CHAPTER - 6

Comparative study between the situation
in the hills and the plains

Consists of four sections:

6.1. Present state of traditional institutions of
the Barmans with reference to the state
of those in the North Cachar Hills.

6.2. Rites and customs in existence with more
or less changed forms.

6.3. Impact of Non-Barmans influences on the
Barmans (Linguistic).

6.4. Impact of Non-Barmans influences on the
Barmans (Religions).
6.1. Present state of traditional institutions of the Barmans with reference to the state of those in the North Cachar Hills:

The reason for changes and differences between the Hill Dimasas and the Barmans in the respective traits:

For about two hundred years, the Dimasas lived in an atmosphere of comparative isolation. It was possible in the North Cachar Hills as the hilly terrain was covered with impenetrable forests. But as no people or race is able to retain perfectly free from mixture of blood and culture with other peoples, some traits of neighbouring tribes have crept into the Dimasa community. There have been a few instances of inter-marriages between the Dimasas and the neighbouring tribes. But, they are very few and have not been able to make much of an impact.

Their speech retains much more purity than that the Barmans. When the British rule was extended to the North Cachar Hills, they found the hills terribly ravaged by fierce Katcha Naga attacks, which depleted the Dimasa population almost to the point of non-entity. The colonial administration in the N.C. Hills existed from 1854 to 1947. There was no civil administration before 1879. The colonial military was present to combat the Nagas. Only in 1879, the civil administration was established with its head quarters at Gunjung. The first sub-divisional officer was C.A. Soppitt. Still the population in the hills was very small. When the British had taken over the Cachar plains in 1832, the reports came from the hills that the large scale Katcha Naga depredations had almost decimated the Dimasa population.
and barely a few thousands remained alive there. As a sequel to Sambudhan's uprising in 1882, the administration concentrating on law and order was streamlined. But administrative and expenditure policy of the British Government, left the village institutions undisturbed. Because of the British hands-off policy, the system of village Government of the Dimasas underwent much less changes than the Barman system of the rural government in the Cachar plains. Only the very important villages were situated in isolated corners of the hills connected by footpath, amidst thick jungles infested with wild animals. In such a situation, the hands-off policy served them well. Only the law and order policy became their primary concern.

In the plains, following the advent of British rule, the Barman system of village government had to lose much of its importance and influence. The reason is simple - the North Cachar Hills had a substantial Dimasa population, who lived in comparative isolation. But the Cachar plains were not. A Dimasa village is perfectly homogeneous and 'One village-One tribe' rule persists in every village. Here, the Barman system of village government is one of a people constituting a small percentage of total population inhabiting the Cachar plains. Naturally, their village governments regulated the life of a small part of the whole population of Barak plains. Their lives and activities were regulated more by general laws and regulations made by the British Government. In comparison with the administration in the hills, the administration during the early British period in the plains was more extensive and complex. Those running the village
government of the Barmans found themselves in a trying situation when they saw, they had to bend their system a very great deal to adjust with laws of the new government. They had now to refrain from doing things, which violated the British laws. Even in their internal matters, they had to see to it that their action did not invite troubles from the new government of the day. The establishment of the district council has inevitably led to great changes in the status of the village administration in the North Cachar Hills. On the contrary, the village administration in the Barak plains has not undergone any such changes owing to the existence of such a superior tribal establishment at the district label.

In the Barak Valley, the 'Kunang' is still selected by the adults in the Barman villages. But in the North Cachar Hills, it is the District Council, which appoints the Kunang of the village, though before making appointments, the District Council hears the opinion of the village communities. But the power to appoint or allow somebody to succeed to the post is vested in the District Council in the North Cachar Hills and not the village committees.

In the Barak Valley, it is the elders in the village who sit together and replace the Kunang as and when the necessity arises. But in the North Cachar Hills, it is the District Council replaces the Kunang if his removal from the post is needed and wanted by the villagers. The villagers, on their own cannot remove him.

The village administration of the Barman in the Barak Valley can directly approach the state government with request for financial help or prayer for some action. But in
the North Cachar Hills, no village administration can approach the state government for financial grants or on any other matter without going through the District Council.

