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**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM**

# **BULLETIN**

**OF**  
**ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH**  
**FOR**  
**TRIBALS AND SCHEDULED CASTES**  
**GUWAHATI**



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

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**Mrs. N. A. HAZARIKA**

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**EDITORIAL NOTE**

This is the XV issue of the Bulletin of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes.

In this issue, altogether 9 (nine) articles contributed by distinguished scholars besides two articles of the Faculty Members of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes have been incorporated. All these articles reflect the life and culture of some ethnic groups of Assam.

This bulletin is published annually with a view to focus the culture, arts and crafts, history and new challenges of the tribal people to the scholars of all disciplines.

My hearty thanks and gratitude goes to the contributors of this bulletin, to the faculty members and staff of the institute for rendering assistance in bringing out the issue. I also extend my thanks to M/S. Bohniman Printers, Guwahati.

**Mrs. N. A. HAZARIKA**  
**EDITOR**  
*Bulletin of the Assam Institute of Research*  
*for Tribals & Scheduled Castes, Guwahati,*  
*and*  
**DIRECTOR**  
*Assam Institute of Research for*  
*Tribals & Scheduled Castes, Guwahati-22*

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# FOLKLORE AND ORAL HISTORY OF THE RABHAS : A STUDY ON LEGEND AND BALLADS

Dr. Malina Devi Rabha  
Lecturer, Deptt. of Assamese  
Bikali College, Dhupdhara  
Pin : 783123

## INTRODUCTION:

The science which studies the expression, in popular beliefs, instructions, practices, oral literature and arts and pastimes, of the mental and spiritual life of the folk, the people in general, in every stage of barbarism and culture is called folklore<sup>1</sup>. It refers to all those components which make part of the traditional and environmental equipment of the people. Folklore is the expression of life and thought<sup>2</sup>.

Oral history has been an integral ingredient of the cultures of all societies throughout human history<sup>3</sup>. Myths, legends and folklore have been accepted as three basic components of oral history.

Like other ethnic groups of the North East India and that of Assam, the Rabhas are also the tribe having their own distinct languages, literature and culture which they use to express through mythology, ballads, songs, proverbs etc. The society of the community has rich folklore and oral history which passes from generation to generation. The Rabhas having seven clan (Thal or Khel) such as Rangdani, Pati, Maitory, Kock, Dahuri, Bitilia and Sunga use to follow different deities. Among these sections there are some affinity of structure in folk culture and literature

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1 Wright, A.R., 1928 : English Folklore, p.7.

2 Goswami, P., 1960 : Ballads and Tales of Assam, Gauhati University Press, p.,2

3 Datta, Birendranath, et al. 1994 : A Handbook of Folklore Materials of N.E. India, p.36



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### **Rabha legend :**

The legend refers to oral chronicals in prose or verse which transmitted traditionally from one generation to another. The Rabha folk life is endowed with rich legend or legendary histories. It may be noted that due to lack of sufficient written history of the Rabhas, the community depends solely on legends as source of socio cultural and economic studies.

The legends of the Rabhas can divided into a number of kinds such as

- (i) Mythological legend.
- (ii) Rabha local legend.
- (iii) Rabha explanatory legend.
- (iv) Rabha romantic legend.
- (v) Baran or clan based legend.
- (vi) God/Goddesses or worship related legend; and
- (vii) Natural creation based legend.

#### **(i) Mythological Legend :**

Legends which are based on Mythological beliefs are called Mythological legend. Legendary history like Dadan-Maru-Khetri, Naluwa-Chaluwa. Rondona-Chandone etc. may be considered as mythological legend.

#### **Dadan-Maru-Khetri legend :**

The Rabhas believed that Dadan the major general of Bana King of ancient Sonitpur was the first and the foremost king of the Rabhas defeated in the battle of puran famous Hari-Harar Juddha. When he was a king he invaded small kingdoms situated in the south eastern parts of Sonitpur. The king Dadan with the companion of some people of different baran or clan like Sursang, Rongdan, Tengton and Pam went to Bhutan for help and shelter but the Bhutanese king refused to give shelter and help so he had to come back towards the Brahmaputra valley and settled down at Bagbor hill near Barpeta. The king was accompanied by his wife Tobarani, sister 'Soso' and 'Soso's daughter along with his husband Marukhetri, the Major General. After living a few years at Baghbor hill he came towards Saulkocha river bank

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and through Jogigopha-Panchratna crossing the Brahmaputra river he again took rest at Hashila 'beel' near Goalpara and at last established kingdom at Dadon hill near Lakhimpur. The Rabhas lived happily and peacefully under the king Dadan. Unfortunately the kingdom was smashed by Chamkrong and Banakrong. The strongman Dadan was killed by the army of Arimoto king of Komatapur while he was without arms and alone. According to the legend, Marakhetri was a Khatria and got married one of the Dadan's niece. As he got married a Rabha girl without his mother's permission he had to face curse and killed in the seventh war<sup>4</sup>.

Besides this popular mythological legend there are also the legends of 'Naluwa-Chaluwa' and Rondona - Chandona in which the sources of migratory history of the Rabhas are found.

#### **(ii) Rabha Local Legend :**

There are several interesting local legends which have been a source of the accounts of the places where the Rabhas were supposed to inhabit. Among these mention may be made of the places and their importance in the Rabha Society like Mechpara, Rongdam, Athiabar, Kulung(Luki), Boko, Bongaon, Bogai, Pantang, Jalukbari, Beltola, Raniduwar etc<sup>5</sup>. Besides Chandradinga, Trikkikila, Paglatek, Mandahati (Garohills) from Simsang in the south of Meghalaya to the north upto Tammrangapa (i.e. Brahmaputra) in the west upto Hahahutu temple to Nilgiri - Nichigiri (Nilachal Kalapahar), the Rabha had their predominance which have been in the purana and The Garo's written by Playfair and the Ethnic affinities of the Rabhas' by Dr. B.M.Das.

#### **(iii) Rabha Explanatory Legend :**

The Rabhas have many interesting explanatory legends. Among them the legend of Kumbarchung - a rich but, miser persons llegend may be mentioned. Besides, 'Rabha Jatir Utpatir. Kahini', "Biswa Barmanda Sister Kahini" are also remarkable.

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4 Das, B.M. 1960 Ethnic Affinities of the Rabhas and Pam, Pasanna, Kumar, 1957, Dadanbir, A mythological drama which is published by Rabha Bhasa Parishad, Dudhnoi, 2000.

5 Rabha, Dhananjay, 1998 : Rabha Janajitir Chamu Itihas, AIRTSC, p. 161.

#### (iv) Rabha Romantic Legend :

Dadan - Daimukehi's love story is a very popular legend of the Rabhas. According to this legend once the king Dadan was going for hunting and suddenly met a beautiful girl named Daimukehi and fell in love but their love could not succeed as Daimukehi was obstructed by her father. Similarly, Dadan had curse. Ultimately the helpless Daimukehi transformed her self into a stone statue at Mogho near Baida and Dadan committed suicide Bedorba near Baida

#### (v) 'Barai' or Clan Based Legend :

In the legends like Nanindar-Fanindar, Tore-Toshre, Sisu-Ginal (porpoise and crocodile), the Rabhas find the sources of their 'Baraihuri' or clan system.

#### (vi) God/Goddesses and Worship Related Legend :

In this type of legend various god, goddesses, spirits form of prayer and worships which the Rabhas follow, have been included. Among them a few popular legends like Pangba bai, Rantak (Lakshmi), Jakuwadeo, Mairabai, Kushambai, Jaglang, Memong (spirit) are worth mentioning.

#### (vii) Natural Creation Based :

This type of legend is associated with the Rabhas and they believed that each and every nature of creation of God has its own meaning associated with the Rabhas.

For example, Chong Janong (a weeping wild insect), Kumti and Mokora etc. have the meaning and belief related to the Rabhas.

#### Chong Janong :

Once two Rabha sisters were living together. The elder sister one day brought a basketful of corn (millet) and advised her younger sister to dry up in the sunlight and husk so as to prepare 'Topola pitha'. Then the elder sister went for fishing. After coming back from fishing she found very small quantity of pitha and rebuked her younger sister that she had consumed the 'pitha' but she denied. The elder sister became furious and lost control on

herself and killed the younger sister by cutting her stomach but did not find anything inside. Since such pathetic event the sister took the soul of wild insect which weeps during sunlight in the season of millet harvesting<sup>6</sup>.

#### Ballad :

Ballad may be defined as 'a short narrative poem' adopted for singing, simple in plot and material structure, divided into stanza and characterised by complete impersonality as far as the author or singer is concerned.<sup>7</sup>

#### Rabha Ballad :

Depending on subject matter or the theme of the story Rabha ballad can be subdivided into a number of groups, such as (1) legendary ballad, (2) Etiological ballad (3) Mythical ballad and (4) Realistic ballad.

However in the true sense of the terms the Rabha ballads are very difficult to identify and group as above.

#### (1) Legendary Ballad :

Among the ballads characterised by folk historical or legendary elements of the Rabhas mention may be made the stories that of the great king Dadan, Sati Dumukuchi, Kumbaichung, Naluwa-Chaluwa, Rondona Chandone, Marukhetri-Kurukhetri etc.

#### Dadani Chaychari : (Dadan's Ballad)

The story of the king Dadan is one of the significant stories of the Rabhas. According to the legendary belief though the King Dadan had been living happily with his subject subsequently he became unacquainted with many of his clans as they were migrated to different locations. In the meantime two kings of his dynasty namely Changkrong and Bankrong jointly attacked Dadan's kingdom and smashed. In the ballad the precarious condition of the king Dadan and his people have been depicted as follows :

'He'g Chamkrong king 'He'g Bangkrong king,

What bend of word do you apply, what word knot do you tie

6 Informer Dr. Upen Rabha Hakacham, Chatabari, Lakhipur, Goalpara.

7 Goswami Prafulla Dutta, 1960, Ballads and Tales of Assam, Ghy-14, p.7

Seeing leading a happy life, sleeping  
 In what matter is Dadan guilty  
 Of which forest storm's king 'He' chamkrong  
 By what device 'He' Bangkrong king  
 Dadan's near and dear  
 Have been smashed today  
 Ousting the king with all the relatives  
 In the dark night  
 Attach and arrest as if your own land  
 Hai! chamkrong you are very skillful  
 Hai! Bangkrong you are very cunning  
 Rondona-chandoni chaychari  
 "He Rondona Ah'he Chandana oh  
 Henarong kijora Raye  
 Bishina Nil-Nichmani Oh'  
 Rakhate Prange Pronge Rengjo?"

