CHAPTER-II

BACKGROUNDs OF DEORI COMMUNITY

The North Eastern Region of India indeed presents glorious example of diversity, which is very well reflected in the mosaic of socio-cultural traits, which are followed by myriads of district aboriginal tribal communities inhabiting this region. The Deoies amongst them are no exception to this rule. They too have been maintaining their local identity vis-à-vis social, religious, cultural and traditional practice from the hoary past and all these have made a definite imprint on the socio-cultural landscape of this region.

The tribes are traditional and custom bound. They have become the victims of superstitious beliefs, outmodes and meaningless practices and harmful habits. Child marriage infanticide, animal sacrifice and other harmful practice are still found in some tribal society. Most of them are also educationally and morally backward. Lake of Transport and Communication, lake of awareness of modern technology ignorance of adults, economic hardships etc are some causes of their educational and moral backwardness.

Like other tribes and communities the Indian constitution has regarded the Deoris once of the scheduled Tribe of Assam. Deoris are aboriginal tribes of Assam. They are distinguished from the other societies by certain mode of behaviour such as their dresses, food habits and socio-cultural rituals and rites etc. They were settled near by Sadiya first. At present they are found the few districts of Assam – Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Sonitpur, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia District of
Assam. They also found in two district of Arunachal Pradesh i.e. Lohit and Sanglang. According to 2001 census the total revenue villages of Deori in Assam are 133 and their population are 2,45,000.

As per semantics the word “Deori” means the offspring’s of God and Goddess. According to the Deori language “De” means great wise and “O” and “Ri” denotes male and female respectively. Hence, the meaning of “Deori” is the great or wise male female being the Deori are believed to be priests or worshippers Gods and Goddess.

Regarding the word meaning of “Deori” few documents in written form have been found. The term “Deori” refers to a person who is well – versed in worshipping a Deva (God). According to Dr. B. K. Kakati the word “Deori” is a new Indo-Aryan formation connected with Sanskrit “Deva-grhika”.

Sir, Edward Gait wrote that the Deories are the Priestly Section of the Chutiya kings of Sadiya dynasty who worshipped the Goddess-Tamraswari (Kechaikhati).

As a whole – the term ‘Deori’ used to distinguish the recognized minister of religion through out the Bodo races used this points out to fact they are essentially what indeed their tribal name implies a levity or priestly body, and one in earlier days possessed of large influence which even yet has not been wholly lost.

According to W.B. Brown the Deoris are small and schedule tribes of upper Assam and as the name implies, they are the representatives of the priestly or Levite class among the Chutiyas, who is one of the most numerous castes of Upper Assam? There must be available documents that the Deoris are ethnically affiliated to the great Tibeto-Burman tribes of North-East India.
Notes: Due to lack of scientific study and observation a clear and acceptable etymological derivation of the “Deori” could not be drawn up so far. No satisfactory explanation of the terms “Deori” has been found till now. People generally say that one who can worship the God or one who knows about the God is a Deori, which consists of three parts-

_De-u-ri:_ The first part means “Purusa” and the second parts “Prakriti”. So the Deori consider themselves to be the descendents and worshipper of “Prakriti” – the mother Goddess the Supreme creatures of the Universe – the Adyasakti.

2.1 Historical Background of Deori:

Deori is a plain tribe of Assam, the worshipper of Kundimama (Kundi - Siva, Mama - Parvati) from ancient time maintaining their own custom and tradition. They worship Kundimama. Through they do not have their own written history, reliable documents and the writing in ancient books such as Kalita Puran, Jogini Tantra, writing of American Missionaries and the research oriented works and thoughts of Historians Researchers, Anthropologists, Philosophers and Literary persons etc reveal the original settlement of Deories.

the persons doing *Worship* or *Puza* i.e. they are the owner to temple of God and Goddess are called Deori.

**Dr. Ravi**, an anthropologist mentions that they were Araya Hindu and entered Assam through the North-East corridor of India. The Deori are the first Araya entered Assam before 13\textsuperscript{th} century.

**G. A. Grierson** mentions in “*Deori Chutiya Grammar*” that Deori as the priestly class of Chutiyas. According to Historian and Archaeologists that best people that are wise knowledgeable and working as priestly called Deoris worshipping God and Goddess from ancient time and also perform sacrificing.

From the above description it is clear that those who are professionally worshipping and persists from generation to generation in *Than* (holy place), *Dewalaya* (holy place) and *Temple* are called Deori.

According to the *Hemkush* (dictionary) (1900) the Deoris are a section of plain dweller ‘Asaranica people’. According to the *Chandra Kanta Abhidhan* (1933) previously hills dweller priestly section of Chutiyas of Assam.

According to **W.B. Brown** the original seats of Deoris were in the region beyond Sadiya. It is only about a century ago that they removed hence to their present Settlements and some of them still occasionally visit Sadiya for religious purpose. In 1901 census mentions that the riverside of *Kundipani*, which is situated on the east corner of Sadiya was their original seat of Deoris. *Emperial Gazette* of 1909, mention that Deoris were settled near Sadiya. The riverside of *Kundil* was their original seat of settlement. However Deoris were the original priestly section of the worshiper of God.
2.2 Philosophical Background:

Generally tribal communities of Assam believe in a life sustaining soul or soul like entity, to which the body of an individual is attached inseparably, and when this entity is detached from one’s body, the individual concerned dies. They have same notions, some very clear ones and some others not so clear, of life after death, dead persons inhabiting places full of happiness or suffering according to what kind of place in the other world one deserves to life in on the basis of his or her life on earth, or hovering around as spirits till their salvation. They also believe in rebirth in different forms including human ones, some of them believing that they are reborn in their own communities. After the initial death rites performed soon after the death of a person, the final death rites are held at different times after the death of a person. Amongst some of the tribal such final death rites are highly expensive affairs being marked by liberal entertainment of all the people present with non vegetable food and drink.

