CHAPTER - V

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA: DISTRICT DARRANG

Historical back-ground:

The name 'Darrang' seems to have originated from the Sanskrit word 'Dwaram' meaning a gate or a pass. It is believed that in the past, there were some traditional routes or passes (locally known as 'duars' meaning doors) in the northern side of the District, through which the Bhutanese could enter the plain from the north. Some of the places of the District are still known as 'duars' viz. Kalingaduar, Jamduar, etc. The existances of such passes lends support to the view that the name Darrang originated from the Sanskrit word Dwaram¹.

There are different interpretations of the word 'Darrang' by different writers. However, the study, that is the present Darrang District is a part of the old Darrang District of Assam. As a District of plains of Brahmaputra valley, Darrang was, from the time immemorial, on the path of many invaders and travellers from the North, Northeast and west.

In the past, this part of the territory, formed a part of the ancient Kamrupa, whose boundary extended from Karatowa river in the west to the Dikrang river in the east. So far history goes, Mahiranga Danava (C. 1700 B.C.) of Kirata dynasty was the first king of Kamrupa. He was succeeded (in C. 1600 B.C.) by Soawe (Asura's king meaning of which was demon belonging to non-Aryan group²).

DARRANG DISTRICT
STUDY AREA OF THE RESEARCHER SHOWING THE HEAD QUARTERS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION BLOCKS.
Even Banasura, the earliest known king of Darrang, was a non-Aryan, who founded his kingdom at Sonitpur, that is modern Tezpur. According to B. P. Rabha, Bana was a king of Koch-Rabha dynasty of Bodo origin.

In this way history goes back to the illustrious Monarchs who administered Kamrupa in different times of whom king Narakasura (C.1500 B.C.) of Bhumia dynasty, Bhaaskar Barman (A.D. 594-650), several kings of Salastambha dynasty (A.D. 650-998), and in the later parts of tenth century by a line of kings under surname of 'Pala' dynasty.

Again king Arimatta (A.D. 1336-85), again shifted the capital from Kamatapur to Baidyagarg, near Rangia. King Arimatta died childless and subsequently towards the early thirteen century, Darrang was ruled by Bhuyan kings, who excavated many large tanks in Darrang for drinking water.

In the sixteen century, the Koch tribes curved out a principality, covering a part of modern Goalpara and Coach-Bihar District.

According to S. K. Chatterjee, the Koaches were a Mongoloid race very closely allied to the Mechias, Garos etc. They are Hinduised or semi Hinduised Bodo, who abandoned their original Tibeto-Barman speech and adopted the dialects of North Bengal and Assam.

Later on the entire tract from the Karatowa in the west to Barnadi in the east came under the control of Koch kings. The most illustrious Koch king Nar-Narayana brought Darrang District under his control upto river Dikrai in A.D. 1546, with the help of his heroic general Chilarai.

After Nar-Narayana, the large Koch kingdom was divided into two parts. The eastern part comprising present Darrang, Kamrupa and Goalpara Districts belonged to king Raghu Dev. Raghu Dev was succeeded by Bali-Narayana who was a vassal king of Ahoms at Darrang. In A.D. 1616, Bali-Narayana was renamed as Dharmanarayana on his installation as Darrang Raja by the Ahoms. King Dharmanarayana was succeeded by Kishnanarayana in 1792, and he was succeeded by Samudranarayana in 1795. The important period of history of Darrang District was from A.D. 1818 to 1824 when a reign of terror was prevailed all through-out Assam by the Burmese invasion.

After the treaty of Yandabu in A.D. 1826, Assam including Darrang has come under the British rule. They started the cultivation of tea in the District along the northern foot-hills and a railway line was constructed touching the tea estates in A.D. 1912-13.

Mangaldoi was an administrative Sub-Division of the old Darrang District, with the Head-quarter at Mangaldoi Town from A.D. 1833 to 1835. But for frequent flood and the encroachment of the Brahmaputra threatening the Town and for the dirty drinking water, the Head-quarter was shifted to Tezpur in A.D. 1835.

The people of Darrang could not easily accept the British rule. As an immediate protest to pay the increased land revenue, they revolted against the British Government in A.D. 1894. As a consequence, 140 people were shot dead and over 150 injured by British Military Police at Patharighat.

In fact, it was first battle of independence against the Britishers in the eastern region. It was for this reason Darrang was utterly neglected by the British during the subsequent period, which contributed much towards the backwardness of the District.⁸

After independence, Darrang became one of the north bank District of Assam with two Sub-Divisions - Mangaldoi and Tezpur. Finally, on 1st July, 1983, the Mangaldoi Sub-Division had been up-graded to a full-fledged District known as "Darrang District", which is the study area of the present work.

