CHAPTER VII

CHANGES IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

7.1: Religious Beliefs:

Many of the religious beliefs and rituals are intimately related with the cycle of agricultural activities. Besides, the supernatural beliefs, these are also concerned with every stage of life which are performed with rituals and ceremonies right from the birth to death of an individual. They are categorised into two sections-followers of bedang system and followers of ved system of religious rituals which is already mentioned in chapter VI.

The religious rites and rituals that are performed by the followers of bedang may be categorized into three levels like - the family level, in which only the family members participate in the performance of the religious rites. Secondly the religious rituals performed in the descent group level, in which the whole descent group members take part. The third level is the village level religious rituals, in which the whole village people perform together the worship of certain Gods and deities. (Similar view point was expressed by Duwara.)

7.2: Religious Ceremonies Performed by the Family

The religious performances that are observed by the family members includes the ceremonies performed in the family level. In this level an individual family may perform the rituals like Bhakat Sewa, Morol Puja, Dhanor-Ag-Ana, Birth-ritual, Death-ritual etc.

An individual family may also perform various worships to satisfy the spirits whose evil eyes may cause harm to the family members and their belongings. When a family runs through some problems, then it observes certain rituals according to the advices of the fortune-teller the ojha, to break the impact of the malevolent spirits by the observance of rituals so that the whole family gets rid of the problems it has been facing.
which they recite the holy book the *Bhagavata* throughout the night. They are treated with good food according to the capacity of the concerned family. On the thirteenth day at noon the family of the deceased gives a vegetarian feast called *Vaishnava-bhojana* to the *bhakats*, guests and the relatives. After giving this feast, the family members are considered to be purified and they can live a normal socio-cultural life.

*****
On the third day of the death the tilani is observed. In tilani the khel members (bhakats) who took part in the cremation of the dead come to attend and they are treated with pitha-guri (rice-powder), milk and bananas. These items of food normally come from the co-villagers. The bhakats recite the devotional prayer (nam-dhara) on the occasion. It is compulsory to observe the ritual pollution till the day of tilani by the family and descent members. During this period of ritual pollution they are restricted to do the day to day activities of life, such as entry into the goshai-ghar, ploughing, using hoe to un-earth the soil, planting and harvesting, entering into the granary, eating non-vegetarian food etc. After the observation of tilani the members of the descent group can do all activities of daily life except entering into goshai-ghar and consuming non-vegetarian foods.

On the tenth day the ceremony of ‘doha’ is observed in which the sons shave their heads and wear new clothes. The female giyati cooks rice and curry in new earthen pot (mola) and the family members offer these to the deceased. The khel members (bhakats) present on the occasion are treated with mah-prasad and fruits, and they recite the holy book (puthi-parhe). The khel members associated with cremation of the deceased become ritually purified from the day of doha ceremony and they can associate themselves with other socio-cultural activities of the khel as well as the village and the society.

The day eleventh is the day of shraddha ceremony. On that occasion the soul of the deceased is offered the cooked foods and respect to the deceased, the family members pray to leave all the expectations of life and depart to the abode of the dead and bless the relatives alive. The bhakats chant the prayer through the means of nam-prasanga. The family members of the deceased treat the guests and the bhakats with mah-prasad and sira (rice-flakes), curd and jagary.

On the twelveth day there is no ritualistic celebration in the day time. From the evening of this day the bhakats recite the orekha recitation (orekha-path) in
a person dies the message is spread among the co-villagers and the *khel* members (*bhakats*) by the messenger (now-a-days through mobile phone). Each family has a particular place for cremation in the cremation ground according to their descent group, which is known as *hatham*. The dead body is not taken out of the house just after the death occurs, but it is dressed with new clothes, offering of cooked rice is performed as the means of last food of life. The woman who takes the main part in cooking of rice and its offering to the deceased is called *giyati*. Similarly the male *giyatis*, who are called *kath-giyatis* performed the work of preparation of the pyre in the cremation ground along with the *khel*-members (*bhakats*) and the co-villagers, which is constructed in the north-south direction. After the pyre is ready for cremation, the dead body is brought to the cremation ground on a bier carried by the sons and other relatives. The rice cooked by the female *giyati* is kept in front of the pyre as offering to the deceased. As the bier carriers reached the cremation ground taking the corpse, they circle around the pyre for 9 times in the case of male deceased, 7 times in the case of female deceased and then put the corpse on the pyre keeping the head toward the south direction. After putting the corpse on the pyre the sons of the deceased circle around the pyre and the dead body, each of them holding fire flame lighted with dry bundle of bamboo sticks (*jur*). They circle 7 or 9 times for female deceased or male deceased respectively and in each revolution they touch the pyre with the fire flame near the mouth of dead body, which is called *mukhagni*. After the *mukhagni* the male *giyatis* set the fire in the pyre thoroughly and look after till the end of the cremation. When the cremation is over all men participating in it takes a bath in near by river or pond and take the heat of the fire lighted by the *giyati* and return to their homes. On reaching home each of them has to take bath again at the gate of the campus (*paduli-mukh*) and change the clothes before entering into the house. There after some times all of them get together at the courtyard of the family of the deceased to discuss about the observation of rites regarding the death ceremony.
After the completion of the revolution and *mukhagni* the two male *giyatis* light the pyre thoroughly and they take care of the pyre till the end of the cremation. After completion of crematory functions, they come back to the family of the deceased and then the *giyatis* and the other villagers go to their home.

The post mortuary rites for the purification of the death have to be completed within 15 days to one month according to the convenient to the family. But it must be completed within the month. During these days the family members cannot consume any non-vegetarian food, oil, spices etc. They consume these food items after the observance of the death ritual in which the co-villagers and relatives are treated with a feast according to the economic condition of the family.

After one year the annual ceremony is observed which is known as *pat-lutiwa*. In this occasion two red fowls are sacrificed and the meat is cooked and offered in the name of the deceased on a plantain leaf with cooked rice and other edibles as a meal and keep in an abandoned place, a little distance away from the home. The remaining portion of the meat is eaten by the family members. This ceremony is generally observed by the family members only. No guests and relatives are invited in this function. When food is offered to the deceased the family members pray accordingly; “*Aji tumak bhag-jug dilu; tumar jodi kiba akha-issa asil ai bhag loi joa*”. The meaning of which is as “Today you have been offered this share of food. If you had any expectation, please take this share and leave”. This way the mortuary rites are completed. The formal death ritual is celebrated later on altogether with the deceased of the descent group known as *karam*, which has been elaborated in chapter VII.

6. 4.1: Changing Trend in Death Ritual

Usually among the Hinduised section of them dead body is cremated. In case of death caused by suicide, drowning and snake-bite etc., the body is not cremated, but buried. The dead body of the child is also buried. Normally when
the Vaishnavite section this marriage is prevalent, but they do not use rice beer in the entertainment of the guests and the villagers instead they entertained them with tea, snacks etc.

6.4: Death Ritual

Among them who follow the bedang system, the dead bodies of adult persons are cremated in the cremation ground and children are buried in the ground. The funeral activities require three persons of which two are males and one is female. They are called giyati. The female giyati performs the activities in the household of the dead and the male giyatis perform the activities in the cremation ground. They should be from the other clans than that of the dead. The female giyati prepares a paste of black grams and turmeric (mah-haldhi) grinding these ingredients to bath the corpse and she take active part in the bathing activities of the corpse. She also cooks rice and boils an egg for the dead. Then she mixes the cooked rice and boiled egg and packs in a banana leaf. This packet of rice and egg is assumed as the food for the departed soul.

At the same time the two male giyatis with the other members of the khel/village and relatives of the deceased person prepare the pyre for cremation of the corpse in the cremation ground. After the preparation of the pyre the packet of food containing boiled rice and egg is kept in front of the pyre and the dead body is carried around the pyre and the packet of food with the bier carried by the sons and relatives. The revolution is done for 7 rounds, if the deceased is a female and for 9 rounds if the deceased is a male. After this the dead body is kept on the pyre keeping the head towards south direction. The pyre is constructed in north-south direction. Then the sons of the deceased circle around the pyre and the dead body each of them holding a fire flame lighted with dry bundle of bamboo stick (jur). This is also taken for 7 rounds if the deceased is a female and 9 rounds if the deceased is a male. After each revolution they touch the pyre with the fire flame near the mouth portion of the dead body, which is known as mukhagni.
the Brahman caste. So they have trained some persons of their own community to perform the rituals of marriage according to the Vedic system. But the priests of their own community too started demanding the same amount of remuneration and food items (*manani-bhujani*) from the clients (hosts), which lead many of them to accept the Vaishnavite system of marriage through the recitation of the holy books *Bhagavata* and *Kirtana* by the *bhakats*.

In the marriage through the Vaishnavite system the other activities are the same except the Brahman Priest performing the Vedic rituals of marriage. In this system the *bhakats* perform the marriage rituals by the recitation of either *Bhagavata* or *Kirtana* with the performance of the devotional prayers (*nam-prasanga*) and through the rules of the *Bhakatia* marriage system following the book *Biya Sakamor Acharan Bidhi*.

6.3.8: Joron-Biya or marriage by giving dresses and ornaments to the bride

This is a form of arranged marriage, but not so much detail and expensive like that of bor-biya. This type of marriage is preferred by the families of low income. For the purpose of the parents or guardians of the boy and the girl discuss the matter. If they arrive at a consensus a date is fixed for the *joron* ceremony. On that day the groom’s party consisting of elderly relatives proceeds to the bride’s house with dresses and ornaments for the girl and three *bhars* shoulder loads containing baskets full of edibles like fried rice powder (*sandah*), rice-cakes (*pitha*), curd, jagary, betel leaves and nuts and pots of rice beer. The groom’s party offers the dresses and ornaments to the bride’s father and he gives to the bride and asks to accept these in the presence of all. The acceptance of the dresses and ornaments by the bride indicates her consent of marriage. Then the groom and the bride bow before the persons present there for blessing for their happy coupled life. The guests are then entertained by the bride’s father with rice beer. After the entertainment of the guests and villagers the groom’s party returns home along with the bride and the couple starts living as husband and wife there after.
bride’s side or groom’s side. After completion of these rituals bride bows before the groom and both of them are considered as husband and wife.

After completion of the marriage ceremony the bride and the groom are taken inside the house and the groom performs certain rituals of gift giving (mandhora) to the family members of the bride and takes some light food and at that time the bride gets ready to leave her parental house with the groom. After completion of the rituals inside the house the bride and groom leave the bride’s house and start the return journey, the groom taking the bride to his home. On the arrival of the married couple in the gate of groom’s house the mother of the groom welcomes them inside the robha of their house and seats the bride and the groom on mats and the friends and relatives of the groom, to make merry start the game of ring-hiding inside rice (anguthi-lukowa-khel), in which only the couple can take part. As this game and fun is ends the bride is taken inside the house in which she starts her new life. After taking some rest the bride gifts (mandhora) to the elderly persons of the groom’s family and are introduced with one another. On the second night the bhakats (persons who perform devotional functions) are called to recite the book called khoba-khobi and advice the couple to live a good and happy married life and give them blessings.

Usually on the eighth day of the marriage the groom and the bride go to the bride’s house in which they are treated with eight varieties of foods. This occasion is called as athmangala or’gharsina. Though it is performed on the eighth day of marriage, yet it is usually performed with the convenience of the bride’s family on some day just after marriage.

Though the Vedic system of marriage is performed by the Brahman priests among the caste Hindus, yet according to Padmeswar Pator, an informant, those people of the Tiwa community who follow the ved-system, earlier invited the Brahman Priests to solemnise the marriage, but the demands of the priest for money and other gifts (dan-dakshina) made them vulnerable to be exploited by
worship the reception of the invitee and guests go on for the whole day long in both the families of bride and the groom.

On that day the bride and the groom have to take bath twice with the water collected two times by the mothers and other women (aiyatis) in their houses respectively. The collection of water is done in the same manner as on the previous evening for adhibash. The bride baths two times on the day of marriage. The first bath takes at noon and the second bath before the arrival of the groom and his party for the purpose of marriage. In the same way the groom takes his first bath at noon of the day and second bath before getting ready to start the journey to the bride’s house with his friends, relatives and co-villagers for marriage.

The groom before starting his journey to bride’s house bows before his parents and elderly persons present there and in the family prayer house (goshai-ghar) and then starts the journey. On the arrival of the groom and his party at the gate of the robha (marriage hall) of the bride’s house the women (aiyatis) present there ululate (uruli) and sing marriage songs (biya-nam). The groom and his party is wel-comed by the aged responsible persons of bride’s family. In the gate of the robha the groom has to stand on a wooden stool (pira) and his feet are washed by the younger sister of the bride and there after the groom and his party enter into the robha and the groom is seated on a low wooden stool (bor-pira) already prepared for him in the mandap of marriage and the other members of his party sit on the chairs arranged inside the robha. After the sitting of the groom and his party inside the robha in the court-yard of the bride’s house the marriage rituals are started by the priest who has come with the groom’s party. The priest performs the marriage rituals according to the Vedic tradition. When the actual time marriage (bibah-lagna) comes the bride is called to come into the mandap for marital tie with the groom. On arrival of the bride at the marriage mandap, with the recital of Vedic hymns by the priest in the witness of hom-agni the marriage lock (lagun-gathi) is tied by some of the female relatives present there from either
marking) with knife and then filled in the pot by three times sub-merging it into water and then return home. During this occasion the women sing songs (*biyanam*) related to marriage, ululate (*uruli*) which is considered as the symbol of holiness. On reaching home the mother of the bride sprinkles water on the roof of the houses, there after the bride is taken for bathing. The place of bathing is prepared with four banana saplings which is called *bei*. Then at first takes seven revolutions around the *bei*, led by the mother. During the revolutions a young girl sprinkles water mixed with curd at the bride in each revolution. After seven revolutions the bride is seated inside the *bei* on a stool called *pira*. Then she is bathed by massaging a paste of black-gram and turmeric (*mah-haladhi*) which is sent by the groom’s family through the *joron* party. This bathing of the bride is known as *nuowa*. After bathing (*nuon*) the bride is lifted in arms by a male relative (maternal uncle, elder brother, brother-in-law etc.) and take to *robha-tol* (marriage hall) and seated in front of the *maral* (*mandap*) of marriage, where she bowed down and takes the blessings of God. On this day the bride, her mother and the elder male person (normally the father) who conducts the rituals of *sampradan* or *kanya-dan* have to keep fasting throughout the day and in the evening only take boiled rice called *habis*. The ritualistic performance of this evening is known as *adhibash*. Similar activities are performed in the groom’s house also.

