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BHARAT RATNA DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

BULLETIN

OF
ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
FOR
TRIBALS AND SCHEDULED CASTES
GUWAHATI



Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R. Ambedkar
 Birth : 4th April, 1891, Death : 6th December, 1956

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 OF THE
ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
 FOR
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GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
 DIRECTORATE OF
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EIGHTH ANNUAL ISSUE, 1992

EDITOR
DR. B. N. BORDOLOI

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Editorial Note:

This is the Eighth Annual Issue of the Bulletin of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes. This issue is dedicated to the memory of Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, whom the countrymen regard as the 'Father of the Indian Constitution' and who fought throughout his life for social justice for the weaker section of the people of India, specially for those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. His birth centenary was celebrated throughout the length and breadth of the country during 1990-91 as the year of 'Social Justice.'

Although we had tried to bring this issue of our Bulletin out during the Birth Centenary Celebration of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, it could not be done so due to some unavoidable circumstances beyond our control. Esteemed readers, well-wishers and our patrons will kindly excuse us for the delay in publishing this commemorative issue.

In this issue besides our faculty members articles by three distinguished persons on Dr. Ambedkar are also incorporated. These distinguished persons are Padmasree Satish Chandra Kakati, a veteran journalist, Shri Nandeswar Bania, I.A.S. (Retd.) and Shri Nakul Das, a veteran journalist who is now a Cabinet Minister in the Council of Ministers, Assam. I am grateful to all the three distinguished persons for allowing their articles on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to be incorporated in this issue.

It is our belief that like the previous issues, this issue of our Institute's Bulletin will also be well-received. We would like to have feed-back on this issue in the forms of comments and suggestions from our esteemed readers.

I acknowledge with thanks the help and co-operation received from different quarters in bringing out this Eighth Issue of our Institute's Bulletin.

Dr. B. N. Bordoloi

Editor

Bulletin of Assam Institute of Research
for Tribals and Scheduled Castes and
Ex-Director

Assam Institute of Research for
Tribals & Scheduled Castes, Khanapara,
Guwahati-781022

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Eighth Annual Issue of the Bulletin of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes should have seen the light of the day within the year 1991 itself but as mentioned by the Editor in his Editorial Note, some adverse circumstances stood in his way and the consequent delay. Henceforth efforts will be made to bring out the publication within the stipulated time-schedule.

The publisher gratefully thanks the Editor for taking pains in compiling and editing the volume with materials drawn from different sources including those articles already published in Assamese and getting them published again in this volume with permission for English rendering.

29-6-92
GUWAHATI-22

H. SONOWAL
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**BULLETIN OF THE
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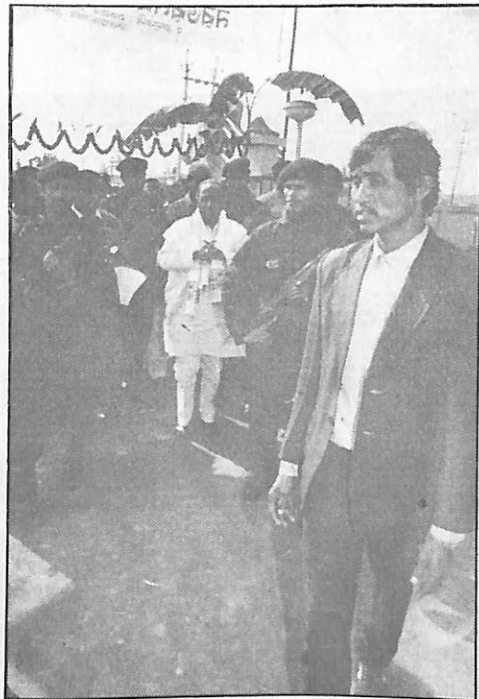
EIGHTH ANNUAL ISSUE

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Shri Hiteswar Saikia, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam, seen being received at the gate on the occasion of inauguration of Institute's new building complex.



Shri Hiteswar Saikia, Hon'ble Chief Minister Assam, seen entering into the premises of the Institute's new building complex.



Inauguration of the new building complex of the Institute by Shri Hiteswar Saikia, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam.



Photo shows the presentation of a scarf to Shri Hiteswar Saikia, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, by a tiny tot.



Photo shows the presentation of a Gamocha to Shri Hiteswar Saikia, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam at the inaugural function of the Institute's building complex.

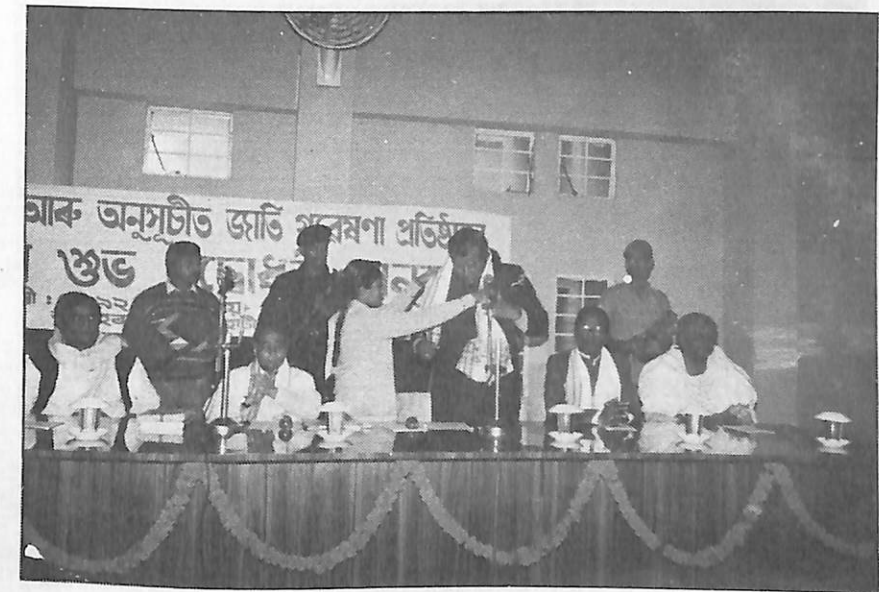


Photo shows the presentation of a Gamocha to Shri Bargaram Deuri, Hon'ble Minister, welfare of plains Tribes and Backward classes.



Dr. B.N. Bardoloi, Ex-Director of the Institute. seen welcoming the distinguished guests at the Inaugural Meeting.



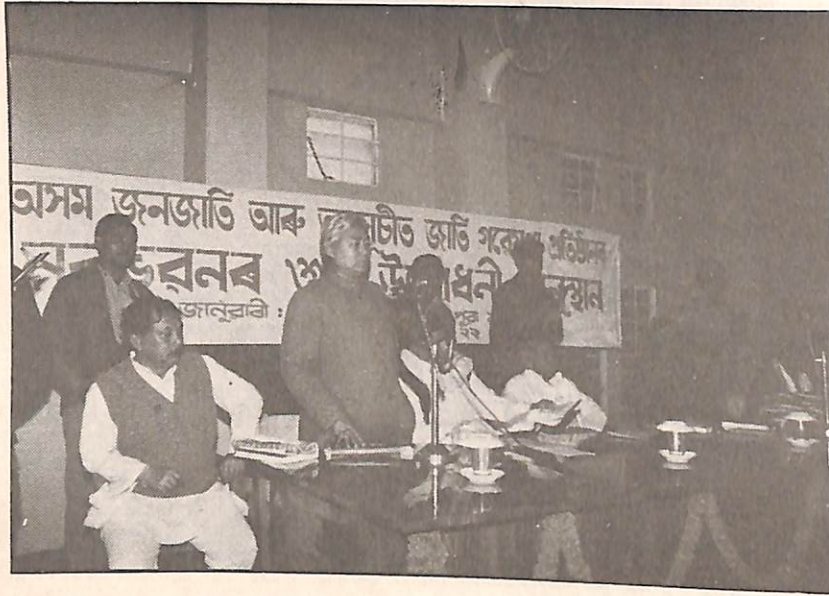
Dr. Bhumidhar Barman, Hon'ble Minister, Education, addressing the gathering.



Photo shows the delivery of inaugural speech by Shri Hiteswar Saikia, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam.



Shri Nakul Das, Hon'ble Minister, Veterinary and Animal Husbandry, addressing the gathering



Shri Balin Kauli, M.P., addressing the gathering



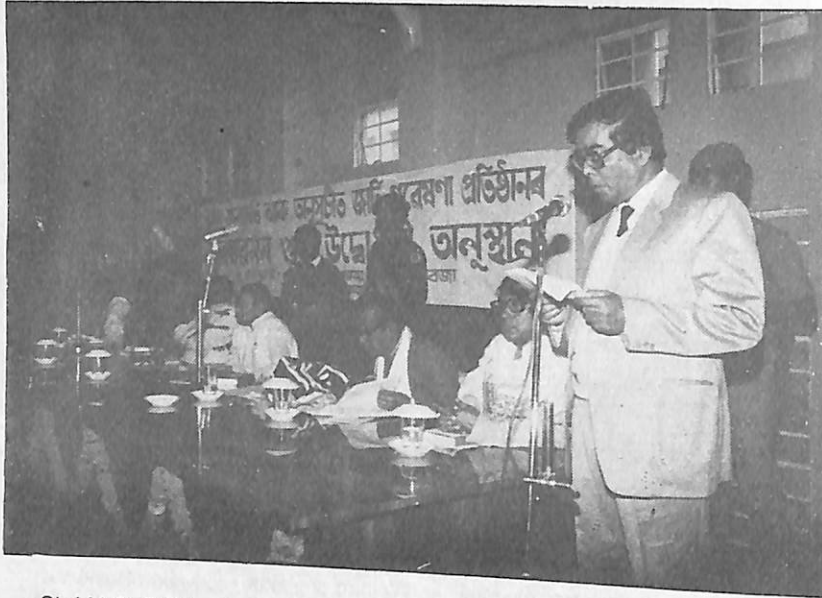
Photo shows the release of the book "Transfer and Alienation of Tribal Land in Assam" authored by Dr. B.N. Bordoloi and presentation of the first copy of the released book to Shri P.C. Bhattacharjee, an eminent scholar, by Shri Hiteswar Saikia, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam.



Shri Bargaram Deori, Hon'ble Minister, Welfare of plains Tribes and Backward classes, delivering the presidential address at the inaugural function of Institute's new building complex.



A view of the distinguished guests who attended the inaugural function of Institute's new building complex on 2nd January 1992.



Shri M.C. Saikia, Deputy Director offering a vote of thanks at the end of the inaugural function of the new building complex of the Institute



A view of the new building complex of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled castes at Jawaharnagar, Guwahati-22.

Dr. Ambedkar : The Soul of the Depressed Classes

Shri Satis Ch. Kakati*

Late Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, known as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in short, is an off repeated name. Those who are conversant with the Indian social system and politics and specially those who have studied the present history and political events, the name of Dr. Ambedkar is very well-known to them. This man was man of education, a popular pleader, a scholar, a legal luminary, forceful writer, journalist, constitutional expert, friend of the oppressed and depressed sections of society and lifelong fighter to establish the human rights which ultimately led him to share the greatest honour shown to the distinct leaders of this country. He has been awarded posthumously the National Award 'Bharat Ratna' like the other worthy sons of India such as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Gobinda Ballav Pant, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Dr. Radha Krishnan.