[Meaning Oh! Randona-Chandonai! Accompanying with a dog where are you going? Your wives have become homeless.<sup>8</sup>

## (2) Etiological Ballad :

Generally the various elements related to the history of the creation of universe like birds, insects, plants, animals etc. which are depicted in the form of song is called etiological ballads.

Naluwa-chaluwa's story is a glaring example of etiological ballad prevalent among the Rabhas. Of course, these are two separate legendary history related to naluwa-chaluwa.

## (3) Mythical Ballads :

When ballads are composed based on unnatural or supernatural elements they are called mythical ballads<sup>9</sup>.

The Baiku festival which is prevalent among the Rabhas is basically a folk dance and song combined form of presentation. In the last month of

8 Rabha Rajen, 1974, Rabha Janajati, p.131.

9 Sarma Nabin, 1997 Loko Sanskrit, Chandra Prakash, p.2

May and first week of June it begins. The onset of spring season depicts a new look of nature. The very form of nature in this season and at the beginning of new sowing of seeds by keeping a cordial relation with community life and wishing a happy and prosperous year khokchima bairangiri, nairangsi, etc. Gods are exclusively worshipped in memory of king Dadan and Marukhetri and in that occasion the praiseworthy 'haimuru' song is sung. In this ballad 'Hai-maru ha', 'Haimaru ha' is repeatedly sung and hence the name is given after so<sup>10</sup>.

## (4) Realistic Ballad :

The ballad which reflects a realistic attitude to life and may describe ordinary affairs, even love can be termed as realistic ballad.<sup>11</sup> The love story of a legendary figure of Rabha Jogen Bantho with Tansan Darai is an appropriate example of such ballad.

### A stanza of Jogen Bantho-Tansan Dorai Ballad

" Jogen Bantho Rengeta tomtoma motori

Tansan Dorai Khape Mongjo Akong Pani."

Meaning : "Jogen Bantho is going on 'Tomtoma (scooter) and at that moment peeping through 'Akon' (a shrub) Dorai weeps and remains heart shattered.

## CONCLUSION :

In the conclusion it may be said that the Rabhas have rich folklore and associated cultural elements. But, of course many of the components as described here are on the verge of extinction due to lack of extensive application and exercises and also due to lack of preservation. However, it may be opined that such type of oral history can be used as a story base for reconstruction of history of the Rabhas. Hence, the protection and preservation of such elements from further destructions is the need of the hour.

10 Informer Dr Upen Rabha Hakacham, Chatabari, Lakhipur, Goalpara.

11 Goswami.P. 1960, Ballads and Tales of Assam, G.U. Press. p.7.

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# CHANGING ECOLOGY AND PROBLEM OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT : A CASE STUDY OF 'NAITARA-CHAUTARA' WETLAND AND THREE FRINGING S.C.VILLAGES IN GOALPARA DISTRICT

**Dr. M. Gopal Singha**  
Sr. Lecturer, Deptt. of Geography  
Bikali College

## INTRODUCTION :

Sustainable development refers to a neo-concept of development where development can sustain without incurring maximum environmental losses. The concept was perceived during eighties. Of late the concept has evolved to such an extent that any sort of developmental issue is ought to think over the sustainability.

The ecology, which exists in an abstract form is delicate concept of all biotic and abiotic components of a particular land area. The geographical location, physiography, climatology are the basic parameters of an area for evaluation from ecological view point. The ecology, however, on the basis of the other biotic and abiotic components having certain pattern and processes of interrelation ultimately determine the future potentialities, trend and direction of ecological change. (Bhattacharjee, 1999).

The importance of environmental aspect in development is undeniable and the environmental problems are to be considered as an integral part of overall process of economic and social development (Mukherji, 1985). The

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accelerated pace of development leads to over exploitation of both renewable and non-renewable resources. This phenomenon has also led to man's interference with the ecological balance beyond the limit of natural regenerative processes which jeopardise the life support mechanism of the ecosystem. Ecologically sustainable development is to bring forth human well being and to develop the quality of life without jeopardising the life support system. The growing pressure on environment creates the problem of forest depletion, overfishing, overgrazing, erosion, desertification so on and so forth. The changing nature of environment and changing socio-cultural conditions have led to man-environment contradiction.

In the present study an attempt has been made to decipher a highly stressed eco-system of 'Naitara-chautara' which was earlier a picturesque as well as endowed with rich avifaunal resources. The paper also attempts to highlight the changing socio-cultural milieu of the scheduled caste people who have been the resource user as well as the exploiter of this wetland ecology.

## OBJECTIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY :

- (i) to study the nature of changing ecological condition of the wetland;
- (ii) to examine the socio-economic parameters of the scheduled caste people and their changing occupational structure and
- (iii) to layout the problems and prospects of rural economy and sustainable development in the context of changing ecological scenario.

The problem under study is significant from the following facts that, ever increasing pressure of human population has far reaching impact particularly on a resourceful area like Naitara-chautara wetland. The study is found to be relevant to the study area as the neighbouring fishing community having their caste-based economy is threatened due to such man-environment contradiction.

## DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY :

The primary data of the present study are collected from field survey in the villages. The observation and cross examination of the wetland as well



as the villages in the edge of the beel have been made for the last couple of years. Besides secondary data as regards the population have also been collected from the rural census report of Goalpara district.

The data are standardised and grouped systematically for better understanding of the variables under consideration.

### STUDY AREA AND ECOLOGICAL BACKGROUND :

Naitara-Chautara, a picturesque wetland is situated about 8 kms from N.H.37. It is one of the biggest wetlands in Goalpara district. The wetland lies immediately to the north of Shitolmari hillocks which was once covered with thick forest cover. It is a wetland or beel of geographical and legendary importance. The beel covers a length of about 7 km from east to west and a breadth of about one and half km. in summer season when the Brahmaputra and its tributaries are in spate. The backwater of Jaljali and the Brahmaputra 'Suti' highly influence the beel during summer. it is drained by two rivulets namely kornoi and juria coming out from the East Garo Hills of Meghalaya through Rangjuli and Dhanubhanga respectively, though the rivers have low volume of water discharge in winter season, they carry a large volume of water. The kornoi river after joining the 'beel' again drained out towards north near Kalyanpur and later joined the Brahmaputra Suti near Nagarbera. The beel is encompassed by a number of fringing villages like Tiplai, Bhakatpara (Tiplai part II), Naitar-Ulubari in the north, Ulubari Goruchatka, Panbari, Lalghat, Bagan in the south.

The beel in the recent past, happened to be of the resourceful ecological setting with vast water reserve, maximum depth, plenty of plants and micro organism, water hyacinth, lily, lotus, indigenous and exotic birds like peacock, hornbill, short necked swan, crane etc., varieties of rare species of fishes, leeches and other aquatic components.

The three scheduled caste villages located in the edge of the beel namely (i) Bhakatpara (Tiplai-III) and (ii) Ulubari-Naitar in the Northbank and (iii) Goruchatka in the south bank have been selected for study.

### SOURCE OF ECOLOGICAL CHANGE :

The pressure of ever increasing population has tremendous impact on land, water, bio-sphere and economy of the wetland. The expansion of habitable places in the wetland has led to exploitation of forest cover in the Shitolmari and Ganeshpahar hillocks and also cutting of hill slopes for quarrying and farming. The demolition of two embankments (Garkhawai) constructed during the koch kingdom who established camp near the wetland is another contributing factor of soil erosion in the area. Besides extensive cutting of earth for new farming land in the entire catchment area has led to soil erosion and siltation in the wetland. This has accentuated the problem of siltation year after year causing rise bed of the beel to the level of 10ft.

The wetland had an extensive area of about 5 sq.km in permanent waterbodies even upto a couple of decades ago and the average depth was 7 ft in winter season. But at present the average winter season depth has decreased to 4-5 ft due to heavy siltation. The present total water bodies (Jalmahal) is reported to be 107 hectares i.e 40 per cent of total area (267 hectares) and low-lying land portion is 133 hectares i.e 49.8 percent of the total area. This land area has been transformed into cultivable land for Boro and early paddy crops.

The beel has two parts-naitara and chautara. The average depth of the eastern part i.e, chautara is more than that of the western part. The waterbodies of Naitara is rapidly drying up and is completely on the verge of transformation into low-lying paddy field. (Fig-1).

The beel once endowed with rich exotic avifaunal components including migratory birds have fast losing their sight due to overfishing and poaching of birds. About 500 country boats were used for fishing and transportation purposes and about 500 fisherman were engaged in daily in this beel. During summer season the vast water bodies engulf the entire area and flooding is a common phenomenon. The Boro paddy cultivation is taking place in such a way that major portion of low lying parts of the beel have been converted into such field and the needy farmers are more interested

in agricultural activities as the production of fishes are decreasing in recent years.

### WETLAND ECONOMY :

The economy of the wetland is also changing with the changing ecological condition of the wetland. Earlier about 500 fisherman brought fish to the market and revenue collection was to the tune of Rs. 5-6 thousand per day but at present it is only Rs. 2-3 thousand.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF S.C. VILLAGES :

The villages under study are model ones for examining the man-environment contradiction and the changing ecological as well as the socio-economic structure of the people (Table-1).