On the marriage day in the very morning the bride is seated on a wooden stool (*pira*) near the threshold of the main house and the mother in presence of other female relatives massages the bride with betel leaves sunk in a mixer of curd and sesamum from head to feet for three times. This ritual is called *daiyan-dia*. After this ritual in the morning the worship of the ancestors called *na-purusar sraddha* is performed at noon. The ancestor worship is done by the father of the bride or other aged man of the father’s generation of the same descent. The ancestor worship is performed according to the Vedic rules conducted by the Brahman-Priest (*Bamun*). The same type of ancestor worship *na-purusar sraddha* is also performed in the groom’s house. After the completion of the ancestor
presented to the bride’s party on reaching of their house of marriage. They also take with them a pot filled with curd, a pot filled with water a bunch of areca nuts and betel leaves and a pair of coconut, a suitcase containing dresses, ornaments and other cosmetic items for the bride, turmeric and black-gram and items of edibles especially sweets.

On reaching the bride’s house the joron party is welcomed by the mother of the girl with friends and relatives. The mother of the boy and mother of the girl, three times exchange the sarai (a peculiar Assamese stand-disc with cover) filled with betel leaves and areca nuts and other pan masalas. Then the boy’s mother and other females of the joron party (aiyatis) are seated on mats already arranged in the marriage hall robha near the maral (mandap). The males of the party sit on the chairs arranged in the other side of maral. Then the girl is taken out by the female relatives and seated on the mat readily prepared for the purpose, in front of the maral. Then the boy’s mother along other female members of the joron party open the suitcase and the items such as ornaments, hair-oil, mirror, combs, dresses, handkerchief etc. are taken out and offered to the girl on a sarai. Then the mother of the boy and other female relatives give these items one by one to the girl to be put on. After that ceremony the girl becomes the bride and she bows before the maral to get the blessing of God and then bows before the elderly persons present there expecting blessing from them. On this day the family of the boy gives a pair of dress (sadar-mekehela) called lao-kaapor to the bride’s mother and the bride’s family sends a set of dhoti, gamusa etc to the boy known as nowani-kapur through the joron party. The joron party is treated with good foods by the bride’s family and after this reception the joron party return to the boy’s house in the evening.

In the evening of the joron day the mother of the bride with other women aiyatis (relatives and neighbour) goes to collect water (pani-tola) from near by river, pond or other sources of water. The water is collected in pot (ghot) either earthen or brass made. Before collection of the water, in the source it is cut (cross
boy’s parents and a few old men and women and few young boys and girls go to
the girl’s house. They take with them two batas full of betel leaves and areca nuts
and other edibles like rice-cake, sweets etc. The parents of the boy present a ring
(usually a gold ring) to the girl. The family of girl also invites their relatives,
friends and members of the khel for the occasion. The girl on that day bows before
the elders to take blessing from them. Then the boy’s parent gives her the ring
which she wears in front of all the guests present at the occasion. This ceremonially
occasion is called ring-ceremony or kharumoni-pindhoa.

In some cases this is done on the day before marriage day on which the girl
is presented the marriage dresses and ornaments and other items of adornment of
the bride which is known as joron-dia.

After the ring-ceremony the time of marriage comes. On a stipulated day
elderly members of both the families meet to fix the date for marriage. On
meeting, both parties hold discussion about the process of solemnisation of the
marriage. The girl’s party informs the boy’s party about the fees to be paid to
different organizations of the village on the marriage day by the groom’s party.
After discussion of both the parties the date of marriage is fixed on a convenient
day following the almanac (panjika) of the year. On this day the boy’s party takes
a bhar (shoulder load) containing rice-cake, sweets and other edibles along with
betel leaves and areca nuts. On this day the marriage mediator or ghatak is also
present in the occasion.

On the date fixed by both the parties the marriage ceremony takes place.
The ceremony of joron is performed on the day before the marriage day or in
some cases on the same day of marriage which is also fixed on the day when the
date of marriage is fixed. In the joron ceremony the groom’s party comes to the
bride’s home. They include the parents of the boy and other elderly relatives of
both sexes and a few members of the khel (aged and younger). The joron party
brings with them betel leaves and areca nuts, pan-masala (guwamuri) to be
The proposal of marriage is sent to the parents of the girl from the parents of a boy through a marriage mediator (ghatak). The ghatak (male/female) plays the role to establish communication between the two families. He/she may be a person of the same clan or same khel or the same village. Sometimes persons of other village may also play this role who is a known person to both the families. He/she arranges the meeting of both the parties in the house of either the boy or the girl. Generally girl’s house is selected for the first meeting place of both parties where the boy’s parents and other elderly persons of the clan or descent group along with the mediator pay a visit. In this visit the boy’s party takes some gifts and edibles (sweet etc) and betel leaves and areca nuts to be presented before the parents and family members of the girl as a symbol of respect.

The traditional system of them who have been following the bedang system of rituals, it becomes compulsory to offer lao (gourd shell) full of rice beer. But those who have given up this tradition do not take the rice beer (gourd shell) in this occasion. The preparation of rice beer among the followers of Vedic or Vaishnavite system is tabooed.

On the day of first meeting of both parties subjecting marriage proposal the information of positive or negative consent is sent through the mediator by both the parties. If both parties agree with the proposal than another day is fixed on which the boy visits the girl’s house with his one or two friends. The boy brings with him the gifts for the girl which include usually dress items or ornament. The girl comes to introduce herself with the boy and gifts the boy with gamusa or seleng-chadar and bowed before the boy. This meeting of the boy and the girl is called sua-sui.

After the introduction of the boy and the girl with the positive consent of the both, the relatives of the girl go to see the house of the boy. There after the visiting of persons of both families occasionally go on till the marriage. In the mean time marriage engagement take place in which on a stipulated date, the
occasion the bride and the groom along with the groom’s younger relatives (boys and girls) go to the bride’s parental house. The groom on that day is introduced as the son-in-law of that house for the first time. The relatives of the bride’s family gift the couple, generally the groom with different material items. The groom gifts the relatives and family members of the bride as a symbol of love and respect. In the evening the bride and the groom along with their party of this occasion return to the groom’s house and start living as husband and wife thereafter.

After few weeks the parents of the bride visit the groom’s house as the affinal relatives of the family. On the first visit they bring with them gourd shell full of rice beers and other edibles like cake of rice-powder (*pitha*), sweets, biscuits etc. Similarly the parents of the groom too visit the bride’s house in their convenient time. They also take with them the items as the bride’s parents bring to them. The day of bride’s first visit to her parental house after marriage is set by the parents of both bride and groom with the convenience to both the families. There after the process of relation between both the families as relatives go on with the casual occasional visit by the members of both the families.

6.3.7: Changing Trend in Borbia or Negotiation Marriage

*Bor*-biya is a marriage, solemnised by the negotiation of the parents of both the bride and the groom. Sometimes the boy and the girl themselves choose each other as the marriage partner and subsequently take the permission of their parents of both sides. As the parents of the boy and the girl give the positive consent, the other activities of the marriage go on according to the social procedure of the community.

Those who have given up their traditional system (*bedang*) and have accepted the Vedic system of ritual, perform the marriage according to the Vedic or Vaishnavite procedure.
with his friends and relatives goes to the girl’s house as the groom to marry the
girl as his bride. On reaching the bride’s courtyard the groom and his party are
welcomed by the bride’s family members and seat them in the courtyard readily
prepared for solemnisation of the marriage. The groom and his party sit there in
front of the villagers of the girl’s village. Both parties exchange and offer each
other areca-nuts and betel-leaves and rice beer carried in guard shells. After the
introduction of both the parties the bride is taken out to the courtyard and seated
by the side of the groom. Then both the bride and the groom bow before the
villagers of both sides present on the occasion and seek blessing of the elders for
their future coupled life. This way marriage is considered to be solemnised. After
the completion of the marriage ceremony the bride and the groom along with their
friends and relatives get ready to leave the bride’s house. On leaving the house of
the bride the bride’s father advices the bride and groom as: “Fa tanegra, khala
ajagang nage, tanegra khala nagat asagang, salon faron lang seg ai peg bharosa
dilo aro”. The meaning of which in Assamese language is like “Baba ajiirpara tok
suwali sodhalo, agaloi samajar logot nije mili juli thakibi”. In English the
meaning of this is “I have given my daughter to you, live in harmony with
yourselves and with the society in future” Thus at dawn the bride and bride groom
leave the bride’s house and on leaving the parental house the bride throws a
handful of rice in her parental house saying that “Aji moi olaiso sangsar kariboloi
buli’, ai lakh muthi chatiyai, agoloi ahile lakh amuthi jate pao” meaning “by
throwing the handful of rice, I have leave to start coupled life, expecting that in
future when I visit will get the same” and then leaves for the groom house. On
reaching the groom’s house both bride and the groom bow before the parents of
the groom and other aged relatives present there and entered into the house.

The first visit of the bride and the groom to the bride’s parent’s house after
marriage is the celebration of the post marriage introduction ceremony, generally
called as gharsina parba, (athmangala in Assamese language). The date of the
ceremony is announced on the marriage day by the family of the bride. On that
marriage the rice beer in *loas* (goard shell) taken by boy’s *sajati* members offer to the girls parents and they then later accept it.

The acceptance of the *loas* containing rice beer indicates the positive consent of the girl’s parents towards the proposal of marriage. Then the persons present there drink the rice beer all together. Then the girl’s family may also treat them as guests with rice beer and other food items. The person who acts as the go between of the boy’s side and the girl’s side is called *jela*, who is a very knowledgeable person and plays an important role in the marriage. On the first introductory visit the positive response of the girl’s parents to the marriage proposal taken by the boy’s parents settles the agreement of the marriage and they fix a day for the formal meeting of the boy and the girl for introducing each other which is called *Soa-sui*. When the boy goes to introduce himself to the girl he takes with him dress items for the girl as the gifts. The girl also gifts him with traditional towel (*gamucha*), handkerchief (*rumal*), *seleng-chadar* etc. If the boy and girls choose each other as the life partner then the marriage takes place. Without the consent of the boy and the girl the marriage cannot take place. After the boy’s visit to the girl’s house and his consent of marrying the girl and consent of the girl as well, there comes the turn of family and relatives of the girl to see the boy’s house and as such on a fixed date they make the visit. This team includes the parent’s of the girl and relatives and a few aged persons (men and women) of the same *khel*. On this day they introduce themselves with other relatives and neighbours of the boy’s family and at the same time the tentative date of marriage is fixed.

On the marriage day both the *khels* of the boy’s and the girl’s family select the mother for the boy and the girl, from their *khel* respectively. This *khel-mother* must not be from the same clan of the boy and girl respectively. This *khel-mother* of the boy bathes him and similarly the *khel-mother* of girls bathes her for marriage on the marriage day. During the day time feasting and merry-making go on both in the boy’s family and in the girl’s family. In the evening the boy along
6.3.6: Bor-Biya or Negotiation Marriage

*Bor-biya* is a type of negotiation marriage arranged by the parents of the bride and groom, which has entered into their custom lately by the influences of other neighbouring communities. This type of marriage is also known as *Sudhan-biya*. In the earlier days they preferred marriage by capture (*Sowali dhari ani kora biya*) and marriage by elopement (*Poluai ana biya*) as boys and girls of marriageable age preferred to choose his or her life mates own selves.

The economy also compels them to prefer the *Poluai ana biya* or marriage by elopement instead of *bor-biya*, because of very high expenses of the *bor-biya* as basically most of them are economically not sound enough.

For the performance of this type of marriage, the first proposal goes from the boy’s family to the girl’s parents. For that purpose an aged man of the boy’s family along with the knowledgeable men of the *khel* give the first visit to the girl’s parents. In that visit they take with them *laos* (gourds shell containing rice beer), two *botas* (plate on a stand used in socio-religious offering) containing seven betel leaves and seven areca nuts in each *bota*, another *bota* of five betel leaves and five areca nuts. On reaching the girl’s parents’ house after introduction they offer the *bota* with five areca nuts and betel leaves first and then after the other two *botas* with seven areca nuts and betel leaves are also offered. Then the persons present at girl’s home ask them their purpose of visit with such preparation. Then in reply they describe their aim of visit that they have brought the proposal of marriage for the girl of that family to their boy. Then the girl’s parents or any other such person present of the girl’s side asks about the clan (*kul*) of the boy’s family, because marriage within the same clan is impossible. Even to the other clans to whom the girl is given marriage, a boy of that clan cannot marry from that clan though the clans are not the same. If the clan is within the marriageable range then the parents of the girl give consent of marriage of their daughter after detail introduction of the boy’s family. On agreement of
There after the family of the girl invites the boy and the girl for *athmangala* ceremony on a convenient day. On the day of *athmangala* ceremony the family members (descent members) present at the occasion to introduce themselves to the boy and his family members, attending the ceremony. Both the parties of the boy and the girl exchange gifts to one another as a symbol of love and honour. The family and other relatives of the girl give the marriage gifts (*usarga*) to the girl. This *athmangala* plays a vital role in the introduction of both the families and as such it is also called *gharsina* ceremony. On this occasion the family of the girl treats the guests present in the ceremony with a feast.

### 6.3.5: Performance of Burha-Biya or Old Age Marriage

The old-age marriage or *Burha-biya* is organized by the family of the boy. In this occasion all the *khel* members and the co-villagers are invited. On that occasion the boy (groom) sits in the court yard along with the other members of the society in extreme east direction, and the girl (bride) offers him areca nuts and betel leaves in a *bota* (plate on a stand used in socio-religious offering) and a garland is put on his neck accepting him as her husband and thus their marriage is solemnised in the presence of the members of the society, then both of them bow before the members of the society to gain their blessings and are recognized as husband and wife there after. The guests are entertained by the family of the boy (groom) with a feast and rice-beer (*mod*) by the followers of the traditional system.