Among the Deories cremation is the rule, the dead bodies of children, pregnant woman and epidemic cases are buried. The pyre has seven layers of wood but for the priests layers of wood are raised to nine. The traditional custom of laying layers of wood in pyres for a man or a woman was seven layers and five layers respectively. The dead bodies are bathed with water and new clothes are wrapped over the bodies. An egg is broken on the forehead of the dead generally by true eldest son. The corpse is wrapped with a bamboo mat and carried to the cremation ground in a procession by the sons, relatives and co-villagers. Food, rice-beer fire etc. are carried to the cremation ground. The eldest son offers cooked food and rice beer to the soul of the dead and puts fire in the pyre. After returning from the cremation ground all are
purified in the courtyard of the deceased with holy water prepared by a woman of the family.

Generally ceremony is held on the fourth day after death of the person. For the ceremony the chicken curry is prepared and selected elderly villagers offers rice beer and chicken curry on the floor a request the soul of the deceased to give up all connection with the inmates of the deceased.

The Final purification ceremony may be held any time of the year. As it is an expensive affair the villagers observe this ceremony when they can afford. Generally it is held after one year Pork, rice beer; vegetables etc are required in large quantities as the feast on this occasion is shared only by the consanguinal and affinal kind but by all the villagers.

2.3 Deori in Lakhimpur and Dhemaji District:

History is always silent regarding the migration of Deoris of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji district. They have been living for centuries at the river sides of Dibang, Kundil and Tengapani, which is situated near the “Misimi Pahar” at the North East corner of Sadiya and they have acted as a priests of Chutiya Kings (1204-1513) and Later Ahom King Gaurinath Singh (1780-1794). In the first three decades of 19th century the three clan of this tribe viz Dibongiyas, Tengapaniyas and Borgoyan came from Tengapaniya area of Sadiya and settled at riverside of undivided Lakhimpur and Sadiya District.

Personal experience of Sri Singkumpani Deori Boruah, (Rt. teacher age – 94, Village – Bordeori Gaon) probably in 1807-08, the Deoris were come to Lakhimpur and Dhemaji district from Sadiya and first settle at Siram Sapari at Majuli and from
Siram they came to Hamara and then finally settled in this place (Bordeori Gaon) which is situated in the bank of Dikrong River.

According to Kamalakanta Deori, (Rt. Teacher, Udaipur Gaon, age 73-in the year 2011) and Mrs. Rajanti Deori, (Matriculated, age-63-in the year 2011) Deori had come to Siram from Sadiya by boat. Then they settled at Kathalbari in the bank of Dikrong River.

Again it is also found that the Deori migrated to the lower Assam during the last part of the 17th Century. Initially they settle in the districts of Sibsagar, Jorhat, Lakhimpur and Dhemaji. They usually migrated in groups and such a group settled in Dergaon of Jorhat. Another group come to the North Bank and settled in Bor-Ati of Narayanpur (Lakhimpur). Then they divided in to two groups out of which one settled in a place, which they called Bor-Deori Gaon. The second group moved northward and made purchase of the land of Dafflas who had settles in the foothill in seared of fruits, hunting animals. They settled Kinapathar and some settled in Borbam, Bordoloni etc. in the Dhemaji of Bank of the river Jiadhal (Assam).

2.4 Personality Patterns of Deori:

Personality is not a fixed state but a dynamic totality, which is continuously changing due to interaction with the environmental. Personality is unique by the conduct behaviour, activities, movements and everything else concerning the individual. It is the way of responding to the environmental. The way in which an individual adjust with the external environment is personality.

Deori is an ideal tribe. This tribe is regard by cultural evolutionists as the form of social organization that develop into a stratified society and eventually; into the type of social organization known as the primitive state. As an ideal type, the tribe
derives its unity not from a territorial identity but from a sense of extended kinship. They work together in such joint endeavours as trade, agriculture, house construction, welfare and economic activities. This is the main approach of Deori personality pattern.

No two individuals even the identical twins have alike personality. The second basic fact regarding personality is that it is the product of its own functioning what we do today, depending on our accumulated experiences of the past. The experiences are accumulated day after day and shape our personality by continuous interaction with external environment.

Deori’s personality pattern and their social life despite tremendous challenges and have been able to maintain the own traditions, religious beliefs and practice, various socio-political trails and tribulations through the centuries. Although the people have faith on traditional magico-religious cure of the ailments, yet allopathic medicine has penetrated into their villages. They are still maintaining most of their traditional socio-cultural traits intact; at the same time keeping a window open for incorporating modernization without affecting the core of their own culture. This kind of attitudes and principles perhaps brings them to a separate ethnical existence leaving a scope of strengthening the composite Assamese culture.

They are generally endomorphic body type (Sheldon). Their body type has a fat, soft and round body. There are viscrtotonic nature showing a cheerful disposition and the desire for the visceral comfort of relaxation eating and sociability. A high degree of co-relation is found in their temperament.
2.5 Values and value Preferences of Deori:

Values and personality are bound together in the matrix of culture. The unit of sociological theory is the person in group and culture that in their verified and proliferating values, roles and patterns of thought and action produce the nature of personality, and maintain the stability of society and it has been the vehicle of his valuation and conception of himself and of his status’s and obligations in society.

