



VOLUME I : NUMBER XI-1996

DEPARTMENT FOR

WELFARE OF PLAIN TRIBES AND BACKWARD CLASSES

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

BULLETIN

OF
ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
FOR
TRIBALS AND SCHEDULED CASTES
JAWAHARNAGAR : GUWAHATI-22

VOLUME : I

NUMBER : XI

1996

**BULLETIN
OF THE
ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
FOR
TRIBALS AND SCHEDULED CASTES**

EDITOR

MR. R. ZAMAN

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
DIRECTORATE OF
ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
FOR
TRIBALS AND SCHEDULED CASTES
GUWAHATI - 781028**

1996

**BULLETIN
OF THE
ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
FOR
TRIBALS AND SCHEDULED CASTES**

PUBLISHED ANNUALLY FROM GUWAHATI

ELEVENTH ANNUAL ISSUE, 1996

**EDITOR
MR. R. ZAMAN**

Published by R.Zaman, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Jawaharnagar, N.H.-37, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

EDITORIAL NOTE :

This is the eleventh annual issue of the Bulletin of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati. There has been unavoidable delay in bringing out this issue in time inspite of our best efforts.

In this issue, we have included articles from Dr. Prem Saran, Nazmeen Anam, Punyeswar Payeng, Dr. Haren Kr. Hazarika, Kanta Chakravarty and also one from the Director of the Institute. The articles are related to various aspects of tribals and scheduled castes. Some of the articles are based on field study.

The bulletins of this Institute have been well received by the scholars and institutions from various parts of our country. We have also received feed back from our esteemed readers. I hope the present issue of the bulletin will also received by the readers with great pleasure.

I am thankful to faculty members and staff of the Institute for bringing out the issue. I also thank M/s. Bohniman Printers, Guwahati for their help and co-operation in printing out the bulletin. Finally, we look forward for comments and suggestions for improving the quality and standard of the bulletin in future.

**R. Zaman
Editor**

Bulletin of the Assam Institute of Research
for Tribals & Scheduled
Caste, Guwahati.

And

Director

Assam Institute of Research for
Tribals & Scheduled Casts, Guwahati.

Contents

1. Tantra and Modernity : The Persistence of Three Core Indic Themes-	Dr. Prem Saran, IAS 1
2. The Death Rites of the Thadou Kuksi-	Nazmeen Anam. 7
3. A Peep into the Mising Folk Songs-	Punyeswar Payeng 10
4. Ethnic Identity and Socio-Religious Aspects of Bodos a Plain Tribes in Assam-	Dr. Haren Kr. Hazariks. 14
5. Some Key Aspects of Forest Management in Tribal Areas-	R. Zaman 17
6. Maternal Education its Relations with Fertility and Mortality : A Study Among the Ahoms of Assam.	Kanta Chakravarty 23

TANTRA AND MODERNITY: THE PERSISTENCE OF THREE CORE INDIC THEMES.

Dr. Prem Saran, IAS

(Revised version of paper read by Dr. Prem Saran, I.A.S. at the Seminar on "Mythology, Legends and Traditions of India and North East India" organized by the Kamarupa Anusandhana Samiti, at Pandu, Guwahati, on 25-10-1996. Not to be quoted without authors's permission).

Introduction : In 1985, when I was the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang district, I helped to organize a seminar in Mangaldoi, in association with the Archaeological Survey of India and the Directorate of Museums, Assam. It was on the myths and legends of Northeastern India, and I myself presented a paper in which I made use of the Myth of Sati and its links with the famous yoni-pitha at the Kamakhya temple in Guwahati.

I used therein that wellknown Shakta myth, in order to juxtapose the cultural values of Assam and the Northeast with the philistinism that characterizes much of Indian modernity. That paper was later incorporated in a book (Saran, 1994), which was based on my subsequent M.A. in South Asian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

In this paper, my thesis is somewhat similar, but much more elaborate . And my database is ethnographic, since it arose out of about a year's fieldwork that I had conducted in 1993-94, for my Ph.D in Anthropology at the University of California. That Dissertation is now being processed for possible publication by the Oxford University Press.

The said field research was done in the delightful Kathmandu Valley of Nepal. It was based on participation - observation among the Hindu and Buddhist Tantrics-- for instance Newar Brahmins, and Bajracharyas and

Shakyas, respectively-- of the ancient and still-traditional Indic cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that my data-collection was facilitated considerably by the fact that I myself had formally taken diksha (i.e. initiation) into the Tantric cult at the Kamkhya temple, over twelve years previously. This enabled me both to get the confidence of my informants, as well as to interpret my material as an insider."

Further, it may also be noted that my data-interpretation is, I daresay, empatheti cally enhanced by the fact that I am a member of the matrifocal, and thus gynocentric, Nayar Community of Kerala. Again, I did my first Postgraduate degree in Calcutta, and I now live and work in Assam, and also happen to be married to an Assamese women. As a result, I can claim some insight into the culture of eastern and northeastern India.

Finally, given the intimate historical-O.K cultural links between Nepal and India, especially eastern and northeastern India, it is quite patent that my conclusions apply in the larger pan-South Asian context. Further, given the holistic and holographic nature of culture, it is again obvious that my three core Tantric themes are intrinsic, if somewhat muted, aspects of the Indic civilization as a whole.

Three Tantric Themes. No visitor to the above main towns of the Kathmandu Valley can fail to notice the ubiquitous depictions, in metal sculpture and cloth painting, of Tantric deities in sexual union. These are of course traditional icons, but they are now vastly expanded in number and thus visibility, in order to profitably

titillate the large number of Western tourists who visit the fabled vale.

Enculturated as they are into the blandness or their own Judaeo-Christian traditions, these antipodally novel artisanal creations strike the fancy of the European and American visitors. Needless to add, this helps to open their pursestrings, which are already temporarily loosened by their tourists' affluence, engendered as that is by the skewed exchange rates that obtain between the Western and South Asian currencies.

International cash flows apart, what is more salient for my own purposes here is the sexual union that these icons focus on. Of course this erotic conjunction of the male and female principles is meant to present complex and subtle philosophical and mystical ideas which are of hoary vintage in the South Asian culture area, and also wider afield in east and southeast Asia where they were exported. It is also used, however, as a model for self-divinization and other related ritualized action by Tantric practitioners, whether this is in the realm of yogic visualization, or of actual, physical union.

These iconographic specimens thus neatly encapsulate my three core Tantric/Indic themes. These are, respectively, holonic-individuality, hedonism (and the related theme of lila), and gender-mutuality. As regards the first, the above deities provide templates for the experiential construction of a divinized selfimage, based on a mystically-generated identity. As for the second, the overt ecstatic parameters of these images are very obvious, and Tantric sadhana strives to parlay such ecstasy into the realm of enstasy. Which is Mircea Eliade's term for yogic (i.e. mystical) union.

Related to the second theme is the Indic aspect or these icons, based ethno-culturally on Indic cosmogony, namely the view of the cosmos as continuously generated by the erotic ply of the divine. Finally, the icons concerned make visually evident the third

them of gender-complementarity or mutuality, which is based on the pervasively fundamental and pan-Indic ideology of Sankhya.

In what follows, I shall expatiate on these three Tantric themes as being inherent leitmotifs of Indic Culture. Further, I shall also use my discussion of these themes as tactical pointed appui, to mount an anthropological critique of "Westernity", which is my own academically, if pejoratively, gauche synonym for modernity.

For the last mentioned purpose of cross-cultural comparison, I shall utilise the scholarly material, now increasingly available, on the neo-Tantric movement of Rajneeshism that has made such a splash in the West. And for interpreting that material, I shall also use my own lived experience of Western civilization as an ethno-cultural system. That experience was aggregated by virtue of the participation-observation involved during my five-year academic sojourn in the U.S.A., over the decade between 1985 and 1995.

Cultural Background. Before broaching my discussion proper, it will be useful to outline the general Indic context of my study. In that context, it will also be necessary to define my key terminological distinctions, and thus my philosophical axioms.

First the term "Indic" by this I refer to the indigenous civilizational bases of South Asian cultures. Thus, insofar as mine is an essay in religious anthropology, the term indicates the autochthonic religions of South Asia, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism.

At the same time, however, I do not exclude the South Asian versions of Christianity and Islam from the scope of the term. For these have partaken, over many centuries, or a fertile symbiosis with the above religions of strictly indigenous provenance. Also they are therefore quite distinct from, say, their Arab and Euro-Asian-cum-North American forms, respectively.

Within Hinduism and Buddhism, and also in Jainism, Tantrism has been extant as a

powerful current of ideology and praxis, from the very early centuries of our era. This stream has strong links with Shaivism, as also Vaishnavism, and is additionally almost synonymous with Shaktism. (Also, regarding the last, although Buddhist goddesses are usually termed "prajna", and are quiescent like "purusha"-- the Hindu male-principle of gnosis-- they may still be treated as functionally equivalent to the Hindu ones. And, interestingly, many Buddhist Newars in the Kathmandu Valley routinely refer routinely refer to their female deities as "shaktis".)

As a result, on the one hand Tantrism has exhibited a phenomenal degree of persistence in South Asia. This is quite evident from the cases of wellknown neo-Tantrics of contemporary times, like Aurobindo (Bolle: 1962, 1965) and the even more recent Rajneesh. And, on the other, it has flourished in precisely those parts of the Indic culture-area which are noted for their matrifocal and gynocentric traditions.

