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GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

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Editorial Note

This is the Sixteenth issue of the bulletin of the the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes. The earlier bulletins have been well received by the readers.

In this issue, altogether 10 (ten) articles contributed by distinguished scholars and faculty members of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes has been incorporated. I hope, this issue will be very informative and will be received by the readers with great pleasure. The bulletin is published annually with a view to reflect the new challenges of the tribal people of this region and the changing scenario of their culture and economy.

I extend my thanks and gratitude to the contributors of this bulletin, to the faculty members and staff of the Institute for their assistance in bringing out this issue. I am also thankful to M/S. Bohniman Printers, Guwahati.

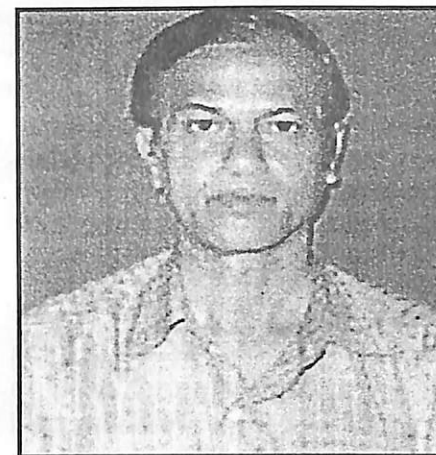
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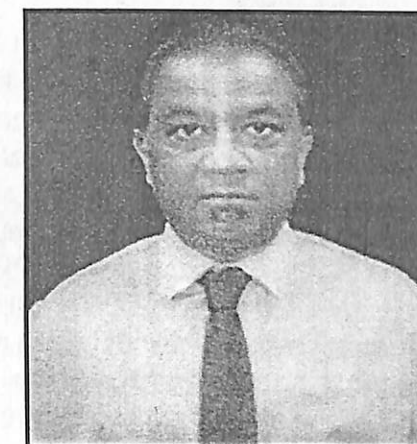
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TRIBUTE

The Officers & Staff of the Directorate of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes deeply mourn the sudden demise of the following members of the Directorate during the years 2006-07



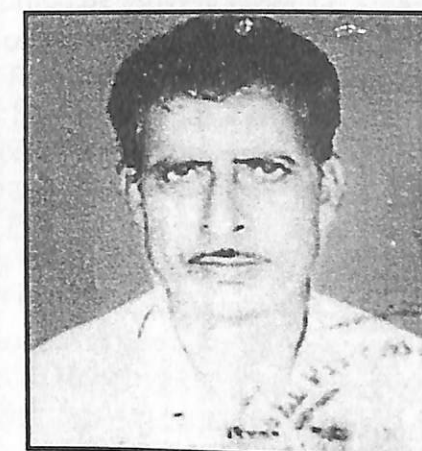
Late Pranab Kr. Phukan
Inspector of Statistics
Died on 16-03-2006



Late Luit Kr. Bhuyan
Accountant
Died on 05-02-2007



Late Babul Kalita
Driver
Died on 31-03-2006



Late Ram Narayan Singh
Chowkidar-Cum-Mali
Died on 20-03-2007

May the Departed Souls Rest in Eternal Peace

TRIBAL SITUATION IN ASSAM SINCE PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Sri Birendra Kumar Barman**

Assam has a rich legacy of culture and civilization conjured by the name. Being the homeland of different race of men, Austric, Mongolian, Dravidian and Aryan that came to dwell in her hills and valleys at different time since remote antiquity. Assam has developed a composite culture of variegated colour.

Situated in the North-East of India, Assam has a glorious history of her own. Popularly known as the ethnological museum of India, Assam has been described as a mini India, having a rich diverse cultural heritage.

Until 1826, Assam was ruled by the Ahoms which is termed as the turning point in Assam history. They ruled Assam nearly for six hundred years. The Burmese entered through Eastern borders and overran the territory at time when court intrigues and dissension were sapping the vitality of the Ahom royalty. The British appeared soon 1826 by the treaty of Yandabu, the Burmese ceded Assam to the British.

Assam, the sentinel of the North-East India is most strategically situated, close to India's international borders with as may as four countries i.e. China, Burma, Bhutan and Bangladesh. It is surrounded on all other sides by predominantly hilly or mountainous tract. Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh on the North, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh on the East and Meghalaya and Tripura on the South.

During the pre-independence period Assam was known as Bar Assam or Greater Assam, where seven sisters of today were considered as one even though Tripura built a strong royal hegemony. The British ruled the entire areas. The British Government appointed Commissioners to look after the administrative matter of this region. The administrative role played by then officers in the form of grouped and regrouped of the territories and the people according to their own interest of cost minimization in administration and profit maximization in economic ventures gradually developed ethnic uproaring in Bar Assam, which in subsequent years resulted communal clashes in the name of safeguard and maintaining ethnic solidarity among various tribal people of Assam. Thus a segmentation tendency among the ethnic groups had become an unavoidable issue whose impact was bitterly faced by the Government of Assam during post independent period.

It is evident from history that even after reorganization policy of the British

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Government some of the present state of North-East, maintained rigid ethnic solidarity and they tried to establish their own rule under the leadership of their own king of chief. Though it was there, the state re-organization (1955-56) envisioned an integrated North-East India in the form of an enlarged Assam. It anticipated a merger of Manipur and Tripura with Assam after some years. However, this recommendation was not accepted by the Government of India. Later on a political resentment developed in Manipur then Naga dominated areas in Manipur, resulting the formation of statehood to Manipur on March 22, 1972.

Similarly, the Meghalaya, which was under the jurisdiction of Assam till 1972, got its independent Statehood on February 21, 1972, Mizoram, the former Lusai Hills district of Assam became a Union Territory on January 21, 1972. Again on August 15, 1972 the NEFA was made Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh and Itanagar became the capital of Arunachal Pradesh. Tripura being the independent monarch did not face much trouble to establish their self rule. Therefore, as soon as India got freedom Tripura became a Union Territory in 1956.

The earliest inhabitants of Assam were probably the various offshoots of the great Indo-Chinese hordes, whose headquarters are supposed to have been on the upper belt of the Yang-tse-Kiang and Ho-ang-ho. These Indo-Chinese tribes were represented by various names even though their origin were more or less the same by name and characters. They were known as the Ahoms, Chutiyas, Deoris, Moran, Matak, Bodos, Manipuris, Nagas, Lusai, Kuki, Mikir, who was later termed as Karbis, Lalungs (Tiwa, the present name) Miri or Mishing, Rabhas, Thengals, Sonowals, Fakials, Koch, Khasis, and Jayantias, Hmars, Dimasas etc. These tribes were confined within their own periphery with their political hegemony. They ruled themselves under the chieftainship, whom they called as 'Raja'. They have their own socio-cultural, socio-political and religious faiths and maintain rigid identity until the time of British colonization. In subsequent years various waves of immigration were intolerably received by these groups of tribes, which germinated the menace to their entity.

Before the advent of colonial rule, the various ethnic groups in Assam were self styled and their needs and aspiration were designed as per their traditional outlook, which they never felt as the discrepancy of the development in the entirety of their life and culture. But colonial government had hatched unearthed conspiracy for the administration of this great region and division of tribal and non tribal brought underway. This was the factor that initiated socio-political imbalance in the minds of the various ethnic groups and thus diversity came into being.

Truly speaking British established their rule in Assam in 1826, which was

characterized by the co-existence of equally strong pockets of tribals as well as feudal influence with the corresponding ethnic connotation. The division between the caste Hindu Assamese society and non Assamese indigenous societies were the deep rooted factor for the development of later political turmoil in Assam as a whole.

Moreover, it is evident that the expansion of the colonial education among the tribal people of the plains and hills had developed an elite section in the non Assamese indigenous societies. It increased scope for jobs in Government establishment, the tradition-bound smaller societies, later on named 'tribes' became pregnant of an untraditional segment the middle class. And this very class of people played a pioneering role in unfolding consolidation and then spreading an identity consciousness among the members of their own societies. On the other hand discrimination, alleged superiority of the caste Hindu Assamese and caste-based social equations gradually started pushing them away from whatever proximity might have been achieved with the core-Assamese society. Gradually the unresolved economic apprehensions started getting a political direction. The atmosphere of neglect and indifference expedited the withdrawal process further. The hurt sentiments of the middle class realized that without political power, no malady could be remedied and as a result bargaining for political power began, But no effective mechanism was evolved which could satisfy the legitimate aspirations of this tribal "Middle class", Instead a deliberate attempt at projecting them as mere showpieces in different political organizations and without giving them any real power further damaged the situation. They were never taken into confidence. This stubborn situation was potential enough to provide motivation for them to start thinking in terms of their own political hegemony.

The ethnocentric nature of state sponsored development has been a major factor in creating rifts in poly-ethnic Assam and has played a major role behind the emergence of hill and plains movement. The backwardness felt by the plains and hills tribes were expressed by the emergence of political activities of the so-called newly born tribal leaders in the various pockets of the hills and plains. Much of the plan fund and fund for the central development schemes/programmes have been channelized for the development of certain plain areas particularly for the Brahmaputra Valley. Thus the developmental inputs in both the hills and plains tribal dominated areas were very insignificant. This attitude of indifference to the acute problems of the region has been cycled repeatedly by the Assamese bourgeoisie towards the non Assamese ethnic groups in general and the Hill people in particular.

The emerging tribal elites in the hills and plains increasingly became disillusioned with the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of Indian Constitution. The

historical backwardness of the hills and plains areas, perpetual poverty specially in hill areas like Karbi and N.C. Hills that permeated the hill communities and the ethnocentric attitude of Assamese ruling class led the educated tribal elites to think of their own development in terms of more political autonomy. Full fledged autonomy is seen to be the only means to achieve economic development among the different ethnic groups of the plains and the hills.

The concept of tribal movement emerged primarily in response to economic backwardness and negative discrimination of Assamese ruling class, who also attempted to establish their cultural hegemony over the other ethnic groups through their linguistic symbol. The linguistic chauvinism of the so-called higher castes made both the hills and plains tribes apprehensive about their identity. It finally severely affected the natural process of assimilation of different ethnic groups into emerging Assamese nationality. In fact, the process of nationality formation remained incomplete in Pre-Independence Assam. The boundary of Assamese nationality has been continued to widen through the incorporation of other ethnic groups, such as the migrant Muslim, Bengali, the Koch, Rajbongshi and other Indian citizen into it. Even the new generation of the Hindu Bengali are increasingly being identified with the Assamese nationality. While the process of assimilation has been continued in the Brahmaputra Valley, Assamese language is used as the lingua franca in the hills of the region creating a vast hinterland to be consolidated latter.

Similarly, the alignment and realignment of ethnic groups over time for their representative group interests have made it more difficult for the respective Government of Assam to keep the political or communal integrity of the State intact. In the process, latter on the hill areas like Karbi Anglong and N. C. Hills became volatile and stood as stumbling block in the uniform administration of the State Government. Gradually, the Assam and its adjoining hills started fighting for their own rule, power to fulfil their aspiration and interest.

Due to specific historical and administrative traditions the self determination aspiration in the hills has been from beginning political in nature. The Nagas, the Mizos, the Khasi-Jaintias-Garos, the Karbi-Dimasas all began their assertions with a more or less definite political idiom. On the other hand, plainsmen belonging to a number of smaller ethnic groups of Mongoloid origin, who latter on came to be known as plains tribals had to begin their assertions mainly with apparently non political focus-safeguarding cultural identity, preservation of language, choice of script, instruction through mother tongue, continuation of English as medium of instruction in higher education etc.

Thus after a series of meetings and representation made by the leaders of Karbis and Dimasas this two hills region, on February 2, 1970 the separate Civil district of N. C. Hills was inaugurated. This was obviously done as part of

the appeasement policy to keep them in Assam.

It can be understood that unlike hills the first concrete plains tribal aspiration may be traced back to January 4, 1929 when four memorandum were submitted to the Simon Commission. However proper autonomy aspiration of the plains tribals required about four decades to be articulated and in fact on February 27, 1967 with the birth of plains Tribals Council of Assam a distinct phase began.

Plain Tribal Council of Assam, which stood for the Barmans of Cachar, the Bodo Kachari, the Deori, the Hojais, the Kacharis including the Sonowals, the Lalungs, the Meches and the Rabhas, submitted a memorandum to the President of India on May, 20, 1967 demanding the full autonomy in the predominantly plains tribal areas of the Northern tract of Goalpara, undivided Kamrup, undivided Darrang, Lakhimpur and Sivasagar districts including all the tribal Belts and Blocks so that the tribals can (a) adequately protect their land, (b) give effective check to economic exploitation of tribals by non-tribals, (c) conserve their language, culture, customs and what is best in them (d) prevent political domination by non-tribals over tribals and imposition of anything which would disrupt their traditions and customs and (e) grow according to their own genius and traditions.

In later half of the present century this tribal movements got extreme momentum. Specially in Bodo dominated areas the ABSU took the leading role who was best inspired by the Assam movement. Simultaneously, the movement was also peddled by the BPAC. Finally, it drew the attention of the Government of India and the State Government as well. An accord was signed between the leaders of ABSU and BPAC on the other hand and the Additional Chief Secretary of Assam on 20th February, 1993. After the accord, Bodoland Autonomous Council was formed in 1993. This Council too could not fulfil the aspiration of the Bodo and new movement activities again rocked the Northern part of the Brahmaputra valley which took numbers of life. These activities continued for about eight years and in 2003 these groups began discussion with the Government of India. After a series of discussion, the present form of BTAD (Bodoland Territorial Areas District) has come into result.