The natural barriers in the hill along with the British policy of non-intervention in the working of these institutions had preserved the institutions in their original form. This colonial policy of non-intervention in the tribal areas was followed more or less in the whole of India, specially so in the North East in the North Cachar Hills, where 'One Village-One Tribe' rule is still followed and the Dimasas live in their villages undisturbed by the presence of any other people not conversant with their system. This insularity of their physical existence has allowed them to live with themselves. The administrative changes came in the wake of the Mantagu-Chelmsford Reforms. The reforms had given the government wide powers in regard to the tribal areas. Empowered by the government of India act 1919, to declare any territory of India as backward area, the Governor General in council on January 3, 1921 declared North Cachar Sub-division of the Cachar District as one of the backward tract.*

Two important Acts (1) The Administrative Reform Act 1919 and (2) The Government of India Act 1935 had further strengthened the isolation of the hills from the plains. The Act of 1935 was very comprehensive. Under the provision of

* : Above comments were made by Dr. T. Bhattacharjee and authority on the Socio-Political Development in North Cachar Hills in course of prolonged discussions made on the subject.
this Act, the provincial legislative assemblies and councils and the ministries headed by the Prime Minister responsible to these, legislatures were created. The hill areas of Assam were divided into two categories of administration, the Excluded Area and the Partially Excluded Areas. Though administratively the part of Cachar District, the N.C.Hills was placed India the category of Excluded Area. It meant the administration was placed directly under the Governor of Assam who ruled all such areas through a special officer appointed by him. To an observer, it did not make much difference in the administration because the policy throughout the British rule was one of isolation from the general administration in the plains attended with the policy of non-intervention in the internal matter of a tribal society which served them well in spite of some rebellious hiccups like Sambudhan’s Revolt (1882) and the Kuki Rebellion (1918-1919).

The tribal people were isolated from the effective system of administration and for an ordinary tribal, the administration at Haflong was a distant entity. The people continued as if no sweeping administrative changes had occurred at the top. The only difference was that they got a respite from regular inter-tribal feuds. But in the plains, all people having to abide by common laws which were enforceable and many of which directly contradicted the Barman social laws, it became impossible for the Barman rural administration to retain their complete authority, as they were the part of same political system. There are some reasons. Firstly, as the villages increased in numbers, the
percentage of purely and predominately Barman villages went on falling. The reason is simple. In the plains, the 'One Village-One Tribe' principle could not be followed and for peculiar social and political situations, it was not possible to isolate one group from all kinds of interactions.

The partition of the country brought in its trail large influxes of migration into Barak Valley. Some of them penetrated deep into the interiors of the valley. Though the Barmans' Bengalee connection had been in existence for many generations, the new migration of the people, tended to bring both the communities, much closer in the plains. The history of the tribe points to an increase in its southward exodus from their bases in North Cachar Hills during a few decades before the start of the 19th century. A Dimasa prince Laxmi Chandra had entered into wedlock about 1745 with Koch Princess Kanchani of the plains. Her parents did not have a male issue who could sit on the throne. The Koch rule was the remnant of the Koch princess in the valley from the time of Chila Rai's invasion and conquest. The legendary Koch military general Chila Rai's forces humbled the pride and might of the Ahoms in the 16th century.

The Barman village administration or self-government of the people, who are numerically very small, still exists in the valley. The exodus from the North Cachar Hills brought only the elite of the tribe who followed the king. It was quite possible that the migration of the Dimasas occurred in phases. Unlike in the hills, the plains-dwelling Barmans live now mostly in the villages with mixed population. They seem to be satisfied with the conditions but the Barmans
traditional institutions thrive well in the villages where the Barmans are predominant. The provision of the sixth schedule had given the Dimasas a political institution, which attracts the attention of the budding politicians to the hills and the village administration is now under ‘Gaonbura’ there. As the village population belongs to one community only, there is a greater chance of the village administration to survive. This explains why the tribal institution in the plains shows the signs of decline. The Barmans being Hindus, their co-habitation with the Bengalee Hindus is possible.

Autonomous District Council was established in 1952 along with all other hill districts of Assam except Naga Hills. The establishment of this apex tribal body with extensive legal and statutory powers at the district level has certainly ensured the greatest tribal autonomy in the North Cachar Hills has had. But on the other hand, it has also begun to undercut the autonomy of the village administration. The village government can pray for grant directly only from the District Council. It has no authority to pray or demand grants directly from the state government without going through the District Council. The District Council has the right not to approve its prayer. The District Council can stop any welfare work undertaken by village government calling it against the interest or welfare of the people. It seems that the only unfettered authority, the village government enjoys, is the one in connection with the matters concerning the community rituals.

