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EDITORIAL NOTE

This is the third annual issue of the Bulletin of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati. Due to some practical unavoidable difficulties this issue could not be brought out in time inspite of our best efforts.

In this issue 8 (eight) articles are incorporated covering Hills and Plains. Most of the papers are based on field studies of our faculty members. A consolidated report of the evaluation studies on the development schemes implemented under Tribal Sub-plan conducted by the Sub-Divisional Welfare Officers while they were attending the Orientation Training-cum-Workshop at Guwahati, during January 1985, is also incorporated here.

The First and Second issues of our Bulletin were very much well-received and we have received encouraging reports from readers from various parts of the country. The suggestions for further improvement of the Bulletin made by the well-wishers and respected readers have encouraged us to improve the quality of the articles. Further we invite suggestions from our respected readers on this issue also so that we may improve further the standard of the future issues of the Bulletin.

In editing this issue of the Bulletin I have received help and co-operation from Dr. G. C. Sharma Thakur, Joint Director, Shri M. C. Saikia, Deputy Director, Shri P. N. Bharali, District Research Officer, Guwahati, Shri Paramesh Dutta, Senior Investigator, other Faculty Members as well as the staff of the Institute. I offer my heartiest thanks and gratitude to all of them for their help, co-operation and assistance.

B. N. Bordoloi,

Editor,

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Dated Guwahati
the 31st December, 1985

DISPLACEMENT OF TRIBALS DUE TO INSTALLATION OF MAJOR INDUSTRIAL AND IRRIGATION PROJECTS

The Case Study of Dhansiri Irrigation Project in the Darrang District of Assam.

[In the conference of the Directors of the Tribal Research Institutes held in New Delhi on 25th and 26th March 1982 under the aegis of the Ministry of Home affairs, Tribal Development Division, Government of India, there was a lively discussion of the subject of displacement of tribals due to installation of major industrial and irrigation projects. The Home Ministry Officials, officials from the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Directors of the Tribal Research Institutes as well as the other participants viewed with great concern the dimensions of the problems created by such displacement. It was pointed out that in the name of national interest, the interest of the tribal people were sacrificed since the affected tribal families donot get the benefits from such projects in terms of employment and rehabilitation. Instead they have been compelled to leave their hearth and home making them nomadic sometimes.

It was, therefore, decided in this Conference that each Tribal Research Institute should take up the study of such displacement on priority basis and a National Committee was constituted to co-ordinate the study reports from various states.

In persuance of this dicision the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, had taken up for study the displacement of tribals caused by the Dhansiri Irrigation Project in the Darrang District which is the only major irrigation project of Assam.

The field study was conducted during the later part of 1983 and some field data were collected during the first part of 1984 also. This study highlights (1) the extent of displacement of tribals, (2) rehabilitation scheme, if any, (3) cash compensation paid, (4) extent of pending cases, (5) problems faced by the displaced families, (6) attitude of the tribal people towards the project and (7) concluding observations and suggestions.

The field study was conducted by Shri U. K. Barua, Senior Investigator under the guidance of the Director. Shri M. C. Saikia, Deputy Director, had helped the Director in drafting the final report. The study report is presented here in an abridged form—Editor]

Introduction

The river Dhansiri is the biggest river in the Udalguri Sub-division of the Darrang District of Assam—the source of its origin being the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh. On its way to the downhill it meets with the river Jampani from the Bhutan hills. The meeting point of these two rivers is known as Bhairabkunda which has a pictureque landscape.

The headwork of the Dhansiri Irrigation Project is located at Bhairabkunda where the borders of Assam, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh have met.

The Irrigation project has been designed with six big canals. They are—(I) Main Canal—9.75 kms. in length and 33 metres in breadth, (II) Canal B1. M—7.94 kms. in length and 33 metres in breadth, (III) Canal S1, B1. M.—3.28 kms. in length and 33 metres in breadth, (IV) Canal Sc. B1. M—4.29 kms. and 33 metres in breadth, (V) Canal C1 and (VI) Canal C2. Apart from these six main canals, there is a net-work of smaller canals which embraces a good number of villages within a radius of 20 kms. The total area potential of the project is estimated to be roundabout of 41200 hectares. Although the project was started in the year 1976 and it was scheduled to be completed by the end of 1980, nevertheless, the headwork was yet to be completed at the time of our study (last part of 1983). Of course, the major parts of works so far as the construction of the main canals and the net-work of sub-canals are concerned were found to be almost completed.

People and Their Socio-Economic Background

The area where the net-work of canals of the Dhansiri Irrigation Project is located is

predominantly inhabited by tribal people belonging to the Bodo-Kachari and the Rabha communities. Apart from the people of these two tribal communities, the area is found to be inhabited by the Nepalis, Santals, Muslims and people belonging to other backward classes in smaller numbers.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people, tribals as well as non-tribals, inhabiting the area. There are a few State Government employees like Junior Engineers, Agricultural Demonstrators, Secondary and L. P. School teachers; a few self-employed business men like tea-stall owners, small contractors, timber dealers, grocery shop owners, etc. Most of the agricultural families fall under the categories of small and marginal farmers. In the foot hill areas lands are not very suitable for agricultural purpose because of there arenaceous characteristics lacking moisture retaining capacity. Hence the people have to work very hard to have two square meals a day.

Extent of Displacement

Till 1982 for the purpose of the Dhansiri Irrigation Project total land amounting to 1183 Bighas, 17 Kathas and 13 lessas or say 1184 Bighas belonging to 1001 tribal families were acquired. (One Bigha consists of 14,400 sq. ft.). Thus the average land acquired is slightly more than one Bigha.

The following table shows the yearwise acquisition of land and the total Number of tribal families affected since the inception of the scheme till 1982.

TABLE—I

Year	No. of affected Tribal families	Area of land acquired in Bigha, Katha & Lessa.
1976	87	106-1-16
1977	4	4-2- 4
1978	101	116-2- 6
1979	171	231-1- 4
1980	288	333-4- 8
1981	241	259-3-12
1982	109	134-2- 3
Total	1001	1183-17-13

The following table shows the Mauza-wise distribution of affected tribal families.

TABLE—II

Mouza	Affected Tribal families	Percentage to total affected families
1. Silputa	84	8.39
2. Harisinga	70	6.99
3. Ambagan	318	31.77
4. Udalguri	252	25.17
5. Barsilajhar	277	27.68
Total	1001	100.00

The land acquired includes periodic patta land, annual patta land and T.B. Land.

Methodology of Field Study Conducted

The Special Land Acquisition Officer, Udalguri, had furnished a list of 1001 tribal families along with area of land acquired of each family. Out of these 1001 affected tribal

families, 92 families (about 9% of the affected families) scattered over 23 villages in five Mauzas of Udalguri Sub-division were selected for the purpose of our field study on the strict criterion that each family selected has lost more than two Bighas of land. In other words, 92 out of 1001 affected families had lost more than two Bighas of land each. Only those family members are interviewed on whose names the acquired land was recorded. The selected families are within the radius of 25 Kms. from Bhairabkunda where the headwork of the project is located.

The total number of persons in these 92 families is 787 out of which 395 are males and 392 are females. The percentage of literacy is 42.04, (Males 47.85% and females 36.22%). The literacy percentage is found to be quite encouraging.

Land Holding Pattern

The following table shows the landholdings of 92 families prior to acquisition for irrigation project.

TABLE—III

Area in Bighas	No. of families	Percentage
1 to 5 Bighas	26	28.26
5 to 10 Bighas	22	23.92
10 to 15 Bighas	15	16.30
15 to 20 Bighas	9	9.78
20 to 30 Bighas	12	13.04
30 Bighas and above	8	8.70
Total	92	100.00

The following table shows the landholding position of 92 families under the purview of study after the acquisition of land for the irrigation project.

TABLE-IV

Area of land in Bighas	No. of families	Percentage
Landless	4	4.35
1 to 5 Bighas	63	68.47
5 to 10 Bighas	16	17.39
10 to 15 Bighas	4	4.35
15 to 20 Bighas	3	3.26
20 to 30 Bighas	1	1.09
30 Bighas and above	1	1.09
Total	92	100.00

From an analysis of the above two tables it can clearly be seen that the acquisition of land for the irrigation project had rendered four tribal families landless. The families having 1 to 5 Bighas of land had increased to 63 from 26, the percentage increase being 40.21. Similarly families having 5 to 10 Bighas of land had come down to 16 from 22, the percentage of reduction being 6.33. In this way the acquisition of land for the irrigation project had changed the landholding pattern of families under the purview of the study.

It is, therefore, evident that most of the families under the purview of our study are small and marginal farmers and whatever they produce can hardly meet their consumption requirements. Under the circumstances, acquisition of even a Bigha of cultivable land has its repercussion on the family income.

Extent of Land Acquisition and its Consequences

Out of the 92 families studied by us, 7 families have lost homestead lands ranging from 2 to 5 Bighas and only 1 family has lost more

than 6 Bighas. In this process of acquisition, one family which has been dependent on Touzi land for his homestead, lost it completely due to eviction. Another family in the village No. 2 Fascia has lost his homestead land with all the structures over it. Similarly another family in Jamguri village has sustained loss of his homestead land.

As to the loss of cultivable land, it is pertinent to note that out of the 92 families, 60 families, have lost land ranging from 2 to 5 Bighas, 30 families from 6 to 10 Bighas and 2 families from 11 to 15 Bighas. In the 2-5 Bigha group, 50 families have reported as having annual patta and in the 11 to 16 Bighas group, 6 families have sustained loss of Touzi as well as patta land both periodic and annual.

Although the acquisition of land was made in the greater interest of the society, its repercussions on individual cultivators sometimes fall in such a way that they are reduced to the status of landless agriculturists. In this context reference specially may be made of Rabiram Boro of Baniapara village under Ambagan Mouza who lost 3 Bighas 4 Kathas and 11 lessas of land leaving only a marginal area of land which having proved insufficient for any practical purposes, sold it out and thus he became landless. The cases of Rupram Boro and Rohen Narzary of village Jamuguri under Udalguri Mouza may also be pointed out here. After acquisition of their cultivable lands, whatever have been left over proved to be useless to them due to raising of high canal banks just in the vicinity of their land resulting in stagnation of water during rainy season and dryness during winter. Such a situation of uselessness of the left over land has also been reported by Sri Prasendra Boro

of No. 2 Fascia village under Harisinga Mouza.

According to the information supplied by the Gaonburahs of Angrajuli and Jamuguri area, at least 8 families of their area possessing Touzi land were forced to leave their hearth and home and to move out to other places. The names of the head of the families and places of present shifting where known are shown below.

Names of householder	Place of shifting
1. Mahendra Narzari	Gohpur area of Sonitpur district.
2. Lakshi Kanta Basumatary	
3. Kakru Brahma	
4. Laobar Narzari	Not definitely known.
5. Zonga Boro	Sialmari under Sonitpur district.
6. Celeng	Rangapara in Sonitpur district.
7. Maharaj Boro	Kachbil in Darrang district.
8. Janushan Narzari	Jonai in Lakhimpur district.

The Gaonburahs referred to above, also informed that the following persons had received compensation for their acquired land but finding no alternative land in the vicinity of their original habitation, had left for Udalguri area of the Darrang district. These persons have been identified as—(1) Ganesh Brahma, (2) Haricharan Brahma and (3) Prafulla Daimari. One Mr. Khama Daimari who did not get any compensation also followed them to Udalguri area. A few persons who became landless consequent upon acquisition of their Touzi land for establishment of officers colony of the said Project, have been identified as—

(1) Sukar Daimari, (2) Magoon Daimari and (3) Gudiram Doimari.

Rehabilitation Scheme

The Dhansiri Irrigation Project, except providing for cash compensation to the affected families for acquisition of their land as per provisions of the land acquisition rules, has not envisaged any scheme for rehabilitation of the displaced families. There has not been any provision also to provide the affected families with suitable alternatives plots of land. Thus it appears that the Project Authority does not have any responsibility towards the affected families other than paying cash compensation under the Land Acquisition Rules.

Payment of Cash Compensation

Cash compensation is paid in respect of acquisition of patta land only. Since T. B. land is government land, for its acquisition the question of paying cash compensation to the occupant does not arise. Land value, to determine the amount of compensation to be paid, is fixed by the Revenue Department Officials.

A large number of villagers within the sample villages have reported that they have neither received any compensation nor any alternative land in lieu of the land lost due to acquisition. Due to non-receipt of money value (compensation) of the land or alternative lands, they have been subjected to face innumerable economic problems which tend to arise even at a slightest fall of their agricultural output. So the loss of even 3 to 4 Bighas of cultivable land proved to be too much for them. A section of the villagers

mostly from Angrajuli, Champagaon, Daug-dupor, Kathalguri, Balisiha Habi, No. 2 Jhargaon, No. 1 Jhargaon, Kahibari, Routa-pathar, etc. have, however, received compensation but their number is very much insignificant compared with the number of cultivators not receiving compensation. It has, however, been complained that those who have received compensation, had to struggle for it even for a period ranging from 4 to 6 years. Had they received their compensation just after acquisition they could have arranged alternative land by themselves at a lower premium but the prolonged dragging of the cases have undermined the value of money due to constant price rise of immoveable properties. To them the inordinate delay and settling the acquisition cases was very much painful rather than the acquisition itself. It has also been complained that no compensation whatsoever has been paid to the occupants of Touzi land, though the touzi lands were cleared and made useable by the concerned families. Land revenue has since been paid annually for the use and occupancy of the land so cleared.

Pending Cases

A sum of Rs. 80.00 lakhs has been earmarked for paying compensation in cash for the purpose of land acquisition. But surprisingly enough at the time of our field study it was found that only a sum of Rs. 8,83,643.93, which accounts for slightly more than 10% of the total amount earmarked for paying cash compensation, was paid to the affected families. There were 343 pending cases till 31.12.83 for settlement and they had been lying at different stages with the Officers like District Collector, Sub-divisional Collector,

Land Acquisition Officers, Assistant Settlement Officers, Sub-Deputy Collectors, Executive Engineers (Irrigation), etc.

Reasons for keeping so many cases pending are also many. Some of them are—requiring correction of records, awaiting sanction, non-placement of required fund, non-possession of acquired land by the Irrigation Department formally, non-preparation of land acquisition papers, requirement of valuation statement, non-submission of estimates, lack of ceiling certificates, lack of countersignature, submission of revised proposal, non-publication of notification, requirement of re-valuation statement, change of alignment, lack of spot-verification documents, non-finalization of appeal petition, requirement of land acquisition papers and so on and so forth.

If these cases are not disposed of quickly, the affected families have to suffer much for no fault of theirs.

Affected Families' Views on Payment of Compensation and Land Acquisition

Having talked to the people of the villages receiving compensation, it has come to our notice that everyone is dissatisfied over the rate of compensation paid for acquisition of the land. According to them the amount paid to them is not enough to purchase a similar plot of land elsewhere as the cost of land has gone up tremendously in recent years. The situation has further been aggravated by the time-gap between acquisition and payment of compensation. The loss of crops in the intervening period ranging from 4 to 6 years has subjected them to mental agony crippling their initiative and drive for better cultivation.

Further it has been pointed out by the aggrieved parties that in some areas the Irrigation Authorities have proposed to dig canals by the side of the Moradhansiri and Golondi Minor Irrigation schemes for which sufficient lands were already acquired for the purpose. The new proposal would render some families to lose whatever lands were left and ultimately force them to displace themselves from their original moorings. In this context the cases of Sri Prafulla Kumar Mushahari and Mrs. Ganeswari Rabha of Balisiha Habi may be referred to. Both of them have received Government communication intimating them the Government decision to acquire their land for the Dhansiri Project although they had already lost substantial area of their land for the Moradhansiri and Golondi minor irrigation projects.

The practice of instalment payment of the amount of compensation has also been looked down upon as a deterrent to their economic rehabilitation. They desire that whatever amount is decided by the Government should be paid in a single instalment so that such an amount could be fruitfully utilised in purchasing an alternative plot of land because amount received in instalments cannot be kept in hand for long due to their pressing needs from all quarters. The lack of banking habits together with the increasing propensity to consume whenever some amount comes to hand, ultimately tends to negate all mental preparedness for capital formation for a new venture. Therefore, it would be very much helpful, to do away with the practice of instalment payment of the compensation for greater interest of the tribal society.

Attitude of the People Towards the Dhansiri Irrigation Project

The general attitude prevailing in the project area towards the utility or otherwise of the scheme is found to be of divergent character. Those who have seen the irrigational canals in the Punjab and other states, have least trouble in appreciating the value of the scheme, but those who have seen only the 'dong' types of irrigation to which they were wedded since time immemorial, these huge canals and their net work of distribution system have little meaning for them. This latter category of the villagers usually draw water for their paddy fields by cutting dongs from the Bhutan Hills and for that matter the villagers of Angrajuli, Bhairabkunda, Major Gaon, Kachubil, Champangaon, Sonai, Batabari etc. pay an annual water revenue of Rs. 2,000.00 to the Government of Bhutan (Ref. village headman of Garaibari No. 1). Other villages like Ambagan, Fascia, etc. also practise 'dong' system of irrigation for which their indigenous skill is well-oriented.

It is, however, surprising to learn from the villagers of Tamulbari, Ambagau, Adala, Betabari, Fasehia, Laching, Baniapara, etc. that most of them did not get any prior information before starting of the canal digging operation by the contractors. At least ten families covered by our study still claim that they did not get any intimation from Government about the impending acquisition of their lands. On the other hand villagers of Laching and Jorpukhuri who got intimation from Government that their lands would be acquired, eventually did not suffer any loss as the canals were diverted to other directions.

However divergent opinions have been expressed by the cross-section of people covered by the villages within our sample study as to the utility or otherwise of the irrigational net works. Out of the 92 families, 2 families (representing 2.17%) had agreed that the project would eventually eliminate their poverty. One family (1.01%) was found to be hopeful of getting employment opportunity in the project work. Two families (2.17%) expressed their bitterness over this project for dislocating their social and economic equilibrium. According to them the economic utility of a big irrigation project like the present one was negative in as much as this type of projects require large agricultural land for their canal system and the villagers in the vicinity of the headwork extending over 4 km, were to face deprivation from the irrigated water due to raising of the canal banks to a great height with sufficient depths which would render the local dongs drawn from the Bhutan Hills inactive. The nearby villages in and around Bhairabkunda where the headwork is located, therefore, had no word of appreciation for this project. Five (5.43%) families of this area termed it as blocking the local dongs and damaging their luxuriant crops.

Further 43 families out of the 92 families of our sample (representing 46.74%) had expressed the view that the Project had taken unexpectedly longer time for completion of work and at the same time caused them economically poorer by snatching away their agricultural holding without adequate compensation. Another set of 3 families (3.26%) did not offer any comment as to the advantage or disadvantage brought about by the scheme. But 6 families (6.52%) were found to nurture

a hope that this scheme would help immensely the draught-prone areas of Udalguri subdivision. Interviewing yet another set of families comprising 10 units (10.87%), we could learn that the families were expecting a successful completion of the project works which would eliminate their recurring labour of digging dongs to irrigate their agricultural lands. However 2 families (2.17%) expressed apprehension that the canals would cause havoc to the people in rainy season if not scientifically aligned and regularly checked, while 10 families (10.87%) expressed in unequivocal term that the scheme was in no way beneficial to them as no adequate compensation was paid for the land acquired for the purpose. Remaining 8 families (8.70%) preferred to keep mum till the project is finally executed in all respects.

