

A Historical Transition of the Mech Society of Jalpaiguri District during Colonial Period

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Abstract: Numerous indigenous tribes like the Meches, Rabhas, Garos, etc. had been living in Jalpaiguri district from much before the advent of Britishers. Among them, the Meches were remarkable. They were nomadic tribes. When the British came and introduced the colonial economy then they gave up their old habits and started living permanently in one place. Therefore, one witnessed radical change had been seen in their economic activities, social system, cultural system and so forth. This article seeks to highlight the overall transformation that took place in the society of the Meches after the establishment of British colonial rule.

Keywords: *Jhuming* cultivation, Migrated, Bodo, Mleccha, Subadar, Sharna, Bathou.

The Meches were an indigenous tribe of North East India.¹ Mech people also were living in the Jalpaiguri district. Most of the writers, like- G. A. Gearson, B. H. Hodgson, Dr. T. C. Sharma, etc. opined that the Mech people originated from Bodo, a ruling tribe of North East India.² Mr. Hodgson described that Meches were also called Bodos, and the Dhimals also belonged to the same race. But Meches or Bodos lived in separate villages and without intermarriage. Another opinion about their origin is that the Meches were of Mongolian in their origin. In West Bengal, the Meches lived on the bank of the Mechi river in the Border area of Terai of Darjeeling district. Therefore, the name 'Mech' is derived from River 'Mechi'.³ G. A. Gearson wrote in his book '*Linguistic of India*' that the Bodos of Jalpaiguri and the Terai area of Darjeeling district call themselves Mech because they settled on the banks of the river Mechi.⁴ After that they were fleeted by tea planters (Britishers) and after that, they moved eastward.⁵

Sorensen (1904), Laiblik (1958), Griaras (1903), Endel (1911), Anderson (1909), S. K. Chatterjee (1951), etc. scholars opined that the word 'Mech' originated from the Sanskrit word *Mleccha* (untouchable). But the Meches of North India regarded themselves as Bodo.⁶ The branches of Meches people who migrated to Nepal and settled there came to be known as Limbu and

Khambu. In the Jalpaiguri district, Kumargram, Alipurduar, Kalchini, and Madarihat was their main inhabitant of land in the last phase of the colonial period. Therefore, the name Mech came from the Bodos community and is officially recognized as Mech in West Bengal.⁷ It is a more acceptable theory regarding the origin of Meches that they are descendent of the Bodo people.

Some basic features and History of Meches:

W.W. Hunter maintained that the Meches were much-migrated people. Their main occupation was cultivation.⁸ Mr. W. B. Oldhan, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, described that the Meches were being gradually driven (from Darjeeling Terai) towards the east owing to the pressure of more intelligent races. They had the habit of consuming liquor whenever they could get it. They had also a bad habit of drinking *Jou* (Rice beer) and prove many other social evils.⁹ They were lazy. They liked to live far away from civilized people and they lived in remote places because they sought to live undisturbed

Physically the Mech people were fit and robust, so some of the Meches were appointed to armed police in Jalpaiguri district. One Mech was *Subadar*, he looked like a *Gurkha*, and under the *Subadar*, there were some Gurkha polices who obey the Meches *Subadar*.¹⁰ So it is observed that gradually, their changed their occupation and livelihood and the social, economic and cultural system were influenced by the other communities.

The Meches gradually changed their traditional way of living and another social system. They gave up the habit of migration and they tried to settle in one place permanently. In due course of time, Nepali people began to take water from the Mech people i.e. they were not untouchable any longer.¹¹ When they gave up their migratory life then they changed their occupation too. They tried to grow paddy on their land.¹² When they were under the Bhutan rule in Western Duars then they lived under one village headman called *Thakurany*. Every village of Meches had *Thakurany*. In due course, the *Mandol* replaced *Thakurany*. *Mandol* was helped by *Halmaji*.¹³