A realistic role and status psychology – rooted in the ethos, the central value system and them of primitive and present culture configurations – which is on the way is influencing the analysis of both the structuring of personality and patterning of roles, statuses, and value system. The study of contemporary urban culture, its dominant social classes, status prestige system, social control and growth of insecurity and impersonality is like wise obtaining its anchorage point from the self maintenance mores, ethos, or value scale of the community. Each culture, tribal, rural communal or urban industrial from the functional social psychological viewpoint, is a creative synthesis of group values and ideals, a system interrelated statuses and a framework of rights and duties for each role, position and status that would personalities and govern character and virtues.

2.6 Value Preferences and Personality Patterns of Deori Secondary School Students:

Behaviour of a person is the reflection of his values. Valueless life is meaningless. Society and environment have a unique role in the formation of values. Since human being can not do anything without society. In this regard famous scholar Emile Durkhaem is of the opinion. “Impact of society is fully reflected in the
personality of a human being. This inner and outer behaviour reflects social consciousness of the society.

The ancient Indian Schools assumed that mere intellectual achievement have no important if they lack proper urge and character. In their view the only important things was good behaviour. It implies that good behaviour was supreme religion for them.

“Aachar Parmo Dharm Shrutyupta Smriti Aev. Ch.” (Sanskrit testimony)

It means that if a person has less knowledge but virtuous, then he is better than immoral but knowledgeable person.

Educational system must provide all the necessary facilities, support and required atmosphere. It would be for the students themselves to make the right use of the aids provide to them. It is by their will that they have to grow up into self determining individuals striving constantly towards excellence, not in respect of studies but also in respect of integral development of personality; Physical, emotional, dynamic, intellectual, ethical, aesthetic and spiritual.

The most of the Deori Secondary Level Govt. High and higher secondary schools has had only a marginal place in the system of value education. Not that its intrinsic importance in the process of education has not been realized by those at the help of academic affairs.

Here, is two factors appear to have been mainly responsible for sidelining value in the system of education.

Firstly, in the Deori’s society education has been considered and use by both parents and their students basically as a means for material success, which for the overwhelming majority means good success in public examinations by acquiring knowledge of the scholastic kind.
The second problem is that the important of value education with a formal curriculum and text book on value education is not a very meaningful exercise. Moreover a school is certainly not the only place where values need to be inculcated, the home is a more important place for such purpose and even the society as a whole matters much as for as in calculating of values is concerned. But in as a rural tribal Deori society there is nothing any types of environment to teaching of value because, most of parents of the student are illiterate person.

2.7 External Appearance of Deori people:
 Actually Mongolian characteristics are visible on the Deoris. They are strong built and possess charming features. Outsiders are attracted with their simplicity and hospitality. They are amiable and maintain cordial relation with the non-tribal people of surrounding villages. Deoris are very laborious. Both man and women engage themselves in agricultural operation. Co-operation among the whole villagers in all spheres is a salient feature of their daily life. The Dibangia section maintains the traditional language whereas the other two sections Borgoyan and Tengapania speak Assamese language.

2.8 Socio-Cultural Environment of Deoris:
 The social field and human beings adjustment to society considered as dynamic processes in which changes constantly take place, in which used social roles and status arise in the side and on the other-side social values, ideals and norms which is the subjective side. The structuring of society of values and of self is inseparable, with old articulations being supersedes by new and apparently move adequate and satisfactory ones these in turn constantly responding to external events, technological
changes, cultural, development and chronic, subjective tension, Values are the only stable realities that may constitute a frame for the ordering of these complex. Man as a social being gets invariably involved in multiple socio-cultural interactions developing there in a network of relations with individuals both within and outside the periphery of his society. Man as a member of the society setup that may be called a social structure. The notion of social structure, however, varies widely as asserted by different authorities of social science. While the New Encyclopedia Britannica (Vol-14 page 991) describe social structure as a functional interdependence of the parts of the whole all seeking or maintaining an equilibrium, another authority, (Rad Chiffe Brown 1964: 191) describes it as social relations of person to person including dyadic relations, as between a father and a son etc. and also the differentiations of individuals and of classes by their social roles.

G.C. Sarmah Thakur, in his book “The plains Tribes of Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar and Nowgong” (1972, page-25) describes the Deori is the main and most important branch of the Chutiyas who have been keeping the old traditions and belief in spite of the changes of time and social modes and morals.

The Chutiyas were the dominant race in upper Assam when the Ahoms swarmed into the valley. An isolated colony on the river Dikrong in Lakhimpur, calling themselves Deori Chutiya were found, who had a peculiar language which they called Chutiya and they were styled Deori.

Their present habitations are spread in Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Dhemaji and Darrang districts. In Lakhimpur district they are mainly found in Sadiya, Khowang, Bihpuria etc and in Dhemaji district Bordoloni, Dhemaji etc.

Despite tremendous challenges the Deories have been able to maintain their old traditions, religion beliefs and practices intact amid various socio-political trails.
and tribulations through the centuries. They are still maintaining most of their traditional socio-cultural traits intact, at the same time keeping a window open for incorporating modernization without affecting the core of their own culture. Owing the recent years, the Deori society has undergone transformation and changes. The grip of intertice in which this society was found in the past has now been slackened. They have now come forward to accept the Governmental development schemes of different sectors with a view to changing their own destiny. But at the same time, they are maintaining their culture, which distinguishes them as a separate ethnic or tribal group.