Concluding Observations

When a major irrigation project is installed in a tribal area, the intention of the Irrigation Department and for that matter the Government appears to be a genuine one since the project is installed in the national interest, that is to say, in the interest of the people. The people are expected to get water all the year round for cultivation. In a draught-prone area such a project is expected to help the cultivators to raise crops twice or thrice in a year instead of a single crop. This may boost up agricultural production and as a result people will have a better footing in the economic front. Betterment in economic conditions is expected to have a favourable impact on savings leading to capital formation. This will again help in the development of the entire area.

But our study in respect of the Dhansiri Irrigation Project has belied all our hopes. The analysis of our study leads to the following observations :

1. Due to installation of the irrigation project altogether 1001 tribal families had lost about 1184 Bighas of cultivable as well as homestead land.
 2. The acquisitioned land includes Periodic and Annual Patta lands and T.B. lands.
 3. As a result of acquisition of land, some families were rendered landless.
 4. Whatever land remains after acquisition proves uneconomic and in some cases was sold to neighbours and the affected family left the area for good.
 5. Raising of high canals makes the nearby land uncultivable.
 6. Many families have not been paid compensation as their cases are still pending at various stages.
 7. No alternative lands have been provided in lieu of acquired lands.
 8. Those affected families who had received compensation had to struggle hard for it for a period ranging from 4 to 6 years. One can imagine the troubles they had to face to get what was due to them.
 9. As there is a time gap between the acquisition of land and payment of compensation, the value of money diminishes year after year due to constant price rise.
- As the prices of immoveable properties also go up, the affected families cannot purchase the same area of land lost with the amount of money received as compensation.
10. The affected families are of the opinion that the price fixed by the Revenue Autho-

riety for the acquired land is much less than the prevailing market price at the time of acquisition.

11. Cash money received as compensation is rather squandered away as the people do not have the habit of savings with the Banks and Post Offices. Hence such families become poorer and poorer. Compensation paid in instalment is a deterrent to their economic rehabilitation.
12. At the time of our study 343 acquisition cases were still pending at various stages and on various grounds and there is no certainty how much time it would take to clear the pending cases.
13. Some affected families under the purview of our study have complained that they did not receive any notice from the Government for immediate requisition of their land.
14. Most of the affected families have considered the project as their enemy and not a friend.
15. The Project which was started in 1976 and was supposed to be completed by 1980, is yet to be completed. What benefit such a project which requires so much time for completion would give is beyond the comprehension of the local tribal people and they doubt very much whether the project will ever irrigate their agricultural fields.
16. Out of Rs. 80-00 lakhs earmarked for compensation due to acquisition of land only an amount of Rs. 9,18,830.09 was paid till the end of December 1983. That is to say, slightly more than 10% of the amount estimated for payment of compensation was paid at the time of our study.

This study which is intended to find out the extent and intensity of displacement of

tribals from their original moorings due to construction of a major irrigation project in tribal areas, has shown that the scheme has been welcomed by the tribal cultivators with reservation as against the enthusiasm shown in respect of other minor irrigation projects constructed in the Tribal Sub-Plan areas of Darrang district like the Golondi, Moradhan-siri, Kalpani, Kulshik, Mangaldoi, etc. This attitude of indifference is seen specially among those who were affected by acquisition process. They raised certain issues like indifference of Government officials in computing compensation for the acquired land, the total lack of seriousness towards arranging alternative lands in lieu of the inadequate compensation, the unilateral decision of the Government in deciding the quantum of compensation, the inordinate delay in disposing of compensation cases, the instalment payment of the compensation, the non-recognition of the right of land holders of Touzi lands towards granting of any amount to them by Government, etc. etc.

Suggestions

On the basis of the findings of our study, we would like to put forward the following suggestion for consideration of the Competent Authorities and implementation thereof.

1. Whenever a major irrigation project or an industry is proposed to be installed in a tribal area, the families that are likely to be affected should be identified first and a full-fledged rehabilitation scheme on the basis of this identification should be incorporated in the Project Report.

2. The present system of paying cash compensation to the displaced tribals should be done away with. Instead, the affected families should be fully rehabilitated as per Project Report by providing alternative lands for

homestead and cultivation, constructing dwelling houses and providing other amenities.

3. For this purpose a Local Committee with officials and non-officials should be set-up in the project area to look after the rehabilitation schemes. This Committee should bring to the notice of the Government if it observes any discrepancy in rehabilitation of the affected tribal families.

4. Cash compensation should be paid only when the land acquired is very small and whatever compensation in cash is paid should be paid in one instalment without pending the cases for an unduly longer period. The quantum of cash compensation should have some relationship with the present market value of the land.

5. At present there are no legal provisions to enforce the rehabilitation of displaced tribals due to installation of major Irrigation or Industrial Project. Some legal provisions or rules, therefore, should be framed immediately so that the displaced tribals are not required to suffer in future.

6. Prior to the establishment of any major industrial and irrigational complexes in tribal areas the view points of the tribals regarding the future project should be given due weightage.

7. When lands are proposed to be acquired for such public purposes the tribal families that are likely to be displaced should be given prior intimation at least 6 (six) months ahead.

8. Government should constitute a Machinery to collect detail information of the displaced tribals to examine the individual cases and to suggest suitable measures for their economic rehabilitation.

9. Lastly, at least one person from each of the affected families should be employed in the project in any capacity considering the capability of the person concerned. □ □

STRATEGIES FOR TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-EAST INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

* B. N. Bordoloi

Introduction

When we speak of Tribal Development as a concept, it reminds us that sets of strategies are essential for the development of the tribal communities in India. Here one may raise some pertinent questions. Why do we need separate strategies for the development of the tribal people? In what respects the tribals in India differ from the other people?

Answers to these questions are very much obvious. The Tribal Communities in India are regarded as the weakest section of the society although it is an admitted fact that a few Tribal Communities are at a far advanced stage of development.

Each tribal community is a distinctive unit with its own socio-cultural background and values. As a matter of fact, the tribes differ each other ethnically, linguistically and socio-culturally. Their problems differ from tribe to tribe and from region to region. Even among the members of the same tribe the local problems have different dimensions. Similarly the pace of development, not to speak of different

tribes, is not at all uniform among the members of the same tribe inhabiting different regions. What, therefore, holds good in one case may not necessarily apply to other cases. Long years of isolation have made the matter worse.

Loss of basic resources like land or forest, prolonged exploitation in various forms, tapping of natural resources of tribal areas by external agencies, non-tribal cultural arrogance, a psychological feeling of being ignored or injured, low level of nutrition, illiteracy, and such other problems faced by the tribal communities have made it rather obligatory on the part of the Government to formulate separate development strategies for the tribal communities.

The Dhebar Commission (1961) had divided the tribal Communities in India into four broad layers or groups :

- i) at the bottom a class in an extremely under developed stage,
- ii) at the top-most level a class or layer which can afford to forego any further help and in between these two layers there are two more classes with varying

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degrees of acculturation and development.

Even to-day, after 24 years' of Dhebar Commission's Report, the situations have not changed much and still we can well demarcate four categories of tribal communities in India designating them as primitive, shifting-cultivators, transitional groups and advance groups.

Dr. L. P. Vidyarthi, however, has classified the tribal communities in India into six cultural types, i.e. (1) Forest hunting type, Primitive hill cultivation type, (3) Plain agricultural type, (4) Simple Artisan type (5) Cattleherder type and (6) Industrial-Urban workers type. All these categories need separate strategies for development. In formulating the development strategies for the tribal communities, their eco-system, ethnicity and other socio-cultural factors are given due importance.

Development Strategies for the North-east Tribes During Pre-independence Period

The British Government did not formulate any rational policy for the development of the tribal communities of north-east India and as such they did not have any development strategies for them in the true sense of the term. The areas inhabited by the tribals were either excluded or partially excluded ones. The British Government allowed the tribals to manage their own affairs and did not interfere in their internal matters unless it was absolutely necessary. Their "*Laissez Faire*" policy or policy of segregation and isolation paid them good dividends. The main intention of the British Government was to keep the tribal people as far as practicable at a long distance from the rest of the population. They

followed this policy to suit the needs of the administration and found that it had been working well in serving their interest to the full.

It would, however, be quite injustice to say that during the British days nothing had been done for the development of the tribal people in the north-east India because of the lack of a clear-cut policy of tribal development. But we shall have to remember that whatever development activities were performed by the British Government for the development of the tribal people of this region, they were undertaken not in the interest of the tribal people but to serve the interests, both administrative and commercial of the rulers. New railway lines were opened to carry coals, timbers, oil, tea, etc. from this region to outside, roads were constructed to connect district and sub-divisional Head quarters so that soldiers and police personnel could be sent quickly as soon as some tribal uprisings were reported. To offer basic amenities to the Government employees serving specially at the district and sub-divisional Headquarters, opening of the educational institutions, hospitals and dispensaries, provision for drinking water supply, opening up of commercial establishments, trade centres, markets, etc., considered absolutely essential. The tribal people living in the north-east region had reaped some of the benefits of development schemes primarily meant for providing basic amenities to the employees of the British Rulers and other infrastructural facilities created for smooth running of the administration and also for serving the commercial interests of the rulers.

Under the patronage of the British Rulers the Christian Missionaries had done a Yeoman's

service in spreading education and offering medical and other social welfare facilities to the tribal people of North-East India. The high percentage of literacy among some of the tribal communities of north-east India can be accounted for this.

To supply essential commodities and other consumption goods to the personnel connected with administration, maintenance of law and order, etc. the British Rulers allowed traders and merchants mostly from outside the north-east India to make an inroad to the tribal areas. These people in course of time settled in the tribal areas permanently and started exploiting the people in various ways. They, at the same time tried to establish a bond of friendship with the tribal people and the trading community became their (tribals') friends, philosophers, and guides in due course. By taking advantage of the tribal people's simplicity, truthfulness and ignorance, these traders exploited them to the highest possible extent.

The British rulers, however kept a close contact with the tribal chiefs of the different ethnic groups in north-east India and through them *Dao Tax* and *House Tax* were collected. These tribal chiefs who had a good command over their community members were like petty kings with their small kingdoms and subjects. The British Government always tried their best to have a friendly relationship with these tribal chiefs by following the policy of least interference. But even then, during the early period of the British rules there were frequent uprisings against the British among the hill tribal communities of North-East India. Sometimes the entire British encampment was ravaged to the ground at night killing all

the inmates. Thus to keep the tribes of North-East India under control was rather a grave problem for the British rulers as there had been a feeling of distrust between the rulers and the ruled. The British Government's approach towards the tribals to make them feel the impact of administration was very gradual and for fear of reprisal, no specific strategies for tribal development were enunciated. Although the Government of India Act, 1935, had envisaged some development strategies for the tribal communities in India, they were primarily meant for the tribes of Central India and not for the tribes of North-East India.

From the above, we can conclude that the British Government did not have specific strategies for development of the tribal communities of North-East India.

Development Strategies for Tribals During Post-Independence Period

(a) Constitutional Frame :

Tribal development, as we understand today, has taken its root from the Constitution of India itself. Article 46 which is otherwise known as the Directive Principles of State Policy lays down that the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The state shall also protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Article 244 empowers the President of India to declare an area as a Scheduled or Tribal Area under the Fifth Schedule and (or) the Sixth Schedule separately. It is also very interesting to note that the Sixth Sche-

dule was created only for the hill tribal areas of Assam (undivided). Among the north-eastern states, only recently the hill tribal areas of Tripura have been brought under the Sixth Schedule. Since the hill tribal communities of Assam had their own system of administration through their traditional socio-political institutions, the founding fathers of the Constitution of India created this special provision with a view to allowing the Autonomous District Councils to manage their own affairs including the development aspects according to their likings.

Article 339 (2) lays down that the executive powers of the Union extend to the giving of directions to a state as to the drawing up and execution of schemes for welfare of the scheduled tribes in the state.

Article 275 provides for financial assistance to the states for implementation of schemes of development for scheduled tribes and raising the level of administration in the scheduled areas. The Constitution also makes a provision of appointment of a Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. He has to oversee whether the Constitutional guarantees have been properly implemented. He makes an Annual Report to the President and this report is presented to the Parliament so that its members can have an idea regarding the progress in the tribal areas.

The founding fathers of the Constitution of India under Article 339 provide for the setting up of a Commission at the end of 10 years of the commencement of the Constitution to review the tribal situations and recommend measures of their development. This Commission set up in 1961 under the Chairmanship of Shri U. N. Dhabar made exten-

sive recommendations. The Constitutional provisions refer to the tribal development strategies in an implicit way only. In July 1958, our Late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru explicitly enunciated the strategies for tribal development in more clear terms summarising them in five fundamental principles which are commonly known as 'Panchasheel' for tribal development. They are quoted below :

1. People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
2. Tribals rights to land and forests should be respected.
3. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed especially in the beginning. But we should avoid too many outsiders into tribal territory.
4. We should not over administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.
5. We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but the quality of human character that is evolved.

The above five Principles may be regarded as an integrated approach to tribal development. The strategies and objectives laid down in different five year plans reflect the underlying idea of the Panchasheel for tribal development. However, the strategies and objectives very often become squ-

are pegs in round holes and donot suit the changing panorama of tribal situations. In other words, when these strategies are translated into actions they rather fail to deliver the goods. A resume is given below:—

I) During the first Five Year Plan emphasis was on education and economic development, improvement of roads and communication provision for medical and public health facilities. An extensive rural development programme, commonly known as community development programme, was launched in early fifties aiming at total development of the rural masses. It was considered to be people's programmes with government participation. As the community development was a flexible model, it was thought expedient to apply this model to the development of tribal areas also with slight modifications.

II) Thus during the Second Five year Plan, Special Multi-Purpose Development Projects/Blocks numbering 43 were created in the tribal concentrated areas on the same model as Community Development with a higher investment of Rs. 27 lakhs for each Project/Block. Emphasis was given on economic development like agriculture, cottage industries, forest, Co-operatives, etc.

A Study Team headed by Dr. Varrier Elwin reviewed the workings of these S. M.P.D. Projects/Blocks and recommended a comparatively less intensive programme for tribal development blocks but extensive in coverage.

The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission (1961), popularly known as the Dhabar Commission, while endorsing the Panchasheel of tribal development enun-

ciated by Late. Jawaharlal Nehru observes Thus : "The problem of problems is not to disturb the harmony of tribal life and simultaneously work for its advance ; not to impose anything upon the tribals and simultaneously work for their integration as members and part of the Indian family".

During the 3rd Five Year Plan 489 Community Development Blocks where the percentage of tribal population was 66 or above were converted into Tribal Development Blocks. Thus the Tribal Development Block programme was rather an intensification of Community Development programme with higher investment of resources. The T. D. Block programme was expected to take care of all the problems in the tribal areas. By the end of the 4th Five Year Plan the number of T. D. Blocks was increased to 504. Although a third stage of intensive development was added to the T.D. Blocks, this programme had failed to deliver the goods because of a few major factors. First, the budgets of T.D. Blocks were so schematic and rigid that flexibility to suit the felt needs of the people was rather a difficult proposition. Secondly, a larger section of the population was left out of this programme although another stage of five years of intensive development was added without there being any geographical expansion. Thirdly, there had not been any integrated approach for tribal development. Fourthly, micro-level or grass-root planning for tribal development was more or less absent. And lastly, not but the least, is the dearth of adequate trained personnel with missionary zeal to work in the tribal areas.

A Study Team on Tribal Development

headed by Mr. P. Shilu Ao, (1969) comprehensively reviewed the T.D. Block programme. This team suggested that there should be no attempt to transform the tribal people who are at various stages of development (from food gatherers to advanced ones) overnight into carbon copies of sophisticated plainsman but by fostering all that is good and beautiful in their culture—their aesthetic within a reasonable distance of time. The period of time has necessarily to vary from tribe to tribe, depending on the degree of advancement of the tribe.

Whatever development strategies were undertaken for the upliftment of more than 250 tribal communities in India till 4th Five Year Plan, the fact remains that due consideration was not given to treat each tribe separately basing on the fact that there has been a wide divergence in their socio-economic, cultural and technological milieu. That is why we have witnessed loud voices of protests, dissent and divisive tendencies among some tribal communities in the north-east. Economic backwardness with fear psychosis of losing ethnic or group identity has compelled them to think in terms of getting away from national polity.

New Strategy

Background

The Renuka Roy Committee, even as early as 1959, emphasised integrated programmes based on agriculture, forestry, handicrafts and villages industries, their degree of emphasis depending upon the systematic survey of needs and possibilities in each tribal area. The Dhebar Commission (1961) also stressed an

integrated approach; The Shilu Ao Team (1969) suggested an integrated perspective for development for each tribal community.

The Expert Committee set up in 1972 headed by Prof. S. C. Dube to formulate new strategy for tribal development in the country during the 5th Five Year Plan has equated tribal development as social and economic development of tribal people through fast and time bound area development and other programmes suiting the genius of the people, progressive elimination of all force of exploitation and ensuring a move towards the goal of equality and justice.

Fifth Five Year Plan

On the basis of the recommendations of the Dube Committee mentioned in the above para, the new strategies for tribal development were spelt out in the 5th Five Year Plan document.

Two important strategies are :

- i) In integrated approach to tribal development with a view to bridging the gap between the level of development of tribal areas and other areas.
- ii) Improving the 'Quality of Life' of the tribal people.

Tribal Sub-Plan

The strategy for integrated approach to tribal development led to the launching of the Tribal Sub-plan during the Fifth Five Year Plan period. The concept of Tribal Sub-plan is based on three fundamental facts.

Firstly, there are variations in social, political, cultural milieu among the scheduled

tribes communities in India.

Secondly, these communities are concentrated in some parts of some states and dispersed in other states.

Thirdly, the most backward tribes or primitive tribes live in secluded regions.

The immediate objectives of the tribal Sub-plan have been envisaged as the elimination of exploitation, accelerating the pace of socio-economic development, building inner strength of the people and improving their organisation capacity.

The compact areas where the percentage of tribal population is 50 or above have been demarcated and brought under tribal Sub-plan. As the basic unit of planning and execution, Integrated Tribal Development Projects have been created to cover the entire Sub-plan Area. At present there are 181 I.T.D.Ps. in India and in the Tribal Sub-plan Areas of Assam there are 19 I.T.D.Ps. For each I.T.D.P., a Project Report has to be prepared where the perspective development schemes of various development departments for a span of 5 years are incorporated after proper co-ordination. The Report also contains interalia the topography of the region, natural resources and their exploitation, core problems of the people, profile of the tribal communities, special Sub-Region, growth centres and so on.

Sixth Plan Strategies

The Tribal Sub-plan strategies evolved during the Fifth Plan period were continued during the Sixth Plan period also with greater emphasis on specific objectives, namely, (a) raising of productivity levels in production fields of tribal activities with a view to enab-

ling a specific number of tribal families to cross the poverty line, (b) development of human resources and upgradation of education, (c) elimination of exploitation of tribals in the field of alienation of land, money-lending, debt-bondage, trade, excise, forest and (d) development of adequate infrastructure. The shifting of emphasis from infrastructural development during the Fifth Plan to family oriented schemes during the Sixth Plan Period is another landmark so far as the formulation of strategies for tribal development is concerned.