Social Transmission

Yogini Tantra as well as Dr. S. K. Chatterjee and other writers described them as '*Mlechha*', a Sanskrit term, meaning people who do not belong to Vedic society or the Mech people were of inferior status. However, to Dr. T. C. Sharma the word '*Mlechha*' denoted not only the 'Meches' but the whole of the greater Bodos of North East India, which had been described as '*Mlechha Territory*'. The '*Mlechha*' identity on Mech or Bodo was a derogative term and far-reaching impact on their society. The other developed communities are

ge. They believed in an egalitarian society.

deities

r of Meches was Rishi. The organized festival called *Subachini* *subachini* was worshiped for keeping their families safe from *hini* goddess was also worshiped by Rajbansi and Namasudra ~~erefore, it was transmitted from other races. It was compound~~

Cultural heritage

Religion and d

The chief deity where goddess sickness. *Subac* people also. Th

knowledge of the religion of Christian and became religious preachers. Among them Nayansingh Mochary and Rajasingh Narjinary were remarkable and they were appointed as catechists. In 1908, the Mahakalguri Central Church was established and the Dhalkor and other churches followed it. The position of Jagatsingh became higher and in 1913, he was ordained as a pastor. But, in 1914 he died. In 1920, Lauchlen Maclean offered the post of catechist to Jitnal Narjinary. Jitnal was the primary teacher and he was the nephew of Jagatsingh. Within a short period, Jitnal Narjinary became pastor in 1925. When the converted Christians were increasing then the area of Western Duars was divided into two parts in 1934; i.e. Western part and the Eastern part. The Eastern part of Western Duars consisted chiefly of the Bodo churches.²¹ With the spread of the Christian religion, welfare work also started. In 1936, the Women's Fellowship was founded under the leadership of Kadamsiri Narjinary who was the sister of Jagatsingh and mother of Jitnal.²²

The Christian missionaries undertook many projects for the socio-economic, educational, cultural, and spiritual development of Bengal as well as the whole of North East India. Besides this, the charitable work of Christian Missionary attracted the Mech people.²³

The Meches believed in the egalitarian social system. The Christians, too, believed in a casteless society. Again they (the Meches) believed that the Christian religion believe in more or less equality. Therefore, many of the Mech people decided to convert to Christianity. Thus, Christianity spread among the Meches. Among other causes, the religious idea of tribal people was animist in nature, like Sharna, *Bathou* religion, etc. The old religion of the Meches was called the *Bathou* religion. Like other religions, there were no written doctrines, philosophy, etc. in *Bathou* religion. Another cause was that the different Hindu religious groups did not show very much interest in spreading the Hindu religion among the tribal people. So, they became quite hopeless and accepted the Christian religion. Here one characteristic of evangelicalism was that at first, some leading tribes accepted the Christian religion then they spread it among other tribal people. It was like the filtration theory of education.

The Brahma religion

With time, some Meches gradually got Hindunised in the first decade of the 20th century. In this period, the Meches were under the transitional stage and held a very low rank in Hindu society. Therefore, many of them accepted the idea of the Brahma religion also. Not only that, but many of them also converted into the Brahma religion, a branch of the Hindu religion. The first pioneer of this work was Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. Kalicharan Brahma started his religious work in Assam. After the coming of the outsiders Hindu and Christian people (last of 19th century and first phase of 20th century), the Meches were suffering from a lack of social ideology.²⁴ In the last phase of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the Bodo society

was also suffering from religious humiliations, lack of moral support and political degradations. Kalicharan, when he was young then he realized the backwardness of the Mech people. The Mech people practiced some social evils. Due to these, other social groups or religious groups of people hated them and treated them as uncivilized. It can be said that Meches encountered two problems; one was the identity crisis and another was an uncivilized badge. The Bodo believed in the Bathou religion, which consisted of many Gods and Goddesses. Kalicharan realized that it was necessary to reform the religious practices and some social customs. Kalicharan wanted to spread the ideas of Brahma Samaj which was not separate religion from Hinduism. He even realized that if the idea of Brahma spread over the Bodo society, then the conversion might stop. Here it is necessary to say that they claimed themselves as Hindus. He believed confirmed that the practiced the idea of Brahma Samaj could lead to the progress of Bodo people and Mech people in there the man in the internal and external affairs of Bodo people or Mech people. He became a devotee/ of and practical ascetic austerities of Brahmanism from Swami Shibnarayan in Kolkata.²⁵