But the village administration of the Barmans in the Cachar and Hailakandi Districts enjoy full autonomy in their
internal matters. It is only the village adults who select the person to be appointed to the post of the Kunang and other officials. They can demand government grants directly. Their physical sphere may be shrinking. But the authority and the autonomy of the village administration in the internal matters still remain intact.

The only thing, the Barman rural administration in the Cachar and Hailakandi Districts find it difficult to continue the one concerning the ritual worship and propitiation of the village deity. There is a rule stating that no person should walk into and go out of village during the performance of such rituals. It is quite impossible to apply this law strictly in the Cachar and the Hailakandi District, where the Barman does not have a sizable numerical presence. A non-Barman in the village knowingly or unknowingly may violate this law. Such violations according to the Barman bring bad luck. The quarrels arise over the violation of such rites between the Barmans and the Non-Barmans in the Barak at the time of observing the ceremony.

6.2. Rites and customs in existence with more or less changed forms:

Birth:
While in the North Cachar Hills, the husband of a pregnant Barman (the Dimasa) woman, would perform the worship
Now in the Barak Valley, when a Barman woman is going to give birth to a child, the villagers are informed of this about two months before the birth. They observe a ritual called 'Gishmitiya Modai'. The family also makes an offer of rice beer to Sibrai. The ritual is a puja in which the traditional Barman priest 'Hojai' and an assistant priest called 'Barua' do the priestly duties. In the puja, which is finished by noon, a pair of pigeons and a drake is sacrificed. The tribal mid-wife 'Hojaiju' dedicates a pair of doves to the Sun-God. The mother and the child remain in a one-month-long period of impurity after birth. On the 9th day after the birth, the child’s head is ritually shaved. Sometimes within a year, the 'Hojaiju' and her assistant are ceremonially given cloth or money or both in presence of other villagers. This rite is called 'Nanabesheng Jiriba' or 'Nandao Shaiba' and it is still observed in the community. The Barman naming rite is the same as observed by Hindus.

The original system of the Barman marriage has been narrated in the chapter 3, concerning social system of the Barmans. Though the traditional system of marriage outwardly remains by and large the same, it has in fact undergone a radical change. The usual system of marriage is now, a negotiated marriage, solemnized in the Hindu way though rites

1: Danda. D., Among the Dimasas of Assam, P - 22,40.
of Baropan, Chhotopan* and the custom of paying bride-price (Kalti) are still observed. Though Kalti has still to be paid in every marriage, a considerable number of parents of the educated girls have now to give dowry in cash or kind to have the best available bride-grooms for their daughters. Barring Chhotopan, Baropan and Mayofa-Garba, all marriage rites are now performed according to Bengalee Hindu customs, Bengalee Brahmin priests perform these. These priests are the descendants of 12 Brahmins who were said to have been brought here by king Krishna Chandra. Unlike the birth rites, the system of marriage has undergone a considerable change.

**Death rites:**

The traditional Barman death rites which include some of their old tribal ones (already narrated elsewhere) and the rest i.e. Brahmanical rites are still observed. The Barmans observe the Shraddha ceremony on the 13th day after the death. Shraddha is a Sanskrit word, meaning, offer of respect of prayer to the deceased. This ceremony of Shraddha came...

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Foot Note: The two rites pertaining to the settlement of the marriage, i.e., 'Chotopan' and 'Baropan' described by Goswami are as follows:

Whenever the parents of a bride-groom get information of a prospective bride and wish to get the marriage between them solemnised they would go to the house of the girl with a Chotopan (smallpan) along with elderly kinsman. They bow down to the parents and elderly superiors of the girl and offer Chotopan to them. After marriage proposal properly discussed, they fixed the date for Baropan (bigpan), another ritual performance, amount of kalti (Bride price) to be paid and the date of marriage. On the day of 'Baropan' the boy's father or guardian visits the house of the girl with 'Baropan' and one or two Laothai (container of 'Zu', a kind of wine. The container is made of dried guard) full of 'Zu'. He bows down to the parents and elderly persons present at that time and offers the articles to them. This function is known as 'Laothailangba'.