Table - 1

Physical and Socio-economic characteristics of Bhakatpara, Ulubari-Naitar and Goruchatka Village

Name of surveyed village	Location	Communi-ty	No. of surveyed household	Total popula-tion of surveyed household	Household under different occupations				
					Fishing Total (%)	Agricul-ture poultry	Wage labour	Business	service
Bhakatpara	Low-lying area in Brahmaputra	S.C. (Assamese)	20	118	7 35%	4 2 20%10%	1 5%	3 15%	3 15%
Ulubari-Naitar		S.C. Namsudra (Bengali)	19	134	5 26.31%	6 31.57%	15 78.94%	1 5.26%	Nil
Goruchatka	Built-up area in Brahmaputra valley	S.C. (Assamese)	30	132	10 33.33%	4 13.33%	11 36.66%	4 13.33%	1 3.33%

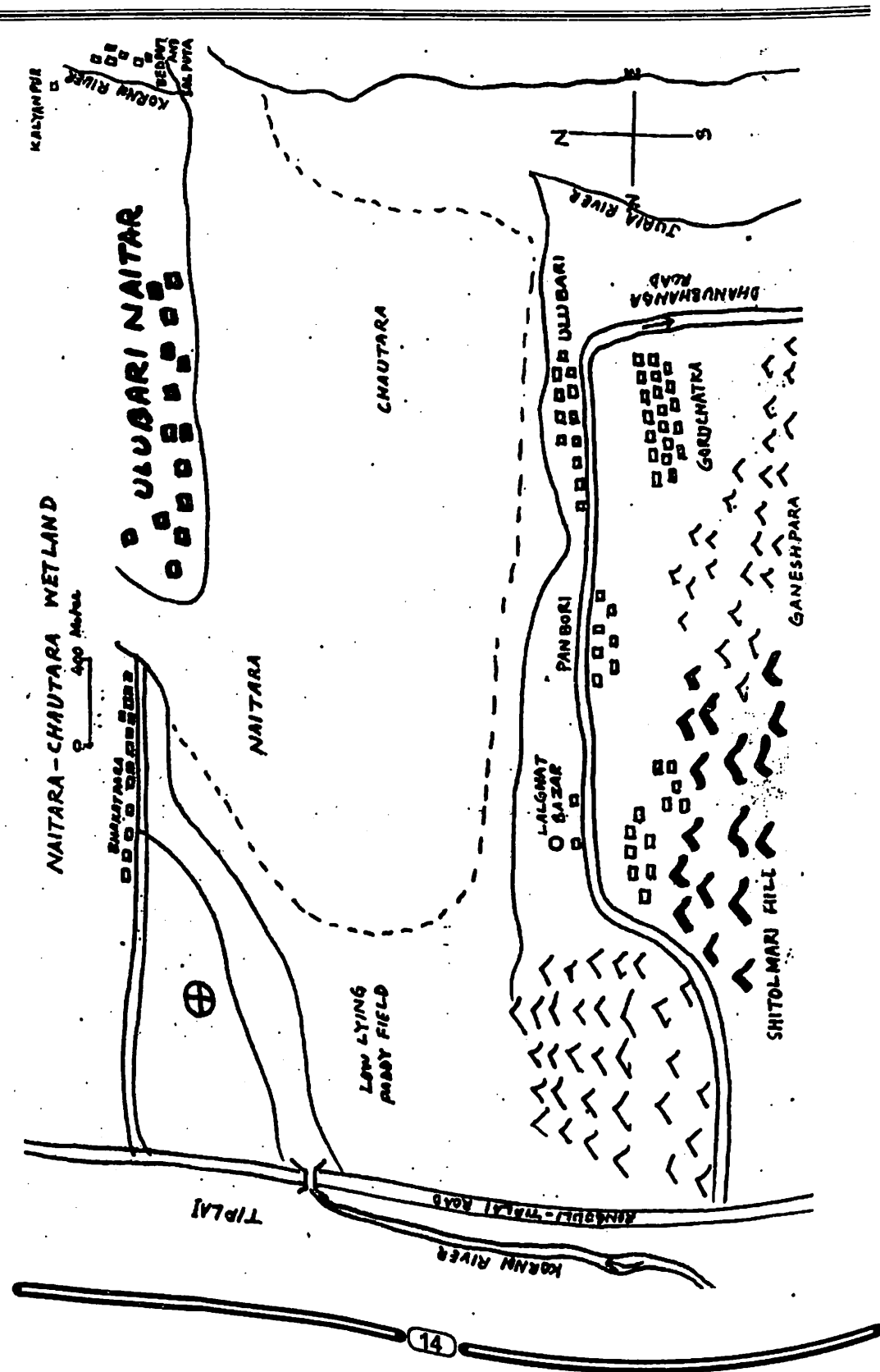
Source : Field survey, 2002

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC BASE OF THE STUDY AREA

The village Bhakatpara is a small linear pattern village situated on the norther margin of beel. The village is one of the age old village inhabited by the scheduled caste communities belonging mainly to Kaibartos. Out of 70 households a number of 20 households are surveyed in the village. The surveyed households have a total population of 118, having an average family size of 6. The village has high percentage of literates population (77.47 percent). The main occupation of the people is fishing. Another village namely Ulubari Naitar, situated in the north eastern margin of the beel is a landlocked S.C. village inhabited by "Namasudras". The village is backward in every aspect of development. The literacy rate is only 26.11 percent . Most of the households are below the poverty line. Apart from these two S.C. villages another village namely - Goruchatka is one of the S.C. villages where a major proportion of people depend on Nitara and Chautara beel for earning a living. The village is socio-economically very backward. The literacy rate of the village is 32.52 percent, which is quite below the neighbouring villages and the district.

### PROBLEM OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT :

It is seen that three S.C.villages depend solely on Naitara-Chautara beel for their sustenance. It may be noted that the fishing grounds surrounding the village have been diminishing day by day and so the villages have to seek new avenues for earning their livelihood as the fishing economy fails to support the majority. It is clearly seen that Ulubari Naitara only 26.31 percent households are now engaged in fishing. A large proportion (78.94 percent) of households have to depend on wage labour and other tertiary activities as the fish production has been decreased to a great extent. In Ulubari-Naitara the people begin to rare pig for earning subsidiary income. Besides, villages are constantly trying to convert the lowlying areas into paddy field and such fields have become boon for their earning. Hence, a problem of sustainability in the context of both ecological and economic area has emerged.



## CONCLUSION :

The above analysis clearly depicts that the wetland ecology of Naitara-Chautara has been changing due to over exploitation years together. The villagers, who are the users and exploiters of the beel have been experiencing the problem of sustainability. Besides, the problem of ecological change may create hazardous consequences in the near future. Hence, a concerted effort to check the changing ecological imbalance should be made through appropriate strategies before it is too late.

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4. **Informant** : Diganta Das, Mahaldar, 47 years, Bhakatpara, Tiplai

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# CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE TRIBALS OF ASSAM TOWARDS MODERN ASSAMESE LANGUAGE AND VOCABLES

**Sri. Pranab Kr. Phukan**  
Inspector of Statistics  
A.I.R.T. & S.C.

Dr. B.K.Kakati compares Assamese language as an island in the ocean of Non-Aryan languages prevailing in the region. Essentially Assamese is an Aryan language surrounded by Non-Aryan languages like Bodo, Rabha, Lalung, Mishng, Karbi, Dimasa, Naga dialects etc. The Non-Aryan impact over Assamese can be discussed under four major heads :

- I. Impact of the Austric language group.
- II. Impact of the Tibeto-Burmese group.
- III. Impact of the Thai language group.
- IV. Impact of the Dravidian group of languages.

The impact of Bodo culture over Assamese culture is marked considerably in the field of vocabulary.

The names of rivers, places like Bhogdoi, Mangaldoi etc. In these cases Bodo 'Dai' (Meaning water or river) was added as suffix to the root names. Many place names in Assamese are of Bodo origin. Place names like Hajo, Lumding, Haflong, Maibong, Harangajao, Dispur, Hakama, Bihampur, Kokrajhar (pronounced by Bodos as Khokrajhar) etc. are the direct products of Bodo impact. These place names too had phonological variations while penetrating the Assamese language in the different phases of linguistic and cultural history.

Ha + gajou = hagajou = Hajo

Hajo is a place full of hillocks. In Bodo, ha means land, while gajou means high. Similarly 'Lama' in Bodo means road while 'giding' means a sharp bend. Place names like Lumding may originate from 'lama' - giding'. Incidentally Lumding has a sharp bend while leading towards North Cachar hills. Some type linguistic explanations can be offered as regards the place name like Haflong. 'Ha' in Bodo means holes or tunnel. This Haflong is a place the road to which is full of holes or tunnels.

The incorporation of this Goddess in the tantric form of Hinduism took place in the distant past. The 'Hevajra Tantra' and The 'Kalika Puran' composed before 1000 A.D. contain ample references about the existence of the 'Kamakhya pitha'.

Perhaps the single deity worshipped in the shape of pudendum of the great Goddess Parvati is considered as one of the fifty one pilgrimage centre of sakticult through out length and breadth of India.

The characteristic Socio-cultural and political features of Assam have in fact evolved with contributions of all Scheduled Tribes of Assam who preferred to make Assam their home land and have largely merged their distinct identities into common Assamese nationhood. In the late medieval period the Bodos along with Austric and Aryan migrants of the valley formulated unified and integrated cultural pattern called Assamese. Mongolian elements were intrinsically worn the linguistic pattern. Acharyya Suniti Kumar Chatterjee observes, "This can be synthesis of culture and fusion of races in the formation of the great nation which is characterised like a cut gem by many facets among which the North-east frontier facet is the most remarkable."

Dr. Bani Kanta Kakati, one of the pioneers in the linguistic and analytical studies has mentioned elaborately about the tribal elements in Assamese language from different angles viz. phonological, morphological and lexical. For instance the Assamese earthen jar called 'Tekeli' has been named after Bodo-Kachari word 'tingkhili' and Garo word 'Tekli'. Assamese word 'Dalang' (Bridge) has its roots in Bodo prakit 'Daalang' and 'Jalang'. 'Aapaa' a kamrupi equivalent of the Assamese word 'Loraa' (Boy) has its roots in Kachari 'Aaffa' and 'Chutia' 'Aappa'. Various authors dealing with linguistic research have

opined that Assamese language has a good number of Bodo words. Renowned Linguist Dr. Pramod Chandra Bhattacharyya, who conducted an in-depth study regarding the close affinity of the Bodo and Assamese languages which have tribal origin. Therefore, it may be said that Assamese language has at least twenty percent words of tribal origin.

The greatest contribution of the Indo-Mongoloid people made a reservoir in Assam is that they brought into N.E. India, the technique of food production by plant cultivation and domestication of animals.

Besides, names of rivers and places there are many other words which are commonly used both by the Bodos and the Assamese (Especially of Kamrupi dialect). Some examples are given below for reference.

Bodo	Assamese	English
Anali	ānālī	troubles
ābrā	ābrā	foolish
Tāngon	tāngon	beating stick
Dangri	dāngari	Cattle fodder
Bouthar	batār	More specially pieces of hay
Udāng	udāng	weather
Duli	duli	open
		bowel for storing the paddy or
Phāgla	pāglā pāgal	pulses
Monā	monā	Mad
Mai	mai	bag
Belbung	belbung	Agricultural implement
Bundā	Bundā	Foolish
Bundi	bundi	he-cat
Galkher	galkhir	she-cat
Narphina	nārpaina	milk
Dāmbā	dambrā	very weak
Themā	temā	he-calf
		small box

The rivers like Dihing, Dihong, Dikrai, Disang etc. contains the Bodo word 'Di' means water.

The Koches who were a powerful Bodo group ruled for a little more than a century in the Western part of the region towards the early part of the sixteenth century A.D. To day a substantial portion of the Assamese population belongs to this community and many Assamese cultural elements are enriched by the total cultural assimilative character of the Koches. The cult of the mother Goddess Kamakhya developed in this region from the Koch king - Naranarayan and his able brother Chilarai's patronage.