Although Dr. Ambedkar had shown his genius in more than one field of activity, still the part played by him in safeguarding the interest of the backward communities and later on the scholarship shown by him in framing a new Constitution for the Indian Nation will remain incomparable with any one. It is

due to these qualities of his personality that Dr. Ambedkar may be identified as the soul of the backward and depressed classes of society and given unanimous public recognition as the maker of the Indian Constitution. There is no doubt that the role played by him in these two fields of activities will immortalise him throughout all futurity to come.

It is interesting to know that Dr. Ambedkar was born in Ratnagiri district of the undivided Bombay Province in the family of a very low-caste community known as 'Mahar'. This 'Mahar' caste ranked as the lowest among all the Sudra castes of the four 'Varnas' in the Hindu religious heirarchy and at that time this caste was also known as 'Antas', 'Periya' and 'Ati-sudra'. In these days the backward communities are identified as 'untouchables', 'Harijan' in the language of Gandhiji and 'scheduled castes' in the constitutional parlance. Pandit Nehru describing them as naked, starving, crushed and utterly miserable had lamented very much having seen their plight. These communities in the days of the British Government were officially termed as 'depressed classes'. According to Census of 1931, there were 429 backward classes at that time among which the 'Mahar' class was the most back-

* Ex-Editor, The Assam Tribune, Guwahati.

ward where Dr. Ambedkar was born in the year 1891 (14th April).

But it is very much surprising to find how Dr. Ambedkar could achieve such academic distinction inspite of his birth in such a low caste when the social system of those days provided no scope for educational attainments for the children of the down-trodden. His father was serving as a military officer in a lower rank under the then Boroda State. The children of the military officers working under the Boroda State got some facilities for academic pursuits. But these facilities were confined only among the children coming from Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya and a few students selected from out of a few sub-castes of the Sudras. Excepting these, no other students belonging to the Sudras could even manage a seat within the four walls of the school building. Dr. Ambedkar had to prosecute his studies in such adverse circumstances and from his childhood could realise the impact of caste differentiation and mentally prepared himself thenceforth to fight against it.

It is very heartening to note that Dr. Ambedkar had passed the Matriculation Examination from Epistone High School of Bombay in the year 1908 and obtained his B.A. degree in 1912 and then he took M.A. degree in Economics and then Ph.D. degree from Columbia University of U.S.A. in 1916. Having attained this distinction, he worked in the London school of Economics to get his M.Sc. and D.Sc. degrees in Political Science simultaneously passing out the Bar-At-Law Examination. Thereafter he started practising law at Bombay High Court in addition to a teaching job in a local college. Although he got himself employed, Dr. Ambedkar always

nurtured an instinct to fight against the social injustice perpetrated on the down-trodden classes of people. With this end in view he formed a committee known as 'Bohiskrit Hitkarini Sabha' along with an organisation known as 'Samaj Samata Sangha' simultaneously publishing a Magazine called 'Bohiskrit Bharat'.

Then started, Dr. Ambedkar's public life and as a part of it he was selected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly during the period 1926-34 and through the membership of this Assembly he fought vehemently against the social, political and economic imbalance and social injustice done to the backward classes of people. He accordingly got himself nominated by the Government to the three Round Table Conferences held at London as a representative of the backward communities. In the Second Round Table Conference he raised the questions of separate voting right and reservation of seats to the members of the backward classes which ultimately created a difference of opinion between him and Gandhiji. Gandhiji even resorted to fasting in Yarbeda Jail in protest against the proposal of Dr. Ambedkar. Subsequently, the issues were amicably settled. It is to be noted that although Gandhiji had a difference of opinion with Dr. Ambedkar in a very sensitive and vital issue, Gandhiji had never underrated his personality. On this point Gandhiji remarked as follows :

"..... a man who has carved out for himself a unique position for himself in society. Whatever label he wears in future. Dr. Ambedkar is not the man to allow himself to be forgotten" (Harijan, July 16, 1936).

It was not that differences of opinion on some major issues were there only between

Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar, but Pandit Nehru also differed with Dr. Ambedkar on some critical subjects. But it appears to be quite astonishing to see that inspite of the differences Pandit Nehru had inducted him in his Interim Council of Ministers assigning him the Law Ministry though Dr. Ambedkar was a Member of the Executive Council of the Governor General with effect from July, 1942 to 1946. Apparently Dr. Ambedkar was the supporter of British Government but Pandit Nehru had recognised his administrative efficiency and the vast experiences of his public life. In addition to this, Nehru got him elected from Bengal as a Member to the Constituent Assembly in 1946. But Dr. Ambedkar again differed with Pandit Nehru in the matter of the passing of the Hindu Code Bill and consequently he resigned from the Council of Ministers headed by Nehru in 1951. Though Dr. Ambedkar had resigned from the Council of Ministers, he discharged his duties in the Constituent Assembly as a Congress Member which implied that Dr. Ambedkar had already earned reputation as an expert in Constitution Drafting and for this expertise found in him, he is remembered as the father of the Indian Constitution similar in line with Jawaharlal Nehru who has been recognised as the forerunner of Modern India.

It is interesting to note that inspite of his busy schedule of work Dr. Ambedkar could claim authorship to several valuable publications among which mention may be made of the following : (i) The Problem of the Rupee (1923); (ii) Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah (1943); (iii) Who were the Sudras and how they came to be the fourth Varna in the Indo-Aryan Society (1946); (iv) Thoughts on Linguistic States (1955); The Buddha and his Dharma

(1957).— (published after the death of the author). These publications and the articles that appeared in the news papers bore testimony to his unique scholarship.

It is undoubtedly a fact that Dr. Ambedkar had fought throughout his life for safeguarding the interests of the backward classes with whatever connotation they are identified. On being elected to the Constituent Assembly, he aspired for serving the interest of these down-trodden communities. He himself had mentioned about these things in his Presidential address delivered before the Drafting Committee constituted by the Constituent Assembly for drafting a Constitution for India. To quote him in his own words — "I came into the Constituent Assembly with no greater aspiration than to safeguard the interest of the scheduled castes". Dr. Ambedkar however expressed his surprise for being elected Chairman of the Drafting Committee because there were people like Sir B. N. Rao who were more learned and suitable for heading such a Committee. But the tremendous work which he undertook in drafting the Constitution from the very first session of the Constituent Assembly (i.e. 9th December 1946) to the last day of the Constituent Assembly on which it had accepted finally the New Constitution of India (i.e. 26th November 1949) was unique by itself. Therefore the finest hour of Dr. Ambedkar's life may be said to be in between 1946 to 1949 though he was the life and spirit of the backward classes of India.

In the Constituent Assembly Dr. Ambedkar had delivered his first speech on 17th December 1946 on the resolution put up by Pandit Nehru five days earlier in the Constituent Assembly

relating to the aim and objects of the Independent India. Dr. Ambedkar apparently could not visualise that Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly would invite him to speak. It is needless to say that Dr. Ambedkar was not satisfied on the resolution put forward by Pandit Nehru because the resolution on the aims and objects did not reflect the economic and educational aspirations of the mass people specially the backward communities of India. The opinions that came to surface in his first address in the Constituent Assembly were — opposition to the Grouping proposal of the Cabinet Mission amidst thunderous applause and the other one was the need to centralise power with the Union Government in preference to State Govt. in the interest of Unity of India. Incidentally he referred to the remarks of Edmund Burk, the British thinker on the wisdom of application of power rather than power itself. To quote Dr. Ambedkar—“Burk has said somewhere that it is easy to give power, it is difficult to give wisdom. Let us prove by our conduct that if this Assembly has arrogated to itself sovereign power, it is prepared to exercise them with wisdom. That is the only way by which we can carry with us all sections to the country. There is no other way that can lead us to unity. Let us not have doubt on that point” — Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar was however in favour of drafting the new Constitution in the same pattern indicated by the Government of India Act 1935 but definitely was opposed to the incorporation of the Article 90 of the old Act which authorised the Governor to suspend the Council of Ministers. However, his opinion did not get through as could be seen in Article 365 of the Constitution of India which

stipulates conferment of this authority to the Governor. In this context it can be remembered that the time limit of ten years set forth for reservation of seats both for State legislature and Parliament for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes as contemplated in Article 332, was initially opposed by Dr. Ambedkar and advocated for reservation for an unlimited period. But Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel did not agree with the proposal of Dr. Ambedkar and consequently it fell through. It is necessary to mention here that during the currency of the Drafting of the Constitution, the Constituent Assembly had appointed several Committees and Sub-Committees which made several suggestions and recommendations and these were critically discussed in the Constituent Assembly and then accommodated in the Constitution. If the discussions on which Dr. Ambedkar had participated were collected and published in a book form that would itself be a valuable document which would testify the spheres of erudition of Dr. Ambedkar as well as be a repository for the future researchers of political history.

Incidentally reference may also be made to the speeches delivered by Dr. Ambedkar in connection with the incorporation of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. The Constituent Assembly had taken special interest for the Hill tribes of Assam to assimilate them with the main stream of India and to devise action on this score a Sub-Committee was constituted under the Chairmanship of Lok-priya Gopi Nath Bordoloi which was precisely known as ‘The North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee’. The two other Members of the Sub-Committee were famous social worker A.V. Thakkar and

Reverend J. J. Nichols Roy. It is needless to elaborate that during the days of the British Government, the Six hill districts of undivided Assam were kept isolated from the rest of the country and the new Constitution gave some local powers and some other powers on local self government under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. This resolution of the Sub-Committee was moved by late Gopi Nath Bordoloi, the Chairman of the Sub-Committee himself, but two other well-known Members of the Constituent Assembly, Late Kuladhar Chaliha and Late Rohini Kumar Choudhury had opposed this resolution on the plea that this would segregate the hill tribes from the main land. In addition to late Bordoloi, the resolution on the Sixth Schedule was seconded by Reverend Nichols Roy. Still as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Dr. Ambedkar had to speak in support of the resolution as follows :

“I agree that we have been creating regional and district councils to some extent on the lines which were adopted by the United States for the purpose of Red Indians. But my point is that those who have based their criticisms of this Schedule on this fact, namely, that we are creating regional and district councils, have altogether failed to understand the binding factors which we have introduced in this Constitution.

The first thing that we have done is this — that we have provided that the executive authority of the Government of Assam shall extend not only to the non-tribal areas of Assam, but also to the tribal areas of Assam, that is to say, the executive authority of the Assam Government will be exercised even over those areas which are covered by the autonomous districts. This, as will be seen, is a great improvement over the provisions contained in the Government of India Act 1935”.

Synchronising with the birth centenary year of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (born — 4th April 1891 — Died — 6th December 1956), the Govt of India have decided to celebrate the year 1990-91 as the Year of Social Justice. Incidentally the celebration calls for upholding the ideals which he so zealously nurtured throughout his life. If this can be achieved nothing will be more befitting on such an occasion when all of us have assembled here to show respect and pay homage to Dr. Ambedkar.

In this context we are also to realise the significance of his first speech in the Constituent Assembly where he stressed on the need of wisdom in the application of power rather than power itself - and if the implication of this statement is realised fully, his ideals will then only be translated into action. ● ●

Article published in the Souvenir of the Convention organised in connection with the celebration of the Birth Centenary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar by the Department of Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes, Government of Assam, in Guwahati on 21st September, 1990.