To be continued in the next bulletin.....

Tribal : Development and Constraints

Sri Ganesh Chandra Kakati**

Assam is located in the extreme North East corner of the country. It is blended with both hills and plains. It is the home of different ethnic groups. It is also known as Anthropologists paradise due to its large cultural diversities. The total population of Assam as per 2001 Census is 2,66,55,528 out of which 33,08,570 is the tribal population. Tribal population constitutes 12.41% of the total population of Assam.

Assam maintains two scheduled tribe lists. One for the Autonomous Hill Districts of Assam called Hill Tribes and another for Plain Tribes of Assam. As per Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act. 2002, Hills Tribes constitute 15 communities and Plain Tribes constitute 14 communities. It is to be noted that one Plain Tribe community also figures in the Hill Tribe's list and three Hill Tribe communities figure in the Plain Tribes list.

The literacy percentage of the tribal communities of Assam is 62.52 as per 2001 Census, which is slightly less than the total literacy percentage of Assam i.e. 63.25. Hence, we cannot say that educationally tribals are backward. But the dropout percentage of the tribal students who pursue higher education and other technical education in spite of the various welfare measures taken by the Government for the tribal people in educational sector. The tribal people have not taken the advantage of the schemes like pre-metric scholarship, post-metric scholarship etc. Only a small section of the tribals have taken the advantages of the reserved quota of seats in higher education and other technical educational institutional and have settled in their life.

Majority of the tribal communities lives in the far flung areas. Hill tribes live in hills covered by forests. Others live in naturally isolated areas. Some lives in flood prone areas. But more or less they live in and around forest areas. These areas are unhygienic, prone to malaria and other diseases like typhoid, cholera, diarrhoea, tuberculosis, gastro enteritis etc. are very common in those tribal inhabited areas. In Karbi Anglong district water has been contaminated with high percentage of fluoride. Consumption of such water has resulted in dental decay and many have been crippled for life.

Economically they are very poor. Majority of them lives below poverty line. Plain tribes practise wet cultivation for their livelihood. But land holding pattern per tribal family is very low. Moreover, flood affects their paddy, which is a common phenomenon in Assam. Hill tribes practise Jhum cultivation also known as slash and burn cultivation. Jhumming same plot of land over the years losses its fertility. Moreover, to prepare a

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jhum field, they need to cut tree clear forests which is very dangerous from the ecological point of view. That is also one of the reasons for decrease of forest cover in Assam. Needless to mention that forest is the life of tribal people. Tribal people and forest have a symbiotic relationship.

The state covers 78483 sq.km.. areas out of which. Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) areas are 10991 sq.km. There are 524 nos of forest villages with a total population of 1,60,179 out of which 20,694 nos, are Scheduled Tribe families. There are 26 sectors under TSP in Assam. There is also provision for Special Central Assistance under TSP. There is Advisory Council for ST (P) people headed by the Hon'ble Minister of Welfare of Plain Tribes & Backward Classes Department. The M.L.As and M.Ps. belonging to ST (P) are the members of the Advisory Council. The Project Implementation Committees (PIC) is responsible for selection of beneficiaries at the project level. There is a Monitoring and Coordination Cell under TSP for monitoring the implementation of schemes. The schemes under family oriented income generating schemes (FOIGS) are being implemented under various departments. During 10th Five Year Plan period (2002-2007) flow to TSP is 6.85 % i.e. Rs. 52,250.00 lakhs against State General Area allocation of Rs. 78,68,243.00 lakhs. Since 2002-03 (under 10th Five Year Plan) to 2005-06 (up to September, 2005) an amount of Rs. 10,513.83 lakhs was utilized under SCA to TSP against total allocation of Rs. 11,317.99 lacks. Under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution of India, an amount of Rs. 1646.87 lakhs was utilized against the fund for Rs. 3735.00 lakhs released by GOI (up to September, 2005). The amount for Draft Annual Plan 2006-07 under TSP is Rs. 9909.77 lakhs i.e. Rs. 5.36% State total General Areas Allocation. Every department has been implementing schemes under TSP for the welfare of the ST (P) people of Assam.

Long back our first Prime Minister Late, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had said that the tribal should be governed by themselves. With this view the Govt. of Assam had taken up some bold steps by creating Autonomous Councils for various ethnic groups of Assam, namely Bodo Kachari, Mising, Rabha, Tiwa, Deori, Sonowal Kachari & Thengal Kachari communities. Moreover, originally two Hill Districts namely, Karbi Anglong district and North Cachar Hills district were covered under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Sixth Schedule was also amended and extended to Bodo Land Territorial Area District (BTAD) under Bodo Land Territorial Council (BTC). Thus the Govt of Assam has adopted for self-government and self-rule by the tribal people themselves. That is what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had conceived long back.

The Central Govt. has already granted Rs. 500.00 crores as a special package to Bodo Land Territorial Council (BTC). The State Govt. have also moved the Central Govt. for granting another Special Development Package for the BTC Areas by allotting Rs. 200.00 Crores annually for next five years amounting to Rs. 1000.00 crores. Similarly Special Development Packages for other Autonomous Councils will be

worked out as soon as these Councils submit their development projects.

Govt is making all out efforts to provide basic amenities to the tribal areas. Fund allocation has been made in proportion to the tribal population under TSP. Projects for economic development and creation of various infrastructures are also being taken up under Special Central Assistance to TSP and under Article 275 (1). Programmes and Development activities are being closely monitored by the WPT & BC department to ensure that the benefits of all the development activities goes to tribal people. Fund has been provided to different sectors to take up specific development schemes in tribal areas.

The Govt in the welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes has a separate development arrangement for the all round economic progress of the Plains Tribes of the State. These schemes are called Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP). At present, there are 19 ITDPs under the control of the WPT & BC Department. For each ITDP there is a Project Implementation Committee with a local tribal leader as Chairman and a Project Director as a Member Secretary in the rank of Addl. Deputy Commissioner. Some other local tribal representatives and development department officials are the members of the concerned ITDP.

The Govt. of Assam had already filled up 1000 back log vacancies in various Govt. departments during last five years. Steps are being taken to fill up the remaining backlog vacancies.

Under the provision of the Section 161 of the Chapter-X of Regulation, the State Govt. has constituted 47 Protected Belts & Blocks, popularly known as Tribal Belts & Blocks, predominantly inhabited by the people of notified classes. The Belts are larger units while the Blocks are smaller one. At present there are 17 Belts and 30 Blocks located in the plain Districts of Assam. These Belts & Blocks were created for notified classes. People from other communities can not purchase land within the tribal belts & blocks.

In spite of all development scheme adopted by the Govt. for the tribals and thousands of crores of rupees spent both by the Central and the State Governments, the tribals are not developed up to the desired level. They are still underdeveloped. They are not at par with that of the other non tribal communities. What could be the reasons behind it? It is because of the fact that our delivery system is not adequate or is it because of the fact that our implementing agencies are not efficient enough to effectively handle the challenges of the tribal development? I think more or less all these factors are responsible.

Some of the remedial measures of tribal development are :

1. One of the major constraints of tribal development is the lack of public cooperation in the development progress. Therefore, local tribal leaders, specially elected members should be consulted/involved at the various stages of policy making,

implementation and evaluation of the tribal development schemes.

2. Budgeting and sanctioning of schemes is a major constraint which try to materialize at the fag end of the financial year. Because of that benefit do not percolate to the tribal people. Therefore, such constraint should be removed through effective planning.
3. Positive attitude of the officers and staff responsible for budgeting, preparing proposals, sanctioning of schemes/proposals and finally implementing the schemes in field is very important. Movement of the files should be strictly monitored and there should not be unnecessarily delay in sanctioning of proposals. Guilty officers/staff should be booked immediately.
4. Lack of awareness among the tribals about the developmental plans and programmes is also a major constraint for tribal development. NGOs can play a major role in this regard. They can make the tribal aware of the policies and programmes undertaken by the govt. for their development. NGOs can also help the govt. departments in assessing the impact of the policies and programmes and suggest measures for better implementation of the programmes.
5. Tribal unemployed youths should be trained on various income-generating schemes for their self-employment. They should be encouraged in every way to earn for themselves and their families. There is also lack of tribal entrepreneurship among the tribal people. Proper environment should be created and tribal should be encouraged to take up small-scale industries based on locally available raw materials.
6. Tribal should be encouraged to form Self Help Group (SHG) in the field of fishery, poultry, duckery, piggery etc. so that they can earn enough for their families.
7. Family Oriented Income Generating schemes (FOIGS), poverty alleviation programme etc. should be designed in such a way that the benefited families can create permanent assets, which in turn generate sufficient monetary income.
8. Tribal Research Institute (TRI) may be engaged to evaluate the schemes/ projects implemented by various departments to find the merits & demerits of the schemes/projects.

THE TEA AND EX-TEA GARDEN TRIBES OF ASSAM – A PROFILE.

Origin of tea in Assam :

Dr. G. C. Sharma Thakur**

Tea was first traced in Assam in the year 1823. A Singpho Chief (Gam) informed Robert Bruce, a British Officer who visited Gargaon (present Sivsagar) before annexation of Assam to the East India Company in 1826, about the existence of tea plants in the jungles of Joypur, Kehong, Chabua Naohalia, Tingrai etc. areas of Upper Assam. The Singpho called the plant as 'Funup'. In 1834, G. I. Gordon, Secretary of the Tea Committee visited China and brought tea seeds along with some expert tea growers and started a tea garden at Kundil (near Chapakhoa, a sub-divisional headquarter of present day Tinsukia district). In 1836 another tea garden was started at Joypur. Tea production started and first consignment of tea containing 12 boxes was sent to London in the year 1838.

In 1840 the responsibility of the tea plantation was transferred to Assam Company. By 1859 the Company had nearly 3400 acres of tea under plantation in Sibsagar district which yield 700,000 lbs of tea. The largest tea garden at that time was 'Lingri pukhuri' which was later amalgamated with Mazenga. At the same time tea gardens were established at Cinnamora, Nakachari and Neghiriting. In 1872 there were 11290 acres under matured plant which produced 3,200,000 lbs of tea. By 1891 the outturn had risen to 20,465,000 lbs of tea.

Initially there were many ups and downs in the tea trade as the Kundil Mukh garden at Sadiya, started in 1835 could not meet the required soil condition suitable for tea growing. The Muttack tea garden, however, showed promise of survival. But the Chabua tea estate was closed in 1849. The Assam Company had suspended their operation in these gardens. It was not until 1852 that a favourable turn took place in the matter of tea cultivation in Lakhimpur district. In 1852 Colonel Hannay who had a small garden near Dibrroo extended his plantation to about 10 acres of land. At the same time M/S. Warren Jenkins, the proprietor of Chabua started the Maejean Tea Baree. In 1859 the total area taken up for tea plantation in Lakhimpur district was 14000 acres of which 1700 acres had been planted yielding 2,82,000 lbs of tea. Thus tea plantation grow from year to year making a total of 844 tea gardens till the end of the 20th Century with 2,16,000 hectares of land under tea.

Recruitment of labourers for tea growing : Tea growing expanded to other districts of Assam and the British tea companies had to face the problem of shortage of

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unskilled manpower known as 'Coolies'. It may be noted that the rural Assamese folk did not like to perform the duties of labourers as they had enough landed properties and they considered the job of tea garden labourer below their dignity. Large section of the villagers were addicted to opium. The Kacharis, however, were hard working people and the Dafadars (brokers or middlemen) could procure some Kacharis for the service. In course of time the Kachari labourers put pressure on the companies to increase their salary and they made preparation for strike. The Company officials tried to engage the Nagas but soon they (the Nagas) left the job as they felt the labourers job under supervisor as derogatory. As a result the tea business became a losing proposition. The Companies then brought Chinese labourers and they too proved to be unsuitable as they began to demand more wages and other benefits. Besides they did not obey the orders of the company officials. At last finding no alternative, the company decided to bring labourers from outside Assam and agents were deputed to Bengal for that purpose.

Procurement of tea labourers from outside Assam : The Assam Company started an office at Rangpur in 1852 and for the first time 329 labourers were brought to Bausara and Mirwa tea estates of Cachar district. Again in 1859 another 400 labourers were engaged in the tea estates of Cachar district. Most of these labourers were brought from Chotonagpur, Ghajipur and Banaras.

The company agents appointed contractors for collecting labourers who in turn engaged Sardars on commission basis. At that time famine like situation engulfed the tribal areas of Chotonagpur, Singbhum, Ranchi, Telengana etc. and the helpless tribal people could easily be influenced by the Sardars to come to Assam. These labourers were given shelter in the tea gardens and they were paid very negligible wages. They could not come out from the gardens and outsiders were not allowed to visit their lines. (habitations of the labourers were and still are called lines). The tea garden managers were considered as their friend, philosopher and guide. The managers very often oppressed them. Dr. Amalendu Guha in his famous book 'Planters' 'Raj to Swaraj' has described about the pitiable condition of the tea labourers. The poor labourers expressed their plight in his folksong:

Chardar Bale Kaam Kaam
Babu Bale Dhare Aan,
Chahab Bale Nibo Pithir Chaam.

