

PHATOBIHU :-

From 16th Century onwards, on the bank of the river Charikodiya, a gathering known as the “Phatobihu” is being celebrated annually, till date. For convenience it is now celebrated on the month of “Bohag” (of Assamese Calendar) and the dates are considered according to the last Friday, Saturday & Sunday of the month. This is now considered as the traditional auspicious occasion of Dhakuakhana, under Lakhimpur district, Assam. The immense beauty on the bank of the river where the occasion takes place could, none other than the “Mohghuli Chapori”, an area where nature has its own wonderful way to express its wonder with tall trees, green grass and soft cool breeze blowing away the dark shades of everybody’s life. “Phatobihu” is a platform for all to be bound with the same threads of love, brotherhood and equality irrespective of caste, creed and religion since the Ahoms ruled the place. Thus, it possesses some specific characteristic and significance of its own although “Bihu” is celebrated all over as in Dhakuakhana in the same way.

There is no written history about “Phatobihu”, and so there is no definite evidence, that describes best, traditional festival. But people residing in this region have been holding this occasion as a means of cultural investigation programme.

Origin of the name “Phatobihu”.

According to Tai language “Phat” means - A place beside a river or some deep water bounded area where goods are exchanged for trade and tax collected.

According to Ahom Lexicans, “Phat” means - A place where traders assemble for trade and for the payment of duty.

Legendarily speaking, there are many tales related to “Phatobihu”. But one such tales that still counts is worth mentioning.

During the Ahom rule, a vast area was under the control of the Ahom rulers. Both the North & South bank of the river Brahmaputra was occupied by them. So, accordingly, the officials from the court representing the Ahom rulers gave a visit in this region annually. As an easy means of communication, they travelled along the water ways by the river Brahmaputra and the sub-rivers and reached this land. To mark their visit, the people organized a grand welcome for the officials with great

enthusiasm. The common people eagerly came out to pay their taxes to these officials' thereby organized cultural events for their entertainment. It was a 7 days process and so the people from different castes and communities exhibited their own cultural songs and dance forms. The whole region was indeed transformed into a place for "merry-making and joy". Happiness reigned over the region. Although the sole reason for this gathering was "to pay taxes" yet it was dominated by the festive mood of the commoners and thus "Phat" was transformed into "Phatobihu" in course of time.

Transformation with time :-

Previously Phatobihu was confined with small tribal and non-tribal communities only. Later on it came out to be celebrated regionally. In 1918 Phatobihu had a halt in its celebration due to India's freedom movement. People, who previously dominated to sing and dance in the festival, disagreed to participate.

Later towards the end of the 20th century, Phatobihu again regained their rhythm with some happiness and merry making. In 1976, Phatobihu was officially organized in Dhakuakhana Govt. M.E. School field. From 1996, Phatobihu came to their own traditional field in "Mohghuli Chapori" on the bank of river Charikodiya to regain their long lost vigor and charm.

Mohghuli Chapori & Phatobihu :-

Legendary literaturist Homen Borgohain denoted the present Phatobihu celebrating region as the "Mohghuli Chapori" in his noted short story "Gorokhia" situated on the bank of the river Charikodiya towards the western part. The natural beauty of the river and the immense greenery all around its surroundings soothe away the heart and soul. Phatobihu becomes lively with nature – the tall green trees, orchids and cooing of the birds put upon an additional flavor for the festival to end with success. An additional drizzling of "rain" does not fade away the beauty and the people to gather enlighten "Mohghuli Chapori to its best.

Special features :-

Phatobihu holds its own special significance and characteristics. The organizers take immense effort to organize Phatobihu with the same traditional way, as it used to be, with the slightest modification. The ethnicity and the flavor of cultural programmes are organized in a systemic manner with the view that the customs and traditions are not hampered, dishonored or misguided.

