CHAPTER VIII

DEITIES OF THE RABHAS

A. Introduction

The Rabhas are the scheduled tribe people of Assam. They belong to the Bodo group of Tibeto-Burman family. Different scholars of the west and India have given different views as regards to the origin of the tribe. In the census report of Assam, 1891 it is reported, "In lower Assam it is asserted that they are an offshoot of the Garos, while in Kamrup and Darrang it is thought that they are Kacharis on the road to Hinduism. That they belong to the great Bodo family is certain, but it is not equally clear that the Rabhas are more closely allied to any one tribe of that group than to another. They have their own language (which is fast dying out), and it is not necessary for a Kachari or Garo to become a Rabha on his way to Hinduism....... it seems probable that the Rabhas are in reality a distinct tribe".¹ This view is accepted by Dr. B.M. Das.² The Rabhas claim themselves to be superior to the Garos and the Kacharises.

² B.M. Das. Ethnic Affinities of the Rabhas, p. 3.
They are concentrated in the south bank of the Brahmaputra in the Districts of Kamrup and Goalpara. Very few Rabhas are living in the District of Darrang. Their population according to the statistical Hand Book of Assam, 1978, is 1,38,630 including male and female. They are divided into some sub-clans known as (a) Pati, (b) Rangdaniya, (c) Maytoria, (d) Dahruli, (e) Koch, (f) Chumna and (g) Sitalia and (h) Tota. The division was made in accordance with the division of work entrusted in time of traditional Khokhi Puja. 3 The Rangdaniyas and the Maytorias have their own dialect, while the patis and other sub-clans speak the local Assamese dialects. The number of Pati Rabhas are more than the other clans. They are more acculturated and akin to Assamese Hindus.

The religious faith of the Rabhas is animistic. They believe in gods and godlings and other supernaturals. These gods and goddesses live in the trees, mountains, rivers, pond and other places. Some of the deities are benevolent and other some are malevolent. The malevolent spirits are always motivated to do mischievous acts and stealthily seek opportunity to bring disease, death, damage of crop or destruction of domestic animals. The propitiation of various spirits and deities is still important and provides them

with a guarantee of all necessary supernatural services. Rarely they worship a single deity. Other deities are also propitiated along with the chief deity. No image is made in their original worship. Sometimes stone or tree is installed to symbolise the deity. Rei is their principal deity though he is not worshipped individually.

They do not engage any Brahmin priest in the worship of different gods and goddesses. They have their own priest known as Douri. Rei or Dee is the Rabha name of a deity. Sri J.N. Bantho has divided the deities as Rabha Rei (Rabha deities) and Lani Rei (non Rabha deities). On the other hand Sri R. Rabha has divided as benevolent and malevolent deities. Though the principal deities are common, the different villages and clans have different gods and godlings, and as such, systematic classification of which is not possible. In course of our discussion we shall try to indentify them as Rabha and non Rabha deities and their nature.

1. Bāikho or Khokci

Bāikho or Khokci is the principal deity of the Rongdania, Maiteri and the Dahari Rabhas. The Patis and

4. J.N. Bantho. Rabha Jati Itibitta, p. 44.
other Rabhas also worship her along with other deities. The Puja is held in the month of Bahag-Jeth (May-June) or in Saon and Bhada (July-August). The Puja continues for three to seven days. The deity is worshipped in different names in different places such as Daduri in Dariduri village area, Suchan in Matisila village, Makati in Tikrikila village Tamai near Nachanpani Bil. The deity is symbolised by stones, silver necklace, silver haucha and flower of silver. According to J.N. Bantho Daduri, Makati, Tamai and Duri are sisters and their mother is Suchari. There is a distinct place for the Khokai Puja. The methods of worship vary village to village. We shall try to give a description of the Baikho Puja held at Dariduri village ten Km. west of Goalpara town. The place of worship is at first made clean. Different gods and goddesses are installed representing them by stones. In front of every deity four plants of Napal and four branches of Khampa gach are planted. The stones are be smeared with rice powder. At first sacrifices of pigs, goats, cocks are done and the severed are heads placed before every god and goddess. Then a curry of the flesh of the remaining portion of the sacrificial animal mixed with rice powder, dhakya sak and leaves of Phakpa tree is prepared in a peculiar manner. The curry is then offered to

the respective deities as _naivedya_. Country liquor is poured over it. Areca-nuts and betel leaves are offered. Incense and resins burned. It is forbidden to take the offered articles home. After the completion of the Puja, the devotees take country liquor and other _prasad_. The Puja is performed by the _dauri_. The sacrificer is called _Rato_. Sunday is preferred as the day of Puja.

