

Conclusion

The extent of changes and continuity of the Traditional life in Raja-Mayong is now attempted to be summarized in the following paragraphs on the basis of the dimensions in the foregoing chapters. It is argued that unless the background of the village in all its aspects, is dealt with, as far as possible, no amount of discussion on change and continuity in it would give a complete picture.

Raja-Mayong known more generally as Mayong, continues to be a village till the time of study. Of course it has come to light during field work that proposal for declaring Raja-Mayong along with adjacent villages of Jhargaon and Buraburi as a town in the 1991 census was put forward by the D.C of the District of Morigaon. This move of the District administration was resisted by the local leaders. They argued that the roads and other amenities are not sufficient for declaring it as a town and as such there was no justification for the people to tax in rate of urban area. But urban influence has penetrated its life since 1980. Marked changes in the way of life of the people respect of their values and other physical needs are noticeable.

The twelve century old reputation of its being a centre of magic and witchcraft as mentioned by Rajmohan Nath in his book, *The Backgrounds of Assamese Culture* has made Raja-Mayong known to world. Its residents still feel proud in calling their place a centre of

magic. A Doctoral thesis has already been completed on the magical lore of Mayong in the last decade of the last century. (Kalita, Dr. Dilip Kumar *Magical Beliefs and Practices in Assam with Special Reference to the Magical Lore of Mayong.*)

Introduction of electricity in domestic use, establishment of Telephone connections and B.S.N.L mobile tower in Raja-Mayong, involvement in the urban oriented economy, exposure to tourism in Assam, frequent contact with the Urban Centers are some of factors accelerating the import of urban values to the village.

The establishment of the Office of Pabitara Range (Wildlife) Sanctuary very close to Raja-Mayong, the establishment of a Degree College in Raja-Mayong village, the working of the Public Health Center in supplying of Drinking water, the establishment of TOURFED, the centre of tourism, establishment of Museum in Raja-Mayong, the working of State Bank of India, Raja-Mayong Branch improvement of roadways as a means of communication via.-Chandrapur-Kajali, construction of concrete bridge over the river Kapili an other places in the Mayong-Morigaon road were some of the important Developments both in outside and inside the village during the last two decades that had their impact on the socio-economic life of Raja-Mayong of our study.

Raja-Mayong was a village with unique characteristics. From time immemorial its contact with the outside world as people from far off places come to Mayong in search of knowledge of magic as Mayong is almost synonymous with magical beliefs and practices.

The economy of the village was not self-contained to make it isolable. At present, the village is going towards self-sufficiency in production of rice though it is a flood prone area. Previously, Raja-Mayong was a trading centre of Black Salt, Milk, Fish and Meat. At present, the village is still dependent for other goods. In spite of struggle for economic development by the people of Raja-Mayong most of the people still live below poverty line. The percentage of people living below poverty line is higher by 6.4% in Raja-Mayong than the state average of Assam.

The study of the social structure of Raja-Mayong reveals that the traditional pattern of caste system was followed profoundly and that the status, rank and heirarchy of the castes were largely determined on the basis of the festivals and rites as well as by the nature of duties or charge they were required to discharge in the temples or shrines of the village. The notion of pollution has opened the doors of free access to caste rites and a great amount of flexibility is permitted. The Koch and the Nath castes participate in almost all rituals on an equal footing. In the Royal festival, caste rigidity becomes flexible and sense of brotherhood has begun to prevail.

The role of Namashudra is very poor because they have entered into the Raja-Mayong village after 2003. Though their role is very poor, yet they have been invited to the rituals of Naths and Koches. The Nepalis, as a community has no relation to the Koch caste in regards of the Royal festival. They have a good relation with the people of the Nath caste. But recently they have been excluded from their rituals on the ground of pollution. Some of the Nepali people are Buddhists by religion and their religious observances are looked after by their Lamas i.e. Budhhist priests. The three Ahom families are members of the Khel

of the Koch caste and marriages between Koches and Ahoms are permitted.

Though the Royal festival of Raja-Mayong has acted as a unifying force, yet there are lot restrictions in the name of caste in the village. The Koches are under the fold of the Sildubi Sattra of the Damodariya sect while the Naths belong to an altogether different cult. This found manifestation in the rites and rituals as well as in the social interactions among the older people. But the younger generation is seen to have overcome these differences and have inculcated a sense of equality which leads us to believe that there would no more differences in the near future.