2.9 Life Style of Deoris:

The tribes have their own mode of living amidst nature and they have unfathomable socio-religious attachment to their territories in which they live. Nature bestows on them an idyllic environment in which they have been brought up and naturally the tribes hesitate to accept the new innovation, which we may call development but to most of the tribal a social crisis phenomenon.

Outwardly one may get the impression that the Deoris are happy with a motor able road inside the territory or a dispensary within easy reach. But very soon they realized the evils attached to these. The question is whether development measures should or should be extended to the Deoris areas. The intension is never to keep aloof the Deoris from the developments that take place outside their territory and leave alone theory is outmoded in the present day context. But it should be our endeavor to see that while making new innovations into socio-cultural fabric of the Deori society we should be cautions. Generations have passed in a particular selling with a set cultural pattern and close attachment to the objects of nature such as the forest, rivulet
etc. The unsophisticated Deoris people apprehend that new innovations may rob them of the traditional treasures and the Value System.

Perhaps the most serious damage caused by the new innovations is the spread of individualistic ideas among the people. The money economy has affected the core of the culture. Deori people have had the glorious tradition of cooperative living and most of the Deoris have traditional social institutions for performing social welfare activities. But most of the half educated young boys are employed third and fourth grade staff the youth do not have time to offer voluntary service to individual families the time to distress. These vital social aspects are forgotten while formulating schemes for Deoris development.

Actually development of the Deori community needs to be done cautiously keeping always in view the typical tribal characteristics their value system modes and morals etc. Emphasis should be laid on overall socio-cultural development and not merely on material progress.

2.10 Deori Village:

Deoris are a revering tribe and they are pile dwellers. Houses are constructed facing the river and all the house are of the similar pattern, although they vary in length according to the size of the family. A typical Deori house can accommodate more than 40 patterns. The floor of the house is made of flattened bamboos or timbers and is raised from the ground on wooden pots.

A Deori village is usually named of the river, which it is situated. For example Gai Deori Gaon, Bor Deori Gaon, which is belong to Lakhimpur district, Sissimukh, Chiripani, Bordoloni Borbam Deorigaon, which belong to Dhemaji district of Assam. Their house is constructed in such away that the roof of one house should not touch
the roof of another. It is believed that if the houses are not constructed according to the prescribed procedure the inmates of the house fall victim to a particular disease called *Hemeju* (a kind of incidental disease). The floor of the house is made of flattened bamboos and is raised from the ground on wooden posts. With a long passage having a considerable number of rooms all on one side, a typical Deori houses resembles the house of the Miri community. The front portion of the house is kept open on three sides and out side as have easy access to this part of the house. This is the place where the unmarried youths sleep at night.

The people are very laborious. Except for ploughing and the cutting of trees the women folk help their men in all other daily activities. Besides taking responsibility for the children, the women-folk have to weave clothes and cook meals for all the members of the household. Women are treated in society, though not high, is not low. Co-operation among the villagers in all spheres is a salient feature of their daily life.

### 2.11 Social Life of Deoris:

Society is web of social relationship. It is an organization, a system or a pattern of relationship among human being. In a society the life style of an individual is determines by the social class he belongs. The critical period of an individual’s life affects not only his own family but also the society he belongs. Generally a tribal society like Deori can distinguish from another society by certain mode of behaviour such as their dresses food habits, socio-cultural and rites etc. Therefore, it will be worthwhile to mention their social life distinctly clearly.

Co-operation is the salient feature of Deoris social life. Both male and female are very laborious. They reap a bumper crop of sail paddy by the strenuous labour of
both sexes. Men folk are experts in agricultures; house building etc. and similarly the women folk are also expert in their own fields. The unity is scrupulously maintained and interfamily disputes are amicably settled in the villages. The youths play active role in the smooth running of the individual or community festival or religious occasions.

2.12 Family Structure of Deoris:

Every tribe including the Deoris possesses the universal unit, namely family. According to 1971 census 13,44,020 persons were enumerated as members of the scheduled tribes (Plains) of Assam. One of them is Deori which total population according to 1971 census 23,080, out of this there are 11,901 is male and 11,179 is female and pc of ST population (plain) Deori 1.72 and total percentage of Deori state population is 0.16 and the total literary pc of Deori is 27.72 out of 27.72 29.58 percentage male and 15.10 percentage female whereas in 2001 census the Deori population is 41,161. The Deori types belong to different ethnological groups possess diverse socio religious characteristics and are at various levels of economic development of family particularly Deoris of the revering areas of the Brahmaputra valley with their traditional socio-cultural life being unimpaired by the widespread contact with non-tribals.

Among the Deoris monogamy is the rule but polygamy is far from extinct, they prefer joint family system. Besides a father, his wife and children, the same homestead is also occupied by father’s brothers or cousins, their wives and children. In other words it members are two or more lineally related kinsfolk. The Dibangia call the joint family as Jākaru Jupā. The Jupa is a primary social unit consisting, a group of people living in a common residence under a single head. The Sukia Jupa as the
name indicate (Sukia – separate) consist off a man his wife and married children occupying a single residence under the overall governance of father while the Jakarua Jupa is composed of two or more married brothers with their wives and children, unmarried brothers and sisters, parents and grand parents occupying a residence under a single head. The father is the head of the family and all the members obey his orders. Kinship, social economic ties hold together the members of the family.