In the evening, songs and dances are performed by wearing traditional dresses. The participants must wear peculiar turbans. The chief dancer is called _Ganatra_. Bows and arrows are also used in the dance. The last item of the worship is walking over burning pile of bamboos. The pile is about thirty to forty feet high. It is the belief of the devotees that one who is not clean is sure to burn. The Raytors made a fort by the branches of the trees and a mock fight takes place between two parties. The purpose of the puja is the welfare of the villagers and good harvests. In the folk song it is mentioned in this way:

"Respected Darmang, we the Rabhas, remember you every year. When you were in the hill you were _Ranokamuk_ (stone). Now coming to the _tham_ you have become _Ranimuk_ (idol) _Rera_. Flowers are planted, leaves of _Khumap_ tree are placed before you. Incense and resins are burned; rice powder is sprinkled."
We have been offering prayer to you from time immemorial to the present day. We, the Rabhas, are living as hill, river by your grace. Keep well our cattle, bless us with good harvest and prevent from any epidemic which may occur. You drive the epidemic out of the village. This is our prayer.

Here the deity is addressed as Darmang. The Rabhas believe that the Khokoi puja was held at Darmang hill at first. The Dahuri Rabhas worship about forty two gods and godlings along with Khokci. They are Keuti, Maiti, Burha Dharas, Gaunar Raja, Chator Thakur, Rindy, Kindi, Marona, Gadana Lakhi, Shut etc. are prominent. Kokoi, Keuti, Maiti, Lakhi and Shut are worshipped by sacrificing pigs; Budha dharam by white cocks, Gaunar raja by red cocks and other deities by cocks of any colour. Goat is sacrificed before chatour Thakur. Khokoi is a compound word, the meaning of which is "Look at the Khalai" (Khakdur-echi). Khalai means a fishing tool where caught fishes are kept. There is a legend among the Rabhas that Teapa and Manche alias Dakai and Bengai were two sisters. They went for fishing. Instead of fish they got a piece of stone. Their father kept the stone in the granary and used to worship it. After worshipping, fortune smiles upon them and ultimately the puja becomes public. It is
interesting to note that the war story of king Dadan is related in lyrics in the Khukci puja. But neither Dadan nor his general Narukhetri is worshipped. Rather Dadan’s nius Tasi, Daduri, Nakati etc. are worshipped. This indicates that the Rabhas belonged to the matriarchal family and they worshipped their ancestors. Sri R. Rabha thinks that the Khokoi puja is a combination of worship of mother goddess and fire. She is connected with the productivity. 7

The word Baikho means the god superior. Some scholars try to associate it with Bihu, the spring time festival of Assam. But the Rabhas observe the festival in the name of Baikho. Of course, some of the Rabhas believe Khokoi or Baikho to be the goddess of storm, thunder and rain. She is both benevolent and malignant. The devotees must vow to worship her to get rid of her wrath.

From the above discussion we can come to the following conclusion.

(i) Khokoi was first worshipped individually and then publicly.

(ii) She is the principal deity of the Rangdania and the Maitori and Dahuri Rabhas.

(iii) She is the mother goddess. Sometimes she is worshipped in the form of female sex organ and as such she may be connected with the fertility cult.

(iv) In the Khokoi puja, the Rabhas remember their old days.

2. Lāṅgā

Lāṅgā is the tutelary deity of the Pati Rabhas. While Khokoi is the female deity, Lāṅgā is a male one. The Rangdania Rabhas also worship him. His domain is extended from Goalpara to Khatri areas of the District of Kamrup. The Bodos and the Karbis of the South Bank of the river Brahmaputra also propitiate him. In every village of the Pati Rabhas, there is a than dedicated to the name of Lāṅgā. Now we shall by the give a description of his worship by the Rabhas.