Dr. Ambedkar and Modern India

Dr. B. N. Bordoloi*

The Birth Centenary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a prominent leader and one of the architects of modern India, who was posthumously awarded 'Bharat Ratna', the highest National Award, is being celebrated throughout the length and breadth of the country from 14th April 1990. If somebody asks me a question regarding the contribution of Dr. Ambedkar towards building up of a modern India, my answer would be a big plus. In fact one would be interested to know in which area his contribution had not touched. A time has now come to analyse the activities of a person who was born in this country hundred years back. It is an undisputed fact that among the leading architects of modern India Dr. Ambedkar was surely one. In this brief article I am trying to focus on different aspects of Dr. Ambedkar's contribution in building up a modern India.

Dr. Ambedkar had immense faith on democratic thoughts and principles and that was why he believed in freedom, socialism and fraternity. Showing due respect to his deep involvement in the democratic principles and thoughts he was entrusted with the most difficult as well as the most important task on the eve of India being a Democratic Republic. And that important responsibility was the

drafting of the Constitution of India as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee.

It is also very interesting to know that Dr. Ambedkar on 14th October 1956, 56 days before his death, got himself converted along with his followers into Buddhism. But he had not taken such a serious step about two months before his death with a view to getting salvation through his newly acquired religion. He did so with a view to establishing social justice and to bring about a social reformation in the Hindu society. Sufferings and humiliation that he had to face during his school days, specially till his completion of the Matriculation examination, were simply unthinkable for the students of the present era. His sentiment as well as the feelings were so deeply hurt that to establish the down-trodden, poor exploited, neglected, untouchables and other weaker sections of the people in the Indian social structure with dignity and honour had become the principal objective in his life. The protections that have been offered to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by the Constitution of India are, in fact, the results of undaunted works of Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar was not only an expert in law matters but was also a very learned economist. Besides having an M.A. Degree

in Economics he also did his Ph.D. in Economics. He had served as a Professor of Economics in a College for about two years. He had his own ideas regarding the economic development of India. According to him, the main cause of miseries and sufferings of the common people of India was poverty. In order to save common people from such a wretched condition, the application of science and technology was a must. And he believed that it was through the application of science and technology, poverty and backwardness can be removed. For this purpose he had prepared Integrated Social and Economic Development Plans and allowed the people to know what he had in his mind. Dr. Ambedkar was even in favour of transferring the land ownership to the State machinery. Although his Integrated Social and Economic Development Plans could not get through, their concepts and ideas might have some impact on the Five Year Plans prepared by the Planning Commission, Government of India.

Dr. Ambedkar firmly believed that Indian's integration or for that matter, national integration was the most important aspect. To achieve this, the most essential factors would be to establish social justice and eradication of poverty. Bereft of these two, the political freedom had no meaning at all. His conviction was that social and economic justice could be achieved in a casteless society only. That was why, he wanted to completely destroy the caste system based on the four Varnas. In fact, we, the Indians have been dreaming of a casteless Indian society since our independence and perhaps several decades would be necessary to arrive at such a stage. The father of the nation, Gandhiji, also had such

a dream. And Perhaps Gandhiji's thoughts and ideas might have influenced Dr. Ambedkar also.

According to my opinion the most important contribution of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in building up a modern India was the drafting and finalisation of the Constitution of India. In our Constitution many articles have been incorporated covering many areas and subjects. One of the basic aims underlying these Constitutional provisions is to preserve the national integrity of our country, be it in times of peace or in times of wars. Because of this reason Dr. Ambedkar incorporated a sense of flexibility in the Constitutional provisions so that by amending the provisions of the Constitution, the emergency situation or unforeseen situation may be met. Because of this nature Indian Constitution could be amended several times - either for the purpose of amending the existing provisions or for incorporation of new ones. It is an obvious fact that the Republic of India is constituted with several States and Union Territories. But we have only one citizenship and that is Indian Citizenship. The integrity of India can be defended and preserved only when every Indian will think and act in words and spirits that he or she is an Indian citizen only and none else.

In order to eradicate untouchability many steps including the enactment of laws have been taken in India since independence. It would not be out of place to say that these concrete results were due to the attempts of Dr. Ambedkar in actions and spirits. Observance of untouchability and to engage people to do unclean jobs by force are crimes as per Constitutional laws and offenders are punishable.

* Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals & Scheduled Castes, Guwahati.

Dr. Ambedkar's writings and his activities have brought consciousness and courage to the down-trodden weaker sections of the people specially untouchables. In our country an individual is given more importance than a family or a village since it is a democratic country.

Dr. Ambedkar was very much conscious in regard to the status of women in the Hindu society. In the Hindu society of India the status of women, whether they belong to caste Hindu or low caste, is always at a lower level. It was Dr. Ambedkar who tried his best to give equal status to the Hindu women along with the males. According to him it was the Sage Manu who was responsible for placing the Hindu women in the status of servants or serfs with a view to establishing male supremacy.

The contribution of Dr. Ambedkar in building up a modern India is multifarious. It is quite impossible to incorporate all these in this small article. In this paper I, therefore, have indicated only a few of them.

It has already been mentioned that Dr. Ambedkar, being completely displeased and frustrated with the religious principles of Hinduism, had accepted Buddhism. As a Buddhist convert he had prepared a few dictums, that is to say, acts which he would perform and acts which he would refrain from performing. Before concluding this article I feel that his dictums should be made public for the information of one and all.

This article was published in the Souvenir of the Convention organised for the Birth Centenary celebration of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar by the Department for Welfare of Plains Tribes & Backward Classes, Government of Assam, in Guwahati on 21st September, 1990.

These dictums are as follows :

1. I donot believe in the existence of Brahma, Bishnu and Maheswar and I shall never worship them.
 2. I donot consider Ram and Krishna to be Gods and I shall not worship them.
 3. I donot believe that God takes birth as a human being.
 4. I donot consider Buddha to be an incarnation of Bishnu.
 5. I shall not perform any religious rites for my forefathers nor shall I offer anything in the name of God.
 6. I shall not do any work which is against the principle of Buddhism.
 7. I shall not perform any religious function with the help of a Brahmin priest.
 8. I believe that all people are equal.
 9. I shall follow the Eight Paths of Buddhism.
 10. I shall not steal, speak lies and touch wine.
 11. From today I have abandoned Hinduism where there are difficulties in recognising a man as a man and where I am considered as a low caste man.
 12. By accepting Buddhism I am reborn.
- We are extremely happy that even after 34 years of his death Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was awarded Bharat Ratna, the highest award of India. With this brief article I pay my homage and respect to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, whom I consider to be one of the greatest sons of Mother India.

Dr. Bhimraj Rao Ambedkar

Nandeswar Bania

During the last decade of the Nineteenth Century a shining star appeared in the political horizon of India. A hundred years hence, a man was born in a low middle class family belonging to the Mahar community in a very backward village of Maharashtra. This man had subsequently proved himself to be the saviour of the millions of down-trodden people crying under the pressure of untouchability. That glittering star was Babasaheb Dr. Bhimraj Rao Ambedkar who was more popularly known as Babasaheb. Among the contemporary persons associated with his life, the names of Rao Bahadur M.C. Raja, Babu Mukunda Behari Mallik, Bapu Saheb Rajbhoj, Baba Jogendra Nath Mandal, Rai Saheb V. Muni Swami Pilley, Rai Bahadur R. Srinivason and Rai Saheb Sonadhar Das (Senapati) of Assam may be mentioned. Although Babu Jogjiban Ram, the then Minister of the Govt. of India was his contemporary, both the leaders have separate style of functioning for the social and political upliftment of the backward communities.

The political reformers of the pre-independence era felt the necessity of social reconstruction much later. But Dr. Ambedkar could assert much earlier the birth rights of the backward communities with much conviction although some self-centered conservative politicians had opposed his system of works. These

two warring political factions subsequently came to settlement through an accord for a political reconstruction between the British Government and the Indian Freedom Fighters and that accord historically came to be acknowledged as the "Poona Accord". This was virtually a communal award between the advanced and the backward sections of society and between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Its main aim was to establish the political and social rights of the backward communities in the Indian Constitution and to facilitate the road to freedom as well as to make written provisions for the political and social security of these groups of people. In this accord, Dr. Ambedkar, the unrivalled leader of the backward classes, had signed it. This was a very critical moment for Dr. Ambedkar as it amounted to saving the life of Gandhiji in one hand and in saving the interest of the backward communities on the other hand. It is known to all that after attending the Round Table Conference in London and thereafter giving evidence before the Simon Commission, Dr. Ambedkar pleaded for a separate electorate for the backward communities. As a result, the British Government had almost decided to act on the communal award by instituting a separate electorate for the minority communities. Against this proposal, Mahatma Gandhi had resorted to fast unto death. To save

the life of Gandhiji and also to honour the public opinion expressed within and outside the country, Dr. Ambedkar had to deviate from his earlier stand for a separate electorate and agreed to the joint-electorate proposed. Through this he reflected his humanistic gesture before the international public opinion and identified it as the most significant instance of his love for humanity. Consequent upon agreeing to the joint electorate system, the members of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe could enjoy reserved seats in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha including services and posts in the administration against reserved quota. These provisions were subsequently incorporated in the Indian Constitution which might be regarded as the Magna-Carta for the backward communities of India. How far these constitutional safeguards could throw direct impact on the economic, political and social upliftment of the backward communities during the last 40 years will have to be perused objectively by the politicians as well as intellectuals of the society.

Dr. Ambedkar had taken active part in politics as a true follower of socialism and democracy. He was assigned the charge of Labour Department on assuming the membership of the Executive Council but subsequently he resigned the Ministerial Office. After termination the British domination in India he became the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee - the responsibility of which he discharged more creditably. The other scholarly members of the Drafting Committee like Satubhai Desai and Sri T.T. Krishnamachari had paid glowing tributes for this unique achievements. That was why, Dr. Ambedkar had been recognised as the "Father of the Indian Constitution". He was

one among six legal luminaries of India.

Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar was a very meritorious student from his childhood. He could show his brilliance in study inspite of his low caste birth and other social constraints and a hostile atmosphere. The Maharaja of Baroda being convinced at his academic attainments extended all help for his higher education. Thus Baroda Maharaja's action had helped him to obtain graduation from Eldinstone College under Bombay University at the age of 20. He also became a graduate from the Colombia University and then he obtained his Ph.D. Degree in Political Science from the same University. He also obtained another Doctorate Degree in Economics from the London University. From Graise-inn-College he passed Barristery and also obtained LL.B. Degree from Colombia University. For a period of 30 years he practised law as a Barrister.

Dr. Ambedkar was of the opinion that if the provisions embodied in the Constitution were not materialised in action then it would not be wise to say that the Constitution itself was defective, rather in such an event the authorities responsible for implementation of those provisions would have to be called upon to explain their inaction. He stated that the minority communities were an explosive force, if it was allowed to explode then the entire social structure could be torn into pieces. He further stated that the minority communities had agreed to surrender their physical entity at the hands of the majority communities taking them into utmost confidence. It was now high time to measure with what amount of confidence such a sub-mission was accepted by the majority communities.

Dr. Ambedkar was second to none in his oratory skill. Being born in a very backward Mahar community he had experienced practically the repression and misbehaviour meted out to the backward classes. He had thrown all his weightage of personality, scholarship and skill of oration for the betterment of depressed and down-trodden communities. That was why often times he was misunderstood and he had to face severe criticism. In this context his evidence before the Simon Commission and his statement made in relation to Poona Accord were very much significant. He was opposed to the Hindu conservatism which led him ultimately to forsake tenets of Manusamhita and to accept Buddhism in the year 1956. The seeds of Buddhism sown by Dr. Ambedkar in the inner core of these oppressed sections of the society continued to germinate. An unabated conversion has been taking place till these days. What implications could be derived out of such an act?