These are Nepal, and-- in modern India-- Assam, West Bengal, Orissa, Kerala, and so on. Moreover, these geographically frontier regions, and especially Assam and Nepal, have fortuitously been spared the more intense and pernicious effects of the "triple puritanism" that mainland South Asia had historically been subject to. These are Brahminism, Islam and Christianity, all of which had mitigated their thrust by the time they reached the more liminal areas of the subcontinent, as I briefly explicate below.

Secondly, by the term "Brahminism", I mean the ascetical trends in the Indic civilization, as propagated mainly by these priestly groups among the Hindus. It is such attitudes that underlie the pan-Indic male anxiety-syndrome regarding the loss of semen. This is a magical fear, and such loss is believed to be inimical to one's successful achievement of the salient religious goals such as yoga or "mystical union". Honourable exceptions here are the Tantric Brahmins,

especially the "left-handed" ones, say of Assam and Bengal; and examples are my own guru and parama-guru.

Thirdly, we come to the term "mystic", by which I refer to the cross culturally documented and common experience of union with the ground of being, whether that ground is defined theistically or otherwise. The quest for mystical union (i.e. "yoga") has been a longstanding preoccupation in the Indic civilization, which is why the yogi and his ilk have been a perennial and charismatic cynosure of the culture.

Finally, the term "Tantrism": I refer by this to the centuries-old cultic activities of erotic mysticism, that have had a truly pan-Indic spread but have been concentrated in the gynocentric areas indicated above. Tantra is thus also very much a yogic parampara and sadhana, since the aim is the traditional Indic one of samadhi or nirvana, that is to say the mystical experience.

Tantrics use the traditional yogic techniques--such as pranayama, nyasa, mantra, and kundalini- or laya-yoga-- but they do so in conjunction with ritualized sexual union. This latter may be actually, physically performed, or only in visualization. The former is called vamachara, and the latter dakshinachara.

These two modes of Tantra, that is the so-called left- and right- handed practices, respectively, are essentially one insofar as their respective success in triggering the state of mystical consummation itself is concerned. For that is an "inner" and experiential state of intuitive knowledge, i.e. jnana, which can be accessed by both kinds of praxis, as by any other kind of sadhana.

Again, as far as the left-handed praxis is concerned, male Buddhist Tantrics usually retain their seed, whereas Hindus usually treat it as an oblation into the sacrificial fire of the yoni. Here too, the climactic divergence is most probably of very little significance, insofar as the attainment of the unio mystica itself is

concerned.

What is salient, however, as regards Tantric praxis as a whole, is the intensification-- for instance by prolongation-- of sensual pleasure. For the Tantric sadhaka, and sadhika, seek thereby to leapfrog existentially into the state of mystical union. And that experience is described canonically in the Indic scriptures-- as in the Hindu "Taittiriya Upanishad" --as a state of ineffable joy, or "ananda", which is the *raison d'être* of the entire Tantric sadhana.

Having therefore clarified my key terms, I now turn to the cultural setting proper of my study of the Tantric traditions of the Kathmandu Valley. As already stated, my fieldwork was conducted among the denizens of the Kathmandu valley. The religious worldview here is strongly matrifocal and gynocentric, like that of the matrilineal Nayers of Kerala, and of the Indo-Mongoloids of eastern India and northeastern India-- viz. Oriyas, Bengalis, Assamese, etc.

Like the other Indo-Mongoloids, the contribution of the Nepalese to the Indic civilization has been quite distinctive and rich as for instance in the religio-philosophical realm. Not the least of these are the Tantric traditions, both Hindu and Buddhist, which are still so deeprooted and persistent in the Kathmandu or Nepal valley.

Incidentally, due to the tragic contemporary diaspora of the Tibetans, the historical connections of the valley with the Tibetan civilization have now been reinforced by thousands of Tibetan refugees. Many of them are highly learned monks, whose Buddhism called Vajrayana is cognate with Newar Buddhism? Vajrayana, and thus practically synonymous with Tantrism. Also incidentally, some of my own informants, both Hindu and Buddhist, were longstanding disciples of such lamas (i.e. "gurus").

At any rate, like the Assamese and other Indo-Mongoloids, the Nepalese are also notable for the joie de vivre that characterizes

their lifestyles. In this regard they are quite distinct from the peoples of most other parts of South Asia, whose existential attitudes are rather ascetical and puritanical. This is probably because they, like the Assamese, were historically spared the impact of what I have called the "triple puritanism" that much of the rest of the subcontinent was the cultural victim of.

The first strand in this triple composite is the Brahminical ideology that the Indo-Aryan speakers imported into South Asia, though it became increasingly mitigated by the indigenous matrifocal cultural elements, as the former penetrated farther into eastern and southern India. The second was the puritanism of the Islamic ulema, which again got diluted as it spread eastwards, especially since Nepal, as also Assam and northeastern India, were never subjugated politically by Indo-Muslim rulers. And the third and final type of puritanism was the guilt-imbued Judaeo-Christian one, injected by the British colonizers; here again, it may be noted that Nepal was never conquered by the Western imperialists, and Assam too came under the Anglo-Saxon yoke quite late.

Having thus escaped the worst effects of the above "triple puritanism", societies like the Nepalese have been able to preserve in their more traditional forms the three core Indic themes that were the subject of my research. My research data were culled from the life-histories that I collected of practising Tantrics in the Kathmandu Valley, most of them being priests and/or scholars. In this brief paper I cannot do more than summarize my findings, which I do in the next section.

Indic Civilization and Westernity. I now present synoptically my conclusions regarding my three Indic themes, which I also contrast with the corresponding cultural attitudes of Westernity/modernity, which I do by adducing data from the Rajneesh movement.

1. "Holonic"/"Mandalic" Individuality. The modal individuality of the traditional non-

Western person is quite different from that of the Westerner. It is "cosmomorphic", as the anthropologist Malcolm Crick puts it, by which he means that it is not constituted by a radical separation between the individual and the rest of the cosmos.

Naturally, the ethnocentric Westerner, even if he or she happens to be a scholar, would have it that his or her brand of individuality or personhood is peculiarly conducive to personal autonomy. This has, however, been confuted by the work of sociologists like David Riesman, and of anthropologists like Melford Spiro.

My own data lend substance to Crick's view: Indic personhood is indeed "porous", as I term it. And it is this very "porosity" that enables the cultural propensity of the South Asian for the experience of the unio mystica. As a result, it is the vogi (i.e. mystic) who is still a major culture-hero in the South Asian subcontinent, as witness the many "swamis" who claim the limelight.

This kind of individuality may therefore be aptly termed "mandalic", seeing that mandalas (i.e. meditation-diagrams) are a salient component of traditional yogic praxis. Or, to put it more descriptively, it may be termed "holonic". This is my neologism based on Arthur Koestler's concept of the "holon", which is a whole that is in turn a part of other wholes. Koestler argues that everything in nature behaves like a holon.

Thus, Indic "holonic" individuality is antipodally different from the atomistic individuality, that is modal to the Western civilization. Further, this Indic individuality, as consummated in the self-image of the mystic, bestows a very high degree of personal autonomy, since the experience of mystical union confers what the anthropologist Aghananda Bharati calls an "irreversible poise".

Finally, the existential attraction of the Indic mode of individuality for the Western person is indicated by the vogue of Rajneeshism in

Euro-America. Many of these Western votaries of the movement were not only people with graduate degrees and highly successful careers, but quite a few had also been votaries of the Human Potential movement in the west, some being in fact leaders of the same. In other words, in line with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, they seemed to seek the extra-personal dimensions implicate in the Indic brand of "cosmomorphic" individuality, with the existential poise and autonomy that it also potentially vouchsafes.

2. Hedonism with an In-built Golden Mean.

As already indicated above, Tantrism is also a traditional mystical sadhana. The only difference is that this brand of yoga involves the use of sensual, that is hedonistic, techniques. Thus, the goal of the Tantric is also the traditional one of mystical union, which moreover, when achieved and experienced, is very much more blissful than even the joy of sexual union, as the canonical "Taittiriya Upanishad" explicitly states.

As a result, when Tantric sadhana is successfully consummated by the mystical experience, it tends to put an end to the common human obsession with sex, that seems to be especially pronounced among modern people. This would seem to be evident also from the popularity of the Indian "sex guru" Rajneesh among Westerners.

The apparent paradox here is easily resolved when we reflect that Western attitudes to human sexuality are permeated by the Judaeo-Christian ideology, which inculcates a high degree of guilt vis a vis sensual pleasure. As the anthropologist Allan Coult characterized this mentality, "You must feel bad in order to feel good". It is therefore no wonder that Rajneesh's explicitly guiltless neo-Tantric teachings were so attractive to people in the supposedly sexually-liberated West.

Further, the Tantric ideology is also intimately connected with the Indic cosmogony, which views the universe as the

steady-state emanation of the divine lila (i.e. sexual sport) of Shiva and Parvati. This is a far cry from the linear, purposeful teleology of the Western civilization, of which the joyless Protestant workethic is such a characteristic product.

Rajneesh too, as neo-Tantric guru, sought to inculcate in his Western acolytes this ludic worldview of lila, imbued as it is existentially with a spirit of spontaneity. As he said, "Tantra is a playfulness... it is sincere, but not serious". And again, "the whole of existence is celebrating... everywhere there is fun, there is joy and delight".