Among those who have accepted the Hindu customs, perform the *Burha-biya* according to the Hindu system of marriage, especially through the Vaishnavite system with the recitation of the Holi books, *Bhagabata* or *Kirtana* by the *bhakatas* of the *khel* as well as of the village or from the other neighbouring villages. In the ceremony of *Burha-biya* the guests and relatives of the boy’s family are invited and treated with a feast.
through *Bor-biya* or arrange marriage until their parent and parent of their mother solemnise the *Burha-biya*. In such cases, *Bura-biya* will have to be performed first by the mother’s parents (grand-parents), followed by their parents and subsequently they get the social allowance to organise their arranged marriage.

**6.3.4: Changing Trend of Poluai Ana Biya or Marriage by Elopement**

This is a love marriage. When a boy and a girl fall in love with one another and the parent of either party are not satisfied with the selection of their son’s or daughter’s would be wife or husband, then the boy and the girl run away to start the coupled life, as the result of which the parents of both boy and the girl are compelled to organise their marriage which is socially approved.

When the boy and the girl run away, the boy brings the girl to his parental house. As the boy and the girl reach the boy’s house it becomes the responsibility of the family members of boy to provide information to the family of the girl as soon as possible. For that purpose the family of the boy sends a team of some responsible persons including descent members and khel members as the delegates to the girl’s house. This team of boy’s side which goes to give information to the girl’s house is called *sajati*. The *sajati* take with them areca nuts and betel leaves, fruits, curd, sweets and other such edibles to the girl’s family. The *sajati* team on reaching the girl’s house explains the purpose of their arrival in their house, by saying that the girl of this family (girl’s family) has gone to their family (boy’s family) and she is living there right now. That is why they have come to meet and inform this to the family of the girl taking with them the items edible and appeal to whole heartedly accept these items edible. According to their custom the acceptance of these edibles taken by the *sajati* of the boy’s family by the members of the girl’s family (especially the girl’s father) signifies that the boy with whom the girl has flew away is accepted as the son-in-law of the girl’s family.
During the study it is found that four men in the Kalbari-Bagariguri village and four men in Markangkuchi village came to live in the house of their wives as gobhia who are of old generation, but none in Natun Kumuraguri village.

6.3.3: Poluai Ana Biya or Marriage by Elopement

Traditionally they preferred the marriage by elopement or Poluai ana biya and marriage by capture or marriage by kidnap or “Sowali dhari ani kora biya” (already mentioned about marriage by capture). In the marriage by elopement or Poluai ana biya when the boy and the girl fall in love with each other, the boy brings the girl to his house with or without the consent of the parents of the girl. In such cases the family of the boy sends a delegation of messengers (sajati) to the family of the girl to give the information of going of their girl to the boy’s house with him. In this type of marriage both the boy and the girl agree but in some cases the parents of the girl disagree which leads to unpleasant relationship between the two families.

After bringing the girl to his house the boy and his family informs the matter to the girl’s family, then after the family of the boy solemnises their marriage on a day convenient to them. It may be performed just after one week of the bringing of the girl or later on at any time convenient to them in the old age. As such the solemnisation of this marriage is known as Burha-biya or old-age marriage. But it is customary to solemnise the Burha-biya even at very old-age, otherwise the children born out of them are not considered as legal offspring of the couple as their marriage was not socially approved.

The children of such couple cannot enter into wedlock through Bor-biya or marriage by negotiation, which is an arranged marriage until their parents have not entered into the marriage relation socially.

According to them, if the daughter of a couple who have not solemnised their Burha-biya after elopement, runs away with a boy to establish coupled life and her children attain the age of marriage, they can not enter into coupled life
In this system of marriage, the boy may or may not accept the clan of his wife. When in such a marriage the boy accepts the clan of his wife, he has to do this through the ritual of *kul-singa*. If he has performed the ritual of *kul-singa* he would not be cremated in the *hatham* (cremation ground) of his clan of birth and he can not claim his share of paternal property, but if he has not performed the ritual of *kul-singa*, he may be cremated in the *hatham* of his clan of his birth. The ritual of *kul-singa* in *Gobhia rokha biya* is seldom performed.

The *Gobhia rokha biya* or marriage by keeping resident husband indicates that the Tiwas were matrilineal in past. But at present they patrilineal people and the girls after marriage accept the clans of their husbands and the inheritance of property is patrilineal, where the sons inherit the properties of their father and the girls go to live in her husband’s family after marriage. But those couples having only single daughter without any son issue want to marry a boy to their daughter and keep him in their house as a *gobhia* or resident husband of their daughter.

The formality of this marriage is not so elaborate. The parents of the girl give a small feast to the khel-members and co-villagers without any ceremony, in which the elderly villagers are invited. After the feast is over the boy and the girl entering the marriage are taken inside the *barghar* of the girl’s clan to bow before the divine power and then the couple bow before the elderly villagers present in the occasion for their blessing and from then the boy and the girl are recognized as husband and wife and the boy starts living in the house of his wife’s parent as a member of their family.

The practice of this marriage is very rarely found among the Tiwas of the plains by those couples without son so that their family does not cease after their death and to secure the life of their daughter after marriage so that she does not have to face any hardship if she would be married to another family. The consensus of the parents of the boy is necessary for this type of marriage, the lack of which may cause bitterness between the families of the boy and the girl.
of the matters. The jury of the villagers took the consent of the girl and when she
gave her consensus then the villagers tried to construct good matrimonial relation
between the two families and the jury of the villagers posed a fine on the boy’s
party for the offence of forcefully taking the girl. Then the boy’s family offered
areca nuts and betel leaves with the fine amount in cash in a sarai (stand-disc) and
bowed before the villagers. To get the positive consent of the girl some of the
boy’s party took assistance of the magicians. The marriage ceremony was
performed according to the convenience of the boy’s family later on as Burha-
biya. (Gogoi)

This type of marriage is not in prevalence at present, as forcefully taking
some one is considered as a crime of kidnapping, resulting in extinction of custom
of the marriage by capture or Sowali dhari ani kora biya. In all the study villages
this type of marriage has not been found. According to the aged persons of these
villages who have informed that they have not experienced the occurrence of this
type of marriage in their villages, they only heard about this type of marriage
occurred during early years of 2-3 generations back.

6.3.2: Gobhia Rakha Biya or Resident Husband Mrriage

The marriage by keeping resident husband or Gobhia rokha biya is a form
of traditional marriage in which the boy comes closer to the girl according to the
willingness of the girl and starts living in her house after marriage accepting the
clan of the girl, which is the custom of the matriliny.

In such situation the boy is known as gobhia. The Tiwas living in the Plains
are patriarchal and patrilineal people and as such the resident after marriage is
patrilocal. A boy brings his wife to his father’s house after marriage, which is their
usual socio-cultural norm in Morigaon district of Assam. Yet a very negligible
link with the old tradition of matriliny is reflected through the Gobhia rokha biya,
which is very rarely prevalent among those who are still following their traditional
custom of bedang system.
The Table- 6.3.c. shows the number of brides belonging to different communities married to the Tiwa boys of the three villages. In Natun Kumuraguri village maximum 6 Koch girls married to Tiwa boys. There are 4 Boro girls and 4 Jogi girls entered into marriage with Tiwa boys of the village. There are 2 Keot girls and one girl each from Kalita caste and Adivashi community married to the Tiwa boys of Natun-Kumuraguri village. Thus there are all together 18 inter-community marriages held in this village and out of these except 4 brides of Boro tribe and 1 bride of adivashi community remaining 13 are belonging to the Assamese caste Hindu communities like Koch, Keot, Jogi and Kalita caste.

In Kalbari-Bagariguri village there are 5 cases of inter-community marriages. There are 2 Koch girls married to the Tiwa boys of the village. There is one bride each from the Karbi tribe, the Boro tribe and the Hajong tribe entered into marriage with Tiwa boys of the village.

In Markangkuchi village maximum 6 brides belong to the Karbi tribe, followed by 5 brides of Boro tribe. There are one bride each of the Kalita, Koch, Nepali and Adivashi communities.

They have different systems of marriage such as Sowali dhari ani kora biya or marriage by capture or marriage by kidnap, Gobhia Rakha-biya or the marriage in which the groom comes to live in the bride’s house as resident-husband, Poluai Ana-biya or marriage by elopement, Bor-biya or Sudhan-biya or marriage by negotiation and Joron-biya or marriage by giving dresses and ornaments to the bride which are described below.

6.3.1: Sowali Dhari Ani Kora Biya or Marriage by Capture

The marriage by capture or kidnap or Sowali dhari ani kora biya is no more in existence. During earlier days when a boy liked a girl he sought her consent through a third person as a messenger. If the girl did not give her positive consent, the boy forcefully took her to his house and sent the message to her parents and then the family of the girl called the meeting of the village elders for justification.
through the Vaishnava procedure of Hindu marriage through reading of Holy book ‘Bhagabat-Gita’ in the courtyard of the girl’s house by the ‘Bhakats’.

**Case Study 6.2**

Sri Bhugeswar Konwar of Natun Kumuraguri village informed that his younger daughter had love affair with a Kalita boy of the neighbouring hamlet of the same village. When he came to know the matter in his family he talked to the parent of the boy and after discussion his family and the family of boy arrived at solution of the matter by arranging the marriage between the boy and the girl. As such the marriage was solemnized according to Assamese Caste-Hindu procedure of marriage. Since the boy belongs to the Kalita community the marriage was performed through Vedic procedure of burning holy-fire of ‘hom-agni’ (hom puri hoa biya) in the courtyard of his house by the Brahmin priest (Bamun).

He said ‘I have only given my daughter and the courtyard to solemnise the marriage. They (boy’s party) solemnised the marriage according to their own procedure. My family just entertained the guests who came as the groom’s party with a feast of reception and now the son-in-law and his family members are considered as our kin.’

The following table shows the breakup of inter-community marriage in details.

**Table 6.3.c. Marriage of Brides From Outside the Tribe in the villages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group (caste/tribe/community)</th>
<th>Natun-Kumuraguri</th>
<th>Markangkuchi</th>
<th>Kalbari-Bagariguri</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karbi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boro</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koch</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nath-jogi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalita</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adivashi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hajong</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepali</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Present generation: 47% (last 3 years)

Past generation: 21% (parental generation)

Thus the cases of inter community marriages were not uncommon in the past but the rate of such marriages is higher in recent times as compared to the past. Following table shows the inter community marriages in the studied villages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the villages</th>
<th>No. of marriage of Tiwa boys</th>
<th>Communities of brides of inter-community marriage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natun-Kumuraguri</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Bodo, Adivashi, Jogi, koch, keot, Kalita.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalbari-Bagariguri</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>Bodo, karbi, Hajong, Koch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markangkuchi</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bodo, Karbi, Adivashi, Nepali, Koch, Kalita.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3.b. shows that maximum inter-community marriages have taken place in between Tiwa boys and other community girls like Bodo, Adivashi, Jugi, koch, Keot and Kalita in Natun Kumuraguri village, because the village is neighboured by the villages inhabited by these communities. The Tiwa boys and girls of these communities attracted toward each other and fall in love and as a result this tie, the boy brings the girl to his house through the process of elopement marriage. In Markangkuchi village and Kalbari-Bagariguri village also the inter-community marriages are the result of love between the boys and the girls of different communities.

**Case 6.1**

*In Natun Kumuraguri village a Tiwa girl named Jan Konwar of about 22 years of age fell in love with a Koch boy of the neighbouring village (Koch Kumuraguri). When the parents of both the boy and the girl came to know about their of love affairs, they decided to solve it by arranging their marriage according to social norms. Since the boy and the girl belong to two different communities – Koch boy and Tiwa (uddhar-hoa) girl the marriage was held*
practiced, but the marriage of a widower with his deceased wife’s sister (usually with the younger sister) is practiced very rarely, but marriage with deceased wife’s elder sister is not permitted. Widow re-marriage is permitted only with the widower. The case of divorce is very rare in their society.

In all the three villages under study the patriarchal and patrilineal systems are prevalent. The residence after marriage is patrilocal, the bride comes to live in the parental house of the groom. The wife takes the clan of her husband after marriage and the children born out of the marital tie are affiliated into the clan of the father.

In all these three villages inter tribe-caste (inter community) marriages are found, in every case of such exogamous marriage the patrilineal system is followed. The girl entering the inter tribal or tribe-caste marriage accepts the clan, descent etc. of the boy. For example, in Natun-Kumuraguri village, a girl named Mukuli Deka of Patidaya village, belonging to Koch caste married to a Tiwa boy named Haren Konwar of Natun-Kumuraguri village belonging to Melang clan. She was incorporated into the clan and descent of her husband and came to live in the parental house of the boy.

Similarly a Tiwa girl of Natun-Kumuraguri village, named Jan Konwar gets married to a non-Tiwa boy, and she has gone to live in her husband’s house accepting his descent group and clan.

During the field work, data relating to the rate of inter community marriages during the preceding three years was collected. It is seen that out of 51 such cases, 24 (47%) were inter community marriages. These were then compared with similar data collected from different older respondents about cases of marriage involving them as well as their relatives. A total of 184 cases were collected out of which 38 (21%) cases involved inter community marriages.
The *Kul-singa* literally means severing ties with natal clan. A girl belongs to her natal (father’s / mother’s) clan till her marriage. At this point, she may choose to stay back at her father’s ancestral home and her husband joins her as a resident son in law. In such a case, it is not obligatory to severe ties with her natal clan by performing the *kul-singa* ritual. After *kul-singa* ritual, the girl becomes a member of her husband’s clan.

For this ritual of *kul-singa* on the marriage day the boy’s party comprising of the boy’s seniors (parents) and junior members of the family, the *jela* (priest) and the *hari-kunwari* (female priest) of the descent group, the *jela* of the *khel* and other senior and junior members of the society go to the girl’s house. They take with them one basket of rice, one packet of small rice cakes (*anguli-pitha*), one basket of fried rice powder (*sandah*), two gourd shells (*lao*) containing rice beer (*mod*), one big pot (*kalah*) containing rice beer, areca nuts in 5, 7 or 9 in number and betel leaves respectively with same amount of rupees as the number of nuts arranged in two shoulder loads (*bhar*). The respectable members of descent group and the *khel* of the girl accept the contents of these two *bhars* and the boy and girl are given blessings for their happy and long durability of marital life. Then the *jela* of the *barghar* of the girl’s descent group sacrifices the a few fowls in the presence of the girl praying before the gods and goddesses and ancestors for the welfare of the girl and thus the affiliation of the girl to her father’s clan is broken and from that time she accepts the clan of her husband.