The spread of education, political participations are some of the important factors in the present century which brought about changes in the traditional caste hierarchy. The literacy level of Rural people of Raja-Mayong is higher in comparison to other villages of the G.P. The people of Raja-Mayong actively took part in the Freedom movement for which the people have a strong sense of belonging the Nation.. Though the area of Raja-Mayong is remote from the District administration and from Guwahati, the people are politically conscious, which may be ascribed to their constant touch with the traditional Monarchy which is still prevalent.

Though the place used to remain cut off from the main land both literally and figuratively for most of the time in the past, of late this trend has undergone a lot of change in the fact that matrimonial alliances of the people of Mayong with people from other places have taken place in a great scale. As regards the family structure it is observed that the joint family is fast dwindling and the nuclear family has the norm of the

day. There are more nuclear families in the village at present than in the past. A change in occupational pattern may be regarded as a major cause of this change in family pattern. The pace of development is higher in the village of Raja-Mayong for which people from nearby villages prefer to settle in the village and girls from the fringe villages also prefer a groom from the village.

It has been observed that the family size in Mayong area quite large which signifies that family planning of the Government has made little impact on the people. This may be regarded as one of the causes of economic backwardness of the people.

A major change that have taken place in Raja-Mayong in the recent years is that the one time centre of tantrism and magic has now almost entirely has become a centre of Vaisnasim. The people of the area are mostly following vaisnava faith at present and have started going away from the magical beliefs and practices of yore. Of course we cannot say that it has been able to dispense with magic totally. Since magic is an esoteric practice, people still are seen resorting to it whenever they do not find answer to their problems elsewhere in the same primitive belief that the forces of nature can be controlled by man.

A new religious tolerance has been seen in the village that the mixture in the worships of the lord Vishnu, Shiva and Durga or Mahamaya has been assimilated. One Raja-Mayong villager is though a Vaishnavite devotee, yet, he worships the Maya, Lakhi, Shiva etc. In the Shrine of the lord Ganesha or Shiva or Mahamaya, the typical worship of lord Vishnu has been publicly celebrated and one part of the adoration has been offered to the lord Ganesha or respective deities. Such type of Mutual attachment of the religious aspects in the society

can make unity among diversity and would bring the social cohesion and fraternity among the people.

The Royal Medhis or preists can not break the principles of Pancha Devata which are the symbolic images of Salagrama. The earlier Salagrama has been seen in the Royal temple. So, the Traditional religious relation between the Medhis and the king of Raja-Mayong is still surviving and their activities in the Rites are annually operative. The king of Mayong is a cultural symbol than a political entity and it is his prerogative to handle the Salagrama.

The castes in the village are always traditional and no major change has occurred in this sphere. Though inter caste marriages are quite common now a days, and the society is quite lenient as compared to the past, it is not the norm.

The creation of the Pabitora wild life sanctuary has adversely affected the economy of the people of the village as some amount of arable land of the people of Mayong was included in the sanctuary and people cannot expand their cultivation into the sanctuary any more. Of course the major cause of shortage of land is regarded to be the increase in population and fragmentation of the agricultural lands as a consequence. Moreover affluent people from other places and also from within the village have bought a considerable amount of land from the poor farmers who sell out their land as a result of extreme poverty. This has made a two pronged attack on the poor people of the area, as the price of land has gone up for many reasons on the one hand and the poor people cannot buy land after selling their own land which has led the poor towards being landless day by day.

Information pertaining to improvement in agriculture, collected from the respondents, reveals that in Raja-Mayong some of the cultivators continue to use the traditional methods and implements while some have resorted to modern scientific implements. They have begun the use of a considerable amount of chemical manures also. They have started the cultivation of the high yielding varieties of crops and have begun to adopt pest control measures. The cultivators of the area have been facing the perennial problem of ravaging floods, which is a common problem for most of the cultivators of Assam. As a measure against this problem of floods they have changed over to the cultivation of Boro paddy in the winter with the help of irrigation with ground water, contrary to the earlier cultivation in summer.

In addition to this the people of the village have to face another problem which is peculiar to villages situated beside wild life sanctuaries. Wild life, particularly Buffaloes and to some extent the rhinoceros create havoc to the standing crops of the villagers. Satisfactory measures have not been taken by the Forest Department for protection of the crops of the cultivators, which is leading towards a man-animal conflict in the area. People in the area feel that a strong fencing around the sanctuary prohibiting the animals to come to the fields of the villagers will solve the problem to a great extent.