The Deoris are partrilineal in decent and count their relationship through the male life. Children take the clan of the father. After the death of a father his sons become the rightful owner of his property, which is equally divided among his sons. In case a man dies without any survivor, his property usually goes to the nearest agnatic relations. The wife and daughter are not eligible to share the property.

The people of the village are primarily agriculturist by profession. From that point of view the percentage of the joint family should have been nearly to the extent of hundred percent because the category of joint family is the most suitable one for the purpose of agricultural profession.

2.13 Interactions With Non-Deoris:

An individual in a society not only maintains interactions with his clan members but he is also bound to maintain it with other non clan individuals if in his locality, people not belong to him own clan, live in. At the Lakhimpur and Dhemaji, Deoris Block are in touch with other non Deori people like Assamese all caste, Biharis, Bangali, Maruwaris and non tribals, who are surrounding the Deoris in great numerical strength. In economic field specially in selling their products and social political factors they also have interaction specially with the Assamese in the field of
children education and socio-political affairs. In the field of education also Deori of
the village are coming in contact with other non-Deoris people.

2.14 Clan System of Deoris:

There are four broad divisions (Khel) among the Deoris namely Dibangia,
Tengapania, Borgoyan and Patargoyan, each originating from a particular place
name. The Deori who were living in Patsadiya were known as Patargoyan. Each of
these divisions is compose of a number of exogamous clans (Banshas)

(a) **Dibangia or Jimchari** – Sundari (Bordeori), Patriya (Saru Deuri),
    Airio (Bharali), Sariyo (Bora), Chitikayo (Borgrandhani), Komtaya
    Chungkrayo, Dhupiyaio, Kumarayo, Lagachyo and Kaliyachukoyo.

(b) **Tengapaniya**- Machiatika (Bordeori), Bikramiyatika (saru Deori),
    Khutiyatika (Bharali), Sakocharutika, Pagimegeratika, Phapariyatika
    and Chema boriyatika.

(c) **Borgoyan or Midiya** – Ikucharu (Bordeori), Chamucharu (Sarideori),
    Hisaru (Bharali), Busaru (Balikatia), Lufaru (Bora) and Gosaru.

(d) **Patorgoyan** – At present Patorgoyan division cannot be traced any
    where. They might have amalgamated with the people of Borgoyan
    and Dibongia clans. Although enquires about khel is often made and in
    general discourse people refer to Khel, yet clan distinction with in a
    Khel is hardly made except for marriage purpose.

2.15 Social Stratification:

In respect of social stratification the Deori society can be broadly divided into
two viz. secular and religions. In the former category the Gaonbura reins supreme
who is the head in all socio-political activities. He is the nucleus around home all the village elders gather for smooth running of the day-to-day affairs of the village. The assembly of village elders can give judgment in the petty disputes brought before it.

For the smooth functioning of their religious activities every village has nine office bearers who have been assigned specific duties. Out of these four important office bearers in the heirarchical order are Bor Deori or Baderi, Saru Deori or Saderi. Generally Bor Deoris are selected from Bor Deori clans like ‘Sundariya’, ‘Muchiatika’ etc and they command highest regard from the villagers. A Bor Deori must be free from all sins, his main duty to offer Pujas in the “Than”, Saru Deori assistant of Bor Deori in the Puja. The Bharali remains in charge of the Puja paraphernalia’s. The Bora collects dues and other essential articles from the villages on ritual occasions. All the clans have equal status at least theoretically but in practice the Bor Deori gets high status among the office bearers.

Besides them there is another important person in a village called Deodhari, who can forecast the fortunes of the villagers. These persons should be without the slightest blemish and the villagers treat them with the highest regard.

2.16 Deories Kinship System:

Kinship is the determining factor of human behaviour among the individual in every society. Every one is expected with certain type of behaviour according to his or her relationship with the individual concern. A well regulated behaviour pattern strengthened their relationship from time to time on all occasions of interpersonal relations. Knowledge of accepted pattern of behaviour is an essential part of good and acceptable social personality.
All human being are together in groups by various kinds of bonds in all societies and these bonds of relationship created the concept of kinship in the human society. A man’s kin are those persons with whom he is genealogically connected through his father and mother. This did not meant kin relationship are merely and extension of relationship within the family. This system existed in its own right, and a child who is born into a family is born at the same time into a kinship system.

Deori kinship is bilateral and consanguinity is of primary importance and affinity comes next, a person is born in a family and thereby develops relationship with his or her procreators and their parents in the ascending generation as well as his or her siblings in his or her own generation. This kinship valuation plays a pivotal role in the life of the person providing food, shelter protection and education up to his/her maturity.

2.17 Marriage:

Like the other communities of Assam, marriage is an indispensable part of the Deori society, which can be regarded as a social institution. It can be considered as a one of the purpose of life. For a Deori young boy marriage is indispensable. The boys marry within the age of 20 – 25 years while marriageable age for girls is 18 – 22 years. Clan exogamy is strictly follows in the case of marriage system. Similarly marriage is regulated by moiety, which is an exogamous group of related people. If any one violates this social prescription he will punish by the priestly council of the village. Monogamy is the general rule and second wife is taken after the death of the first wife. Once a girl is married she belongs to her husband’s family. The children take their father clan name. Widows can live as wives with the widowers but in such cases no ceremony is observed. The system of levirate and sororate are not in vogue.
among the Deoris. Thus, after the death of the husband the younger brother of the deceased does not marry the wife of the elder brother. One does not marry the younger sister of the wife.