The Mech society was a became stagnant society. Realizing this backwardness, some conscious Meches converted to the Christian religion or other religions. There was also no separate religious philosophy of Bathou religion, by which the Bathou religion and other social evils of the Mech society could be reformed.²⁶ Kalicharan Brahma and other Meches were attracted by the idea and work of Brahma Samaj. Some other social reformers of Hinduism also attracted them. Kalicharan was inspired by the movement against (or condemned) the casteism of Hindu society, animal sacrifice, the sati system, child marriage, the *pardah* system, etc. The social reformers all over India propagated that benevolent idea also. Moreover, they also encouraged the spread of education among the people. All these ideas changed Kalicharan's mind.

He spread the idea of monotheism and he respected the fire or Sun. He worships fire i.e. Sun as God. According to the Brahma Samaj philosophy, 'Fire' is *Brahma* and *Brahma* gives light to the entire earth and all its beings. Brahma is universal, endless, and all-encompassing. Where there is Brahma, there can be found *Satya* or truth.²⁷

Here the idea of nature god is highlighted. It was a real thing, not meaningless customs. There were also similarities with animist religion, but free from evil practiced. Other natural events, like-clouds or rain was regarded as ceremonial subjects. He emphasized '*Yogyahuti*' ceremony, which could purify the human mind. Kalicharan's advice to the Boro Community was that they should give up some bad habits and social evils. He emphasized giving up drink '*Jou*', rearing pigs, forced marriage, animal sacrifices and the worship of many Gods and Goddesses. He emphasized inculcating good habits and developing the progressive idea of human society. In West Bengal, Hardas

Gabur, Bonkunath Mondol, Bamansing Katham, Moniram Brahma, and Debendranath Brahma were his followers and they converted to the new religion.²⁸

Social division

D. H. E. Sundar did not mention the social division of Meches in his report.²⁹ But J. F. Grunning, Indian Civil Servant, mentioned that the Mech society was divided into two sub-tribes called *Agnia-Mech* and *Jati Mech*, which were practically endogamies or an *Agnia Mech* could not marry a *Jati-Mech* without forfeiting his position in his own clan.³⁰ In due course of time, the Meches got divided into five or seven sub-tribes or clans. They were (1) *Narjinary (Pat clan)*, (2) *Ishwarari (Debgotra)*, (3) *Basumatari (Bhumigotra)*, (4) *Hajoyari (Pahar Gotra)*, (5) *Mochari (Bagh Gotra)* (5) *Saprosari*, (7) *Moushabi*, etc.³¹

With time, the number of Meches increased in Jalpaiguri District. As per census reports another table of the figures of the Meches of Jalpaiguri is given below:

Table-1
Statement of Mech Population

Census year	Total population	Mech population	Percentage of Mech Population
1872	327985	40	—
1891	449538	21608	—
1901	546764	22350	4.08%
1911	663222	19893	2.99%
1921	695946	10777	1.54%
1931	740993	9510	1.28%
1941	847841	6886	0.81%
1951	916747	10507	1.14%

Sources-(i) Mitra Asok, *District Census Hand Book, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal*, Government of India, 1951, p-91, (ii) Census of India, 1991 & 2001, District Statistical Hand Book, Jalpaiguri, Bureau of Applied Economics & Statistics, Govt. of West Bengal, 2002, Table-p.15, (iii) Donnel, C. J. O, *Census of The Provinces of Bengal, 1891*, Calcutta, 1893, Table-v, p. 286

From the above table it is proved that, after 1901, the numbers the population of the Meches were fluctuating. Sometimes it decreased and, in some censuses, it got increased. In 1951, the number of Meches got remarkably decreased because many Meches migrated eastward.

