

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Doyas are an indigenous and socially distinct group of mongoloid people in Bhutan. They have been existent in the southern Bhutan as *Kepoti* (original inhabitants of the place) since time immemorial.

There are various myths regarding the origin of these people and their relation with other groups of people in the surroundings. Some of these myths share similarities with the Monpas, Dang and many other indigenous people in the Himalayan region. There are many factual and oral traditions which tell that Doyas lived in a vast area between south-western hills of Bhutan and adjacent plains of north Bengal under their domain. They claim to have their affinity with that of Totos in Totapara in North Bengal but any physical and social relation between the two communities had been cut off from each other for long enough now to find it difficult for the people to relate among themselves. A recent linguistic studies has shown that the Doya language is more closer to the Monpas, Lepchas, Rai and Newaris spoken in the Himalayan region.

Socio-cultural and political history of the east Himalayan region amply prove that Doyas are a segmented group from a large ethnic background whose identities seem to have disintegrated in obscurity.

Doyas are today a predominantly mixed population. Genealogical studies of the people have shown various instances where the Drukpas and Nepalese men married some of the Doya women in the past and present generations. Progenies of such inter-community marriages comprise a considerable proportion of the present population. Such marriages seem to have helped continuation of Doya society from total disorganization and the problem of near extinction sometime in their memorable past although; the descendants of these inter-marriages are not fully accepted in their traditional society.

Descendants of Doya-Nepali conjugations are labeled as Danchat and they are kept socially segregated from the rest of the conservative society. However, the descendants of Drukpa-Doya women are accommodated without any strict discrimination.

Controversies over the name of this group of people itself are an indication of the current socio-political dynamics to which the people are being exposed. It is enough to highlight the facts that the different names employed to call the people originate from different cultural perspectives through which the people have been known and interpreted from time to time – **Lhop** (**Lhops** used in plural sense) is a Dzongkha term for the south. The Drukpas who inhabit the northern highlands employ this term for the people dwelling in the south. **Doya/Doiya** seem to a derivative of a Sanskrit word *daya*, which is commonly used in Nepali language also. Nepalese who migrated into the region accorded this term for the **generous and kind people** who welcomed them to settle in south Bhutan as neighbours. **Lhopu**, as also a Tibeto-Burman term, means *southern dwellers*. The people themselves now prefer to be known as **Lhopu**. Nevertheless, these names are geo-specific and interpreted from different cultural perspectives. Hence, none of these names are generic or ethnonym of the people. Prominence of any of these names of the people at a particular time in the past also speaks much about the other's cultural influence on these people. The people are predisposed to an identity crisis whether they realize it or not but the future generation will research for themselves.

There have also been disruptions in the people's way of life affecting their physical, social and cultural aspects in coping with many a crisis situation in the past which resulted in assimilation of many cultural traits and practices from others and corruptions in traditional social norms and practices. Nevertheless, the distinctive nature of their cultural tradition persists with a distinct language still spoken even against strong currents of acculturation processes from the national mainstream in the country and Hindu cultural traditions from the south. There are indications that some sort of cultural revivalism will ensue among the Doyas in

near future to assert their distinctive cultural identity and redefine their ethnic relations with others.

The first batch of people who went to school in 1960s are retiring in their villages after seeing many different communities in Bhutan while serving the Royal Government at different places. These retired people vocally take pride in being Lhopu and the Lhopu-ness in their ways of life as compared to others. This is quite contrary to the general impression and feelings about the people of being lowly and unworthy among the older generation of people themselves.

The Satakha or Satank group of people who are mostly Danchats are making a lead by becoming an influential and dominant section of people in Lhopus affairs despite social discrimination they suffer from the rest of their society.

Lhopu society is organized along matrilineal descent groups or Riihs wherein descendant females are permanent resident of matrilineal households, Makim. Males take resident in wife's (FZD) household after marriage. The Makim is a centre around which males assume important roles to maintain and continue the matrilineage and the society at large. The Riih title is transmitted through female lines only. A consanguinal unit of at least a son and daughter is the ideal unit of the society which can reproduce only when the son and daughter find their conjugal partners to reproduce children who would in turn undergo preferred conjugal relations among themselves to reproduce and form a society of their kind. In absence of such prescribed conjugal partners on the cross cousin's sides the continuation of the lineage is affected by either bringing a male of any other matrilineage home or in case there is no young female in a household, any marriageable male in the household get a woman for his wife from another matrilineage through a process of transmutation to continue the transmission of his matrilineage. There are several Riihs with different titles. Each Riih has its origin and associated deities. These deities are worshipped at regular intervals to express lineal solidarity and seek blessings for general well being of all under a Riih. There may be one or more segments of a single Riih located at different territories or at different places within the same territory all of who can be linked to one or several Makims under the same Riih title.