They are in all likely-hood the first cultivators of rice in India. They introduced for the first time in India the art of rearing silk worm as well as spinning and weaving of Silk clothes.

Hajongs are also one of the important tribes of Assam. They are inhabiting in South-west Assam and scattered from Lakhimpur to Mankachar in Goalpara district of Assam. Hajongs are Khatriya by birth. According to some scholars Hajongs were expert cultivators and so the contemporary Garo people used to call them Hajong. In Garo language 'Ha' means earth 'jong' means worm.

According to renowned anthropologist Mr. B. C. Allen, Mr. Dalton, Mr. R.S. Endle, Hajongs are a branch of great Bodo group of people Mr. Dalton also opines that Hajongs and Rabhas are a branch of Bodo-Kacharis and they have significant relations with Garos.

Hajongs have their own language (dialect). According to some scholars the name of their language (dialect) is 'JHARUA'. In some specific areas their language is like Assamese (Kamrupi) and in some other areas Bengalee mixed Assamese like Goalpara language.

There are significant similarities between the words of 'JHARUA' and Assamese language some examples are given below.

## NOUN

### Assamese

Lorā  
Showali  
Shāgāli  
Sāp  
Sāk  
Sutā  
Ghar  
M'ah  
Kathāl  
Kal  
Dail  
Chāul  
Pāchi  
Haladhi  
Akāsh  
Barashun

### Hajong

Hāpāl  
Gābhur  
Hagal  
Hāp  
Sak  
Huta  
Ghar  
Bhāsh  
Kahal  
Kalā  
Dail  
Chail  
Paili  
Hiladi  
Din  
Megh

## ADJECTIVE

### Assamese

Bhal  
Beyā  
Dustā  
Ronga  
Bogā  
K'ola  
Besi

### Hajong

Bhālā  
Nithā  
Chuitān  
Rāngā  
Dhālā  
Kalā  
Bākhār, Tānti

## PRONOUN

### Assamese

Môr  
Tôr  
Tār  
Amār  
Tomālôkar  
Teolokar

### Hajong

Môlā  
Tôrā  
Alā  
Amloi  
Tumloi  
Umloi

(Some word in case of masculine or  
feminine gender)

## WORDS OF RELATION

### Assamese

Deutā  
Mā  
Dādā  
Bhani  
Khuda  
Māmā  
Phei  
Māhi  
Jetha  
Sahur  
Sahu Aai

### Hajong

Bābā  
Mayai  
Dādā  
Baini  
Kākā  
Māmā  
Pupu  
Māhi  
Dado  
Ahur  
Ahuri

The gender, i.e. masculine and feminine is indicated in Assamese by some suffixes like a, I, ini etc. But using the words indicating masculine or feminine as adjective to identify the gender in Assamese is the result of tribal contact.

For instance, Matā Hati, Maiki Hati, Mata Para, Maiki Para, Mata Mah Maiki Mah, such use of Mata 'male' and Maiki 'female' is the result of tribal language influence.



The formative suffix *-ma*, a Boro suffixes indicating big is also used in Assamese as in *ballam*, 'a spear' *'Jalam'* shining decoration. *Pekham* 'spreadig' plumage in dancing of pea cock, *beham* 'lazy' etc. Another Boro formative suffix '*sa*' indicating small/little is also incorporated in Assamese as in *Kalea* 'blackish' *bogea* 'whitish', *dhepca* 'little flat' etc. this *-Sa* or *-Ca* is further extended to *cia/ciya* in Assamese, e.g. *daheciya*/half-mature/half-ripe, *kereciya* 'slanting' etc. There are some verb roots in Assamese borrowed from the Boro language. As for example, *celek* to lick, *jira* to refresh oneself, *rep* to cut with drawing strike, *agach* to obstruct, *bhekur* 'to get mouldy', *Cep* 'to squeeze', etc. similarly some compound verb-roots are formed with the Boro verb roots such as, *gaba - mar*, 'to embrace, *bic di* 'to make way through a crowd by displacing people, *Khem bandh* 'to get into a lump' etc. In these verb-roots the first part is Boro origin. In Boro there is no *p* and *t* which are pronounced as aspirated *ph* and *th*.

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## PLANTS AS INTEGRAL PART OF THE GARO ETHNOMEDICINAL SYSTEM

Birinchi K. Medhi<sup>1</sup>  
Rameeza Hasan<sup>2</sup>

### PRELUDE

Ethnomedicine has long been recognised as an important field of Anthropological research. Anthropological study of disease and illness from ecological and epidemiological points of view to understand the distribution of diseases and their relationships with socio-cultural and environmental factors have helped in the emergence of several ideas and formulations of present day Medical Anthropology. In every society, particularly in small-scale societies, the people are found to have certain cultural mechanisms or practices to keep their health in good condition. The curative properties of biological materials, particularly of plant species, are said to have been known to human beings since the period of their emergence. The primitive man must have used as therapeutical agents and remedial measures those things, which he was able to procure most easily. There is no authentic record of medicines used by the primitive man. The knowledge of medicinal plants must have been accumulated in the course of many centuries (cited in Kirtikar et.al., 1975 : XVII-XVIII). In all the early civilizations there were much interest in drug plants. In China as early as 5000-4000 B.C. many drugs were in use. The Assyrians, Babylonians and ancient Hebrews were all familiar with their use. The Greeks were familiar with many of the present day drugs, as evidenced by the works of Aristotle, Hippocrates, Pythagoras and Theophrastus. The Romans were less interested in healing plants. However in 77 B.C., Dioscorides wrote his great treatise *De Materia Medica*, which dealt with the

1. Professor, Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, Guwahati - 14, Assam
2. Junior Research Fellow, Gauhati University, Guwahati - 14, Assam.

nature and properties of all medicinal plants known at that time. In India, the earliest mention of the uses of plants, especially for medicinal purposes is found in *Rigveda*, perhaps the oldest repository of human knowledge having been written between 4500 and 1600 B.C. Panini (7<sup>th</sup> century B.C) coined the word '*dravya*' (drug) from the nominal root '*dru*' (plant). In the work that followed, particularly *Ayurveda*, the properties of various drugs in detail were scripted. Later during the Buddhist period, considerable progress was made and medicinal plants were cultivated under direction of highly qualified specialists.

The medicinal value of plants have been discussed by different groups of anthropologists round the globe in their study of ethnomedicine. It is greatly to the credit of the people of India that they were acquainted with a far larger number of medicinal plants than the natives of any other country on the face of the earth. The importance of studying the subject of Indian medicinal plants has been insisted on by several writers. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, John Flemming contributed a valuable paper on the medicinal plants of India. *Materia Indica*, was a remarkable work published by Ainslie in early part of the twentieth century (cited in Kirtekar et.al, 1975 : XVIII-XXXIII). A modest attempt have been made in this paper to give an overall idea of different plants used by the plain dwelling Garos of Assam to prevent and cure diseases and illness.

Data have been collected for this paper from five Garo dominated villages namely Nisangram, Bakrapur, Kasumari, Daglapara and Khalkapara situated within a radius of ten-kilometers of Dudhnoi, a township of Goalpara district, Assam. The village Nisangram is divided between the states, Assam and Meghalay. Since the present paper is an attempt to study about the use of plants in ethnomedicinal practices of the Garos in plain areas of Assam only that aprt of Nisangram have been taken into consideration in the study. All the remaining studied villages are located in the plain areas of Assam.

The reasons for selecting only the Garos of plain areas are many. Originally the Garos who refer themselves as *Achik Mande* (meaning hillman)

were hill dwellers. The Garo society is matrilineal and they sustanied their livelihood principally through shifting cultivation. With the passage of time many Garos migrated and settled in the plain areas and came into contact with Assamese Hindus. As a result they have adopted settled agricultural practices. Adoption of settled agriculture greatly improved their economy and eventually the population of the Garos residing in plain areas also increased. It is pertinent to note here that Garo culture have much similarity with Assamese Hindu culture. Many Assamese Hindu cultural traits have percolated to the Garo culture due to long cultural contacts between the two societies. Instances like use of same type of agricultural implements for cultivation by both societies is a concrete example of the similarties in both the cultures. Traditionally the Garos were animistic; however, all Garo families living within the territorial jurisdiction of Assam have accepted Christianity. But their conversion to Christianity does not prevent them from practicing some of the traditional religious rites and uphold the religious beliefs. *Wangala*, the greatest harvesting festival is still celebrated in honour of *Saljong*, the Sun God.

## GARO CONCEPT OF MEDICINAL PLANTS

'Human ecology is concerned with the broad setting of man in his environment'. Human beings have been in close interactions with nature from the very early period of their existance. With many different kinds of pursuits man has to look forward to nature even today. The reciprocal relationship between plants and human beings of various levels of culture is not only an age old feature but it also provides us an easy understanding of socio-economic and cultural bondage that exists between them. Man has been using plants since time immemorial, the importance and uses of plants, however varied from time to time as also from human society to society as the knowlegde about plants, their parts and contents varies.

Ill-health is a universal human experience. Bit, the distribution of diseases in kind and magnitude varies from society to society and this variance

could be explained with the help of different biological, ecological and socio-cultural factors (cited in Rajpramukh 1998 : 191). Among the Garos of the studied areas there exists a certain set of beliefs about the nature of causation of diseases and their treatment. There are many diseases, which according to them are caused by natural factors. They talk much about the potency of certain specific herbs in curing certain specific diseases. The use of plants in an attempt to cure diseases and relieve physical suffering was hence known by them for a long time. The experienced traditional medical practitioners of each of the studied villages know at sight, classifies and utilizes the various medicinal plants, herbs, barks, fruits and leaves of trees and plants, and other material ingredients that constitute the chief source of basic ingredients in Garo ethnomedicine.

Many Garo ethnomedicine men and mid-wives who mainly assist womenfolk during child-birth have gained reputation in their society as specialists. These specialists accept whatever remuneration they get for their services but they never demand anything. Although they are not fully professional, they do earn nominal amounts from such part-time practices. Traditionally they do not have distinct social position among the Garos. Their helpful assistance and services rendered are however always acknowledged with gratitude among all sections of the Garo community. Whether or not the healing powers of the folk medical expert is effective depends on as many variables as our therapeutics. Failure to achieve a cure does not necessarily diminish the prestige of the folk medical expert, just as unavoidable failures do not destroy the prestige of our medical practitioner.

There is a wide scope for liberal and innovative use of traditional medicinal knowledge known by the Garos. Usually a few medicinal ingredients are mixed together at different quantities to prepare a medicine to cure a particular disease. Individual ethnomedicinal practitioner works out his/her own formulae of combination and proportion at which different medicinal ingredients should be mixed with. A list of medicinal plants known to them have been presented in the table that follows.