In the earlier days on the day of *kul-singa* the parents of the girl demanded the bride price (*ga-dhan*) of their daughter, but now-a-days this custom is not practiced.

Monogamy marriage is the socially and legally accepted form of marriage, though polygyny marriage is not unknown in their society. Thus monogamy is the widely preferred form of marriage prevalent among them. The marriage of a widow with her deceased husband’s brother (either elder or younger) is not
“As traditional residence is uxorilocal, a man after marriage does not usually leave the village of his birth. There is no preferential form of marriage in the Lalung society. A man is free to choose his wife from another village also but such an occasion does not arise mainly for two reasons.

A young man does not find ample opportunity to meet girls of other villages. His life is regulated in an organised way in the dormitory. He normally comes into contact with the girls of his own village only and it is usual for him to marry one of them.

The other reason is that a man even after his marriage has to discharge some social duties towards the family of his birth. If any dispute on division of land or other property arises among his sisters, he is called upon to arbitrate. A sister cannot dispose off any land of the family without consulting or taking permission from her mother or mother's brother or in their absence her own brother.” (Syamchaudhury & Das: 71, 72)

Thus in past, the Tiwas were matrilineal and the boy after marriage went to live in his wife’s parental house without any right on property as it was inherited through the female line from mother to daughter, he only held the authority to look after the property of his wife. He might or not accepted the clan of his wife, but his children were affiliated into descent and clan of their mother.

But at present Tiwas living in the plain districts of Assam including Morigaon district follow the patriarchal and patrilineal system. The children are affiliated to their father’s clan, girls accept the clan of their husbands after marriage. To be affiliated in the clan of the husband the girl has to break the affiliation of her father’s clan through the performance of ritual of kul-singa at the time of marriage.
years in Markangkuchi village and 5(6.6%) women got married at the age below 15 years in Kalbari-Bagariguri village.

Clan exogamy rule is strictly observed and breach of this type of marital relation is considered as incestuous marriage which is prohibited. If the situation arises for marriage within the same clan then the problem tried to be solved conditionally by the khel. In such situation the boy has to bear the fine enforced by the khel, in the form of a feast, cash in money etc. and he has to go through the purifying (porasit) ceremony.

To solve this situation either the boy or the girl is raised into the clan of his/her maternal uncle, if the mother of either the boy or girl has not performed ritual of kul-singa during time of her marriage. If she had performed the ritual of kul-singa at her marriage or later on, then boy or the girl can’t be raised into the clan of the maternal uncle of either. In such a situation, either the boy or the girl is raised into the other clan of related family. Otherwise the marriage of the boy and the girl can’t take place socially. In spite of this if the boy and the girl enter into marriage then the couple is driven away from the village without keeping any relation thereafter.

If their marriage takes place by raising either of them in the clan of the maternal uncle or any relative of other clan, then too the couple (generally the boy) can’t get rid of the fine fixed by the khel, he must pay the fine amount and give a feast to his descent group (khuta) and khel members and go through the ritual of purification (porasit hoa).

If he fails to do so, the boy loses his father’s clan, as a result of which he loses the right to claim the inheritance of his father’s property. In such a case, he is considered as the member of the adoptive clan and at his death his dead body has to be cremated in the cremation ground (hatham) of that clan, not in the hatham of his father’s clan.
Table 6.3.a. indicates the age at marriage. The maximum age at marriage is 41 years for the males only found in Natun-Kumuraguri and Kalbari-Bagariguri village. The maximum number of males 31(46.3%) got married at the age between (26-30) years in Natun-Kumuraguri village. In Kalbari-Bagariguri village 41(63.0%) and in Markangkuchi village 36(51.4%) maximum males got married at age (21-25). Thus the average age at marriage for males in these two villages is (21-25) years and in Natun-Kumuraguri village it is (26-30). If the average age at marriage is seen for males in all the three villages, it will be (21-30) years. At the age of (31-40) years males married in Natun-Kumuraguri village, Kalbari-Bagariguri village and Markangkuchi village is 16(23.9%), 9(13.8%) and 13(18.6%) respectively. At the age of (15-20) years 2(3.0%), 4(6.2%) and 7(10.0%) males got married in Natun-Kumuraguri village, Kalbari-Bagariguri village and Markangkuchi village respectively. The maximum women got married in all the three villages of Natun-Kumuraguri (75.3%), Kalbari-Bagariguri (82.9%) and Makangkuhi (80.6%) at the age of (15-25) years. At the age of (26-35) 21(18.8%), 8(10.5%) and 11(17.7%) women got married in Natun-Kumuraguri village, Kalbari-Bagariguri village and Markangkuchi village respectively. There is only 1(1.6%) woman who got married at age of (36-40)
The ritual of puberty is observed in Natun-Kumuraguri village and by the uddhar-hoa families of Kalbari-Bagariguri village, of the villages under study. Since most of the families of the first village and a few families of the second village have adapted the caste Hindu customs Assamese Vaishnavism.

In the other village, Markangkuchi the villagers follow their traditional custom. According to their traditional system there is no ritualistic performance during the attainment of adolescence or puberty and as such the villagers of Markangkuchi do not observe rituals related to puberty.

6.3: Marriage

“Marriage is nothing else than a more or less durable connection between male and female, lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of the offspring” (Westwrmarck, 1891:19)

Marriage is a socially approved union between a man and a woman among the Tiwas. Clan endogamy is strictly prohibited it is considered as incestuous union which is socially disapproved. Such a relation is never socially sanctioned at any condition. The average age of marriage among them is 21 to 30 years for boys and 15 to 25 years for girls. The following table shows the age at marriage in three of the study villages

Table 6.3.a. Age at Marriage of the People of the Villages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Natun-Kumuraguri</th>
<th>Kalbari-Bagariguri</th>
<th>Markangkuchi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>Total (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>02 (3.0)</td>
<td>34 (40.0)</td>
<td>36 (23.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>16 (23.9)</td>
<td>30 (35.3)</td>
<td>46 (30.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
life. During this stage of life there is no ritualistic observation performed in case of boys. But in case of girls certain rituals and customs are observed when a girl experiences the first menstruation which is known as *santi-hoa* or *dangor-hoa*. This stage of life phenomenon is observed by the girl for 7 days. During these seven days the girl is not allowed to meet any boy, specially the male persons. The girl cannot consume the normal food as the other family members. She is given fruits, gram, pulses, milk, etc. for these days. On the seventh day the family observes the ritualistic ceremony of the puberty called *santi-bia*.

On that day the girl is bathed by the mother along with other women and girls of the village *khel* under a plantain sapling planted for the purpose of this bathing in the backyard of the house. The mother of the girl and other female relatives and village women bathed the girl by observing particular rituals and the women present on the occasion sing the marriage songs (*bia-nam*). Then after bathing, the girl is taken inside the house and dressed in new dress items like a bride ready for marriage. She is adorned with different cosmetics. Some families employ the beautician to adorn the girl as a bride for that day. The girl also has to apply the vermilion on her forehead like a bride in a real marriage. Since the girl is considered as a bride for that day the observation of the ceremony is called *santi-bia* because it is believed that after passing this stage of life the girl acquires maturity in her behavior giving up the immature childish nature of childhood. This is also called *tulani-bia* because they believe that after attainment of puberty, the girl gets the maturity to enter into the marital bond, that means the girl is brought up to marriageable stage through the *tulani-bia*.

The observation and celebration of puberty is generally a women’s affair. But with the passage of time at present the males also attend the feast given by the parents of the girl. The puberty ritual is not observed in the traditional Tiwa custom or among those who follow the *bedang* system of tradition. It is only observed by that section who has accepted the Hindu customs and traditions due to influence of the other Hindu-caste communities of the neighbourhood.
6.1.5: Changing Trend of Taking Care of the New Born

The room in which the new born baby is kept a fire is lighted to burn for the days of the ritual impurities. Nobody directly enters into that room when coming from outside. To enter into the room he/she has to touch the fire first in the front room and then only can enter into the baby’s room. This rule is very strictly obeyed when some one comes from outside at night time. During these days if fish or meat are brought for dinner that night it cannot be taken inside the house. These are generally kept outside the house and after following some ritualistic rules these can be taken into the house. They believe that along with the fish/meat brought at night the malevolent spirit might have come along with these which can cause harm to the new born baby.

6.1.6: The Changing System of Celebrating the Purification Ceremony of Birth

Birth is considered as the social impurity of the family of child birth. The purification ceremony of the birth is observed on the 21st or 30th day of the child birth. For that occasion, the relatives of the family and the neighbouring families of the same khel are invited. The khel people (men) attend the occasion and they are known Bhakatas (devotee). They read the Holy religious book -the Kirtan Puthi and recite the devotional prayer called Nam. They pray before God for the betterment of the new-born child. On that day the child is given a name by the astrologer (Ganak). The first seeing of the new-born baby by the relatives of the family is initiated by the gifting of a pair of new dress items to the child. If the relative does not prepare earlier to see the child then he/she may offer money as a gift for first looking of child and then take the child in his/ her lap on giving the gift to the child.

6.2: Puberty

Adolescence is the stage between childhood and youth. During this stage of adolescence children go through the physical as well as behavioral changes in
This purification ceremony of the descent group has to be observed within one month to one year but before the annual celebration of the *Lao-puja* which is observed by villagers commonly; otherwise the families of the descent group cannot participate in the *Lao-puja*.

### 6.1.4: Changing Trend Regarding Birth

Now-a-days, the children are born in hospitals. The scheme of the government to pay the mother with remuneration encourages the mother and the other family members to admit the expectant mother to give birth in the hospitals. The Asha workers of the health department motivate them to take the advice of the doctors during the pregnancy period and during child birth. But this awareness of giving child birth in hospitals is very much recent.

Earlier children were born at home itself. In that case the expectant mother was assisted during the child birth by some experienced aged females of the neighbourhood. In that case sometimes mother is attacked by certain kind of illness called pre-eclampsia, which is called by them as *bagh-bayu* or *baghini-prosuta* and she becomes unconscious. In that case she is cured by the treatment of the woman present there to assist her in child birth. This type of illness is very dangerous and it may cause death to the concerned woman sometimes. When the mother of the child born is attacked by pre-eclampsia, she roars like a tiger and falls unconscious and sometimes the victim may die due to this. The Tiwas have a belief that if a broken stick of hand loom (*rahar-kathi*) is inserted in the hair lock of the expectant mother then she is not attacked by the pre-eclampsia after child birth. According to informant Mr. Padmeswar Pator, now-a-days the child is born usually in the hospital and in such cases too a small piece of broken handloom stick is kept in the hair lock of the expectant mother which is done secretly from the doctors.
there for introduction. After some songs and dances, the ceremony comes to an end and the guest leave for home giving blessings to baby or babies.

This ceremony is performed on the 5th day of birth of the baby in individual case. But sometimes this ceremony is celebrated lately, of course within the year in which all the newly born babies of the descent group are purified and given names for their recognition as a member of the family and as well as the member of the descent group.

The song sung at the occasion is as:

“Hajore ghatote
Moira Pani Khale
Goshai Baikunthaloi jai”
“Leheli lolaiya lai
Lainu dhemelia lai
Deuri, hatari mindai pujaya
Maloni jogali phul”
“Hajore ghatote
Moira pani khale
Goshai Baikunthaloi jai”
“Ainumu sarasa
Bhainu mu sarasa
Goshai lo sarasa jia
Kharamot thuranglo
Ahusi ramaga
Sanlo segune dia”……

The meaning of the song in Assamese is like, “hajor ghatat mora sarai pani khale, goshai Baikunthaloi jai... Lai, Lehelik Deuri, hatariye puja korote Maliniye phul diye...aiye saraja, Bhaiye saraja, Goshaiye saraja jibo, Ashujar utsavat mala (alonkar) dia….”
The male giyati-the sajati sacrifices the fowls in the name of god, praying for the welfare of the children and the meat is given to the female giyati- the hujuni for cooking. The female giyati-the hujuni cooks the meat of the sacrificed fowls with tender edible part of plaintain tree (posola). In cooking, the hujuni is assisted by other women of their khel. They also prepare another curry of small fishes and dried jute leaves (sukuta). The guests present at the occasion are treated with these two curries and rice beer. If the hosts are economically sound they can offer the guests rice along with these two curries. But usually the guests are treated with these two curries and rice beer.

The guests are seated in the courtyard of the host family and the hujuni of the day distributes the rice beer among them one after another. She distributes the rice beer with a wooden container called daran. The guests drink it in steel bowls or in a khola, the container made from bark of the plaintain tree (kal-dona). When the hajuni distributes rice beer she has to do it serially one after another towards right direction. The rice beer is offered first to the chief person of that occasion who is known as jela then offered to the person sitting to his right side and offered to all present there accordingly. If the hajuni commits any mistake in distributing the rice beer she has to pay a fine to the society (khel). The guests attending the occasion have to behave in accordance to the cultural norms. Any un-expected behavior and utterance of vulgar language is considered as a crime and the person is fined by the society (khel). The fine amount ranges from a pair of betel leaves and nut to cash amounting Rs 20- Rs 30. The amount is deposited in the fund of the society for developmental and social functions.

After the refreshment is over, the new born baby/babies for whom the celebration was performed are brought to the guests for their blessings. At that moment the jela starts the song of the occasion and all other present there sing together and a few of them dance to the song taking the new born baby or babies. During that period, the name of baby is declared in front of the people present
treated with rice beer or *mod*. The rice beer is distributed among the guests with a piped wooden container known as *daran*.

During the old days the guests drank the rice beer in bamboo vessels (*bahar-sunga*) and a container made from bark of plaintain tree (*kol-dona*) known as *khola*. But at present steel bowls (*bati*) and glass tumblers are used for the purpose. Now-a-days the guests are also treated with tea and snacks.

In the mean time the female *giyati*- *hujuni* takes the baby out of the house and massages it with mustard oil and declares a name for the baby in front of the guests. In the early days the name of the baby was given according to the incidents, day, month, time, stories etc. related with the birth of the child. But now-a-days these factors are not much considered any more. At present, the parents choose a name which they think attractive or popular at a particular time in the society.

Both *giyaties* selected for the ritual of this purification ceremony must be the member of the *khel* but never from the descent group of the host because the whole descent group is considered to be polluted by the impurities of birth and until and unless the celebration of the purification ceremony is performed they cannot officiate in any ritualistic activity of the society.