3. Indic Gender-Mutuality. Many contemporary Western feminist scholars of South Asia, like Miranda Shaw and Rita Gross, have commented in highly positive terms on the gender attitudes displayed in Tantrism. They see these Indic attitudes, based as they are on the traditional religious philosophy of Sankhya expressing an equitable ideology of "gender-mutuality", or complementarity.

This is amply evident too from the ubiquitous, pan-Indic iconographic worship of Shiva in the form of the linga, since that iconom is always embedded in the vani-pitha. That is to say, Shiva is always worshipped in conjunction with his consort Shakti. The most graphic indication of this male-female conjunction is indeed another iconographic form of Shiva. This is the deity called Ardhanariswara, that is "the god who is half-female", who is sculpturally represented with one half of her/his/its body male and the other female!

That this is no mere ideological smokescreen is also indicated by the crossculturally salient fact that a majority of the Western followers of the neo-Tantric Rajneesh were women. And even more significantly, most of the leaders of his movement were women, who were termed "supermoms"! This kind of leadership role-playing by women in large groups is still quite novel by Western standards even today,

though it is almost passe in supposedly backward South Asia, where many of the top leaders in contemporary politics have been and are women! And of course, in traditional South Asian Tantric praxis, women too have been influential gurus.

To conclude therefore, South Asian Tantrism displays the remarkable cultural persistence of three core Indic themes, which I have also briefly shown to be antipodally distinctive via a vis the corresponding ideological and civilizational mainsprings of modernity/Westernity.

References*:

Bolle, Kees W.:

1962 Tantric Elements in Sri Aurobindo. In Numen IX; 128-142. 1965 The Persistence of Religion: An Essay on Tantrism and Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Nandy, Ashis:

1976 Woman Versus Womenliness in India: An Essay in Social and Political Psychology. Psychoanalytical Review 63 (2): 301-315. 1978-1979 Oppression and Human Liberation: Towards a Third World Utopia Alternatives IV : 165-180.

1983 The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Saran, Prem :

1994 Tantra : Hedonism in Indian Culture. New Delhi : D.K. Printworld.

1995 "Yoga", "Bhoga", and "Ardhanariswara": Individuality, Edaemonism, and Gender in South Asian Tantrism. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms; Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Sharma, T.C.:

1983 The Indo-Mongoloids and their Contributions to the Culture and Civilization of India. Guwati : Bulletin of the Tribal Research Institute of Assam 1(1).

*N.B. The References above are incomplete (Reminder to self: to scan the text of the paper, and also my Ph. D. Dissertation).

THE DEATH RITES OF THE THADOU KUKIS

Nazmeen Anam.

Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills with its landscape of green hills and deep ravines, crystal springs and verdant forest, provides shelter to a number of tribes, of which the Thadou Kukis are one of them. This colourful tribe seems to reside in pockets in both the hill districts of Assam from a pretty long time.

Kuki, the genetic term, as it is, belongs to Indo-Mongoloid stock. They are a short to medium statured, fair people with Mongoloid facial features. The tribe has several sub-tribes of which some of them are Thadou, Hrangkhal, paite, Anal, Gangte, Hmar, Kom, Beite, Lamsang etc. The sub-tribe Thadou forms the main bulk of the population, which has the following clans viz. Sitlhou, Mongjel, Lhoujem, kipgen, Lhouvm, Jomhau, Chonglai, Hangsing, Haokip and Singait. The origin of the Kukis is traced to be in China subsequently in Myanmar but they happen to reside in Manipur and Mizoram from a very long time. They are also scattered in Tripura, Chittagaou Hill Tracts and in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills.

The belief of only one supreme being called "Palhien" is prevalent among the Thadou Kukis. The concept of Heaven and Hell is acceptable to them. They also believe, that after the death of a person, he goes to 'Mithiko' - the village of death. People with good deeds are believed to go directly to 'Mithiko' after death. They firmly believe that the soul of a dead person does not leave his surroundings immediately, but moves in the

house for seven days. Therefore, meals are taken to the grave-yard by the priest or the head of the house for seven days. This is called 'Thie-Anse'.

The two types of death, natural and unnatural have different methods of burial. Unnatural deaths are called 'Thise' or 'Gamthi' and natural deaths are called 'Inthi'. The Thadous held 'Thilha', the spirit of the deceased to be responsible for the death of a person. Person with unnatural deaths are not buried in a graveyard and as such no corps price or 'Longman' is levied. Barren women or women without male issues are buried near the house of the person. In still born babies also, same is the method of burial. Death of a divorced women or 'Nungkik' is considered an unnatural one. The dead body is taken out through an entrance made in the wall, but not from the door. Here every work is accomplished by the left side. For instance, the carriers of the dead body are to stretch their left legs first; again serving and sipping of rice beer is permissible to be served by widows only.

Persons who are killed by wild animals is considered by the Thadou to be a matter of disgrace. Such deaths are not accompanied by any ceremonies.

In natural deaths, the deceased is bathed and dressed in his best clothes. When the dead body is placed in the middle pillar of the house, it is called 'Sanglai'. According to K. Kipgen in his book 'Thadou Kukis', an elderly person, related through the father

performs 'Thilamhon' (making way for the dead) by shouting loudly the names of the forefathers of the deceased one by one chronologically and after every uttering of the names, he chants the word 'Lamotin' (make way) stamps the floor with his right leg and moves a step towards the main entrance. He moves in such a speed as to complete the genealogy on reaching the main door. Then he fires his gun, chops the left frame of the main door. The significance of this practice is to express the identity of the deceased and to ensure a respectful journey to 'Mithiko'. The Thadous used to kill a dog on the death of a person, so that the soul of the deceased is accompanied by the sound of the dog for a safe journey to the valley of the deceased.

The Thadou Kukis have three ways of disposing their deceased ones. Burying the dead body by performing 'Lang' is the most respectable method. A person performing 'Chon' ritual in his lifetime is subjected to the 'Lang' method of burial (Chon is a burial, which is observed with the motive of declaring himself wealthy. To declare himself wealthy, his granary should have plentiful paddy, a large number of livestock etc. It is observed for seven days, where seven types of animals are killed for rituals). A person having performed 'Chon', is ensured to get a seat in the 'Mithikho'. It is learnt, that in the past, for 'Lang' type of burial, the dead body is bathed in boiling water or oil is forced through the mouth, making the person stand erect, so that all the waste come out through the exterior. After this, the body is dried by smoking in the fire. The corpse is then laid in a palangin by putting a turban or 'Delkop' on his forehead. It is kept for seven days so that all known and related can attend the funeral. Each day the body is taken from the house to the graveyard and back for seven times. 'Langla' a funeral song is sang all these days.

The second kind of burial is called 'Khunsum', which is the next most

respectable form of burial. Here, the wife of a person, who has performed 'Chang-ai' in their lifetime, is entitled for this type of burial (Chang-ai is a ritual observed by a person who becomes wealthy by reaping a good harvest for three consecutive years in his village. It is celebrated in the name of his wife. Large scale feasting is performed). Even persons, who have performed 'Sa-ai' ritual is entitled to 'Khunsum' method of burial (Sa-ai is a function which is observed by a person who has earned fame by killing more than a hundred big animal). Unlike 'Lang' type of burial, here the dead body is moved from the house to graveyard seven times for one day only.

The third method of burial is the common type, meant for the common people. No moving of dead bodies, seven times a day is involved here.

The graves are usually dug in such a way that the face of the dead man faces the east and the head towards the west. After laying the deceased, in grave, some people offer country liquor, fruits etc. for the grave, which are meant for carrying it to the souls of the other dead relatives in the heaven, by the soul of the deceased. In the past, large stones were erected on the graves of the chiefs. After the burial a game is killed for the deceased men, which is called 'Ko-sa' meaning grave meat. Some particular portion of the animal are distributed to the relatives and lineage head. The rest of the meat are cooked and offered to the people who assisted the burial.

The system of death price or 'Longman' is prevalent among the Thadou Kukis. The price of 'Longman' is equivalent to one 'Mithun' and the eldest maternal is entitled to receive it. The recipient of the 'Longman' must kill a pig, at the time of demanding. In case of a father's death, the 'Longman' is paid by the eldest son.

It is to be noted, that all these rituals pertaining to death and disposal of a dead

body were used to be observed rigidly by the non-christians only. The custom of disposing the deceased among the Thadou Kuki is accompanied by numerous rituals in almost every phase. The system of disposing is also determined by the social status of the person. It is found that in the past persons who have performed 'Sa-ai' and 'Chang-ai' rituals were honoured with special memoriam, by erecting huge stones on their

graves. It is also learnt, that in the hoary past, the dead body of chiefs were kept in isolated raised platform to decompose itself.

It is observed, that, after embracing Christianity by almost all, many of the rites and rituals were given away. But there has been a tendency among the people to preserve their tradition as well as to abide by the norms of the church, simultaneously.

A PEEP INTO THE MISING FOLK SONGS

Punyeswar Payeng

Munsiff, Rangia Court,
Rangia.

It would not be gainsay if we remark that Mising men and women are songsters and Songstresses by their prehistoric nature of life. They are by nature jovial and peace loving people. During their recreation they sing their customary songs which are more or less spontaneous outburst of their minds. Like the different tribes, Misings also sing their customary and traditional songs with different tunes and rhymes. While singing Oinitem they not only beat drums and play pipes befitting to the occasion but dance too.