(The Sardars want only duty to be performed at any cost. The Babu and the Managers want to inflict punishment at the slightest pretext).

The company procured the labourers along with their families. This helped them in two ways. First the labourers will not run away and secondly the children would also be engaged as tea labourers at nominal wages. The Sardars arranged marriages between unknown boys and girls and entered their names in the company register as husband and wife. This was called 'Depo Sadi' (Depot marriages). The then Chief Commissioner

of Assam Ramfield Fuller had described the miserable condition of the labourers as 'animals kept in a case'. In this way hundreds of labourers were brought to Assam in the company ships as shiploads of inanimate objects. Due to suffocation many tribal peasants embraced death inside the ships. During three years from 1863 to 1866, 84,915 labourers were brought to Assam and out of these as many as 31,876 labourers died due to various diseases. In the ten years ending 1890, 76,041 labourers were recruited in Sibsagar and 92000 labourers were engaged in Lakhimpur tea gardens.

In 1915 the contract labour system was abolished, but the Sardari system of procuring labourers continued. Every year from November to January the Sardars visited different tribal areas of Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Central Provinces, etc., to collect labourers. In 1865 the Native Labourers Act was amended to legalise the Sardari system of collecting labourers. As per the Act of 1882 the Sardar was to enter into a contract before the District Magistrates of the concerned districts from which he was to collect labourers. Such kind of labourers were treated as 'Girmitia'. Originally the contract was made for five years, but in practice the labourers were not allowed to go to the native states after the stipulated period.

The tea trade in Assam flourished as the companies expanded the tea areas. More labourers were needed and in 1901 the tea companies allowed the Sardars to collect more labourers from the tribal areas outside Assam even without license. The Sardars used force to collect labourers and there was much resentment. Apprehending the companies stopped bringing labourers from unlicensed areas. In 1915 the 'Girmitia' labour system was officially abolished but the system continued secretly. Such type of labourers were termed as 'Aarkathia Chalan'. In this way poor tribal people from Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Madras, Central Provinces, Maharashtra and Gujarat became part and parcel of the population of Assam as tea and ex teagarden labourers or tribes. Till 1938, 17,02,905 labourers were brought from these states (Source— Gandhi, Asom Aru Asamar Chah Majdoor by— Rabin Kakati; Chah Bagichar Jivan Aru Sanskriti by Shri Sushil Kurmi, 1st Edition, Assam Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, 1991. p. 15).

It is estimated that more than half of the contract labour did not return to their native states. Till 1950, 29898 labourers stayed back in Assam. Most of them occupied government waste lands and other unclaimed lands and started life as cultivators. They are the present ex-teagarden tribes living in 2387 villages with an estimated population of 12 lakhs. The condition of the tea tribes during British days were like beggars. Description today, i.e. after Independence, the position has undergone metamorphic changes. The labourers are still carrying with the derogatory term 'Kuli' as their place of habitation as 'Kuli line'. As they were contract labourers and had no chance of returning to their original states, the tea garden authorities did not care to provide the basic needs. The living condition was very unhygienic. There was no medical facility although as early as 1865 an act was passed that there should be a doctor in each tea garden having 300 or more labourers. But the tea garden owners did not pay any heed to this.

The labourers were engaged for 9/10 hours every day. The children were also employed at nominal wages. The tea garden 'Babus' and Managers did not hesitate to physically injure the labourers for petty offences. In short the tea workers in those days were bonded labourers and they were compelled to live in a world dictated by the management.

Passing of Workers' Compensation Act 1923 and Indian Trade Union Act, 1926 and Birth of INTUC and Assam Chah Majdoor Sangha, 1958 and Minimum Wages Act, 1948 : The Plantation Labour Act of 1951 provided some relief to the labourers. Before this Act, no outsider could enter a tea garden without permission but this Act removed this handicap. In course of time due to persistent demand of the labourers the Government passed the Workers' Compensation Act 1923 and the Indian Trade Union Act 1926, but the condition of the labourers remained the same as the management maintained an uncooperative attitude. For the first time a Trade Union was constituted in Cachar district in 1939 (The Sylhet Cachar Chah Sramik Union). The first session of the Premiere Trade Union INTUC (Indian National Trade Union Congress) was held at Dibrugarh in 1943. To safeguard the interests of the tea labourers the Assam Chah Majdoor Sangha was formed on 9th August 1958. The Assam Tea Employees Welfare Board had undertaken various welfare measures for the tea labourers. The Board took bold steps to provide various facilities to the students belonging to the tea tribal communities. The Minimum Wages Act of 1948 and the Assam Tea Plantation Provident Fund Scheme of 1955 went a long way to ameliorate the pitiable condition of the tea workers in Assam. The Plantation Labour Act of 1951 provides benefits to the real tea workers only and the same act does not have welfare measures for the ex-tea garden labourers.

Recent Governmental measures : In order to cater to the needs of the ex-tea garden labourers, Government of Assam have created a Directorate of Tea and Ex Tea Garden Tribes in 1982. There are various socio-cultural organizations to look after the welfare of tea and ex tea garden labourers such as Assam Tea Tribes Students Union, Assam Tea and Ex Tea Garden Tribal Youth Association, North Assam Tea Tribes Cultural Development Centre, Assam Adivasi Council, etc.

Demands of Tea and Ex Tea Garden labourers : The All Assam Tea Tribes Students Union has submitted a 20 point demand to the Chief Minister of Assam for redressal of multifarious grievances. The memorandum includes demand for provincialisation of the tea garden L. P. schools, appointment of L. P. school teachers in the tea garden schools from the educated unemployed youths of tea and ex tea garden tribes, opening of pre primary schools in each tea estates and ex tea garden labourer concentrated areas, training of educated tea and ex tea garden tribal women on priority basis, starting of adult education centres in tea and ex tea garden labourer inhabited areas, declaring all the tea and ex tea garden tribal groups as scheduled tribes, establishment of hostels for tea and ex tea garden tribal students in all the sub divisional

head quarters of Assam, conducting a population census of the tea garden tribal groups, offering of all the posts in the tea gardens to the eligible tea and ex tea garden tribal youths, etc.

There are as many as 97 groups of tea tribes in Assam with varying similarities and dissimilarities of culture and language as the tea tribes were recruited originally from various states of India as mentioned in previous paras. All these groups, however, are united under one banner i.e. 'Chah Janajati'. The nomenclature 'Chah Janajati' is newly coined from the original names such as 'Kuli', 'Chah Majdoor', 'Chah Bagichar Asomiya Sampradai', 'Chah Srakik', etc. It may be mentioned that the list of the tea and ex tea garden groups given by Shri Sushil Kurmi, a knowledgeable person of the tea tribes, vary considerably from that of the list prepared by government of Assam in 1984.

Following are the lists of Kurmi and the State Government.

A. The list of tea and ex tea garden groups as shown by Shri Sushil Kurmi.

1. Munda, 2. Santal, 3. Oraon, 4. Savara, 5. Bhuyan, 6. Paharia, 7. Mal Paharia, 8. Parja, 9. Gaur, 10. Kandh, 11. Baiga, 12. Kharia, 13. Asur, 14. Kol, 15. Bhil, 16. Savar, 17. Karua, 18. Gorait, 19. Bhumij, 20. Ghatowar, 21. Bhokta, 22. Ganju, 23. Baraik, 24. Chik, 25. Kavar, 26. Baori, 27. Khadal, 28. Kumhar, 29. Keot, 30. Kandhar, 31. Kairi, 32. Kahar, 33. Kasari, 34. Koya, 35. Rajowar, 36. Turi, 37. Churi, 38. Bagti, 39. Modi, 40. Charag, 41. Hozam, 42. Halowai, 43. Rajak, 44. Dusad, 45. Tangla, 46. Pasi, 47. Teli, 48. Bania, 49. Bhat, 50. Chasa, 51. Rajput, 52. Gaur, 53. Gowala, 54. Barhoi, 55. Pardhan, 56. Mahanti, 57. Mahli, 58. Kurmi, 59. Panika, 60. Pator, 61. Tanti, 62. Hari, 63. Chamar, 64. Ghasi, 65. Dom, 66. Kaamaar, 67. Paik, 68. Besua, 69. Bedia, 70. Jatapdora, 71. Telenga, 72. Patowa, 73. Mali, 74. Kisan, 75. Bayan, 76. Jalaha.

The list of tea and ex tea garden tribes prepared by Government of Assam :

1. Arya Mala, 2. Asur, 3. Bansphor, 4. Bhokta, 5. Bawri, 6. Bhuyan, 7. Bhumij, 8. Bedia, 9. Belder, 10. Bharak, 11. Bhatta, 12. Basor, 13. Baiga, 14. Baijara, 15. Bhil, 16. Bhonda, 17. Binjia, 18. Birhor, 19. Birijia, 20. Bedi, 21. Chowdhari, 22. Chera, 23. Chikbanik, 24. Dandari, 25. Dandasi, 26. Dusad, 27. Dhanwar, 28. Ganda, 29. Gonda, 30. Ghansi, 31. Gorait, 32. Ghatowar, 33. Hari, 34. Holora, 35. Keot, 36. Koiri, 37. Khonyor, 38. Kurmi, 39. Kowar, 40. Karmali, 41. Korwa, 42. Kol, 43. Kalahandi, 44. Kotwal, 45. Kharia, 46. Kumhar, 47. Kherwar, 48. Khodal, 49. Koya, 50. Kondpan, 51. Kohor, 52. Karmakar, 53. Kasan, 54. Lahar, 55. Lodha, 56. Lodhi, 57. Madari, 58. Mahli, 59. Mohli, 60. Mahato, 61. Malpaharia, 62. Manki, 63. Mirdhar, 64. Majwar, 65. Nonia, 66. Nagbansi, 67. Nagasia, 68. Pasi, 69. Paidi, 70. Panika, 71. Parja, 72. Patratanti, 73. Pardhan, 74. Rajwar, 75. Sawar, 76. Sakora, 77. Turi, 78. Chamar, 79. Barhai, 80. Ahirgoala, 81. Jalaha, 82. Modi, 83. Telenga, 84. Tassa, 85. Bauri, 86. Tantubai, 87. Kalihandi, 88. Nath, 89. Teli, 90. Tanti, 91. Gonda, 92. Munda, 93. Khond, 94. Santhal, 95. Savera, 96. Pan, 97. Oraon.

Socio Cultural life : The present socio-cultural milieu of the tea and ex tea garden tribes is blended with traditional Assamese culture although most of traditional tribal

traits of each of the tribes are, by and large, intact. Thus the culture of the tea and ex tea garden tribes is considerably influenced by the Assamese culture. The Dravidian, Austric and Mongoloid traits have been assimilated into a mixed pattern known as tea cultural pattern.

They are largely animistic. Superstitions beliefs and belief in different benevolent and malevolent deities and spirits are characteristic features of their religious belief system. They perform Karam Puja, Tusu Puja a Paus Parab, Kalipuja or Sahrai Parab, Gram Puja, Phakua Parab, Phaspunimar Puja, Barpahari Puja, Bir Puja, Sarul Puja, Kural Bagdei Puja, Satyanarayan Puja, Trinath Mela, Lakshmi Puja, Janmastami, Siva Ratri, Sarak Puja, etc.

The people do not have a written language but the spoken language 'Sadani' and 'Tharta' is prevalent in the society. They speak a language mixing Assamese Bengali and their local dialects.

The tea tribes have colourful dances and songs tuned with 'Madal', 'Muruli', Drum, Nagra, Dafia, Sahni, Madanveri and Jhanj. Among their dances the Jhumur, Tusu, Kathi, Danda, Damkas, Natua, Jhanda dances are popular and these are performed in various socio-religious occasions.

In respect of marriage, the tea tribes are exogamous. Normally the would be groom's parents formally offer proposal to the would be bride's parents which is called 'Jalghati' or 'Ghoti Pani'. The would be groom's party spends the night at the would be bride's house which is called 'Rait Ghuma'. Before the day of marriage a few relatives of the groom bring lagan consisting of turmeric mixed rice, pieces of turmeric, Bel' leaves and 'Dubari' saplings to the would be bride's house. The party stays at the bride's house for 3, 5 or 7 days. Marriage is solemnized at the bride's house and a priest belonging to the community conducts the proceedings. 'Sindurdan' (offering of vermilion) is performed when the groom places vermilion on the forehead of the bride in presence of the elderly relatives. Formerly marriage proceedings continued for 2 days but now a days the same is performed within a day. It is customary for the bride to stay a few nights at her parents house and after that she is taken by the groom to her in law's house. It may be mentioned that large numbers of tea tribes have different customs, beliefs and practices, marriage, religious beliefs etc. and the above description does not cover the detailed socio-cultural life of all the constituent tea tribes.