When a child is born into a family all the related families of the descent become polluted by the impurities of child birth. The purification of the family and the descent group has to be observed within one month to one year, because sometimes this ceremony is observed for the children born to the descent group together within the year.

On the day of purification ceremony there must be two fowls - one male and one female for each child, if the ceremony is observed for several children born in the descent group during the period. The number of fowl is twice that of the number of children of which half are cocks and half are hens.
child are considered ritually pure and allowed to come out side the house and mix up with others and on the same day the child is given the name by the attendants of the ceremony and considered as the member of the family of birth, decent and clan.

The celebration of this ceremony could be postponed up to one year, if other families of the same descent have new born babies within this time period and the ceremony is observed together within the year.

In Natun-Kumuraguri village the impurities (sua) of child birth is continued for 3-4 weeks. During this period of impurity, the mother and the child is considered as polluted and as such they usually do not touch others. On the day of purification ceremony a nam-prasanga (devotional singing) is organized by the family, which is performed by the women of the khel and the village. They are entertained by the concerned family with light food like tea, snacks etc. and mah-prasads. Some families of this village perform this ceremony on 21th day of the birth and some families do it on the completion of the month.

In Kalbari-Bagariguri village the families which follow their traditional rituals observe this ceremony like the villagers of Markangkuchi village. On the other hand the families which have taken the rituals of of the Caste-Hindu communities of Assam (Vaishnavism) observe this ceremony as it is observed by the villagers of Natun-Kumuraguri village.

6.1.3: The Traditional System of Celebrating the Purification Ceremony of Birth

To conduct the ceremony for this occasion, it is customary that two persons are selected from the khel, one male and one female. They are known as giyati. The male giyati is known as sajati and the female giyati is known as the hujuni. In this ceremony two fowls, one cock and one hen, are sacrificed by the sajati at the door step of the main house of the host. The meat of these fowls is cooked with arum and hot chilies for the guests attending the occasion who are also
into consideration at present days. Now-a-days the pregnant woman seeks the advices from the doctors for easy and healthy child birth. From the present study, it may be seen that at present, quite a few births have taken place in hospitals.

6.1.2: Taking Care of the New Born

The newly born baby is kept in a room inside the main house. The room is warmed with a fire of husks *tuh-jui*. That fire is not allowed to extinguish till the day on which the baby is taken out of the room for the purification and name giving ceremony. The four corners of the house where the new-born is kept is tied with the spiked branches of *jujube* (*Ziziphus jujuba*) tree (*bagari-thani*) with the belief that the evil spirits cannot cause any harm to him/her.

The impurities of child birth continue for five days. During these days the child is not generally taken outside the house and the mother observes the ritual impurities and does not take part in the usual domestic activities and she is not allowed to mix up freely with other members of the family and neighbours as well. The purification ceremony is observed generally on the fifth day of child birth. On that day the friends and relatives of the family (descent) and the *khel* members attend the ceremony. The presence of these members is very much of expectation for the host family. It is generally seen that the presence of at least one member of each families of the same lineage and one member of each family of the *khel* is compulsory. But it may vary village to village as the fixed rule of each village is not the same.

In the villages under study, in the purification ceremony of the child birth, the descent members of the concerned family and their *khel* members attend the ceremony. In Markangkuchi village it is celebrated on the 5th day of the child’s birth and for those days the mother and the child are not allowed to come out of the village. On the 5th day, the purification ceremony is performed which is attended by the descent, clan and the *khel* members who are entertained by the family of the child birth. By performance of this ceremony the mother and the
CHAPTER VI

CHANGES IN LIFE CYCLE

In this chapter an attempt has been made to observe the changes in the socio-cultural life of the Tiwas of the study villages. This has been approached mainly through their life-cycle rituals.

6.1: The birth, marriage and death rituals of the Tiwas:

Among them, the traditional system of customs and beliefs is known as bedang system which is prevalent generation after generation. But due to the close contact with the caste Hindus many of them have accepted the caste Hindu customs, giving up their traditional system, that type of new custom is called by them as ved-system. These customs and beliefs are reflected in the performance of different rituals associated with different stages of life cycle like birth, marriage, death etc.

6.1.1: Occasion of Birth in Traditional system

A child is generally born in his/her father’s house since they are patrilineal by descent and patrilocal by residence. In the past generations, as revealed by older respondents, during the child birth the expectant mother was assisted by two or three females of the village who were expert in such works (mid-wives). They were known as ojani. After the birth of the baby the mid-wife cuts the umbilical chord with a thin and sharp bamboo slice. Iron blades or knives were never used for this purpose, perhaps due to fear of infections. From the day of birth, the child becomes the member of his/her father’s descent and clan.

Earlier, during the pregnancy, the expectant mother had to observe certain taboos in the day to day activities of life such as loitering in the abandoned areas, crossing of the river, pond, marsh etc. But these taboos are not seriously taken
containing rice and the earthen pot filled with water by the side of the cooked rice and boiled egg. The female giyati readily prepares the fire and water to be touched by the men who return home after the cremation of the dead so that the evil spirit can’t come with them to home from the cremation ground.

The duty of the male giyatis is to prepare the pyre in the hatham by the fire wood supplied by the family of the deceased and the co-villagers. They, with the help of the co-villagers complete the activities of cremation. They can neither sit and take rest nor can even drink water before the completion of the cremation. After the cremation, the male giyatis and other co-villagers who were present in the cremation ground, go to the house of the deceased and in the court yard they all sit making a circle on wooden planks or on such pieces of wood, but all the male and female giyatis sit on wooden stools (Pira). Then the family of the deceased offers all of them with country-liquor (Mod). The giyatis are offered country liquor in the bowls of bell-metal (Kahor-bati) as the sign of honour and none of those present there, drink country-liquor or eat any edibles offered to them before the giyatis eat and drink their shares.

*****
the society as well as of the *khel*. The punishments may be in the form of fine in cash which is deposited in the treasure of the *khel* to be used in the community affairs of the *khel*.

The performance of the death ritual from cremation of the dead to the purification ceremonies, are the affairs of the *khel* and the co-villagers. Whenever any incident of death occurs in a family the message is spread among the *khel* members as well as among the co-villagers through the *barika* or *parika* (messanger) or through other persons of the village. During the bye gone days it was a tough job for the *barika*, who was responsible for conveying the message, but at present though the position of the *barika* exists in the village organization, the development of communication by the use of motor-bike, cars etc. and mobile networking system make the spreading of message easier and quicker. As soon as the message of death in the village is received the *khel* members and co-villagers arrive at the house of the deceased and the *khel* members select two men and one woman (two in some places) for the arrangement of the process of cremation, these selected men and woman are known as *giyati* or *kiyati*. They plan the orderly performing of all the activities connected with cremation of the dead. It is the duty of the female *giyati* to bathe the dead body and prepare the food to be offered for the dead during his/her last journey.

The female *giyati* washes the body of the dead and dresses with new cloths and cooks rice and boils an egg in a new earthen pot (*Matir-saru*) and the cooked rice and egg are offered to the deceased by the family and descent members. The female *giyati* also arranges a basket (*Dun or Pasi*) containing rice and an earthen pot (*Tekeli*) of water and a packet of cooked rice and boiled egg to be taken to the cremation ground with the corpse and the cremation party. The dead is cremated in his clan’s cremation ground called *hatham*. In the *hatham* of the dead, the two male *giyatis* prepare the pyre for cremation of the dead with the assistance of the *khel* members and co-villagers. In the *hatham*, the female *giyati* offers the cooked rice and boiled egg to the deceased in a plantain leaf and keeps the basket
common surnames of Assam. It becomes difficult to distinguish an individual whether he is a Tiwa or non-Tiwa from the surname. That is why many Tiwa people now begin to write the clan name instead of surname. For example Sri Saru Konwar who belongs to the Melanglok (Melang clan) likes to introduce himself as Sri Saru Melang instead of Sri Saru Konwar, because of the surname Konwar is also used by some non-Tiwa people.

5.8: Khel and its Role

The Tiwas are not different in the matters of the nearest social groups like family, descent, khel etc. from other communities. Every individual of the village is a member of these social groups. The first two groups are based on kinship and the khel is composed of the families of the neighbouring habitation (hamlet).

The institution of khel has tremendous significance among the Tiwas. The khel is composed of the neighbouring families belonging to different descent groups. The member families of a descent group some times if it becomes convenient, jointly perform the birth rituals or manashwa, death ritual or karam, bhokot-sewa etc. The members of a single descent group cannot form a khel as because the khel members play the main role in the purification ceremonies related with birth and death in the families within the khel, in which the whole descent group is considered to be polluted by the impurities of birth (Janma-sua) and death (Mora-Sua) and they are barred from all kinds of socio-religious activities. In such situations the khel members belonging to different descent groups serve the activities of the purification ceremonies of the concerned family as well as the descent group. As such the institution of khel performs the significant role in the birth, marriage and death rituals. The jela and the giyati to perform all these rituals are selected from other descent groups of the same khel by the khel members. Other than these socio-religious functions, the khel also performs the activities of keeping peace and order among the constituent families. The khel holds the authority to punish the wrong doers, who violate the norms of
The parents-in-laws too consider their sons-in-law and daughters-in-law as their own children.

The both joking and avoidance behaviour are seen among different kinship relations. The behaviour of joking is found between the relations like grand parents and grand children, elder sister’s husband and wife’s younger sister, elder brother’s wife and husband’s younger brothers and sisters and sometimes among the siblings. The avoidance behaviour is usually exists between the parents-in-law and sons-in-law/daughters-in-law, between younger brother’s wife and husband’s elder brother, wife’s elder brothers and sisters and younger sister’s husband etc.

But now-a-days the behaviors of joking and avoidance relationship are not very strictly observed. The relatives behave naturally with one another not maintaining the closeness of joking behavior or distance of avoidance behavior. The young and educated generation freely converse with their relatives and above all the kin show their responsibilities towards others.

5.7: Surname

The Tiwas have their numerous surnames to introduce an individual belonging to a particular family. Some of the surnames are common to other communities of Assam especially the caste Hindu communities. The surnames usually used by them are Deoraja, Dekaraja, Loro, Forongai, Borjala, Hatai, Deuri, Doloi, Kunwar, Bordoloi, Dekadoloi, Senapati Khalar, Lumphoi, Darphang, Mosrong etc.

Of the study villages, in Natun-Kumuraguri village Kunwor, Bordoloi, Pator, Suddhi and Bangthai surnames are found. In Kalbari-Bagariguri village Bordoloi, Pator and Deuri and in Markangkuchi village Bordoloi, Deuri and Doloi surnames are found.

Besides these surnames at present, there comes the trend of using the clan as surname. During the field work when the researcher asked an informant the reason behind using the clan as surname he told, that the Tiwas surnames are
Both descriptive and classificatory terms are used by the Tiwas in the study villages. The primary kin like father, mother, husband and wife are usually denoted by single term for each relation. The classificatory terms are applied for addressing the siblings. The secondary and the tertiary kin are usually addressed by the classificatory terms. For example the term Khai or Kokaideo is applied for addressing the elder brothers and similarly the term Pai or Bai is used to addressed the elder sisters. The term Ani is used to address the father’s younger brother’s wife and mother’s brother’s wife and father’s younger sister. Of these first two (Khai or Kokaideo and Pai or Bai) are tertiary kin and the third (Ani) is secondary kin. The list of kinship terms are given in the Appendix.

In the study villages the Assamese language is spoken as the mother tongue. But in Markangkuchi village a few families speak in Tiwa lanhuage. As far as the kinship terminology is concerned, the Tiwa kinship terms mixed with Assamese kinship terms are used by a very small section of the villagers of Markangkuchi. In other two villages of Natun-Kumuraguri and Kalbari-Bagariguri, none of the villagers can speak in Tiwa language and as such the Assamese kinship terms are used to address their kin.

The members of the family (joint or nuclear) keep their kinship tie intact. The senior and aged persons are honoured by the young generations and in return, the young are always cared for by the elders. The relation between husband and wife is quite amicable and both of them show requisite respect toward each other. The relations of the siblings are quite affectionate and are bound by a sense of responsibility towards each others. Even after separation from the joint family, brothers living in their own nuclear family do not forget their liabilities to each other. The elder brother is always respected and the young are loved by the elders. The daughters-in-laws show the honour towards their parents-in-law as their own parents. Similar is the behaviour of the sons-in-law towards the parents-in-law.
consanguinal kin are those who are related by the blood relation. The kinship relation between parents and children, grand parent and grand children, among the siblings is based on blood ties. Such type of kinship is called consanguinal kinship. The consanguinal relation is not only based on actual blood relation but may be based on supposed blood relation, which is seen among the adopted kin. The affinal kinship is based on the marital relationship. The husband and wife are affinal kin of each other. The consanguinal kin of the husband are the affinal kin of the wife and vice-versa. The father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law etc., are the affinal kin. Both the consanguinal and affinal kinship may be primary, secondary, tertiary and so on according the range of closeness /distance of relationship.

In every tribal society kinship plays an important role, when ever some one is in crisis situation expect the help from the relatives, which is applicable to the Tiwas also. Their family, descent and clan are the kin-based groups. The family and descent are composed of both consanguinal and affinal kin and they consider the existence of blood relationship among the members of a clan.

Their kinship includes the kin related through both father side and mother side. Fa (father), Ayong (father’s elder brother), Tadai (father’s younger brother), Ani (father’s sister), Ayo (father’ elder brother’s wife), Asi (father’s younger brother’s wife), Asa (father’s sister’s husband) etc. are the kin related through the father side and Ma (mother), Mamai (mother’s brother), Asi (mother’s sister), Ani (mother’s brother’s wife), Asa (mother’s sister’s husband) etc. are the kin related through the mother side. Thus both descriptive and classificatory kinship terms are found among them. Fa (father) and Ma (mother) are descriptive terms and Ayong (father’ elder brother), Tadai (father’s younger brother), Mamai (mother’s brother), Asa (father’s/sister’s husband), Asi (father’s younger brother’s wife/ mother’ sister), Ani (father’s sister/mother’s brother’s wife) etc. are classificatory terms.
them and at the same time the condition of economic hardship moulds them in such a way that no one wishes to hold these positions of social liabilities voluntarily, as their engagement in such duties of the society cause economic loss for their families as they have to provide a long term social service, leaving aside their works of earning livelihood and other family works.