This man of rare brilliance and wide scholarship, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar breathed his last on the 6th day of December, 1956 and thus this historically controversial shining star had faded to the oblivion. Along with his departure, one sixth population of the newly acquired democracy of India became dumb like an orphan child.

Dr. Ambedkar was a man of contrast. In the social and political spheres of the Indian public life, Dr. Ambedkar's style of functioning was quite independent and as such to the majority of the upper caste Hindus he was never acceptable. The persons whose veins continued to flow blood of untouchability, to them Dr. Ambedkar was never an acceptable character. But nevertheless he always

expressed clearly whatever he had to say without fear and favour. He exposed his mind very clearly through his various writings but at one time the Government did not hesitate to proscribe them. But truth can never be hidden. Today after 43 years of independence, the politicians, intellectuals and others have univocally admitted that the provisions and safeguards incorporated in the Indian Constitution for uplifting the backward communities have failed and the entire issue deserves to be reconsidered. Let us look back what Ambedkar said on 26th January, 1950. He said "Today we have established political socialism and simultaneously we have admitted economic and social imbalance. If we cannot remove this imbalance of the Constitution in a rapid stride, the suffering of this imbalance may at one time shake the very base of the Indian democracy if not totally annihilate the function itself." Looking back to the last 34 years which has been marked by the void created by the death of Dr. Ambedkar we will see that the backward communities are standing on the same footing on which he left them. These people have not been allowed to develop according to their desire inspite of the implementation of Seventh Five Year Plans and incurring crores of rupees under the plans reason being self-interest and whimsical attitude of the administrative machinery. Simultaneously we have also seen that Ambedkarism has been emerged to the surface by penetrating the long slumbering negligence that has spread over a period of more than 40 years. The backward classes under the impact of poverty and backwardness now appear to have attained consciousness from a state of torpidity or inertia and are now demanding their birth rights. This is evident

from the report of the Mandal Commission. The cycle of events that has unpredictably fallen over the political doldrums had casted tremendous responsibility on the national leaders to navigate shrewdly the political

vessel of Indian administration by forsaking all the differences that hitherto existed in between them. Otherwise protesting masses will call for explanation from us.



Dr. Ambedkar and Social Justice

Shri Nakul Das

It is very much heartening to know that the Birth Centenary Year of Dr. Ambedkar has been chosen as the year of "Social Justice" and by doing so, this great scholar of India has been sought to be honoured which is a matter of much jubilation. This is very much befitting in view of the fact that this great son of India fought relentlessly throughout his life for achieving social justice in all walks of life. Though some people till today do not hesitate to describe him as the leader of the down-trodden masses, still it is universally recognised that Dr. Ambedkar tried his level best to establish a new social set up based on the principles of equality and social justice - the drafting of the Indian Constitution will bear glaring testimony to this aspect of endeavour. Gandhiji, the Father of the Nation, also made glowing tributes to this genius in the following words. "A man who has carved out for himself a unique position in society. Whatever labels he wears in future, Dr. Ambedkar is not the man to allow himself to be forgotten" (Harijan-July 16, 1936).

If we analyse the basic philosophy of his life along with his continued efforts in uplifting the interests of the down-trodden and exploited masses from the discriminatory socio-cultural and socio-religious behaviour of the Hindu society, then it becomes crystal clear that in framing the changing trend of the

Indian social structure, Dr. Ambedkar had contributed immensely. If this great noble soul would not have emerged at a critical time of historical coincidence to lead the depressed and exploited masses of the backward communities it is difficult to assume whether they would have continued to remain tagged with the main stream of the Indian public life. In this context mention may be made of the historical Puna Accord between Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar.

The third Round Table Conference of 1932 did not produce any tangible result. The Conference invited by the British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsey Macdonald was not attended by the Congress - the main political party of India or any representative from the native States of India or any member of the British Labour Party. As a result no decision could be taken, but on the other hand, the Prime Minister, Mr. Macdonald gave a communal judgement to bring to an end the then burning issue on Hindu-Muslim dispute. This judgement provided not only for separate electoral system and reservation of seats for the Muslims but also sought to create a division among the great Hindu Society by recognising the backward communities as a separate political entity. In consequence of this, severe reactions had emerged in the Nationalist India and in protest Mahatma

Gandhi, who was then interned in the Yerabad Prison, resorted to fast unto death on 20th September 1932 declaring that he would sacrifice his life to prevent divisions among the Hindus. With his farsightedness, Mahatma Gandhi had declared that if the conspiracy was allowed to materialise not only the Hindu society would be divided into pieces but Indian Nationalism would also suffer a setback. This fast unto death had created tension and turmoil along with severe reactions throughout the length and breadth of the country. The leaders of the Hindu pantheon then rushed to Puna and requested Gandhiji to break his fast and on 26th September many orthodox Hindu priests in different parts of the country had thrown open the doors of the temples and shrines for the untouchables. This being done Mahatma Gandhi had broken his fast and on the very next day he signed the historical Puna Pact with Dr. Ambedkar. According to the term of this Pact, the Depressed Classes had stayed back with the voters of Hindu communities with separate reservation of seats for them. The Government had recognised this Pact and assured its implementation simultaneously releasing Gandhiji to convince the Hindu society about accepting this Pact as well as to removing the social distance hitherto prevailing in between them.

The people who simply believed that Dr. Ambedkar, the leader of depressed classes of the society, must also admit this truth of history that Dr. Ambedkar's nationalistic outlook and thoughts were no insignificant than any of the national leaders of India. As the framer of the Indian Constitution and Chairman of the Drafting Committee his contributions in creating a new social order by safeguarding the integrity and unity of

the country would definitely immortalise his patriotism and nationalistic thinking.

Dr. Ambedkar had admitted himself that the basis of his basic philosophy was based on religion and not on political science. The evils of caste distinctions of Hinduism had created indelible impact on his mind in his very childhood and this had ultimately led him to revolt against the social injustice perpetrated by the orthodox Hindu caste. This revolt was not a revolt for gaining political power but a revolt against social injustice and its only aim was to establish social justice for the millions of depressed and backward people.

Dr. Ambedkar was born on 14th April 1891 in a very poor untouchable Hindu Mahar family in the village Mou in then Central Province (now Madhya Pradesh). Dr. Ambedkar had tested from his very school days how the so-called upper caste Hindus unceremoniously and undesirably behaved with the so-called lower castes. On a particular day in his school, he was not allowed even to drink a drop of water on the ground of his heritage - as a child of the untouchable. From this day onward he had developed a strong sentiment against the unjust social behaviour of the Hindu communities. This tendency on the part of the Hindu upper caste rather inspired him to fight for establishing rights of justice by the total annihilation of untouchability from the India Hindu caste structure.

After passing Marticulture Examination. Dr. Ambedkar's marriage ceremony was solemnised in an uncovered open house located in a market place. He could feel the humiliations that were meted out to untouchables under pressure from the then prevailing social norms.

It was not Dr. Ambedkar alone who tried to initiate a social revolution by public wakening against perpetration of untouchability by the caste Hindus. In this connection it would not be out of context to remember what opinion was nurtured by Mahatmaji on untouchability. Gandhiji said "I regard the problem of untouchability as the problem of life and death. If untouchability continues, Hinduism and for that matter India as a whole, is sure to meet with unnatural death. If untouchability can be uprooted from the heart of the Hindus, then Hinduism will surely be in a position to convey some fundamental gospels of world.....my struggle with untouchability is the struggle against all the evils of human life."

The aim of Dr. Ambedkar's social justice was the social liberation of millions of depressed down-trodden scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who were exploited and made to suffer under the impact of the four 'Varnas' enunciated by the Hindu scriptures. In 1930 he declared with firm determination that no country can administer any country by dominating over it and similarly no class, caste or community can dominate over another community. That is why, he remarked in connection with the liberation of Indian people from the British administration that with the transfer of power, the powers should be distributed in such a way that it establishes equality and social justice for all classes of people by actually bringing about a social change. Again he declared during the Round Table Conference held in London in 1930-32 that the untouchables of India desired an annihilation of the British administration but they also pined for such an administration which was run by the public, of the public and meant

for the public. In this connection the democratic philosophy of Abraham Lincoln comes to mind. For implementation of this clear concept of Dr. Ambedkar, opportunities came to him when he was called upon to frame the Constitution of India. As the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, he gave us an unique Constitution which bore testimony to his far-sightedness as a scholar and reflected not only his achievements as the rare genius, a man of utmost presence of mind with imprints of patience and tolerance but also his philosophy of social justice and equal treatment to different segments of society. In the framing of the Constitution he put his entire efforts selflessly and in the process used to forget everything. At the time of accepting the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly excitement rose to mass jubilation when he declared India as a Sovereign Democratic Republic and the way in which the national leaders in the same tone commended the contributions of Dr. Ambedkar in the framing of the Constitution would be surely shrined in golden letters in the history of our Democratic Republic. An eminent foreign critic had opined that it would not be a high hyperbolic statement to say that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had taken his birth in India only to give the Indian an unique Constitution. On the occasion of the Birth Centenary of the great soul of India, it is befitting to remember in gratitude his contributions to society by each and every Indian irrespective of 'caste, creed, religion and Varna.'

Dr. Ambedkar also left his indelible marks in the Union Council of Ministers as the Minister of Law. He put his entire energy and efforts on the basis of the

Constitution to remove by means of legislation the various discriminations prevalent in different strata of the Indian society. He had drafted Hindu Code Bill to restructure and modernise in a democratic form the social system of the Hindus. Although Prime Minister Nehru himself had unstinted support to this piece of drafting legislation yet it was argued by the conservative and powerful lobby that it sought to bring super revolutionary changes to the Hindu Social system and it was premature and this led to difference of opinion between Pandit Nehru and the then President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad. As a result the Parliament could not pass this Bill. Having failed to bring about a very essential and fundamental change in the Hindu Social System he resigned from the Union Council of Ministers in September, 1951. Of course, after the Lok Sabha Election of 1952, the Parliament accepted this Draft Legislation. The President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad also accorded his approval towards its acceptance. In giving a new shape to the Hindu Social System in the modern form by this legislation (i.e. Hindu Code), the fact that comes to surface is genius and scholarship of the author behind this enactment.

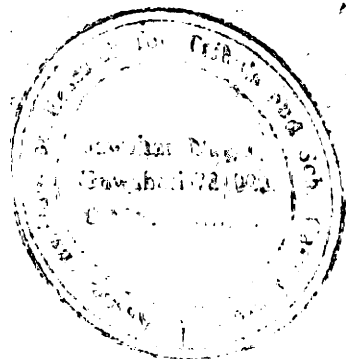
Having struggled all throughout his life for safeguarding interest of the depressed and exploited Indian masses through his constructive revolution, he embraced Buddhism at the fag end of his life which subsequently

became a matter of mass discussion. In spite of fighting throughout his life and providing constitutional safeguards he ultimately could realise that to eliminate untouchability of the Hindu fundamentalism, it would be better for depressed sections of the society to embrace Buddhism. That was perhaps the reason for converting himself to Buddhism along with several lakhs of his followers with an expectation to liberate them from the social injustice on the strength of Buddhistic gospel 'Buddham Saranam Gachhami'. The later part of his life could be described as a living silent revolution of Dr. Ambedkar for establishing social justice.