Table 1 : Medicinal use of plants known to the Garos of the studied areas

Sl. No.	Name of plant			Plant portion	Form of medicine
	Garo	English	Botanical		
I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1	Ambare Rongthong	Hogplum tree	<i>Spondias pinnata</i>	Fruit and bark of the tree	(a) Curry prepared from the fruit is taken during indigestion. (b) Paste of the bark is consumed with water in Typhoid. (c) Paste of the bark used as a medicine to cure excess bleeding in women after child-birth. (d) Raw juice extracted from the paste of the bark is given to drink when women suffer from puerperal fever.
2	Amolkhi	Emblic Myrobalan	<i>Phyllanthus embilica</i>	Fruit	(a) Raw juice is consumed in an empty stomach to reduce hair-loss or alopecia. (b) Fruit is taken during indigestion.
3	Anarosh	Pineapple	<i>Ananas comosus</i>	Tender leaves	(a) Decoction of the juice extracted is used to cure upset stomach. (b) The juice extracted from the paste of the leaves is used to cure worm infestation and vomiting in children.
4	ChengTamarind	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>		Leaves and roots	(a) The juice extracted from the paste of the leaves and roots is used for removing poison.
5	Eching	Ginger	<i>Zingiber officinalies</i>	Rhizomes	(a) Paste is applied on forehead in headache. (b) Juice extracted is mixed with honey and taken in coughs.



I	II	III	IV	V	VI
6	<i>Genda</i>	Marigold plant	<i>Tagetus patula</i>	Leaves	(c) Juice is given to drink in stomachache and indigestion. (d) A piece of rhizome is used as one of the ingredients to prepare a medicine for curing heaving sweating in persons.
7	<i>Gol morich</i>	Black pepper	<i>Piper nigrum</i>	Seeds	(a) Leaves are crushed and applied in cuts and bruises. (a) Seeds boiled with water and consumed every night to cure cough. (b) Paste is also consumed with water in cough. (c) Seven seeds dried and grounded to powder and boiled with water is given to drink in Tuberculosis. (d) Decoction of the seeds along with other medicinal plants proves effective for constipation. (e) Seeds are one of the ingredients to prepare medicine in cases of difficulty in expulsion of placenta in women after child-birth. (f) Seeds are also one of the ingredients in preparing the medicine to cure attack by spirits.
8	<i>Holdi</i>	Turneric	<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Rhizomes	(a) Raw juice is given to drink in case of worms. (b) Raw paste mixed with honey is applied to cure soreness of tongue in children. (c) Hot paste is applied over the affected area in sprains.

I	II	III	IV	V	VI
9	<i>Kapol/Silkha</i> Myrobalan	Chebulic	<i>Terminalia chebula</i>	Fruit	(a) Paste of fruit consumed with water in blood dysentery. (b) Paste of the fruit applied over the affected area in bone fractures and wrapped with a piece of cloth. (c) Fruit is used as one of the ingredients for curing heavy sweating in persons.
10	<i>Kompiram</i>	Guava	<i>Psidium gujava</i>	Tender leaves	(a) When ulcers occur in the month due to Typhoid a paste of the leaves mixed with honey is applied over the bruise or ulcer. (b) The leaves along with other ingredients are made into a paste and placed on an old one paisa coin and heated with a little water before given to drink. This medicine is given to drink twice a day in case of excess bleeding in women after child-birth.
11	<i>Manamuni</i>	Indian Pennywort	<i>Centella asiatica</i>	Entire plant	(a) Juice extracted from the paste is taken in indigestion and diarrhoea. (b) Paste is applied on forehead in headache. (c) Juice extracted from the paste applied in droplets in eye diseases
12	<i>Nim</i>	Margossa tree	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Leaves and bark	(a) Bathing with water to which the leaves have been added cures body itches. (b) The paste prepared from the bark is used as a medicine in throat cancer.
13	<i>Norsing</i>	Curry patti	<i>Murraya Koenigii</i>	Leaves	(a) A poultice of the pounded leaves mixed with coconut oil and applied over the affected area in case of sprains.

I	II	III	IV	V	VI
14	<i>Medipol</i>	Papaya	<i>Carica papaya</i>	Fruit and latex	(b) Curry prepared consumed to cure loss of appetite. (a) The fruit is consumed in cases of constipation. (b) Latex is used as a pain reliever. (c) Latex is applied over the affected area in case of dog bite.
15	<i>Phoron da</i>	Castor plant	<i>Ricinus communis</i>	Leaf	(a) The leaf is heated over the fire and applied on the affected area in case of mumps.
16	<i>Sokchuan</i>	Devil's tree	<i>Alstonia scholaris</i>	Roots and gum of the tree.	(a) The raw juice extracted from the paste prepared from the roots is applied in droplets in the nose in sinusitis. (b) Juice extracted from the paste of the roots is used to cure urinary tract infections in man. (c) The gum/latex is consumed by barren women during mensuration for effective results. (d) Juice extracted from the paste of the roots mixed with the paste of a few cloves, cinnamon and water is to be consumed every day in empty stomach to cure oral cancer. (e) The same paste mixed with coconut oil is applied with cock's feather over the affected areas in oral cancer.
17	<i>Ta'aTaro or Arum</i>		<i>Alocasia esculens</i>	Leaves, roots and branches	(a) Stem of the arum is broken into two and the gum is applied in cuts to stop bleeding. (b) Skin of branches is wrapped in fresh cuts to stop bleeding.

I	II	III	IV	V	VI
18	<i>Therek Hatiya</i>	Plantain plant	<i>Musa musacea</i>	Entire plant along with the flower of plantain.	(c) When one side of the mouth becomes crooked or deformed a paste made of the entire plant is applied from the middle of the forehead to that side of the face which is not deformed. The paste is changed every-day for a week for effective results. (a) The flower of plantain is fried till black and mixed with the paste prepared from the plants skin and water. This paste is applied with the help of a raddish both externally and internally in case of piles. (b) Skin of the flower of plantain is one of the ingredients to prepare the medicine for puerperal fever.
19	<i>Tuloki</i>	Sacred Basil <i>orotissimum</i>	<i>Ocimum</i>	Leaves	(c) A piece of cloth dipped in water mixed with locally prepared alkali is applied on forehead to reduce body temperature in fever. The cloth is changed at frequent intervals. (a) The juice extracted from the paste of the leaves is mixed with honey and taken during coughs. (b) Drops of the juice extracted is applied in the ears during ear pain.
20	<i>Wa'ge Bamboo</i>	<i>Bambusa tulda</i>		Tender leaves	(c) In case of soreness of buttocks in children the juice mixed with water is applied. (a) Used in preparation of amulets to be free from the influences of black magic and evil spirits.

The Garos have a vast knowledge about the medicinal value of plants, particularly of the environment, which have been derived through socialization. These plants are used not only a cure diseases but also constitute a part of their diet. Plants having medicinal value like Silkha (*Terminalia citrina*), Bhedailota (*Echiles frutescene*), Amloki (*Phyllanthus ambilica*), Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Kach Kal (*Musa sanguinea*) and many vegetables form part of their diet. Many medicinal plants not avialable in the kitchen garden of the folk medicine experts are obtained from the neighbouring jungles of Bormedang, Bangsiphal and other forest areas of Garo hills. Some of these medicinal plants are believed to possess magical properties. The amulates prepared from these plants helps a person to ward off evil spirits and avoid spirit encounter.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In an attempt to keep body and mind healthy and get rid of diseases and ailments, the Garos of the studied areas employ a large number of biological materials like plants as medicines. The Garos are traditionally well adapted to their surroundings through the use of different biological and non-biological materials. The villagers in general and the folk medical experts in particular are well conversant with the use of various biological and non-biological substances as medicines.

The Garos are at present living in a plurallistic medical situation in which allopathic, homeopathic and indigeneous system of medicine are existing side by side. As a result the contemporary range of options for treatment is wider than it was before the introduction of modern medicine. The impact of modern medical facilities on the Garo community is clearly visible in the transitional nature of the community in appropriate perspectives. In the presence of multiple treatment options factors like disease type, economy, education etc.. exert considerable influence in determining the treatment to be followed or adhered to. It has therefore been observed that the choice of treatment options are conditioned by many determinants. All Garos of the studied areas do not behave in the same manner when treatment options are concerned. But once the option has been chosen there is no controversy.

It has however been found that when effective results are not achieved

through the use of modern medicine, the Garos can always fall back upon plants for curative purposes, the therapeutic use of which are always known to them. These plants present in and around the studied areas therefore occupy an important place in their social mileu.

The importance of the use of plants in the preparation of Garo folk medicine cannot be denied. The Garos in general have a close contact with nature. They principally depend on nature for majority of the ingredients to prepare ethnomedicine. There is therefore, a need for preservation of Garo folk medicine as all the indigeneous methods are not baseless. Further research is needed to produce a more complete picture of the attributes plants must possess for users to regard them as medicinal in the larger health care system.

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## THE ROLE OF THE DEORI WOMEN IN THEIR ECONOMY

SRI BASANTA KUMAR DEORI

RESEARCH SCHOLAR, GEOGRAPHY DEPTT.  
GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

The Deoris are a Scheduled Tribe Plain found mostly in Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sonitpur, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia districts of Assam and some are also found in Iloh and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. "The Deoris belong to the Indo-Mongoloid group of Tibeto-Barman linguistic stock" (Bharali, 1985).

"The Deoris are one of the four divisions of the Chutiyas' (Bordoloi et al. 1987). These divisions are Hindu Chutiyas, Ahom Chutiyas, Barahi and Deori. They were the Priest group of the great Chutiyas community. The Deoris have been able to maintain their dialect, old tradition, Religious beliefs intact upto today.

"There are four broad divisions amongst the Deoris" (Deori, 2002). These divisions are ---(1) Dibangiya (2) Tenga Paniya (3) Borgoyan (4) Patrogoyan. The last group is not traceable and they might amalgamated with other's group's or other communities. The Deoris are bilingual, speaking both Assamese and their own tongue. The Deoris who speak their own language at home as in case of the Dibongiyan - and other's like the Borgoyan and Tenganian - who speak corrupt version of Assamese language in their households.

According to the 1971 census the total population of the Deoris are 23080. The estimated population of the tribe in March 1987 is 37,028 (Bordoloi et al, 1987).

A Deoris woman is of yellow brown complexion, moderate height, long black hair, straight, medium broad face. She wears colourful traditional artificially woven clothes show as to how the Deoris women weave traditional fine clothes.