Seventh Plan Strategies

Food, work and productivity are the basic goal-priorities of the Seventh Plan. The proximate objectives in the field of tribal development in the Seventh Plan are primarily two (1) to raise the socio-economic condition of the tribal people and (2) to strengthen infrastructure in the tribal areas. The approach document calls for a mix beneficiary oriented, infrastructure and human resource development programmes as the essential elements of planning process. Beneficiary oriented programmes and infrastructure development should be oriented in such a manner that 50% of the scheduled tribe families including those that spill-over from the Sixth Plan target could cross the poverty line. The Tribal Sub-plan concept is not applicable to States and Union Territories like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya in the north-east where the majority of the population belong to scheduled tribes. Here all development schemes may be termed as tribal development programmes.

Tribal Sub-plan, Assam

The Tribal Sub-plan area of Assam covers an area of 10,991 Sq. kms which accounts for about 14 per cent of the state's total area of 78,523 sq. kms. As no census could be carried out in Assam in 1981, we have to rely on the projected population only, assuming a growth rate of 36.09 percent during the decade 1971-81. The projected plains tribal population of Assam on 1st March 1981 would be 18.31 lakhs. Although during the Fifth Plan, the tribal Sub-plan area of Assam covered 71.94 percent of the total plains tribal population, during the Sixth Plan period, this could be increased to 80.57 percent by including some additional contiguous small pockets to the Sub-plan area under the Modified Area Development Approach commonly known as MADA. The entire Sub-plan area of Assam was constituted into 19 Integrated Tribal Development Projects for the successful formulation and implementation of Tribal development schemes.

Dispersed Tribals

It now appears that Assam's Tribal Sub-plan could not cover 19.43% of the total plains tribals as the villages inhabited by them are scattered and dispersed. Under Backward Sector Plan, some funds have been provided for the dispersed tribals. Some schemes under Education, Economic Upliftment and Health have been formulated and implemented for the dispersed tribals since the Fifth Plan. But these schemes are few and far between and unlike the Tribal Sub-plan Sectoral quantification for dispersed tribals is totally absent.

Development Strategies for Tribal Sub-plan, Assam, During Sixth Plan

The core strategy of development for Assam's Tribal Sub-plan during Sixth Plan was to achieve an accelerated rate of development within the sub-plan areas with a view to bringing up the level of development of these areas to that of adjoining other advanced areas within a reasonable span of time. To achieve this, following objectives were visualised :

(I) Socio-economic infrastructure development in the form of education, health, water-supply, housing nutrition, communication, electrification, etc.

(II) Diversification of occupation from agriculture to secondary and tertiary sectors by developing human resources through vocational education and training.

(III) Modernization of traditional agricultural practices by providing required infrastructure in the form of irrigation, power, credit, marketing and extension services.

(IV) Development of entrepreneurship with a view to enabling tribal youths to set-up small scale and village industries.

(V) Motivation of small and marginal farmers to take up subsidiary occupations like animal husbandry, poultry, fishery, sericulture etc.

(VI) Removal of chronic indebtedness by ensuring regular and timely flow of institutional finance.

(VII) Strengthening and toning up of the administrative machinery for the effective implementation of tribal development programmes.

Development Strategies for Tribal Sub-plan, Assam, During Seventh Plan

Development strategies for Tribal Sub-plan during Seventh Plan are (1) coverage of greater number of scheduled tribes families under family oriented programmes, (2) infrastructure development and (3) human resource development. These strategies are sought to be achieved by strengthening the project administration, improvement in the quality of implementation, better supervision, improvement in monitoring, proper and timely evaluation, introduction of family beneficiary cards and lastly decentralization of planning so that the tribal people can be associated during formulation of plans and schemes and their implementation at various stages.

Tribal Development Authority, Assam

The most important development strategy so far as the plains tribal area of Assam is concerned in recent times is the creation of the Tribal Development Authority in September 1983 for the accelerated development of the tribal people. It is a corporate body with a perpetual succession. The main functions of the Authority are :

1. (a) To prepare short-term and long-term plans for all round socio-economic development of the areas to which this Authority is applicable.

(b) To formulate schemes for the development of the area in the context and within the frame-work of the State Plans.

(c) To recommend such other measures as may be considered necessary for accelerating the development of the area.

(d) To review the schemes for the development of the area and their progress from time to time.

(e) To call for their reports relating to the implementation of the development programmes in the area and to suggest measures for co-ordination and supervision of the schemes.

2. The Authority may with the approval of the State Government set up such agency at Sub-Divisional or block level as it may consider necessary for the effective discharge of its functions.

All sums received from the State Government for the development of the plains tribal areas shall be credited to the "TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY FUND" which is non-lapseable. The authority shall have the power to take loans from the State Government on such terms and conditions as may be agreed upon.

As a first step the Authority has identified 19 most backward Gaon Panchayats, one each in 19 Integrated Tribal Development Projects in the Tribal Sub-plan area of Assam and special schemes under six sectors, namely, Irrigation, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, Education, P.W.D. (road communication) and Health have been prepared with a total outlay of Rs. 20.00 lakhs for each of the 19 Gaon Panchayats and these schemes are now being implemented in a phased manner. This programme will be extended to other comparatively backward Gaon Panchayats during the Seventh Plan period.

It is hoped that this Authority will be in a position to implement the schemes meant for the development of plains tribes in a more

effective way as the tribal people themselves will be fully associated in preparing short-term as well as long-term plans for their all round socio-economic development. It will go in a long way in fulfilling Late Prime Minister Nehru's desire that the Tribals should be allowed to develop according to their own genius.

Tribal Development Strategies in the Hill Areas of Assam

The Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar Hills districts, which at present constitute the hill areas of Assam, are under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. These two districts have two Autonomous District Councils—one for each district. Since the majority of people in these two districts are tribals, the concept of tribal sub-plan is not applicable here.

When Meghalaya was created, the Karbi Anglong and N. C. Hills districts opted to remain with Assam. The Government of Assam had then decided to place all the development departments under the administrative control of the District Councils with effect from June 1970 vide Government Notification No. AAP-95/70/36, dated 1.6.70 with a view to giving more autonomy to the District Councils. Thus the two District Councils have been directly associated with the planning process of development of the hill areas in the sense that the development departments prepare the sectoral plans in consultation with the District Council Authorities which are co-ordinated by the Development Commissioner, Hill Areas, and finally approved by the Hill Planning Board.

The strategies for tribal development in hill areas of Assam, do not fundamentally differ from the national and state strategies envisaged in the plan documents.

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A COMMON CULTURAL MUSEUM FOR THE NORTH-EASTERN REGION—A NEED.

* Paramesh Dutta

Milliard salute to the mighty river Brahmaputra. There is nothing which can be a more apt symbol of the thrilling story of the North-east than the mighty old Red River. Meandering through an evergreen valley and the blue hills, only the mighty Brahmaputra, and nothing else, can tell us the fascinating tale of cultural fusion and assimilation in this part of India since the pre-historic time. Col. L.A. Waddell (1901) observes—“Few of the wilder parts of the world, still left preserved such a vast variety of primitive tribes of such great ethnological interest as the mountainous valley of the mighty Brahmaputra in its course from Lower Tibet to the Bay of Bengal”¹.

The geographical situation of North Eastern India as a frontier region has given to its special position and importance. It is a mountainous region forming natural walls separating India from the adjacent foreign lands. This part of the country extends over an area of more than 2.5 lakh square kilometres with an approximate population of 19.8 millions. Perhaps no other part of the Globe with comparable size and population has as much

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climatic, cultural, linguistic and racial diversities as this region has.

The land of seven sisters, North-East India, has its own story of assimilation. In the process of racial and cultural exodus various people have entered into this region from different corners and made it their home land at different periods of time. There are a good number of communities inhabiting in this region at present. Each of these ethnic groups has its own distinct way of life. Though the way of life of one group differs from the other, people living in North Eastern India are united by a common cultural process. At times the united North Eastern India loomed large in Indian History and Politics, particularly in connection with the affairs of Eastern India. To understand the reality of the underlying cultural unity of this region proper research is now needed. It is also to be marked that many extinct cultural remains are lying underground of North Eastern India which are to be unearthed through scientific excavation and exploration for the better understanding of our cultural heritages. This will enrich our culture

and will help us to link the past pattern of life with those of the present.

Though this part of India possesses a good number of ethnological and archaeological evidences, with an unique history of a much longer period about which there is no written records, only a little has so far been done to study the North Eastern culture as a whole. Dr. D. N. Mazumdar (1980) comments—“Despite the wide proliferation of ethnological studies of North-East India at present age, it will worthwhile to mark the lacunae. No attempt has yet been made to make the basic information about ethnic groups upto-date. Tremendous changes have taken place in these groups since the British administrations recorded about them, and at present moment the groups are not what they were in British times; Moreover, there has been no systematic attempt to add to this repository of basic information by recording information about hitherto unstudied groups. After Endle no body has yet tried to make a scientific study of the Kacharis though this ethnic group is found in all parts of the Brahmaputra Valley. A scientific study of the Kacharis would have thrown light on the absorption of tribal groups in Hindu caste hierarchy. We have no basic information about many ethnic groups of Nagaland and Manipur.” One would very well be able to view the amount of changes that have been undergoing within a community, as stated by Dr. Mazumdar, if he goes through the two books viz—“The Apatanis and their Neighbours” and “A tribe in transition—From cattle to cash” both written by Prof. C. V. Furer—Haimendorf who studied the Apatanis, a tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, at two different periods of

time. So far the insufficiency of studies is concerned Roy and Kakati (1978) state—“It is also true that the culture of the plains and the highland of Assam are not well studied against their historical or archaeological backgrounds. The little work that have been done are insufficient to elicit any clear cultural or historical picture about this region”. In fact, systematic study of the ethnology of North-East India began after the occupation of this region by the British rulers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Since then many scholars are working hard for bringing into light different aspects of the culture of this region. Many Research Institutions of the Government such as the Anthropological survey of India, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Directorate of Research, Arunachal Pradesh etc. are also working for exploring the culture of this region. Even then the studies, carried out both by individual scholars and Government organizations, cannot be treated as sufficient to understand the unity of the cultures of North Eastern India as a whole.

The above is the situation of North-East India in short. We, the people of North Eastern India, have many things in common, but we do not exactly know what these are. It is an unpleasant truth that some politicians and administrators have divided this region into several units for the interest best known to them. At the same time they are trying hard to bring forth social integrity among the people of North-East. But social integrity cannot be thought of apart from political one. How long shall the people of this region live unitedly, unless they become aware of the fact that under what cultural process they are living is a vital question. It is high

time now for the anthropologists, archaeologists, linguists and sociologists to reconstruct the past of the ethnic groups of this region and also to discover the underlying cultural unity of the people by interpreting their culture in a scientific manner. Their task is a difficult one. For carrying out their work in an integrated way with an inter-disciplinary approach they need a Central Research Institute and a Museum of Man for the North Eastern region. In fact, a Museum of Man for this region is a long felt necessity. It is a gratification that the Department of Culture, Government of India, has established a National Museum of Man at Bhopal with a view to promote research in all fronts relating to culture and also to make the common mass acquainted with various cultures of the sub-continent for facilitating national integration. Another such museum for the North Eastern region will be an added asset for India.

Culture being a dynamic process is bound to change. Every culture of yesterday has changed a lot to-day due to various factors. The regional symposium on "The role of the Museum in changing Asian Societies with special Reference to its Role in preserving and strengthening Traditional, Rural and Tribal cultures", organised by the Department of National Museums of Sri Lanka in honour of the centenary of the Colombo Museum held the view that—"Asian countries had been predominantly rural and that the majority of the population had lived in villages and, in general, at present continued to do so..... whereas in the past, in many cases, probably for centuries, change in village life had been so slow as to be an almost imperceptible evolution, despite vicissitudes of history, and

thus little disruption of tradition had occurred, contemporary conditions were bringing about irresistible fundamental and extremely rapid changes. Improved communications, industrial development, modernization and technological progress of every kind, encouraged by nations seeking their place in the world of to-day, as well as urbanization and migration of villagers to the cities in search of employment, factory production of items of everyday use, all had contributed to eroding traditional patterns of life, the traditional beliefs and ceremonies, the traditional social practices, the traditional arts crafts. As a part of the great Asian culture North East Indian culture has also been affected by similar conditions. Our material as well as non-material cultural aspects are changing very fast. Many concrete examples can be cited in this regard. It will not be out of context to cite a few examples here. In Assamese society the use of mortar and pestle has almost come to a halt due to the impact of industrialization. The use of bell-metal utensils has also reduced to a great extent among the Assamese living in urban and sub-urban areas. The bamboo fire making device among the Noctes of Arunachal Pradesh is disappearing. The model of a granary constructed during the forties by the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh has changed during the current decade. Considering the above examples we can say that such changes of cultural aspects would definitely result in losses if steps to record and preserve the culture are not taken in time.

In this crucial juncture a Museum of Man for the North Eastern India could reduce these losses into minimum. A museum is an asserted centre of culture. It not only bears the

responsibilities for preserving, documenting and presenting, for scholars as well as for general public, the traditional cultures of their land, but also acts as a centre of learning which can educate the people of the area on various aspects of their traditions. Knowledge of traditional cultures is indispensable for understanding the contemporary developmental processes and even future developmental possibilities of our population. This knowledge can be had from the collections of a museum. According to Dr. Sachin Roy—"A museum, when talking in terms of culture, is nothing but a mirror which can give to a visitor a reflection of his own self and his culture, and thus stimulate his thought process as also acknowledge himself, his people and his country in a very wide perspective"⁸. The Fifth UNESCO Regional Seminar held at Mexico adopted a definition of the 'museum' which says—"The museum is an institution which functions through its exhibits, research projects, and planned activities as a cultural centre within a community. Serving in both an educational and integrative capacity its major objective is the preservation of the history and individuality of the community which it accomplishes while simultaneously discovering, protecting, diffusing and sponsoring universal human values. Located in a specific place within a structure housing its collections, laboratories and exhibits, the museum functions under a wide and general programme of education, artistic and recreational activities. The museum service on a local, regional level an actual and potential, transient or localized, segment of the public and constitutes a centripetal cultural force for the better integration of the community"⁹. Considering the role of changes, under-

going within the culture of North East India, it should be a bounden duty for us all to save anything that has a permanent value in our culture and is indispensable for our future development. Such values can be saved through a regional museum.

There is enough materials to start a Regional Museum of Man in this part of India. In this connection I would like to mention about the comments of two ethnographers of International repute, on the specimen collection of the Anthropological Museum of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University. After visiting the Museum (which is an outstanding contribution of Prof. M. C. Goswami, Retd. Prof. & Head of Anthropology, Gauhati University, who devoted much of his efforts in collecting the exhibits from all corners of North East India), Prof. C. Von Furer-Haimendorf, Professor of Anthropology, University of London, comments—"I am greatly impressed by the rich and valuable ethnographic collection contained in the departmental museum. If spaces are available it would easily fill two or three large halls and would become the nucleus of ethnographic museum for the whole North East India". Dr. Sachin Roy, Former Keeper & Head of the Department of Anthropology, National Museum, New Delhi, commented—"I am happy, I got a chance to see the splendid collection of ethnographic materials in the Anthropology Department of Gauhati University, This collection itself could start a regional Museum of Man"¹⁰.

Besides, there are some other museums in this region viz; Zonal museum, Anthropological survey of India, Shillong, Museums under the control of Directorate of Research,

Arunachal Pradesh, Assam state Museum, Nagaland state Museum, Ethnographic Museum of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Gauhati, Purbabharati, Nalbari, etc. which can extend their helping hands in establishing a Regional Museum of Man for North East. In such a regional museum the art, artifacts, moral, beliefs, customs and conventions, etc. of the ethnic groups of this region can well be preserved in a scientific manner. This will help us in understanding the reality of underlying cultural unity of this region and the cultures of North Eastern India as a whole. It will also help to keep alive the integrity of the region in particular and of the country in general.

In this context it is heartening to note that some cultural enthusiasts of this region under the captaincy of Dr. P. C. Saikia of the

Department of Anthropology, Dibrugarh University, have gone ahead to establish a North Eastern Regional Museum at Dibrugarh. For this noble purpose the Govt. of Assam has allotted a plot of land measuring 25 Bighas at Lahowal area of Dibrugarh district. We hope that this museum will serve the long felt need of the scholars of different disciplines as well as of the general public of this part of our country in the near future.

The North Eastern Council may also consider the importance of establishing a regional museum for this region and perhaps it can take a positive step in this regard. If the NEC comes forward with a challenging project of establishing a regional museum for the North Eastern region, it would definitely be a praiseworthy work for the Council.

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The Kaibartas of Assam—Some Reflections on Changing Traditional Occupation in Two Kaibarta Villages of Jorhat District of Upper Assam.

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(The paper has been divided into two parts. In the first part an introductory note on the Kaibartas has been incorporated. It may be noted that no systematic study has yet been made about the Kaibartas of Assam and the materials presented here are collected from the references made by eminent historians and ethnographers in their writings on the tribes and castes of Assam. In the second part, basing on the above data, an effort has been made to analyse the field data of two Kaibarta villages of Jorhat district).

PART I

The Kaibartas constitute the predominant scheduled caste community in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. Although fishing is their traditional occupation, many of them have accepted the profession of boatmen as a source of living while a sizeable section is engaged in agricultural activities. As fishing is, by and large, a primary occupation of the Kaibartas, most of the Kaibarta villages are found on river banks or near the beels, rivers and streams where fishes are available. As per 1971 Census their total population is 2,94,809 i.e., 32.41% of the total scheduled caste popu-

lation of Assam. Their percentage of literacy is 30.38.

Opinions differ regarding the origin of the term Kaibarta. In Assam the term is used mainly to indicate the people whose main profession is fish trade. Thus Doms and Nadiyals come within the fold of the Kaibartas.