Geographical background of the study area

Location

The District of Darrang is situated in between 26°9" and 26°25" of latitude and between 91°45" and 92°22" longitude. The four boundaries of the District are, river Pachnoi and Sonitpur District in the east, Barnadi and Kamrup in the west, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh covering with a large and small hills in the north, mighty river Brahmaputra and Nowgong District in the south.

Geographical area

There are two Sub-Divisions of the District, one is Mangaldoi and the other is Udalguri Sub-Divisions. Covering a total area of both the Sub-Divisions 3465.3 Square Kms. The District has a Terrain of Char areas both on the southern and northern bank of the river Brahmaputra.

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The District covers the entire northern portion with large and small streams originating from hills.

Physical features

The climate of the District is humid and flood prone. Udalguri Sub-Division has sixteen numbers of main rivers, while Mangaldoi Sub-Division has only three parental rivers. The average rainfall of the District is 1500 mm per year, while the maximum average temperature ranging from 26°C and 32°C and minimum temperature 9°C.

Special features

The terrain of Chars including the river Brahmaputra is about 50 kms in length and about 10 to 15 kms in breadth Chars of various sizes. The Char areas of the District suffers from heavy floods once or twice in a year, one new Chars keeps emerging after every flood of the District. The northern belt of the District suffered with heavy flood and erosion every year, as its location is in the foot-hills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. Hence quite naturally, the educational institutions specially the elementary schools remained closed consecutively for more than some time for two months, resulting wastage and stagnation because of heavy flood during summer season in the District. The extreme north and south belts, covering a large area of the District, contribute much towards the general backwardness of education. Hence, once again one of the hypothesis, that District Darrang is one of the educationally backward District of Assam is proved.
Resources and land utilisation

Out of 1,56,620 hectares of geographical area, 1,91,140 hect. is under gross cropped area of which double cropped area is 1,06,144 hectares. On the basis of availability of natural and irrigation water source, the District is favourable for the cultivation of Ahu rice, Sali rice, Jute and Rabi crops abundantly. The District has a level of ground water deposit available, at a depth of 30 to 50 meters is sure to boost the agricultural production. The District is also practically virgin land for purpose of industrial developments.

Population composition

According to census of 1971, the total population male and female of the then Mangaldol Sub-Division, now Darrang District, was 8,34,574 persons including 4,37,738 males and 3,96,836 females.

The Table No. 5.1 shows the population of the District in a Thana-wise basis according to 1971 census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thana (P.S.)</th>
<th>Area in Sq.kms.</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panary</td>
<td>813.2</td>
<td>95,315</td>
<td>84,369</td>
<td>1,79,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udalguri</td>
<td>391.1</td>
<td>50,702</td>
<td>44,928</td>
<td>95,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazbat</td>
<td>380.7</td>
<td>30,841</td>
<td>27,004</td>
<td>57,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalaigaon</td>
<td>422.1</td>
<td>69,191</td>
<td>64,694</td>
<td>1,33,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalgaon</td>
<td>525.8</td>
<td>68,585</td>
<td>62,877</td>
<td>1,31,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangaldol</td>
<td>932.4</td>
<td>1,23,734</td>
<td>1,12,964</td>
<td>2,36,198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total for old Mangaldol Sub-Divn. 3465.3 4,37,738 3,96,836 8,34,574


As indicated in the Table No. 5.1, Mangaldoi Thana holds a larger population in comparison to the other Thana areas. The density of population of undivided Darrang District stands in 1971 at 198 per Sq.km. Tezpur Sub-Division had 172 persons and Mangaldoi Sub-Division (present Darrang District) 24 persons per Sq.km.¹¹.

At present, the District has a total population of 13,83,682 numbers as per estimated figure of 1985, out of which 55,682 Nos. are S/C population and 2,05,259 Nos. are S/T population. The density of population per Sq.km is 775.34 and growth rate is 38.6% from 1971 to 1983 and 15.19% from 1981 to 1985¹².

The urban population of the District as estimated by Mangaldoi Sub-Divisional Town Planning Councils in 1985 is 62,146 Nos. and the rural population is 12,71,536 Nos. The figure clearly indicates that about 88% population lives in rural areas.

Immigrated population

Immigration has inflated the population of the District for last one hundred years in the District. Migration of people into and within the District, migration from the rural areas to the urban areas and from rural to rural areas are common features in all the Districts of Assam. The inter District migration figures reveals that Darrang District occupied the third place in Assam in respect of inter District immigration during the decade 1951 to 1961¹³.