Besides at present days, young men do not expect to become a gobhia and wants to bring their wives to their own paternal homes. As a result of this the daughter-in-law of a family of the former hari takes over the charge from her mother-in-law, if her kul-singa ritual is performed during her marriage. The daughter-in-law who has not performed kul-singa ritual at the time of marriage cannot take the post of hari from her mother-in-law, since she belongs to her father’s clan, even after marriage.

In Kalbari-Bagariguri village there were four barghars belonging to Sukai, Amphi, Ladu and Phangsong clan earlier. But now only the barghars of the Phangsong clan and Sukai clan are in existence. The main reason of decreasing the number of barghars in the village is difficulties of maintaining of its functions and unwillingness of the girls of those families related with the barghar to become hari by staying unmarried or marry with a gobhia husband. Besides the boys at present do not want go as a gobhia to his wife’s house.

But even then, the role these two functionaries (jela and hari) are permanent in some places, who performed all the socio-religious ceremonies of their concerned clan and descent group. Some times jela and hari (giyati) may be selected for the particular function, which have not to engage themselves as jela and hari in all the socio-religious ceremonies of the respective clans and descent groups related with barghar.

5.6: Kinship

The recognition and expression of geneological relationship is kinship. The kinship relationships are based on consanguinal and affinal bond. The
The hari has to perform the duty of all religious matters related with the barghar and in other ceremonial occasions. In the ceremonies like Nowan-Chyawa (Na-Khowa in Assamese), Khati-man worship (Kathia Bidhan Puja in Assamese), Badal-Maji Worship, Magh-Bihu, Bohag-Bihu etc. she performs the responsibilities of cooking food for offering before the deities. She also prepares the Chira (rice flakes) and a kind of steamed cake (Bhapat Dia Pitha) in the month of Aghon (November-December) from the first cut rice (Ag lowa dhan) to offer before the home-deities.

In these worships she cooks a curry of fish or meat using Gaj-Tenga (a kind of sour prepared from bamboo-shoots) or Theker-Tenga (Gartinia pedunculata) or using any other sour suitable or fruit, rice-powder (Pithaguri), water, salt (sodium chloride) without using chilly (Capsicum spp), garlic (Allium sativum), onion (Allium cepa), turmeric (Curcuma longa) powder and any other spices. The curry thus cooked is called Lang-Dong. Ancestors and ancestress, Sat-Ai and Sat-Bhoni (Seven mothers and Seven sisters), Baro-Bhai and Baro-Bhoni (Twelve-brothers and Twelve-sisters) are the deities for whom she worships in the barghar with untied hair and offers the food cooked for them in plantain leaves. She also arranges an offering of food containing cooked rice and langdong curry for the deities of the Than (an isolated place of worship in the village) and hands it over to the jela to offer in the Than. The remaining part of the lang-dong curry is eaten by the elderly women present there inside the barghar in a very short time, when no male enters into the barghar and this system is called Margine Mel Pindowa. On the occasion of death ceremony or Karam in the village (Khel) she cooks rice and curry to offer as the Pinda (food) for the departed soul. Other than these she has to perform the duty in the worship of the home-deities (Ghar-dew or Ghar-gosai) in the purification ceremony connected with the birth, death etc. In these functions her role is very much important.

It is observed that the willingness to become a jela or hari has diminished among them due to the strict rules and regulations to be customarily observed by
mother to daughter. The woman on whom the responsibility of the *hari* is vested has to observe some restrictions regarding food, she can’t eat the food eaten by others and she can’t consume any kind of food which is socially dis-approved, even though she may wish to consume. She only eats the socially approved food. Like food habit she has to maintain the cleanliness with due bathing and washing in time.

The selection of the *hari* is done in their traditional prayer house of the clan or descent group called *barghar*, after performing a worship in it by the elderly members of the clan and descent group and after the selection of the *hari* they advice her to perform her duty of worships related with the *barghar* sincerely so that her status in the role of *hari* does not go down in the village.

According to informant, Mr. Lakhi Deuri, a woman may be selected as *hari* who has got married by performing the ritual of *kul-singa* and accepts the clan of her husband. In such situation she may be selected as the *hari* of her husband’s clan or descent into which she is affiliated as a member by the ritual of *kul-singa* through which she gives up her father’s clan and descent group. Thus tradition of the post of *hari* succeeded from mother to daughter has been changed to mother-in-law to daughter-in-law.

**Case 5.7**

*Bharati Bordoloi of the Sukai clan acted as the hari of their barghar who did not change her clan after marriage, though she was married to a man of Phangso clan. Her husband became a gobbia and was accepted as a member of his wife’s clan Sukai (as mentioned in case 5.5). But due to her growing age, she has vested her duty of hari to her daughter-in-law, Smt. Jonali Bordoloi who has accepted the clan of her husband (Sukai) through the process of kul-singa in her marriage.*
and clan and in such a situation the girl cannot act as the hari. Therefore the hari after marriage does not go to her husband’s house, instead her husband comes to live in her house (family) as resident husband or gobhia by performing the ritual of kul-singa at marriage. Kul-singa may be performed either for a bride or for the groom, that is who ever wishes or decides to leave the membership of his/her natal clan, in order to attain membership of the clan of his/her spouse.

**Case 5.5**

_in the study villages there is a ‘barghar’ in Kalbari-Bagariguri village, belonging to Phangsho clan. The ‘hari’ of this ‘barghar’ is Smt. Senimai Bordoloi, who has kept her husband Sri Dijen Bordoloi as a ‘gobhia’ whose paternal house is at Silsang. Sri Dijen Bordoloi performed his ‘kul-singa’ ritual at the time of marriage and affiliated himself into the clan of his wife, Smt. Senimai Bordoloi which is of Phangsho clan. Sri Dijen Bordoloi’s original clan was Mosrong. The ‘gharbura’ of their ‘barghar’ is Sri Rajib Bordoloi, the eldest son of Dijen Bordoloi and Senimai Bordoloi._

**Case 5.6**

_Informant Smt. Bharati Bordoloi of Kalbari-Bagariguri villages of about 55 years age is the ‘hari’ of the ‘barghar’ of her descent group. She is married woman belonging to the ‘Sukai’ clan. She performed all the religious activities related with the worship of the ‘barghar’ and other socio-religious activities of her descent group or ‘vansha’. She did not leave her parental house after marriage, instead her husband, Sri Puwaram Bordoloi who belonged to the ‘Phangso’ clan came to live in her parental house as a resident husband or ‘gobhia’ and affiliated himself into the ‘Sukai’ clan which is his wife’s clan._

The ritual of _kul-singa_ does not take place in case of the hari to give up clan of father and accept her husband’s clan. Instead her husband goes through the process of _kul-singa_ to make him give up of his own clan and accept the clan of his wife. The status of the hari is a hereditary which is transferred from the
and then the person is selected as the *jela* or *gharbura*. The person selected as the *jela* of the *barghar* has to observe some taboos regarding food and has to abstain from some works which may be polluting for him. For example he can go to the cremation ground as a villager or *khel* member to cremate a deceased, but he cannot take the responsibility of the *male-giyati* (man of other descent selected to perform activities of cremation of the deceased) of the cremation. Similarly he can attend the *rati-sewa* worship as a *bhakat*, but he cannot play the role of the *bura-bhakat* of the *rati-sewa* worship.

It is the duty of the person who becomes *jela* to learn all the procedures of the worship of the *barghar* deities. But usually it is seen that since the rank of the *jela* goes from father to son or elder brother to younger brother, the person to be selected for the post of *jela* is acquainted with the procedures of the worship of the *barghar* deities. The *jela* holds the position of the main functionary in performance of the initiation ceremony of the new-borns, marriage ritual (*biya*), death ritual (*Karam*), different worships and ceremonies of his respective clan or descent group. He has to sacrifice the animals like goat and pig and birds like fowl, duck etc. in the worship and smears the blood in the altar of the worship. After completion of the worship, when he takes meal he is offered the cooked head portion and the thigh (leg piece) of the fowl as the symbol of honour.

There are two or three associate priests in every clan and every descent group known as *sahajogi-jela* or *hadary*, any one of whom performs the activities of the *jela* in his absence. The *hadari* is also called as the *sarubura* who can succeed the post of *gharbura* or *jela*, when the time comes.

Every clan and descent group has a female priest of their own like the *jela* (male priest) who is called the *hari* or *hari-kunwari*, who is simply called *hari*. The *hari* is the daughter of the descent group to which the *barghar* belongs. After marriage the girls go to their husbands’ houses. If the procedure of *kul-singa* ritual is performed in the marriage the girl loses her affiliation to her father’s descent
disappeared among the Tiwas living in the plain, who have accepted the clan through the male line (Patrilineal) and the suffix *lok* has been attached with the clan name, because they have given up their Tiwa language long ago and accepted the Assamese language as their mother tongue. In Assamese language *lok* means a male individual. Thus the clan with the *lok* suffix, such as *Sukai-lok* indicates perhaps the clan comes from the male line, not from the female line.

In the three study villages, it is observed that in Markangkuchi village only the suffix *wali* is used widely, while in the other two villages namely Natun-Kumuraguri and Kalbari-Bagariguri, the suffix *lok* is used with the name of the clan.

5.5: Role of Jela and Hari or Hari-Kunwari

Every Tiwa clan (*Kul*) and descent group (*vansha*) there is a main priest of its own who is known as the *borjela* or *gharbura* which is also known as *jela*. Thus the *jela* is the man who performs all the socio-religious activities of his respective clan and descent group. The *jela* of the clan performs rituals of the clan and the *jela* of the descent group performs the rituals of every family belonging to the descent group respectively. He is the main priest of their prayer house called *barghar*. The *jela*, of the *barghar* though he is also known as *gharbura*, he may not be an old man, but is a married and aged man.

The office of the *jela* is not hereditary that is passed from father to son, but the selection of the *jela* of the *barghar* must be done from the same family. It may be taken over by the younger brother from the elder brother. An adult and knowledgeable man of the clan is selected as the *jela* to act as the main functionary of different rituals of the clan. Same is the system in case of selection of the *jela* of descent group (*vansha*). When a *jela* is selected for the worship in the *barghar*, the person is bathed and dressed in the courtyard of the *barghar* in the presence of the elderly persons of the descent group and members of the *khel*. After the bath, offerings of betel-leaves and nuts are made in front of the *barghar* deities.
Case 5.3

Mr. Moneswar Pator of Natun-Kumuraguri village is of 65 years old, belonging to Melang clan. He informed that in the earlier generations the clan exogamy was strictly followed but this has become flexible in the present condition. Mr. Pator has three sons and his eldest son fell in love with a girl belonging to the same clan of Melang. When the matter came to his knowledge, he immediately informed the matter to the Khel. The meeting of the khel, which was held in the Namghar of their khel decided that the marriage should be solemnised by accepting the girl into the clan of the maternal uncle of the boy and thus the marriage within the clan became permissible. The khel members demanded the boy treat them with a feast of rice, pork and rice-beer etc.

Case 5.4

Informant Ms. Nandita Bordoloi of Natun Kumuraguri village of about 30 years of age, informed that her grand father who belonged to the Koch community from the neighbouring village married a Tiwa girl of Natun-Kumuraguri village (her grand mother) and came to her house as a resident husband (gobhia), accepting her clan. As such the clan of my informant’s father became the clan (Melang) of his mother of Tiwa community. Later on his wife and children (informant and siblings) affiliated into the clan of their father, the Melang clan. Her brother is married and his wife has accepted the Melang clan.

The suffixes lok and wali are used by the Tiwa with their clans. It seems that the Tiwas living in the plains use the suffix lok with their clans. For instance an individual of Sukai clan says his/her clan as Sukai-lok. The suffix wali is used by those who have traditional touches with the Hill-Lalungs. Similarly an individual of Sukai clan among the Hill-Lalungs says his/her clan as Sukai-wali.

From these two suffixes used in the Tiwa clans make the researcher to think that the Tiwas were originally matrilineal, the traces of which has been
persons belong to the Sagar clan. There are 2(3.6%) families each of Ladu, Damu, Amchi, and Boga-Amchi clans with 9(3.0%), 10(3.4%), 11(3.7%) and 14(4.8%) persons respectively.

In Markangkuchi village 8 clans namely Sukai, Phangsong, Amchi, Mithi, Khasar, Khoral, Madar and Puma are found. There 16(32%) families and 76(30.3%) persons are of Mithi clans. 12(24.0%) families and 52(20.6%) are of Khoral clan, 6(12.0%) families and 30(12%) persons of Madar clan, 5(10.0%) families and 28(11.2%) persons are of the Khasar clan, 4(8.0%) families and 36(14.3%) persons are of the Sukai clan and 4(8.0%) families and 18(7.2%) persons are of the Amchi clan, 2(4.0%) families and 7(2.8%) persons are of the Puma clan and 1(2.0%) family and 4(1.6%) persons are of the Phangsong clan.

In the three villages of study, it is found that the clans are patrilineal. The children accept the clan name of their father. The girls, till marriage stay in the clan of their father and after marriage are included in the clans of their husbands. After marriage the wife is affiliated into her husband’s clan through the ritual of kul-singa.

The clans are exogamous. The practice of endogamy is probited normally. In the earlier days marriage within the clan was taken seriously and the couple who entered into marriage within the same clan were excommunicated by the villagers and kept no contact with them and some time compelled to go out from the village.

However at present the cases of marriage sometimes occur in the villages due to love affairs of the boy and girl belonging to the same clan. This type of problematic situation is solved by suggestions given by the khel.

In the study villages the clans are of equall status and there no existence of any principal clan or dominant clan. According to the aged persons of the villages, their clans were matrilineal in 2-3 generations earlier which have passed to the patrilineal system in course of time.
Table-5.4.a shows the clan wise distribution of the families and population of the three villages under study. The clans like, Melang, Sukai, Magar, Phangsong, Amphi, Ladu, Damu, Amchi. Boga-Amchi, Sagar, Mithi, Khasar, Kholar, Madar and Puma are found in the three villages.

In Natun-Kumuraguri village four clans are found, namely Melang, Sukai, Magar and Phangsong. 44(73.3%) families with 227(75.4%) population belong to Melang clan, 13(21.7%) families and 63(21.0%) persons belong to the Sukai clan, 2(3.3%) families and 9(2.9%) persons belong to the Magar clan and 1(1.7%) and 2(0.7%) persons belong to the Phangsong clan.

