congress Government has formed this type of development council in expectation of the votes. (No.TAD/BC/402/2016/104, bishnupriyamanipuri.blogspot.com/2016/11/assam-govt-dissolves-bmdc.htm).

It is mentioned in the book “Sarania sakal kon jatir manuh”, (Deka: 1993) that the people can be hinduised without giving up their own culture, own title if they want. It is not necessary to give up their age-old religion for taking saran. But, they did this. They will be welcomed if they will return to their own religion.

Brahmin or other upper caste people ask the lower class to take saran for so-called upgradation. But these upper castes never accept them as their part. They used them as manual labour for the agricultural field. They advise them to take Saran for taking advantage of using them as manual labour in their agricultural field. Brahmin
came home to give saran and took a coconut or betel tree as offerings and comes every year for collecting the fruits.

The songs are written in such a way that they reflect who the Sarania Kachari people are and what they are searching for and their deprivation of several years. Dharmeswari Sarania of Borimakha, the president of Sarania Kachari Democratic women council said that they are trying to put jojoba flowers in their green attire, as this flower plant is available in every doorstep. In Assam using of green Mekhela Chador is vast. Women from other community use green Mekhela Chador. So, to mark different from others they decide to use the jojoba flower in their attire marking it specific for Sarania only. For the first time, some youth organized the youth festival. No other organization such as development council and Sarania Kachari student union did not help and encourage them.

To be upgraded socially by following different types of sacramental process is a process of mental satisfaction. Considering the status of Brahmins and other high class, they also try to get the status of Assamese Hindu through the sacramental process.

In the fifth chapter, the descriptions about the folklore of Sarania Kachari people are given importance. Folklore is connected with the way of life of the people and it extends support to the survival group. It stands for collective voice and the importance of folklore as a source of understanding the respective community in the context of preserving cultural diversity and protecting cultures of the people has increased to a great extent. The fifth chapter is about the folklore of Sarania Kachari community and expression of Sarania Kachari identity through folklore. Folklore tradition will fade away if the rituals or other religious purposes or agricultural activities in which these folkloric traditions are practicing will be lost. Without the
original tradition, the folklore will be without the soul. In the past, the practice of Silkworm rearing and beast hunting were common amongst them. But with the time these practices are becoming rare. Now, these activities can found in the form of dance. The trial of the establishment of folklore is related to the survival struggle in respect of Sarania Kachari community. Folklore defined the entire community’s mindset. Or in other words, a community’s mindset can be understood by studying the folklore which is the part of their life.

Though the villagers mainly depend on agriculture for their subsistence, there has not been much improvement in this technique and the people continue with outmoded forms of cultivation in the small holdings without any irrigation facilities and therefore they are living with the poor economic condition. Catching fishes from the lake, gathering firewood from the jungle and living happily with old customs and tradition and their little agricultural produce are the characteristic of the mode of living of the Sarania Kachari. The Sarania Kachari observes two ways of lifestyles. The rural Sarania Kachari maintains the unprogressive character of the means of production and livelihood. The urban Sarania Kachari demonstrates the modern progressive attitude. They are no longer content with modest living and wish to achieve something more to demonstrate before the world. They are trying to show their rich cultural heritage to other. The emergence of such consciousness can be attributed to Ramesh Das (Baksa district), Dipak Deka (Baksa district), Nalini Deka (Tamulpur, Baksa district), Satish Das (Baksa district) etc.

Naam Ghar, fields, festivals, life cycle ceremonies public meetings are spaces for renovating the social relations. Public meeting is very important in this respect. In case of Sarania Kachari, the formation and deformation of any committee or council or
any important decision are taken here. Public meetings and discussions are important for awakening the consciousness of the people.

The breakdown of some features of the tribal system does not mean that tribal identity has been lost. Some tribes have taken new political and economic policies and functions as the order of the day. Others can notice these new policies. This does not mean that due to these features a community can lose its tribal status. The social status of the tribe depends on the community itself.

Economic and ritualistic interdependence between caste and ideas about the caste status made Sarania Kachari people turn towards the Assamese people. There is no question of organizing a marriage outside the caste. The factors of changes are science and technological advancement, growing material prosperity, ethnic appraisal and the effect of urbanization. These factors are also continuously affecting the traditional life of ethnic communities as well as Sarania Kacharis. It affects the traditional life cycle and ritualistic behavior. Identity is recognized by cultural practices and their way of living.

The disturbing factor about ethnic struggle is that it affects the neighbouring ethnic community’s mindset. For eliminating the effects of ethnic problems Government offer Autonomous council, but Assam is a multiethnic state therefore if one ethnic struggle settles down another arises. From this study, it understands that folklore is a tool to maintain social stability and unity. People did not understand its role in the past but it was always in practice. Though identity movements start for solving problems by using folklore as a tool, some time question of identity creates problems rather than solves it.
As the book “The Kacharies” shows Boro, Mech, Hajong, Rabha, Dimasa, Koch, Thengal, Sonowal Kacharies, Sarania Kacharies belonged to the same origin “Mongoloid groups” and some people of these tribes took saran under Vaisnava dharma in the past. These people are living in different districts of Assam such as Lakhimpur, Sibasagar, Darrang, Nagaon, Kamrup, and Goalpara with different names though they had the common ancestors that were historically found. The common pattern of living is their distinctive feature as it is different from the Assamese Hindu. The pattern of living is also different from Kachari, Rabha, Deuri, Mishing, and Karbi people. The Sarania Kacharis are following the same language, an Assamese dialect. They are distinctive in terms of culture. Sarania Kachari is not confident about their identity as they did not want to follow Kachari lifestyle and the Assamese mainstream did not recognize them as Assamese or Hindu. This mixed identity can be seen in their whole culture. They were not able to identify confidently as other communities do not support them as a unique community. As due to assimilation and unconsciousness about own culture, they forgot their age-old folk songs. However, in recent time being conscious about their existence whatever they found which express their past e.g., a small piece of sentence or riddle, they are trying to decorate these with new words through which they can express their culture, so that new generations maintain their culture. When some people live together for many years and try to forget their past culture and wish to mix with the superior classes, it is obvious to grow a new culture. The traditional folk characteristics have been changed beyond recognition by the power of modernity. It is enacted positively by considering the present but the past is reconstructed according to the demand of the time. For presenting the lost horizon and focusing the present identity, folklore is standardized, many political elements are eliminated, and many are newly added.
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