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DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THREAT TO TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD : CASE STUDY

Gita Bharali**

Displacement of people from traditional habitats causes much trauma to the affected persons. Compulsory acquisition of land for construction of dams and roads, quarrying and mining operations, industries and reservation of forests for National Parks and environment protection forces people to leave their traditional abodes and land – their main sustenance. Thus, development projects have often become a major threat to the people whom they deprive of their traditional livelihood without alternatives. Tribals are the worst sufferers since most development projects such as dams and industries are located in inaccessible tribal areas. Nearly 50-60 million people have been displaced by development projects in India as a whole and tribals constitute at least 40% of them. Cash payment does not really compensate the tribals for the difficulties they experience in their lifestyle and ethos. Displacement can lead to violation of the Fifth Schedule as it deprives them of control and ownership of natural resources and land essential for their way of life. The present paper will try to see the impact of such development on the traditional livelihood of the people thus affected and specially the tribals. Special focus will be on the proposed Pagladia dam in the Nalbari district of Asom that will displace around 105,000 people, 90% of them are tribals.

Displacement and Deprivation :

A growing number of environmentalists and social activists have misgivings about development projects such as dams, industries, mines, railways and roads which influence people's livelihood in different ways. Some of them are displaced (DP) away from their homes. Some others lose most of their land and other sustenance but are not physically displaced and are called project-affected persons (PAP). Most projects count among the DPs/PAP only those who are deprived of their individual land. Most of those who are deprived of their community property resources (CPRs) or other livelihood such as service providers depending on the village as a community are rarely counted among them (Dhagamwar 1989: 192). Tribal livelihood is predominantly CPRs.

Studies show that between 1947 and 2000 such projects have caused some 50 to 60 million DP/PAP (Fernandes 2004 : 1192). Studies also show that most of the DP/PAP are from assetless rural poor classes. According to one estimate 55.16% of them are tribals (www.tribal.nic.in) but some others keep it at 40% (Fernandes and Bharali 2006: 8). This is also true in case of most of the projects. For the Hirakud dam and the Rourkela Steel plant in Orissa about 2,25,578 acres of mostly tribal land was acquired (Baboo 1992, Srinivasan 1990: 134). As a result, of Orissa's 16 lakh DP/PAP 1951-

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1995, 42% are tribals (Fernandes and Asif 1997: 112) while the State has a tribal population of 22.1% (Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2001: Census CD). In Andhra Pradesh 30.19% of the total DP/PAP are tribals (Fernandes et al 2001: 85) while their proportion in the State is 6.6% (Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2001: Census CD). The situation is worse in the Northeast. In Asom out of 19,09,368 lakh DP/PAP 50% are tribals (Fernandes and Bharali 2006: 108) while the State has a tribal population of 12.4% only (Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2001: Census CD).

Besides, Official sources underestimate the actual data mainly because they exclude the CPR dependants, most of them tribals. Its main reason is that the *Land Acquisition Act 1894* (LAQ) recognizes only those individual land ownership deeds (*patta*). Land without an individual *patta* is State property. Besides, the State alone has the right to decide a public purpose and deprive even individual owners of their assets. This State power is overriding (Ramanathan 1999: 19-20). Most of the land used for such development projects is CPRs. Most of those who depend on CPRs do not have any official documents to show their ownership over the land they processed and accordingly deprived of their land.

Those deprived of their CPRs are a substantial proportion among the DP/PAP in Assam. Our study on 'Development-Induced Displacement and Deprivation in Assam 1947-2000: A quantitative and Qualitative Study of its Extent and Nature' shows that official sources give us a total of only 4.5 lakhs DP/PAP in Asom while we came to a total of more than 19 lakhs from 14 lakhs acres of land. Out of 14 lakhs acres of land more than 10 lakhs are CPRs. Assam government recognizes only that it has acquired 3.8 acres of private land from 4.5 lakhs persons. The remaining 14.5 lakhs persons deprived of more than 10 lakhs acres are CPRs dependents, mainly tribals. Much of the acquisition of the CPRs is for unproductive purposes such as building for the administration and the security forces. Out of the total dependents of the 14 lakh acres of land, only the dependents of 3.8 lakh acres have got some monetary compensation. These are those who have *patta* or land deeds. The CPRs dependents have not got any compensation. Besides, the monetary compensation given was very inadequate to begin life anew. Besides, out of 3,000 projects only 10 have got rehabilitation (Fernandes and Bharali 2006).

It results in impoverishment and marginalisation. Land is the center of tribal life. When it is lost both its owner and its other dependents lose their economic support, socio-cultural relations, food, work and income. In our study we have interviewed 726 DP/PAP, 25% of them are tribals. We have found that the access to work has decreased from 77.27% before displacement or deprivation to 56.41% after it. It has decreased mostly among the tribals since most of them depend on CPRs and once it is taken away from them the access to work become less. Before displacement and deprivation

each family in an average cultivated 3.04 acres each but after displacement it has been decreased to 1.45 acres. Landlessness has increased substantially among the tribals from 20.55% before displacement to 47.95% after it. These have compelled them to shift their occupation from cultivation to domestic workers, daily wage earners and so on and it ultimately reduced their income and therefore economic status.

The impact of such development projects on the tribals is not limited to the economic field but impinges on the social and cultural aspects. The tribals who live in a different type of society are forced to interact with another culture and society to which they cannot always adopt themselves. We have found that 71.43% of the tribals who had in the past developed a culture of sustainable use of forests have started cutting trees. Once deprived of their livelihood, tribals fall back on the same resource for survival but in this process they make a transition from their traditional constructive to destructive dependence on it. While in the past most of the tribal communities had treated it as a renewable resource that had come down from their ancestors that they had to use according to their needs and environmental imperatives and preserve it for the future. Besides, as reported drunkenness has increased among the men and it subsequently led to more domestic violence. Most of the families we interviewed said that this is because of the frustration men suffer due to the deterioration of their economic status.

What is said of Asom is equally true of the remaining North Eastern States where the tribes live under four types of administration. Nagaland and Mizoram run their civil affairs according to their customary law the former under Article 371A and the latter under 371G. A second category comes under the Sixth Schedule. It is the case with Meghalaya, like the Karbi Anglong and NC Hills districts in Asom. A third category, for example the Kok Borok of Tripura, like the Tiwa, Rabha and some other tribes in Asom has district autonomous councils (DAC) without the Sixth Schedule. The rest do not have a specific system though a few modifications are made in their favour. Articles 371A and 371G recognise community ownership. Also the Sixth Schedule does the same but in practice transfers power over land from the village to the DAC that controls most departments except law and order, rehabilitation and elections (Fernandes, Pereira and Khatso 2005: 22-23). Most others tribes, for example those of Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh (AP) live according to their community based law but the State recognises only individual ownership. The Manipur tribes have some protective mechanisms while the AP tribes only have the administrative rules framed in the colonial age (Barooah 2002) but it is difficult to call them protective mechanisms.

As mentioned above the result of the non-recognition of community land is deprivation of the CPR dependants. Studies in the Northeast show that development projects have deprived several lakhs of people of their livelihood but most have underestimated their DPs/PAPs because they exclude the CPR dependants. For example, the Dumbur Hydro Electric dam in Tripura displaced 2,558 families that had

pattas but another 5,500 to 7,500 CPR dependent families were not counted (Bhaumick 2006:62). Much of the land acquired is in regions whose tradition is community ownership without the Sixth Schedule or recognition of their customary law. For example, the 2,000 MW Lower Subansiri Dam in Arunachal Pradesh will acquire mostly CPRs (Menon 2003). Also Tipaimukh will acquire the CPRs of the Zeliangrong Naga, Hmar and Kuki tribals. Of its submergence area of 308.60 sq. km, 209.79 is forests, 11.95 sq. km is village land, 61.6 sq. km horticulture and 25.25 sq. km is agricultural land (Rounglevausuo Dams Update 2004). It is also because of the propensity to acquire more CPRs than in the past in the Northeast as well as in the rest of India.

This trend will get worse in the future. Based on the declaration of former Prime Minister Mr. A. B. Vajpayee that the Northeast should become the 'Powerhouse' of India, 156 massive dams are being planned in the region. On 14th March 2002 the then Minister for Power explained the sanction granted to 13 of them and the fact that 35 others were under active consideration by stating that the Northeast has 58,971 MW of hydel potential or 38% of India's total (*The Assam Tribune*, 15th March 2002). More than 140 of the 156 dams are ranked as A and B or of high viability. Besides over 900 mini and micro hydel projects have been identified (Menon et al 2003). Tipaimukh dam will displace around 15,000 tribals (Pamei 2001) and those to be built in Arunachal Pradesh will displace over 20,000 of them from their CPRs (Hussain 2002: 294-295). Thus, the development projects will displace a large number of people, especially tribals and will add to the thousands who have already been deprived in the region of their livelihood by development projects, political and ethnic conflicts and natural and human made disasters.

Tribal Livelihood and Displacement :

The tribal communities from whom this land is alienated are thus deprived of all their livelihood because most of them live in a natural resource based informal economy that depends on the one hand on agriculture, both settled and jhum and on the other on the non-timber forest (NTFP) such as medicinal herbs, edible flowers, leaves and fruits. They also get their small timber and firewood from the forest. Hence development is bound to affect their agricultural and forest land which is the primary source of their livelihood. The development process pushes them from an informal to a formal economy that is new to them without any preparation. They had depended on agricultural land and forests, both of which they lose to the project. When they receive compensation it is monetary with which most communities living in the informal economy are not familiar. As mentioned above in most cases the CPRs are not compensated.

As explained above most DP/PAP in the Northeast as well as in the rest of India have not been resettled. Those who are resettled on land have not got the quality of land they had earlier. Our study in Assam shows that the rehabilitation is extremely weak. Most projects have stopped at monetary compensation for *patta* land and fewer than 10 out of more than 3,000 projects have resettled their DPs. Most have not been

given even the little money required to resettle themselves. Compensation for private land is low. For example, in the mid 1970s people displaced by the Dekadong dam in Sonitpur were paid an average of Rs 1,487.84 per acre. Besides, when resettled, the land given to them is not cultivable. Some mention job compensation but most projects consider their DP/PAP fit only for unskilled daily wage jobs and exclude them from others since they lack the skills they require (Fernandes and Bharali 2006). If that is the case with private land, the situation is much worse for the predominantly tribal CPR dependants.

The Case of Pagladia

Based on this analysis we shall move to the proposed Pagladia dam to be built in the extremely backward Thalkuchi village in the Nalbari district of Asom near the Indo-Bhutan Border and see how it will affect the traditional livelihood of the future DP/PAP. Since a majority of them are tribals, mostly Boros, this analysis will help us to understand their transition from the informal to the formal economy. Both tribal and non-tribal groups inhabit the area but 90 percent of them are tribal. This area is a stronghold of the All Bodo Students Association (ABSA) and comes under the Boroland Territorial Council (BTC).

Based on an investigation conducted by the Central Works and Planning Commission during 1968-71, the Planning Commission sanctioned it as a Flood Control Project for Rs. 12.8 crores at 1971-72 prices. In 1984-85 it was taken over by the Brahmaputra Board. Irrigation was added to it and its cost was raised to Rs. 287.89 crores at 1988-89 prices. The Technical Advisory Committee on Irrigation, Flood Control and Multi purpose projects of the Ministry of Water Resource Development (MOWR) studied it in 1990 and recommended the addition of Hydropower generation and conjunctive use of surface and ground water to ensure the optimum development of the MOWR on Multipurpose River Projects cleared it from the techno-economic angle.

Clearance of the Ministry of Environment and Forests was obtained after getting a No Objection Certificate from the Government of Asom and after raising its estimated cost to Rs. 540.99 crores at 1999 prices. The Public Investment Board of the Central Government sanctioned it at Rs. 526.62 crores in March 2000. The Union Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved it in November 2000 at a cost of Rs. 542.9 crores for implementation by the Brahmaputra Board. Thus originally conceived as a flood control project, it has now become a multipurpose one. It claims that it will save about 40,000 ha from floods and erosion covering 190 villages in the Nalbari district. It also proposes to irrigate 54,160 hectares of land in 145 villages and produce 3 MW of electricity and is scheduled to be completed in 2007. But work has not yet started because of opposition from the people.

People's Livelihood before Displacement

The main livelihood of the people to be affected by the dam is natural resource-based, agriculture on the one hand and CPRs on the other. The tribals in particular are CPR dependants and are skilled agriculturists. They use traditional ways of irrigation from the hill streams. Some records show that they pay a water cess to the Bhutan officials, mostly in kind for drawing water from the streams (Roy 1995:20). Their cultivation is traditional and they believe that use of any manure except cowdung and burnt weeds can destroy the fertility of their land. They also do multiple cropping and use many traditional methods to improve land fertility (Brahma 1992: 45-48). So most of them are self-sufficient in agriculture and collect their other necessities from the CPRs. They continue to depend on agriculture with minor deviation. Some of them also have non-agricultural alternatives.

Another source of livelihood is animal husbandry. They have a natural propensity to rear animals like pigs, goats, cows etc. During our field visit we saw that every family has cows and bullocks. The latter are used for ploughing. Fishing is another source of income, mainly practised by women who get much of their sustenance from the river. They go to the local *hats* (markets) to sell their homegrown vegetables and other produce (Sen Choudhuri 2004: 37). They also collect food and medicines from the forest. Weaving is another occupation and according to T. C. Sharma (1983: 57) the Boros introduced the art of rearing silkworm and spinning and weaving silk clothes in Asom. Apart from the income they get from them, these occupations also give women some economic autonomy and a fairly high social status.