Like the other communities, marriage is an indispensable part of the Deori Society which can be regarded as a social institution. The marriage is the accepted form of union between a man and a woman. The girl generally marry between the ages of 18 to 24. The tribe endogamous system as well as clan exogamy are strictly adhered to in respect of marriage. Once a girl marry she belongs to her husband's family. The children take their father's clan name. Divorce generally does not occur in the Deori community.

The present paper is concerned with the aforementioned activities of the Deori woman. The main objectives of the study is to analyse the role of the Deori woman in their Economy and is based on generalised observation of the Socio-Economic System.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the Deori Community. 98% of their population directly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. As agriculture is the main occupation of family the Deori woman are active agriculturists. Most of the works are performed by them such as transplantation, reaping, weeding etc. The rice are cultivated in two seasons-seeding Ahu which started from January to April and sali paddy which started in south west monsoon season from mid June to mid September.

Like other communities, Kitchen Gardening is popular among the Deori woman. They cultivate all kinds of vegetables which are found in their areas. The Deoris woman living in Remote area, feel pride today having a kitchen garden. Elderly woman spend most of her time in making a kitchen garden. They grow lady's finger, chilli, ginger, garlic, brinjal, potato, tomato etc. The vegetables are for domestic consumption some surplus vegetables produced in the garden are sold in the market.

Animal husbandary plays an important role in their Economy. They rear cow, buffalo, goat etc. Besides these they also rear pig and poultry which are mostly need for meat, offering sacrifices for Pujas and for business purpose too. The Deori woman mainly rearing poultry and piggary. Every Deori woman has her own mini piggary and poultry farm. Some of the Deoris woman rear goat which is not common in their society.

The Deori woman managed all the poultry, piggary and goats. Most of these product are sold at home by themselves and sometimes, these

products are also sold in the market by the men on behalf of woman. The Deori woman earn's a lot of money by selling domestic animals. From these money she buys ornaments, dresses and other's necessary articles.

The Deori women have a expert traditional skills in weaving. Generally all women has her own traaditional pitloom. There are not a single women or young girls who are not expert in weaving. From the early age they start learning and by the time they attain puberty they become master of weaving. They used to weaving clothes to meet his brother's, other's family member's and her own requirements.

The weaving Industry is mainly dependent on Cotton, Silk thread and partly eri thread. The Cotton and Silk thread are available in the market, but Eri is not found in the market. So, they rear Eri worm and Spin yarn out of cocoons. A eri shawl is produced in traditional hand loom from Spun of Eri which is used for more than 10 years.

A part from doing all these Economic activities, it has been seen that some of the women are working in government jobs. After all a Deori woman takes more responsibilities in her domestic works. They have to look after their family.

## CONCLUSION :

As it has been observed that life in riverine belts is hard, where nature is extremely hard to exploit. Every summer monsoon season movement of life is a hard struggle owing to floods. Inspite of tremendous hardship of the life is a hard struggle owing to floods. Inspite of tremendous hardship of the environment the Deori women where not suppress by their spirit. They started read and write presently. The speed of formal education is no doubt very slow, but they now understand the importance of education. Now, a few of the Deori women are nurse, teacher and other's government jobs. Establishment of high or higher secondary school in deori village help Deori women to get more formal education.

In Deori community, the poultry and the pig breeding have been confined to women folk. The Deori women are not accepted the promotion programme of poultry and pig keeping. So, therefore effort should be made

to give training to the rearer's women folk by the government to improve their knowledge and earning capacity and also enhance their family incomes.

Weaving will provide employment opportunities to the Deori women, if weaving is implemented in its right prospective. It also improves their family incomes by selling their traditional clothes. So, Government should pay more attention for development of their weaving Industry.

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## PITHCRAFT : THE DYING FOLKART OF SOME INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF ASSAM

NAZMEEN ANAM  
CURATOR, AIRT & SC

When one asks "what is art?" It spontaneously comes to our mind that art is an expression of the sense of beauty; and the sense of beauty is the essence of joy. The earliest evidence of man's development in the field of art and culture finds expression in the cave art of Paleolithic culture.

Social scientists Beals and Hoizer say that all human artistic creations are the products of age-long dialogues between the artist and his audience.

Pithcraft, commonly known as Sola art, is a unique art of a section of the indigenous people of Dhubri district. Pith or 'kuhila' in Assamese is a plant from which certain decorative articles are made after due processing. Gauripur of Dhubri district is the place which is famous for pithcraft. The ingeniousness of the art is reflected in the various objects made by the artisans. The products of this folk art include masks of Goddess Durga, Goddess Kali, Ashura, Ravana, etc. Another form of creative folk art lie in images of Manasa, Kartik, Gour, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Behula, Lakhinder, Chand Sadagar, Menaka, etc., which are exclusively made out of the pith plant. They are later painted with varied colours. Besides these, toys like crocodiles, elephants, tigers, cows, snakes, parrots, sparrows, etc., are also made. The artists not only limit their creativity to making toys imitating members of the animal kingdom, but their skill is manifested in making fruits like mangoes, bananas, jackfruit, pineapples, chilies, etc. out of pith. The works are so beautifully accomplished in the case of the various masks and the animal forms that they get exposure not only in the locality, but in the outside world also, during exhibitions, etc.

The process of making pith articles is quite simple. Only, the artist has to be careful and has to have ideas to give form and reality to the object. At first, the stem of the plant is collected from beels or wet, marshy lands.

Then, they are dried for about 10 days in the sunshine after which they are ready for use. These dried piths are then preserved inside the house. To give shape to different type of objects, a particular kind of sharp knife, locally called kait, is used and the most noteworthy part is that a particular kind of indigenous adhesive is made to paste or join piths together. This is made from the common edible fern called dhekia. Paint for colouring the objects is bought from the market. Nowadays, of course, other accessories like beads, suede, golden threads, etc., are purchased from markets for decorating the objects. The market value of these objects is very limited at present in comparison to the past. The trade of pithcraft takes place only in the local markets. Presently, the source of raw materials has been largely depleted as most of the marshy lands have been transformed to agricultural land. As mentioned earlier, most of the raw materials are collected from Dhaka beel, Shisa beel and Satu-batu beel of Dhubri.

Narendra Malakar, who is a skilled artiste of pithcraft, is a resident of Gauripur Rajbari. He and his brother Narendra Nath Malakar have been practicing this trade from their great grandfather's time. Their father late Sudhir Chandra Malakar was a genius in this folk art. The craftsmanship in pith work enabled him to visit faraway places. It is learnt that he represented Assam in the Indian folk culture delegation to Sweden in 1987 and to Japan in 1988. Late Uma Nath Malakar, the grandfather of Narendra Malakar, was also the recipient of many awards from the Assam Government. He had originally been a resident of Dhepdhepi of Dhubri district. But under the patronage of the king of Gauripur late Pratap Chandra Baruah, he was given shelter in the Rajbari of Gauripur near the Mahamaya and Madanmohan temples.

Pithcraft is the only occupation of Narendra Malakar's family. About 40 to 50 families in Dhepdhepi Ochita, Jhabsabari, Binnarasara, Nalia and Kalduba practice this art as their primary occupation. Golokganj, Satrasal, Agomoni, etc., are other centres of pithcraft. The uniqueness of this craft is that the artists have their own way of representing animate and inanimate objects, with their indigenous paints and adhesive. This beautiful art of pithcraft is not to be seen in other plain districts, except among the Tiwas of Morigaon, whose headgear and a few other objects are made of pith.

Many products of the pithcraft are related to the socio-religious practices of the local peoples. The item kadam, a simple arrangement of pith flowers resembling kodom is regarded as auspicious by a section of Goalporia people. They decorate their front door with it in the belief of warding off evil and

earning the goodwill of God. Again, many images and masks of pith are used in households or public worships by the local people. This reflects that traditional pithcraft will thrive due to the practice of socio-religious rituals of the people. Now, due steps should be taken to stop the extinction of the exquisite pith art and emphasis should be given in organizing workshops where traditional artisans from interior places are given opportunity to train new artisans and thus preserve this traditional and popular folk art.

**Author :** Nazmeen Anam, M.Sc., B. Ed.  
Presently serving as Museum Curator  
of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals  
and Scheduled Castes.

## CUSTOMARY LAWS AND THE GENDER ISSUES IN NORTHEAST INDIA

Vizalenu Khatso

Gender has now become a fashionable term to designate the problems related to feminism. An important expression of social inequality is gender differentiation. Studies show that the status of tribal women in general and those of the Northeast in particular is higher than that of women in caste societies but they are not equal to men. Tribal customary laws seem to legitimise discrimination against them. That is what we are trying to find out in an ongoing study which this paper summarises\*. It is being done among the Adibasi and Dimasa of Assam, the Aka of Arunachal Pradesh, the Angami of Nagaland and the Garo of Meghalaya.

Patriarchy as an ideology and value system cuts across cultures and societies. Gender discrimination can be located in its internalisation in the socialisation processes, most of them within the family. It begins with the psychological acceptance of the father as the male head of the household but not accounting adequately for the woman's position in it. Much less is the importance given to her in their society though she plays a vital role in the socio-economic functioning of their society. But most of them are unable to assert their rightful position in the traditionally male dominated tribal society.

The relatively high status of tribal women is the context of the modernization of the tribal customary law. The first reason for their higher status is that their societies themselves were egalitarian. Secondly, women were in charge of the family economy and that turned them into economic assets. That is the reason for the bride price in some tribes and absence of any material exchange in others. For example, the Angami have neither bride price nor dowry. The Aka husband gives a certain number of mithuns to

\* Walter Fernandes, Melville Pereira and Vizalenu Khatso. 2005. Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Laws in the Northeast : A Comparative Study of Five Tribes. Guwahat: North Eastern Social Research Centre.

the woman's family. Also the Garo and the Adibasi have bride price. To be exact, bride price is a wrong term. It is in reality compensation to the family for depriving it of a worker.

The fact that the woman is not equal is seen mainly in their inheritance laws. Only among the matrilineal Garo the woman is the heiress. In practice she is the guardian of the property because any alienation or change in land use requires the consent of her uncle. Among the Angami men alone can inherit clan property. The woman may be gifted what the family has bought or what belongs to the mother. Besides, they are a terrace cultivation tribe and jhum is their secondary cultivation. So in some cases the woman may inherit jhum land but not the terraces. The Dimasa women too cannot inherit clan land. The Aka are a CPR based tribe and only have the concept of usufruct rights, not of ownership. Before the jhum season the man chooses the plot for cultivation. The Adibasi too have only male inheritance.