Others social activities

After the marriage of the daughter of Mech *Jamadar* of Dhulabary with Ujir Sing, a king of Nepal, the Meches came in close contact with Gorkha in the

Tarai area of Darjeeling district.³² Ali was the chieftain of Meches. He converted to Islam during the time of Bakhtiar Khalji's attack in Bengal. He was followed by his classman and woman etc. It is noticeable that the *Sheikhs* and the *Nasyas*, who composed the majority of the Muslims of the district, whose economic activities and social manner or customs and dresses were almost like the Rajbansis. The members of two groups of those Muslims did not come from Rangpur, Coochbehar, Dinajpur and Pabna. Therefore, it may be said that they were native inhabitants and converted to Islam. They were 29.81% of the total population of the district of Jalpaiguri. In addition, they were not a minority in this district and they were people of land or son of the land. They worshiped the *Pirs* and *Murshid*. They built Mosque in this district.³³

There were five types of marriage system, - (1) *Bounanoi* (*Balatkar*), (2) *Dounkhatnai* (*Paliye niye giye bibah*) (3) *Khatsnnai* (*Swechhay chheler paribare chale asa*) (4) *Gaboi donnai* (*Ghar jamai*) and (5) *Soungnai* (Social marriage). Initially, the practice was that, after marriage, there would be no extra symbol or dress of the bride. Later on, they began to use vermilion.³⁴ The society of Meches was liberal in the field of marriage. Though the Garo did not marry a Mech woman, a Mech had been known to marry a Garo woman. However, this involvement led to less caste. Likewise, a Mech woman could marry a Rajbansi. But the Rajbansi society treated him as an outcast, and nobody might eat with him. Like Rajbansis, the Meches could marry more than one wife.

There was the practice of mutual divorce in the Mech society. However, there were some terms and conditions in this regard. One of the conditions was that, after marriage, if the man was unfaithful to the girl (with whom the pre-marriage process was going on according to the customs of Meches), then the offending party had to pay a fine of Rs. 63. On the other hand, if the girl would be unfaithful then she would pay Rs. 30.³⁵ The man and woman had equal rights in the society. But, gradually it changed. In due course of the period, the Meches prayed to their God Mainao for the male child.³⁶ Their society was paternal. Both man and woman went to work together. It is noticed that widow remarriage was prevalent in the Mech community. There was a joint family, but in due course, it changed.

Homesteads

All Meches build their houses in lines facing East and West. A house consisted of three compartments; one called *Chasing* (used for paddy), centre room *Fankar* (used for cooking), and the third was called *Noo* (sleeping room).

Food

The chief article of their food was rice and others were flesh of pig or hog (*Oma Bidat*), deer, goat (*Birma Bidat*), ducks' fowls (*Dao Bidat*), pigeons, rhinoceros (*athar*), etc. They partook in every vegetable and some took the milk. They did not consume beef. Cooking with oil, Pulse, potato, sugar, and different type of spices was prevalent. They took different types of fruits.³⁷ Narcotic tobacco, *Pan* (battle leaf), and a smoking pipe called '*fuski*' were taken.³⁸

Dress

The men wear *gamchha* (*gamchha*, a cloth around their loins that covers them from the waist to the knees). A cotton coat, which some of them were to cover their bodies and an arm, was called *buchla*. The cloth cover head is called *pagreo*. Over time, they began to wear the dress of the other communities. With time they wear *dhuti*, *gumchha*, *coat* (*bukhechili*) head cover (*pagga*), strip cloth wear (when going to work), strip cloth wear woman round loins (*lofoon*), the cloth used her chest (*kambang*), etc.

Jewellery

Personally, male and female of the Meches worn ornaments.

Superstitions

They adopted a superstitions process for selecting for living. Thursday and Sunday were not good day.³⁹

Weaving

Only one type of cotton cloth was weaved by them, which was called fun. All sons of Meches inherit their father's properties.⁴⁰ The widow or daughter had no right of inheritance. If anybody had no son then the nearest male member would inherit all property.⁴¹

Economic changes

The Mech people were much migrated in nature.⁴² Their economic life depends on mainly natural resources, which were close in relation to the forest. The Meches obtained their numerous requirements from the areas they inhabited with the help of simple implements and without any technological aids from outside. Nothing seemed to escape them-edible roots, fruits, vegetables, flowers, and honey, insects, fish, pigeons, cock and other birds, monkeys, hares, pigs, etc.