Misings are very laborious and hard working people but they never part with music even at the time of work. The women folk in spite of confining themselves in their household works such as cooking, weaving, spinning and stitching or husking etc. sing their customary songs with nice tunes befitting to the ideas of the specific songs and also through different songs tease their counterparts, friends and lovers. The youths through their traditional songs and their inner meanings endeavor to win over the hearts sometimes spend their nights singing love songs before retiring to bed. The melodious songs of the cockee (when sung sometimes) make the youths or the counterpart of the singer emotional and divert their mind towards feelings of love. According to tradition a song must have the faculty to attract the human emotion and feelings by the language used and tune applied for.

In other words, the songs and their tunes must be appropriate for the purpose for which it is intended. The Mising "Oinitem" or the love songs must have the characteristic of charming tunes and wordings towards not only to a particular lover, but general to all the people of all ages and for times. Mising songs are practically something like a far stretching and wobbling ocean on a full moon night.

However, on deeper analysis, it is found that some of the Mising songs are centered round the ancient glory and reminiscence of their pre-historic abode in hills and hillocks of the present Arunachal Pradesh. Such songs narrate the setting up their small villages, their coming down to plains in search of a new habitat on the bank of the mighty Brahmaputra and the river Subansiri. Like the songs of the other tribes, the Mising songs were also composed for their pains and pangs and joys and happiness. The chief characteristic of the Mising songs is that they are pre-historic, traditional and tell-tales of their movements from place to place in search of a peaceful life in this beautiful world. It is worthwhile to mention that Mising songs are not of recent origin but of time immemorial. On careful scrutiny from the ideas of the songs, they can be classified in to the following categories (1) MIBO ABANG OR RITUAL SONGS, (2) KABAN OR PATHETIC (WEEPING) SONG, (3) MIDANG OR WEDDING SONG, (4) KANINAM OR

LULLABY and (5) OINITOM OR LOVE SONGS.

Let us now discuss about each category of the songs according to their inner ideas having sociocultural aspects and the way they are singing.

MIBO ABANG (PRAYER OR RITUAL SONG) :

Before the adoption of Bhakatia Pantha, or Neovaisnavite sect the "Mibe" who is a Mising priest initiated all the ritual functions. Therefore, Mibe is invited to perform ritual functions in order to appease the evil spirits and the benevolent spirits as well. Thus the disease making spirits responsible for disease are coaxed and worded off by the Mibe by reciting prayer songs. This ritual or prayer song is called "Mibe Abang". So to speak, the Mibe song is definitely a song for appeasement of the spirits and not for human enjoyment. Except Mibe. It is beyond the reach of other people to understand such type of devotionalsong. It is believed that at the time of reciting the prayer song (Mibo Abang) the Mibo turned to a supernatural being who can speak to the spirits.

According to Mising custom, when sacrificial offerings are made, it is necessary to call for the souls of the dead ancestors to receive the offerings and to protect the family from any disease or calamities by keeping them healthy and happy. In the absence of any written documents, as is not possible on the part of any individual family to know all the names of the dead ancestors, it is believed that, the dead ancestors whose names are left out in sacrificial offerings cause various kind of troubles to the family from time to time. So in order to find out the names of the left out ancestors, the Mibe recites the prayer songs. Then the Mibe shouts and talks with spirits to tell the names of unknown ancestors. He also starts talking in a totally different voice. This is said to be the spirit's

voice. The Mibo also narrates the suffering of the sick persons before the creator and forefathers and pray for their mercy. It is also believed that the Mibo can call back the souls of the sick when it goes away to the above of Uie among (abode of death persons) by reminding the souls about the Nature's beauty on earth.

So in order to remind the souls, the Mibo sings :- "Dermitunge tirmeki tirmangai, Kambang appune reyapko reyaba. **KABAN (WEEPING OR PATHETIC SONG):-**

The Kaban song is an expression of deep sorrow and bereavement over the death or parting with the dearest for ever. This song has its pathos and a sense of despair mixed with nostalgia. Human life is transitory but love is permanent. According to them destiny frauds someone in such a way that he is subjected to lead a loner's life till his death. Through this song one recollects the reminiscence of those wonderful and fun filled days enjoyed together with life partner or perspective consort. These songs also reflect this sorrow when he finds his lover entombed covered with thick grasses. It is really a pathetic story as some people are made to spend the later part of their life alone.

Generally, Mising boys and girls play, sing and dance together since childhood. When they become young, romance develops. They try to meet each other in a schedule place or a bathing ghat to express their love. They do not long to separate from each other and their ultimate goal is to become husband and wife. In Mising society, it may also happen that the boys elope with the girls when either of their parents have opposed their marriage. Sometimes due to long enmity between the two families the girl is forced to marry an unknown person without her consent. This unbearable separation forms the themes for their songs. The boy or the girl sings

weepingly out of desperation and expresses the agony and pangs of separation. So They sing out of dejection :-

"Ciya nengane hoiya nengane
Oinom nengane ngantad bamdune ;
Kinpang chuyamilo kapang chuyamilo
Oinom payadpe yadbem memangai.
chilo yayange yampo yayange
Polo lokari kartid dungkune,
chilo yayangs yampa yayange
Gitung gitulo okum okumlo
Bigang bigala kabla dungkubo.
Rune donyino pine polono
Nyakke mikchi sim jabam kalangka."

'Kaban Song' has gradually reached vanishing point. There is also dearth of Kaban singers. Some of the Kaban songs composed by Prof. Nahendra Padun, are voiced by the Mising singer Smti Biyoia Payeng Taye and a few other singers. Now-a-days, the songs of 'Kaban' and Mibo Abang' are on the verge of extinction unless due importance is given to revive the same.

MIDANG (WEDDING SONG) :

Midang song in Mising society is quite different with that of Assamese Biyanam. The theme of this song is to remind her as to how she was born and brought up and how she spent her early life with her parents, brothers sisters and friends. Now, she has to leave her parents, brothers, sisters and most of relatives and friends, her villages and forests where she spent years together. She weeps at the time of parting with all her relatives and friends from whom she was getting plenty of love and affection. Now she is given away to the stranger's house for good to lead a new life. So, she sings weepingly when she bids farewell to her relatives and friends. So to speak, Mising, Midang song is an expression of bidings farewell to the tear-full girl. The girl at the time of departure addressing to her parents, sings farewell song, a beautifully composed piece of a customary and traditional rendering in her own dialect.

Thus she sings :-

"Nanou nana chilo kalakke
Nyakke dungkadem dakkar gorame
Rantid buktid yekune,
Nani Babunolu Donyi-polo kangamadape,
Duma gela chilo pakinnam ribipe
Biken bilenna."

KANINAM (LULLABY) :

Mising women are hard working. They have no time to sit idle. Since women are busy from morning till evening, they have no extra time to take care of their children. So, when a baby is crying, the mother with child on her back sings songs of the moon, stars, trees, rivers, birds and animals at the time of husking, cooking, reaping of paddy, spinning and weaving etc. The theme for the many of the lullabies centre round the moon. Sometimes the mother sings songs praying to the moon to send one or two star (s) for her baby. Another song of pacifying the weeping child is to cause fear in the mind of children by singing songs of the demons, spirits, Gods and Goddesses and ferocious animals. To Lull the child by singing songs is the theme of this song (Kaninam). Thus the Mising mother ask her baby not to weep till the baby dove can fly.

'Oiyawa kappaya Pekkawa demada,
dedadin ayemilo kablangka.'

The mother assures her weeping baby that she will take revenge against the person who has beaten her baby :-
'Oiyawa oiyawa chekabi demtane
demlikdem demyekune.'

In the past parents feel proud of their sons when they see them driving out the cattle for grazing with echari (immature bambritick) along with the other village cowherds. So the Mising mother sings-
'Ngakkena oiyabi echari bangela garuwam rakiyeku.'

OINITOM (LOVE SONG)

One of the most popular song is Oinitom. This song is an essential part of

joyful life. It is not known who composed those songs. There are a number of songs on which the Mising sing either in the social function or at a private place. One may hear the spontaneous flow songs from the lips of Mising men and women. In the past, the main aspect of the function of this type was to train up the village young boys and girls in singing and dancing. A boy is singing love song specially composed for her beloved sweetheart. They show their gestures to attract their lovers through this type of songs. According to Mising customs, when a new boy or girl comes to their village, they organise a function and start beating drum, singing Oinitom followed by colorful dances. Both boys and girls are singing love songs and romance begins during dances and singing. The boy stares at his sweetheart with loving glance and the girl reciprocates as well. Through oinitoms they communicate their emotions and compare the beauty of their lovers with that of the natural beauty of flowers, trees and rivers etc.

Thus the Mising boys sing admiring the beauty of their lovers :-

"Amoi gadyuma,
mutiyem tuyuma
ankelongne aslda
dagyum kayuma."

(O' yes, eyes are the windows of mind).
Apindak aramde

Yallam kabengdung
Mirse dikang emnamin
Mikchem titchul kabdune.

Siri oiya siyado
Eraliya mayade
Agam luma lumape
Achinangem dadune."