Foot Note: Twelve Aditya Brahmins; An article by S. Chattarjee published Dainik Jugashankha, 09-08-2001 has mentioned that Aditya Brahmin Priests were the advisors of the Kachari King.
down to the Barmans when they embarrassed conventional form of Hinduism. According to some, during the observance of Shraddha ceremony, the Barmans used to sing the Kirtans composed in praise of Lord Krishna by King Govinda Chandra. But this is not in practice now. Again instead of observing the elaborate and expensive Brahminical Shraddha rites, some followers of Swami Swarupananda hold a common prayer meeting in accordance with the advice of the saint³.

**Family Life:**

The Barmans are a monogamous community where cases of bigamy and polygamy are exceptional. Goswami found a Barman having two wives in Lakhinagar.⁴ The Barmans are traditionally a monogamous society where there was and is no child-marriage or marriage against the will of the boys and girls. About 75 percent of the Barman families are nuclear, each of which consists of a man, his wife and children. The rest are joint families. A joint family consists of two or more nuclear families living in the same house and having a common kitchen and owning common property. A youngman previously used to live with his wife in his parents' house for about 7 (seven) years after marriage but the youngman now built and began to live in separate houses two or three years after they are married. Thus, the Barmans traditional family system remains what traditionally it was before. So, the change that has occurred

⁴ : Ibid.
in the Barman family system is limited to speedier breaking up of joint families.

Religion:
All Barmans, barring the very few converted to Christianity, are Hindus. When they embraced Hinduism they began to identify their female goddess of war Ranachandi with Kali. In the same way, they identified their traditional God Sibrai with Lord Shiva and his wife goddess Gamadhi with Durga. But Ranachandi, Sibrai and Gamadhi began to be called by different names and worshipped in the Brahminical manner.

Festivals:
The principal festival ‘Gaddi Sainjara’ is still observed in every house. But the second most important festival ‘Garba Puja’ already described in relevant chapter, performed in varied manners. Its observance is expensive and therefore, it is not observed in all villages. In some villages, Kali puja is taking its place. But, where Garba Puja is celebrated, non-Barmans are also invited now to take part in it.

Village Administration:
In every Barman inhabited village, the headman or Kunang, his assistant or Dilo and Habisgao (bearer of Kunang’s messages) are elected by the adult male members of the families. Previously, the Kunang’s necessary qualifications were seniority, honesty, courage, intelligence
and being noble. Now, the Kunang has to have an additional qualification, which is the ability to negotiate and deal with outsiders. But the Kunangs and his other officials’ authority and jurisdictions have diminished to a considerable extent to adopt themselves to the need of time and for the sake of existence and continuity, the extent of reduction depending mainly on the percentages of the Barman’s population in different villages.

6.3. Impact of Non-Barmans influences on the Barmans (Linguistic):

The Dimasas and the Barmans who are said to be a branch of the great Bodo group, have their own distinct linguistic identity also. They had not and still do not have any written literature even from when their written history is known, i.e. in the 13th century. But they were in some respects more advanced than their invading rivals, Ahoms. But while the Ahoms had their own written literature, the Kacharis had none. Their language has always remained spoken. It has been subjected to the influence of the Assamese and the Bengali languages. The influence of the Bengalee is much more prominent than that of Assamese because of the geographical proximity. Today, while in conversation among themselves in their mother tongue, they use many Bengali words, phrases and idioms, the Dimasa words for which they cannot recall. Instead of Dimasa equivalents for some of the Bengali words, they usually use the words from the latter. Some of the Dimasa words or names were Sanskritised. The name of Dimapur,
which remained their capital till the first part of the fourth decade of the 16th century, was Sanskritised into Hidimbapur to show that the Pandavas of Mahabharata were related to the ancient kings of the Kachari dynasty. Hidimba whose descendants they claimed themselves to be, was married to the second Pandava Bhima. They began to call their kingdom 'Hairamba Kingdom' and Hairamba is an adjective form of the word 'Hidimba'. In forming the adjective, a rule of Sanskrit grammar was followed. Later, Hidimba was often changed into 'Heromba'. Thus came about a big change in the meaning because Heromba means 'Ganesha', the elephant-headed god of success worshipped mainly in South and western India. The Hindu business community worships 'Ganesha' as the god of prosperity. In the news commentaries in Dimasa broadcast on the radio often they use non-Dimasa word, as the word stock of the language are limited.

The influence of Bengalee on the one hand and the small size of the population, on the other make it very difficult for the people to have a literature in their own language though a number of educated Barmans' are working for making advancement in the field of literature.