The essential items of a Deori marriage constitute dried fish, Pork, Suze and betel leaves and huts.

The mediator plays important role in a Deori marriage. Both the family i.e. families of bride and groom appoint pathorias. On the marriage occasion he wears a special dress and he helps in the settlement of bride price and other details in a marriage. He must be man who is proficient in local folk-lore and other marriage formalities. In the Deori marriage, there are many local marriage song sing as follows-

*Ram ram tulite talica*

*Ram ram bahiche deuta*

*Ram ram sarai lai maniche*

*Ram ram ekai lakh takare*

*Ram ram duinolakh takare*

*Garu ai ram ram*

*(Local folk marriage song of Deories)*

*(Collected from Dutta, B. Tribal Folk song of upper Assam)*

From this discussion we see that marriage is a very important social institution in Deori society. Every Deori society has developed a pattern for guiding all marriages.
2.18 Religious beliefs and Practices of Deories:

All the three section of the Deoris viz- Dibangia, Borgoyan and Tengapania are still maintaining their traditional beliefs and practices. However, the influence of Vaisnava Gosains is visible in the Deori villages but the trend towards traditional beliefs is still prominent. The common place of worship among the Borgoyan and Dibangias call it “Midiku”. All the sections worship Lord Siva and Parvati as chief duties. The Dibangias call this supreme duty as ‘Kundi mama’. ‘Kundil’ is identified as Lord ‘Siva’ and ‘Mama’ as ‘Parbati’ of Hindu Pantheon. Another name of this chief deity is Gira Girachi. Pisa Dema or Balia Baba and Pisasi Dema or Kesaikhati, the son and daughter of Gira Girachi are two other important deities of the Deories. They also worship ‘Gailurung Kundi’ as ‘Ganesh’ and ‘Kunwar Kundi’ as ‘Kartik’.

The Puja Paraphernalias include flower, sacrificial dao, piece of chandan wood, copper, argha, bell, canopy, etc. The priestly functionaries including Bor Deori or Baderi, Saru Deori or Saderi, Bor Bharali, Saru Bharali, Kelua, Bora, Barik, and Randhani or Ladani. These office bearers are essential in all the ‘Than’ Pujas and their offices are hereditary.

Besides the major deities, the deori have a good number of household deities, they believe that if these deities are worshipped regularly Than peace and plenty will prevail upon the household. Sacrifices are offered to these deities. Some of the important household deities are – ‘Bakanmak’, ‘Miruchi’, ‘Kin’, ‘Dha’, ‘Chitere’, ‘Bura Dangaria’, Mora’, ‘Chakchik’, ‘Achira’ etc. From the name of household deities like ‘Bura Dangaria’, Ghururdeo etc. the influence of non Deori Hindus may be traced.

Sacrifice of animals and fowls, pigeon’s forms an important of the Deori Puja. The presence of Bordeuri or Ba Deori is essential in the Pujas. Rice beer is not
offered to the deities but consumption of rice beer after the Puja is not forbidden. Wednesday is the most auspicious day for worship and Pujas are performed either on Wednesday or on Sunday.

Some of the Hindu rituals like Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja etc. have been incorporated recently into religious structure of the Deoris.

2.19 Festivals:

The Deoris observe major festivals during a year Bohag Bihu and Magh Bihu or ‘Magiyo Bihu’. The term ‘Bihu’ might have originated from the Chutiys word ‘Bihu’. Bi mean extreme and su means rejoicing. The Bohag bihu is observed on the ‘Sangkranti of month of ‘Chot’ (14\textsuperscript{th} April) while the Magh Bihu observed on the Sangkranti of ‘Puh’ (14\textsuperscript{th} January). The Bohag bihu is the most important one and like other follow Assamese, the Deoris also observed this festival for seven days with unrestricted joy and marry making. It may be mentioned the Deori Bihu do not always fail on the Sankranti day rather these Bihu may be deferred to a day or two as they observed the same from Wednesday. The Deori bihu must be preceded by a Than Puja and the Bihus must start on Wednesday. These festivals have close relation with their agricultural activities. The ‘Bohagiyo Bihu’ and ‘Magiyo Bihu’ festivals are observed before starting the agricultural operations.

Bihu Puja on the occasion of Bihus has much socio religious and cultural significance and arrangements have to be made ahead of the day of Puja. Sacrificing of goat is a must in the Bihu Puja. Once in every four years a white buffalo is sacrificed which is considered as a substitute for the traditional human sacrifice. Ceremonial bathing of the cattle takes place in the morning of the day of Puja. Cows
and buffaloes are taken to a nearby river where day are smeared with mixture of turmeric and Matimah garlanded with black threes interwoven with Tanglati and bathed ceremonially by a male villagers. On the day every household observes ‘Suwarani’ Puja. The headman of each household prays before the household deity in the ‘Sawarani’ room for the welfare of the family members. Towards noon all the villagers irrespective of age sex gather at the ‘Than’ (religious institution).