Some authors try to include the Keo's in the fold of the Kaibartas. William Robinson traces Kaibarta origin among the Keo's who are no longer considered as Kaibartas. "The Nadiyals or Doms are on the whole the most numerous tribe in Assam. That they originally emigrated from Bengal there can be little

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doubt. Their original employment is that of fishermen There are a good many Keyots or as some please to call themselves Kaibartas. They are divided into several classes, the two principal are called the Haluwa Keyots and the Jaluya Keyots. The former class are chiefly cultivators of the ground; they retain the worship of Krishna. The Jaluya Keyots are fishermen and without having relinquished their name or profession have in many points following the tenets of Mahomed; yet they keep themselves distinct as a caste and will not mix with the Moslems."¹

Although Doms and Nadiyals of Assam are categorised as Kaibartas, yet traditionally there are clear out distinctions between the Kaibartas and Keots on the one hand and Doms and Nadiyals on the other. B. C. Allen observes, "The names Kewat and Kaibarta are used more or less indiscriminately for the same caste in Assam. Owing to the comparative scarcity of the higher castes, the cultivating Kewats occupy higher position in this province than in Bengal, but some of them have taken to styling themselves Mahisya Baisya as they resent the attempt on the part of the Nadiyals or Doms to assume the name Kaibarta..... The Nadiyals or Doms are a fishing caste and in Assam have never performed any of the degrading offices assigned for them in Bengal. They are cleanly in their persons and great

in the ceremonies of their religion."² Montgomery Martin has also drawn similar demarcating lines between the Kaibartas and Nadiyals on the one hand and Doms and Keots on the other. "The Nadiyals or Doms are more numerous than the Koch as they extend over both Assam proper and Kamrup. Their manners exactly resemble those of the

colony which has settled at Goyalpara..... Notwithstanding their care in eating they are considered as impure. There are a good many Haluya Keots who cultivate the ground and Keyots who fish. The former are pure and usually assume the title of Kaibarta, the latter are impure but have not adopted the Muhammedan doctrine as those of Rongpur have done."³

The term Kaibarta has got currency for the fishing communities like Doms, Nadiyals and Jaluwa Keots. In the early writings also no serious attempt was made to trace the origin of the Kaibartas. Risley, however, has provided us with some useful information. "There seem to be good grounds for the belief that the Kaibartas were among the earliest inhabitants of Bengal and occupied a commanding position. Many centuries ago five separate princedoms—Tamralipta or Tamluk, Balisita, Turka, Sujamute and Kutabpur—are said to have been founded by them in the Midnapur district and it is perhaps not unreasonable to infer from its traditions that part of the country must have been one of the earliest seats of the tribe..... The simplest explanation of the relation between the Kaibarta and the Kewat appears then to be that both belonged to one and the same tribe, but that the branch which settled in Bihar gradually became endogamous and adopted a Hindu name."⁴

Risley traces the origin of the Kaibartas in Bengal. He mentions a legend to substantiate his finding. "There was a powerful tribe called Kewats who were raised to the status of Sudras by Ballal Sen conferring on them the title of Kaibartas in return for their undertaking to abandon their original profession of

fishing."⁵ The internal structure varied from place to place. Thus in Central Bengal and Maldah the cultivating groups are called 'Halik' or 'Chasa' while the fishing groups are designated as 'Jalik' or 'Jalwal' or 'Jaliya'. Risley further inform us that in areas like Bakarganj the cultivating Kaibartas have various names such as Halia Das, Parasara Das or Chasi Kaibarta while the fishing Kaibartas are referred to simply as Kaibarta.

In Assam eminent literateurs and scholars like Lakshminath Bezbarua, Rai Bahadur Kanaklal Barua and famous historian Rajmohan Nath tried to trace the origin of the Kaibartas. According to Bezbarua and Kanaklal Barua, the Kaibartas were Dravidians.⁶ Gunabhiram Barua in his Assam Buranji⁷ has not elaborated about the Kaibartas. It appears the Kaibartas of Assam in those days were insignificant in numbers and in later years their numbers inflated with the wholesale inclusion of the Doms and Nadiyals into the fold of the Kaibartas. However in the said Assam Buranji the Kaibartas have been referred to while describing the Keots. 'The Keots come within the fold of the Kaibartas'. Incidentally it may be mentioned that in Orissa the Kaibartas and Keots are grouped together with Dhibara. Fishing is their main profession.

About Doms and Nadiyals the Buranji throws some light. 'Doms are living in Assam since a long time. Fish catching, fish selling, boat making and boat plying, lime making and selling are their main professions. Now they are engaging themselves in agriculture and other trades. In trade and commerce they are considered as inferior caste. There is no definite source about the origin of the word

Dom. The Doms of other parts of North India are very low castes. They make baskets and sell those and some are engaged in cremating dead bodies. Among them some traders are also found. When Buddhism was in full vigour the low castes embracing Buddhism tried to take revenge upon the Brahmins but when Hinduism was revitalised, those who did not accept Hinduism were hated by the Hindus and called them Doms. In this way they formed a separate class outside the Hindu fold. As the Brahmins did not accept them as disciples, the Doms had to satisfy themselves with the Kalita Gurus.' (Extract from original Assamese text).

Similarly nothing could be found about the Kaibartas in the Assam Buranji written by Haliram Dhekial Phukan,⁸ although a full chapter entitled 'Jati Bibhag' on the various tribes and castes of Assam, is devoted. However Dhekial Phukan mentions about the Doms, Jaluwa Keot and Nadiyal. "Jalui Keot O Dom Ei Dui Jati Matsya Byabasai Kare Dom Jati Soumar Pithate O Pragjyotishpure Adhik. Taharder Madhye Adhik Lok Dhanadhyao Ase, Baniyya Byabasai Anekei Kare Sutarang Lekha Parao Jane. Apar Tahara Ek Ek Jan Eman Besh Bhusaniwta Hoiya Bhraman Kare Je Keh Dom Jnan Karite Pare Na. Taharder Jajak Brahman Prithak Ase—Apar Tahardiger Je Brahman Tahara Domer Adrista Rajaska Kanya Bibah Kare, Kintu Bibahanantar Punarbar Domer Grihe Bhojan Kare Na. Ei Dom Jatiera Apon Sadmabesh Kariya Uttam Jatir Saite Milita Hoiya Akarya Karibek Emat Asanka Kariya Raja Taharder Kapale Ek Rohit Matsyer Sihna Godna Deoaiten, Taddara Tahara Jati Gopan Karite Parita Na.—Ei Kshonei

Tahardigake Dom Kahile Ragapanna Hoi, Nadiyal Name Apnake Kshyata Kare." Free English translation : 'Jalui Keot and Dom practise fishing. The Doms are concentrated in Soumar Pith (Upper Assam) and Pragjyotishpur (Kamrup). There are very rich people among them also. Many are engaged in trade and commerce and they are literate. A few persons among them travel with such costly dresses that nobody can recognise them as Doms. They have their own Brahmans. These Brahmans enter into marital relations with grown up girls of fellow Doms but after marriage they donot take food in Dom's house. In order to prohibit mixing of the Doms with the high castes, the Rajas (Kings) compelled them to put in a Rahu fish mark in the forehead so that they would not be able to hide their caste Of late they become furious when they are referred to as Doms. They prefer to call themselves Nadiyals'.

That the Kaibartas are a very old and recognised community is testified from the reference of Kaibartas in the 'Santi Parba' of the Mahabharata ((3/16).

Bimal Dev and Dilip Lahiri have made interesting revelation regarding the origin of the Kaibartas of Assam. "An analysis of ancient records—'Mojohar' and copper plate granted by the Ahom king Siva Singha during the years 1135 B. S. and 1657 Saka in favour of Borpeta Satra reveal that a sect of the Kaibartas, some of whom were fishermen by profession adhered to Buddhism in early days and that for their non acceptance of Hinduism which was then prevalent in Assam, they were looked down upon by the Hindus of Assam and were contemptuously called Dom. From the famous Mojohar of 1135 B. S. it

also appears that three persons viz Sarva, Daika and Saranga who happened to be the sons of one Bolo Dom were Hinduised by the illustrious Vaisnava reformers Sri Sankardeva and Madhavdeva and were declared and recognised in the Mojohar as Kaibarta and 'Bhakats' of Borpeta Satra It is significant to note that there always existed a strong desire among the Doms of Assam Valley to acquire the caste name Kaibarta. The issue also received support from the religious head of Nogora Satra of Golaghat."⁹

B. C. Allen opines that Kaibartas are very few in numbers in Assam. The Nadiyals or Doms prefer to call themselves as Kaibartas. "In Kamrup the names Kewat and Kaibartta seem to be interchangeable. The Kaibarttas are divided into two functional groups which for all intents and purpose are separate castes, the Halowa and Jaliya. In Assam proper the Jaliya Kaibartas are very scarce but the Nadiyals or Doms are endeavouring to get their claims to the name acknowledged by Government. The genuine Jaliya Kaibartas, however, marked the difference between themselves and the Nadiyals by declining to sell fish except on the river bank within a paddles throw of the boat and abstaining from the use of the 'Ghokota' net. The Kewat or Kaibartta in Assam is a clean Sudra Caste ranking immediately after the Kalita. In addition to the Jaliya there are six other sub divisions.—Mali, Halowa, Seoli, Neoli, Katharoa and Bhari of which the Mali ranks highest though all six have taken to agriculture."¹⁰

About the etymology of the name Kaibarta there are various shades of opinion. Some aged Kaibartas say that the name had its origin from 'Ka' meaning water and 'Vartta'

meaning livelihood. But we donot trace the meaning of 'Ka' as water in the Assamese, Prakrit or Sanskrit languages. The word had its origin probably in the Brahman and 'the Sanghita' age when it was known as Kim Varta, Kim i. e., awkward or ugly, Vartanam, i. e. occupation. Kaibarta thus was a person following a low or humiliating occupation. Risley, opines "This he adds, would be in keeping with the pedigree assigned to the caste in Manu where the Kaibarta also known as Margava or Dasa is said to have been begotten by a Nishada father and an Ayogavi mother and to subsist by his labour in boats."¹¹

PART II

A. Bagar Gaon

The village lies at a distance of about 22 Kms. from Jorhat, the headquarters of the district and 6 Kms. from Titabar Tiniali. The village is exclusively inhabited by the Kaibartas. There are 55 households with a population of 495 (male 290 female 205). The village is connected with Titabar with a katcha fair

weather motorable road. The nearest all weather motorable road is at a distance of about 5 Kms from the village. Medical and High School facilities are available only at Titabar. Till the date of our survey (October '84) the village has only one graduate and 5 Nos. of H.S.L.C. passed youths. Only one youngman has been studying at Titabar college from the village.

Out of 55 households only one household, 1.81% (Table 1) is found to be engaged in fishing trade. This household possesses only two bighas of land including one bigha homestead land. The head of the family purchases fish from Jorhat wholesale market and sells those at Titabar. The informant revealed that fish trade is no longer lucrative as the profit margin is very low. Besides, due to non availability of local fish he is facing difficulties to earn any profit, particularly during summer season. He expresses his willingness to earn his bread only through cultivation. It may be noted that traditional occupation like fishing, weaving etc. are in the unorganised sector.

Table I shows the occupational pattern of the families of the village.

TABLE—I
Occupational Pattern of Bagar Gaon

Fish Sellers		Cultivators		Cultivators Cum Service holder		Day Labourers	
No. of families	P. C.	No. of families	P. C.	No. of families	P. C.	No. of families	P. C.
1	1.81	45	81.83	7	12.74	2	3.62

There are 45 families whose main occupation is agriculture. They form 81.83% of the total families of the village against all India percentage of scheduled caste cultivators of

28.17. Seven families, 12.74% have service holders and these are well off economically because these families have agricultural lands too. Only two families, 3.62% are found to be living on alms. or serving as day labourer. There is only one household which has more than 45 bighas of land and this is the richest family in the village having sizeable income from agriculture as well as service (a member of the family is serving as L. P. School teacher). On an average each household possesses six bighas of land including homestead land. There are two extreme cases where landed property is practically nil and the families live on begging.

The cultivators are happy with their present profession and they donot like to return to the old profession of selling fish. The poorest of the poor i. e., beggars as well as the day labourers too prefer other sources of living than fish selling. They are ready to open grocery shops if Government help is available.

The reasons for abandoning the traditional fish selling business are :

1. The profession is considered as derogatory.
2. The traditional occupation has dual handicap viz. social disability and economic deprivation.
3. The income is not lucrative.
4. As there is no marshy land, river, beels near the village, income from fish is uncertain and not regular throughout the year.
5. Society's attitude towards fish trade compels the younger section to seek other professions.

B. Bhitarkakila Namani Chuk :

The village is situated at a distance of about 13 Kilometers north of Jorhat, the headquarters of Jorhat district. Situated on the bank of river Kakila the village is experiencing annual flood of the river Kakila and the Brahmaputra which is only about half a kilometer from the village.

Bhitarkakila Namani Suba with 523 households is a big village with four 'Subas' or parts, viz Ujani Suba, Major Suba, Namani Suba and Baragharia Suba. For our survey we selected Namani Suba having 82 Nos. of Kaibarta families and 2 Nos. of Brahmin families who act as priests of the Kaibartas. For our present study we are excluding these two families.

The total population of the village is 493 (male 265, female 228). The Jorhat Neamatighat P.W.D. road connects the Kakila road cum embankment by the side of which the village is situated. Besides protecting the villagers from the onslaughts of recurring flood, the embankment helps them to eke out their living. The low lying areas lying on the eastern side of the embankment are the natural fisheries while the paddy fields lying on the western side of the embankment provide the villagers with their requirement of paddy.

There is a post office within the village. The nearest telegraph office (Jorhat) lies at a distance of 13 Kms. from the village. Although there is a state dispensary at Tiniali, about 5 Kms. from the village, the villagers prefer to go to the Jorhat Civil Hospital at a distance of about 16 Kms.

The Bhitarkakila L. P. School caters to the basic educational needs of the small child-

ren. One hundred and ninety six students (110 boys and 86 girls), all from the Kaibarta community are studying in this school. There are only 10 (6 boys and 4 girls) high school going students although the Nam Kakila H.E. School is situated only at a distance of 1 Km. from the village. Six boys and two girls from this village are prosecuting higher studies in the Bahona College at a distance of about

5 Kms. from the village.

The condition of drinking water is not at all satisfactory as most of the villagers use water from the Kakila river. Government have supplied 3 Nos. of tube wells. The water of the tube wells contains high percentage of iron.

Table No. II shows the occupational pattern of the village :

TABLE—II
Occupational Pattern of Bhitarkakila Namani Suba

Fish Seller		Cultivators		Cultivator cum Fish Seller		Day Labourer	
No. of families	P. C.	No. of families	P. C.	No. of families	P. C.	No. of families	P. C.
17	20.23	45	53.58	19	22.62	3	3.57

Out of 84 families, 17 (20.23%) families earn their livelihood by selling fish and they have no subsidiary sources of income. The cultivators numbering 45 families (53.58%) are also living from hand to mouth as the paddy lands are scarce. Most of the cultivators are not self sufficient and they sell fish occasionally to earn some extra money. They constitute 22.62% of the families of the village. Three families 3.57% have no other source of income except day labourer. Oftentimes they have to resort to begging, as the labourers are not engaged regularly.

There are three graduates, fourteen H.S.L.C. passed youths and one I.T.I. passed young man in the village. Except a few class III and grade IV service holders, the village does not possess any gazetted service holder. From the list of service holders shown below one

can ascertain the standard of employment among the Kaibartas of the village.

Name of the posts	Nos.
L.D. Assistant in H.E. School	1
L.D. Assistant in State Govt. office	2
L.P. Teachers	2
Driver	2
Police Constable	3
Road Mohorir	1
Steamer Master	1

Selling of fish was the traditional profession of the villagers but of late most of the villagers prefer plough cultivation which is the prevailing agricultural practice among the neighbouring non Kaibarta villagers. Suitable paddy lands, however are very scarce as the forefathers of the present day Kaibartas did not care to possess any landed property nor

they ever thought of resorting to agriculture as the only source of living. The ready, made answer of 45 households to our queries as to why they do not stick to their traditional profession, i.e., fish selling, was that sources of fish are fast dwindling, most of the beels and fisheries have been taken over by Government and the terms and conditions of the fish mahaldars are not satisfactory. Besides, education is spreading fast in the village and the educated people are reluctant to follow the traditional occupation. Social attitude towards selling fish is one of humiliation and young boys do not like to carry the business at Jorhat town. The educated and young boys prefer Govt. jobs and running of shops to selling fish.

Conclusion :

The survey reveals that the Kaibartas who were traditionally fishermen by profession are no longer sticking to that profession with the traditional fervour. Only some elderly persons are maintaining the age old tradition. In our present study of two Kaibarta villages, we found that persons engaged in selling of fish are very negligible in Bagar Gaon where as the Bhitara Kakila Namani Suba village possesses only 17 such families (20.23%). It was found that none of the villages possesses individual fisheries and the villagers following the profession of fish selling have to depend upon Government fisheries. Individual fisherman finds it difficult to carry on the business as per terms and conditions laid down by the Mahaldars. Income from fish is not regular and the Kaibartas prefer agriculture to fish selling

business. It was also found that the educated persons among the Kaibartas do not like to follow their parents' fish selling profession. They opine that fish sellers are looked down upon by the non Kaibartas and they therefore prefer Government jobs and other independent avocations.

The General economic condition of both the villages is not satisfactory. It was seen that the plight of the villagers who are accepting agriculture as main profession is better than that of the fish sellers. Therefore in both the villages the most important felt need is agricultural land. The existing agricultural lands per family are utterly inadequate.

Formerly women folk also helped their men by catching and selling fish. But today the women folk catch fish for household consumption only. Beels and marshy lands are not available near the villages. The womenfolk are expert weavers but due to lack of purchasing power they are not in a position to purchase the required yarn.

Most of the villagers are unaware of the benefits extended by Government and other welfare agencies. The people in general are suffering from inferiority complex, which has cut at the vitals of the Kaibartas since time immemorial. Except one or two educated persons, the villagers in general do not know that the Government have taken welfare measures to ameliorate the poor economic condition of the scheduled castes of Assam under the Scheduled Caste Component Plan. Unless some concrete steps are taken to remove the inferiority complex, the pitiable economic condition of the Kaibartas will never be improved.*

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Evaluation of a Few Tribal Sub-plan Schemes In Sonapur Area Under Integrated Tribal Development Project, Guwahati-II

The Directorate of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, had conducted a Seven Days Orientation Training-Cum-Workshop for the Sub-Divisional Welfare Officers working under the administrative control of the Department for Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes, Government of Assam, from January 5 to January 11, 1985 at the National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development, Beltola, Guwahati. Altogether 23 Officers attended this Training-cum-Workshop.

In the workshop sessions conducted during the training course the trainees were exposed to the techniques of evaluation of different development schemes, i. e., family beneficiary schemes, community beneficiary schemes and infrastructural development schemes, implemented by the different development departments out of funds from Scheduled Caste Component Plan and Tribal Sub-plan. Besides the evaluation techniques, the trainees were apprised of the techniques of monitoring also since monitoring and evaluation are two inseparable parts in the implementation of any development scheme.

In order to enable the trainees to have some practical experiences in regard to the evaluation studies they were taken to Hajo area for evaluation of the schemes implemented under Scheduled Castes Component Plan on 8th January 1985 and on 9th January 1985, they were taken to Sonapur area under the Integrated Tribal Development Project, Guwahati-II, for the purpose of evaluation of some of the Tribal Sub-plan schemes. Faculty members of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, accompanied the trainee officers and guided them in their field studies.

The trainee officers were in the field for about 5 hours on both the days and due to time constraint they could not evaluate all the schemes implemented in those two areas mentioned above. They were also asked to examine whether the Family Beneficiary Cards were properly filled up and maintained.

The officers evaluated the schemes specifically assigned to them in groups of two or three. The evaluation study reports were submitted to the Course Director.

Here in this paper an attempt is made to present what the trainee officers had found in their evaluation studies at Sonapur area. Due to lack of space, of course, it has not been possible to accommodate all the study reports.