Some times, boys in group sing oinitoms aloud in the night roaming all over the village roads and public places in order to gain over the heart of their sweet-hearts. The cowherds while tendering their cattle or at the time of return from the grazing site sing oinitoms praising and comparing the melodious songs of the Cuckoo, the buzzing of bees with the well developed and muscular figures of the healthy boy and girl. Mutual appreciation is the main theme of Mising love songs. So to speak, oinitoms afford them opportunities for choosing their life partners.

Now, the traditional Mising folk sings have got a stepmotherly treatment with the advent of new popular song like Anuniton (modern songs), Assamese modern songs, Hindi songs and the like. The traditional singers who believe in the spirit of tradition are a rare breed now and the budding ones have no sense of realism and artistic outlook like that of the traditional singers. It is now high time to revive these melodious folk songs which are still glittering in the lips of elders of Mising society.

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF BODOS A PLAIN TRIBES IN ASSAM

Dr. Haren Kr. Hazarika

LLB, Ph.D.. (Joun.)

Asstt, Secretary, State Selection Board,
Govt. of Assam

Deptt. of Education, Dispur, Guwahati-6

The Boro Kacharis of Assam is a branch of the Great Bodo Group of the Indo-Mangoloid family falling within the Assam-Burmese linguistic Section. Their identity is not uniform as an ethnic group. The Bodos are an important plain tribes in the Brahmaputra valley. They are of Mangoloid origin. The Mangoloid were known to the vedic Aryans as kiratas. The Mangoloid of Kirata race came to Assam from china. Tibet and Burma in different periods. The term Bodo indicates that they came from Tibetan region. Their original home was known as 'Bod' in their own language. Coming as they did from the Bodo country, they were known as Bodos.

The Bodo speaker socially belongs to the Mangoloids. The Bodo languages under the present analysis is said to have no inhabited scripts of their own. The Bodo literature including folk songs, falkfals, Ballads, ideoms and proverbs and of the considerable amount of written unpublished literature in Assamese and Roman Scripts. The published literature comprises mainly of books relating to poems, stories, prayers. Songs on the one hand and the journals and Magazines with different types of compositions on the other hand. The thinking and beuties of Bodo literature will reveal their mode of life and attitude towards nature the remaining metres of Bodos verse

and songs always appeal to the readers ear and heart.

Elements and Culture :

The Bodo culture is a part and parcel of the Mangoloid (Kirate) culture. The Mangoloid Bodo culture in Assam has influenced to some extent the India (Indo Aryan) Assamese culture and the vice versa. The different aspects of Bodo culture in the background of Assamese culture are discussed by a good number of competent scholars.

The Bodo claim to be the original inhabitants of Assam. S. Endle used the term Kachari to designate the tribes. The Kachari title is usual interpreted as being the Indians term. The Kacharies call themselves as Bodos. Before the coming of the Ahoms to Bodos control the political desting on ancient Kamrup. Before the annexation of the two valleys of Assam by the British, the Bodos tried to resist the onslaught of the British and since failed to succeed, they regin themselves to the dictates of fate.

The changing trend of social outlook of the Bodo Kacharis can be visualized with the emergency of the 19th century. The traditional near animalic belief that contributed to guide the religious philosophy of the Bodo Kacharis begin to change by the preaching of Guru Kalicharan Brahma

who was inducted to the Brahma faith by Srimati Paramhansa Sibnarayan Sarani of Calcutta.

The Bodos are educationally backward but their trend of higher education has single grown among the Bodos, mainly through the created a band of social elite among the Boro Kacharis prospended the in more rapid stride in all fields. This section of the people in the subsequent years were able to put into motion the political aspirations of the tribals people as ultimately led to the formation of Assam Tribal league in 1935 for achieving this purpose.

The Bodo society is patriarchal with certain traces of matriarchal type of qualifies. In the Bodo society the childrens are recognised by their father and they belong to the clan of their father. A tribal family is composed of husband wife and their fathers and childrens. After the death of the father the property is inherited by the sons. In the absence of sons by the daughter. According to the concept of the society as the male. The contributions offered by a Bodo women in the field of economic development is so prominent that apart her the economic prosperity of the Bodo family can't be imagined.

The Bodo society is divided into twelve sub-clans. Harmony among different sub-clant is the keynote of their social system. The collective needs food and clothing together with their social manners in general have been by the aspect of their society. In connection with birth, death and wedding the Bodos observe various ceremonies.

The religions of the Bodos is simple. Their supreme god is "BATHAU". He is the ruler of the world. The monotheistic and monistic tendencies becomes more marked with the efflux of time. There is also the popular religions as prevalent among them. The popular superstitions, belief in spirit, imps spells, incantation and with craft find a place in the sacred connon. Sacrifice

occupy a prominent place in the Bodo rituals. Utterances of mantras and salutations are the common aspects in all types of Bodo worships.

Apart from the changing trends is socio religious and socio-political fields changes have also occurred in recent times in the livelihood patterns and the way of life of the Bodo-Kacharis. His true that the agriculture still continues to be the primarily source of livelihood of the tribes, but it has undergo diversification replacing the most cases the traditional one year on crop pattern that hitherto prevailed till the fifties. His however to fact that in the context of the present day fashion conscious would considerable among the changes have taken place in the dress outfits now only of the male section but the female as well. Similarly, the art of dyeing yarn and cloths which was community secret of the tribes is gradually feeding out.

The Bodos are cultivators and agriculture is the mainly of their economy. But now a days pressed by financial difficulties many Bodos have to earn their breed by different profession other than agriculture. In the off season many Bodos serves as day labour or open small shops.

As Bodos are cultivators, their socio-religious festivals are related to Agricultural pursuits. Baisaga is the spring time festival of bodos. It is celebrated with singing, dancing and consuming rice, beer etc. Kharai is the greatest religious ceremony of the Bodos. Both music and dancing from Bodo part of their culture. The use of various type of instruments playing it turning point to regular culture of Music. The musical instruments are gagana, cymbol, Dotara, Fluite, Drum etc. The Bodo dance at its best is seen the Bihu festivals and Kharai ceremony. To some it is a national festivals of the community. It is intended to properitidte "Bathow" of 'Sibrai' the chief diety of adoration of the Bodo Kacharis along with main (the Goddess of harvests)

and hosts of other Gods and Goddesses. Bathow according to them represents the five basic elements called "panchnut" (viz- earth, water, air and fire) out of which has emerge the human body and for that matter the entire universe and the properitiation to this dirty is therefore, held to be on this basic philosophical idea.

The Bodo Kachairs believes that if anybody express any desires on this auspicious movements, it usually gets fulfillment. The usual time for holding the kherai festivals is the month of Kartic (Oct-Nov.) When plantation is over but the seeding are still in the process of growing. It is believe that propritations to "Mainoo" the Goddess of harvests at this time will be amply blessed by a profuse yields.

Apart from the changing trend is socio-religious and socio-political fields, changes have also occured in recent times in the livelihood patterns and the way of life of the Bodo Kacharis. It is true that agriculture still continues to the primerly source of livelihood of the tribes but it has undergo diversification replacing in most case the traditional one crop pattern that hiterto prevailed till the fitness.

It goes without saying that with the changed of time old things die and new ones comes into being to take their place. In the case of Bodo culture also with the gradual change of time some old customs and traditions are in the process of being changed. The conversion to new religious faith is contributing much to this process of changes. As a result of constant intercourse with the Hindus, the Bodos seem to inbibe the Hindu character. The existing Hindu influences upon the Bodos seem to be the made dress, food particularly abstaince of beef eating, use of sacred water, mode of cremation, offering of food to the dear etc. Image worship is in the process of evolution

among the Bodos.

The Bodos are good, story feller. The stories reflect their social attitudes and imagination of their fore fathers. In the myths, it is seen that their imagination story from the creation itself. It goes without lying that with the changing of time old things die and new ones come into being to take their place. In case of Bodo culture also with the gradual changes of time some old customs and traditions are in the process of being changing. The conversion to new religious faith is contributing much to this process of change.

With the development of communication, economic condition, and Education the Bodos have discovered their racial identity. Now they want not only to survive individually, but to survive racially. Since the beginning this migration till today they have been swayed by two influences namely the Aryan were already divided into three groups (a) ten Bodos affiliated to their tribal type of religious belief. (b) Hindus and (c) Christians. All these classifications indirectly cut the root of racial integrity.

Reference :

- (a) S. K. Chatterjee : *Kirata-Jana-Kiti. The Indo Mongoloids : Their contributions to the History and culture of India, Calcutta : 1951.*
- (b) Mr. R. Rath : *Bodo Kachari their Darshan : Assam Sahitya Sabha Patrika, Vol 21, Jorhat 1961.*
- (c) Rev. S. Endle : *The Kachari, reprint Delhi, 1975.*
- (d) Bhuben Narzy : *Bodo Kacharis Samaj aru Sanskriti 1966, Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati-1.*
- (e) Sri M.M. Brahma : *A brief introduction of the Bodo Kacharis of Assam Bulletin of the T.R.I. Assam Vol No. 1, 1985.*
- (f) Chaki Ram Thakuria : *Bodo, Kacharis Samaj Janjibanar Geet, souvenir of All Assam Tribal Sangha, 10th session 1977 (Assam).*
- (g) Mono Ranjan Lahiri : *Bodo Sahitya Bikash (In Assamese). Souvenir, All Assam Tribal Sangha, with session 1977, P. 16.*

SOME KEY ASPECTS OF FOREST MANAGEMENT IN TRIBAL AREAS

R. Zaman
Director,

ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
FOR TRIBALS & SCHEDULED CASTES

A large number of people prefer to make the forest as their home. There are certain advantages as the tribal people enjoy by living in forest. The forest provides them with building materials. It also provides them food for fruits of various types., edible leaves, nourishing roots, etc. The fauna is also available for their hunting. The steams in the forest provide them with fish. The tribal people enjoyed hunding freely in the forest. Further, forest provides them with fuel-wood for cooking their food. Apart from these advantages the tribal people enjoyed some sorts of geographical isolation from other people. To live in isolation without interference from communities outside is a kind of desire of almost all tribal. This is partly because of their shyness of contact and also backwardness. In view of the fact that they developed certain primitive traits with their distinct culture which they like to maintain.