Some women feel that this is a moderate view and do not see any basis for the higher women's status in the tribal customary laws. So they oppose the demand of some tribes to go back to their customary law. They feel that though women have played an important role in shaping the history of each tribe, they have remained invisible in public life. For example, the customary law does not allow them to be members of the village council where all the important decisions concerning their society are taken. The husband who represents the family in these bodies does not necessarily have to consult his wife but the woman who gives the final decisions in the family is to do it after consulting her husband.

They are two sides of the same coin. The major issue today is not whether one should go back to the customary law. It is obvious that it has to be modernised and the higher status of women should be taken towards gender equality. The main question is whether the modernization of the customary laws has benefited every class of tribals, especially women. There are indications that instead of involving them in the decision-making process in the family, village and societal forums, it has restricted them to the family thus strengthening patriarchy. The study in progress indicates that the division between the family and society has spilled over to the modern systems. One of them is representation in elective bodies. Most tribal men view such a demand as a threat to what they believe to be their prerogative to acquire and retain political power. Women in their turn feel that they have achieved



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a level of progress superior to that of men in all fields of human endeavour and that they deserve to share also political power.

This male elite has taken control of all decision-making in most matrilineal as well as patrilineal tribal societies of the northeast and interprets the customary law to their own benefit. Some men in matrilineal societies are demanding a changeover to male inheritance. The administration whose value system comes from outside the region, finds it difficult to understand matrilineity and treats the man as the head of the family. That is an important tool in the strengthening of patriarchy.

That shows the need to take a new look at some modern processes. Article 39 of the Indian Constitution deals with equality in access to the means of livelihood and Article 51 (A) states that it is the duty of every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. That would be the first step towards equality. In practice many modern practices seem to do the opposite and reduce the little power that tribal women had. One sees a slow beginning of dowry among the Adibasi which is a sign of the woman's transition from being an economic asset to a liability.

So the question is not whether the man or the woman should inherit land or should be the head of the family. A process has to begin that can take the customary laws towards gender and class equality.

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## MODERNISATION AND TRIBAL WOMEN'S STATUS

Walter Fernandes

An important trend integral to the search for identity among many tribes of the Northeast is return to their past amid modernisation that some view as only negative. How does one deal with this trend? What is its impact on their communities? Is the choice between the past and the present? We tried to understand it from the point of view of tribal women in a comparative study\* of six tribes: the Aka of Arunachal, the Adibasi, Bodo and Dimas of Assam, the Garo of Meghalaya and the Angami of Nagaland. The first point that stood out is that women's status is better in the Northeast as a whole than in the Hindi heartland. In the tribal communities it is even better than in non-tribal societies of this region but women are not equal to men. All their societies, even matrilineal, are patriarchal.

The first foundation of the higher status is the clear division in their shifting cultivation societies between the family and the social spheres. Unlike in settled agriculture societies, the woman in shifting cultivation tribes was fully in charge of the family decisions and economy while the man represented the family in their society. The second foundation was community ownership of the resource. In most tribes the village council made up of men alone decided on the area to be cultivated in a given year and how much land each family would use according to the number of mouths to feed. Then the husband chose the plot. After it the woman took charge of its production. As a result, she had some control over the resource as long as it was community owned unlike in settled agriculture where the man owned the land and took all the decisions. Also the division of work tended to be more gender friendly than in settled agriculture.

The woman's status was even higher in matrilineal societies like the Garo in the sense that she was the heiress. However, decisions on its alienation

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\* Walter Fernandes and Sanjay Borbora. 2002. Modernisation and Women's Status in North Eastern India : A Comparative Study of Six Tribes. Guwahat: North Eastern Social Research Centre.

and change of land use remained with men. Some clans in tribes like the Dimasa and Rabha had double descent. Inheritance was through the male line while the clan and family name came from the mother. Some Rabha clans were matrilineal but that has changed with their contact with the "mainstream" society. Thus, the division between the family and social sphere continued also among the matrilineal tribes.

Modernisation should have built on it and taken them towards equality. In reality, the opposite seems to be happening not because of modernisation in itself but because of the manner in which it is imposed on them. Many modern inputs have pushed them into a new society without any preparation for this interface. For example, education belongs to the social sphere. So though in theory schools are open to all, in practice more boys than girls gain access to them even among the Garo. That increases men's power in patrilineal societies and begins the process of transferring it to them in matrilineal tribes. For example, some educated Garo men begin nuclear families at their marriages and speak in terms of "taking the bride home" though in their tradition the man went to his wife's house. Also the individual oriented administration that treats the man as the landowner and head even in matrilineal tribes and deals with him alone in matters concerning land use and transfer strengthens patriarchy. Among the Dimasa a few individuals have started taking control of huge tracts of land by depriving others of their share and that affects women more than men since their higher status depended on its community ownership.

This process may be modified if the tribe passes through a political process. For example, since the Angami were in the forefront of the Naga Nationalist struggle many of their young men went underground leaving both the family and social spheres in the hands of women. That is when many educational institutions were built in their area. As a result, more women than men gained access to them. Among the 68 graduate family members in our sample, 41 were women. That should have been the case among the matrilineal Garo but in practice the division between the family and society was modernised and more of their boys than girls go to school. It is seen also in the Meghalaya legislature that has only three female members though all three tribes of that State are matrilineal.

Other inputs can subvert even the political processes. For example, despite the big number of Angami female graduates out of 169 family

members holding salaried jobs mostly in the Government, only 38 are women because men are considered bread winners. The gender attitudes of the men and women of the generation that had passed through the political process were equitable but they have changed in the next generation. For example, the Naga Students' Federation is reported to have said that women cannot inherit clan land because it is against their customary law. The village Council and the elders continue to interpret their customary law in favour of men. Many educated women remain unmarried because their custom demands that the husband be better educated than the wife and there are not enough educated men among them.

That is where one needs to take a new look at the type of modernisation. Going back to the past is not the solution nor is imposition of modern inputs measures to counter their ill effects. When for example a male oriented individual based administrative system strikes at the very foundation of the woman's status in a CPR based tribe, one has to find ways of countering it. The solution is not to oppose individual ownership but to find a way or retaining the community ethos while accepting individual ownership and using it to help their societies to move towards gender equity. In other words, modernisation should go hand in hand with measures to counter its ill effects and to prepare their communities for the interface with modernity.

## CHANGING LAND RELATIONS AND CONFLICTS IN NORTHEAST INDIA

Melville Pereira

The tribal land ownership pattern in the Northeast has traditionally been communal and egalitarian. The community or chief who owned land distributed it to each family according to its need. The family had only usufruct, not ownership rights. Some tribes also had a blend of individual and community ownership. Studies indicate that the modern changes introduced into this system without protective measures have resulted in inter-tribal conflicts such as Boro-Shanthal, Naga-Kuki and others. In other words, changing land relations are basic to the conflicts in the region and the tribal communities are the worst affected by them.

This paper will share the findings of one such study\* that looked at changing land relations among six tribes viz. the Aka of West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh who are close to their tradition, the Adibasi, Boro and Dimasa of Assam, the matrilineal Garo of Meghalaya who continue to be governed by their customary law and the Rongmei of Manipur. The Aka and Rongmei are governed by their customary law but do not come under the Sixth Schedule. The Dimasa and Garo have the Sixth Schedule.

An important insight gained is the growing ambiguity that develops among the tribes around land when changes are imposed on them. Some like the Rongmei and the Adibasi and to some extent the Boro who have lost much land to conflicts or encroachment want to retain control over the little that is left and also to move away from it as a livelihood. That is not the case with the Aka and the Dimasa who live by the community based customary law. The Rongmei seem to have given up hope in land as long-term security and use it as a tool in their search for alternatives such as their children's education and jobs in the administration. Many of them sell or

\*Walter Fernandes and Melville Pereira, 2005. *Land Relations and Ethnic Conflicts : The Case of North Eastern India*. Guwahati : North Eastern Social Research Centre.

mortgage their land to earn money for their children's education or to bribe officials to get a job.

The individual orientation of the administration is another factor. It recognises the CPRs only in the Sixth Schedule areas and ignores the customary law of the others. Even in the Sixth Schedule areas the State and the financial institutions give loans and subsidies for commercial crops to patta owners alone, thus encouraging individual ownership with no protection against class formation. As a result of such modernisation without protective measures, land that was their identity has become a commodity to be sold or leased to the highest bidder. Their communities begin to lose the sacredness attached to it. One of its results is class formation in their egalitarian societies.

Another issue in the conflicts is land encroachment by immigrants who can do it with impunity because their CPR based customary law is not recognized by the State since they do not come under the Sixth Schedule. As such it is not considered land of the tribal communities depending on it. They do not have a right over it under the individual based land laws. So those who occupy it are not considered encroachers.

Another source of land loss is displacement by development projects, often without the family being counted among land losers. That is the result of the same law. For example, out of around 40,000 persons displaced by the Dumbur dam in Tripura in the 1970s only a third were declared displaced since they had individual *pattas*. The rest who had for centuries lived on the CPRs according to their customary law were not even counted. It is true also of the Rongmei who lost their land to the Loktak project and the Adibasi of Lakhimpur who lost their land to the Lilabari airport.

That results in conflicts for the land and forest resources that become scarce. More land is lost because of these conflicts. For example, the Rongmei have lost most of their land to the ethnic conflict that followed their displacement. The Boro and the Santhals, much of whose land was encroached upon by the immigrants, lost more of it to the ethnic conflict. The Tripura unrest is attributed to the loss of 60 per cent of tribal land to Bangladeshi Hindu refugees followed by displacement by the Dumbur dam.

A crucial issue in this process is the transition from a subsistence to a commercial economy that recognises individual ownership alone. For

example the Rubber Board encouraged the matrilineal Garo tribe to plant rubber but gave subsidies to individual heads of families alone, understood as men. The banks gave loans to the same. With it began the transition to a class based society and strengthening of patriarchy. Among other tribes too an important consequence of this process is weakening of the traditional tribal culture that gave some decision-making power to women in the family without making them equal to men. In the matrilineal tribes men who shared power with women, have slowly taken over all decision-making in their families and societies.

These issues have to be dealt with to find a solution to the conflicts. One has to study also the neglect of the secondary sector combined with the high level of education and high unemployment. The close link with land as the centre of tribal culture and identity has to be recognised. The conflicts for exclusive right over the land in a given area are bound to continue as long as it remains their main livelihood. Because productive jobs are not produced in the secondary sector 70 to 75% of the workforce depends on the primary sector against 66 per cent in India as a whole. To find a solution one has to create some millions of low investment land based jobs for the tribals that can provide them security and combine new crop production with processing and marketing. That requires social investment to train them to deal with the market as a community.