Analysing the salient features of migration, E. R. Pakyntein, the Superintendent of Census Operations, Assam, 1961 has observed that there has been a big influx of people into Darrang and Lakhimpur District of Assam\textsuperscript{14}.

The immigration from outside Assam has been an important course of the population spurt in the District since the later part of the 19th century. The flow of immigrants into Darrang District, from the erstwhile East Pakistan or East Bengal has been quite considerable. Seven thousand in 1911, twenty thousand in 1921 and forty thousand in 1931 were found in Darrang District\textsuperscript{15}.

The advent of large numbers of immigrants whose language, manners, and customs differ widely from that of the indigenous people affected the economic, political and socio-educational structures of the District. Apart from the Muslim immigrants, influx of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan since 1946 till 1965 and up to this date has been quite considerable. During 1951 census, 18,853 Hindu refugees were censused in Darrang District. Immigration of tea garden labourers is also one of factors that contributed to the growth of the total population of the District. As recorded in the old District Gazetteer of Darrang, an enormous rush of immigrant labourers, from Bihar and Orissa took place in 1918–20, where 1,05,000 tea garden labourers were censused in Darrang District\textsuperscript{16}.

On the other hand Nepalis constitute a considerable part of the immigrants into the District. The numbers of Nepalis in the District

\textsuperscript{15} Census of India, 1951, Vol-II, Assam, Manipur & Tripura, Part-I-A. P-73.
increased during the early part of the century. In 1952 only 10,000 Nepal born Nepalis and in 1961, 19,019 were censused in Darrang District\textsuperscript{17}.

In respect of literacy, the District of Darrang continues to occupy since 1951 the lowest position among the plain District of Assam excluding Goalpara. The position was not better even in earlier censuses in 1911, 1921 and 1931. Considering the fact that the bulk of the total population of the District is constituted by the tea garden labourers, tribal population, immigrant Hindus, Muslims and Nepalis etc. whose progress in the field of education is very slow, for which the growth of literacy in the District has been regarded as remarkable\textsuperscript{18}.

Hence, the other hypothesis that the major influx of immigrants from the different parts of the world has become a bar in the development of socio-educational structure in Darrang District is proved.

Education and Literature

As a part of ancient Kamrup, Darrang was culturally linked with the rest of India. Gurukula system was in practice in ancient Kamrupa. Sanskrit was the main vehicle of taught and scholarship. However, the traditional education was mainly restricted to the Brahmins and other high casts. The institution of 'Satra' became popular in the sixteenth century. But tribal people were debarred from such type of informal education. Along with the decline of Royal patronage by the beginning of nineteenth century, the influence of 'Satras' ceased to be important educationally.

\textsuperscript{17} Op. cit., - Gazetteer of India, Assam. P. 108.
\textsuperscript{18} ibid, - P. 434.
After the annexation of Assam in A.D. 1826, really the Britishers started the mass education in Darrang. They established two vernacular schools at Desh Darrang (Mangaldoi) and Chatgari (Tangla) in A.D.1837. After 1874-75, they established few more schools in Darrang District. The American Baptist Mission made a notable contribution by establishing few primary schools at Bengbari and Horishinga during 1880. During those times education was imparted with the knowledge of three R's.

In respect of literacy, Darrang District occupied the lowest position among the plain Districts of Assam, including Goalpara District. Analysing the causes of backwardness of the District, Mr. C.S. Mullan, the then Director of Census, observed in 1931 as follows. 'Darrang hardly 65 literates per thousand and was the worst plain Districts of Assam from the point of view of literacy. The actual reason for the long continued backwardness was stated to be that the District had a large Colly caste, Kachari population, among whom literacy was almost negligible.'

After 1934, along with the formation of Mangaldoi Local Board, by collecting a fund of its own from different sources, began to disburse liberal grants for the establishment of primary schools in the District.

The position of literacy was not, however, better, even after independence of India. The following Table gives an idea of the growth of literacy of the District, with a comparison of the State's figure.

TABLE No. 5.2

Growth of Literacy: Darrang District
in percentage (1951-1971)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Darrang District</th>
<th>Average - Assam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the Table No. 5.2, it is observed that the disturbing feature of the growth of literacy since 1951 was the widening gulf between the average rate of literacy for the State and that of Darrang District. It is further observed that both the percentage of average literacy of Darrang District in 1961, are lower than the State average. Inspite of getting increased educational facilities, the percentage of female literacy were not encouraging.

The general literacy of Darrang District in 1971 was 20% and tribal literacy was 17%. It may be calculated that the non-tribal population, with their 7,06,080 souls must have a literacy of 23.0%. Hence, the hypothesis in this regard that 'Educational backwardness of the population of the District, has contributed towards the general backwardness of the District is confirmed.'