They usually practiced *jhuming* i.e. shifting cultivation is mainly forest area. They changed their inhabitant place frequently. They went to new places and practiced slash-and-burn cultivation. But, this system was disturbed when Britishers came into this area and introduced the colonial economy. The British Government undertook forest and brought it under direct control. They passed new rules and regulations to protect the forest. Due to the new forest policy of the government, the Meches were bound to give up their traditional cultivating system. Not only Meches, but most of the tribal people also changed their old cultivating system.⁴³ In Jalpaiguri, there was no feudal system in agriculture. Most of the elements of the feudal economy were absent. During this period, some of the forests of the district came under the control of the British government and offices of the Forest Department were constructed. Therefore, the Meches lost their freedom in collecting forest produce. In 1918, one acre of Government *Khas* land situated in *Taluk*

Kharibari *Tahasil*, Falakata of Jalpaiguri district was transferred to the Forest Department for the construction of a Forest Office.⁴⁴ Likewise many forest offices were constructed in many forests from where the officers easily preserved the forest's resources in the colonial period. In 1921 few lands of Western Duars of Jalpaiguri district were reserved for grazing and supply of timber and fuel etc.⁴⁵ Therefore, the Meches had changed their nomadic life and were compelled to settle permanently in one place. Some of them became middle-class business people, which was not the case before. Grunning wrote that the Meches could make them efficient cultivators if they lived in one place or lived permanently.⁴⁶

After the establishment of the tea garden, the jungle wasteland was brought under the plantation. Therefore, realizing the land crisis or value of the land, the Meches decided to leave a place permanently at a later time. Not only that, many Meches became *jotedars* and at one time, the number of the Mech *jotedars* rose to 766 in the Jalpaiguri district. During that, time the total holding lands of them were 20593.66 acres. One Mech *jotedar* consisted of 400 (four hundred) acres of land, another had 250 (two hundred fifty) acres of land. After permanent settlement, the Meches began to cultivate areca nut (*guai*) and it became an extra source of income.

A Mech *jotedar* had his *chukanidars* and *adhiars* as similar to the Rajbansis.⁴⁷ His tenant was called *Bhatiaproja*.⁴⁸ But it was true that 'modernization', 'money economy' and 'technological transformation' disrupted the tribal mode of living.⁴⁹

They were bound to accept the permanent cultivation system. They learned the cultivation from the Rajbansi people. They had to fight for survival when the forests were cleared for tea plantations then they began to change their economic activities. It is also because the Britishers introduced tea gardens and their character was the capitalist mood of the production. They cleared the jungle, which was the inhabitant land of the Mech. Naturally, they had to adapt to the new lifestyle, because of continuous contact with the neighbouring Rajbansis and a good number of Meches accepted Rajbansi culture.

The census of India in 1931 was the first major occasion when the problem of the Indian aborigine tribe was discussed with genuine interest. A. E. Porter, then the Commissioner of Census, expressed concern about the anti-tribal forces operating in the tribal areas. He felt that the development of communications exposed the tribal to increased contact with the non-tribal people resulting in a serious dislocation of the tribal economy, society, and culture. He feared that if the contact was not arrested the tribes might become Hinduized⁵⁰ and be reduced to landless labourers and a depressed class. According to him, the solution to the problem would be "to create self-governing tribal areas with free power of self-determination regarding surrounding or adjacent provincial units."⁵¹ According to D. H. E. Sunder the

crops cultivated by Meches were the same as those grown by Rajbansi, namely, paddy and mustard seed, also a little jute and tobacco in Jalpaiguri.⁵² The Meches accepted to find the permanent cultivation and they tried to or bound to give up their own habits. It was changed because tea cultivation was extended. They were using plough more freely than they used to do previously. Sometimes they employed Rajbansi people to plough for them. Therefore Meches took to steady cultivation, by the plough they make the most efficient cultivations.⁵³ The British government attempted to introduce permanent cultivation among the nomadic tribes through settlement operations, which was largely responsible for infusing the concept of 'private property' slowly into the Mech society.⁵⁴