Mr. S. K. Purkayastha, Member Secretary,  
National Commission for Backward Classes  
is having a glance at the Institute's Library



Unemployed trainee youth along with the  
Faculties of the Institute





Photo shows the tribal trainee weavers



Institute Stall at Guwahati Book Fair

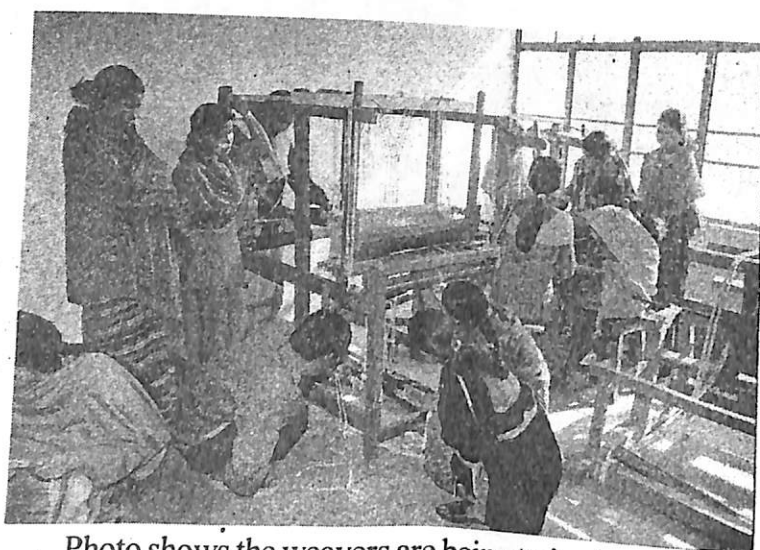
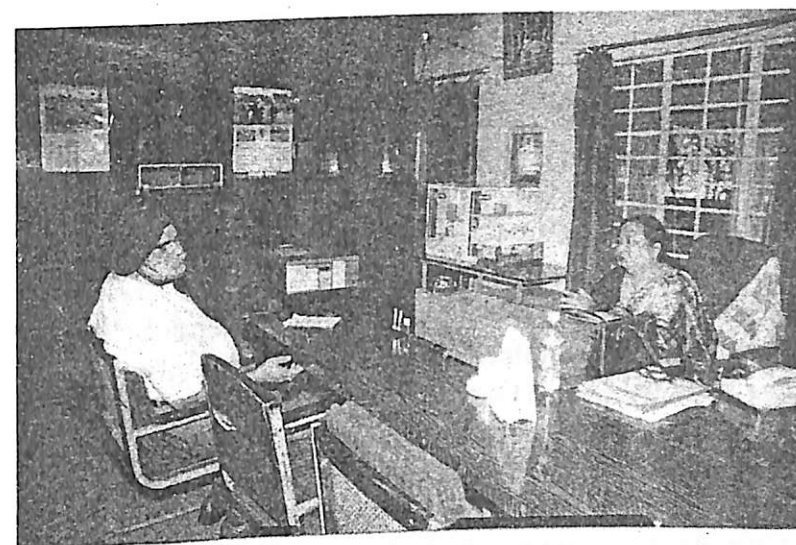
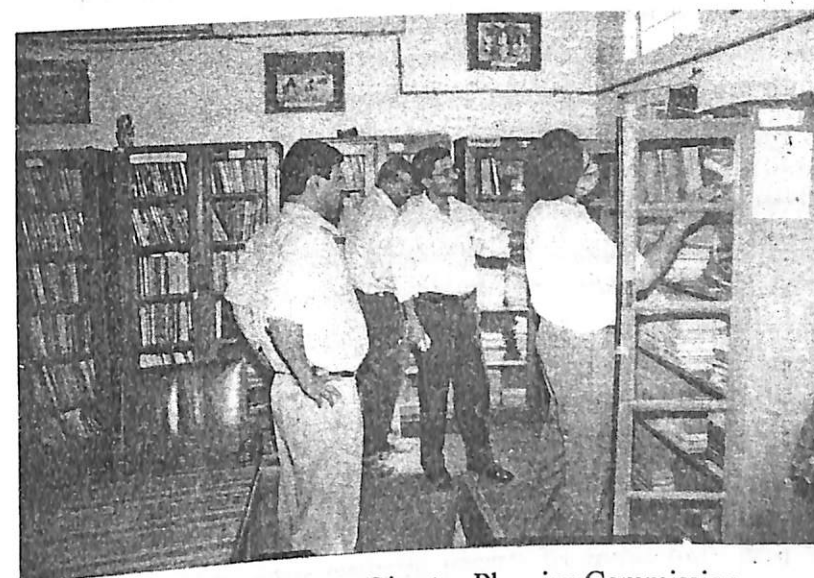


Photo shows the weavers are being trained



Mr. A. S. Ahluwalia, Director, Planning Commission, New Delhi is having a discussion with Mrs. N.A. Hazarika, ACS., Director of the Institute



Mr. A. S. Ahluwalia, Director, Planning Commission, New Delhi is having a glance at the Institute's Library



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## FUNCTIONS OF THE INSTITUTE

### INTRODUCTION :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes (erstwhile Tribal Research Institute, Assam) with its Headquarters at Guwahati was set up in January, 1977 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under "Research and Training", with the approval of the Ministry of Welfare (erstwhile Ministry of Home Affairs), New Delhi. The scope of activities of the Institute includes both Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The jurisdiction of the Institute extends to entire Assam covering both Hills and Plains.

The main functions of the AIRTSC are (1) Planning, (2) Research, (3) Evaluation, (4) Training. Besides these, the other important functions includes publication of books, research bulletin, organization of seminar and workshop, participation in exhibitions at State, Regional and National level, award of Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Fellowships, documentation of tribal life and culture through audio-visual media, establishment of a documentation centre and a Data Bank on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, establishment of a museum for the authentic documentation and preservation of the material culture of tribals and their heritage, establishment of reference library and so on.

### PLANNING :

The Institute had prepared Project Reports for the 19 nos. of Integrated Tribal Development Project during the 5th Five Year Plan and had revised Project Reports of 17 nos. of I.T.D.Ps. during the 6th Five Year Plan. During the 7th Five Year Plan the Institute prepared the Indicators of development for the Tribal Sub-Plan areas of Assam in pursuance of the guidelines given

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by the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India. The Institute has also been helping the Government of Assam, in the Department for Welfare of Plain Tribes and Backward Classes, in preparation of Tribal Sub-plan and the Scheduled Caste Component Plan.

### RESEARCH :

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes has so far completed more than 55 nos. of important research studies. The Institute has also conducted 129 nos. of confidential studies, as per guidelines laid down by the Government of India, on the communities which submitted memorandum to the Government for their inclusion in the list of Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes.

### EVALUATION :

The AIRTSC has so far conducted more than 18 nos. of evaluation studies. During the year 2004-05, this Institute has conducted an evaluation study on the Role of NGO working for SC people of Assam. Moreover, evaluation study on Family Oriented Income Generating Scheme (FOIGS) and National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their Dependent (NSLR) are in progress.

### TRAINING :

The AIRTSC organizes different Tribal Orientation Training Courses regularly out of its annual budget allotment and Oriental Training courses sponsored by the Department of Personnel & Training (Training Division), Govt. of India. The training courses are organized for senior and middle level officials as well as non officials who are connected with the formulation and implementation of schemes meant for welfare of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of the State. Moreover, the Institute also organizes Orientation Training courses for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes unemployed youth on income generating schemes of various Government Departments.

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During the year 2004-05 this Institute has conducted two nos. of training courses on unemployed ST youths.

### **EXHIBITION :**

The Institute has been participating in the State, National and International level exhibitions held from time to time within and outside the State of Assam by displaying the cultural heritage of the tribes of Assam. So far the Institute had participated in 30 nos. of state level exhibition and 3 nos. of National level exhibition and one regional level exhibition.

### **SEMINAR :**

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes has been conducting seminar regularly on the problems and development of the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes.

### **PUBLICATION :**

The AIRTSC has been regularly publishing research bulletin (annually) based on availability of fund. So far this Institute has published 23 nos. of books. During the year 2004-05, this Institute has reprinted its 5 books.

### **PUBLICATION UNDER GRANTS-IN-AID :**

Under this scheme, this institute publishes books written on scheduled tribes and scheduled castes of Assam. So far this Institute has published 57 nos. of books.

The AIRTSC has been regularly publishing books written on ST under the scheme Grants-in-aid to authors. During the year 2002-03 this Institute has published 4 nos. of books.

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### **MUSEUM :**

The Institute maintains an ethnographic museum for the purpose of disseminating, displaying and preserving the rare artifacts belonging to different ethnic groups of Assam covering Hills and Plains. The preservation of the rich cultural heritage helps the research scholars in enhancing their knowledge. At present there are about 500 nos. of rare artifacts of different ethnic groups preserved in the institute's museum. Due to dearth of fund the museum is yet to be made dust proof. Besides infrastructural facilities are required for preservation of the artifacts procured.

### **FELLOWSHIP :**

The AIRTSC offers Doctoral and Post Doctoral Research Fellowship to the deserving scholars on various aspects of Tribal Development, sponsored by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, New Delhi.

### **LIBRARY :**

The Institute maintains a reference library. There are good numbers of valuable books and journals in the library on the various subjects like Social Science, History, Language, Encyclopedia, etc. There are about 6000 no. of books in the library. Reading room facilities are available for scholars and others.

### **DOCUMENTATION OF TRIBAL LIFE AND CULTURE :**

To document various life and culture of STs and SCs through audio-visual means, this institute has so far produced the following documentary films -

1. The Kherai - on Bodo Kachari,
  2. Baikho - on Rabha,
  3. Ali-Ai-Ligang - on Mishing,
  4. Deo Dhani Utsav and dances of Deoris,
  5. Bihu Festivals observed by different ethnic groups,
  6. Jone Beel Mela on Tiwa (Lalung),
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7. Traditional Dress and Handicrafts of Tribals of Assam,
  8. Kamrupia Dhulia on Scheduled Castes,
  9. Traditional Handloom and Textiles of Plains Tribes,
  10. 'Wangsua', a religious festival of Lalungs,
  11. Bishu festival of Dimasa Kachari,
  12. 'Wangala' festival of Garos,
  13. Dances of Hajong Community,
  14. Man Tai Speaking.

### **BUILDING COMPLEX :**

The Directorate of the Institute is functioning from its own building since 2nd January, 1992. The building complex apart from accommodating administration and research personnel also accommodate the library, museum and the training wing along with hostel facilities for trainee officers.