In Kalbari-Bagariguri village there are 8 clans, like Sukai, Phangsong, Amphi, Ladu, Damu, Amchi, Boga-Amchi and Sagar. In this village 27(49.1%) families and 134(46.1%) persons belong to the Amphi clan, 16(29.1%) families and 90(30.1%) persons belong to the Sukai clan, 3(5.5%) families and 21(7.2%) persons belong to the Phangsong clan. There is 1(1.8%) family with 2(0.7%)
the daughters also do not marry boys of their father’s clan. Thus cross-cousin 
marriage, i.e. the marriage with the father’s sister’s daughter (FSD) and mother’s 
brother’s daughter (MBD) are equally prohibited.

Originally their clans were territorial clans formed from a consanguinous 
group living in a particular territory. As it grew bigger in size it branched off into 
number of clans and the dominant clan from which the chief was selected, 
bringing other clans under control and formed the bigger territorial groups.

This can be clarified by the writings of Syamchoudhury and Das, (ibid: 70) “It appears that in the past Lalung (Tiwa) clans were divided territorially. In 
the hills, the Lalungs (Tiwas) can be broadly divided into five divisions or sub-
tribes, namely, Mukro, Rongkhoi, Amsi, Marjong and Amswoi. In each division 
there are a number of clans which are usually not concentrated in any particular 
village. These divisions have come to be known by the name of the principal or 
the dominant village in their territory”.

In none of the villages under study, clans are not confined to particular territory. 
The table given below shows the clans found in the study villages.

**Table 5.4.a. Distribution of Clans in the Villages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of clan</th>
<th>Natun-Kumaraguri</th>
<th>Markangkuchi</th>
<th>Kalbari-Bagariguri</th>
<th>Total family (%)/ Person (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of family (%)</td>
<td>No. of person (%)</td>
<td>No. of family (%)</td>
<td>No. of person (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melang</td>
<td>44 (72.3)</td>
<td>227 (75.4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukai</td>
<td>13 (21.7)</td>
<td>63 (21.0)</td>
<td>04 (8.0)</td>
<td>36 (14.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magar</td>
<td>02 (3.3)</td>
<td>09 (2.9)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phangsong</td>
<td>01 (1.7)</td>
<td>02 (0.7)</td>
<td>01 (2.0)</td>
<td>04 (1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladu</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
traditional system of religious beliefs called ‘bedang’, and as a consequence of which the institution of ‘barghar’ disappeared from their village. There are four ‘Namghars’ in the village belonging to different ‘khels’. Even those families who have not accepted ‘Vaishnavism’ and are following the ‘bedang’ system of traditional religion also have connection with the ‘Namghar’, disconnecting them from the ‘barghar’.

5.4: Clan

According to Gohain, “the most important social grouping is the clan called khul. It must be mentioned that all the clans are socially on equal footing and they eat together and intermarry. The khul is an exogamous mtrilineal descent group. The clans grouped into some clusters called maharsa. One particular clan in each cluster is regarded as the principal or dominant clan but there is no position of the clan in the said cluster and all are teated equally.” (ibid: 1993: 41)

Thus from the above it is understood that the clans of the Tiwas are rigidly exogamous and in its origin these were matrilineal descent groups. The clan of the female line was followed, in which the children born out of a couple were affiliated into the clan of their mother. A man who came to live in the house of his wife after marriage, accepted the clan of his wife by giving up his clan of birth. The clans maintain their communication with each other with the bond of kinship by establishing inter-clan marital relation, due to exogamy nature of clans and the sub clans. There can be no marriage within a clan or between two clans of a same clan cluster and those (boy and girl) who enter into marriage, violating this rule are driven away from the village.

Besides the prohibition of clan endogamy there are certain restrictions regarding marriage among them. Since the children of a couple are incorporated into the clan of their mother, they are barred from marrying in the clan of their mother and at the same time they are barred from marrying in the clan of their father. Therefore the sons can’t marry the girls belonging to their father’s clan and
The other descent and clan members go to other villages to participate the worship of the deities of *barghar* belonging to their same clan.

On the other hand in the village of Natun-Kumuraguri most of them have been attracted towards Hinduism especially towards the *ek saran nam dharma* or *Vaishnavism* of Mahapurush Sri Sankardeva and have associated themselves with the *Namghar*, the prayer house cum community hall of the Assamese Vaishnavite sect. As such there is no trace of *barghar* in this village. The aged persons of this village said that during their childhood there was a *barghar* in their village belonging to Melang clan, but due to conversion of them from their traditional religious beliefs (*bedang*) to Assamese *Vaishnavism* the existence of *barghar* and its related worships have disappeared from this village.

**Case 5.1**

Informant Sri Saruram Bordoloi of Markangkuchi village is a Knowledgeable man and he is the Gaonbura of the village. He informed about the *barghar* of the Tiwa people of the village. He said that *barghar* is the prayer house of the family, descent and clan in which different items of worship, drum (dhol), daron, sacrificing implement (earlier) etc. are kept on a platform called gurbang inside the *barghar*. The worship of the main *barghar* deity, Badalmaji or Fa Mahdeo and the departed souls of their ancestors are done near the base of the main post (thuna-khuta) of the *barghar*. According to him there were a *barghar* in every family earlier, some them are in ruins and have not been reconstructed yet and at present there are only five *barghars* in which the families belonging to same descent worship their concerned deities.

**Case 5.2**

One of the aged inhabitants of Natun-Kumuraguri village, Mr. Bhogeswar Bordoloi, about 60 years of age informed that in his childhood there was a ‘*barghar*’ in their village, belonging to his clan ‘Melang’, but in course of time most of the families of the village converted to ‘*Vaishnavism*’ by giving up their
Assamese community prayer house cum meeting place called *Namghar* by giving up their traditional Tiwa system of rituals and ceremonies known as *bedang*.

The family is the main unit of the society and the families of the same descent affiliation form a descent group called *Vansha* or *Khutas*. This descent group is unilineal, which is patrilineal in nature among. Every descent group called *Khuta* is associated with a traditional prayer house of the descent group or the clan which is called *barghar*. But due to the acceptance of the Hindu system of ritual (*Vaishnavism*) the importance of the *barghar* is decreasing day by day.

Of the study villages in Markangkuchi there are five *barghars* belonging to different descents and clans, like Sukai, Khoral, Madar and Mithi. Of these clans, Khoral clan has two *barghars* in the village. Sri Lakhan Doloi and Smt Sarudoi Doloi are the *jela* and *hari* of the Sukai clan, Sri Ranu Deuri and Smt Bhugeswari Deuri are the *jela* and *hari* of one *barghar* of the Khoral clan and Sri Umeswar Deuri and Smt. Nalmati Deuri are the *jela* and *hari* of the other *barghar* of the same clan. Sri Muleswar Bordoloi and Smt. Uskun Bordoloi are the *jela* and *hari* of Madar clan and Sri Tipsing Bordoloi and Smt. Anima Bordoloi are *jela* and *hari* of Mithi clan.

In the earlier visit to Kalbari-Bagariguri village the researcher found four *barghars*, belonging to Phangsong, Sukai, Amphi and Ladu clan. But at present there are only two *barghars* belonging to Phangsong and Sukai clan existing. Sri Rajib Bordoloi and Smt. Jonali Bordoloi are the *jela* and *hari* of the *barghar* of the Sukai clan and Sri Dijen Bordoloi and Smt. Senimai Bordoloi are the *jela* and *hari* of the *barghar* of Phangsong clan. The *barghar* of the Amphi clan has broken down, which has not reconstructed and that of the Ladu clan has been shifted to the neighbouring village of Ajarbari. The members of the Amphi clan go to the neighboring, Koroiguri village to attend the worships of *barghar* of the same clan and the members of the Ladu clan go to Ajarbari village for the same purpose.
clan of their mother, even the husband too accepted the same of his wife, if he performed the *kul-singa* ritual.

In that situation on his death his dead body can not be cremated in the *hatham* (allotted place for every clan) of his own clan in cremation ground (*makar*). He has to be cremated in the *hatham* of his wife’s clan. If he does not perform the ritual of *kul-singa*, then he has to be cremated in the *hatham* of his own clan, when he dies, if even he dies in his wife’s house too.

But the system of keeping *gobhia* has almost disappeared from their societies, as no family wants to send their son/sons to the house his/their wife(s), instead they want to send their daughters to the houses of their husbands after marriage by the performance of the *kul-singa* ritual as a result of which they are included as the members of their husbands’ clans. It is also found that even the boy who come to stay in the house of his wife, does not accept the descent of the wife, but the wife accepts the descent and clan of her resident husband (*gobhia*) and their children are also counted as the members of the father’s descent and clan.

But if the wife of the resident husband (*gobhia*) is a *hari* or *har-kunwari* (female priest) of her own decent or clan, then she remains as a member of the descent and clan of her parent and she does not accept those of her husband and in such situation the husband accepts his wife’s lineage and clan and their children are also included in the descent and clan of their mother.

These types of cases are rare and are dis-appearing gradually from their society, since the activities of the *hari* are associated with the *barghar* (a traditional prayer house of the Tiwas) and its presence in the villages is gradually being replaced by prayer house called *Goshai-ghar*. Due to the impact of the influential Assamese culture and the influence of the Assamese *Vaishnavism* of Mahapurush Sri Sankardeva. Many Tiwas people in Morigaon district go to the
agriculture. Due to the increase of family members in a joint family, the land they possess is unable to provide occupation to all the family members and at the same time it becomes less capable to provide food for the whole family. As such the members of the joint family have to opt for other source of income for earning livelihood and results in the breaking down of the joint family into a few small nuclear families.

A nuclear family is usually composed of a man and his wife with their unmarried children. The father becomes the head of that family and it becomes his sole responsibility to provide all the necessities like foods, cloths and other needs to his wife and children.

The wife too assists her husband in smooth the running of the family. She generally looks after the domestic work and takes care of the children and her husband and simultaneously helps her husband by earning through her domestic activities like rearing of animals and birds, weaving and even in some families (followers of traditional belief system) the house wife brews the country liquor to sell to the customers as a source of income.

5.3 Descent

The Tiwas of Morigaon district follow the patrilineal system of family and the father becomes the head of the family. The inheritance and the succession systems are patrilineal and these are transmitted from father to son and the children are affiliated into descent (khuta) and clan (kul) of the father. The girls till marriage are included as the descent and clan members of those of their father, but after marriage they are affiliated into the descents and clans of their husbands, through the ritual of kul-singa in marriage ceremonies.

According to aged informants, who informed the researcher that there was a system of matrilineal residence among the Tiwas, in which the man came to live in the house of his wife, known as gobhia or gharjia in the earlier years. In such cases the children born out of that couple had to accept the lineage or descent and
A Tiwa joint family is composed of a male head of the family, his wife, married and un-married sons, un-married daughters, daughter-in-laws, married and un-married brothers, their wives and children etc.

But in the earlier days when the Tiwas followed the matrilineal system the family composed “of the parents, unmarried son and daughters and a married daughter with her husband who stays in the house a resident son-in-law, i.e. gobhia and his children. Ideally the youngest daughter stays with her husband in the house of her parents and inherits the parental house and a major share of parental landed property.” (Gohain, 1993: 45)

The head of the joint family is always assisted by the other adult members of the family in various family matters like taking decision in different situations such as smooth running of the family, its economic activities, and management of family property, affairs of marriage and other such socio-economic and socio-religious affairs. The members of the joint family show due respect to the head and all of them obey his advices.

The daughter-in-laws think the mother-in-law as their own mother and obey all her instructions and advices. The residence after marriage is patrilocal and the descent affiliation is patrilineal. The property is inherited by the sons after the death of the father. Their clan (Kul) is patrilineal and exogamous in nature. The daughters do not get the share of their paternal property. But till marriage their brothers have to take care of them and it becomes their duty to arrange the marriage of the sisters in the absence of the father. If a joint family breaks into nuclear families after the death of the father, the widow mother may live with any one of her son’s family, which means that family has not gain full status of the nuclear family.

The separation of the members of the joint family to form the nuclear family is mainly due to the economic reasons and increase in the numbers of the family members. The main source of income in a joint family is mostly
widow mother (Joint family). There are 4(7.2%) families with the composition of husband, wife with husband’s unmarried siblings and both parents (Joint family) and 4(7.2%) families are with composition of husband, wife children and husband’s both parents (Joint family). There are 3(5.6%) families composed of husband, wife and their grand children (Joint family) and 3(5.6%) families composed of husband, wife and husband’s father (Joint family). 2(3.7%) families are with the members of husband, wife and children with husband’s widow-mother and unmarried siblings (Joint family) and 2(3.7%) families are with the members of husband, wife, children and husband’s unmarried siblings (joint family). There is 1(1.8%) family is composed of two married brothers with their wives and children (Joint family).

In Markangkuchi village there are 24(48.0%) families composed of the members of husband, wife and their unmarried children (Nuclear family). The 5(10.0%) families are composed of the widow-mother and her unmarried children (Nuclear family). The families composed of husband, wife, husband’s unmarried siblings and both parents (Joint family) are 8(16.0%). There are 4(8.0%) families with the members of husband, wife, children and husband’s widow mother (Joint family). The families composed with the members of husband, wife, children and husband’s both the parents (Joint family) are 3(6.0%). Same number of 3(6.0%) families is with the members of husband, wife, children with the husband’s widow mother and unmarried siblings (Joint family). The family composed of husband, wife, children with husband’s unmarried siblings (Joint family) are 2(4.0%) and 1(2.0%) is composed of the two married brothers with their wives and children (Joint family). Thus in this village there are 29(58.0%) nuclear families with 122(48.6%) individuals (52 males and 70 females). The number of joint families are 21(42.0%) with 129(52.4%) individuals (63 males and 66 females) in total.