STATE OF AFFAIRS IN PRE-BRITISH TIME.

The British came to India in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. Before the advent of the British the tribals in the forest enjoyed the complete freedom for any activity whatsoever. Forest was their life line and the tribals living in the forest could not think of anything without forest. The East India

Company came to India with a trading motive and they fully exploited this. Wherever the British went they always kept their trading interest in mind. The British was relucted to interfere in the internal affairs of the then Ahom kings in beginning of the nineteenth century. However, because of the discovery of tea and subsequently oil, the British jumped into Assam to fulfill their trading interest. Additionally they exploited coal and the vast timber in the dense forest of Assam. It is worthwhile to mention that the first enactment relating to Assam was made in 1873 known as the Inner Line Regulation Act. Prior to the British there was unrestricted intercourse the plains people and the tribes of border but Regulation called the Inner Line Regulations Act of 1873 restriction was imposed to stop the age- old tie of the people of the plains and the hills. While this measure by the British helper them in administration of the plains and tribal areas effectively. They Regulation, in fact, helped the British in boosting their trading of various forest produce. The attitude of the British for administration of forest covered areas is targetted mainly on their trading interest and not on the tribal living in the forest.

DURING BRITISH PERIOD

The British felt necessity of extending their authority in the forest areas for effective

stepping the forest produce. In the pre-British period the commercial exploitation of forest was not there. The forest was used only for their domestic needs of the tribal living within the forest. The British felt that the need of quoting restrictions on the tribals living in the forest for effective exploitations of the forest for boosting their colonial desire.

CUSTOMARY REGULATIONS

It is interesting to note that before the State control of forest came into being the tribal living in the forest had some customary regulations of people's right over forest land and forest produce. The forest owned by the community as a whole on the tribals felt that welfare of a community for the perpetual source of O.K. food fodder and feed is above all considerations. Some customary regulations are mentioned below:-

(1) To stop the indiscriminating exploiting in order to has a sustain supply of forest produce, (2) restrictions on certain of forest or ponds or a stretches of rivers for total production, (3) restriction of family over the quantum of exploitation is imposed by the community. The exploitation has to be as per the need of the family.

Apart from these some other customary regulations are followed because of the religious compulsion. The availability of vast forest reserve with limited tribal population has helped in maintaining the eco system with these customary regulations. Whether the customary Regulation of the tribals would have been sufficient to manage the forest in the scientific way in the long run is a point to be needed.

REGULATIONS FOR FOREST EXCHANGE POLICY DURING THE BRITISH PERIOD

(1855 to 1947)

The intention of the British for control over the forest in India was evident as per back as 1806 when the British reserved deep forest in coastal areas of Malabar. The British

were interested in exporting teak for ship building purposes. England was fighting at that time with Neapolian and goods with good Indian teak was necessary for military purposes.

Later on the British realised the tribals living in the forest may be in hindrance in their total exploitation of the forest. The British colonial emperor depended heavily on Indian forest which was so resourceful. However, the British called for scientific management on forest in India and started working on that line. How scientific was their attitude will be revealed only in enactment of the acts that followed. However, the British established an Imperial Forest Department in 1864.

A. MEMORANDUM, 1855

A memorandum was issued in 1855 which outlined a guideline restricting the life of the forest dwellers further purpose of preservation of forest. The memorandum also sought to be benefited by putting restriction on people's right over forest. Tribals are allowed to live in the forest but only by following the restrictions imposed on them. In otherwards the tribals living in the forest reconsidered as intruders. It may be noted that tribals living in the forest were also punished by the British to exploit forest at reasonable low cost. The tribals provided chief labour in cutting, transportation, etc.

THE GOVERNMENT FOREST ACT, 1865

The memorandum was not sufficient to impose restriction on the tribals and extend state monopoly over the forest. The British realised this and in order to enhance the power of the Govt., the Government Forest Act 1865 was passed.

The remification of the Govt. Forest Act, 1865 is far reaching and subsequent act enacted during the British Period was only improved over this Act. The Act provided any land covered with trees, brush-wood or jungles to be owned State control. At the

same time, the Act provided punishment for the preach out any provision of the Act including arrest of offenders and confiscation of implements used on offenders. Total State Control Restrictions on tribals than punishment are all new things to the tribals. While the tribals were exploiting forest for the domestic needs, the British were interested in commercial exploitation of the forest. The regulations on the tribals was uncalled for. The British had succeeded because there was nobody to protest at that time.

The fall out of the Indian Forest Act, 1865 is that the tribals can do nothing in forest. In fact, by the provisions of the restrictions and punishment for offence the tribals are chained their age-old freedom in the forest was curtailed drastically.

INDIAN FOREST ACT, 1878

The Act was much more comprehensive than the Act passed in 1865. Certain forest terms like tree, timber, forest produce were clearly defined. For the first time forest were classified as (1) Reserved Forest, (2) protected Forest and (3) Village Forest. In reserved forest everything was restricted unless permitted. In protected forest everything was permitted unless restricted. In village forest, the Government retained its authority to cancel or assign the rise to village community.

Further, the Act made provisions to settle the claims of tribals on land declared as forest. Only Forest Officers can settle the claims as per the Act.

The fall out of this Act are many-fold.

(A) Demarcation and fencing by the Forest Department in the forest to exercise and enhance state control over the forest had led to loss of control of the forest dwellers over their habitat. The forest dwellers who dependent mostly on the forest now declared as reserved and protected turned now to the village forest to meet their domestic needs.

Over dependence on village forest by the forest dwellers has led to faster denodation. (B) The tribals living in the forest had always been used by the British for commercial exploitations as tribals were available at cheaper/much rate. The role of the tribals so far as conservation and protection through their customary regulation was over.

(C) With the enactment of the Act and classification of forest the communal ownership concept of the tribals vanished and communal responsibility of the forest evaporated.

NATIONAL FOREST POLICY, 1894

Based on the report by Voelekar on Indian Agriculture, for the first time the close ownership between forest and agriculture was recognised. By the National forest policy (NFP) 1894, cultivation on permanent nature was engaged in forest area. Only the area of forest yielding inferior timbers are to be managed by local population. Hill forest was classified for protection. Only the forest providing valuable timber are to be used for commercial purposes. The forest were classified as forest for preservation, forest for commercial purpose and minor forest and pasture land. The N F P 1896 stretches mainly on revenue aspect and commercial supply of forest produce. To the utter surprise of the tribals even pasture lands which are used by the tribals for grazing of their domestic animals were taken out of their communal control there by removing all source of tribal ownership on forest.

INDIAN FOREST ACT, 1927

The Act is same as the Act of 1878, only penalty for offences were increased.

The Act formulated in the pre-Independence era by the British were based on primarily on enhance revenue collection and commercial exploitation by increasing state control over forest. Although the British were talking about the scientific management

of forest through preservation and conservation, in effect the Act formulated by the British were always aimed at increasing restrictions on tribals inhabiting the forest. This was because of the mis-conception of the British regarding the tribal who used forest for their domestic needs only. Dr.I.H. Hutton an ICS Officer who made extensive study on tribals empty remarks "far from being of immediate benefit of the primitive tribes, the establishment of the British rule in India did most of them much harm than good.

----- the early days of the British administration did very great detriment to the economic position of tribes through ignorance and neglect of their rights and customs." It is to be noted that when Government of India's Act, 1935 was passed by the British, the forest was included in Provincial Legislature (Item 22). The effect of this provision is that the Individual Provincial State started making laws on forest according to the necessity of the State. The enactment made by the Provincial States were more or less in conformity with the acts made by the British and there was nothing special made for the tribals. The scenario that emerges in the pre-Independence stage so far as the tribals living in the forest are concerned is definitely very grim. Because of authoritative control of the British and the mute voices of the tribals because of their backwardness, aloofness, no remedial measures were possible.

POST INDEPENDENCE SCENARIO

Like every-body else in the country probably there was some expectations of the forest tribals to get some justice when India attained freedom. The first policy document in post-Independence India was National Forest Policy, 1952. Strangely this policy supports all the concepts embodied in the National Forest Policy, 1894 and there was nothing new in this policy. To the surprise of all there was no mention of the tribals at all. This is really very sad. The policy emphasised

the growth of forest based industries for the national interest.