What after Displacement :

That is why the people feel that the dam will threaten their livelihood and socio-political practices that are integrated and deep-rooted in their ancestral lands. As mentioned above, it will uproot about 1,05,000 people in 38 villages, 90 percent of them tribals but its beneficiaries are mostly non-tribals on the southern bank of Pagladia. The dam will permanently damage 34,000 hectares of fertile agricultural land that is their primary sustenance. The land they have been promised in return is sandy and infertile. After our visit we realized that what they about the land to be given as compensation not being fertile is true.

Besides, a model village has been constructed to resettle the potential DPs in a vaillage in the same district. But it is under the occupation of the 1947 East Pakistan Refugees and others who came later. So resettling them on that plot is a recipe for a major conflict. Besides, they consider the so called model village of a single house unfit for tribal lifestyle. Its limited space will not permit them to rear animals that is a primary source of their income. Weaving is one of their major occupations but the model house makes no provision for hand looms. The dam will also deprive them of the river which

is an important source of sustenance. Thus, they consider the dam an attack on their culture, land and livelihood. Most importantly the Rs. 47.89 crore rehabilitation package is for 18,473 persons from 3,271 families while the people claim that around 105,000 persons from 20,000 families in 38 revenue villages will be uprooted, 90% of them are tribals (Bharali 2004).

People's Resistance

So, from 1968 the people to be displaced have been protesting against the dam and have brought their movement under an organisation *Pagladia Bandh Prakalpar Khatigrasta Alekar Sangram Samittee*. Its President told us that the protest is needed because the dam will uproot the already marginalised tribals as well as non-tribals living on the North bank of the river. The people claim that for five decades since independence they have been deprived of their due of developmental schemes and funds required to improve their lifestyle and that the imposition of this project on the already marginalised tribal farming communities endangers their traditional livelihoods and inalienable rights as indigenous people. So they consider it against their interests, culture and ethnic identity. Besides, the issue of tribal interests has come to the fore and because most of its beneficiaries are non-tribals. It is likely to push the entire debate into the emotional tribal versus non-tribal controversy.

Hence, to save their livelihood, culture and ethnic identity the potential DPs organised peaceful protests against the dam through bicycle rallies and *Dharnas* in front of the DC's office. In these demonstrations they get the support of a number of tribal political parties and groups since the dam will affect their livelihood. Among those who joined them in the demonstrations are the activists of the All Boro Students' Union (ABSU), All Rabha Student's Association (ARSU) and All Boro Employees Federation (ABEF). Because of these protests, Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi has requested the Central Government to conduct a fresh survey of the dam to allay the misgivings of the tribal people. If the findings reveal that it will do more harm than good then some alternate scheme can always be worked out. However, the people are afraid of the future role of the BTC as well as the State though the former has supported them before the constitutional recognition of the BTC.

Conclusion :

The analysis given in this paper shows that though development projects are important for the progress of the nation they tend to become a major threat to the traditional livelihood of the people affected by them. It is true more of the CPR dependants than of the others. That cannot be accepted if development is understood as a method of bringing about changes for the better. In reality many of them seem to destroy the economic base of the people. So there is a feeling that the development minority impoverishes the majority. Case studied from all over India as well as the Pagladia dam

shows this reality. They also create division instead of enhancing unity. Hence it is difficult to call it genuine development. It is, therefore, essential to search for non-displacing and least displacing alternatives.

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A GLIMPSE INTO THE ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM OF AIRT & SC

Nazmeen Anam**

Seeing is believing. A visual display or a glimpse of an array of artifacts is more effective than bookish descriptions. Museums are referred as store houses, treasure troves, antique houses and the like but they actually serve as Institutions where valued items of a society are treasured to save them from deterioration. In other words, museum is the mirror of man and his activities.

The term 'museum' is derived from the Greek word Muses which refers to the nine sisters of Greek Goddesses of learning, equivalent to the Indian counterpart 'Saraswati'. The Greek word 'Mouseon' or the 'Muoses' is a place dedicated to the 'muses' for studying and learning noble disciplines.

The ethnographic museums generally lay emphasis on collection of artifacts pertaining to the life and culture of different ethnic groups. Now these groups in their varied ecological conditions explore nature with their wit and experiences. Subsequently they become skilled in producing their own economy. Material culture and economy are intricately weaved to knit a beautiful mosaic of culture. The necessities of day to day life results in springing up of material culture of an ethnic group, be it in the form of storing basket, fishing trap or a wine brewer. When oral traditions cannot be preserved properly, material culture tends to throw light to reconstruct lost cultures. With such an objective, the concept of ethnographic museum came into being.

One have to go back to 1977 to know about the inception of the present ethnographic museum of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes. The infant museum was set up along with the other wings of the Institution. The then officers and scholars were able to gather momentum in collecting the material culture in the form of museum artifacts from the entire length and breadth of Assam, the cultural cauldron of North-East India. At present the ethnographic museum displays a good number of exhibits belonging to the indigenous tribes of North East India, particularly Assam.

Bamboo and Cane-made artifacts dominates the various section of the gallery. This museum has preserved a variety of artifacts reflecting the socio-religious and socio-economic aspects of the multi ethnic groups in Assam. The material culture of the Tiwas, Karbis, Hmars, Dimasa Kacharis, Rabhas, the Bodos, Misings, Sonowal Kacharis, Rengmas, Tamangs and some other tribes are housed in the showcases of the gallery in a tribe wise manner. The institution is trying to procure all the cultural objects of the tribes required in their daily life, during festivity, in funeral ceremonies, during hunting and fishing expeditions etc. Weaving forms an integral part of tribal culture. The intricate designs in the traditional textiles are praise worthy.

The ethnographic museum of AIRT & SC is a treasure den of our past heritage. A section is maintained for each tribe, where textiles, musical instruments, hunting and fishing tools, utensils of day to day use, ornament caskets, baskets etc. are on display. Spouted wooden bowls, wooden laddle, plunged basket etc. find place in the show cases. Hand woven basketry and wrapped basketry built on coiled foundation are on display. Their skill is manifested in the exquisite bamboo and cane handicraft based on coiled wicks, matting and twined works. For instance, we can speak about the unique

'Sero' of the Karbis which is plaited in cane in the shape of kettle. It serves as a wine decanter. Again the bold and beautiful motifs in the textiles reflect their artistic pursuits and self sufficiency. Mention may be made about the 'RIKHAUSA', 'RIJAMPAL' etc. of the Dimasa Kacharis, RIBI GOSENG of the Miris, DAUKHNA, PHASNA, JYME KHANGRA of the Bodos and the like, which are displayed in the gallery. Last year, a separate section has been maintained for exhibiting rare and exquisite ethnic jewellery of the North-East. Most of the ornaments are made of silver. Some are silver jewellery combined with wild beads, glass, resins, feathers etc. These rare ethnic jewellery are on the verge of getting lost. Different types of armlets and anklets find place in the show cases. Mention may be made of the beautiful "Nothengpi", a silver ear stud of the Karbis. It is the Karbi version of the Assamese thuria'. When one sees the workmanship of 'Chandrawal' the Dimasa silver necklace, one can understand the glorious heritage of that ethnic group. Necklaces made of 'Poal moni, coins, tiger tooth, amber, local rubies and the like are also on display. In that very year, the Directorate had endeavoured to portray the life and culture of some indigenous tribes of Assam in the museum gallery.

In order to implement the same, picturesque landscape and sculptural figures of the Karbis, the Bodo Kacharis and Dimasa Kacharis were cast in three separate sections. One can have a vivid idea about those tribes by stealing a glance at the sculptures in their respective terrains.

Another lively section has been introduced in the form of 'ethnographic photo gallery' where life and culture of different ethnic groups is being exhibited for better understanding.

The ethnographic museum of the Institution is now laying emphasis on the collection of dying folk art, coins, traditional jewellery and other antiques. It is an universal urge for every individual to know his past. The material culture of the tribes in the form of museum specimens are exposed to the general mass and scholars for better perceivment of their past heritage. Our past heritage is the backbone of our present culture. Museum truly serves as a base to broaden the outlook of the curious minds to know the unknown, to marvel the unmarvelled.



TRADITIONAL JEWELLERY OF THE RENGMAS



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF THE GAROS



MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF THE BODO KACHARIS

HOUSEHOLD GOODS OF THE HILL TIWAS

ITEMS OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM



A GLIMPSE OF A TYPICAL DIMASA VILLAGE

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED TRIBES THROUGH SELF-HELP GROUP - A CASE STUDY

– Ms. Namita Devi**

Introduction

According to National Sample Survey Data, the poverty in India in absolute terms is increasing, even though it is coming down percentage wise, in spite of the continuous efforts on the poverty alleviation programmes by the Banks and the successive Governments. After 54 years of economic planning and government efforts to eradicate poverty through various poverty alleviation programmes 37.3% of population are still living below the poverty line of which as 74.2% live in the rural areas (Shanmugam, E., 1999). With a view to enable the poor to cross the poverty line, Government has initiated a number of anti-poverty programmes since 1979, such as IRDP, DWACRA, TRYSEM, JRY etc. But, owing to many factors including non-association of grass root institutions in implementation, the programmes could not yield the expected results. Because of the non-involvement of the grass root institutions in the process of identification of the poor under the poverty alleviation schemes, many genuine poor do not get selected. Even those who get selected as beneficiaries are imposed schemes without considering their skill and aptitude. As a result the schemes did not yield the expected results. The plans were formulated at the top and imposed on the beneficiaries. In a country like India, where the socio-economic structure of each and every community is different, we can hardly expect successful implementation of a programme in every state, district, block and village without the involvement of local institutions. Against the above mentioned back-drops, micro-finance through self-help groups (SHGs) has been recognized as one of the most promising and effective tools for empowering rural people in most of the developing countries of the world. The basic moto of SHG is to make micro-credit accessibility to the needy people to enable them to generate self employment and sustainable income. Self-help group (SHG) is a small group of poor people having a homogeneous social and economic back ground joining together voluntarily with an intent to carry on saving in a common fund to meet their emergency need and to provide collateral free loans including consumption loans with terms decided by the group.

The Problem under Investigation :

The Plains tribal community of Assam as a whole is economically very poor. As such it is the duty of the government and the concerned authorities to do the needful for the upliftment of this economically weaker section of the society. In this paper it is an endeavour to investigate how far micro-finance through SHGs has been able to uplift the economic status of the plains tribal community under Demoria block of Kamrup district.

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Objectives of the Study : The proposed study entails the following objectives :

- 1) To analyse the economic impact of SHGs on the tribal people particularly in Demoria Block.
- 2) To ascertain the role of SHG in promoting income generating activities.
- 3) To ascertain the role of the SHG programmes in promoting saving habits of the tribal people.
- 4) To ascertain the role of SHG in poverty alleviation.

Rationale of the Study :

Demoria Tribal Development Block has been purposely selected for our study on account of dominance of tribal people in the block. It is the only block which is in the vicinity of Guwahati city and is having the highest number of scheduled tribes among all the Tribal Development of plain districts of Assam. Hence a study on this block is expected to throw some light on the impact of micro-finance through self-help groups on the plains tribal community in the state of Assam.

Methodology of the Study :

Due to time and budgetary constraints, only five SHGs from Demoria Block were selected for our study. After selecting the SHGs from the interior villages inhabited by S.T. community, a field survey was conducted to collect the required information from the groups. The survey was conducted during August-September'05 for collection of Primary data. Well structured schedules were used and data were collected by taking personal interview with the respondents.

The data so collected have been processed, tabulated and analysed with the help of simple statistical tools and techniques and conclusions have been drawn therefrom.

A brief profile of the SHGs selected for the study is high lighted in the following table (Table - I).

Table - I
Profile of the sample people SHGs in Demoria Block

Sl. No.	Name of SHG.	Date of formation	No. of members	Caste of members	Educational qualification	Marital Status
1.	Rukmini SHG	12-5-01	14	Karbi	P-5, HSLC-I, III - 8	CM-1, NM-4 W-8, S - 1
2.	Latabari SHG	9-10-01	10	Karbi	P-6, HSLC-2 III-2	NM-2, W-8
3.	Swarni Jyoti SHG	1-3-02	11	Karbi	M-9, III - 2	W-5, S - 6
4.	Tetelia SHG	10-6-02	10	Karbi	HSLC-2, M-8	NM-2, W-7 S-1
5.	Oineng Chekasi bari SHG	8-12-02	10	Karbi	HS-1, P-2, III - 7	NM-1, W-8 S-3

Note : P = Primary, HSLC = High Level, H. S. = Higher Secondary, Level, M = Middle level upto Class - X, Ill = Illiterate Marital Status : CM = Currently married, NM - Never married, W = Widow, S = separated.

It is evident from Table - I, that most of the members of the sample units are illiterate, widow and separated. Out of the total 55 members, 19 members are found illiterate, 33 are widows, 11 are separated. Thus it appears that SHGs are becoming popular even among the illiterate people. They have come forward to form SHGs to fight against their poverty.