6.4. Impact of Non-Barmans influences on the Barmans (Religions):

The original religious beliefs of the Barmans have been discussed in the chapter 3, pertaining to the topic. The Dimasas originally followed an animistic religion like other primitive tribal communities. But at least by middle of the
16th century, they had begun to be influenced by Hinduism. Their kinsmen, the Chutias, worshipped various forms of Kali with the aid of Deoris or tribal priests and not by the Brahmins. The favorite form in which they worshipped her was 'Kesai Kanti'\(^5\) (the eater of raw flesh). The Kacharis also worshipped her and still they worship. The Bengalees also have accepted her as Kali. Her name has undergone a little change and she is now called 'Kacha Kanti'\(^6\). A Kachari king established a temple for goddess at Udharbond and the temple has now become an important religious place of the valley. But, since their ceremonial conversion to Hinduism, Brahmin priests have been performing the rites. The priest’s job is hereditary and they belong to two Brahmin families of two different ‘Gotras’. The term ‘Gotras’ is a Sanskrit word meaning Hindu ancestral clan. Every Hindu family passes through a period of impurity after a birth or death. A priest whose family is passing through the period of impurity cannot perform any priestly duty until the period of impurity is over. The Kachari king who established the temple, appointed two families of priests. So that, when one family is in a period of impurity, a priest from the other could discharge the priestly duties at the temple. As ‘Kesai-Kanti’ has come to be identified with Kali, so the tribal god Sibrai and his wife Gamadhi are now identified respectively with lord Shiva and Durga.

There was also a goddess of war who was worshipped during the Kachari rule a little away from Khaspur. Human sacrifices were made to propitiate her. The Barmans still look upon the place as an important one. The goddess is called Ranachandi, Soppitt wrongly mentions her name as Ram Chandi. Again, Chandi is a Sanskrit word and thus cannot be the Goddess's original tribal name. Thus, it is safe to conclude that her original tribal name was Sanskritised into Ranachandi. It is worth mentioning here that even when the king engaged Brahmin priests for the observances of Hindu rites, only the native Kachari priests could perform human sacrifices.

It has already been mentioned that the history of the Kacharis is silent about the period of about 60 years from the time of Chila Rai's invasion, which took place about the middle of the 16th century. After this period, the first king we come to know of bore is the Hindu name Jasa Narayan. His Hindu name shows that the community had already come under the influence of Hinduism. In the early years of this century, a silver coin was found near Maibong. The coin bore a date equivalent to 1583 and was issued by 'Jasa Narayana Deb' a worshipper of Hara Gauri Siva and Durga, of the line of Hachensa. This also shows how greatly Hinduism influenced the Kacharis.

It was already accepted by the Bengalee Hindus close to the Kings that the Kacharis were descendants of Hidimba, the

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Rakshasi or non Aryan wife of Bhima, the 2nd Pandava of the Mahabharata. A Rakshasi is a woman from the non-Aryan stock, indigenous in origin. Implicit in this invention of the Kachari ancestry was the contention that their Hinduhood was not full. When the king, Krishna Chandra one day, expressed the resentment at the Brahmins' reluctance to take water for drinking from his hand (i.e. water touched by him), the later invented a subtle way-out to extricate the king from the ignominy. The Kachari king Krishna Chandra, who ruled about 190 years after Jasa Narayana, observed a ritual at the instance of the Brahmins. It was the pretension of the king and his Brahmin advisors on social and religious matters that the Kacharis were pure on their paternal side but a little impure on their maternal side. He also consoled Krishna Chandra by saying, it was possible for them to get rid of this impurity. He narrated the procedure by following which, he said, Krishna Chandra and his people would become as pure Hindus as he himself; and Krishna Chandra also followed his advice. The story is thus told by Guha:

"A big Mazumder was also the leader of the Hindu community then. To learn his view on acceptance of drinking water (from the hand of a Barman), he put a sword and some water and said to the Mazumder, 'which of the two do you like to have?'. Mazumder took up the sword and said proudly, if one can save his caste, he is ready to lay down his life for the wise act. The king then remained silent for a little while. He thought why the Brahmins could not drink water touched by the Barmans though they were descendants of Bhima.

8: Guha, U. C., Kacharer Itibritya, P-112.
continue to sadden him, one day he said to the Brahmin Pandits, "you glorify us as the descendants of Bhima but you do not accept drinking water from our hand. I am very perturbed for I do not understand the reasons for this". Then the Brahmins present pacified him, saying, "the water touched by you will be acceptable as soon as the fault lying on your maternal side is done away with".