It has, therefore, become a very good gesture to pay tribute to Dr. Ambedkar in the Birth Centenary Year by celebrating it as a year of Social Justice. In addition to undertaking discussions from various angles on the eventful life and work of this great leader, it is also essential to enliven his ideals and constructive works schedule - and these being done, glowing tributes will be deemed to have been paid.

In the words of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar himself - "If Hinduism is to be the religion of down-trodden and untouchables, it must be a religion of social justice and must be based on principle of equality".

With these few words I am paying my tribute to this great soul of India in his Birth Centenary Year.



A Review Report of the Seminar on Socio-Economic Development of the Scheduled Castes of Assam

Dr. G. C. Sharmah Thakur

The Directorate of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, in collaboration with the Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati, had organised a Two Day State level Seminar on 'Socio-Economic Development of the Scheduled Castes of Assam' in the Conference Room of the Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati, on 8th and 9th September, 1990. About 70 scholars, most of them hailing from the different places of Assam, participated in this seminar. It was also very interesting to note that majority of the scholars who participated in this seminar belong to Scheduled Caste communities of Assam. This seminar had created a great enthusiasm among the participants specially among the scheduled caste participants since it was for the first time that a state level seminar on the Scheduled Castes was organised.

The seminar was inaugurated by Shri H. N. Das, I.A.S., Chief Secretary, Assam, in the morning of 8th September '90. In his inaugural speech, Shri Das very briefly mentioned some of the steps taken by the Government of Assam for amelioration of the conditions of the scheduled caste people of

Assam. He also pointed out some of the peculiar problems faced by them. Shri Das expressed the hope that the two days' deliberations among the scholars hailing from different parts of the State of Assam and belonging to different professions, calling and disciplines would be in a position to offer some suggestions and recommendations which would help the Government in future planning for the welfare and development of the scheduled castes of Assam. Shri Das thanked the Research Institute for organising such a seminar on the scheduled castes for the first time in Assam.

Earlier Dr. B. N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals & Scheduled Castes and Seminar Director, explained the purpose and objectives of organising the seminar. The inaugural session of the seminar came to an end with the offering of vote of thanks by Shri J. Prakash, I. A. S. Director, Assam Administrative Staff College, Khanapara, Guwahati.

There were three academic sessions in which altogether 14 scholars presented their papers. The scholars were drawn from Universities, Colleges, Government Departments and Local

Bodies. Four papers were presented in absentia of the authors.

FIRST ACADEMIC SESSION

The first academic session was chaired by Shri Gunahas Bora, Principal, Raha College, Raha. This session was divided into pre-lunch session and post-lunch session. In the pre-lunch session, Dr. Tara Nath Das, a medical practitioner from Sibsagar, presented his paper on 'Socio-Economic problems of the Scheduled Castes of Assam'. Dr. Das had written and presented his paper in Assamese. Dr. Das elaborated the burning problems of the scheduled castes of Assam. At the beginning of his paper he traced back the concept of scheduled castes in its historical social and political back-ground. Referring to the problems of a few scheduled castes who have still been following the age-old traditional professions and caste-based occupations, he had also suggested a few remedial measures like allotment of agricultural land, strengthening of Fisheries Co-operatives, creation of employment avenues for scheduled caste youths, and providing interest-free loans and subsidies to the needy scheduled caste people. He had also given a clarion call to the people of the scheduled caste communities of Assam to shake off their inertia and inferiority complex and to come forward to accept the opportunities that have been thrown before them. Lastly, in his paper he appealed to the officers entrusted with the implementation of scheduled castes development programmes to act with a spirit of dedication to the causes of upliftment of the down-trodden sections of the society. At the same time he had also appealed the educated sections of the scheduled castes

to cast aside the tendency of disowning the social responsibilities to their own brothers and sisters.

In the Post-Lunch Session, the paper written by Miss Mousumi Das, a research scholar of the Dibrugarh University, on "A Step towards Removing Educational Backwardness from Scheduled Caste Society" was read out by one of the participants since the authoress was absent.

The next paper was presented by Shri Pravash Das, Head, Department of Economics, Ratna Pith College, Chapor, District Dhubri and the title of his paper was "the Socio-Economic Problems of the Scheduled Caste Fishermen of Assam". In his paper Shri Das outlined the problems faced by the fishermen communities in carrying out their traditional occupation. He opined that the embankments erected for the purpose of controlling the floods, application of pesticides and industrial pollution are some of the causes which stand in the way of increase in fish production. Not only that, the fishermen quarrel among themselves and very often go to the courts for the settlement of disputes resulting in further deterioration of their economic conditions. According to him the allotment of fisheries only for a three years period is not conducive from the point of view of improvement of fisheries by the fishermen. Long term settlement of the Beels and rivers can partly solve the problems of the fishermen. Smt. Gouri Prava Das, a retired teacher of T.C. Girls' Higher Secondary School, Guwahati, presented her paper entitled 'Socio-Economic Conditions of the Scheduled Castes'. Her paper was, of course, in Assamese. In her paper she drew the attention of the scholars

about the role played by the middle-men who exploit the scheduled caste people in various ways. She appealed to the government machinery to see that under no circumstances funds allotted for the development of the scheduled castes under the Scheduled Castes Component Plan are diverted to other areas. She was of the opinion that the scattered nature of the scheduled caste settlements should not be a hindrance to the implementation of scheduled caste welfare and development programmes. She believed that with a strong determination on the part of the implementing agencies, the development of scheduled castes would get a better shape.

The last paper in this session was presented by Shri B.N. Hazarika, an Industrial Consultant, Bamunimaidam, Guwahati. The theme of his paper was "Points and Areas to be discussed on Socio-Economic Development of the Scheduled Caste of Assam". Shri Hazarika's main emphasis was on the need for allocation of fund for the scheduled caste people according to the population percentage. Shri Hazarika in his paper had quoted figures of fund that were spent for the development of the scheduled castes beginning from the 1st Plan to 4th Plan and he had also pointed out the employment position of the scheduled castes supporting his contention with statistical figures.

All the papers presented in this session except that of Miss Mousumi Das were thoroughly discussed and many lively discussions took place among the participants and the scholars who presented the papers. The response and reactions of the participants were very much overwhelming. Shri Gunahas Bora, Chairperson of this session, summarised the contents of the papers and expressed his happiness

to hear the views of the participants on the problems and prospects of development of the Scheduled Castes.

SECOND ACADEMIC SESSION

The second academic session of the seminar was held in the morning of 9th September, 1990 and the session was chaired by Shri Surendra Nath Das, Principal, Tyagbir Hem Baruah College, Jamugurihat, Dist. Sonitpur. Prior to the presentation of papers, Shri B.P. Singh, I.A.S., Special Commissioner, Agriculture Production, Govt. of Assam, who was present in this session of the seminar addressed the distinguished participants. He expressed his happiness at the organisation of the seminar by the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes and the Assam Administrative Staff College. He was of the opinion that such a seminar participated by distinguished scholars mainly from the scheduled caste communities of Assam and hailing from the different parts of the State would surely give an insider's view in respect of the problems on the welfare and development of the scheduled castes. Interactions, among the scholars belonging to the different disciplines and avocations, as well as discussions from the grass-root to the highest level would enable them to arrive at some concrete consensus which in its turn would help the in reformulating and redevising the welfare and development programmes for the scheduled castes of Assam. His speech was followed by the business of the second academic session.

The first paper in this session was supposed to be presented by Shri Nandeswar Bania, a retired I.A.S. Officer. But due to his illness

he could not come to this seminar. His paper, therefore, was considered to be presented.

The second paper in this session was presented by Shri P. Hazarika, Head, Department of Economics, Dimow College in Sibsagar District. The title of his paper was "A Dissection of the Causes of the Economic Backwardness of the Scheduled Castes of Assam". In his paper Shri Hazarika had elaborated the forces responsible for poverty among the scheduled castes of Assam. He explained the causes of the vicious circle of poverty through the help of a diagram. After analysing the causes which are multifarious, he had also offered some concrete suggestions, so that the age-old backwardness of the scheduled caste people of Assam could be removed to a certain extent.

The next paper was presented by Shri W. Ullah, Deputy Director, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam. Earlier Shri Ullah was a Research Officer in the Planning Cell of the Department for W.P.T. & B.C. and he was dealing with the formulation of Scheduled Caste Component Plan of Assam. The title of his paper was "An Appraisal of the Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes—Problems and Prospects". Shri Ullah in his paper elaborately explained the main objectives of formulation of Scheduled Caste Component Plan, allocation of fund including Special Central Assistance and how the scheduled caste people were benefitted through the achievement of physical targets. Shri Ullah also in his paper suggested a few important issues for the consideration of the distinguished participants. According to his own opinion the performance of the Scheduled Caste Component Plan could be

fruitfully enhanced provided the attitude of the implementing officers undergoes a change, follow up actions are initiated timely and regularly with periodic checking by Senior Officers and monitoring and evaluation of the programmes regularly.

The fourth paper in this session was presented by Shri Sutram Das, Subject Teacher Rajapathar Higher Secondary School, Karbi Anglong District. The theme of his paper was "Socio-Economic Problems of the Scheduled Caste Communities". His paper was in Assamese. Shri Das, of course, confined himself to the problems mainly of the fisherman communities. He categorised the problems into agricultural, educational, technical and socio-cultural ones. Shri Das's main emphasis was, however, on the question of reducing the marks in case of admission of the SC students to the specialised courses.

The last paper in this academic session was presented by Shri Khiroda Kanta Baishya, a well-known figure in the scheduled caste landscape of Assam. The title of his paper was very much interesting and in fact in this paper Shri Baishya had expressed the view of an insider (he himself belongs to a fisherman community). The title of his paper was "Where lie the Obstacles that Stand in the way of the Socio-Economic Development of the Scheduled Castes Dependent on Fishing". The paper was, of course, in Assamese. Shri Baishya in his paper gave an account of scheduled caste fishermen and also the social injustices meted out to the fishermen since time immemorial. He had clearly analysed the conditions of the fishermen communities specially Doms and Kaibartas. Since the fishermen community constitutes a greater segment of the scheduled caste communities

of Assam there should be a special survey for them. He had also emphasised on the establishment of Fishery Co-operatives only by the genuine fishermen.

All the papers except that of Shri Bania and Smti. Mousumi Das were discussed thoroughly and the discussions were also very much lively. The chairperson of this session who himself is a Member of the scheduled caste communities managed the session very nicely and at the end he had summarised the presentation of the different papers which had satisfied the participants to the greatest possible extent.

THIRD ACADEMIC SESSION

The third academic session of the seminar was held in the afternoon of 9th September, 1990 under the Chairmanship of Shri B. N. Hazarika, Industrial Consultant, Guwahati. Altogether 6 (six) papers were presented in this session.

The first paper entitled "A Glimpse into the Socio-Economic Aspects of the Scheduled Castes" was presented by Shri Surjya Das of Guwahati. Shri Das in his paper discussed mainly the problems of the scheduled caste fishermen. He had highlighted some characteristic features as well as the basic problems of the scheduled castes at the beginning of his paper. He had also suggested some developmental measures for the solution of their problems. Shri Das had, of course, written his paper in Assamese.

The second paper in this session was presented by Shri Dehram Das of Lakhimpur. The title of his paper was "Socio-Economic Problems of Scheduled Castes of Assam —

A Review". Like Shri Surjya Das, he had also presented his paper in Assamese. Shri Das in his paper discussed thoroughly the problems of education, disbursement of scholarship, problems of the scavengers, appointment of scheduled caste persons in posts and services, the role of Scheduled Caste Development Board, etc. Shri Das, being a Member of a scheduled caste community felt that the people have many traditional customs which stand in the way of their development. He advocated the removal of these social customs by the concerned people themselves.