At the time of framing of the Indian Constitution probably the forest tribals were not represented before the Constituent Assembly. The problems and deprivation of the tribals for nearly 70 years since 1865 were not highlighted by anybody. As a result nothing specific was mentioned in the Indian Constitution adopted in 1950 for amelioration of the condition of the forest tribals although the general problems are taken care of along with other scheduled tribes enlisted in the Constitution. Nothing has been mentioned even in the Directive Principles of the State Policy regarding forest and the tribals living there. However, by the Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976 with effect from 3.1.1977, a clause namely 48 A was included for protection and improvement of environment and safeguarding of forest and wild life. Clause 48A reads as "the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forest and wild life of the country". The necessity of including a clause on forest was realised only after nearly 30 year of independence. Even this clause has no specific mentioned about the tribals living there whose freedom in the forest was taken away by the British as long back as 1865 thereby reducing them mere cheap labourers which exposes the height of exploitation. A clause embodying the problems of the forest tribals and even that of the Flora and fauna in the Constitution in 1950 would have protected rights and privileges of the forest tribals and environment.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE COMMISSION, 1976

The findings of the National Agriculture Commission i.e. NAC, 1976 is highly tragic i.e. for the tribals. The Commission has failed miserably to identify the real exploiters in the Indian forest and in State made a rootless presumption that the tribals have exploited

the forest. The stretch on commercialisation of the agriculture and protection of industrial wood by NAC is acceptable for national interest. But there is no reason to enehilate the tribal interest living in the forest who have been exploited since the era of the British. In short, the tribal cause was not highlighted even after 29 years of Independence.

INDIAN FOREST BILL, 1980

The Indian forest Bill, 1980 had widen the scope of various forest terms to include more resources available in the forest. Another provision of the Bill judicial powers were conferred to the forest offices along with some discretionary powers. This Bill also wanted to protect forest from the people - meaning the tribals. There is no concerned at all for the livelihood of the tribals. The Indian Forest Bill 1980 become Forest Conservation Act, 1980. The only silver lining in the process of the enactment of the Forest Act is the widespread protest. For the first time in 1982 to rectify the industries turned to the tribals. Another forest policy document was prepared by the Government in 1983 and subsequently revised in 1987. The tribals now are ventilating the justice turned to them through some ecologists and scholars.

NATIONAL FOREST POLICY, 1988

The National Forest Policy (NFP), 1988 is a jointly forward in enactment of Forest Acts since the date of the British. For the first time the specific sections 4.6 on tribal people at forest was incorporated. The symbiotic relationship of the tribals with the forest was recognised by the Government. The Policy clearly stated for protection of customary rights and concessions of the tribals. Again the domestic need of fuel, fodder, minor forest produce and construction timbers were considered to be the on forest produce. The concept of associating the tribals for protection, regeneration and development of forest was recognised. The

pro-tribal attitude of the National Forest Policy emerged very clearly in this document after 40 years of Independence.

THE CHALLENGE

The National Forest Policy Resolution of 1988 is yet to be converted into a new Act. There are indications regarding vested interest playing active role to subvert the desperate entrust embodied in the resolution. Various State Governments including Assam are working with desperate after 1988 resolution. But efforts so far is not pentive rooted.

There need dramatic change of outlook of the Forest department if they are to involve tribals in the forest management. The tribals to be associated in the management of forest is not a easy task-Since the era of the British, tribals have not been involved in any way in management of forest. There are poor managers to manage forest. The perception and conception of the tribals are quite different from that the Forest Department. That the tribals are backward and shy to speak out their mind comes as a big hindrence for joint forest management. Further, it is yet to identify the different problems of the tribals living in the forest.

But the policy document of 1988 provides a great opportunity to serve the tribals who are hard core poor and down-trodden. The association of the tribals may come as a boom for the conservation and protection of a eco-friendly forest. All attempts by the Forest department in this regard may be found to be much more responsive. In order to sort out various problems of the forest and of the tribal people, the forest Department may look forward to active involvement of various other departments.

For implementation of the policy document, however, there are a lot of worries. One worry may be delay in decision making. Till the other day it was the directive of the Forest Department to implement any scheme

as they like with the concept of joint forest management. Many decisions will have to be discussed with the tribals before they are implemented in the forest. Parties involved in decision making are many. It appears also that the power that was enjoyed by the forest officials has been curtailed because of the association needed for joint forest management. There are other concerned also the policy may be an imperial in revenue earning of the Government since the tribals may not favour the felling of the trees even though the felling has been done for scientific reason. At this point the contractor's interest are also likely to be hampered. With the united efforts of the forest tribals consistness among the tribals may lead to more inactive thereby hampering national interest.

In spite of the imperiment and trade to the policy document, it may be stated the Forest department is a very well need organisation from top to grass root level. Most of the officials are imparted training on regular

basis. The Forest department as long experience in forest management the policy document has been framed after a lot of deliberations and it was initiated at the behest of the government at the advice of ecologists, sociologists, anthropologists, environmentalists and others.

The information available at the moment reveals that there are State-wise differences in the procedures for identification of the areas to be covered by joint forest management. There are also differences in deciding the unit of operative community, role of traditional leaders, role of Gaon Panchayats, role of NGOs and so on. This is a highly thinking stage where everybody concerned with flora, fauna, environment and tribal people and national interest much ponder and bring out the strategies to work whole-heartedly for the implementation of the 1988 Policy Document in true letter and spirit. The question lies-can we do it in the near future ?

MATERNAL EDUCATION-- ITS RELATIONS WITH FERTILITY AND MORTALITY: A STUDY AMONG THE AHOMS OF ASSAM

Kanta Chakravarty.

Key words: Ahoms, Assam, Maternal education, Fertility, Mortality.

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted on the Ahoms- a populous Tai population of Assam to explore the relations, if any, between maternal education and fertility and mortality. In the present material, it was found that maternal education plays a considerable role in determining the decline of fertility and mortality. The present findings are in conformity with earlier results.

MATERNAL EDUCATION- ITS RELATIONS WITH FERTILITY AND MORTALITY : A SYUDY AMONG THE AHOMS OF ASSAM.

Kanta Chakravarty.

INTRODUCTION:

Education is considered to be one of the most important variables affecting fertility behaviour, and is believed to be the single most important variable accounting for a large reduction in fertility in those countries which have already experienced fertility decline (Coale 1965; Kirk 1969). Education not only played a historic role in demographic transition but still remains a significant variable affecting fertility behaviour in present times.

It is generally believed that education leads to improved knowlege of and favourable attitude towards birth control and better communication between husband and wife. Education can make child bearing relatively safe and improve the health of the entire family. Educated women are more likely to marry at a late age, postpone child bearing, use family planning medhods and seek prenatal care when pregnant.

One my argue that it is not higher education but formal education along with urban living, economic development and other factors such as exposure to new ideas that widens the range of options. These,combined, produce what Jafee calls "a heightened aspiration" that motivates couples to control their fertility (Jafee 1959). Moreover, education itself is a very complex variable. It reduces the age at marriage and

increases the probability of non-marriage. It increases the chances for survival of infants. Education is also positively associated with spacing, i.e., the higher the education, the longer the interval between one birth and another (Choudhury 1976). Longer spacing may thus result in smaller completed family size and a slower growth rate of population. A survey conducted by the National family Health Survey (NFHS), 1992-93, reported that child-spacing patterns had a powerful effect on the survival chances of children.

The effect of education on fertility has been reported in many studies. According to Caldwell and McDonald (1981) education of mothers is a tool which helps them in breaking some of the traditional norms and makes them relatively more independent in taking decissions within the family situation. Palloin (1981) has shown that literacy has a much greater influence on child mortality than on infant mortality.

Several surveys in India reveal that the education of a women is an important factor for determining the fertility rate. A Mysore population study (1961) reported that the average number of children born to women in Bangolore city who were illiterate or educated upto middle standard was higher that of women who were educate upto high school or more. Driver's (1963) study on

Central India also reveals that there is a consistent relationship between fertility and educational level, i.e., the higher the educational level of women, the lower is the fertility. Hussain (1970a,1970b) showed a steady a steady decline in General Fertility Rate with increasing education. Bharati and Ghose Dastidar (1990) showed that negative relations exist between maternal education and both fertility and mortality.

The National Sample Survey (NSS) reports, 1960-61 and 1961-62 Rounds, showed a decreas in the average number of children born alive with an increase in women's edcation (NSS 1967,1970). It is well established that decline of fertility in Kerala is due to the high literacy level of women there. Bhowmick's (1970) study on zemi Nagas of North East India also reveals that literate women have a lower level of fertility that non-literate women.

Education of Mothers is the most crucial determinant of infant mortality (Gandote et al., 1982; India, Registrar General 1983; Ruzicka and Kanitkar, (1972). Khan et al., (1986) has pointed out that the education of the mother has a strong bearing on infant mortlity .

Studies focusing the possible relationship of maternal education with fertility and mortility especially at the micro-level in specific socio-economic group have not been fully explored in the Indian context. In this regard, data from north east India is conscuous by their absence. Considering the dearth of data, the present paper examinaes the relations between maternal education with fertility and mortality if any, among the Ahoms of rural and urban areas.

MATERIAL AND METHODS :

The present investigation was conducted on the Ahom population inhabiting Chiring Gaon of Dibrugarh and Tiphuk village near Moran town, Sibsagar district. Considering the degree of urban contact sample drawn

from Chiring Gaon has been categorized under 'urban', as the villagers were exposed to and benefitted by the urban facilities maximally. Village Tiphuk, on the other hand, is about 15km away from Moran town and represented a typical 'rural' situation. The survey coducted on 189 evermarried Ahom women of whom 89 are from Tiphuk village and 100 from Chiring Gaon. Women whose husbands are alive and have at least one child are only included. The collected information was also cross checked.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

For the purpose of the present study the educational level of Ahom women is broadly classified in two groups;

Less educated : Illiterate and those who were educated upto primary (Class IV) level.