A big image of a cow was made of brass metal covered with a thin layer of gold. The king and his ministers passed through the image and thus had a new birth. It is said that many Kacharis got themselves placed in the Kshatriya caste in the same way. The penance being over, the Brahmins divided the sheets of gold among themselves and then they began the feast of the Brahmins. Udharban was then known for good beaten rice (chida), curd and molasses, when the Brahmins had sat down to feast, the king served them waters with his own hand.

Today, most of the Barmans in Cachar are followers of the kind of Hinduism practised mainly by the Bengalee Hindus. There are also a good number of followers of the religious leaders or 'Gurus' like Swami Sarupanada and Anukul Thakur. The Bengalees form the majority of the valley’s population and majority of the Bengalees are Hindus. The Hinduism practised by them is somewhat different in type practised in other parts of the country. The influences of the Bengalee religious rituals are pronounced on the Barmans. But, there

9 : Ibid.
are still traces of their primitive religious beliefs, which are seen when they make offerings to the spirits through their Hojai but as the modernity began to intrude into their lives, the remnants of their tribal past also began to recede to the background.

The Barmans are the exceptions among the North Eastern tribes in one respect. The Christianity could not make much headway among the Barmans and the Dimasas. They live in the villages close to the hills where many tribes converted to Christianity live as their neighbours. It can be safely concluded that some Christian Missionaries had tried hard to convert Barmans to Christianity. In the village of Doloicherra, according to the field visits, there was a house with thatched roof where a cross was visible implying that it was a Christian religious place. But, there were and still are now no Christian Barmans excepting a very few who perhaps hailed from outside. Local newspaper, the Sonar Cachar, last year, reported (1999) a church had been burnt down in a village mainly inhabited by the Barmans within the Dholai Police Station area. The burnt house seem to be one like the above mentioned 'Church' at Doloicherra. The report raised some controversy and some even denied that the burnt down house was a church and it was claimed that there could not be any Church in the village. Very recently on February 13th 2000\textsuperscript{10}, a few heavily armed people appeared at the 'Lower Ludhi Punji', a few kilometer's away from the border of

\textsuperscript{10} : The Sonar Cachar, News report on 13\textsuperscript{th} Feb, 2000.
Pathicherra. They distributed some garments and household things among the villagers who were all Dimasas. After the distribution of these things, the armed visitors demanded that all the Dimasas, there must at once embrace Christianity in their presence.

The news of the incident somehow reached some of the insurgents of the Dimasa outfit 'Dima Halam Daoga' who at once rushed to the spot and a fight ensued. The Christian extremists fled the area and it came to light later on, that, one of the Christian extremists was an Executive Councillor of the Autonomous District Council. It is also strange that the name of the Executive Councillor is yet to be known. But it is worth mentioning here that at least a son of an Executive Councillor was among the extremist belonging to the D.H.D. who was recently killed in an army operation. It should also be mentioned here that unlike the groups, of Christian extremists who came to convert the people in Lodhi, the D.H.D insurgents are not known for any religious zeal. The D.H.D members cannot be called religious extremists. There are also a few organisations engaged in promoting unity among the Hindus and preventing conversion of Hindus to Christianity or Islam. But they are all Indian organisation like 'Viswa Hindu Parisad' and the 'Banabasi Kalyan Ashram'. They also work for social upliftment and spread of education among the tribal in the North East.

But, there is nothing to show that these Hindu organisations made an attempt at forcible conversion of Christians and Muslims to Hinduism, so, the large-scale conversions to Hinduism from other religions are not
anticipated. The social relations between the original and the newly converts to Hinduism are not smooth always. The inter-marriages among them are not reported. On the otherhand, the missionaries of the different Churches are ever willing to take into their fold new converts. It is worth mentioning here that the head of a Hindu family belonging to the village of Dudhpatil received surgical treatment for leprosy at a hospital run by the Christian Missionaries (Makunda). He received free treatment on condition that one member of the family should become Christian. The tribals being economically very poor, and educationally backward, often succumb to the pressure for conversion. The poor Barmans too are under the pressure.

The Ludhi episode might be a small event in the history of conversion in the North East but its significance cannot be minimised. The Barmans who are recognised as a scheduled tribe in the Barak Valley, are politically in the fringe areas. Generally, such fringe tribal populations are effected by the conversion in the periphery and not in the central areas.