The land known as the “land of golden thread”, people sought to wear dresses made of this golden thread or the Muga silk. The people gathered in the Mohghuli Chapori prefer to wear their own traditional dresses like the mekhela-sador by the females of all community and dhoti punjabi by the males. Gamosa is carried by both males and females. However, other communities prefer their own traditional clothes. This is to make traditional cultural customs, rites and rituals popular so that it does not get lost with the young generation. The people of the region as a whole takes immense care to preserve Phatobihu in its own way so that the rapid growth of globalization does not lay any impact upon it.

Phatobihu :- Opinion and reviews from different persons :-

National Dramatist and literary person Dr. Chandradhar Chamuah reviews as – The residents of the bank of river Luit the Mising teenagers visited Phatobihu with their colourful traditional attires with great enthusiasm. During daytime, they enjoyed themselves in the region of some land locks or in Mohghuli Chapori. But with the passage of time and due to the impact of the Bengali culture, the aristocratic category of people considered Bihu with great ignorance. Thus, the culture of “Rati Bihu” came into existence amongst the common people. In course of among all. However, the actual trends of bihu exhibiting tragedy, romance and love was kept alive by the Kaivartas can be said that Phatobihu was kept alive with true ethnicity and velour by these two main groups of people – the Kaivartas and the Misings – the ultimate common people related to land, water and air in the true sense.

According to legendary literary person Homen Borgohain opines – ‘Phatobihu is the very own folk culture of Dhakuakhana surrounded the Mising Community from all sides, the people come out in groups to dance and sing on the bank of the

rivers Charikodiya to enjoy in the same platform. Their enjoyment is joined by other communities of the land the region reaches a festive season peak. People from all around the region visit this place to get a glimpse over the varieties of traditions of different people representing different community. The bihu continued for seven days and seven nights ...”

Dr. Nagen Saikia, Vice-President of Asom Sahitya Sabha, educationalist literary person reviews- “Phatobihu is organized on the bank of the rivers, Charikodiya where the greenery and scenic beauty predominates. People from different cultures and community gather here each community exhibit their own dance form the whole day long. The common people gather to get a glimpse of these gathering, the cultural integration gathering. The whole region becomes extremely occupied by the spectators and there is not a small vacant space spared. However, there is not any indiscipline or any disorganized to be seen anywhere. The people around remain calm, disciplined and well organized to enjoy. This is the special feature of Phatobihu with traditional attire. The females wear mostly Paat (silk), Muga (silk) or Cotton dresses mostly colorful Mekhela Chadors that are appealing and the males from the smaller ones to the older ones wear dhoti-punjabi and gamosa. This is in fact a Mela (gathering)-Bihu mela (Bihu gathering)”.

According to Dr. Nirmal Kumar Choudhury, Ex-Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University opines- “It’s amazing and wonderful to find people organized in small groups under the trees dancing and singing in their own rhythm, exhibiting their own rich culture. Interestingly, the spectators enjoying this exhibition includes all age group person young to the aged ones. In ancient times, people used to enjoy music and dance in this way. That is why, this tradition is still present in Phatobihu which makes the event practically different, it seemed”.

Another spiritual personality Sattradhikar of Auni-Ati Satra, Dr. Sri Sri Pitambar Dev Goswami opines – “The word “Phatobihu” itself brings joyous and festive merriness of the people. Bihu is a festival of unity and integrity though of the community. Bihu is a festival of mass integration. Phatobihu is a platform for the integration among different communities bonded with the means of brotherhood, love and unity. Thus, Phatobihu might have existed base upon this theory. Since the Atom’s reign, the celebration of Phatobihu has depicted the rich cultural

heritage of the people of Dhakuakhana. This festival is the pride of Assam as a whole. The festival is an example of unity and integrity of the people of Dhakuakhana irrespective of caste, creed, religion, race and community and perfect exhibition of our rich culture”.

According to Rang Bang Terrang, Ex-President of Asom Sahitya Sabha “From the days of Ahom rule, Phatobihu of Dhakuakhana has been depicting a picture of cultural richness of the people of Dhakuakhana. Phatobihu is not confined to the people of Dhakuakhana but has become the pride of Assam. The exhibition of the different kinds of tribes and communities like the Mising, Deori, Kaibarta, Ahom, Chutiya, Koch, Kalita, Bodo, Kachari, Nepali, Adivasi, etc. are infect bonded by the same bond of integrity and therefore sets an example of appreciable beauty of love and brotherhood among them”.