—Editor

Evaluation of tribal sub-plan schemes at Sonapur

Case No. 1. (Individual Beneficiary Scheme)

Smti. Rupeswari Boro of the village Kamarkuchi under the jurisdiction of Barkhat Panbari Gaon Panchayat is a beneficiary under the Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Scheme. She has one unmarried sister also who works in the nearby tea garden as a regular worker earning Rs. 8.00 per day. The family does not have any landed property. Smti. Rupeswari Boro read upto class X and she was undergoing training in weaving under D.R.D.A. at the time of the field investigation. Smti. Rupeswari Boro received a duck unit consisting of 6 (six) numbers (5:1) from the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Tribal Sub-plan scheme only on 7/7/84 although it was a scheme sanctioned in 1982-83. Thus the benefit was given after more than one year from the date of sanctioning the scheme. When the two trainee Subdivisional Officers visited the residence of the beneficiary on 9.1.85 for the purpose of evaluation of the scheme, they found only one duck. The other five were reported to have died of disease.

In this case it was found that since there had not been any incremental income from the scheme the question of enabling the family to cross the poverty line does not arise at all. Secondly the dose of benefit was so small that from this scheme alone the family could never cross the poverty line. A package of schemes should have been given to the family or the dose of benefit from the Veterinary Department ought to have been substantial.

Case No. 2. (Individual Beneficiary Scheme).

Shri Bijoy Garo of Kalitakuchi village under Barkhat-Panbari Gaon Panchayat received a pair of bullock on 30/9/83 from the Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Tribal Sub-plan scheme. Although this was sanctioned during the year 1981-82, the beneficiary had received the dose of benefit after a gap of one and a half year.

Shri Garo is a small farmer having 5 (five) Bighas of cultivable land. He has been able to earn an annual incremental income of Rs. 1200/- approximately from the benefit he had received. He is now in a position to cultivate his own land himself which he could not do so earlier because he had no bullocks. Secondly he also allows the bullocks to be hired by other co-farmers whenever necessity of such hiring is considered essential. From the studies conducted it appears that Shri Bijoy Garo has already crossed the poverty line.

Case No. 3. (Individual Beneficiary Scheme).

Shri Prasanta Boro of Mariakuchi village under Barkhat Panbari Gaon Panchayat, had received a Jersey cow with a heifer from the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary T. S. P. scheme on 6/9/81. Shri Boro is a marginal farmer having 5 Bighas of cultivable land. He had informed that by selling milk he was in a position to earn about Rs. 1,000/- annually. Although the Jersey cows require stall feeding, Shri Boro lets the cow loose during day time so that she can find her own fodder. He is not in the habit of feeding the cows with wheat bran, mixed feed, etc. As such the milk-

yielding capacity of the cow is found to be quite low. The follow-up actions from the Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Department are found to be lacking after the cow was handed over to the beneficiary. However, the dose of benefit has enabled the beneficiary to earn some incremental income.

Case No. 4. (Group Beneficiary Scheme)

This is rather a quite novel scheme implemented by the Agriculture Department. Four farmers, namely, Shri Dayaram Patar, Shri Mukuta Patar, Shri Jumar Lalung and Shri Mahanta Patar of Senabar village in Khetri area, had received a power-tiller from the Agriculture Department from 1981-82 T. S. P. scheme at a 50% subsidised rate. The 50% of the cost of the power tiller amounting to Rs. 24,500-00 was financed by the United Commercial Bank of Guwahati.

The four members of the group have used the power tiller in turn to cultivate their land. Formerly they could raise only a single crop but the power-tiller has now enabled them to go for multiple cropping. As a result the farmers are in a position to increase their production of paddy from 7 to 10 quintols per annum. That is to say, their annual incremental income is from Rs. 2,100/- to Rs. 3,000/-. Shri Dayaram Patar is reported to have increased his production of paddy by 10 quintols annually and in terms of monetary value it is worth of Rs. 3,000/-. It has also been informed that the four farmers who used to purchase some quantity of paddy to meet the requirement of domestic consumption prior to the purchase of the power tiller, have now surplus production. The surplus is sold

to the local needy co-villagers. They also allow the power-tiller to be hired by other farmers. And from this also they get some additional income. They have been regularly repaying the instalments of the loan to the Bank.

This is in fact a very successful scheme which has enabled the four farmer families to cross the poverty line. Secondly this scheme has helped the co-villagers also who need speedy cultivation of their land. The constant follow-up programme from the field level officers of the agriculture department is another factor which has contributed immensely towards the success of the scheme. The role played by the United Commercial Bank, Guwahati is also highly commendable.

Case No. 5. Supply of drinking water (Community Beneficiary Scheme)

Four trainee officers had evaluated two water supply schemes implemented by the Public Health Engineering Department out of T. S. P. Fund. Although the officers were instructed to collect data in details, they could however, collect only the basic data due to some constraints.

A. Maraikuchi Deep-Tube Well scheme

In the Maraikuchi village under the jurisdiction of the Dimoria T. D. Block, a deep tube well has been installed to provide drinking water to the people of the village. The village is inhabited by tribal people only and the total population of the village is 300 approximately. The villagers had informed the trainee officers that they were getting good

drinking water in two shifts—morning and afternoon. Supply of water from this deep well is being extended to other adjacent tribal villages in this locality.

B. Ring Well scheme.

The public Health Engineering Department had installed three ring wells for the village Tetelia and its two hamlets. The people consider the three ring wells sufficient to cater the needs of the main village and its two hamlets. The trainee officers found the ring wells in very good conditions. The water of the three wells, which the trainee officers had the opportunity to examine, was reported to be quite good.

Case No. 6 : Lift Irrigation Project, Digaru (Infrastructure Development Scheme)

Digaru Lift Irrigation Project is located at a distance of 2½ Kms. from Sonapur, the Headquarters of the Dimoria T. D. Block.

This project was evaluated by three trainee officers who visited the pumping stations Nos. 1 and 2 and interviewed a few tribal farmers who have been benefitted by this project.

The project was designed to be completed in two phases. The first phase included the construction of the pumping stations, installation of the pumps into the river bed of the Digaru which is a perennial one and construction of the main canals—MD (I)—0.81 Km. in length running towards National Highway 37 (south) and MD (II) 2.67 Km. in length running towards Sonapur Pathar (North).

The work on the first phase was started

in March 1973 and it was completed by the end of the year 1977 at a cost of Rs. 6,44,300-00.

The feeder canals are proposed to be constructed in phase II of the scheme. The construction of the feeder canals was found to be going on at full swing and they are expected to be completed by the end of the year 1985 at a total estimated cost of Rs. 3,20,000-00.

The first phase since its completion in 1977 has been irrigating 150 Hectares of land belonging to families numbering 80 (55 Nos. S/T, 10 Nos. S/C. and 15 Nos. Others).

The second phase is expected to irrigate 210 hectares of land belonging mainly to Scheduled Tribe cultivators.

Compensation for acquisition of land for the first phase was already paid to the affected families and so far as the second phase is concerned there are no proposals for acquisition of land.

Irrigated water is made available to the cultivators free of cost whenever they demand and this had been confirmed by the farmers interviewed by the trainee officers. During monsoon the cultivators generally do not want water unless there is a draught condition. But for the cultivation of Ahu paddy they need water from January to mid-April. Prior to the commission of this irrigation project, the farmers raised only one paddy crop during the monsoon. But this project has enabled to take up Ahu paddy cultivation also during winter. The farmers who were interviewed, had informed that as a result of this irrigation project they were in a position to harvest 3 to 4 quintols of Ahu paddy per annum and this is perhaps the greatest benefit for the

cultivators. Along with the completion of the 2nd phase of work, 210 hectares will naturally come under Ahu paddy cultivation and this will enable the farmers to better their economic condition to a considerable extent.

At operational level of the scheme there are some constraints also. Though the pumps could supply about 20 cusecs of water per 8 hour shift, during the later part of the winter sometimes it was found difficult to pump this much water owing to the going down of the water level and also constant silting in the river bed near the pumps. However, these constraints, specially that of silting can be removed if suitable efforts are made.

Whatever may be the constraints, it must be admitted that the scheme itself is a successful one.

Concluding Observations

From the evaluation studies conducted by the trainee officers in Sonapur area under

the jurisdiction of the Integrated Tribal Development Project, Guwahati-II, the following concluding observations can be made.

1. So far as the individual beneficiary schemes are concerned, doses are not found to be sufficient to enable the benefitted families to cross the poverty line. A package of schemes from a few sectoral departments or heavier doses of benefit from the same sector are essential.

2. Wherever there are follow-up programmes the schemes have produced very encouraging results.

3. Success or failure of the schemes implemented depends to a greater extent on the involvement of the people. The drinking water supply schemes and the Digaru lift Irrigation Scheme, evaluated by the trainee officers, indicate clearly the involvement of the people in the process of their own development. This is really a very healthy sign which should be noted by all personnel concerned with tribal development. ● ●

TRADITIONAL TRIBAL INSTITUTIONS

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[Every tribal society has some traditional institutions which in fact govern their socio-political, economic and religious life. These institutions are so much deep rooted that withstanding the wear and tear of time and the various forces of changes brought about by modernism, they have still retained their originality. Thus these institutions still play an important role in their socio-political, religious and economic life. It is, of course, a fact that among some tribal communities of Assam their traditional institutions are more or less defunct and have lost their significance. But some tribal communities still retain them in tact.

The Conference of the Directors of the Tribal Research Institutes held under the aegis of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, on 4th and 5th March 1984, recommended that as far as possible the tribal development schemes should be implemented through the existing traditional tribal institutions during 7th plan period so that benefits from these schemes actually percolate to the target groups. This would also give a new impetus to the tribal societies enabling them to build their inner strength which is one of the main objectives of tribal development. Since adequate knowledge covering all aspects of these institutions are not available with those who are responsible for tribal development planning and implementation thereof, it was decided that the Tribal Research Institutes of different states should undertake studies of these institutions in their respective states.

In this backdrop, brief notes on the traditional tribal institutions of the Karbis, Dimasas, Bodo-Kacharis, Mishings, Deoris and the Lalungs are presented here. There are four contributors to this article and their names are given below :

*Traditional institutions of the Karbis : By—B. N. Bordoloi, Director
Tribal Research Institute.*

*Traditional institutions of the Mishings
Deoris and the Lalungs. By—G. C. Sharma Thakur, Joint Director
Tribal Research Institute.*

*Traditional institutions of the Bodo Kacharis—By—M. C. Saikia, Deputy Director,
Tribal Research Institute,*

Traditional institutions of the Dimasa Kacharis—By G. N. Das, D.R.O., Diphu.

Notes on the traditional institutions of the remaining tribal communities will be incorporated in the next issue of the Bulletin.

—Editor]

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE KARBIS

1. KERUNG AMEI (Grain Bank)

The Karbis inhabiting the Karbi Anglong District of Assam has a very interesting traditional institution which caters to the needs of the poor families specially during the lean months. It is an economic institution, pure and simple, based on fellow-feelings and co-operation. It is the traditionally maintained grain bank which has been functioning in the Karbi society since time immemorial and it is called Kerung Amei in Karbi. Although in recent times there have been some changes in its structure as well as in its organisation, nevertheless, its basic objective and the principles are still in tact.

At present three types of grain bank are found to be prevalent in the Karbi villages. From the points of view of organisation and management each differs from the other.

(A) Type-I

In this type of Kerung Amei all the families, irrespective of their socio-economic status, shall have to be members of this institution. Each family residing within the jurisdiction of a village, whether rich or poor, has to contribute one Don (an indigenous bamboo made container for measuring paddy. A full measure weighs about 5 kilos) of paddy to the bank just after the completion of harvest. The paddy thus collected is kept in a specially constructed godown called Apuru. During the lean months the poor needy families are given paddy on loan with the condition that the principal along with

50% interest, both in kind only, must be repaid just after the harvest. Considering the merit of the case, sometimes, interest is not required to be paid. Such consideration is made on humanitarian ground in case of widows and invalids and patients suffering from chronic diseases.

For the management of the grain bank there is an Executive Committee constituted with four members. One president and one secretary are selected by the village elders out of four members. There is no hard and fast rule regarding the tenure of the Executive Committee. The village elders, of course, have every right to dismiss the Committee or remove a member when the specific allegation against the whole committee or one of its members is proved. Apart from the four members there is one store keeper also, but he is not a member of the executive committee. His main duty is to keep the grain collected under lock and key in the Apuru (granary). Secondly he is required to weigh paddy at the time of lending as well as at the time of recovery. The stock register is maintained by the secretary and the president checks it at regular intervals. The executive committee finalizes the list of beneficiaries and also the quantity of paddy to be given on loan. The first preference is always given to the poorest, widows and invalids. The members of the executive committee and the store keeper render honorary service.

(B) Type-II

The second type of grain bank or Kerung Amei is confined among the male youths of the village. This bank does not depend upon the contribution from the families inhabiting

the village. Nor all the families of the village are the members of this type of grain bank. Its membership is strictly confined to the male youths of the village. They have their own cultivable land and whatever paddy they produce is the capital of the bank. The young boys, of course, offer free service.

Like the grain bank type-I, in this case also paddy is given on loan to the needy families of the village during the lean months to be repaid with 50% interest just after harvest in kind. In case of invalids, widows and patients suffering from incurable and chronic diseases the payment of interest is generally relaxed.

The paddy, which is found to be excess of requirement for lending, is sold to persons of the village who are in short supply of paddy but who have purchasing powers. And the price they charge is about 10% less than the prevailing market price. The sale proceeds are again utilized for purchasing cultivable land or taking lands of the villagers on mortgage. Whatever sale proceeds remain, they are deposited in the post office savings bank, whenever necessity arises some amounts are withdrawn from the saving bank account and utilized for the improvement of village library, youth club, approach road of the village, etc.

All the male youths of the village between the age of 15 to 30 are the members of the grain bank. All the members compulsarily offer voluntary labour at the time of cultivation as well as harvest. For the smooth management of the bank an executive committee consisting of 11 to 15 members is constituted. The members of the committee are selected in a general meeting of the youths

of the village. The committee has four office bearers, namely, President, Secretary, Store-keeper and Auditor.

The families that are to be benefitted in a particular year are, of course, selected in a democratic way. For this purpose all the male persons of the village are called to a meeting. The needy persons, in the meeting itself are asked to give verbal requisitions in respect of the quantities of paddy that they want to borrow. The persons present in this general meeting then select the beneficiaries out of those who have given verbal requisitions. Thus all the families giving requisitions may or may not be selected. Each case is decided strictly on its merit. The quantity of paddy that is to be given to a selected family is, of course, decided by the executive committee in its next immediate sitting.

(C) Type-III

This is another type of grain bank found to be prevalent in those villages where the type-II, that is to say, the grain bank maintained by the youths also exists. The type-III is managed by the aged male persons of a village and it rather runs parallel to that of the youth. The two grain banks function in the same village in a spirit of fair competition and not as rivals.

In this case all the families of a Karbi village are members of the grain bank managed by the aged male persons. While this type of bank has been in existence since petty long time, the origin of the grain bank maintained by the youths can be traced to the recent times only.

A definite cultivable plot of land is under the possession of the bank and it is culti-

vated every year by all the families of the village jointly and the yield is kept in a store specially constructed for the purpose. Thus the yield is the property of the whole village.

This bank rather serves as a co-operative credit society. It does not give loans to its members in kind. Paddy kept in the store of the bank is sold when the price of paddy goes up and the sale proceeds are given to the needy persons of the village specially to meet the emergent situations to be repaid in kind with cent percent interest after the harvest. The interest is, indeed, very high. But after all it goes to the common fund of the village. However, an analysis of the purposes for which loans are given to the needy villagers clearly indicates that practically all loans are consumption loans.

For the smooth management and functioning of the bank there is an executive committee consisting generally of four members, namely, the president, secretary, treasurer and the store-keeper. Maintenance of cash and accounts is the responsibility of the treasurer. The executive members are selected in a general meeting of all the members.

The persons who want loans have to apply to the president in black and white. The executive committee in its sitting then decides to whom loans can be sanctioned. The borrower has to leave a handnote with the treasurer at the time of receiving the loan. The loanee has no need to furnish any security. The handnote with an underlying strength of honesty serves the purpose.

In all the three types of grain banks there are provisions for punishing the wilful defaulters. So far as the type-I is concerned

the wilful defaulter is penalised by making him to repay twice the quantity of paddy borrowed and the interest would also go up to 100 per cent from the usual rate of 50%

So far as the type-II or type-III is concerned, the wilful defaulter has to surrender a plot of cultivable land to the concerned bank for a period of one year and this plot is cultivated by the members of the concerned bank for the surrendered period and thus the yield will compensate the non-payment.

The primary objective of organising such banks is to teach the people to help themselves with the motto—“Instead of expecting outside help, it is better to help ourselves.”

When the monetary economy was injected into the tribal society, the money lending business specially by traders not belonging to the tribal community entered into the picture. Once a tribal family enters into the clutch of the village Mahajan, it can hardly come out from his grip. Thus the second objective in organising such banks is to save the ignorant tribal villagers from the grip of the unscrupulous money-lenders.

So far as the type-II is concerned, besides the two objectives mentioned above another two can also be mentioned here.

The first is to create a strong bond of unity among the youths of the village so that it might lead to other kinds of social works for the betterment of the village.

Secondly a portion of the sale proceeds can very well be utilised for such works like improvement of the approach road of the village, establishment of village library, youth club, etc.

Coming to the type-III it is found that it generates a feeling of co-operation and mutual

help among the families of a village. It makes cash money easily available to the needy persons. The surplus fund is spent for the common cause of the village. In course, of field investigation it was found that the building of a newly started M.E. school was built wholly with the contribution from the management of such a grain bank. Apart from these, all socio-religious community festivals are celebrated with the funds from the grain banks.

It may, however, be argued that the rates of interest are too high i.e., 50% in case of types I and II and 100% in case of type-III. But comparing with the unlimited interests charged by the village Mahajans it is still insignificant. Moreover, in case of granting loans as well as their recovery some humanitarian considerations are always there. But this is totally absent so far as the village Mahajans are concerned.

2. TERANG OR FARLA (Bachelors Dormitory)

Like the other hill tribes, the Karbis have also bachelors' dormitory called Terang or Farla. In some interior areas of Karbi Anglong District this institution is better known as Jirkedam which literally means a group procession and the members call each other Jirsong meaning a friend. In the plains areas of the Karbi Anglong district where there are no dormitory for bachelors, the Risomar or the youth club still serves the same purpose.

The dormitory is generally constructed in a central place of the village with timber posts and thatched roofs on a raised bamboo platform. The inside is decorated very nicely with their own artistic sense. There is a hearth

in the centre of the house and during winter the members of Farla sit around it to get rid of cold.

All boys of the village from the age of 10 upto their marriage are the members of the Terang. The membership is not only automatic but compulsory also. They are required to spend the nights in the dormitory. In case of sickness only a member may be allowed to spend the night at home till he is cured. In bygone days young unmarried girls were also the members of the Terang but they did not spend the nights in the same dormitory with the boys. They used to spend the nights in the house of the village headman called Sarthe. But this has been discontinued from the middle of 20th century. Now the membership of the dormitory is confined to the young unmarried boys only. Nevertheless, the young unmarried girls use to help the members of the Terang in the performance of their duties which are of social service nature.

The Farla has a number of office bearers like the King, Chief Minister, Commander, etc. just like a small kingdom. The members hold a meeting at the place of village worship and select the king, ministers and other office bearers. Just after selection, the office bearers have to take an oath that they will always abide by the rules and regulations of the Farla and will serve the purpose for which they are selected. This institution has 24 office bearers and among them the following are the most important :

1. Klengsarpo (King)
2. Klengdun (Chief Minister)
3. Suderkethe (Commander)
4. Sudersu (Prince designate)

5. Barlanpo (Revenue Minister and Surveyor)
6. (i) Motan Are and (ii) Motan Arbe (Guide)
7. (i) Chengbruk Are and (ii) Chengbruk Arbe (Small drum beaters)
8. (i) Than Are and (ii) Than Arbe (Convenors)
9. Me Apai (Fire keeper)
10. Lang Apai (water keeper).