The Puja is held generally in the month of Sahan of Jeth (April-May). Tuesday or saturday is preferred to be the appropriate day for his propitiation. The puja is performed by a Deuri with his one or two assistants known as Lāṅgā Deuri. The thanas are generally situated either in the jungle or in the bank of a river. The place is made clean on the eve of the Puja day. It is wiped with cowdung and water. Usually in the thana several stones placed in upright position
to make the place of worship. In front of the erected stones three bamboo tubes filled with mustard oil are lighted with wick of cotton thread. Incense are burned. Flowers and sacred basil (Ocimum Sanctum) leaves are dipped in a pot full of water. In front of the altar the deity draws designs with rice powder, over which the portions of plantain leaves bearing offerings for the deities are kept. Along with Langa, a group of deities are also worshipped. They are Dhan Kuwer, Thakurani, Dudhkumar, Phulkumar, Khokai or Saikha and Lekhi. Each deity is represented by a stone which is placed in an order in a row i.e. (i) Dhan Kuwer (ii) Langa Thakur (iii) Thakurani (iv) Dudhkumar and Phulkumar and (v) Khokai. In front of each deity offerings are made in definite proportions i.e. 2, 12, 12, 2 respectively. The offerings are soaked gram, unboiled and boiled rice, milk, banana, molasses, a kind of indigenous cake (Pitha) prepared from rice powder, sugar and jaggery. Country liquor is also offered. The Puja begins with the worship of Thakurani and then Dudhkumar, Phulkumar, Langa, Dhan Kuwer and lastly Khokai.

At first sacrifice is offered to Thakurani and then to Langa, Dhan Kuwer and Khokai respectively. No sacrifice is offered in the name of Dudhkumar and Phulkumar. For Thakurani a pair of pigeons and a he-goat, for Langa a cock
or pig, for Dhankuver, a pair of red coeks and for Khokoi a pair of fowle are sacrificed. The chief Dauri prepares country liquor in a Jange for the propitiation. Except Dudh Kumar Phul Kumar and Thakurani, ether deities are offered country liquor by a ghari i.e. a special pot with a spout in one side of it. At first the liquor is offered in the name of Langa in twelve streams (dhar) and then Kuver and Khokoi two streams each by the ghari, Bhoo is offered to all the deities prepared from Jaha variety of rice. The offerings (bhoo) of Langa, Kuver and Khokoi are same, prepared from chicken, meur dal and potato. For Thakurani bhoo is prepared from meat of pigeon and he-goat, meur dal and potato etc. The bhoo prepared for Thakurani is not offered to other deities. At the end of the function a community feast is held. Though women participation in the Langa puja strictly forbidden in the past, now-a-days they also attend. The male participants consume country liquor. After that each of them bow down before the deities and pray for the welfare of the villagers, crops and cattle.

The Rangdani Rabhas also worship Langa. But the ether deities which are propitiated along with Langa are not the same of the Pati Rabhas. The synchretic deities are Lakher, chherdanga, Lohardanga and Dharm. Cocks are sacrificed in
the name of Lakhar, Chamarang, Dharna and Lahardana and a he-goat in the name of Langa. The phan is prepared from the liver of the sacrificed animals and offered to the deities. Country liquor is also offered. The villagers sit in stones earmarked for each of the head of the family. A community feast is held after the puja. The liquor is distributed by the deuri. The occasion of the puja is same with that of the pati Rabhas.

As regards to his origin of the deity, the Pati Rabhas believe that Langa belongs to the Bhak community. At first he was a servant of a Brahmin. He exhibited some miracles in time of harding cows. He went to Kamakhya along with Narada and being contended at his devotion, the goddess Kamakhya blessed him that he would be worshipped by the Rabhas. Similar legend is heard among the Rabhas other than the Patis who are residing near the Garo hills. Only difference is that Langa belonged to the Garo community and he fought against the Garo in favour of the Rabhas. Therefore he has been worshipped by the Rabhas. Even some thana of Langa are found in the Garo hills. In the Jukuria pit it is mentioned that Langa has come to the South from the north. He was Koch by birth but now being interpolated has become Rabha.
From the above description we can infer that the 
Rabhas had migrated to the south bank of the Brahmaputra 
from the north. That Langa was originally a kach by tribe 
may indicate the Koch Rabhas, a sub clan of the Rabha 
community whose tutelary god Langa was. From the legend he 
seems to be a human being possessing some super-human 
qualities. He is a male deity though the Rabhas were originally 
belonged to the matriarchial family. His introduction in the 
Rabha pantheon may be the result of the social change of the 
tribe. Now-days the Rabhas want to indentify him with 
Siva and Thakurani is his female counterpart. This tendency 
may be their linesancy towards Hinduism.

Whatever may be his identity, he is undoubtedly a 
popular deity of the region. Martin had observed that even 
the Muslims worshipped him.