Reknowned writer, philosopher, and a person acting as a bond between the people of hills and plains. Yese Dorje Thengse reviews – “The spontaneous celebration of people from different communities displaying their own cultural traditions in a wonderful atmosphere of greenery is itself a very good symbol of the great Assamese Community at Phat rule. In ancient times, previously NEFA starting from the Swargadeo rule to the pre-independence period people from the communities like “Apatani, Aoka, Dofola, etc. tribal people participated in the trade and commerce of Dhakuakhana beside the river Charikodiya, and also participated in the merry-making festive season of Phatobihu where artificiality does not predominates in the Phatobihu which is the special features of this festival”.

ORIGIN OF THE NAME “DHAKUAKHANA” :-

From time immemorial this place was under constant environmental disaster and so it made life impossible to make this place fit for living until 1751. As, this place was named as Habung by the Ahoms. Sukapha resided for about two years and then he shifted his Capital to Sivasagar due to the unfavorable climatic conditions. However, history fails to depict a clear picture of how the name Habung got transformed to Dhakuakhana in course of time. But there are stories and evidence from which we can conclude the name to be derived as such. One of such evidence is that, as there was lack of communication to this place, the Ahom Official decided to create river route to be connected by a small sub-stream. And so the sub-stream was created. While the work was in progress, the workers used many utensils and in fact they used the dried leaf cover of betel nut locally known as Dhakua. Thus the stream was named as Dhakuakhana Jaan and the place was named as Dhakuakhana in course of time. This stream connects the Charikodiya river and Korha river towards the north of Jamuguri region of about 5 km during the reign of Rajeswar Singha (1751-59 AD).

Places of Interests :-

1) Basudev Than :- This place is beside the river Sampara at Bebejia under Gohain Mouza. It carries great historical evidence as Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva while preaching his Vaishnavism passed through this place and he asked his favourite disciple Mahadeva to light up an earthen light on the spot where he viewed a frog sitting comfortably upon a snake-head. When the water was gone and the land became clear, the marked spot was excavated and an enshrine of Lord Krishna was found underneath. Amongst the many avatars of Lord Krishna, the one that is found here was that in the form of Bakhudev, the black god. Thus, the place and the Than (actually Sthan- meaning place) came to be known as Bakhudev Than in course of time.

Again, during the reign of Ahoms this place was a landlock bounded by rivers, wetlands, lakes etc. So, the prisoners were imprisoned here. In order, to bind them with the bonding of love, care and brotherhood, a class of Brahmins was sent here

to look after them and moralize them and so Than came into existence under this group of Brahmins.

2) Harhi Devalaya :- Established in the year 1722 AD, this place is in between Dhakuakhana Mouza and Machkhowa Mouza (Block). The important feature of this devalaya is that there are a number of idols encased upon stones beautifully. Among them the idol of Shiva or Mahadeva, Durga, Maa Manasha, Ganga, Koli, Parvati, Samunda. Mythologically this place was formed when "Kesaikhati Gokhani" of Sadiya was annoyed due to the delay of worship by the devotees. She fled away to Deogharia of Machkhowa and then she permanently established herself at Harhi devalaya. Accordingly, it has become a custom to sledge duck, pigeon, goat, buffalo on the eve of Durga Puja. This place carries special historical importance and is a place of interest for the devotees.

3) Gorokhiya Doul :- This place is situated at Salajan Kachari Gaon of Gohain Mouza, beside the Dangdhora river. The shape of the Doul is Octagonal. In ancient times, this place was a grazing field of cattle's. Herds of cattle's grazed and each day one or the other people were responsible of these cattle's. The person who was responsible to rear the cattle's would catch a grasshopper and sledge it with a blade of grass, infect of the Doul made of sand. One day, a boy failed to catch a grasshopper and so he put his head to sledge. Another boy, took a blade of grass to sledge. Quite surprisingly, the head of the boy was sledged into two pieces. Thus, from then onwards, people began to worship in this Doul, believing that some spirit really exists.