The Mech people could not survive with the growing economy or pressure of the more intelligent people. So Mech people could not develop their process of cultivation quickly because they were also lazy and consumed liquor. On the other hand, when they permanently settled, then they tilled the land efficiently. In this regard, according to Colonel Money, the Deputy Commissioner, the Meches were efficient cultivators.⁵⁵ But Grunning wrote in 1911 that because of their bad habit, they had fallen easy prey to the moneylender's speculators, who have exploited the Mech people. So the Mech people migrated eastwards, to more thinly populated areas.⁵⁶ Another habit was that they caught fish with herbal poison (juice of one kind of grass) which was squashed from one kind of plant called *Bishkathali*.

J. F. Grunning, Indian Civil Service, refined the report of Mr. W. B. Oldham, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling that the Meches were disappearing dying out faster than any race. He (W. B. Oldham) gave the reason that their distinctive cultivation was by *Jhuming*.⁵⁷ Grunning told that the Meches, who inhabited Jalpaiguri district, produced vegetables, pepper, cereals etc. Within a short period, they became efficient cultivators. They go in for artificial irrigation in a surprising manner, and Grunning had noticed their water channels were more than a mile long. Grunning again wrote that they became the Government *Raiyats*. One thing was noticeable that before the change of demographic pattern of Jalpaiguri, firstly, the Mech people were much migrated in nature and secondly, they were very lazy.⁵⁸

The Meches and their Occupations

They cultivated land in a shifting process i.e. *jhuming* cultivation. Their economic activities were primitive type. After the establishment of the Colonial economy, their traditional profession was hampered. They began to change their old occupation.

Colonel Mony, the commissioner of Jalpaiguri, wrote that the Meches sometimes appointed the Rajbansi people many places to plough on land. But with time Rajbansi people became more efficient cultivators.⁵⁹

J. F. Grunning said that "Meches make excellent policemen and smarten up greatly under the influence of drill and discipline, the armed police reserve at Jalpaiguri is composed of 75 Gurkhas and 25 Meches and it was not easy to tell one from the other. *Subadar*, a very smart officer was a Mech, though he was invariably mistaken for a Gurkha by people who did not know; he had great command over his men and Gurkhas obey him as they would one of their own race".⁶⁰ Therefore, all occurred due to transition.

Some song indicates their handicraft. There is a song below:

*Zonglai shikhola habab zonglai shikhola
Khundung lunan shi dana noi,
Samsar ni loiza khargoura phunh dau,
Hailai nouni haba mauna.
Shnzu phurthirao zamkhar phiding na noi,
Belache zabola mini bala bala,
Doi sha lahino phang do habab zoungani,
Boi shikolani samayao.*

In English the above song thus:

In English-We are young women. We spin yarn and weave cloth to save the modesty of our family. In the morning, we do our household duties. At noon we work on the spinning wheel. In the afternoon with great merriment, we go to fetch water from the stream at this youthful age.⁶¹ Here it is proved that the handicraft industry was prevalent in the Mech society.

Transport System

Earlier there was a negative bad idea about the communication system among the Mech society. The Meches believed that through/by the good roads robbers or thieves could come. So, they did not keep the roads in good condition at all seasons. Therefore, they used bullock carts not to transport paddy and other crops.

In the early colonial period, there was practically no road to their villages. The river of the foothill was not navigable. In the rainy season, it became violent, and then all types of transport became impossible. However, gradually the British Government constructed some earthen/mud roads in the Mech villages of Jalpaiguri district and very few metallic roads during the colonial period were made. But they were insignificant in number. The new road networks facilitated extensive inter-tribal, as well as non-tribal communication.

