

Position and Role of Women in the folk life and folksongs of the Pati Rabhas of Assam

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Abstract :

The PatiRabha is a sub group of the Rabhas found to be living sparsely around south- Kamrup and east- Goalpara area in Assam. Being a part of the group called Rabhas, the Pati Rabhas have their own genres of folksongs that are akin to that of the Rabhas. But, a unique bunch of folksongs has also emerged and developed among the Pati Rabhas, which is not to be found prevalent among the rest subgroups of the Rabhas. The folk life of the Pati Rabhas is more similar to other non-tribal communities living in south- Kamrup and east- Goalpara areas. In their folk life and society, a female Pati Rabha enjoys equal importance like her male counterpart because of the 'Mahari' system, i.e., matrilineal inheritance. In case of certain customs and rituals including marriage, the legacy and inheritance of the mother get due importance. The Pati Rabha women play an inevitably distinctive role in the folk life of the Pati Rabhas. The folksongs of the Pati Rabhas too are illustrative about the position enjoyed by a Pati Rabha woman in her society. This paper attempts to analyse the position of the Pati Rabha women in the folk life of the Pati Rabhas and in this regard an investigation would be made to find out if in the folksongs of the Pati Rabhas, one can discern any special significance which the women of this subgroup may enjoy in their folk life. Methods like observation and field study (open ended interview schedule with focus group discussion) have been adopted to collect data for this present study.

Key Words: Pati Rabhas, Folk life, Folk songs, 'Mahari', i.e. the matrilineal inheritance