4) Gopalpur Satra :- This Satra is established by the Ahom Sargadew Chakradhawaj Singha as a substitute of Dakhinpat Satra of Majuli for the convenience of the people to worship and offer prayers at the same time.

5) Govindapur Satra :- Towards the north-east region of Dhakuakhana of about 5 Km, Govindapur Satra was established as a substitute of Auni-aati Satra of Majuli during the reign of Swargadeu Shiva Singha by Niranjan Aata.

6) Bordoibam :- Bilmukh Bird Sanctuary – This bird sanctuary is situated near the State Highway. This sanctuary is a favourite habitat of many wild birds. During winter migratory birds visit this place every year. Amongst them Syberian Duck,

Hungary etc. are the most common. This bird sanctuary is the second one after Deepor Beel to get recognized as such.

7) Kuwabari Doloni Bird Reserve: - Situated near the town, this bird reserve is a popular place for birds like kingfisher, stroke, wild duck, vulture, flamingo, wild goose, etc. During winter, other migratory birds make this place their habitat.

Important Cultures for livelihood :-

1) Muga Silk Culture :- Dhakuakhana is known as the land of golden thread. Among the other important means, the people of Dhakuakhana, takes immense pleasure in rearing up the eri and muga silk worms. The silk culture plays an important part in the economic & cultural upliftment of the people and the region as a whole and has successfully reached its importance internationally.

2. Agriculture: - The important means of livelihood for the people of Dhakuakhana is agriculture. Almost 70% of the people cultivate different types of agricultural crops . Both Kharif and Rabi crops are done here. Hence, it can be said that Dhakuakhana fields remains green and rich all throughout the year.

3. Poultry farming: - In the Chapori regions (or grasslands) Poultry farming and cattle rearing is another important means of livelihood.

4) Pisciculture :- Due to the presence of rivers, sub-rivers, streams, beels, etc. Dhakuakhana is a land of fresh water fish land. People here enjoy in Pisciculture farming. Fishes are found in abundance and so a good amount of quality fish is sent to different parts of Assam and North-East as a whole.

MUGA CULTURE

Sericulture is the culture of sericigenous insects. It includes Eri, Muga, Mulberry and Tsar Silkworm. Among these four silk worms muga culture is the most prominent in Assam. The muga culture is the most prominent culture in Assam. The muga culture is practiced very successfully only in Assam. Now here besides Assam muga silkworm can be raised successfully. The weather condition is the main factor for being successful in Assam. Muga silkworm, which is scientifically called *Antheraea assama* is a member of class Insect group : Lepidoptera and family saturniidae.

The muga silkworm is polyphagous and thrives on various endemic plants – mostly of the family Lauraceae. The commonest larval is „Som“ (*Machilus liembycina*) used mainly in Upper Assam. „Sualu“ (*Litsaea polyantha*) is used in Lower Assam. „Mejankari“ (*Litsaea citrate*), „Chapa“ (*Magnolia Sphenocupa*), „Digloti“ (*Litsaea Salicifolia*) etc. are secondary host plants. Besides „Bhamlati“ (*Symplocos grandiflora*), „Bogori“ (*Ziziphus jujube*), „Bajramoni“ (*Xanthoxylum alatum*) etc. are also used when leaves are scarce. The size and volume of cocoon also vary according to food plants.

The life-cycle of Muga silkworm has four stages :- such as pupa or chrysalid (Leta) covered by a cocoon (khola), molt or adult chakari), egg (koni) and larva or caterpillar (polu). The muga male moth is deep brown in colour and size is about 13.7 cm. The female moth is light brown having small round marks on all and size is about 14 cm. Male and female moths after evening, during night and unpaired after 24 hours. Eggs are laid in clusters in a „.....“. It allowed free, eggs will be laid here and there. No. of eggs laid by a single female moth is approx 200-250 nos, which is called one laying.

