

**Social History of Barua Buddhist Community in  
Uttar Pradesh: With Specific Reference  
to Lucknow (1947-2000)**

**SUMMARY OF THESIS**

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## Summary

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The ethnic community of Barua Buddhist (Barua, Baruah) is Mongoloid chagtai and is closely associated with the tribes of Chakmas, Tancangyas, Marmas, Chagtai, Mugal, and Mugh. All these tribes are followers of the Buddhist Religion Theravada. Some Baruas are migrated in India and abroad during the British Colonial Period and East Pakistan. Now they are highly concentrated in the district of Chittagong and southern Bangladesh and some Baruas families reside in broad districts of Comilla and Noakhali. In India – Kolkata and its surrounds, Jalpaiguri District Siliguri, Koch Bihar, Durgapur etc in West Bengal, Jamshedpur, Ranchi in Jharkhand, Lucknow in UP, Shillong in Meghalaya, Guwahati, Bongaigon, Tinsukia and its surroundings etc in Assam, the Sadar Subdivision of West Tripura District (also known as Agartala) the Udaipur Subdivision of South Tripura District and Delhi. Depending on the job, social and economic standing although some Barua Buddhists use titles such as ' Mutsuddi, ' ' Choudhuri, ' ' Talukdar, "Sikdar, ' ' Hajari, ' ' Sinha ' etc.

Bangladesh's Barua community is one of several communities that had long followed Buddhism in past Bangladesh's history. Other communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts include Tangangyas, Chakmas, Marmas and several indigenous tribes; have distinct languages and interesting culture. While some Buddhists use titles such as mutsuddi, choudhri, talukdar, sikdar, hajari, sinha, etc., all in fact are Baruas, depending on the educational, religious, and economic status.

The Barua community undeniably retains a very distinct social and cultural identity within the villages that it inhabits. The population lives mostly in the country's greater district of Chittagong. The Chittagong Hill Tracts include several thousand Barua's. The presence is usually different from Bangladesh's mainstream population. They

believe their ancestors in the ancient kingdom of Samatata were in power. Traditionally, the Baruas claim that their ancestors took shelter from the tyranny and persecution of several subsequent subcontinent rulers in the hills and forest areas of the greater Chittagong region. It is also presumed that during the sixth and seventh centuries, the Baruas settled in the region.

The word Barua had its roots in the word *Boyoya*. The community members probably haven't used the title Barua in the past. Since the Bengali people were unable to pronounce Arkanese and Burmese words, the word Boyoya is assumed to have been replaced by the word Barua. It seems that, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, community members began using this title to obscure their social / ethnic identity in order to avoid political prosecution and social discrimination by King Bodoipaya of Burma, who destroyed the Kingdom of Arakan in 1785. They also tried to connect with the roots of royal blood, or the great Aryan race, while obscuring their ethnic identity.

Buddha Dharmankur Sabha did a tremendous work for the sake of propagation of Buddhism in India by establishing its branches in the different parts of India. For the propagation of Buddhism among the Bengali Barua families in Lucknow and United Province, the same association formed its one branch at Lucknow. Such Bengali Buddhists serve as their assistants as well as cooks for the British and also searched out their horses and stables. In 1908, the Lucknow branch was established. Kripasaran received a land gift of about 10 Kathas valuing Rs.16000 for the creation of a Vihara there on 17 January 1909 as the president of the organization from the United Province Government in the region at 69 Latouch Hill. By establishing intimate relationship with the then Secretary of Education in Government of India who was later named Governor of United Province. Kripasaran was able to manage the land for

Buddha Vihara, and sailed through Lucknow to Akyab to raise funds for the same. Lucknow Vihara's building was under the direction of Bhikku Kalikumar, a Kripasaran follower, and when it was finally completed, the news of Vihara's establishment circulated throughout the United Province and played a vital role in the background of Buddhism's resurgence in the United Province and India. With the aid of Chandramani Mahathera and Barasambodhi Bhikkhu, the Mharaja of Balrampur in United Province obtained a large site for rest room.

'The Bhartiya Buddha Samiti was established by Bhadant Bodhanant Mahasthvir' He acquired a piece of land in Lucknow's Risaldar Park area where he established a magnificent Buddha Vihara in 1925 with the aid of his radical well-wishers and endeavored supporters. He created the Vihara Buddha as a base for propagating Buddhist philosophy and cultural values across Lucknow's neighbouring districts. This Buddhist Vihara also became a monistic sanctuary for Buddhist monks, disciples and Buddhist tourists from various countries who wanted to attend the Buddhist pilgrimage. They usually got down at Lucknow and remained there to honor the portrait of the Buddha that was enshrined in it. So, this vihara became a center of the moment of the Buddhist renaissance in United Province and very soon in North India it acquired reputation and popularity. It was the second Buddhist Vihar established in Lucknow, under Bhartiya Bauddha Samiti's administration.