Educated : Women who were educated, class V or more.

The data of both rural and urban Ahom women shows that the fertility level declines considerably with an increase in the educational level of women. In rural sample, fertility rate of less educated mothers of all ages is 4.86 and 2.89 for the mothers who are educated. Similarly in unrbn sample total fertility rate of less educated mothers of all ages is 4.75 and that of mothers who are educated is 3.14. In the pooled sample of Ahom (rural + urban) also the trend remains the same. It also appears that in both the samples lower educational level occurs generally among the older mother than the younger ones.

It is also apparent from table- 2 that with regard to pre-reproductive mortality, in both rural and urban settings, less educated mothers in all the age groups exhibit much higher fertility rate than the educated mother. The total fertility rate is gradually growing up as the age group of the mother became

remarkable decline in infant child mortality from the less educated mothers to educated mothers. However, juvenile mortality rate increases from 0.93% to 3.85% with increasing literacy level (i.e. from less educated to educated level). In urban sample, the finding is just reverse. In the educated mothers experience higher infant and child mortality than less educated mothers, but juvenile mortality rate declines in them.

In both the rural and urban sample, less educated mothers have higher incidence of still-birth than education mothers. Among rural Ahom, abortion rate slightly declines from 5.24 % to 5.07% with increasing educational level; whereas among urban Ahom, it sharply increases from 2.82% to 7.69% with increasing education of mothers. Thus, in the present study, it appears that maternal education plays a considerable role in determining the decline of fertility and mortality.

According to a study conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), female literacy affects fertility not only directly but also indirectly through child mortality and mean age at first marriage. The total fertility rate has come down from 5.8 in 1960 to 3.6 in 1981. Female literacy and education are also inversely related to birth rates, death rates, infant and child mortality rates and female mortality

rates, the NCERT study says. Female literacy and urbanisation positively reduce the infant mortality rate (IMR). Surveys in the different States have shown that the higher the female literacy the lower is the IMR. Rural and urban differences in IMR are the sharpest in low female literacy states, the study points out. Education pushes up the female mean age at marriage and the higher the female mean age at marriage, lower is the IMR.

It was found that IMR declines sharply with increasing education of mothers from a high of 101 per 1,000 for illiterate mothers to a low of 37 for mothers with at least a high school education, says the National Family Health Survey, 1992-93.

All previous studies have invariably shown that the higher educated women are not only favourably predisposed towards family planning but also use modern and effective contraceptives and start practising contraception soon after marriage or the first birth, unlike those women who have little or no formal education (Choudhury 1976; Mukharjee 1975; Khalifa 1973; Rindfuss and Westoff (1974). It is, therefore, very plausible to argue that the better educated women are more likely to be able to avoid unwanted births and thereby achieve harmony between desired and actual fertility, in comparison to those women who are illiterate.

TABLE -1

Live Births and Fertility Rate by Maternal Education among the Ahom.

Age group (in yrs.)	Rural Ahom		Urban Ahom		Ahom	(R+U)
	Less educated (N=44)	Educated (N=45)	Less Educated (N=28)	Educated (N=72)	Less Educated (N=72)	Educated (N=117)
15-19 yrs	2 (2.00)	7 (1.17)	-	-	2 (2.00)	7 (1.17)

Total reproductive (embryonic wastage)	15 6.55%	8 5.80%	9 6.33%	21 8.50%	24 6.47%	29 7.53%
Infant mortality rate	12 5.61%	3 2.31%	3 2.26%	6 2.65%	15 4.32%	9 2.53%
Child mortality rate	5 2.34%	2 1.54%	2 1.50%	4 1.77%	7 2.02%	6 1.69%
Juvenile mortality rate	2 0.93%	5 3.85%	1 0.75%	1 0.44%	3 0.86%	6 1.69%
Total pre-reproductive wastage	19 8.88%	10 7.69%	6 4.51%	11 4.86%	25 7.20%	21 5.90%

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS :

The work was initially supported by a short term fellowship grant in 1993-94 to the author from Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, Assam, It has since been updated. the author offers her gratitude and thanks to Dr. S.sengupta for his guidance in conducting the study.

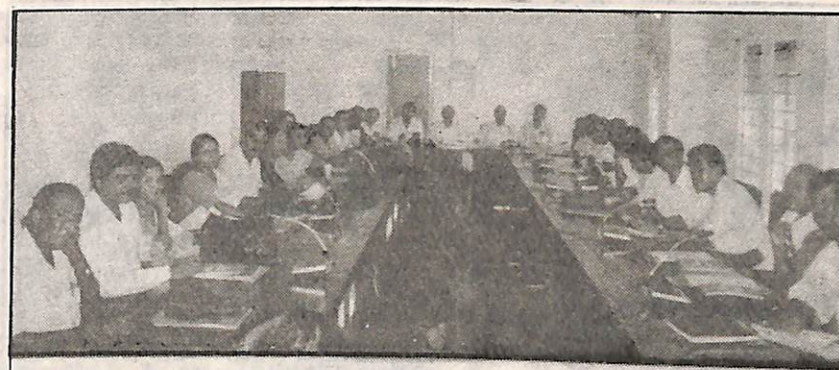
REFERENCES :

- BHARATI, P.** 1990 Maternal education, fertility and mortality in a Bengali population sample. *Journal of Indian Anthropological Society*, 25 : 90-93
- CALDWELL, J.C. AND P. McDONALD** 1981 Influence of maternal education on infant and child mortality, levels and causes. *International Population conference : Proceedings and Selected Papers*. Manila, 1981. Liege : IUSSP. 2; 79-95.
- CHOUDHURY, R.H.** 1982 *Social aspects of Fertility with special reference to Developing countries*. Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 110002, pp. 83-87.

- DAS, B.M.; P.B. DAS AND R. DAS** 1980 BIO social profile of five Mongoloid Populations of Assam. Cyclostyle report anthropological Deptt. Gauhati University.
- DRIVER, E.D.** 1963 Difrerential fertility in Central India. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- GANDOTRA, M.M., N.DAS AND D.DEY** 1982 Infant mortalityand its causes in gujrat. Baroda : Popouation Research Centre.
- HUSSAIN, I.Z.** 1970a An urbam fertility field : A report on city of Lucknow. Lucknow: Demographic Research Centre.
- 1970b Educational status and differential fertility in India. Social Biology, 17 : 132-139
- INDIA, REGISTRAR GENERAL MAHADEVAN, K.,** 1983 Survey on infant and child mortality, 1979. New Delhi : Ministry of Home Affairs.
- 1989 Population Dynamics in the Indian States. Mittal Publications, New Delhi-110059.
- NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEY** 1967 Tables with notes on family planning Sixteenth round. July 1960 - June 1961. No. 116. New Delhi : The Cabinet Secretariate, Govt., of India
- NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEY** 1970 Tables with note on couple fertility. Seventeenth Round. September 1961 - July 1962. No. 154. New Delhi; : The Cabiner Secretariate, govr., of India.
- PALLONI, A.** 1981 Mortality in Latin America : Emerging Patterns. Population and Development Review, 7 : 623-649.
- RUZICKA, L.T. AND T. KANITKAR** 1972 Infant mortality in an urban setting : The case of greater Bombay. In studies on mortality in india. edited by K.E. Vaidyanathan, pp. 186-204. Madras : The Gandhigram Institute of rural Health and Family Planning, Gandhigram.
- THE ASSAM TRIBUNE** 1995, November 28. Infant Mortality Declining.
- THE ASSAM TRIBUNE** 1995, April 23. Female literacy has strong effect on total fertility rate.



A batch of Senior & Middle level trainee officers of Various Department



A view of the trainee officers attending training course on "Tribal Development" conducted by the institute at its premises.



A Karbi woman preparing Rice-bear



A view of Unemployed Tribal youth attending Tribal orientation Training Course conducted by this Institute.



A view of the Scheduled castes unemployed youth attending orientation Training Course conducted by this Institute.



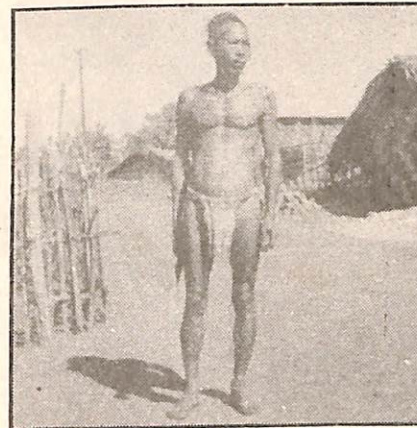
A Karbi woman with a basketful of paddy.



Dr. P.C. Bhattacharya, Rtd Principal, B. Baruah College, Guwahati, Inaugurating three day seminar on Tribal Tradition and its Relation to Development in the Hill areas of Assam, organised by District Research office, Diphu in collaboration with the AIRTSC



A view of the participant scholars attending the state level seminar on Tribal Tradition and its Relation to Development in the Hill areas of Assam.



Front view of a Karbi Man.



Children being Interviewed by the Investigator for the project Social Assessment study in five DPEP (II) district of Assam sponsored by DPEP.