The third paper entitled "Socio-Economic Problems of the Scheduled Caste People and Suggestions of Development" by Shri Chandra Kamal Das of Dibrugarh, Organising, Secretary, Asom Anushuchia Jati Parishad was considered to be presented since the writer of the paper was not present.

Shri Matilal Nayak, Ex-M.L.A., Barpeta, presented his paper entitled "A Socio-Economic Survey of the Hira Community" in Assamese. Shri Nayak based his paper on a survey of 100 families belonging to Hira Community living in and around Barpeta town. In his paper Shri Nayak discussed the various problems of the Hira community whose traditional occupation is pottery. On the basis of the data collected from his field survey Shri Das had suggested some measures for the socio-economic development of the people of the Hira community.

The fifth paper in this academic session was presented by Shri Hari Charan Bhowmick of Sapetagram, Dist. Kokrajhar. Shri Bhowmick like Shri Matilal Nayak had presented his paper in Assamese. Shri Bhowmick had critically examined the various problems of

the scheduled castes like poverty, illiteracy, castism, untouchability, food, shelter, social customs and superstitions, education, health, etc.

The sixth and last paper in the 3rd academic session was presented by Shri Suren Das, Principal, Tyagbir Hem Baruah College, Jamugurihat, Dist-Sonitpur. He also presented his paper in Assamese. Shri Das in his paper had pointed out that some of the communities having scheduled caste status in Assam are not indigenous people. They have come to Assam from different States of India. Such people have been receiving the benefits of the scheduled castes at the cost of the indigenous scheduled castes. Shri Das also disfavoured the award of grants as an incentive for intercaste marriage. He compared such grant given as incentive for dowry system.

The Chairman of the session Shri B.N. Hazarika summarised the contents of the papers presented in this session.

VALEDICTORY SESSION

At the end of the last academic session, an informal Valedictory Session was held. The participants unanimously formed a Sub-Committee to finalize the recommendations. This Committee was constituted with the following Members :

1. Dr. G.C. Sharma Thakur, Convener
Joint Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals & SCs.
2. Shri B.N. Hazarika, Member
Industrial Consultant, Guwahati.
3. Shri W. Ullah, Member
Deputy Director, Deptt. of Economics & Statistics, Guwahati.

4. Shri Dilip Das, Member
Planning Officer, Assam State Development Corporation for Scheduled Castes Ltd. Guwahati.

The participants expressed their thanks and gratitude for nicely organising the seminar on the Scheduled Castes for the first time in Assam. They expressed the hope that this was a beginning only and in future they would be expecting to meet together again to discuss their problems and prospects of development.

The following are the major recommendations of the seminar.

1. Most of the fishermen do not have regular and dependable sources of fishing. Fishermen from outside the State have entered into the fish trade in a big way throwing out the petty local fish traders. The State Government should come to the rescue of these poor fish traders by allotting ceiling surplus marshy lands to them. The Fishery Department should develop these lands before making allotment to the needy fishermen.
2. The existing moribund Fishery Co-operative Societies should be revitalised with finances from World Bank, NABARD, NCDC, NSFDC, etc.
3. The existing schemes of the Fishery Department are by and large, target oriented. Emphasis should be laid on improvement of quality. Instead of offering piece-meal grants and subsidies, a co-ordinated package scheme should be ventured and such development measures should be phased in concentrated pockets, preferably Development Block wise.

4. The Fishery Co-operatives in the State are indirectly controlled by private financiers and in this way the very purpose of forming Co-operatives for fishermen is frustrated. The State Govt. should take suitable steps to remove this lacunae. Only Co-operatives can help the poor fishermen to improve the age old backwardness.

5. The seminar recommended immediate steps from the Education Department in respect of improvement of Lower Primary School buildings of the scheduled caste inhabited villages.

6. The Government of Assam should earmark amount for the Scheduled Caste Component Plan in conformity with the percentage of the scheduled caste population of the State.

7. The concerned Departments should undertake evaluation of the on going schemes.

8. Honesty and integrity of the personnel involved in the selection of beneficiaries for the development schemes should be tested. Experience shows that vested interests act in such cases depriving the genuine persons from getting benefits.

Registered voluntary organisations may be involved in the task.

9. The quality of the materials, animals, poultry, seeds, etc. sanctioned under grant and subsidy system should be ensured as complaints of substandard items are often received. The Directorate of Scheduled Caste should be the nodal agency in this regard.

10. Traditional skills of various scheduled caste communities are drying up due to stiff competition of the articles produced commercially by industrialists. The State Govt. should revitalise those traditional small and cottage industries of the scheduled caste communities by providing modern equipments and training in developed techniques.

11. Unlike the scheduled tribes of Assam, books and research materials on scheduled castes of Assam are few and far between. The State Government should entrust the Directorate of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals & Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, to bring out popular series on the scheduled caste communities of Assam. ○ ○

A Glimpse into the Institution of Karbi Kingship and its Functionaries

Shri G. N. Das

The Karbis are Mongoloid and most probably they belong to the Kuki-Chin group of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family. Their original habitat was somewhere in north-eastern China near the Yang-Tee-Kiang and the Howang-ho rivers. Although the route of migration is shrouded with mystery, it is believed that they moved southward from their homeland, arrived at northern Burma and ultimately entered into erstwhile Assam through the north-eastern route. At present, the highest concentration of the Karbis is found in the Karbi Anglong district while some of their brethren have settled sparsely in several districts of Assam. Moreover, we come to know about the habitation of the Karbis in Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and even in Bangladesh.

KINGSHIP SYSTEM AND ITS ALLIED INSTITUTIONS :

The tradition of this hill race (Karbi) points to the existence of a King of their own in their good old days and they are awaiting his return to earth. Now-a-days, the hill

Karbis who profess primitive religion of their own believe that there were mainly three local Kings (Chiefs), one at Rongkhong, another at Chinthong and the other at Amri. In the Hamren subdivision, the three development blocks namely Rongkhong, Chinthong and Amri roughly coincided with the domains of these three local chiefs in their good old days. The Diphu subdivision was divided into Nilip, Lumbajong, Sosan Dhanta and there were local chiefs there also. The institution of Kingship, however, has become more or less obsolete and the local kings have now become local chiefs, the Diphu subdivision having no chief now. Most of the hill Karbis, however, still retain the dream of a state with their local kings and this kingdom is more temporal than real. In the hierarchy of the local chiefs, the Karbi Recho of Rongkhong occupies the highest place. The next in line is the Lindokpo of Chinthong and the Lindokpo of Amri.

In the Rongkhong area, there are 4 Nos. of Lindokpos who are selected from (i) Ronghang (ii) Rongchaicho (Teron) (iii) Killing and (iv) Rongpi subclans. In the Chinthong area, the No. of Lindokpos is 3 - (i) Chinthong

(Hanse subclan) (ii) Nonglada (Rongpi subclan) and (iii) Nongpli (Timung Rongphar). Again, in the Amri area, there are 2 Nos. of Lindokpos - (i) Du (Hanse subclan) and (ii) Nongkirla (Teron).

The traditional capital of the Karbis is at Niz Rongkhong which is located at a distance of about 21 K.M. from Hamren. The village is also known as Raja Gaon because of the fact that the families of the clans (4nos.) out of which the Karbi Recho and the three Lindokpos of Rongkhong are chosen, happen to reside in this particular village.

A Lindokpo is selected democratically and after his demise, the members of the respective clan select a person who is well conversant with the traditional customs. In the Rongkhong area, the Karbi Recho is always selected from the Ronghang subclan only.

The traditional administration is maintained by the Lindokpo with the help of several functionaries like Dili, Katharbura, Pator and Dengja etc. who constitute the Pinpomar (Parliament). Moreover, the kingdom (Hawar) is divided into several regions which are known as Longri. Habe is the head of the Longri. He is appointed by the Lindokpo. In fact, there are 2 Nos. of Habes (i) Habekong (Chief Habe) and (ii) Habe Riso (Asst. Habe). Each Longri consists of several villages and each village is headed by a Sarthe who is appointed by Habe. It is to be noted that Sartheship is hereditary.

The legislative, executive and judicial powers are entrusted to the Pinpomar. Only when the Pinpomar fails to decide any case, it will then be referred to the Lindokpo whose decision will be considered as final. Again, Arnampharo Amei i.e. council of wise men drawn from clans and sub clans is the supreme Appellate Authority.

The advisers of the Lindokpo may be classified into two categories - civil and ritual. The first group looks after civil or secular matters and the second group is in charge of rituals although, it is very difficult to separate the spheres where one sphere transgressed the activity of the other. The decision was taken by the Lindokpo in council who has both coercive and judicial powers. The Lindokpo and his advisers exercise untrammelled authority over socio-political affairs. The coercive authority is exercised through a traditional means of transmission of message by means of a looped ring with. In the illiterate society, this type of transmission of message is common and it has the effect of telegraph or postal message. This type of transmission is called 'Lam Kido'. The seriousness of the crime is judged by the closely woven nature of the loop so made and carried by an important officer like Mutiyar or Pherenke. More closer the loop, the more urgent is the matter. Goswami narrated a story how the punishment was given to Song Tisso, the Bar Habe for gross negligence and misdemeanour. He was subjected to Lam Kido in 1975. He ignored the message twice but ultimately, he was put under more ominous message 'Habe Kapelam'. He was fined Rs. One Hundred and he was also forced to offer banta and bottles of Arak. His way-wardness cost him Rs. Six Hundred to regain the Habeship. He was reinstated after he made all the payments to his Habeship through another Lamkido.

The religio-ritualistic functions are in the hands of the Katharbura, Dengja and Miji. The Lindokpo himself looks after the civil side of the case. The position of one person in the list is interesting. He is the Duihidi - the drummer. The art of drum beating is to be acquired and all can not do it

automatically. The definite notes of it are to be learnt properly by the eager persons. The traditional line-up of administration is facing a challenge from the District Council. The traditional system largely depends on the willing compliance by the people and it is not backed by any enforceable coercive sanction. The Council on the other hand, can enforce its authority because it is financially viable and also backed by proper sanction.*

THE KING AS THE PRIEST :

The king needs to offer sacrifice to the Blaithelen. It is the worship of the snake. This can be done by the king alone. He performs this Puja once in a year and there is no fixed date for this purpose. He worships the snake (python) so that he can rule his people effectively.

EXPULSION OF THE KING :

The king can be expelled if he is found guilty which includes his involvement as well of his children to the act of adultery, quarrels, excessive drinking and disloyalty to the rules and regulations of the Pinpomar. Sarmen Ronghang who was a Karbi Recho was expelled since he resorted to frequent quarrels with other Lindokpos. Another example can be found in case Makso Ronghang who was expelled due to the act of adultery committed by his son. He was sent back from the king's abode.

PRIESTHOOD :

It is interesting to note that the office of priesthood is exclusively reserved for the

Kathar family and no member belonging to other clan is entitled to the concerned office. The chronological order may be shown as follows :

- (1) Sam Kathar —father of Lunse Kathar
- (2) Lunse Kathar —son of Sam Kathar
- (3) Long Kathar —son of Lunse Kathar
- (4) Harsing Kathar—son of Long Kathar

At present, the priesthood is occupied by Harsing Kathar, an elderly person of Niz Rongkhong.