Fishing is an important economic activity of the village. The beels and ponds in and around the village are given on lease by the local Unnayan committee by auction and the water bodies are called fish mahals. Two families of the village have been monopolizing the auction scenario. Of course fishing and selling of the fish is done by many families of the village on wage basis. In earlier times, the Mahaldari Bishayas had been appointed by the Royal family from the Hira Caste.

But after independence, people from the Nath and the Koch caste are involved in the bidding of the fish mahals. This is a remarkable change as fishing was originally a caste based occupation while Nath is not a fishing caste. It may be noted that Hira is also not a fishing caste, but they were engaged in pottery of a kind where the wheel was not used. But King of Mayong had entrusted them as Bisayas, i.e. officers for fishing. Kaivartas are traditional fishermen but at present fishing is no longer a caste based occupation.

The fate of the sharecroppers depends on the land owners for whom they work. They normally borrow money from the landowners and repay after harvesting. Whatever wage they get is adjusted against the money borrow. As a result they have to resort to borrowing for the next season also. Thus they are caught in a vicious circle and have to live from hand to mouth.

The people of the village have to live in an unhygienic condition as they don't have any provision of sewage. Along with the increase of population in the village the homestead sizes have decreased and as a result garbage dumping within the homestead has made their homesteads unhygienic. Some of the villagers have made sanitary latrines. But most of the people do not have this facility for which the unhygienic condition has all the more aggravated. As the village is low lying and flood waters inundate the homesteads also the question of hygiene has become a cause of concern for the health of the people. The condition of the roads in summer is deplorable as none of the roads in the village are metallic roads. Of course recently the main road connecting the village with Guwahati via Kajoli chaki, Mayong-Jagiroad and Mayong- Marigaon road are being reconstructed and black topped.

The Mayong-Chamata road via Kamarpur is still blocked as bridges and culverts on the road are broken for a long time.

However, the village is well connected through the electronic communication. The village is connected through two mobile phone operators namely the BSNL and Aircel as they have established their towers in the village. Other services of mobile also are available in the village though those providers do not have towers in the village. Moreover the BSNL's land line connections are also available in the village. Of late cable TV connections are also made available in the village.

Though erratic, electricity supply is available in the village for quite some time. The outlook and life style of the people of the village have undergone a lot of change after having access to these facilities. Moreover the exposure to foreign and domestic tourists coming to the adjacent Pabitara wild life sanctuary also has an impact on the psyche of the people of the village. Recently a tourist resort have been set up with all modern amenities in the village apart from the Govt. Tourist lodge which has given employment opportunity to many youths from the village.

The most notable change can be noticed in the political life of the people. The king of the little kingdom of Mayong of pre independent era, referred to as petty kings by some of the historians lost his power after independence. Mayong became a village like any other village and democracy previled in the village also. But the king did not cease to be. The village has coroneted four kings, including the present king, Tarani Singha after independence. Though the king lost his political powers he remained a cultural head and still it is the king who takes decisions after

discussing with his officers on major cultural events like the Pancha Devata Mela. The government of Assam also has accorded recognition to a total of 23 kings in the area which includes the king of Mayong also. The government for first time has offered a Raj Bhatta of rupees nine thousand on 18.1.2009. In the time of the investigation it was revealed that the people liked this traditional institution more than the statutory institution like Panchyats.

The place drew a lot of attention in the freedom movement from the incident of derailment of the train in Panikhaiti as leading freedom fighters from the area were involved in the act. From then onwards the people of the area have felt a sense of belonging to the political activities elsewhere in the country. This has led to a kind of political awareness though its manifestation has not been expressed in any form.

Though the king of Mayong is still revered as a cultural chief the people have accepted the Panchayat system as well the other democratic political practices. The people take active part in these political activities. They come out in great numbers to vote for the Panchayat, the Legislative Assembly and the Parliament. Raja-Mayong has taken the lead in the Panchayat on many occasions as the post of President of the Panchayat is occupied by the elected member from Raja-Mayong.

A remarkable change that has influenced the life of the people of the area is the growth of self-help groups. The formation of self-help groups have greatly contributed towards the strengthening of individual economic condition of the people. The large participation of women in such self-help groups have contributed towards women empowerment in a great way. The self-help groups have gone a long way in improving the economic condition of the village at large.

The education scenario in Raja-Mayong also has undergone a lot change. With the establishment of a higher secondary school, a college and many primary and middle schools Raja-Mayong has become the centre of higher education for the whole area. The literacy of the village also has gone up as high as 82%.

Thus with all these changes in different spheres of life Raja-Mayong is striding ahead in the face of all odds.