The Terang can be regarded as an institution of social work. It performs all sorts of social services for the village in general and families in particular as and when such occasions arise. It, of course, confines its activities within the jurisdiction of village to which it belongs. For example, if a family is not in a position to reap the paddy although the harvesting period is about to be over because of certain unavoidable reason like illness or infirmity among the family members, the head of the concerned family or any aged family member approaches Barlanpo (Revenue Minister and Surveyor) with betel nut and betel leaves and a 25 paise coin. Although from the point of view of status, Barlanpo is junior to Klengsarpo (king), nevertheless, he is first approached because of the fact that it is Barlanpo who is ultimately required to take measurement of the work in his capacity as the surveyor. Barlanpo, in his turn, intimates Klengsarpo (king). Klengsarpo then directs Than Are and Than Arbe (Convenors) to convene a meeting of members of the Farla immediately at a fixed time. The meeting must compulsorily be attended by all members. In the meeting a decision is taken in regard to date and time of the task to be performed. Early in the morning on the appointed

day all the members assemble in the dormitory and then stand in a line according to their rank. Motan Are and Motan Arbe stand on the right side and left side of the line respectively and guide and lead the party playing small drums which indicates that the members of the Terang are going to do some social service. The two drummers play the drums till they arrive at the place of their work.

In the field Motan Are and Motan Arbe, the two guides, give necessary instructions as to how the works are to be accomplished. Every member of the dormitory, irrespective of his rank, has to work. The family on whose land the work is done, has to throw a feast to the members of the Terang in the field itself. But in offering food, due respect must be shown to Klengsarpo (king) and Klengdun (Chief Minister). Motan Are and Motan Arbe have to serve them personally.

When the work is completed Barlanpo (Surveyor) takes the measurement of the work with a bamboo stick measuring 18 ft. which he always carries whenever the members of the bachelors' dormitory go to do some work. The measurement is then recorded in a book. In this way all works done by the members of the Terang or Farla are recorded by Barlanpo and at the end of a year the members of the dormitory take stock of them.

Although the members do not demand or claim any monetary remuneration for the work done, the concerned family out of its own accord offers some monetary remuneration depending on the economic status of the family. The financial accounts are, however, kept by the Klengsarpo and Klengdun. When the amount becomes sizeable, they spend it in the

celebration of community festivals in the village.

The members of the dormitory also render free and voluntary service when the religious festivals like 'Rongker' are celebrated. Similarly during the performance of Chomangkan (the death ceremony), the members of the dormitory or the youth club work day and night for about a month without demanding any remuneration either in cash or in kind.

This traditional institution is now gradually dying as it fails to withstand the onslaught of rapid changes brought about by development works including spread of education. However the dormitory building may not be there but the spirit of offering a helping hand to the needy by the youths of a Karbi village has not yet been eroded. In the interior hilly areas the youths have been trying to revive the dormitory in a modern way by constructing a spacious building with C. I. Sheet roof. Under these circumstances this traditional institution cannot but undergo some changes in its constitution as well as functions.

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE DIMASA KACHARIS

1. Salis (Villages Council)

The traditional organisation of the Dimasa Kacharis at the village level is called Salis, the village council. In fact this Salis is an organisation for village administration with multifarious activities.

The village council is headed by Khunang, the traditional village headman who has both executive and judiciary powers. His executive powers consist mainly of giving guidance in respect of celebration of community festivals

in the village, while his judiciary powers consist of trying of cases, maintenance of law and order in the village, etc. According to the traditional custom the Khunang is to be elected by the village elders in a formal meeting. In discharging his duties he is assisted by another official called Dilek (assistant headman). Like Khunang, he is also elected by the village elders in a formal meeting. From the point of view of age and experience Khunang should be the seniormost person in the village. Dilek is the next seniormost man. Next to him is Daulathu who occupies the third place from the point of view of seniority of age. Next to Daulathu, comes Habaisagao. But he holds his office only for two years. Besides the above officials, there are village officials like Pharai, Mantri, Hangsebukhu and Jalairao. But in the present day Dimasa society except Jalairao, the others have become non-existent. Jalairao, the lowest rank in the traditional village structure is still there because of the fact that any male married person can be a Jalairao.

Thus in the traditional village organisational set up, the Dimasas have 8 (eight) officials, while the five officials at the top, namely, Khunang, Dilek, Daulathu, Habaisagao and Pharai constitute the senior group because of their ages and seniority, the remaining three officials, namely, Mantri, Hangsebukhu and Jalairao constitute the junior group. The members of the senior group being the traditional recruiting authority of the members of the junior group, have the virtual control over the latter.

Khunang, being the traditional headman of the village, wields considerable authority and in fact his authority is undisputed so far

as the affairs of the village are concerned. He is also respected by one and all in the village. The traditional village council with the eight sets of officials headed by Khunang settles disputes, tries cases of thefts, incests, elopements, etc. and the judgements delivered are binding on concerned parties. When women are involved, the elderly women are also invited to participate in the trials. Khunang and the other functionaries of a few villages meet and sit together to settle inter-village disputes. Another important thing that is to be noted here is that no community function in a Dimasa village can be performed without the prior approval of Khunang.

Now let us examine whether the emergence of the Autonomous District Council in the North Cachar Hills and the Karbi Anglong districts has strengthened or deteriorated the effectiveness of the traditional village council of the Dimasas constituted with eight sets of officials.

Khunang is recognised by the District Council as the headman of a village. In addition to his responsibility of maintaining the law and order situations in the village and trial of cases, the District Council specially that of N. C. Hills has entrusted him with some additional responsibilities like the collection of house tax and agricultural tax, maintenance of birth and death register, maintenance of records of arms in the village, etc. Moreover, Khunang is also made responsible for execution of all developmental programmes meant for the village. As the Dimasa society is mostly guided by customs and traditions, the additional responsibilities now shouldered by Khunang do not stand in his way of discharging his traditional functions.

This has rather increased the powers and functions of the traditional village council in an indirect manner. It, therefore, appears that the traditional village organisation is not incompatible with the modern political structure so far as the Dimasa society is concerned.

2. NODRANG

Nodrang i. e., Bachelors' dormitory, is constructed by the young boys in a suitable place within the village. There are no compartments inside it. Changs made of bamboo splits are raised for the boys to sleep at night. Properties kept in the Nodrang are the Khram (drum) and the musical instruments such as Muri, Suphin, etc. Moreover, large stones of various sizes are also kept there for exhibition of physical strength particularly by the young boys who come to the village at the time of marriage festivals from different village. A big piece of wood is placed in front portion of the Nodrang. This is called Khamding (bench). People use to sit on it whenever meeting/dance takes place on the open courtyard of the Nodrang.

Nirupama Hagjer writes in her book 'Dimasa' that in ancient times the youths, prepared with arms and ammunition, used to sleep at Nodrang just like a village defence party. If unfortunately enemy attacked the village, they would immediately inform the villagers so that they could manage to run away from the village. If unable to run away, the people, irrespective of age and sex, would fight against the enemy. Another important function of the Nodrang was that the youths had to keep constant vigil against the sudden attack of the wild animals in the village. They had to kill or drive away the animals by hook

or by crook.

Things have changed now. There is neither internecine strife between tribes nor terrible attacks of wild animals. Therefore, at present, the youths can sleep at Nodrang comfortably. Nodrang has become a centre for merry-making. After the day's hard toil, the youths take their evening meals in their respective houses and then gather together in the Nodrang. Some will gossip, some will sing while someone will play flute or beat the drum, etc. In this connection it may be pointed out that entrance of the weaker sex into the Nodrang is strictly prohibited. But girls take part in the dance which takes place in the courtyard of the Nodrang. There is no dormitory system for the girls among the Dimasa Kacharis.

Narrating the functional aspects of the Nodrang Dr. Dipali G. Danda states that in Dimasa life, the dormitory functions as a youth organisation, particularly at the time of Bushu—the annual harvest festival. Besides this, the youth organisation collectively responds to the call of the headman in rendering any social service e.g. tilling the land of an invalid, roofing the house of a widow. The organisational integrity of this institution is best felt and appreciably executed at the time of the annual harvest festival. Young girls who do not share the dormitory life form the 'second line of defence' in the organisation. Reputed and efficient young boys and girls are nominated Nagahoja and Malahoja, i.e. the joint presidents of the executive committee of the annual harvest festival. They, again select their assistants according to their choice. The joint presidents and their assistants together conduct the festival. Elders

happily greet the leadership of the youth. The young boys and girls arrange everything that is necessary. For instance they collect contribution from the villagers, purchase meat, and carry out all the necessary formalities of the festival. Thus in an informal way they gain formal training and experience and familiarise themselves with the norms of the society. Of course, only those of 16 to 20 years of age are selected for the responsible offices and occasionally they find out their life's companion from this close association.

Boys and girls enjoy equal freedom in this regard. As they cannot live with their parents after marriage, many a youth makes his own house and finds out agricultural lands by cutting and clearing jungles. Thus from their dormitory life the Dimasa youths start chalking out plans for their future.

Mr. B. N. Bordoloi in his book entitled 'The Dimasa Kacharis of Assam' has rightly presented a clear picture of the present position of the Nodrang. He writes :

"The functional aspects of Nodrang have almost lost their significance as the institution itself is at a dying stage. Only in the interior villages the existence of Nodrang is felt. But here also the bare Nodrangs in dilapidated conditions withstanding wear and tear of the time only remind the Dimasas of their glorious past. The institution of Nodrang is sure to meet its inglorious death unless the young generation becomes fully alive of its importance and utility soon."

3. HANGSAO

The Dimasa have a very interesting economic institution which is mainly confined to

the youths. Based on the principles of co-operation this institution is called HANGSAO. The members of the Hangsao complete the unfinished works in the Jhums and in the wet land paddy fields of each family of the village on the contract basis. The price they charge is nominal. After the harvest when the families are in a position to pay the amount of the contract, the members of the Hangsao collect the amount from each family. The amounts thus collected are spent by them at the celebration of the Bishu festival. This institution has thus helped the families especially the poor ones to a considerable extent.

TRADITIONAL TRIBAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE BODO-KACHARIS

Traditional Institutions among the Bodo-Kacharis have lost some of their significance due to the present day socio-psychological attitudes brought about by modern education and cultural assimilation of the people. Nevertheless, some of the traditional institutions have still been preserved which bear testimony to their socio-cultural milieu of the past. Under this backdrop, the following few social institutions may be regarded as traditional since they have been continuing from generations past.

'Raijani Bokhri' :

One of the most significant traditional institutions among the Bodo-Kacharis is the 'Raijani Bokhri' or the common granary system raised and nurtured by household contributions almost in each Bodo-Kachari village. The contributions at a mutually agreed rate is made in kind and all the households of village are sup-

posed to make contributions towards its growth. Once the contribution is made, it comes into the collective account of granary and is then owned by the villagers collectively. The basic intention of this granary is to render mutual help at the time of distress to any member needing such help usually at the time of paddy plantation. The rate of interest is normally charged @25% of the amount borrowed for one harvesting season and is payable in kind. For repayment of the principal and the interest thereon, no formal reminder is required but if it becomes necessary, the Halmaji (village runner) is there to remind and to collect the same.

The benefit of the common granary is restricted to the member only. The accounts of the village granary is maintained by headman of the village who usually accommodates the granary in his own compound and manages its affairs with the help of a village committee selected by the villagers. In a sense it is like a financial institution ready to help distressed families at a nominal rate of interest and reduces the exploitative tendencies of the village Mahajans. Thus it takes the character of a cooperative institution of an indigenous form.

'Raijani Metheng' :

Another important traditional institution of a Bodo-Kachari village is the 'Raijani Metheng' or the village Panchayat which acts as a safety valve of the community residing in that area. Usually the head of each family of the village is the defacto member of the village council and it is presided over by the village headman either socially recognised or selected by the Government. Petty cases

of thefts, assaults, quarrels, land partition disputes, social crimes arising out of disobedience to customary rules and rituals are tried by this institution if the parties in dispute are agreeable to abide by its judgement. Once the dispute is referred to this village council, the parties are usually bound to obey the verdict emerging out of it though some defying souls sometimes cannot be prevailed upon by its judgement. But it cannot be denied that these village Panchayats have some positive roles in minimising heinous crimes due the fear of estracism usually prescribed by these councils as punishment to the wrongdoer.

'Saori'

The word 'Saori' or 'Sanguri' in Bodo-Kachari language means rendering of physical labour on invitation of a co-villager who can not otherwise get things done by his self-effort. It may extend ploughing the agricultural field, constructing one's dwelling houses, or cutting thatches, digging irrigational dongs, etc. etc. Women are not invited to take part in this type of collective rendering of labour, but if a woman reaper extends an invitation to her colleagues in reaping her harvests, such invitations are readily accepted. This invitation when formally made by a co-villager is promptly attended to and by the collective effort of the villagers, a huge task is easily get done at a nominal cost in the form of entertaining the villagers to a full meal and rice-beer if the work entails whole day labour. If the work is not of such a nature that can be completed within half a day, then more rice-beer is served

to the satisfaction of all the helping hands. It is an institution which fosters mutual understanding of individual problem as well as paves the way for fellow feeling and social integration of the community at the village level.

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AMONG THE MISHING

Kebang

Like all other tribal communities, the Mishings of the Brahmaputra valley too possess well defined traditional institutions which play significant roles in the socio-religious life of the people. The traditional village Panchayat called 'Kebang' consisting of village elders is such an institution which is supreme in all socio-cultural and religious matters within a village.

The Kebang is constituted by the elderly persons of the village who congregate in the house of the Gaonburah, the village headman, or in the Morang (Bachelors' dormitory) on specific occasions. The Gam or the Gaonburah must invariably be present on the occasion and he also presides over the Kebang. Complaints ranging from petty cases like theft, eve-teasing, manhandling of elders to criminal offence are brought to the notice of the Kebang which delivers judgement and punishes the offenders. The judgements are, of course, delivered after hearing both the parties, viz., the complainants and the offenders. Punishments, depending upon the nature of offence, range from imposition of fine in cash or kind, i. e., (Apong, locally brewed rice-beer), bodily thrashing and even excommunication. The

Kebang inflicts severe penalty to the persons indulged in adultery or such other immoral acts. The incestuous couples are given the severest punishment. In bygone days such a couple was thrown to a running river or a stream enclosed in a bamboo cage called 'Dirdang'.

Bane Kebang

There is superbody called 'Bane Kebang' to decide cases involving two or more villages. In 'Bane Kebang' elderly villagers from several villages assemble together and take part in the settlement cases and disputes. The Gam or the Gaonburah of the village to which the 'Bane Kebang' is invited presides over the session. But the final judgement is always delivered by a jury consisting of selected elderly persons. The decision or the judgement delivered by the 'Bane Kebang' is final and the parties involved must abide by it.

Murang

Like most of the hill tribes of Assam, the Mishings in the past had an institution called 'Murang' (Bachelors' dormitory). The main function of the 'Murang' was to guard the village from the enemies. It also acted as a training institute. The adolescent and the unmarried youngmen used to sleep in the 'Murang' and keep the village guarded. The youths were trained in social and other duties. To day, however, the dormitory has been replaced by a public hall. No longer the youths guard the village as it is not necessary in the present context. The youths and other villagers gather in the 'Murang' during festivals to chalk out the programmes.

Mimhir Yame

Among the Mishings there is a benevolent organisation of the young men and women in a village called 'Mimhir Yame'. The literal meaning of the term is 'young women and men'. Unmarried girls and boys above the age of 12-13 years become the active members of the body. Discipline and tribal etiquette are taught here and the discipline is maintained by some specially elected officers. The members of 'Mimhir Yame' render helps to any village in need i.e., erecting house, weeding paddy, etc. in exchange of nominal remuneration. The money thus received is used for celebrating 'Porag' festival.

Rikbo Ginam and Daglik Alik

Co-operation and fellow feeling are the salient features of the Mishing community life. In fact before the turn of this century i.e. before setting up of modern infrastructural facilities like roads, medical centres, educational institutions, veterinary centres, etc. the villagers used to live like one family and problems of individual families were considered as common problem of the villages. In those days youth organisations and institutions like 'Rikbo Ginam and Daglik Alik' had great relevance. The young boys and girls used together in their respective 'Morungs' after dusk and learnt many indigenous skills and trades. Gradually the dormitories disappeared but the youth institutions remained. Now the institutions are disorganised although some of the old co-operative activities are still performed with traditional tenacity. Whenever a family wants manpower to construct a house,

to transplant and harvest paddy or to conduct a feast in a festive occasion like marriage, death ceremony, etc. the headman or woman of a family formally invites the young boys and girls for such work and the youths perform the job. The family has to offer only 'Apong' (Rice beer) and other eatables, preferably cooked rice and vegetables. If the family is poor, the youths are satisfied with 'Apong'.

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE DEORIS.

Sariya Mata

Co-operation is the salient feature of the socio-cultural life of the Deoris. It is the duty of each family to help the fellow villagers in time of need. The Deoris have such a benevolent organisation called 'Sariya Mata'. When any family wants to build a house or solemnise a marriage ceremony it prays for help from the fellow villagers. There are two sets of 'Sariya Mata', one for males and one for females. Sometimes only females are invited to help an individual family which is known as 'Maiki Sariya Mata'. Similarly when only male persons are invited to help a family it is known as 'Mata Sariya Mata'. In lieu of the service the members of a family inviting 'Sariya' have to entertain the members of the 'Sariya' with a feast which includes rice beer.

Morungghar

Like the Mishings, the Deoris too had the dormitory system in the distant past. Besides guarding the village, it also served as a train-

ing institute for the young boys in various indigenous arts. Today the youth club has replaced 'Morungghar'. The boys gather at the 'Morungghar', also called 'Club ghar', after dusk and learn various skills of the objects of indigenous material culture. The traditional function of guarding a village is still maintained by the unmarried youths who sleep in these 'Clubghars'. Of late the 'Clubghar' is used for holding the assembly of the village elders. The 'Clubghars' are also the venue for the night school and library.

Mel

Every Deori village has a traditional Panchayat called 'Mel'. It is constituted with all the elderly members of the village. Although in a Deori village there are socio-religious office bearers like Bor-Bharali, Saru Bharali, Deori, etc., only the Gaonburah (village headman) presides over the sessions of the Mel. The Mel decides and settles disputes of all kinds and inflicts punishment to the offenders. Secondly, without prior approval of the 'Mel', no socio-religious festivals and welfare works, involving the whole village can be undertaken.

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE LALUNGS

Khel

The traditional village council of the Lalungs is called 'Khel'. The structure of the 'Khel' is somewhat different from the village councils of the other tribal communities. The Lalungs have a social grouping called 'Khuta'. A

'Khuta' is, in fact, an extension of a family. Following the genealogy, each family of a certain clan forms a social grouping called 'Bangsha' or 'Khuta'. It may be noted that no family in a village can thrive without affiliating itself to a 'Khuta'. Whether solemnising a marriage ceremony observing a death rite, the 'Khuta' plays an important role.