The priest can alone offer sacrifice to the god 'Jagat Dhatri'. He offers this worship so that the Karbi community in particular and the people of the world in general live in peace and prosperity. He worships once in a year. There was no such fixed date earlier. Now-a-days, the puja starts on 9th March and ends on 10th March every year. Habes from different Longris attend the occasion. Besides this, the priest plays a vital role in Niz Rongkhong. He works/acts as adviser to the king and also to the other Lindokpos.

DILISHIP :

The Dili has to be the most trustworthy person to the king. He is responsible for all the field activities. The Dili acts on behalf of the other Lindokpos, too. In fact, he is the media person for all the Lindokpos. There are 2 Nos. of Dilis—1) Bor Dili (Head) and 2) Pator (Asstt). To be Dili, one has to be from a Terang clan. At the same time, he should be a married person. His wife must be from the clan of Tisso, Inghi or Rongpi clan. Eventhough, the person is qualified from all

respects, but if his wife belongs to other clan except those mentioned above, he can not be Dili or Pator.

The Dili has to attend the cases whenever he is informed by the Habes. He settles disputes on behalf of the king as well as of the other Lindokpos. If the cases come under the area of the king, he will do the same on behalf of the king and if the cases fall under the other Lindokpos i. e. other than the king, he will discharge his duties on behalf of the respective Lindokpo. As soon as the disputed matter is settled, the king should be informed of the matter by the Dili with a bottle of wine and other presentation viz, fined money. If the king is satisfied, the case is settled. Otherwise, he may ask the Dili to see the matter again for final settlement. The same is done in case of settling matter to the other Lindokpos.

Under the Lungneh Longri-a-Mei, Baithalangso, a quarrel took place between Tamen Kramsa and Habekog Kramsa who were both brothers. The Habe Mr. Haren Kro informed the matter to the Bor Dili that Mr. Habekog Kramsa had filed a case to the Police Station. The Bor Dili, Mr. Sing Terang came and withdrew the case from the Police Station and brought the case under his control. The younger brother was fined Rs. 50/- while the elder brother was fined Rs. 25/- only. Both brothers had to offer few bottles of wine and some chicken to the Bor Dili and his assistant. Till to-day, the two brothers are living peacefully.

Another example may be cited here. At Rongpongbe, there was a dispute between Harsing Timung and Longsing Kiling for land boundary. Initially, the Sarthe and the Habe tried to settle the matter but it remained undecided. Later on, Bor Dili solved the

dispute and the two persons agreed to abide by the decision which was served by the Bor Dili. With regard to 'Laisehem' we may cite an example here. In the village Lansikha near Donkamokam, an illegal marriage takes place between a boy and a girl belonging to Ronghang sub clan. Bordili comes alongwith his officials to the village and starts trial. He listens carefully all the sayings and later on, declares his verdict to purify both the convicts. The Bey (priest) performs sacrifice at jungle with an egg for the boy and a pigling for the girl alongwith bottles of wine. As a symbol, dresses meant for convicts are also brought, and these are purified. At the end, the Bordili offers the puja. He declares the marriage to be illegal and as a result, they are separated from each other.

In bygone days, such persons were sent to Pureng, a place located at Meghalaya and Assam border about 62 K.M. from Umlong. This is a place for exilement for those who enter into illegal marriage. The exiled people still write their surname and most of them have become Khasi. They speak the Khasi language and embrace Christianity. They do not keep touch with the traditional Karbi society.

A Dili or a Pator may also be expelled due to some reasons. Late Sing Terang, a Bor Dili was expelled for his involvement in corruption. He was also found to be unfaithful towards his duties. He kept a lion's share of the imposed fines for his personal gains. The matter was brought to light and he was expelled. But if the person is faithful and maintains his stewardship for the office assigned, he can continue till his death. Example can be found in case of late Rupsing Terang, a Bordili.

2. Bhattacharjee T.—Sociology of the Karbis, P. 57

DENGJASHIP :

The office of Dengja must be occupied by a person from the Teron clan. There are Dengja Kethe and Dengjaso. The former means the Head and the latter is the assistant. The Dengja does the human sacrifice to the god in order to get rid of hardship, evils etc. He does not have such fixed date for performing the sacrifice. The prey comes voluntarily and approaches the village. Afterwards, it behaves like animal and the Dengja understands the reasons. The prey is kept for some time. And in due time, he is offered to the god. It was learnt that the sacrifice was made at the early part of 1965 by late Mensing Teron, the Dengja Kethe. But these days, human sacrifice is not in vogue.

HABESHIP :

The Habeship is prevalent in the Hamren area and it is totally absent in the Diphu subdivision. The Habe who is appointed by the Lindokpo is the head of the Longri. He is assisted by several officials who are, in fact, sentinels of the traditional customs and practices prevalent among the Karbis since time immemorial. Moreover, the Habe has to decide cases of various nature and if he fails to arrive at an amicable solution, he refers them to the Lindokpo.

A longri-a-mei (regional council) usually consists of the following office-bearers :

- i) The Habe Kong (Elder Habe)
- ii) The Habe Riso (Young Habe)
- iii) The Brutemen (Legal Expert)
- iv) The Mutiyar (Organising Secretary)
- v) The Hemai (Asstt. Organising Secy.)

- vi) The Basapo (Manager) and
- vii) The Sarthes (Headmen) of the concerned villages.

The effective functioning of the Longri-a-mei depends primarily upon the Habe. If he is well versed in all sorts of customary practices and usages as well as in administration, the people live in peace and tranquility. The activities of the various office-bearers may be summed up as follows :

THE BRUTEMEN :

The word (Buruteme) is derived from the Khasi word. In Karbi, it is called 'Phuman Phulok' which means 'experience mind' or the 'legal expert'. He has to extend all possible help towards the Habe in taking decision of the trial.

THE MUTIYAR :

The Mutiyar is the organising secretary of the Longri-a-mei. To attain the mature stage of the Longri-a-mei, the heavy responsibilities fall upon the Mutiyar. It is his duty to pursue the Sarthes to attend the meeting which is called by the Habe.

THE HEMAI :

The Hemai serves as the Assistant Mutiyar. In absence of the Mutiyar, he has to shoulder the responsibilities. Further, he has to take care of the materials which are at the use of the Habe during the hour of trial/sitting.

THE BASAPO :

The Basapo's main function is to arrange the convenient place for the trials/sittings.

If he can not find out the same, he has to arrange at his own residence.

POWER OF THE HABE :

In general, the Habe acts as an executive and as a mediator between the Sarthes and the Pinpomar.

AS AN EXECUTIVE :

- i) The Habe settles intra-village disputes of the Longri.
- ii) He settles the unsettled disputes sent by the Sarthe.
- iii) He can impose fines to the convict as per the traditional norms.
- iv) The Habe has the authority to collect necessary fund for celebration of Chojun or Pirthat, Chomangkan etc.
- v) He has to obey the directives of the Pinpomar.
- vi) The Habe has to actively participate during the various festivals. But he is to be informed and requested well ahead of the celebration of the festivals.

AS A MEDIATOR :

The Habe acts as the mediator between the Sarthe and the Pinpomar. If the settlement of the disputes can not be accepted by either party/complainant, the cases are referred to the Pinpomar.

DISQUALIFICATION :

The Habeship is hereditary. Naturally, the eldest son of the Habe can be ordained

as per advice of the Pinpomar. Of course, the Lindokpo has the full authority not to appoint the eldest son as Habe. But he has to appoint someone from the same clan of the deceased Habe. The Habeship can be removed on the following grounds :

- i) When a Habe is found disloyal to the Pinpomar, the Habeship can be removed from the person concerned.
- ii) When a Habe is found physically unfit due to sudden accident, he may be removed from the office.
- iii) When a Habe commits crime e.g. marries two wives, the Habeship can be straightway removed.
- iv) When a Habe intentionally postpones certain disputed matter for final settlement and makes efforts to conceal such matter/trial, the Habeship is entitled for removal/cancellation.
- v) When a complaint of dissatisfaction from the Mekar (which is supported by the Sarthes) reaches the Pinpomar, naturally, the Habeship is subject to cancellation.
- iv) If the Habe is converted to Christianity, the Habeship is removed, e.g. Mr. Harsing Tisso of Umcherra, about 15 K.M. from Hamren.

In absence of the Habe, the trial (which is urgent in nature) can be settled by the Habe Riso. When a Habe dies, the responsibilities fall upon the Habe Riso till the selection of the new Habe. Normally, the eldest son of the Habe is given the Habeship. If he does not have male issue, the nearest male relative is chosen. And if there is no suitable person at all, the Pinpomar will advise to get a suitable person from the same clan

of the deceased Habe. This process of selection is also applicable in case of Habe Riso.

THE HABE SIKOPI :

The wife of the Habe is called the Habe Sikopi. She is accepted as the ideal leader of the women. She is honoured and held at high esteem. When a Sikopi dies, the Habe can remarry from the close relative of the Sikopi. If suitable partner is not available, he may select someone from the same clan of his former Sikopi.

As long as the Habe is alive, the Habe Sikopi enjoys all the facilities as the head of the womenfolk. When a Habe dies, she can not do the same. Instead, the Sikopi of the Habe Riso discharges the duties.

SARTHESHIP :

The Sarthe plays a dominant role in the village level administration. He is appointed by the Habe and to assist him there are several functionaries like Basapo, Pherenke and Brutemen etc. He has full control over social as well as judicial matters in relation

to his village. He is the most respected person in the village. He is the first person to be invited with honour to attend the functions which take place in his village.

The Sarthe can not, of course, take up the murder cases and sex offences (Kur-chenem or Laiehenem) which are within the power of the Habe or the Lindokpo. But other cases are within the jurisdiction of the Sarthe. In this connection, it may be mentioned here that the Sarkari Gaonbura appointed by the District Council is a paid employee whereas the Sarthe does not receive any monetary benefit. But he is highly honoured by the people.

From the above discussion, we come to know that the traditional Karbi society is governed by a three-dimensional system of administration. At the top, there is the Lindokpo. At the middle, the Habes and at the grass root level, the Sarthes. Although the system is gradually disintegrating with the passage of time, even then the Karbi Recho still plays an effective role in the socio-religious life of the Karbi people particularly inhabiting the Hamren subdivision of the Karbi Anglong district.

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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

INTRODUCTION :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes (erstwhile Tribal Research Institute, Assam) with Headquarters at Guwahati was set up in 1977 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under "Research & Training." A full time Director was, however, appointed in July 1981. The scope of activities of the Institute includes both Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes. The jurisdiction of the Institute extends to entire Assam covering plains and hills.

FUNCTIONS :

As per guide-lines laid down by the Govt. of India, the main functions of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes are (1) Research (2) Evaluation, (3) Planning and (4) Training. The other important functions include publication of Books, Research Papers and Research Bulletins, organisation of Seminars, Symposia and Workshops, participation in Exhibitions at state, regional and national levels, award of Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Research Fellowships, documentation of Tribal life and Culture through audio visual media, establishment of a Documentation Centre and a

Data Bank on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, establishment of a Museum for the authentic documentation and preservation of the material culture of tribals and their heritage, establishment of a Reference Library and so on.

RESEARCH :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes has so far completed 39 Nos. of important Research studies and a few such studies are in hand.

EVALUATION :

Evaluation studies numbering 9 (Nine) have so far been completed and 3 Nos. of such studies are in hand.

PLANNING :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals & Scheduled Castes, had prepared Project Reports for all the 19 Nos. of Integrated Tribal Development Projects during the Fifth Five Year Plan and during the Sixth Five Year Plan it had revised the Project Reports for 17 Nos. of I.T.D.Ps.