During Bihu the elderly villagers visit the entire household in the village and they bless the inmates of the household. The members of each household entertain them with “Suze and Khuji”. In this period the younger sections the society busy themselves in arranging ‘Husari’ (Bihu dance). Separate parties of male and females are arranged. At first dancing start from the ‘Than’ and after that the parties visit other house and house. The role is the Bordeori’s house should be visited first. The Husari party blesses the members of the household for prosperous year and in lieu of that party receives a ‘Sarai’. (Manani for the dancing party) containing locally woven ‘Bihuwan’ (towels) betel leaves and nuts and also some ease money. There are many musical instruments like Dhol, Pepa, Gagana, Taka (Which make from bamboo) etc. They rhythmic dance accompanies melodious songs which is Deori Bihu.

One of the essential parts of the Bihu Puja is “Deodhani Dance”. The term “Deodhani” means “Deva”. It means God or deity and ‘Dhani’ mean sound. So the word Deodhani literally means sound of deity. According to Dr. M. Neog, Deodhani is a holy female dance or God’s women. It is originated from ‘Deva’ (God) and ‘Dhani’ (Woman).

Like other community the Deori Bihu songs relating to love like the ‘Lahariya’ songs of Husori of the Deoris are an indispensable part of Assamese Husari. The love songs of the Deoris are very pleasant and full of philosophical ideas-
‘Damai Chekuna Lebem An-na Hireiba

Matonnaka matoya Bona

Chiga Chakure Angunjuni Kundina

Nona An Nimajei Nina.

(Folk Song of Deori Bihu)

In English: O my love, you love me so much that I cannot forget you though I try to forget. I always pray God in the morning and evening, so as to get you.

(Collected)

In the Magiyo Bihu or Magh Bihu a grand feast is arrangement on the Sankranti day first Wednesday of Magh in the Morongghar which is attached to the Than. The chief priest offers Puja to the deities of the Shiva and sacrifice fowls is also performed.

2.20 Food Habits:

Like other plain tribe the Deoris is also are essentially non-vegetarians. Rice is their staple and fish or meat, or occasionally both, from pert of their normal menu to go with rice. Chickens and Pork are their favourite meat. Some of the recent Deoris families are producing wheat and the people take sweets made of Atta while they visit the towns, yet in their homes they donot take flour or atta. Along with rice they take belied green vegetable seasoned with chills and salt. Generally for their meat they rear fowls, pigs, ducks, and goats. The fleshes of other animals are scrupulously avoided. The poultries and Pigs are not only reared for household consumption but these constitutes as source of income for the womenfolk who use the money for purchasing yarn, clothes etc.
Community fishing is a common affair among them. Particularly in the winter season when the water level of the Beals or Rivers go down. They also care fish in the rivulets.

2.21 Art and Craft:

Textile and Bamboo and to a considerable extent cane, craft are the strongest aspects of Deoris art and craft. Although the Deoris tribes with primitive traits the world over were not known generally for any liberal clothing – many, infect remaining easily identifiable in India for their lack of clothing or their scanty clothing the general tribal societies of Assam. Especially the one coming in to contact at an early date with cultures in which the people have long had developed the art and science of weaving, the craft being practiced by their women. Earlier, they used to grow cotton, remove the cotton seeds with the help of cotton-gins, spin yarn using spinning wheals or spindles, dye the yarn, using natural dyes as required and weave on their loin looms, one end of the warp girdling the weaver’s waist and the other end being tied to a couple of posts a painstaking method of weaving.

In the Deoris communities cloths are generally colorful, and they have a general liking, especially for wearing on ceremonial and festive occasions, for bright colors, such as different shades of yellow, green, orange, magenta, and black. Most of them use a combination of red and black colors, or of red, black and white for their shawls and scarves.

Bamboos and rattan canes have always been an integral part of Deoris life in Assam. They make using bamboo various kinds of using things of day-to-day life, etc.

The performing arts of singing and dancing are important aspects of the lives of Deoris community. Their folk songs at the time of Bihu, agricultural, fishing,
festival and such other occasions, love songs – merry making songs etc. A part from traditional folk songs, the younger generations amongst the tribes have either introduced or are experimenting with new popular forms of music in varying degrees. *Dhol, Pepa, Gagana* are their musical instruments.

### 2.22 Status of Women:

The Deoris women are trimly hard working – playing an important role in the economic life of the family, in the agricultural field, doing paddy transplantation, weeding the growing crops, harvesting crops supplementing family income by rearing hens, ducks, Pigs etc. and they also busy in the house for cooking, cleaning, washing etc.- confers on them a moral right to live with honour. Nevertheless when it comes to questions of women’s right parse, such as the right to make decisions to inherit parental property, the right of membership in traditional village council etc, women are always suffered deprivations they cannot become village chiefs or priests of the Deoris communities.

But it is time that status of women in the Deoris society is not negligible. Though male, the head of the family takes all the decision of family. Yet the role of women folk for the development of society is high. Women are considered as an integral part of man. Women do 80% of all activities. They are expert in weaving; help the men in agriculture and raring animal for supporting the economy of the family.

The societies are agreed to engage their girl’s in any occupation. There also found seem conservation view in the villages. Such as widow marriage not see in this community.
2.23 Modernization and their effects on the socio-cultural and Personality Pattern of Deoris:

In the present time the modernization effects on the socio-cultural and personality patterns of Deori community of Assam.

The new trends of development of the Deori community of Assam in the areas of language and literature, the Deori languages of Assam have established their own literary body for the development of their respective languages in the area of literature and various linguistic studies as well as their introduction in the system of education. Individual and also organization of Deori Sahitya Sabha attempts to contribute to such development. According to 1971 Census in Lakhimpur district there are 8,764 speaks in Deoris language and Dhemaji – 5,745 speaks in Deori language.