The Gaonburah or the village headman presides over the sitting of the 'Khel'. In selecting the headman due importance is given to the integrity and capabilities of the person. The 'Khel' also plays some role in the religious spheres. It is the 'Khel' which selects the 'Giyati' (priest) to preside over the religious performances. The 'Zolo' (An expert in folklore and religious matter), and the 'Barik' (Liaison official between the Gaonburah, and the villagers) are selected by the 'Khel'. It is to be noted here that although the Gaonburah's decision in respect of all matters concerning the village is the final, nevertheless,

in the religious matters the decision of the 'Giyati' is final and the Gaonburah never interferes.

Samadi

The Lalungs in a few villages still maintain their traditional youth organisation called 'Samadi'. It is a platform type house without walls and erected in a central place of the village. Only male persons are allowed to enter a 'Samadi'. It is a training institute where the unmarried youths learn music and art. They practise various kinds of handicrafts and while sleeping at night maintain the vigil over the possible attack by evil-doers. The young members of a 'Samadi' are to be formally invited to socio-religious occasions like marriage, death rites etc. and they remain in charge of the reception. Success of a function largely depends upon the role played by the members of a 'Samadi'.

THE KARBIS—THEIR ORIGIN AND MIGRATION

* B. N. Bordoloi

The Karbis, otherwise known as the Mikirs, constitute an important and major ethnic group in the hill areas of present Assam and they are one of the oldest groups of inhabitants. Although their major concentration is in the Karbi Anglong district, a good number of Karbi villages are found, of course in a scattered way, in the North Cachar Hills district and Nogaon, Kamrup, Sonitpur and Lakhimpur districts of Assam plains.

The term Mikir has nowhere been used by them in their discourses as well as in their folklores and folksongs. He has also further stated that in ancient times the bands of Karbi people who lived mainly on hunting in the forests and shifted their habitats from hills to hills according to their needs were called 'MIKIR' by the non-Mikirs³. Mrs. Gogoi, of course, has not adduced any reasons why the non-Mikirs call them 'MIKIR'.

Several guesses have been made in regard to the origin of the term 'MIKIR'.

Origin of the terms 'Mikir' and 'Karbi'

The Karbis never call themselves 'Mikir'. They consider that the term Mikir was given to them by the neighbouring people. This view is supported by Edward Stack also. According to him the name Mikir is given to the race by the Assamese and its origin is unknown.¹ The Karbis also call themselves ARIENG which literally means a man. In their folklores and folksongs we find the use of the terms KARBI and ARLENG only.² In the opinion of Joygnuram Gogoi the term Karbi means combination of all good qualities.

Some scholars believe that the term MIKIR might have been originated from ME-AA-KAR which means lighting a fire. Perhaps the neighbouring people found the Karbis to be very much expert in lighting a fire in their indigenous way and so they were called ME-AA-KAR which in course of time might have become MIKIR.

Another view in regard to the origin of the term MIKIR is that the Karbi king Thireng Vareng whose kingdom was in the vicinity of Dimapur had given his daughter MEKRI in marriage to a Naga prince. The

*Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati.
1. E. Stack and C. Lyall, The Mikirs (Reprint), Guwahati, Page-4
2. Barua, N. N., Karbi Sanskritir Dhara, Saptahik Janambhumi, June 30, 1976.
3. Gogoi, J. R., Mikir, an article in Assamese in Asomor Janajati, Guwahati-1962, Page-121.

Nagas, being unable to pronounce MEKRI properly, could pronounce it as MIKIR only. The Karbis, therefore, have been called MIKIR¹.

Yet another hypothesis in regard to the origin of the term is as follows :

When the Karbis first entered into Assam, they had a cat with them. Unfortunately the cat was lost. Just at that time some people belonging to another community happened to meet them and enquired their identity. The questions were unintelligible to the new-comers and they replied that they were searching the lost cat, that is, MENGKIRI. The people misunderstood the meaning of the term MENGKIRI and thought that the new comers (Karbīs) introduced themselves as MENGKIRI. Mengkiri in course of time has become MIKIR.

According to Gunabhiram Barua, the Mikirs could mix-up with the neighbouring non-Mikirs very nicely. They looked for love and affection from the others. It can, therefore, be assumed that the term MIKIR might have been originated from 'SAKHAMRIGA' or 'MARKAT'. He further opined that our people called them 'MIKIR' but they call themselves 'KARBI'. The term Karbi might have origin in the Sanskrit word 'KROIBYA' (flesh) or KROIBAD (flesh-eater)².

Now let us come to the origin of the term 'KARBI'. An anecdote regarding the origin of the term 'KARBI' is as follows :

At the beginning, the Mikirs like the other races knew the use of fire and water. In their language fire is called ME and water is called

LANG. In the bygone days one of the ancestors of the Karbis had left his home after lighting a fire in the hearth inside the house. In Karbi ME-AA-KAR means to light a fire and BI means to leave. His wife who was out of the house, saw from a distance that her husband had left the house without extinguishing the fire which might result in burning the whole homestead. Meeting her husband on the way she asked him—"Me-aa-kar chonghai bi kangkok? (why have you left the fire burning inside the house?). As the ancestor had committed the mistake of living the fire burning inside the house, that is to say 'Me-aa-kar Bi', his descendants were called 'Me-aa-kar-bi', In course of time the fire syllables 'Me' and 'Aa' were given up and 'Kar-Bi' remained and this 'Kar-Bi' had become 'Karbi' in due course.

A legend regarding the origin of the term 'KARBI' runs as follows :

The son of Barlia, one of the forefathers, had once suffered from a very serious illness. Barlia worshipped Hemphu, the powerful family deity, for the recovery of his son by sacrificing some goats and fowls. When the worshipping was over, his daughter-in-law who was pregnant at that time, had suddenly developed labour pain. Hemphu, instructed Panjak, a demoness, to help the daughter-in-law in her delivery. Panjak obeyed accordingly. But unfortunately at the feast offered by Barlia no food could be offered to Panjak since she was hiding herself from the glaring eyes of the guests. This fact came to the notice of Hemphu only when the serving of

food was almost over. Hemphu then offered her a portion of his food and the other guests also followed suit. Giving something from one's plate is called 'Thekar' and it is still prevalent in all worships. The people therefore, introduced themselves as 'Thekar Kibi Ache'. It is believed that the term 'Karbi' is a deviation from 'Thekar Kibi'¹.

Another legend connected with the origin of the term 'Karbi' is stated below :

Prior to the creation of this world, Hemphu, one of the principal gods, was alone. One day he suddenly felt very lonely. In accordance with his wish Mukrang, another principal god, appeared before him. After a good deal of discussion Hemphu and Mukrang had decided to create the world first. The first requisite for the creation of the world was land. In their search for land, they approached all the gods, but none could give them land. At last they approached the god of earthworms and he assured them that he would provide them with land and in return he would not accept any reward. But another problem posed before them. The problem was to find out a suitable place to keep the land thus obtained. When they were overburdened with this problem, the god of spiders came to their rescue. He assured them that for keeping the land he could weave a suitable net but in return his descendants, namely, the spiders, must be made the happiest creatures of the newly created world. Hemphu and Mukrang agreed to the proposal and the world was created by them with the help of the god of earth-worms and the god of spiders.

Next, Hemphu and Mukrang created all the living beings except man. But as the world was still without any vegetations, the living beings started fighting among themselves for their survival. The two gods discovered that if the living beings were allowed to continue such a type of life, a time would soon come when all the living beings would be annihilated. With a view to saving the creatures from total annihilation, Hemphu and Mukrang then created all the vegetations. As a result the living beings, especially the envious and ferocious ones, could live without seeing each other, which in its turn reduced the fightings amongst them.

Although Hemphu and Mukrang had created all the living beings, man was yet to be created. The two gods pondered over if any creature was left out. At last they could realise that living beings like their own shape had not been created. Then they translated their thought into action and created human beings, in their own shape². The gods called them Karbi (man) because the shape of the newly created human beings resembled their own shapes. To protect man from their enemies dogs were also created by them.

Now the most interesting fact of the creation of the living beings including men by Hemphu and Mukrang was that only males of each kind of living being were created. They became aged and began to die and the number of each kind of creatures began to dwindle heavily as there were no progenies. The gods could realize their mistake in creating the male sex only. Hemphu and Mukrang

1. Karbi Prasanga (Assamese), edited by D. Gogoi, Diphu 1971, p-5
2. Barua, Gunabhiram, Asom Buranji, Guwahati-1972, pp-16 & 17.

1. Karbi Prasanga (Assamese), edited by Deben Gogoi, Diphu 1971, pp-2 & 3.
2. This clearly indicates the fact that the Karbis visualise their gods in the shapes of human beings.

then, created the female sex of each species of creature and ordered the members of the female sex to cohabit with the male members of their respective race or species for the creation of progenies. Since then this order has been harmoniously maintained by both sexes.

As the god of the spiders had helped Hemphu and Mukrang at the beginning of the creation, his descendants, therefore, have been made the happiest creatures of the world by offering them seats in soft nets and providing them with palatable foods like, insects, etc.

Another legend in regard to the origin of the Karbis is found in their folklore called KARBI KEPLANG or PIRTHE KEKIM. This legend can be narrated below :

BRAHMA, the creator of the universe, at first created this world where we live, move and have our beings at present. To beautify the barren world, he created trees and plants first. In the next step he created other vegetations, insects, serpents, birds, animals and all other living beings. When he completed the creation, Brahma flew into the sky so that he might observe the beauty of his wonderful creation. To him the world looked very beautiful. He, however, felt that it was not perfect as if something were lacking. He then tried to remember if anything or any creature was yet to be created to make the world perfect. At last he could remember that he had forgotten to create human beings. He then flew down to the earth for the creation of human beings and started a workshop for this purpose under a tree. But to his utter surprise he found that there was no suitable clay for

creation of human beings. Finding no other alternative, Brahma created the KARBIS out of his own flesh and blood. When the creation of the KARBIS was over, the Brahma again flew in into the sky and looked below. He observed that the KARBIS did not have any clothes on them. He, therefore, sent a goddess to clothe the KARBIS. When this was done the KARBIS looked very beautiful.

'MASIRA KOHIR' is a very holy verse of the KARBIS. It cannot be recited anywhere and everywhere. It can only be recited during the performance of the death ceremony. This holy verse dealing with the origin of the KARBIS narrates a quite different story which is stated below :

In the early days of the creation, there was a very big bird named WO PLAKPI. The bird laid several eggs. When the hatching was over, from each egg a race of man came out. Thus originated races of man like CHOMANG (the Khasis), NAKA (the Nagas), AHOM (the Assamese), etc. When all the races came out from the eggs, the KARBIS were still inside the last egg. The last egg with the KARBIS inside were bigger in size. The KARBIS were quite anxious to come out from the egg. But they were afraid of the demons and the crows who were in search of human meat. When the Karbis found that staying inside the shell for any longer period was quite unsafe, they came out of the egg with great fear. Thus the KARBIS came into existence.

Mr. E. Stack and Sir C. Lyall have narrated a very interesting legend condensed from Mr. Allen's replies to ethnographic questions, dated October 1900 in regard to the creation of

ARLENG¹. This legend is stated below :

Long ago the gods Hemphu and Mukrang took counsel together for the creation of the world. They marked the limits of their work, setting up four great posts to fix the boundaries of things, and fastened them immovable with six of their mother's hairs. Then they looked for seed to produce the earth, but found none. Then they consulted a hundred other gods with their wives, making with themselves and their wives, two hundred and four in all. It was decided to send one of the wives to beg for some earth from the god Hajong, and Bamon's wife was sent on this errand. But Hajong refused to give any earth from his world from which a rival world might be fashioned, and sent the goddess Bamonpi away empty-handed. But as she returned she noticed the worm-casts on the road, and carried off one and hid it in her bosom. But even with this piece of worm-cast earth nothing could be done, until the gods sent for Helong Recho, the king of the earth-worms, who came and worked up the piece of earth, till in one day it became a heap many feet in diameter; so he continued, till eventually it became this earth of ours. But it was still soft moist earth, on which no one could travel. So they called Kaprang the blacksmith, who with his bellows produced a wind which dried the mud to solid earth. Then the gods said, "We must cause plants to grow on it." They searched everywhere for seed, and at last sent for Rekbepi in the west, by the great post that marked the place of the setting sun, to ask her for seed. Rekbepi came, and herself brought seed and sowed it. (Ano-

ther version states that Rekbepi and Rekbepi, wives of two gods, went to Kana, beyond the boundaries of this world, and obtained from him the various seeds of trees and plants). As they were returning, the SINAM, or head—strap, which held the baskets on their heads broke, and the winds scattered the seeds on the surface of the earth. This occurred on the bank of the river Kallang, in the south-eastern part of Nagaon. But all the bamboos that grew from these seeds were jointless, and therefore weak; strong winds would break down the entire crop in a single storm. So the goddesses who brought the seed tied round the stems pieces of thread to strengthen them; the threads made scars at the joints.

Next came the creation of animals. Hemphu and Mukrang were the leaders, but they were helped by Pithe and Pothe ("great mother" and "great father"). The elephant was first created to be a servant to man. Then the tiger was made, and bidden to eat the wicked; and one killed by a tiger is still thought to have committed some great crime.

Then a great council was held, and it was decided to create a being called Arleng (man). The first man's name was Bamonopo, and he had created for him two wives, one a Mikir and the other an Assamese. But no offspring was born to the man for a long time. At last the Assamese wife sent her husband to her elder brother, who understood the secrets of nature. He sent Bamonpo into his garden, and bade him to pick an orange for each of his wives, and give it to her to eat, when all would be well. Bamonpo did so, and went

1. Stack, E and Lyall, C.,—The Mikirs—(Reprint), Guwahati—p-70.

homewords with the two oranges. On the way, becoming hot he stopped at a river to bathe. While he was in the water, a crow came and carried away one of the oranges. Bamonpo sadly returned to his home, and gave the one orange left to his Assamese wife who ate it. But the Mikir wife picked up a piece of the peel and ate it, and in due course she had a son, whom she named Ram. The Assamese wife also had a son, whom she called Chaputi. He, however, was weak and puny, while Ram was strong and valiant. Ram could pull up trees by the roots, and break them down as he pleased. He could fight and conquer any demon who attacked him, and any man whom he met. But he had no wife. One day while out hunting he became thirsty, and climbed a tree to look for water. He saw a pool, at which he quenched his thirst. As he did so, he noticed in the grass a white thing, which he put in his basket and carried home. It was a large egg. For some days he forgot to look at it, and later on, when he went to see it, he found that the egg was broken, and a beautiful woman had come forth from it. The demons tried to catch her and carry her off, but Ram vanquished them all, and made her his wife. She was very fruitful, and her children multiplied until they were numbered by thousands. Ram's fame spread throughout the world, till at last he disappeared, and was defied by a race of his descendants, called Hindus. They were a mighty race of men, and in the course of time, becoming dissatisfied with the mastery of the earth they determined to conquer

heaven, and began to build a tower to reach up to the skies, Higher and higher rose the building, till at last the gods and demons feared lest these giants should become the masters of heaven, as they already were of earth. So they confounded their speech, and scattered them to the four corners of the earth. Hence arose all the various tongues of men.

Original Home And Migration :

North-East India, specially Assam, was subjected to successive waves of migration from Central Asia belonging to the Indo-Chinese linguistic families of which mention may be made of the Mon-Khmer (Khasis), the Tibeto-Burmans and the Siamese-Chinese including the Shans (Ahoms). It is assumed that the speakers of the Indo-Chinese language of the Mon-Khmer family (Khasis) were the first band of infiltrators into Assam and their date of infiltration is supposed to be several hundred years of B. C. That they were the first band of infiltrators into Assam is indicated by linguistic evidences, popular customs and place-names of the State¹. Peoples speaking Tibeto-Burman languages were the second band of infiltrators into Assam. The Ahoms, one of the Shan tribes, entered Assam in 13th Century A. D. and they were followed by the other Shan tribes, namely, Khamtis, Phakiyals, Naras, Aitoniya, etc.

In the absence of any written history or records, the origin of the Karbis is totally obscure. We can, therefore, make some guess-works only from the writings of the early writers and scholars according to whom the

1. Barua, B. K., A Cultural History of Assam, Guwahati 1969, p-6.

Karbis belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of people. All these writings point to the fact that the Karbis, like the other tribes of undivided Assam,¹ migrated from Central Asia which was their original home long long back.

According to Dr. B. K. Barua the original home of the various people speaking Tibeto-Burman languages was in Western China near the Yang-tse Kiang and the Howang—ho rivers. From these places they went down the courses of the Brahmaputra, the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy and entered India and Burma². Dr. P. C. Choudhury is of the opinion that one wave of the Tibeto-Burmans came probably from the North. This wave consisted of the AKAS, MISHIMIS, GAROS, MIKIRS, KACHARIS, etc³. In regard to the original home of the races belonging to Tibeto-Burman group Dr. Choudhury agrees with Dr. B. K. Barua. Dr. Choudhury has stated further that the Tibeto-Burman races entered Assam through the courses of the rivers Brahmaputra, Chindwin, Irrawaddy, Salween, Mekong and Menam and mountain passes of Assam and Burma through the north-east and South west. The peoples of these races found the speakers of the Mon-Khmer speech occupying small hilly regions

and they drove the latter into different directions. Some of the races occupied the hills of Assam such as the Garo Hills, Lushai Hills, Mikir Hills, Naga Hills, etc. and gradually spread over the plains both upper and lower Assam, along the courses of the Brahmaputra⁴.

As regards the migration of the Tibeto-Burman races into Assam, Rai, K.L. Barua Bahadur says "These later Mongolians belonged to the Tibeto-Burman family of Indo-Chinese group and their representatives of the present day are the Kacharis Koches, Rabhas, Meches, Mikirs, Lalungs, Garos, Nagas, Kukis and Chutias"⁵

Although, according to Dr. B. K. Barua, it is not possible to determine the period of history at which the Aryan speakers came into the valley of the Brahmaputra⁶, nevertheless, Rai K. L. Barua Bahadur is of the opinion that the Mongolians (Tibeto-Burman) races poured into Assam through north-east after the appearance of the Aryans in India. In support of his argument he has further stated that the Aryans designated them as Meches indicating that they are foreigners⁷.

Sir E. A. Gait also supports the view that the successive hordes of immigrants from the great hive of Mongolian race in Western China

1. Undivided Assam refers to the period when the present States of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Union Territory of Mizoram were parts of Assam.
2. Barua, B. K., A Cultural History of Assam (Early period), Guwahati 1969, p-6.
3. Choudhury, P. C., A History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th Century A. D., Guwahati 1959, p-86.
4. Ibid, P-5
5. Barua, K. L., Raibahadur, Early History of Kamrup, Gauhati 1966, pp-13 & 14.
6. Barua, B. K., A Cultural History of Assam (Early period), Gauhati 1969, p. 8.
7. Barua, K. L. Raibahadur, Early History of Kamrupa, Gauhati 1966, p-13

had entered India through Assam from the north east¹. D. N. Majumdar is of the opinion that from the east and north-east the first Indo-Chinese invasion appears to have been by the Tibeto-Burmans².