In the study villages both nuclear and joint families are found. The joint families act as the socio-economic unit which is headed by the senior most male member of the family.
the widow-mother and her unmarried children (Nuclear family). The family composed with the members like the father and his unmarried children (Nuclear family) is 1(1.7%). The families composed of the members like husband, wife, their children and husband’s widow-mother (Joint family) in Natun-Komoraguri village is 7 (11.7%). The families composed of husband, wife children with husband’s siblings and both parents (Joint family) are 4(6.6%). There are 3(5.0%) families composed of husband, wife, children with husband’s unmarried siblings (Joint family). The family composed of husband wife and their grand children (Joint family) is 2(3.3%) and the family composed of husband, wife and their unmarried children with husband’s parental kin (Joint family) is also 2(3.3%). The family composed of more than one married brothers with their wives and children (Joint family) is 1(1.7%). The family with the members of husband, wife, children with husband’s widow-mother and unmarried siblings (Joint family) is 1(1.7%). The family composed of the members like widow woman with her widow-mother in law and unmarried son (Joint family) is 1(1.7%). The composition of the family members are differently combined and thus both forms of family, such as the number of nuclear family 39(65%) and joint family 21(35%) are prevailing in the village. There are 169(56%) individuals (84males and 85females) belonging to the nuclear families and 132(44%) (66males and 66females) belonging to the joint families.

The village Kalbari-Bagariguri has almost equal number of nuclear families and joint families, 28(50.9%) and 27(49.1%) respectively. There are 130(44.7%) individuals living in the nuclear families and 161(55.3%) individuals living in joint families. The members of both types of these families are combined differently. There are 26(47.2%) families with the members of husband, wife and their unmarried children (Nuclear family). There is 1(1.8%) family composed of just husband and wife (Nuclear family) another 1(1.8%) family is composed of the widow-mother and her unmarried children (Nuclear family). There are 8(14.4%) families with the members of husband, wife, children with husband’s
## TABLE: 5.2.a. Family Composition of the Villages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY COMPOSITION</th>
<th>Natun Kumuraguri</th>
<th>Kalbari-Bagariguri</th>
<th>Markangkuchi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband &amp; wife</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1(1.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband, Wife with grand children</td>
<td>2(3.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3(5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband, Wife Unmarried Children</td>
<td>32(53.3)</td>
<td>26(47.2)</td>
<td>24(48.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband, Wife With Children With husband’s widow mother</td>
<td>07(11.7)</td>
<td>8(14.4)</td>
<td>4(8.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband, Wife With Husband’s Unmarried Siblings With Both Parents.</td>
<td>4(6.6)</td>
<td>4(7.2)</td>
<td>8(16.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband Wife Children With husband’s both parents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4(7.2)</td>
<td>3(6.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband, Wife With Husband’s widow mother And Husband’s Unmarried siblings</td>
<td>01(1.7)</td>
<td>2(3.7)</td>
<td>3(6.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband wife children with husband’s unmarried siblings.</td>
<td>3(5.0)</td>
<td>2(3.7)</td>
<td>2(4.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Or More Married Brothers With Their children</td>
<td>1(1.7)</td>
<td>1(1.8)</td>
<td>1(2.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow mother and unmarried children</td>
<td>6(10.0)</td>
<td>1(1.8)</td>
<td>5(10.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father and unmarried children</td>
<td>1(1.7)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother in law with daughter in law and grand son</td>
<td>1(1.7)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband wife unmarried children with husband’s parental kin</td>
<td>2(3.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband wife children and husband’s father</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3(5.6)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60(100)</td>
<td>55(100)</td>
<td>50(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of the composition of the family members shows that maximum of the families are composed of the husband, wife and their unmarried children (Nuclear family). The number of such families in Natun-Kumuraguri village is 32(53.3%). There are 6(10.0%) families in this village are composed of
5.2 Family

The family is the basic social institution which is a minimal group of the directly related individual either by blood or by marriage relation. Marriage relation between a man and a woman resulted in the formation of a family. Family is responsible for it’s care of the members and every individual of the family is liable for their relatives and other kins, though they are not living in the same family.

In the early days as informed by the informants of the researcher that they were matrilineal and as such followed all the rule of matrilineal system like residence after marriage was matrilocal, the children were affiliated into the descents and clans of their mothers. The male individuals had no right on the property which was transmitted through the female line, from mothers to daughters and the main house the mother was usually inherited by the youngest daughter. A man went to live with his wife in her ancestral house and his duty was to look after and manage the landed property of his wife without any right on it. According to some of the knowledgeable persons of the community, the matriliny of the Tiwas was due to their long contact with the Jayantias in past, who were matrilineal in nature, influenced the Tiwas to follow the system of matriliny.

At present in Morigaon district of Assam, the Tiwas strictly follow the patrilineal system in all spheres of life. In the three study villages, it is observed that after marriage the newly wed couple live in patrilocal residence with the boy’s parent and afterward starts a new family by getting separated from the parental in family of the boy. The existance of patrilocal joint and extended families is common in all three study villages.

Table given below shows composition of families in the three villages of study, that all the joint and extended families are composed of relatives of the husband and not the wife. These are linked together through the husbands.
CHAPTER V

CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL SPHERE

5.1 Overview:

While writing about the Tiwas living in the plains Syamchaudhry and Das (1973) have noted “structurally the clan is a division of matrilineal kins, (ibid: 70) and the traditional pattern of residence after marriage was uxorilocal”. (ibid: 71). They however had noted that “a man after marriage does not usually leave the village of his birth.” (ibid: 71). This is mainly because “a man after his marriage has to discharge some social duties towards the family of his birth. If any dispute on division of land or other property arises among his sisters, he is called upon to arbitrate. A sister cannot dispose off any land of the family without consulting or taking permission from her mother or mother’s brother or in their absence her own brother “(ibid: 72.). It is the man of who performs the role of jela in his family of birth though after marriage he goes to live in his wife’s house.

According to these authors, the young boys belonging to “dominant clans” of the village who own more agricultural land, did not want to leave their own village. The families which have in their possession more land than they can cultivate themselves do not want to lose their economic advantage by allowing the working hands (sons) to go away after marriage. In spite of the changes in residence pattern, the matrilineal bias in Lalung family still continues strong. (ibid: 98)

In the study villages, the different kin based and other village organisations and systems are described below with the changes occurred in them. The family, descent or lineage (khuta) and clan are the kin based groups, while, khel is a social organization based on locality. The system of kinship and use of different surnames by the villagers of the study villages have also been described in this chapter.
The women mainly earn through the occupation of labourer, weaving and country liquor selling (followers of traditional belief system only) which provide financial support to the family and money to buy the essential commodities of women such as ornaments, mirror, comb, hair oil, powder, snow and other such cosmetics from the market. Other than these they are basically house wives who perform all the domestic activities and rearing of animals and birds, for domestic consumption and to earn money by selling these. Some educated women of the study villages are employed in the services of school teacher and Anganbadi teachers in the villages.

In Natun-Kumuraguri village 3 women and in Markangkuchi village 4 women are in the occupation of services and in Kalbari-Bagariguri village 1 woman who is H.S. passed is working as Anganbadi teacher.

At present most of the women of all the study villages are involving with the Self Help Groups to associate themselves with the rural based businesses. The women (members) of the Self Help Groups raise a fund by their monthly contributions. The money accumulated in this way are given loan to their fellow member at a certain rate of interest per month. This way after some years when the fund position of the group comes to good condition, the money is invested in rearing of the pig, goat, duck, fowl etc. and some groups buy tractor or power tiller to give on rent during agricultural periods. The income goes to the fund of the group. The Self Help Groups some times take loan from the banks to make their asset which is recovered by its income and/or by the monthly contributions of the members.

*****
by winnowing it to separate the tiny pieces of straws from the grains and storing these in the granaries or inside the main house in big bamboo basket called (duli).

Besides agricultural activities men are associated with the tough and outdoor activities and women, since they are house wives too, perform all the domestic activities like looking after the house hold works such as caring of the children and old-age persons, washing clothes, cleaning the household, cooking, rearing animals and birds, weaving etc. and sometimes fishing in the nearby shallow water.

The brewing of rice beer is a women work as the rice beer is considered as an item of food list, which is not taken as an intoxicant item. Traditionally they use rice beer in their daily list of food items and is used as an important item of socio-religious functions. At present time those who have accepted the Hindu norms have given up the rice beer from their food list as well as from their socio-religious functions. They have given up the preparation of rice beer along with the rearing of pigs as these are excluded from food items of the Hindus.

Though during the early days they prepared rice beer for own consumption, but at the present time it has become an item of business. In all the villages under study, it has been found that some women prepare country liquor (mod) for selling to the customers. They have accepted this as an item of business and source of income, their customers have come to consume country liquor from the neighbouring villages and town areas who are engaged in the occupations of rickshow-wala, thela-wala, driver, handyman, daily labourer etc. and most of them are belonging to Assamese or Bengali caste Hindu communitues.

In Natun-Kumuraguri village 3 (1.0%) women, in Kalbari-Bagariguri village 3 (1.03%) women and in Markangkuchi village 4 (1.6%) women are engaged in the occupation of selling country liquor. This is taken as a means of occupation by the families in the villages who have been following their traditional culture (bedang system).
Kalita, Koch, Jugi etc. and they dress like other Assamese caste Hindu women *mekela-sadar*, blouse, petticoat etc. There was a great demand of the clothes woven from the eri-silk called *endi-cloth* in early days. They reared eri-cocoons to procure to fibers from which the eri-silk thread was spun out with a manual spinning wheel called *takuri* and the *endi* clothes were woven as shawl to wear during the winter months for warmth. But at present they have almost given up the rearing of the eri-cocoons and the demand of the *endi* clothes is going down day by day as they start wearing woolen sweaters, shawls and jackets readily available in the markets and shops. Since the Tiwa women are good weavers and weaving is the work of daily routine, some women belonging to poor families have taken weaving as a profession to earn money by selling the woven clothes in their own village as well as outside the village, which provides an economic support to the family.

In the study villages, namely- in Natun-Kumarguri 26 (8.7%) women, in Kalbari-Bagariguri 10 (3.4%) women and in Markangkuchi 2 (0.8%) women are engaging themselves in weaving job as occupation.

The division of labour among the Tiwa men and women are though distinct, yet they perform some work commonly. Both men and women participate in agricultural activities, where ploughing and tilling the land for the preparation of seed beds for sowing the seeds, the preparation of land for transplantation of saplings is done by men and sowing the seeds, transplantation and harvesting are done by both men and women. The carrying of the bundles of harvested paddy from the field to home is done by men on shoulder loads (*bhar*) and bullock carts (now-a-days in wagon, auto-van and trailer of tractor and power tiller etc.).

The thrashing of the grains from the stalks is a man’s work which is done with the help of bullocks, tractor, power tiller or thrashing machines, where women assist men by accumulating the grains after thrashing and cleaning these
The maximum persons having the occupation of Daily Labourer are illiterate. There are 15(57.7%) illiterate persons of Natun Kumuraguri village (10 men and 5 women), 11(73.3%) illiterate persons of Kalbari-Bagariguri village (8 men 3 women) and 13(35.1%) illiterate persons of Markangkuchi village (12 men and 1 woman) have Daily Labourer as the primary occupation.

There are 2(10.0%) men of Natun Kumuraguri village and 9(27.3%) of Markangkuchi village studied up to Primary level, do Daily Labourer as the primary occupation.

There are 3(11.5%) persons (2 men and 1 woman) of Natun Kumuraguri village, 1(8.3%) man of Kalbari-Bagariguri village and 2(6.1%) men of Markangkuchi village studied up to M.E. level, do Daily Labourer as the primary occupation.

There are 5(25.0%) men of Natun Kumuraguri village, 3(25.0%) men of Kalbari-Bagariguri village and 10(27.1%) persons (7 men and 3 women) of Markangkuchi village studied up to High School level, do Daily Labourer as the primary occupation.

There are 1(5.0%) H.S.L.C. pass man of Natun Kumuraguri village and 3(9.0%) H.S.L.C. pass men of Markangkuchi village do Daily Labour as the primary occupation.

4.6: Role of Women in Economic Activities

The Tiwa women of Morigaon district of Assam dress similar to the other caste Hindu communities’ women. They are expert weavers who weave clothes for themselves and other members of the family. The women do all the domestic activities and in the leisure period sit in their looms to weave varieties of colourful clothes. They use cotton yarns to weave different dress items like riha, mekhela, sadar, gamusa etc. These clothes are same in design and texture with the clothes woven by the women of other caste Hindu communities like Bamun (Brahmin),
Thus it is seen that the highest level of education related with the occupation of driving is the studied up to High School level found in all the three village of study.

Table 4.5.e. Education and Daily Labourer in the Villages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Natun Kumuraguri</th>
<th>Kalbari-Bagariguri</th>
<th>Markangkuchi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>Total (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>10 (50.0)</td>
<td>5 (83.3)</td>
<td>15 (57.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Up to Primary Level</td>
<td>2 (10.0)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (7.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Up to M.E. Level</td>
<td>2 (10.0)</td>
<td>1 (16.7)</td>
<td>3 (11.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Up to High School Level</td>
<td>5 (25.0)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 (19.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S.L.C. Pass</td>
<td>1 (5.0)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (3.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20 (100)</td>
<td>06 (100)</td>
<td>26 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figs. in brackets indicate percentage

Table 4.5.e indicates the relation of education with the occupation of Daily Labourer. There are 26 persons (20 men and 6 women) of Natun Kumuraguri village, 15 persons (12 men 3 women) of Kalbari-Bagariguri village and 37 persons (33 men and 4 women) of Markangkuchi village have Daily Labour as the primary occupation.
Table 4.5.d. Education and the Occupation of Driver in the Villages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Natun Kumuraguri</th>
<th>Kalbari-Bagariguri</th>
<th>Markangkuchi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>Total (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Up to Primary Level</td>
<td>1 (11.2)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (11.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Up to M.E. Level</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Up to High School Level</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>09 (100)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>09 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figs. in brackets indicate percentage

This Table-4.5.d shows the level of education of the men having driving as the primary occupation. The 9 men in Natun Kumuraguri village, 3 men in Kalbari-Bagariguri village and 6 men in Markangkuchi village have driving as the primary occupation.

There are 4(44.4%) illiterate men of Natun Kumuraguri village in the primary occupation of driving. 1(11.2%) man of Natun Kumuraguri village, 2(66.7%) men of Kalbari-Bagariguri village and 1(16.7%) man of Markangkuchi village who have studied up to Primary level have driving as the primary occupation and there is 1(16.7%) man who has studied up to M.E. level has driving as the primary occupation.

There are 4(44.4%) men of Natun Kumuraguri village, 1(33.3%) men of Kalbari-Bagariguri village and 4(66.6%) men of Markangkuchi village, who have studied up to High School level have driving as the primary occupation.