Table - 2

Sl. No.	Name of SHG	Key Activities	Sources of Loan	Date of Received	Amount of Loan Received	Amount repaid (Rs.)	Amount to be repaid (Rs.)
1.	Rukmini SHG	Poultry	SBI, Khanapur	10-4-2003	1,00,000/-	40,000/-	60,000/-
2.	Latabari SHG	Weaving	SBI, Khanapur	08-2-2003	1,00,000/-	30,000/-	70,000/-
3.	Swamajyoti SHG	Knitting	SBI Khanapur	22-3-2004	1,00,000/-	45,000/-	55,000/-
4.	Tetelia SHG	Weaving	SBI Khanapur	15-9-04	1,00,000/-	25,000/-	75,000/-
5.	Oineng Chakani SHG	Weaving	SBI Khanapur	29-12-04	1,00,000/-	30,000/-	70,000/-

Source : Field Survey

From our field survey it is observed that the sources of funds of the SHGs are contributed from members, grants, subsidy, institutional loan and interest received from internal tending. It is also found that all the sample units (SHGs) are engaged in weaving, Animal husbandry and textile enterprise which is highly income generating. All the SHGs received a fund of Rs. 1 lakh each from the SIRD, but the fund is channalised through the SBI, Khanapur Branch and 50 thousand is received as subsidy which was spent for construction of building, purchasing of raw materials buying inputs for running the enterprise. The prior income and saving estimated on the basis of the information furnished by the members are embodied in Table - 3.

Table - 3
Savings and Incomes of the SHGs in Demoria Block

Sl. No.	Name of SHG	Prior Income of the members (Rs.)	Post Income of the member (Rs.)	Prior saving of the member (Rs.)	Post Saving of the members (Rs.)
1.	Rukmini SHG	2,360/-	18,000/-	1,230/-	14,560/-
2.	Latabari SHG	6,520/-	24,000/-	990/-	5,400/-
3.	Swamajyoti	12,270/-	36,000/-	1,320/-	8,140/-
4.	Tetelia SHG	4,300/-	16,200/-	120/-	3,200/-
5.	Oineng Chekanibari SHG	11,750/-	38,400/-	310/-	2,400/-
	Total	37,200/-	1,32,600/-	4,570/-	33,700/-

Source : Field Survey

So, it reveals from Table - 3 that the income generated by the SHGs was highly impressive. The yearly post income by Rukmini SHG, Latabari SHG, Swarajyoti SHG, Tetelia SHG and Oineng Chekanibari SHG, were reported to be Rs. 18,000, Rs. 24,000/-, Rs. 36,000/-, Rs. 16,200/- Rs. 38,400, respectively. The effectiveness of the SHGs which are organised and run by poor and illiterate people is highly praise worthy. Within a short span of the members of the SHGs have been able to generate income. On the otherhand, prior to joining of their SHG, the income and savings of the people were low. But after joining their SHG, they could generate more income and savings which was highly praise-worthy.

The statistical test known as 'Paired t-test' can be applied to test if there is any significant difference between prior average income and post average income and prior average saving and post average saving of the selected SHGs. The left tailed paired t test reveals that there is significant increase in both income and saving of the SHGs formed by the plains tribal people over their income and savings prior to their joining the various SHGs.

It is not an easy task to estimate the income and savings of the members prior to joining various SHGs. While some members were engaged in some other economic activities, some members were not associated with any economic activity. Estimation of prior income and savings of each and every person of such group is not possible. However, we tried our best to obtain data in respect of prior income and saving of the members of the selected SHGs. It is to be mentioned that while post income and saving of OW SHG refer to the income and saving of the SHGs, the prior income and saving of a SHG imply the sum of income and saving of the members constituting the SHG where the income and saving of many members are reported to be nil.

Repayment performance of the group studied was also found satisfactory. Default

was non-existent. Recovery from the SHGs for the banks was also reported to be good. It was over 90 percent. The SHG have performed well on the saving front.

Epilogue :

In this study, an attempt has been made to evaluate the performance of five SHGs operating in tribal dominated rural areas of Kamrup district. The programmes is found to have highly positive impact on income and savings of the self-help group members and cultivated saving habit among them. It has proved beyond doubt that even the poor have saving potential. The SHG provide an institutional frame work for converting these potentials into reality. In a sense the micro-finance programme has succeeded to some extent in motivating the poor to make some savings and pool these savings for mutual benefit of the members.

Through these SHGs rural tribal people not only developed confidence in them, but also cultivated the habit of savings and utilization of collective wisdom to tackle their own problem. All the SHGs studied were found successful in generating income and sustaining saving. The study proves beyond doubt that if the poor are properly motivated and sensitized through education and training, they themselves can generate some funds for setting up micro-enterprises, which if effectively monitored by a dedicated NGO, can go along way in improving the condition of the poor and the marginalised, besides conferring self respect and dignity on themselves.

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THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF THE MISINGS

— S. S. Pegu**

The Misings as a community with socio-cultural traits of their own are inhabitants of a number of districts in upper Assam - namely Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Darrang on the right bank of the Brahmaputra and Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia on the southern bank. A few of them have settled in the valley areas of East Siang and Lohit districts of Arunachal Pradesh bordering Assam. However, they are known as an important indigenous community forming part of the larger Assamese society. Yet because of their ethnic background and socio-cultural traditions - peculiar to them, economic realities facing the people of Assam affect the Misings with more negative impact. Let us look into some of them in the following few lines in brief:

(i) Occupation:

The Misings are agriculturists - cultivation being their primary occupation. However, Mising cultivators suffer from the following short-comings:

(a) Many of them do not possess periodic patta (PP) for the cultivable land under their possession for ages. This weakness - coming from taking things for granted and lack of awareness about the value attached to PP land in law - has harmed many Mising farmers in claiming compensations from the concerned authorities at different periods and locations of the Misings. Examples - as a riparian tribe - many Misings were affected by devastating floods and erosions - particularly post 1950 earthquake - of the Subansiri and the Brahmaputra. In the most recent years, Mising farmers are experiencing hardships in getting compensations following the land acquisition for construction of railway bridge from Bogibeel near Dibrugarh town on the south and Kulajan on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Apart from compensation claims, PP land has other asset qualities. Farmers owning PP land have the right to create equitable or other forms of mortgage with the objective of availing credits from banks or other lending institutions. Even Tea Board, for example, reportedly extends subsidies/other supports to small - tea-growers who are developing their green-leaf gardens on PP land only.

(b) Produce from cultivation is limited to a certain variety of crops - such as paddy, mustard seeds, black pulse etc. Though the latter two are cash crops and supportive of meeting cash requirements of farmers, commercial approach to enlarge cultivation to earn better income is lacking. Most cultivators are at a subsistence level. Moreover, land for cultivation is becoming scarce as the years progress into scores of decades. Added to this, the farmers are still sticking to age-old traditional method of cultivation - which does not help improving higher productivity.

Another area of activities related to agriculture - are the allied ones such as piggery, poultry, fishery etc. The Misings are quite acquainted with raising of pigs and chickens as they need pork and chickens in performing their traditional rituals/worships. Many

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Mising house-wives earn handsome supportive income from the sales of pigs and fowls raised by them. But this activity is carried on in a restricted scale having much lower priority compared to cultivation. There is a case for closer look if some families can live entirely from the income of piggery, poultry etc. Marginal farmers - having a limited area of land uneconomic for carrying on cultivation may utilize the plot for raising piggery, poultry activities for better income.

(ii) Other occupations:

(a) Trade & Commerce:

We have a very limited number of registered contractors for executing various contracts either from the State Govt. Deptts. or from reputed corporates. A small number of them rose at a time when E&D department of the State Govt. was executing construction of embankments after the 1950 earthquake. In recent years it is observed that funds are gradually drying up for such embankments and many of the contractors had to switch over to other sources of income.

The Mising youths - with their capability to analyse and knowledge of fast changing economic scenario in the country - need to appraise the situation prevailing in growth centres like Gogamukh, Dhemaji, Silapathar, Jonai - to name a few - from the point of enjoying a share of the trade and business being carried on in these centers. What is hindering us - is it lack of capital, lack of will and entrepreneurship? Of the few who started to participate in these centers, simply gave up and their assets including landed property to more enterprising non-locals. Are we entitled to react alleging exploitation and lack of protection? Are we not prone to perceive comfort of Govt. service/ employment in public sector undertakings and hate to slog to earn an honest income from enterprises other than secured state services? Even to-day - when the world around - including India is becoming more and more open to competition, most of our youths confine themselves to competition for secured Govt./PSU jobs only. There is a need to change this attitude with a conscious approach so that at least a section of the youth look for self employment schemes.

(b) Household Industries :

With the help of domestic handloom traditionally used for weaving cloths with various designs and arts to meet the requirements of different occasions, Mising housewives/damsels have been engaged in weaving since time immemorial. In the last couple of decades, sale of some items of women's garments, Gadu (Mirijim), Ribi gaseng, Mibu Galok etc, has been going on through individual efforts. This has become an additional income for the needy ones by dint of their personal skill and labour though nobody is sure of the appropriateness of earnings vis-a-vis labour and skill harnessed. Are our products in this category competitive in the market with similar products from other sources? Is there a need to look into this aspect also to improve our products to be more competitive in the market quality-wise and price-wise?

(c) Small Scale Industries (SSI) :

SSI units are rarely by Mising entrepreneurs individually. Number of rice-mills, carpentry at a very low scale, small saw-mills etc. may be found at one's finger tips. Lack of infrastructure like market to sell, roads for quicker transportation, electricity for using sophisticated equipments and to work in day and night shifts, entrepreneurship and managerial skill all combined together to create an environment of non-starting SSI units of respectable level. We all know that SSI units are the ones which provide large scope for employment.

It may not be correct to say that SSI unit is totally unknown to the Misings. The Munkongselek Multipurpose Marketing and Processing Co-operative Society Ltd. was set up in 1951 at Munkongselek - (part of Jonai subdivision). We understand that this co-operative had engaged itself selling some items of trading like yarn for weavers, blankets, 'dhuti' etc. also though the mainstay of the Society was the Munkongselek Saw Mill. It is reported that in its heyday, it used to enjoy the special attention of the forest department in getting necessary logs as raw material for its saw mill and it had a roaring business commercially and it could at the same time provide succour to many families indirectly. It acquired a sizeable landed property in its possession.

Munkongselek saw mill is no more to-day. Combination of factors like poor management, lack of collective interest for larger benefits to more number of people for which the Society was set up, denudation of local forest as a source of logs, siphoning of funds generated etc. might have contributed to the decline. It is gathered that development activities are stagnant today and whatever little income is earned from some rented houses, rented (out) rice mill, a fishery pond etc. is consumed by the present office bearers in meeting their T.A. bills, salaries to a couple of employees. Share-holders of the Society have passed into oblivion. Vast plots of land once acquired by the Society have now dwindled reportedly to around one acre only. Any hope of revival of the unit? Let the Mising youths have a relook into it. What alternatives could have been attempted/achieved by utilizing the huge landed assets to-day - had it not been so easily frittered away?

(iii) Other Sources of Income:

We donot find today any important site in the Mising inhabited areas to be developed as a tourist center to generate indirect economic activities in and around such a center.

Forests - once a source of livelihood for many people - are now dwindling and whatever remains, is becoming quite inadequate vis-a-vis the past base of support.

Do we have valuable natural resources like minerals in the areas we live? Even the couple of tea gardens in and around us are far away from us economically though they exist geographically with us.

Socio-Economy of the Misings upto now is predominantly linked to agriculture. As indicated in the foregoing paragraphs, cultivable land is becoming scarce and limited from the point of economics of productive cultivation with the ever increasing population as well as the ill effects of floods and erosions in respect of the riparian Misings in

particular. As an alternative to cultivation and other activities allied to agriculture some of our youths could have already taken up activities which generate income - as source of livelihood - such as setting up garages for repairing vehicles, rendering transport services, managing small tea stalls/restaurants etc. Last few years a few indigenous Assamese youths with educational qualifications ranging from matriculation to graduate level have taken up a number of self-employment services including job of a barber. Last few weeks - (Aug.Sept.2004) there were reports in newspapers about Naga youths setting up salon at Kohima - setting a new trend in the north-east for providing different types of services - never dreamt of a few decades ago. The Mising youths have to change their outlook about services as source of income other than agriculture and govt. employment. We all know today that scope of govt. employment is shrinking and whatever limited vacancies arise lead to a lot of unhealthy competitions involving undue influences. Search for new avenues - at least by a sizeable youths of the future is inevitable.

Suggested Approach :

The following steps - some of which are already in operation in and around the Mising villages are illustrative for making a conscious endeavour to change the lot of the villagers for an improved living.

Agriculture :

Farmers engaged in cultivation have to adopt innovative methods of cultivation. This will include use of more effective implements, quality seeds and preventive-cum-protective management of the crops grown till harvesting takes place.

Our farmers have to look for newer varieties of crops instead of remaining content with producing paddy, mustard seeds etc. only. Various cash crops are becoming popular them - have to be 'progressive farmers' to adopt improved varieties in their area of operations so that other farmers can follow their examples later on. For this the farmers have to get extension support from the block/district Agriculture Extension Officers. National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) and State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) Guwahati also conduct training programmes for various groups of beneficiaries. Our progressive farmers can participate in some of the training programmes considered relevant to their area of operations. Informations about the schedule of training programmes can be collected through the local agriculture office or BDO. Sericulture and at certain centers horticulture may also be promoted as additional activities.