M. L. Bose, of course, has rejected the theory that the tribes of the North East India belong to the Mongolian origin and their original home was on the Howang-ho and Yang-te-kiang rivers in China. His contention is that the Kiratas were not Mongolians but Mongoloids whose original home was the region where India, China and Burma met³.

The earliest inhabitants of Assam have been described as Kiratas in the Kalika Purana. They had shaven heads and yellow skins and were ferocious, ignorant and addicted to meat and drink⁴. In the Mahabharata, the Kiratas are placed around the Brahma-putra. In this epic a reference has been made to the army of Bhagadatta which was composed of China and Kirata. Bhagadatta's soldiers glittered like gold⁵.

It is very interesting to note that the Karbis have their own unwritten Ramayana called Sabin Alun⁶. It is still prevalent in the form of verses and is transmitted from generation to generation verbally. Although the main theme does not fundamentally differ from the original one, nevertheless, the sub-plots and characters are coloured with local touches.

1. Gait, E. A., A History of Assam, Calcutta 1963, Introduction to 1st Edition.
2. Majumdar, D. N., Races and Cultures of India, Bombay 1965, p-49.
3. Bose, M. L., The Problems of Identifications and Immigration of the North-East Frontier Tribes. The N. E. India Research Bulletin, Vol-V 1974, pp-45 to 50.
4. Barua, B. K., A Cultural History of Assam (Early Period), Gauhati 1969, pp-5 & 6.
5. Ibid, p-5.
6. The Diphu Sahitya Sabha had published Sabin Alun in July 1976.

As for example, Sita, in spite of her royal status, had to go to the jhums for cultivation like any other girl of a common family. This, of course, implies indirectly that all people had to work for their bread irrespective of their socio-political status and the Karbis had no aversion to manual labour. According to an anecdote prevalent among them, the Karbis took an active part in the battle between Rama and Ravana and they helped Rama in all possible ways. The Karbis consider themselves to be the descendants of Sugriva, the great hero of the Ramayana who had helped Rama with his subject to fight against the demon king Ravana for the purpose of rescuing Sita.

Now if we assume that the Karbis are the descendants of Sugriva, then their original habitat would refer to Kiskindha and not to Central Asia and their migration to this part of the country would have been from Kiskindha. Moreover, we will have to forgo the conclusion that the Karbis belong to the Mongloid group of people. But so far nothing contrary to the accepted theory that the Karbis belong to the Mongloid group has been adduced and proved.

In recent times the theory that the original home of the tribes of north-east India was South-Western China and Upper Burma has been disputed. M. L. Bose has adduced a new

theory according to which the original home of the tribes of north-east India was Pragjyotishpur and they never belonged to the Mongoloid group.

According to him the ancient kingdom of Pragjyotishpur was the original home of the Kiratas, Nishads and the Meches. When Narakasura founded his empire in this region, many of the original people deserted their lands and found way to new homes across the ranges into Burma, China, etc. When the kingdom of Kamrupa began to disintegrate some of these tribes beyond the frontiers together with new ones started entering into north-east India¹.

Bose's theory is based on the fact that while Narakasura was an Aryan Chief his subjects were non-Aryans, meaning Kiratas, etc.

Although Bose has disputed the established theory of migration of the tribes of north-east India from Central Asia and adjoining regions his theory depicting Narakasura as an Aryan King appears to an absurdity. The very name of Narakasura indicates that he was a non-aryan. (Asura always refers to a non-Aryan). Secondly establishment of a certain kingdom does not necessarily lead to large-scale out-migration. Even if we assume for argument's sake that Narakasura was an Aryan King, the monarch in his own interest would refrain from driving away the original settlers. Otherwise, he would have to rule over the vast tract of vacant land with no human habitation.

For these reasons, Bose's theory is not a tenable one.

From the analysis given above, we can now

1. Bose, M. L., The Problems of Identification and Immigration of North-East Frontier Tribes, North-Eastern Research Bulletin, Vol-V, 1974, pp-44 & 45.

summarize that the original home of the Karbis was in Western China near the Yang-te-kiang and the Howang-ho rivers. The precise time of their migration to Assam is not known. But one question still remains to be answered. And this question is—why these people had left their hearth and home and migrated to far off places which were quite foreign to them. On this point the scholars are totally silent. The reasons for this type of migration might be due to natural calamities like flood, earthquake, etc. or due to internal feuds among the different peoples, or due to an abnormal increase of population, or due to the attack on their life and property by the pre-historic giant-typed dreadful creatures. Anyway this aspect has to be probed into. Because of its frequent floods and frequent changing of courses, the river Howang-ho is known as the "Sorrow of China". Now-a-days, of course, there are scientific techniques to control the floods. But in those days there was no way for the people to save themselves from the ravages of the floods. The occurrence of severe earthquakes that had rocked a vast area of China in August 1976 causing extensive damages to life and property rendering thousands of people homeless and compelling even those who had homes to sleep on the streets also points to the fact that the areas which were the original homes of the tribes of the North East India were subjected to ravages of severe type of natural calamities. The onslaught of nature, therefore, might have been the principal cause which had compelled the people to leave their hearth and home

and to migrate to the north-east India.

The routes through which the bands of infiltrators entered into Assam through Burma were the Patkai Ranges on the North-East and Manipur-Cachar-Mizo hills (present Mizoram) on the South-East. The scholars are of the opinion that the Nagas, Mizos and the Kuki-chins followed the second route while the other groups including the Karbis entered Assam through the first route. Through this route the Shan tribes also entered Assam later on.

Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to trace the origin of the terms 'Mikir' and 'Karbi' and also to give an idea of the original home of the Karbis and their migration.

So far as the first aspect is concerned we may come to a decisive conclusion that although the people of this tribe were called

Mikir till the other day, nevertheless, it is a name given to them probably by the neighbouring people. In their legends, folklores and folktales the terms 'Karbi' and 'Arleng' are found to be used and nowhere the term 'MIKIR' occurs. The people like to be called Karbis and they consider the term 'MIKIR' a derogatory one.

In regard to the second aspect of discussion, namely, Karbis' original home and migration, it can be summed up as follows :

The original home of the Karbis, like the other tribes of North-East India, was the Western China near the Yang-te-kiang and the Howang-ho rivers. From these places they went down the courses of the Chindwin and the Irrawaty rivers and entered Burma and stayed there for sometime. From Burma they went down the courses of the Brahmaputra, and entered Assam by the north-east route through the Patkai Ranges along with other Tibeto-Burma races before several centuries B.C.



ECONOMIC TRANSITION OF TRIBAL SOCIETY (Comparative case studies of two Deori Villages)

P. N. Bharali *

Introduction

Economy may be regarded as the backbone of a society. The other aspects of a society depend mainly on this particular organised system. Man cannot think about his existence setting aside his economic life. But as culture is a dynamic process, the economy being an integral part of it, is bound to transform from one stage to another.

In India the tribal communities are living at different stages of economic development. Some of the communities are still in the original state of nature. The best examples are Jharwas and the Sentenelese of the Andaman and Nicobar islands. A number of other tribes are living at food gathering and hunting stage of economy. But most of the tribal communities depend on an agrarian economy. Some of them practise settled cultivation while a good majority of them depend on shifting cultivation.

The economic situation of the tribal com-

munities is, however, changing. In many parts of the country, the tribal communities are now indistinguishable from other rural communities. Education at present is moulding the entire mankind, including the tribals, into a new frame. However, the level of education varies from community to community. The developmental planning of the country has also contributed to the economic transition of the tribal communities.

The present paper is an attempt to testify the causes and effects of economic transition taking place among the Deoris—a plains scheduled Tribe of Assam. The Deoris belong to the Indo-Mongoloid group of Tibeto-Barman linguistic stock.

The Deoris were the representative priest of the Chutias. "The temple officers were all Chutiyas and the priests called themselves deoris, a title they must have inherited from former ministrants. Deori is a New Indo-Aryan formation connected with Sanskrit

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deva-grihika"¹. Dalton traces the origin of the Deoris like this—"The daughter of a Hindu king of Sadiya was married to a Chutia youth, who succeeded to throne of his father-in-law and took the name of Sisupal. The royal seat of Sisupal assigned by the Deori-Chutias to Kundil, east of Sadiya. The language spoken by the Deori-Chutia has a strong affinity with Kacharis"². The Deoris of Assam may be divided into four territorial groups namely, the Dibongias, the Borgayas, the Tengapanias and the Patargayas. The last group i.e. the Partargayas has reported become extinct. There is no historical evidence which may lead us to the cause of extinction of the Patargayas group. But there is a myth which says—the four fathers of the Deoris had to migrate from their original habitat in order to escape the frequent raids on them made by the neighbours namely, the Mishimis and the Abors. One night while the four territorial groups of the Deoris were migrating through the course of the river Brahmaputra, with the help of four *Marnous* (large boat), each carrying the members of the territorial groups mentioned above, unfortunately the boat carrying the Partargayas group, lost their trace in the middle of the Brahmaputra.

The concentrations of Deoris are found in parts of North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Sunitpur Districts of Assam. Some of the people of this community have migrated into Arunachal Pradesh, a neighbouring union territory of Assam.

As per 1971 census the total population

1. B. K. Kakati—The Mother Goddess Khamakhyas, Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, Assam, 1967, Page-62.
2. E. T. Dalton—Tribal History of Eastern India, Cosmo publications, New Delhi, 1978, page-78.

of the Deoris are 23,080 (Male-11,901; Female-11,179) and the total percentage of literacy among them is 27.72% (Male-39.50% Female-15.10%).

The economy of the Deoris is based on agriculture. They practise settled cultivation. Both males and females take part in agricultural operation. Though the Deoris are a priestly community, priesthood is not their primary occupation. Their traditional occupation is agriculture. But occupational mobility has taken place among the Deoris due to factors like spread of education, contact with other communities, introduction of scientific method of agriculture as a result of developmental planning, etc. Though economic transition has taken place within the Deori community the level of such transition varies from place to place. In this paper we shall try to compare the level of economic transition in two Deori villages located at two different places.

Two Deori villages namely Modhupur under Dibrugarh Sub-division of Dibrugarh District and Bormuria under Dhemaji Sub-division of Lakhimpur district were selected for the purpose of the study. A brief history of both villages will be necessary to know the level of economic transition taking place in the two villages.

It is to be noted that the villagers of both the villages were living together under the Panidihing Mouza of Sibsagar District till the great earthquake of 1950. Due to erosion of the bank of the Brahmaputra as a result of earthquake, the villagers had to shift to the present sites. At that time, the people had

just started sending their children to the formal educational institutions. Almost all the villagers were agriculturist. So it can be assumed that occupational mobility in the two villages has taken place only after 1950.

Setting

The village Modhupur is situated at Madela Reserve Forest and is 20 km. north west of Dibrugarh town. The village falls under the jurisdiction of Borbarua Development Block. The village is located at a distance of 10 km. from the National High way No. 37. There is regular bus communication from the village to district H. Q. Dibrugarh. There is one primary school, two provincialised M. E. schools and one non-provincialised High School only. Therefore, for better and higher education the villagers have to send their children to Dibrugarh town. The village is a homogeneous one, though settlement of other communities are found in the surrounding areas.

The other village Bormuria is situated at Dhemaji Civil Sub-division. It is under the Sisitangani Mouza of Dhemaji sub-division. Dhemaji is the Block H. Q. and Sub-divisional H. Q. of the village. The village is situated south east of Dhemaji town. The recently

developed Silapathar town is located at a distance of 5 km. from the village in the north-east direction. The North Trunk Road has passed through the heart of the village. The North-Eastern Frontier Railway is connected with Silapathar town. Therefore, the village is well connected with other parts of the state as well as the country. The mighty river Brahmaputra is flowing at a distance of 10 km. towards the south of the village. So, inland water transport facilities may also be availed by the villagers. In respect of education and transport facilities the villagers have enjoyed a better opportunity than the villagers of Modhupur. There are two high schools at the village. Moreover, there is another high school at Silapathar town. For college education, the villagers send their children either to Silapathar or to Dhemaji. The village is a homogeneous one though the settlement of other communities is also found in the surrounding areas.

It has already been mentioned that the occupational mobility in both the villages has taken place. A tendency to take up occupations, other than the traditional occupation is gaining its momentum among the Deoris of the villages under study. The following tables will show the trend of occupational mobility, which has resulted into economic transition.

TABLE NO.—1

Table showing population pattern of the villages under study.
(Data collected during July-August, 1985)

Name of the village	No. of household	Male	Female	Total
Modhupur	38	177	178	355
%		49.85	50.14	488
Bormuria	52	226	262	
%		46.31	53.68	

TABLE NO.—II

Table showing the number and percentage of Infants and students of village Modhupur and Bormuria. (Data collected during July-August, 1985)

Name of the village	No. of infants		L.P. school		M.E. school		High school		College		Technical Education		University		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Modhupur	10	8	19	27	14	6	23	48	12	5	3	1	—	1	71	88
%	5.64	4.49	10.23	15.16	7.91	3.37	12.99	26.96	6.78	2.81	1.69	1.56	—	0.56	40.11	49.43
Bormuria	4	7	51	27	21	19	33	28	11	4	—	—	—	—	116	78
%	1.76	2.67	22.56	10.30	9.29	7.25	14.60	10.68	4.86	1.52	—	—	—	—	51.32	29.79

Percentage worked out is on the basis of total population.

TABLE NO.—III

Table showing the position of educational qualification of persons engaged in traditional occupation in the village under study. (Data collected during July-August, 1985)

Name of the village	Non literate		upto L.P. school		upto M.E. school		upto high school		Matriculate		Under graduate		Technical education		Total		G.T.
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Modhupur	39	74	1	—	7	2	11	4	2	1	1	—	1	—	62	81	143
%	62.90	91.35	1.16	—	11.29	2.5	17.74	4.93	3.22	1.23	1.61	—	1.61	—	43.35	56.64	—
Bormuria	85	180	7	1	7	1	2	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	102	183	285
%	83.33	98.36	6.9	0.54	6.9	0.54	1.96	—	0.98	0.54	—	—	—	—	35.78	64.21	—

Percentage worked out is on the basis of total population.

TABLE NO.—IV

Table showing the category and educational qualification of the persons engaged in occupation, other than traditional occupation of the villages under study. (Date collected during July-August, 1985)

Educational qualification	CATEGORY OF PERSONS																	
	Teacher				Gazetted officer				Non Gazetted officer				College teacher		Business			
	Modhu-pur		Bormu-ria		Modhu-pur		Bormu-ria		Modhu-pur		Bormu-ria		Modhu-pur	Bormu-ria	Modhu-pur	Bormu-ria		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Under Matric	1	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	—
Matriculate	9	4	1	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Graduate	2	2	—	—	2	1	—	—	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Graduate	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Technical Education	—	—	—	—	4	—	1	—	6	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	13	7	3	—	7	1	1	—	20	—	2	1	1	—	3	—	2	—
%	7.34	3.93	1.32	—	3.93	0.44	0.44	—	11.29	—	0.88	0.38	0.56	—	11.69	—	0.88	—

Percentage worked out is on the basis of total population.

TABLE—V

Table showing the percentage of persons engaged in traditional occupation and percentage of persons engaged in occupation other than the traditional occupation. (Data collected during July-August, 1985)

Name of village	persons engaged in traditional occupation		Total	persons engaged in occupations other than traditional occupation		Total	Grand total of both categories
	M	F		M	F		
Modhupur	39	74	113	44	9	53	166
%	23.5	44.57	68.07	26.50	5.42	31.92	
Bormuria	85	180	265	8	1	9	274
%	31.04	65.69	96.71	2.9	0.36	3.28	

It is observed from the above tables (Tables II to V) that the percentage of literacy is gradually increasing in both the villages though the rate varies. It has also been observed that education has led to economic transition. Table V shows that occupational mobility has taken place in both the villages but the rate of such mobility is much higher in village Modhupur than the village Bormuria.

It is revealed from the present study that the economic transition has effected some of the social institutions. In the traditional society the Deories had a joint family structure which has presently been broken down due to economic transition which is a result of the occupational mobility.

The following table (Table No. VI) will show us the present position.

TABLE—VI

Types of family of village Modhupur and Bormuria (with percentage)
(Data collected during July-August, 1985)

Name of village	Nuclear	Joint	Extended	Total
Modhupur	16	1	21	38
%	42.1	2.63	55.26	
Bormuria	35	5	21	52
%	67.3	9.61	23.07	

Another factor of economic transition among the Deories is the introduction of new technology, particularly in the field of agriculture. In this case also the rate of

acceptance of such technology varies in both the villages under study. While all the households of village Modhupur have accepted the new agricultural methods of some kind or other, none belonging to village Bormuria has yet accepted such type of technology. The following table (Table VII) will show the position.

TABLE—VII

Table showing number and percentage of households accepting new agricultural technology. (Data collected during July-August, 1985)

Name of the village	No. of households	Tractors	Fertilizer	Japanees method	Irrigation	Improve seed	New type of crops
Modhupur	38	38	38	10	10	10	38
%		100	100	26.31	26.31	26.31	100
Bormuria	52	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
%							

In the above case education as well as enthusiasm of the people concerned may be assigned as factors responsible for bringing such change. In case of village Modhupur the developmental agencies and the representatives of the people have played their vital roles in introducing the new technologies which have helped in bringing economic upliftment. It may be mentioned here that in addition to the technologies shown in table No. VII a good number of villagers of Village Madhupur have resorted to other means of technological developments. For example out of 38 households 16 households have started using new type of thresher. 4 rice mills have been established in the village due to which the use of traditional mortar pestles is gradually decreasing. Introduction of electricity may be assigned as a factor for this particular type of transition. One household of village Modhupur has also started a Gobar-Gas plant. But the

village Bormuria is still lagging behind in these regards.

Conclusion :

It has been observed that the percentage of literacy among the Deories of both the villages under study is gradually increasing though variation exists. This variation may be a result of the enthusiasm of the villagers concerned towards the formal type of education.

It has also been observed from the tables that occupational mobility resulting into economic transition has taken place among the Deori villagers of two villages. Education may be assigned as a factor for such occupational mobility.

In Modhupur Deori village the people have accepted new agricultural technology which has helped in the better production of

crops. While in the Bormuria the traditional system of agriculture is still in practice. Here also we can say that both education and awareness of people concerned have played a major role in the acceptance of new technology by the villagers of Modhupur Deori village. Though the percentage of literacy in Bormuria is also gradually increasing it has not yet been able to make the villagers aware to accept the new technological changes in the field of agriculture. it is still practised by the villagers of Bormuria and some other Deori villages. The reason of its extinction in the village Modhupur is that the villagers of this particular village have accepted scientific method of cultivation. Now-a-days they use pesticides to prevent insects. Education has taught the cultivators that it is the pesticides, and not the Lakhimipuja, which can protect their crops from the attack of insects. So, they have abandoned the Lakhimipuja.

It has been mentioned earlier that the economic transition has effected some of its social institutions. We have cited the family structure as an example of such effect. In religion also we can see its impact. For example the Deoris used to perform the *Lakhimipuja* in order to protect the crops from the insects. This particular ritual has become extinct in the village Modhupur while

The pattern of living house has also changed due to the factors already mentioned. The rate of this type of change is also much higher in the village Modhupur than the village Bormuria. We can conclude with a view that the economic transition has taken place in the tribal society due to external as well as internal forces.

□ □