Although, Doya society is supposed to be exogamous matrilineages (Riih) society intra-matrilineage marriages have also been observed. This makes us surmise if the society is also organized along segmentary intra-matrilineage system with a specific generational spacing among the descendant generations. However, imbalance in the sex ratio among the lineages and disproportionate population situation for the execution of ideal rules of marriages also seem to have forced upon frequent lineage endogamy under a single Riih title even among parallel cousins on mothers side to somehow continue the lineage groups in adverse situation.

Although, Riih endogamy seems to have become necessary for the survival and continuity of matrilineage, the unfavourable demographic situation seems to have also caused aberrations and corruptions in the traditional norms of conjugal relations among the people.

Each descent group under a Makim possesses certain area of land scattered at several places. Each member of the descent group irrespective sex has equal access and usufruct right of the land according to an agreed allocation arrangement among the descendant consanguinal families. Decisions relating to lineal properties are taken mainly among the adult members of matrilineage comprising of mother, sons and daughters under a Makim. Production is shared between extended consanguinal families and Makim. Married sons also contribute their share of labour and food grain to the Makim or seek help at times of hardship. Land is inherited through the consanguinal group and distributed among the segmentary lineages of sisters.

The intense intra-territorial and intra-Riih marriages among the segmentary groups seem to support the corporate nature of social organization and its management of land and members of descent groups closely around themselves, at different levels. Solidarity in such group levels is expressed in the household ancestral deities, lineal and territorial deities. The group sentiment at different spatial and lineal levels is also expressed in the local idiom, *Rang yo ka notsum itpo*. Elders including women in a congregation such group acts as social control device at times of social crises. Thus, territorial groups comprising of many lineal

and sub-lineal descent groups have different titles by the virtue of their residence in different villages and geographical locations. Further, these territorial groups under different common titles are not exclusive groups as one or two segments of Riihs may be found commonly in two or all the villages under different territorial titles but they would have their allegiance to their own lineal solidarity. Moreover, inter-territorial matrimonial ties among these territorial groups are also observed. Each level of group division on different criteria is associated with strong sense of 'we' and 'they' feeling and antagonism of varying degree at various social occasions. It is often said among the people themselves that they are quarrelsome people. Here it may be said that the very dynamics of Lhopu society is the active division of people for different reasons on one hand and on the other active consolidation and solidarity of descent groups round a matrilineage Makim for its control over the resources and interest in the perpetuity of the corporate group. Hence, the annual ancestral and deities worship around a Makim holds its own importance. A Makim with its resident-husband and matrilineal female is the structural and functional unit of Lhopu society under the prescription of matrimonial rules. This close group is also the group among whom the males are exchanged. Lhopu society does not have distinct marriage exchange groups as in the case of other simple societies.

The inheritance of property through the members of this group ensures conservation of resources and a relative economic independence and mutual cooperation among the extended consanguinal units under a Makim.

This Lhopu type of kin terms and relation is special requiring further field and academic inquiries. According to the Lowie and Kirchhoff system of classification Doya case sounds like Bifurcate Collateral but when the same case is seen through the Murdock's cousin typology it matches with the Iroquois type in their basic features. However, the tendency to equate cross-cousins with that of parallel cousins on the maternal side makes the Doya case uncomfortable in both the systems of classifications.

Doya response to the questions of life and death is based on simple facts of life experiences. Anything beyond the simple facts of life and their logic of similarities and association is relegated to the realm of supernatural powers to whom they trust their lives and sustenance.

Male and female are indispensable parts of the facts of life. Male is compared with the seed or rain for their mobility and potent, and female is compared with soil, the basis life on the mundane world. Conception and birth of a child are as natural as pollination and fruiting of seeds on the plants but they are very important events or the driving force in their social and individual life. Death is a painful separation between the known ways of life and unknown. The unknown is to the super natural as death is to the unknown. The question: why does death come at all in their life scares the concern surviving individuals, humbles them for moments of reflection on the questions of death and integration of what is known and the unknown for all the explanations and answers to carry forth the life in their society.

The economy of the region is fast being overtaken by Market economy from subsistence livelihood pattern of exchange and barter system. The traditional technology and attitudes do not match the deteriorating environmental situation and increasing demands from the growing population with the improvements in the health situation of the people. Average annual food sufficiency for each household has gone a low of only six months a year. People are getting tempted to possess more and more manufactured household articles from the markets right from building materials to day to day use commodities including food items. There is an increasing tendency of people turning to cash crop cultivation and private ownership of such assets. Those people who have no suitable land for developing cash crops are finding lots of difficulties in their livelihood. People in general are indulging in living on credits of the business community and better offs among themselves to meet their basic needs of food and drinks. Resultantly more and more people are getting caught into a debt chain, giving rise to a peculiar situation of acute indebtedness among the people. Today, Lhopu people

are exposed to many a disturbing factors that might have far reaching social consequences even before they realize it themselves.

Lhopus need an enabling environment for their development without any cultural prejudices from outside. They need to be treated as equals to recognize and appreciate their distinct cultural identity. Multi-prong educational approach and facilitations aimed at ennobling and enabling them by developing scientific temperament and human capabilities and sensitivity to others in their surrounding and natural environment will greatly help in the development processes of the people.