In order to augment the cash earning, farmers having limited area of land are to be motivated to upgrade their level of raising piggery/poultry - which they carry on traditionally at a very low scale. Market has never been a problem for these livestock and with better and more hygienic management, higher turn over and income to the farmers is sure to accrue. Further, we all know the import of eggs and fish worth crores of rupees from outside North-East for consumption in this part of the country. Is it an opportunity for our enterprising farmers to produce a percentage of the requirements and earn a

handsome income? We are not going into details, these are illustrative examples only.

Other Activities :

(i) In respect of household industries, there is a need to make the weavers aware of the market demands, taste of buyers for certain designs and artistry in their products. Our weavers will have to compete with the products of other ethnic groups of the N.E region in the market.

(ii) Let us assume that in response to motivation for improved agriculture and activities allied to agriculture, our farmers are successful in plentiful production. Is the local market capable of handling all the produce? If not what is the support system available so that the farmers donot suffer losses? These are points to be taken into account and necessary infrastructures in the form of cold storage, agro-based processing units etc. have to be in place to encourage the farming community. To ensure proper price to growers, organised efforts should be made for transporting the produce to bigger markets in time. That leads to the question of having good roads passing through various centers of growth.

(iii) Is it possible to contribute to socio-economic upliftment of our community only through employment in State/Central/Public sector undertakings? It may not - as the source of income is just adequate for the employee's needs with his family and some savings for post retired life. Opaque sources of income of employees, if any, need not be taken into account. Therefore, it is observed that it is developed stage of agriculture, trade and commerce, good roads and transport, promotion of industrial units, proper supply of electricity etc. are supportive of economic development in general. The state of Kerela has thousands of its people in other parts of these country and in the Middle-East - mainly selling their labour and skill. Funds flowing from these emigrants definitely help to a large extent the economy of the state. Closer home, the people of Mizoram are relatively more self-reliant than the rest of the N.E. Region. They value dignity of labour and self-help.

(iv) Is there a scope for socio-cultural return or change? Expenses incurred in performing Dadgang, Urom Apin, and Urom are so huge that the poor families cannot afford to arrange the same easily and in time. Consumption of Apong -affects the family finance. Let us try for a change through a collective wisdom so that our "work ethics" improve perceptively. We all know that after drinking 'Apong', consumers tend to be drowsy and would like to relax. So it affects the level of efficiency of labour for longer period. Hence, it is generally counter productive if consumed during the day time which should be devoted to productive use.

(v) Role of Self-Help-Group (SHG) is becoming an instrument of economic upliftment - particularly of the poor. However, it is gathered that response for organizing SHGs in the Mising villages is still lukewarm. This requires closer analysis by the local leaders who have genuine concern for upliftment of the poor in their hearts. It is relevant to remind ourselves about the important role played by NGOs (Non-Govt.-Organisations) in different aspects of societies at different places. How many NGOs

are operating in Mising inhabited areas? Let us look into this aspect also.

(vi) Our country is a functioning democracy. We have various institutions like 'Panchayati Raj' at different levels including the villages we live in. Our people have to participate actively to gain knowledge of managing the administration. Substantial funds have been routed through different govt. agencies/depts. Fund is not a problem - only problem is translating fund into actualisation of the objectives to benefit the people. We have been told that substantial amounts of funds are routed through the Mising Autonomous Council. What is the impact of this MAC funds among the people in terms of improvement of primary schools, village roads, drinking water, promotion of household industries or any agriculture related activities?

(vii) Is literacy generally the basis for becoming a better citizen? Then let us start a drive to eradicate illiteracy among the Misings, say by 2010. In Vision 2020, it is hoped that India will be a developed country. Shall we not be proud participants of developed India?

Conclusion :

From the above, we find that there are many obstacles to development. Some of them - say social change / reform for a 'work ethic' oriented to ensure enhanced efficiency of labour for more production, adoption of improved methods of cultivation, organizing SHGs in the villages etc. can be overcome by the villagers with the help of informed leaders of the villages. Necessary support from Extension Services of Block/ Agriculture Department can also be obtained. While emphasis is given on the conditions supportive of economic development in general from a layman's point of view, seeking Govt. / Public Sector employment is not discouraged. Rather acquiring skill and knowledge to compete for jobs / opportunities outside Govt./ PSUs is becoming the order of the day. Our youths today have to be well equipped to occupy positions of knowledge-based management / administration. While on the question of employment, joining the Defence Forces - namely Indian Air Force, Armed Forces, Indian Navy - should also be within the attractive considerations of our youth. A good number of people from any community in the Defence Forces definitely get attention of the nation / country. Moreover, the employees on retirement from the Defence establishments - carry back with them a sense of discipline, commitment and performance of chosen duties. This attitudinal orientation in respect of a good number of youths will definitely create an impact on the Mising society of the future. Removal of obstacles and willingness to adopt new and appropriate approach to adapt ourselves to new socio-economic environments have to go on simultaneously.

PHOTO FEATURE



'BAISAGU'
SPRING FESTIVAL OF THE BODOS



FARKANTI DANCE OF THE RABHAS



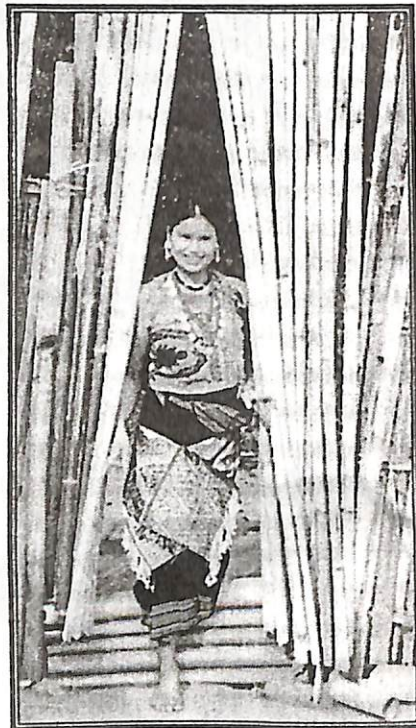
A RENGMA MAIDEN IN HER LOOMS

-SAMIR CHOUDHURY



**A DIMASA COUPLE
ON TRADITIONAL ATTIRE**

CULTURAL MOSAIC OF ASSAM



A TIWA DAMSEL

PROBLEMS FACED BY RURAL YOUTH OF MATAK COMMUNITY IN WINTER VEGETABLE CULTIVATION PRACTICES

Prasanta Dutta**

Introduction :

Rural youth form a vital resource and it is a time of life full of potential and problem. The youth are a potential source of labour and skill that can effectively be used in the field of agriculture.

According to the United Nation people who are aged between 15 and 24 are referred as 'Youth'. The youth in India constitute 19% of the total population (United Nation, 2001) and three quarters of these people live in rural areas (Naika & Siddaramaiah, 1990). Rural youth form a vital human resource which needs to be explored and exposed through forward looking approaches, innovations and clear vision perspectives for the betterment and welfare of the society.

The progress and prosperity of an agricultural country like India largely depends upon how effectively and efficiently the human resource potential of the rural youth is developed and fruitfully utilized in forming activities. Unfortunately, in spite of the fact that rural youth can play the key role in agricultural development both the person responsible for formulating strategies, services and public policies for rural India have often tended to neglect the productive role of youth. Thus, this young population is faced with several problems when they take up their father's occupation and get involved in farming. Under the circumstances it was felt necessary to probe and identify the problems faced by rural youths in farming so that the policy makers and development organization can take appropriate step in solving their problems.

Methodology :

The study was conducted in Jorhat district of Assam that was selected purposively as a large number of rural youth programme have been organized by the Directorate of Extension Education of Assam Agricultural University since 1977. Two agricultural sub-division, Jorhat and Titabor were selected from the district purposively based on the same factors as mentioned above. Further, two AEO circles (one from each selected sub division) were selected purposively. Patiagaon and Hukimara Villagers from Bahona AEO circle of Jorhat sub division and Haluwagaon and Gandhigaon of Baghchung AEO circle under Titabor sub division were selected randomly as the final sample. Informations

**** Research Investigator, IIBM Guwahati**

were collected with the help of a pre-tested and well structured interview schedule. Problems faced by the rural youth respondents in winter vegetable cultivation practices were measured with the help of a two point continuum scale i.e. 'Yes' and 'No' with the corresponding value of '1' and '0' respectively. Analysis was done by considering frequency under 'yes' category and ranked in descending order.

Sample District	Jorhat				Purposive
Sample sub division	Jorhat	Titabar			Purposive
	7	6			
	AEO Circle	AEO Circle			
Sample AEO circle	Bahona	Bagchung			Purposive
Sample Village	Patiagaon	Hukimara	Haluwagaon	Gandhigaon	Random
Number of selected respondents	30	30	30	30	
Total	120				

Results and Discussion

The problems refers to the difficulties or hindrances that comes in the way of achievement of any goal or objectives.

The major areas of problems of rural youth in forming along with the scores and their ranks are presented in Table No. 1. Singha (1996) had reported that the major problem of Assamese rural youth in Agriculture was economic followed by general, social and psychological. There were 9 problems under this society of which general problems are like 'lack of irrigation facilities', lack of reliable sources of information', lack of technical guidance from extension agencies' were selected. Economic problems like 'lack of sufficient cultivable land', 'high cost of fertilizers' and plant protections chemicals, monetary problems, problems in marketing' were selected. Psychological problem includes only 'lack of proper knowledge in respect of cultivation'.

The findings presented in Table No. 1 shows that the rural youth of the study area faced the following problems in winter vegetables cultivation practices.

Table -1
Distribution of the respondents according to the problems faced by respondents in Winter Vegetable Cultivation practices:
(N = 120)

	Problem	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
i	Lack of irrigation facilities	108	90.00	I
ii	Lack of sufficient cultivable land	96	80.00	II
iii	Lack of proper knowledge in respect of cultivation	93	77.50	III
iv	Lack of reliable sources of information	92	76.67	IV
v	Lack of technical guidance from extension agencies	90	78.00	V
vi	Unavailability of input in time	89	74.17	VI
vii	High cost of fertilizers and plant protection chemical	83	69.17	VII
viii	Monetary problem	80	66.67	VIII
ix	Problems in marketing	53	44.17	IX

The findings presented in above table reveals that lack of irrigation facilities (90.00) percent was identified as the most serious problem followed by Lack of sufficient cultivable land (80.00) percent. The other important problems perceived by the rural youth are in descending order included 'lack of proper knowledge, lack of reliable sources of information, lack of technical guidance from extension agencies, unavailability of input in time, high cost of fertilizer and plant protection chemicals, monetary problem and problems in marketing.

The above findings clearly points out for the need of regular and timely extension support and training in farm related activities specially suited to the requirement of the future generation of farmers. Extension workers serving the rural areas should take special care and interest in involving and facilitating rural youth in all development activities. The government should ensure regularity of extension staff at the villages. The private players and NGOs should come forward effectively and efficiently to shoulder the responsibilities of extension activities along with the government in this new era of

privatization and liberalization. Inputs like fertilizer and plant protection chemicals should be made available in time. Besides the government, the NGO and the corporate sector should come out with innovative employment generation programme for the rural youth so that these highly potential people are retained in their rural areas.

Conclusion :

The problems that are faced by today's rural youth are many and varied. There is a need for them to be fruitfully employed and to solve their economic, social, psychological and other problems.

Thus, rural youth development programmes should be formulated and implemented keeping in mind the need and requirement of the young farming community in the area. Rural youth organization similar to H. M. Club in LISK, should be started in the villages of India. Leadership development programme for rural youth should be initiated. Location specific and need based training programme should be organized for the farm youth so that this potential mass are motivated to remain in the rural areas. Extension workers should take special care to solve the problems of this section of the society. Rural youth if organized properly can perform more effectively and efficiently than any other and it will lead to the prosperity of the entire rural community in general. Right initiative by the government and concentrated extension efforts by all concerned can go a long way in bringing confidence and satisfaction in the face of this young farming community.

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THE ROLE OF KARBI WOMEN IN THEIR ECONOMY

Ranima Saikia**

Introduction :

The Karbis formerly known as the Mikirs are traditionally a hill tribe. But for various reasons they scattered also over to plain areas like Golaghat, Nowgong and Kamrup districts and in small patches in Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. The Karbis call themselves as 'Arleng' meaning hill dwellers. However, previous workers also defined the term 'Arleng' as simply man. In fact the word 'Arleng' is meant to be the man of Karbi tribe only. Ethnically they belong to the Mongoloid racial stock and linguistically they are included in the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan group. There exists a classification of the Karbis based on their habitation. They broadly fall into three groups namely, Chingthong, Ronghang and Amri.

The tribal women perform important roles in the socio-economic structure of their society. It is the same with the Karbi women. They are physically short and have a sturdy body with a pale yellow complexion. Most of them wear traditional dresses, which not only enhances their beauty but as well is a true representative of their exceptional weaving skill. A number of studies have been conducted on tribes of India and also of Assam, but what lack are studies on the women folk of this tribes. So the present study is an attempt at bringing forth and analyzing the various facts, which substantiates the role of Karbi women in their economy. This study is based on generalized observations of their socio-economic systems.