The overall socio-political system of the district underwent a series of changes from a primitive economic system to a colonial economy and some traditional economic systems gradually disappeared. The Meches of Jalpaiguri gradually came under the local Rajbansi and in the last phase of the colonial period, they came close to the other migrated people and began to start the new economic idea or techniques. Therefore, they tried to abreast with the new economic idea including agriculture to industry. Side by side, animal husbandry and cattle rearing took as their economic activity. They reared or tended cattle, like- pig, goat, cow, buffalo, sheep, pigeon, fowl etc. Their traditional activities like fishing and hunting were also remaining their old activity. Kshun or khun(Short staple) cotton was produced very much just earlier to the Second World War, because it became popular in some foreign countries, like Japan etc. Gradually they came close to the other race of people and were involved with the activity of society. They went to the market and started purchasing or buying contemporary clothes, food items like salt, different cosmetics and soap etc. Gradually they began to produce in their land, like-castor plants (*Recinus communis*), endi cocoons, maize (*dumba*) etc.

Due to Second World War, the economic crisis took place originated all over the world. The world Market economy fell into depression. Their short-staple (*Kshun* or *khun*) business or trade fell into trouble. Therefore, their income decreased. So the Meches began to borrow money from moneylenders, *jotedars* etc. The interest was high. Sometimes the interest was as high as fifty percent. They could not repay the borrowed money and they were bound to sell their land to repay the loan and their interest.

Cultural changes

Language

Among the tribal people, the language of Mech was rich. The language was called Mech or Bodo. At one time the language of the Meches covered a large area. The name of many places was associated with the Mech language. The folk literature, folk song and the literature or poetry of folk language were excellent. In later times they used the script of Bengali and Assamese and wrote much literature.⁶²

The Meches of the Jalpaiguri district did not have their script. As a result, they did not have any written literature. But when they went to receive education then they adopted other languages whether foreigner or Indian. Here adaptation theory also may be applied. Bryan Houghton Hodgson, the British writer, in 1880 AD, collected a large vocabulary and a few numerals when they were in the nomadic stage. D. H. E. Sunder, the great surveyor of colonial India, in 1895 A. D. collected some vocabulary. In the middle of the twentieth century Charu Chandra Sanyal, a pioneer in the research of North Bengal also collected a large number of numerical and some methods of their arithmetic. The mother tongue was 'Bodo', Mongolian dialect. Suniti Kumar

Chatterji told that that the 'Bodo' or Mech language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-group of the Assam-Burmese language. S. K. Chatterji again told that it was also the speech of Bodo-Naga group.⁶³ But like Tibeto Burman language their words did not possess wide meaning as in Indo-Aryan words. In the construction of sentences, the personal pronouns were repeated, as '*ang-ni-a-pha*,' in English 'me of my father or my father,' '*Nang-ni-na-pha*' In English 'your father or your father.'⁶⁴

Entertainments, Dance and Music

The Meches usually liked to entertain themselves and were some traditional ways of amusing themselves. Sports, music, dance etc. were the main themes of their entertainment. These were their pastime, the source of development of wits and intelligence and their physical culture.

Children and young men were fond of sports. The boys from the age of ten to sixteen played '*chur-game*' (thief game), '*Pakhi-khela*' (bird play), '*Daria-bandha khela*,' '*Cilla-daoma game*' that was Eagle bird, Chiken game (cook fight), '*Ontai-kani*' (picking of stones), '*Acon-Bicon-Gelenai*' (hid and seek game), etc. were main sports of amusement.⁶⁵ The '*Pakhi-khela*' (bird play) and '*Daria-bandha khela*' were also prevalent in Rajbansi society too. Therefore, those games were transmitted from Rajbansi people to Mech society. '*Gila-kanni*, was another important game. Gila was the round seed of a kind of fruit found usually on the banks of rivers. The seeds were thrown into a hole from some distance by twisting the fingers just like the mud marble played in South Bengal.⁶⁶ Therefore, within a short period, the Meches society was changed first. They were not reluctant about modern civilization.

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