Due to contact with outside world and due largely to the communication facilities, changes in respect of certain items of material culture are notice among the Deoris.

Although pile dwelling is the prevailing practices, like that of the Deoris however do not cut into the vitals of the Deori social fabric. The Deoris are still maintaining most of their traditional socio-cultural traits intact at the same time keeping a window open for incorporating modernism without affecting the core of the culture.

2.24 Economic Life of the Deoris:

Man is not only a social animal; he is also an economic being. He is incessantly engaged in what are known as economic pursuits or activities. These economic activities are multifaceted, varied and complex that they constituted what is
known as an economy. The economy may be treated as system or a subsystem. It is a subsystem in the wider social system. It is possible to view the economy as the parent system and analyze its constituent clusters of activities – production, investment, and innovation and so on, as themselves constituting subsystem.

Occupationally tribes fall under four important categories namely:

(i) Food gathering tribes
(ii) Cattle rearing tribes
(iii) Tribes engaged in Cottage Industries.
(iv) Tribes engaged in cultivation.

One of the significant features of tribal economy is that the tribal produce what they badly need and also what can be produced according to their physical environments. There are only very few tribes which depend on industries or have actually setup some industries. There are same characteristics of tribal economy:

(i) Significant role of Agriculture:

A very large population of the tribal society depends on agriculture.

About 70% of the tribal population depends on agriculture.

(ii) No use of Technology:

Another feature is that the tribal people have not used technological advancement in developing their economy. They are still using old tools with the result that event with very hard labor they can produce much less. This results in their poverty and low economic standard.

(iii) Economic and Religious Purposes are Mixed:

It is difficult to think of tribal economy without their religious beliefs. Religion influence economy and vice verse and the both must go hand in
hand. While starting a new work for economic betterment religious
ceremonies must be performed.

(iv) **Collective organization:**

Tribal economy is more collective rather than individualistic while
producing a product care is second to see that the production helps in
meeting the needs of the community as a whole, product is divided
among the people and cultivation is done at one place.

(v) **Production for Consumption:**

Usually the tribes do not produce for trade, in fact they cannot. They
produce only that which is required for meeting the needs of their
families as well as those of their near relatives to whom they are under
obligation to provide. Food and clothing is given priority in production.

(vi) **Markets:**

Since the tribal only consumed what they purchase, therefore there is no
regular market where business like that of stocking competition etc. goes
on. According in business organizations there are no such regular
markets as these are found in other civilized societies.

(vii) **Superstitious:**

In all tribal economy superstitions play a very important role and will
embark on a new project unless these superstitions are wiped out. Due to
these superstitions they will not take start with any new work or system
on certain occasion.
(viii) Industrialization:

There is no industrialization in the tribal areas and even small-scale industries are not very much in existence. The main occupations of the people are food gathering, hunting, weaving etc.

There are some essential characteristics of tribal economy. But some of them are likely to be changed more or less. Yet economically they will take some time more before they will actually come forward with other section of our society. For this they will modernized themselves with technological advance and give up many superstition which are today very dear to them.

Like other tribes, the main occupation of Deoris is agriculture. They relish *Ahu* rice and *Sail Paddy*. Besides, they produced mustard seed, wheat, potatoes, pulses and varieties of winter crops. The Deoris still depend upon the traditional method of cultivation and except a very few families, who are adopting modern methods.

Deoris are very laborious. Both men and women engage themselves in agricultural operation. Except for plugging, cutting, trees and jungles, the women folk help their men in all other daily activities. Besides taking responsibility for their children, they harvesting, thrusting to paddy, rice pounding, firewood collecting, cutting cocking meal, for all the members of the family. The women folk are experts in weaving and almost every household possesses one loom and women feel ashamed of if they do not know the art of weaving. All the cloths for domestic used are produced in their family loom, which help in supporting the economic conditions. Rearing of *Endi, Nuni* and *Muga* and prepare cloths another important economic support for the family. They also rare fowls pigs, ducks, and cows for supporting their economy.
Thus the Deoris have an economic system in which they produce what they actually need leaving either no surplus or little surplus for sale.

Saving which leads to further investment is almost absent and most of the people are poverty stricken. Their economy condition is therefore, far from satisfactory and this is further aggravated by fact that a considerable perform of paddy produced by each family is used for brewing rice beer which is required for the performance of all social festivals and religious rites for domestic consumption and for the entertainment of guests as well.

But at present due to the spreading of education, science and technology more or less among them, the education are engaged themselves in different occupation and some of them are migrated to town area for their own requirement. And those service holders who live in village, they accept agriculture as principal part of occupation. The members of the landless and marginal landholders earn wages as agricultural labours and as daily labour or bring cultivation in rents land.

2.25 Observation:

Like other tribal society Deori is (indigenous peoples in the international context) the world over the undergoing a process of detribalization in the sense that they are increasingly becoming integral parts of the societies at large in different countries and in different walks of life. Therefore, such criteria as primitive way of life and shyness of contact, followed in India to schedule a tribe, are becoming more and more irrelevant with every passing day. Efforts for the removal of economic, educational, and other forms of backwardness of Deori society have been going on and although it may take some time to achieve the goals, the human development index of Deori society is likely to improve considerably in the decades to come.
Now the idea behind the sixth schedule is provide the Deoris people with a simple administration of their own (Deori Autonomy Council, D.A.C.). So that, they could safeguard their own customs and tradition and to provide then maximum autonomy in the management of their tribal affairs.