A quick look at the Karbi society will give an impression that the Karbi women are much better off than other tribal counter parts of India in terms of social status. The Karbis are patrilocal and patrilineal. The *piso-pangri* i.e. the marriage is socially recognized institution in Karbi society and consent from both the bride and groom's side is a must for marriage to take place. Two kinds of marriage set up are found among Karbis (i) marriage without bride price (ii) marriage with bride price. Once a girl is married she belongs to her husbands family but after marriage she retains the same title as of her own clan. Widow remarriage is widely prevalent. These simple social rules are enough to establish that they enjoy a greater degree of social freedom and are revered in their society. However a closer look reveals a life full of hardships for these women folks, mostly their economic contributions to the family is unnoticed and there is an urgent need to focus on this issue and help them to get their due recognition and make them at par with other main stream counterparts.

A number of previous studies have proved it beyond doubt that the women of the

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tribes of Northeast work harder than their men folk. The Karbi women are equal partners of their male counterparts in outdoor activities and are crucial to the growth of the local economy. Das (2001) while describing the status of Karbi women in their society wrote 'in every walk of life the females are the companies of males. Besides performing household works and taking care of the children, the women work with the men folk in clearing *jhum* fields, in collecting firewood from forest, in carrying out agricultural activities and in purchasing essential commodities from the market'. In fact, the Karbi women do all the activities in their society. They are silent performer behind the 'din and bustle' of the society.

Agriculture :

Agriculture is the main occupation of the Karbi society and about 90 percent of the population is absolutely dependent on agricultural economy. Karbis do *jhum* cultivation in the hill slopes i. e. the slash and burn cultivation. The Karbi women are active agriculturist. Most of the women perform more than 80 percent of the agriculture work. Terang (1993:41) stated that in the Karbi society the women play an important role both in home and in the field. He said, "Women are hard and arduous labourer in agriculture in comparison with men. They do all household works early in the morning, prepare food for the day and devote the rest of the work hours with heavy burden of *jhum* cultivation thus contributing helping hand to the rural economy."

The Karbi women assist the men folk in selection of seeds, land leveling, sowing, inter-cultivation and harvest and post-harvest activities. Women exclusively perform most of the post harvest activities. Saikia and Das (1998) reported that nearly 80 percent of the women showed high level of involvement in selection of seeds and cleaning of seeds. Further the study also showed that women were also highly involved in mixing of seeds (84%), broadcasting (94.11%), dibbling (92.12%), reaping of crops (98.04%), making bundles (96%), carrying crops from field (70.6%), threshing of grains (77.45%), winnowing (88.23%), storage of grains (67.65%), storage of grains for seed purpose (79.41%), drying of grains (76.47%), de-husking (79.41%) and cleaning of grains (76.47%).

Besides paddy the Karbi women engage themselves in cultivation of vegetables, roots and tubers which are found in their areas like chilly, ginger, yam, turmeric, colocasia, gingelly, papaya, pumpkin and many other vegetables. The vegetables, roots, and tubers they grow to a greater extent supplement the requirements for domestic consumption. It is also seen that the surplus vegetables produced in their fields after consumption are sold in the market.

Livestock :

As Karbis are agriculturist, livestock plays an important role in their economy. They rear pig, goat and rarely cow. Pig are also reared for offering sacrifices for pujas and for business purpose. Every Karbi woman has her own piggery and poultry. They manage

all by themselves in traditional way. Most of these products are sold by them at home or in the market and sometimes sold by their male counterpart on behalf of them.

The Karbi woman earns a lot of money by selling domesticated animals. The earnings are used to buy necessary household materials, for education of children and rest are saved for future.

Weaving :

The Karbi women are expert weavers. There is not a single woman who is not skilled in weaving. They have their own traditional loom. From the early age, they start learning their traditional skill of weaving and become more expert with their age. They protect their family from economic hardship by their skill in the craft of weaving. Terangpi (1977) described the old-age aspirations of the Karbi women '*A ladung ladung la neri mandung. Janpanthe dung dungte la nerindi mahum, Pirthak Pangreng Klung*'. That is 'my daughter will grow, she will weave in the loom and she will produce cloth for her brother's and sister's and for me'.

The weaving industry is mainly dependent on homegrown cotton and on Eri. Eri worm are reared by Karbi women and spin yarn out of cocoons. Besides weaving for men and women and household purpose they also produce clothes for marketing. Karbi shawls are popular and now a days is gaining outside market.

Apart from this major works, the business run by Karbi women for selling rice beer (*horlang*) is also note worthy. Though in the early times they used to make the liquor only for family consumption, the scenario has changed drastically now. Rice beer is now served in posh restaurants and is in taste with the general crowd. So this small scale home production is gaining field and are produced on huge scale now and is a major source of income for many households.

They are also seen collecting woods from forests and selling them in the market, which also generates income. But with the advent of cooking gas, market for woods is dying down.

Besides doing all these activities within their traditional society, it has been seen that a countable number of Karbi women are engaged in various official jobs. A Karbi woman takes greater responsibilities in her domestic affairs. They rejoice in her domination at home and here she reigns supreme.

Conclusion :

As it has been observed that life in hill terrains is hard. After every *jhum* cycle they had to search for new site for cultivation. In spite of tremendous hardship the Karbi women are still energetic. They have started to realize the importance of literacy and a major part of the women population has taken to higher studies and are performing extremely well. Now few of the Karbi women are in administrative profession, teachers, nurse and do other Government jobs. The speed of formal education is no doubt very slow in the rural hilltops, but slowly it is creeping into the society. Thus it is duty of the

concerned government as well of the general mass to help them get good education and spread the light of education to highly remote areas. More schools should be set up and one should not shy from taking up jobs in these remote helmets.

Apart from this private entrepreneurship should be encouraged among the Karbi women and co-operative societies should be built up. For example in Karbi society, the rearing of pig and poultry has been confined to women folk. They rear in traditional way, which is mostly done on small scale due to lack of money. If they receive loans to build such animal farms on a large scale, not only it will earn them money but will give them a social recognition of being a business women. But effort should not end there but they should be helped to get their products marketed as well. They should as well be trained technically and scientifically for proper maintenance of these livestock and hygiene related issues. Workshops dealing with such issues can prove to be helpful. Moreover, Government should take initiative in giving agriculture related training to the women and on implements, which are basically meant for men folk only. Our agriculture scientists should take initiatives to build equipment, which can help these women to do quality job with less effort, so that they find time for other activities like personal health and hobbies. Weaving which is a household practice among the Karbi women should also be encouraged. Efforts should be made to showcase these talented weavers in the national scenario. With fashion houses making rounds everywhere these indigenous skill can really be transformed to a blooming business. Technical improvements in the weaving industry are long awaited need for these women. Moreover industrial training schools can provide them a platform to start their business in a better fashion.

So, it is the need of the hour that the government and non-governmental organisation should made effort to give them training in improved methods to improve their working skills and earning capacity, so that they enhance their family income and get due recognition of their labour. As the status of a society is judged by the status of women in that society a crusade should be launched at grass root level to raise their standard of living, so to have a better future for all.

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RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE DEORIS

Basanta Kumar Deori**

Assam is an anthropological museum containing many socio-religious groups of people. The Deoris are one of the important social groups of Assam. Ethnically they belong to the Indo-Mongoloid race and linguistically to the tibeto-Burman family. Although the ethnic groups of Assam have merged with one another to form the Assamese nationality, yet many of them have retained certain individual cultural and social traits.

Deoris are scheduled tribes (plains) population which constitutes 1.25 percent of the total scheduled tribe population of Assam (Deori, 2003). According to the 1991 census the total population of the Deoris are 35849. The Deori population is mainly concentrated in the districts of Noth Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Sonitpur, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia.

The Deori are one of the four division of Chutiyas. These divisions are Hindu Chutiya, Ahom Chutiya, Borahi Chutiya and Deori Chutiya (Endle, 1911). There are four broad division among the Deoris namely Dibongiya, Tenga Paniya, Borgoya, Patorgoya (Deori, 2003). The Patorgoya group is traceable at present and it is presumed that the members of this group might have been amalgamated with the other existing group of the Deoris or with other communities.

All the three sections of the Deoris are still maintaining their traditional beliefs and practices. However, the influence of Vaisnava Gossain is visible in the Deori villages but trend towards traditional beliefs is still prominent (Bordoloi et.al 1987). The common place of worship among Tengapaniyas and Borgoyas sections is known as 'Than' while the Dibongiyan call it 'Midiku'.

Their chief deity is the Gira-Girachi or Bura-Buri, believed to be Lord Shiva and Parvati according to Hindu belief. Balia Baba and Kesaikhati, the son and daughter of Bura-Buri are two important or chief deities of the Deoris. Both the Borgoyas and the Tenga Paniyas can participate in the rituals of the Dibongiyan held in the temple of the Dibongiyan by their fellow groups. But strict rule of avoidance is maintained between the Tengapaniya and Borgonyas in their ritual performances in the 'Than' of Tamreswari Mat (the mother goddess of the copper temple) and Kachakhati (the eater of raw flesh), to whom human sacrifices were offered. Her temple was somewhere around Chunpura on the Brahmaputra. She was worshiped by the Borgonyas Khel (Saikia, 1976).

The Deoris have a good number of household deities. They believe that if these deities are worshipped regularly than peace and plenty will prevail upon the households. Sacrifices are offered to these deities— Bura Dangariya, Gharar Deo, Mora Achiya,

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Najaniya (Bankalet Saul), Minichi etc.

Every village has a 'Midiku' or 'Than' (place of worship) where pujas are performed. The essential items for pujas are sacrificial dao, flowers, a piece of chandan wood, copper utensils etc. The priestly functionaries include Bor Deori, Saru Deori, Bor Bharali, Barik and Randhani. In Deoris 'Midiku' or 'Than' pujas office bearers held important positions. Sacrifices of goat, duck, pigeon, hen are important part of the pujas. Rice beer (Suze) is not offered to the deities but it can be taken after the puja is over. Wednesday is the most auspicious day for worship and pujas are also performed either on Wednesday or on Sunday. The Deoridai, who by virtue of long experience are skilled in religious lores. The Deoridai perform private rituals of the households, such as Bura Dangariya, Gharar Deo, Minichi etc.

Deoris festival are observed after performing pujas in Midikus (Than). Deoris celebrate Magh Bisu, in the month of January and Bahagiya Bisu in the month of April. Some other's Hindu festival like Durga puja, Saraswati puja, Janmastami etc. have been incorporated recently into religious structured of the Deoris.

Conclusion :

Deoris still maintain their traditional religious belief and practices, culture and customs. They worship different God and Goddess. Their chief deities are Gira-Girachi, Balia Baba, Kesaikhati. The three division of the Deoris worship three different deities mentioned above. Thus, Gira Girachi, Balia Baba and Kesaikhati are worshipped by Dibongiya, Tengapaniya and Borgoyas respectively.

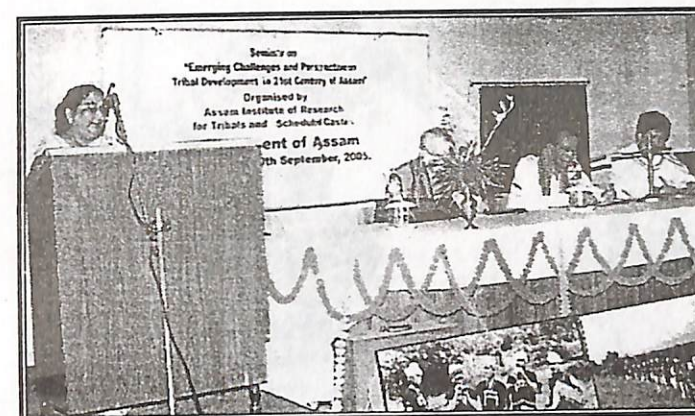
Every village has 'Than' (Midika) where pujas are performed. Sacrifies of goat, duck, pigeon, hen are important part of the pujas. Rice beer is not offered to the deities but can be taken after the puja is over. Puja is performed on Wednesday but puja can be performed on Sunday also. Wednesday is most auspicious day for worship.

Apart from Deori festival some others Hindu festival like Durga puja, Saraswati puja, Janmastami etc. have been incorporated recently into religious structures of the Deori.

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ACTIVITIES THROUGH PICTURES



Director, N. A. Hazarika
Inaugurating the Seminar



Visit of Tribal Youths with Officials to Sikkim



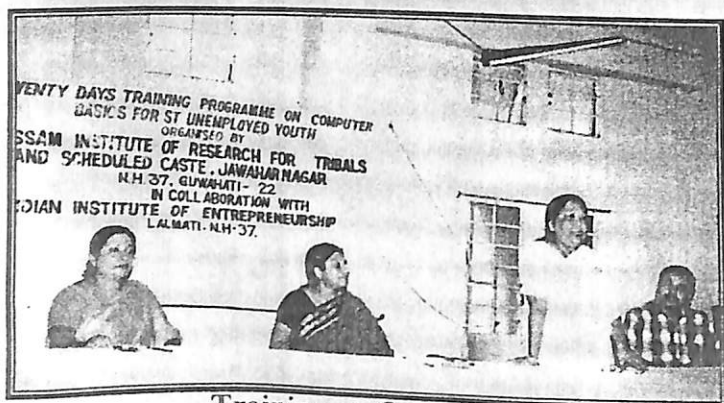
Curator and officials with
Tamang visitors at the Museum



**Bharat Chandra Narah, Hon'ble Minister
admiring the Museum Artifacts**



Training on Muga Reeling



Training on Computer Basics