It had also prepared the Indicators of Development for the Tribal Sub-Plan Areas

of Assam during the Seventh Five Year Plan in pursuance of the guidelines given by the Ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India.

In addition to this the Institute has also been helping the Government of Assam, in the Department for Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes, in preparation of the Tribal Sub-Plan and the Scheduled Castes Component Plan.

TRAINING :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes organizes Tribal Orientation Training Courses regularly out of its own annual budgetary allotment and also Orientation Training Courses sponsored by the Department of personnel and Training (Training Division), Govt. of India.

So far its own training course are concerned the courses are organised for officials and non-officials connected with the welfare and development of the Scheduled Tribes. For the officers who are connected with the formulation and implementation of Tribal Sub-Plan Schemes I.T.D.P wise at the District and Sub-Divisional levels and the officers entrusted with the welfare and development of the Hill Areas Plan Schemes in the Sixth Scheduled Areas, Tribal Orientation Training Courses are organised.

Orientation Training Courses for non-officials like the Chairmen of the Project Implementation Committees of the Integrated Tribal Development Projects, Sub-Divisional Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Boards, Members of the Managing Committees of the Gaon Panchayat level Samabai Samitties and Educated Tribal Youth are also organised.

30 Nos. of such training—24 Nos. for officials and 6 Nos. for non-officials—have so far been organised.

Under the Specific Category of Training sponsored by the Department of Personnel and Training (Training Division), Govt. of India, training courses were organised for Police, Forest and Excise Officials, Project Directors of I.T.D.Ps Development Officers and Branch Officers of the Assam Plains Tribes Development Corporation and Assam Scheduled Castes Development Corporation, District and Sub-divisional level Officers connected with formulation and implementation of tribal development schemes, etc.

12 Nos. of sponsored training Programmes have so far been organised and conducted by the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes.

PUBLICATION :

Publication of monographs and other books and Research Bulletins has been a regular feature of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes. The Institute has so far published nine books as shown below :

1. Chomangkan—the Death Ceremony observed by the Karbis.
2. The Dimasa Kacharis of Assam.
3. The Lalungs.
4. Alienation of Tribal Land and Indebtedness.
5. Tribes of Assam—Popular Series Part-I.
6. Tribes of Assam—Popular Series—Part-II.
7. Application of Science and Technology for Tribal Development.
8. Constraints of Tribal Development in North-East India.

9. Tribes of Assam—Popular Series—Part-III.

Another book entitled Socio-Economic Development of the Scheduled Castes of Assam is in press.

The Institute Bulletin in the form of Research Journal is published annually. Eight annual issues including this has so far been released.

SEMINAR :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes organizes Seminars on the problems of development of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes at State, Regional and National levels. Subjects of Seminars and the venues where organised are shown hereunder.

1. The Contribution of Assam Tribes to the Cultural Heritage of Assam and India. (State level seminar held at Boko).
2. Alienation of Tribal Land and Indebtedness (National level seminar held at Guwahati).
3. Socio-Economic Problems of the Plains Tribes of Assam (State level seminar held at Jalah College).
4. Dimensions of Poverty among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of Assam (State level seminar held at Dudhnoi College).
5. Application of Science and Technology for Tribal Development. (State level seminar held at Guwahati).
6. Constraints of Tribal Development in North-East India. (Regional level seminar held at Guwahati).
7. Socio-Economic Developments of the Scheduled Castes of Assam., (State level seminar held at Guwahati).

EXHIBITION :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes has been participating in the State and National level exhibitions held from time to time within and outside the State of Assam by displaying the cultural heritage of the tribes of Assam - both plains and hills - and also their fast disappearing artifacts. So far it had participated in 10 Nos. of State level exhibitions and 2 Nos. of National level exhibitions. The National Handloom Expo '85 and the Tribal Habitat Exhibition organised by the National Museum of Man in Bhopal are the two national level exhibitions in which the Institute had participated.

In the Tribal Habitat Exhibition at Bhopal the A.I.R.T.S.C. had got a Bodo-Kachari hutment constructed and a team of Bodo-Kachari artisans and artists drawn from Kokrajhar district had not only displayed the material culture of the tribe but also presented a number of cultural items during exhibition which were highly appreciated by the visitors drawn from different parts of India.

MUSEUM :

A good beginning has already been made by establishing a Museum for the purpose of displaying and preserving the rare artifacts belonging to different ethnic tribal groups of Assam covering hills and plains. The Museum set-up will not only help in displaying and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the tribes of Assam, but will also help the research scholars and persons of various walks of life in enhancing their knowledge and further research aptitudes. Many artifacts belonging

to the Bodo-Kacharis, Misings, Rabhas, Deoris, Sonowal Kacharis, Lalungs, Karbis, Dimasa Kacharis, Rengma Nagas, Zeme Nagas, Hmars, Kukis, Garos and Hajongs have already been collected.

The artifacts of the different tribal communities, along with coloured below-ups and transparencies are now being displayed in the Museum of the new Building Complex at Jawaharnagar.

FELLOWSHIP :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes offers Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Research Fellowships to deserving scholars on "Various Aspects of Tribal Development" sponsored by the Ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India.

While two scholars had already obtained their Doctoral (Ph.D.) Degrees through the Research Fellowships awarded by the Institute, another two Research Fellows are conducting their research studies for Doctoral Degrees.

Three Research Fellows have already completed their Post-Doctoral research studies and submitted their study reports.

DOCUMENTATION OF TRIBAL CULTURE :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, has recently introduced the scheme-Documentation of Tribal Culture. The North-Eastern Council, Govt. of India, Shillong, has also helped the Institute financially for implementation of this scheme. Different aspects of culture of tribal

communities inhabiting the hills and plains of Assam are taken up for authentic documentation through Audio-Visual media.

Production of 16 mm short duration coloured Documentary Films on the 'Kherai' festival of the Boro-Kacharis of Assam, 'Baikhow' festival of the Rabhas, 'Ali-Ai-Lrigang' of the Mishings and the Deodini dance of the Deoris have already been completed. The Bihu festivals of the different ethnic groups are also taken up for documentation through 16 mm colour film and this is a N.E.C. sponsored scheme. Video Film Cassette on the 'Baikhow' festival of the Rabhas has also been produced by the Institute. 16 mm coloured documentary films have already been converted into Umatic cassettes for making them suitable for regional and national telecast. Documentation of different aspects of Tribal Life and Culture has also been undertaken through the medium of Coloured Blow-Ups (Still Photography).

DOCUMENTATION CENTRE :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, has also set-up a Documentation Centre recently. The Library of the Institute serves as the resource materials centre.

DATA BANK :

A data bank on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of Assam has been started since 1988-89 with a view to providing required data on Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes to the Central and State Governments and other agencies including research scholars as and when required

A computer has also been installed in the Institute recently.

LIBRARY :

The Institute maintains a Reference Library of its own. Important books numbering about 6000 have already been collected. It also subscribes about twenty Research Journals. The Library provides reading room facilities for scholars and others.

INAUGURATION OF NEW BUILDING COMPLEX :

The new multistoreyed building of the Directorate of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes which was constructed at a cost of Rs. 1.6 Crores at Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati was inaugurated by Shri Hiteswar Saikia, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, on 2nd January '92. Fifty per cent of the cost of the building was borne by the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India.

The building is a compact one having a total plinth area of 30,000 sq. ft. In the training wing there is a provision of accommodating 30 Nos. of trainee officers and 2 Nos. Guests/Guest Speakers. There is one Auditorium, One Conference room and Lecture rooms. The Library and the Museum are also accommodated in the same building complex. A Computer has also been installed. The administrative wing consists of 17 rooms and one big hall.

Addressing on the occasion, the Chief Minister laid emphasis on the training of officers and other workers who are directly and indirectly involved in development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of

Assam and also evaluation studies of the schemes implemented for their development. Shri Saikia hoped that with the modern facilities made available, the Institute would be in position to develop its research, training and other allied activities without any hindrance. The Chief Minister was also of the opinion that the inauguration of this building complex would surely increase efficiency of the Research Institute and indirectly would help in the rapid development of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes population of Assam.

Expressing satisfaction for selection of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes for NICNET LINKAGE by the Planning Commission, Government of India, as a resource organisation for National Informatics Centre relating to the development of Tribals and Scheduled Castes, the Chief Minister said that it was a great achievement for the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes. Concluding the inaugural speech Shri Saikia termed the Institute building complex as a "New Year's Gift" for the people of Assam.

The Chief Minister also released a book entitled, 'Transfer and Alienation of Tribal Land Assam with Special Reference to the Karbis of the Karbi Anglong District'—a fundamental research work done by Dr. B.N. Bordoloi, Director of the Institute.

The inaugural function was presided over by Shri Borgoram Deori, Minister, Welfare of Plains Tribes & Backward Classes. In his presidential speech Shri Deori expressed his satisfaction for having a massive building complex for the Research Institute and he thanked the Director and other officials of the Institute for this achievement. The Minister

hoped that the Institute now having the requisite facilities would be in a position to discharge its duties with greater speed and efficiency.

Dr. Bhumidhar Barman, Minister, Education Shri Nakul Das, Minister, Veterinary and Animal Husbandry, and Shri Balin Kuli., M.P. also spoke on the occasion. The inaugural function was attended by Shri Siew Sambhu Ojha, Transport Minister, Shri Gomeswar Pegu, Minister for State, Revenue, Shri H.N. Das, Chief Secretary, Shri T. K. Kamilla, then Commissioner and Secretary, Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes, other senior government officers and a large number of invited guests.

Earlier Dr. B.N. Bordoloi, Director of the Institute gave an account of research, training evaluation and other activities of the Institute. Shri M. C. Saikia, Deputy Director of the Institute offered a Vote of Thanks.

MISCELLANEOUS :

Collection of data through questionnaires from the various Government departments, public sector undertakings, universities, etc., compilation and processing of the same for the purpose of the Annual Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes so far as the State of Assam is concerned has also been entrusted to the Institute by the State Government of Assam.

The Commission for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes, set-up by the Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal, had visited the Assam Institute in the last part of the year 1988. The Chairman and the Commission Members expressed their high satisfaction at the functioning and the activities of the A.I.R.T.S.C. Dr. B.K. Roy

Burman, Senior Professor, Centre for Studies of Developing Societies, Delhi, also visited our Institute thrice during the year 1989-90.

Dr. B. N. Bordoloi, Director of the Institute has been conducting all the Tribal Orientation Training Courses organised by the Directorate as the Course Director. Dr. G.C. Sharma Thakur, Joint Director and Shri M.C. Saikia, Deputy Director of the Institute also have been acting as faculty members in these training courses. Dr. B.N. Bordoloi has also been serving as a Guest Speaker in various training courses organised by state level and national level Institutions. He has also been attending state, regional and national level seminars, workshops and conferences by contributing and presenting research papers within the State and outside. He also attended the XIIth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, in July 1988 and presented a research paper which was highly acclaimed.

Dr. B.N. Bordoloi, was a member of the Working Group constituted by the Planning Commission, Government of India, on the Welfare and Development of the Scheduled Castes during the Eighth Five Year Plan. He is also a member of the Central Research Advisory Council constituted by the Ministry of Welfare (Tribal Development Division), Government of India. He was a member of the Task Force for Application of Science and Technology, constituted by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. Dr. Bordoloi, is also a member of the Working Group on "Tribals' Command over Resources" constituted by the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi. ● ●