Silk filaments can be obtained from muga cocoon by the process of The colour of the muga silk is golden yellow or creamy white. Section is flat and circular. Length of filament in a cocoon is about 300 mtr. The size of the filament is 5.5 denier.....

	Summer	Winter
Egg Stage -----	7 days	15 days
Larval Stage -----	24 days	70 days
Spinning State -----	3 days	7 days
Pupal Stage -----	14 days	55 days
Moth Stage -----	2 days	3 days
Total --	50 days	150 days

The complete life cycle is found as one brood (bah). The muga worm is normally multivoltine and has five to six generations in a year. The broods are known locally as „ ‘Katia’, ‘Jarua’, ‘jethua’, ‘Aherua’ and ‘Bhadiya’, ‘Katia and Jethua’ broods are called commercial broods and Aherua. Bhadiya and Jarua broods are called seed broods.

Brood	Month of Rearing	Quality of cocoon	Silk from Looc cocoons	Purpose of brood
1. Katia (Autumn)	Oct -Nov	Best Cocoon good reeling property	250 gm reeled silk	Mainly for silk
2. Jerua (Winter)	Dec – Feb	Pooust Cocoon	150 gm reeled silk	Mainly for seed
3. Jethua (Spring)	May – June	Good Cocoon next to Katia in quality	250 gm reeled silk	Next important brood for commercial cocoon
4. Ahehua (Summer)	June- July	Interior Cocoon	180 gm reeled silk	Mainly for seed
5. Bhadia (Late Summer)	Aug – Sept	Interior Cocoon	150 gm reeled silk	Mainly to seed

Muga silk worm is semi do masticated and multivalve. The rearing activities are above in outdoor condition, but to which it is difficult to manage the rearing activities easily. The activity of muga silkworm is as indicated below :-

Activity	Period
Emergence of meth	Dusk to down
Paiding of meths	Dusk to down
Deposition of eggs	Evening to down
Hatching of worms	Morning
Moulting of larva	any time of the day
Maturing of worm	Dusk

Diseases of muga silk worm: - All varieties of silkworm including the meya worm are highly sucuptible to various types of diseases such as Febrime caused by protozoom, Flacherie caused by virus, Grassalie caused by bacteria and Mescurdine disease caused by fungus.

PRESENT STATUS OF SERICULTURE IN LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT

DHAKUAKHANA SUB-DIVISION

Sl. No.	Name of Seri Circle	Nos. of Village	No. of Family engaged in Sericulture			No. of Lood Plants			Production of Cocoons			Production of Raw Silk		
			Eri	Muga	Mulbery	Eri	Muga	Mulbery	Eri (Kg)	Muga (Kg)	Mulbery (Kg)	Eri (Kg)	Muga (Kg)	Mulbery (Kg)
1	Lamachuk	43	729	375	90	15.5	22	11.6	14455	9454500	1.771	11,564.00	1890.90	186.42
2	Ghilamara (E)	22	325	915	150	17	11.1	8	7725	9082320	2.220	6,180.00	1816.46	233.68
3	Ghilamara (W)	30	542	841	136	15	19.4	12.5	4926	2049622	2.013	3,940.80	409.92	211.89
4	Parabhari	29	535	604	192	10.5	22.1	22.6	3855	15193704	2.834	3,084.00	3038.74	298.32
5	Gobindapur	38	195	975	130	15.5	27.1	14.1	6835	9454500	1.924	5,468.00	1890.90	202.53
6	Jalbhari	37	705	553	180	7	30	24.5	4330	7815720	2.614	3,464.00	1563.14	275.16
7	Bhomakalbari (E)	37	610	450	180	11.2	26.8	23	5865	11153280	2.664	4,692.00	2230.66	280.42
8	Bhomakalbari (W)	32	417	290	114	12.5	30.2	25.4	6380	4790280	1.689	5,104.00	958.06	177.79
9	Dhakuakhana	32	612	465	126	13	24.4	22.5	6365	8572120	1.864	5,092.00	1714.42	196.21
	Total	300	4670	5468	1298	117.2	213.1	164.2	60736	77566046	19593	48,588.80	15513.21	2062.42