## **Methodology**

In this study both historical and qualitative methods were used for the study. A descriptive study aimed at empirical examination and analysis of the stated problem has been employed which uses two methods. In addition, a survey of a selected sample across different ages, occupation and place of residence was undertaken to

understand their view. A systematic examination of official records, reports, past surveys was analysed.

Methodology applied in this is a qualitative, historical and interdisciplinary approach.

The study also involved data collection from Gazetteers, reports, newspapers. The collection of secondary data consists of the reviews of relevant literatures, books, journals and magazines, newspapers, research papers and published and unpublished articles and thesis, and government records as well as the internet sources.

In order to systemize the data for this study, the recorded interviews were reviewed several times.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

- a) Questionnaire Method.
- b) Interviews recorded on a digital recorder have been used to supplement the questionnaires. This method is beneficial in obtaining information from elderly people.
- c) Content or Document analysis has also been used as a source.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To explore the history of Buddhism in Lucknow.
2. To trace out the historical background of Barua Buddhists in Uttar Pradesh.
3. To examine the socio-economic status of Barua Buddhist Community of Lucknow.
4. To explore the religious beliefs and practices among the Barua Buddhists in Lucknow.
5. To document the responses of the minority Barua Buddhist community within the socio-economic environment of the country.

## **Hypothesis**

- The philosophy of Barua Buddhist is general and Barua Buddhists intellectuals in particular have solid Buddhist ideas.
- From the beginning first attempt was made by Barua Buddhist to suggest egalitarian social, moral and culture or democratization of nature.

## **Significance of the Study**

The study will discuss the Barua community's cultural heritage and the construction of its social identity in light of colonial education, the revival of Theravada Buddhism, and the community's representation and participation in national politics. The result of present research work will support to understand the society as a whole in the past conditions of their socio-cultural, political-economic, and religious status in the past. The study presents a demographic profile of the Barua community in Lucknow as well as their standard of living. The cultural heritage of the Barua community has yet to be explored in light of the cultural imposition and domination of the neoliberal agenda and this study brings in to light the distinct identity of a community and its tradition, customs and practices.

## **Chapterization**

The first chapter which is the introduction part of the study starts with tracing the historical background of Barua Buddhists in South East Asia most particularly in Bangladesh and India. The study traces about their ancestry and highlights how this tribe has made its inroads into the Indian soil most particularly in West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. The chapter also throws its light on the historical background of various minority groups in India and depicts their demographic development right

from 1951 census. Moreover the chapter includes the hypotheses, objectives and literature review related to the study.

The chapter second of the study begins with introductory profile of the State of Uttar Pradesh. The chapter specially focuses on the population trends of Buddhist community in various provinces of Uttar Pradesh since 1951 till 2001. It has brought to light the variations in the population of the Buddhist community while comparing it with the demographic trends of other communities in the state. The chapter has provided the figures of Buddhist community in Lucknow right from 1951 taking the help from various government census reports. Origin of the Barua community and the meaning of the term Barua has been explained in this part. Moreover this chapter has brought to light the migration of Barua community, including the causes of their migration in India principally in West Bengal and Lucknow. At the end chapter highlights the role of Dr. Ambedkar in Buddhist revival moment (Neo-Buddhism) in India. The conversion call, provided by Ambedkar in 1956, greatly impressed Uttar Pradesh's outcasts, especially the Jatavs, the state's largest scheduled caste group.

The chapter third which is titled as Socio-economic status of Barua Buddhists is primarily based on the primary survey conducted in Lucknow city. All the information related to the educational status, social status, occupational, income and expenditure status, health status is included in this chapter.

The chapter four of the study discusses about the religious beliefs and cultural practices of the Barua community. It gives a brief introduction of the Theravada Buddhism in South East Asia and India and also throws light on the difference between the Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism. The main focus on the chapter is on the various religious practices, festivals and ceremonies performed by the Barua Buddhists across South East Asia and Lucknow in particular. It gives us a

detailed description of these festivals and ceremonies, how are they performed and to which aspect are they related. All the rituals related to their marriage, funeral and religious are provided in detail.

The chapter five of the study titled as Buddhist monastic centres in Uttar Pradesh with special reference to Lucknow mentions about the various vihars scattered over the various places in Uttar Pradesh. It discusses about their establishment, management and various activities performed at these places.