

## The Bihu Festival of the Morans of Assam, India

Sri Mridul Moran,

Junior Research Fellow, Assamese Department, Dibrugarh University, Assam, India  
Corresponding Author: Sri Mridul Moran

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**Abstract:** Like the other Assamese people, Bohag Bihu is the most popular festival of the Morans of Assam, India. But there are notice some own features. The Moran tribe celebrates the Bihu in own way. Their tradition of Bihu celebration is different from other tribes of Assam. On the other hand, Magh Bihu and Kati Bihu are not strictly celebrated by the Morans. They do not celebrate Bihu only as a festival of joy and merry making; they celebrate it by following rituals and customs. Dharma Husari, Rati Bihu (Bihu performed at night) etc. are the important part of the Moran Bihu. The main objective of this paper is to highlight the own characteristics of the Moran Bihu and its rituals and custom.

**Keywords:** Bihu festival, Dharma Husari, Moran tribe, Rati Bihu, rituals and customs.

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### I. Introduction

The Moran tribe is one of the aboriginal ethnic tribes of Assam, who are mainly inhabitants of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia district, Assam, India. Morans are basically agriculturist. So, they celebrate agriculture-centered festival. The Moran celebrates the *Bohag Bihu* festival like the other Assamese tribes. But *Magh Bihu* and *Kati Bihu* are not strictly celebrated by the Morans. *Bihu* is a socio-religious festival among the Morans of Assam. They do not celebrate *Bihu* only as a festival of joy and merry making; they celebrate it by following rituals and customs. They celebrates the *Bihu* with own characteristics.

### II. Moran Bihu And Its Rituals And Customs

Though *Bohag Bihu* is the most popular festival of the Morans like the other Assamese people, there are notice some different features. The Moran tribe celebrates the *Bihu* in own way. Their tradition of *Bihu* celebration is different from other tribes of Assam. The Morans do not start the *Bohag Bihu* from the starting of the Assamese month of *Bohag*. They always start the *Bihu* from Tuesday of the month of *Bohag*.

#### Bihu Namuwa and Bihu Uruwa

The Morans celebrate the *Bihu* for a week or more days according to the permission of the *Gosain* or *Satradhikar*. At the end of the last month of Assamese calendar year, the religious pontiffs and priest of different *Satras* will gather in their respective *Satras* and decide the dates of *Bihu Namowa* (starting of *Bihu*) and *Bihu Uruwa* (end of *Bihu*). The first ritual of starting the *Bohag Bihu* is called *Bihu Namwa* (bring down the *Bihu*). The Morans celebrate the first day of *Bohag Bihu* is as *Gosain Bihu*, because they start the *Bihu* with the permission of *Gosain*. Accordingly *Bihu Namowa* ritual will be performed in the *Satras*. After this, *Bihu Melas* will be celebrated in the *Bihu Ghars* of different villages. Though *Bihu Uruwa* ritual is generally celebrated at *Satras*, the *Bhakats* of the local *Namghars* can also decide the date of *Bihu Uruwa* ritual separately for a particular village. After this ritual, the sound of *Dhol*, *Pepa* is not heard in the villages.

#### Gasar Talar Bihu

*Gasar Talar Bihu* (*Bihu* dance performed under a tree) is very popular among the Moran tribe. In an isolated place of a village, the young girls performed *Bihu* dance under a tree. The village youths build a house under a big tree of the centre of the village, which is called *Bihu Ghar*. At present, a notable change has been seen regarding making the *Bihu Ghar*. It is built permanently with bricks, sand, cement and iron.

It is very interesting feature that the village boys do not sing and dance with their own village girls. The boys go to the other villages and the youths from some other villages come their village.

#### Husari and Dharma Husari

*Husari* is not popular among the Moran people. Unlike some other Assamese communities the Moran *Husari* do not consist of young girls.

*Dharma Husari* is the important part of the Moran of Assam. In some places they perform *Dharma Husari* in which religious songs are sung in place of *Bihu* Songs. In other words, the practice is quite religious and only those who are aged and devotees i.e. *Sharaniyas* can only take part in this typical traditional religious *Husari*. *Phul-Konwar* and *Moni-Konwaror Geet* (song of *Phul-Konwar* and *Moni-Konwar*) sung in this religious *Husari*. It is an important point that, the *Dharma Husari* is not performed every year.

#### **Barmoga Utsav**

During *Bihu* time, the Moran tribe also perform *Barmoga Utsav* (prayer for baby), which is also quite uncommon to other Assamese communities. It is a part of the *Dharma Husari*. On this occasion; the whole *Bihu* party goes to the families who invites and perform the *Dharma Husari*.

#### **Rati Bihu**

*Rati Bihu* (*Bihu* performed at night) is another tradition of the Moran tribe. In the past, the Morans had celebrated *Rati Bihu* in the villages. But this practice is hardly seen today in few Moran villages. There are observed to celebrate the *Rati Bihu* in Kakapathar, Amguri, Tarani Pathar etc. villages of the Tinsukia district of Assam.

#### **Bihu Dress of the Moran Tribe**

The *Bihu* dresses of the Morans are unique and very beautiful. The dancing girls during *Bihu* time wear white *Mekhela* or *Muga Mekhela*, *Kokal Mora*, *Kolia Riha* and red blouse. On the other hand, the dancing boys wear white shirt or vest, *Churia* (Dhuti) and *Gamosa*. The Moran *Gamosa* is different from Assamese *Gamosa*. The color of the flower and the side of Moran *Gamosa* is not red, it is golden.

### **III. Conclusion**

The Moran tribe celebrates the *Bihu* in unique way. Their tradition of *Bihu* celebration is different from other tribes of Assam and this unique tradition create own cultural identity of the Moran of Assam, India.

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