3. Háchang

Háchang is not a single deity but congregation of 
several deities. Some scholars are of opinion that it is 
the new edition of Khokci Puja. The Puja is popular among 

the Maitori and Rangdani Rabhas. The Puja is held in the month of Jeth (May-June) or Ahar (June-July). In this Puja Darmang occupies the high position on his left side Khucuri, Pajamba, Tura, Traynang Kaynang and Chari and on his right side Kangoo, Phedor, Langacara, Langaca and Budhabadi are placed in the than of Hachang. The deities are represented by some stones, the highest one is of Darmang. The main performer of the Puja is called Deuri and his assistants are called Tekbra.

The than is made clean on the previous day by the villagers. The Puja starts in the morning. The Deuri and Tekbra worship different deities in Rabha dialects. They offer country liquor in the name of different deities. Cocks, goat, duck and pig are sacrificed. Cocks are sacrificed in front of Langacara, Kaynang, Phedor, Kangoo, Pajamba, either coocks or ducks, Langaca, cari, Budhabadi and Khuchri, a he-goat of Tura and a pig in front of Darmang. Bhog is prepared from the flesh of the sacrificed animals mixing them with leaves of dheksa, rice powder and salt. The above mentioned articles are put in a piece of bamboo and instead of cooking it is baked. It is called Phakchak. The Phakchak is offered to the deities first. Afterwards a community feast is held. The villagers besmear their face with rice powder, begin
to dance and sing. They sing in benediction of the deities and pray for favour in agriculture.

4. Rantak or Rantuk Ghar Gosāni

Rantak or Rantuk is the goddess of wealth of the Rabhas. She is worshipped in this name by the Kach-Rabhas. Other Rabhas i.e. the Patis worship her in the name of Ghar Gosāni or Bar Gosāni. Sri R.N. Rabha is of opinion that Rantuk is the original deity of the Rabha community.⁹

The main house of the Rabhas has two rooms. The house is constructed facing east and west. The eastern meat room is known as Ṇu and the western Māngoṛ. A bamboo platform is constructed on the north-west side of the Ṇu. The platform is four and half feet long, two and half feet wide and three feet high. Two earthen bowls full of unboiled rice are placed on the said platform. These bowls are kept in association with the traditional weapons like sword, shield, spear etc. A Ṭrisul (trident) and a Ṭvisul or surkhana (drident) are kept over the bowls. A mānjira (small symbols) is kept hanging on the Ṭrisul or Ṭvisul. An egg and areca-nut are kept on the riceful bowls. The bowls are decorated with Mangala used, Nagarphana tree and garland of akhāi (rice flower).

Rice powder is sprinkled on the platform and the devotees also rub the same on their faces. The two bowls represent the goddess Rantak. A pig is sacrificed in the names of Hadata and Bidata and two cocks in the names of their attendants Holi and Gantak. The deity Rsi is worshipped by offering wine. The puja continues for three consecutive days and community feast is held every day.

In some areas of Goalpara and Kamrup the deity is worshipped by the name of Ghar Gosani. The puja is performed on the occasions of first rice taking ceremony, Bihu festival and on the eve of harvesting. A duck is sacrificed. There are few legends as regards to the identity of the deity. She was known as Thanabari who made secret love with Siva. Siva left her when she was carrying and blessed her that she would be worshipped as Ghar Gosani. Another legend is that the name of the mother of Ghar Gosani or Ghar deuti was Narayani. The name of her father was not known. In fear of public rumour, their mother did not give birth. At least Ghar deuti, her eight sisters and a brother were born after severing their mother's womb by an axe. Then they left heaven with Siva and ultimately Ghar Gosani received puja from the mortal human beings specially from a Rabha named Tukura. The other one legend has similarity with that of Khokoi. Now she is identified.
with Lakshmi by some.

Rantuk seems to be the mother goddess who is connected with the productivity. The riceful bowls, egg etc. may indicate fertility. The traditional weapons which are kept in front of the deity may be the reminiscence of old war which the Rabhas had to fight for their existence.

4. Songbai Tengngi.

Songbai Tengngi is a female deity of the Koch-Rabhas. The deity is worshipped publicly. The puja is held at a possible distance from the village. A date is fixed preferably in the month of Bahag (April-May) for the puja. Before the puja of the deity, another deity is called Songkon Sakaliingngi is propitiated to save the village from any evil spirits. In between the puja of the two deities some taboos are observed i.e. husking of rice, songs, dance, making peculiar sound by the lips etc. The devotees identify the deity with Mahamaya. He-goats, cocks, pigeons, tortoise etc. are sacrificed. Ripe banana, molasses, sugar, unboiled rice are offered to the deity. Women are forbidden to attend the puja. The deurla performed the puja. At the end of the puja merriment is held at the house of the deuri and country liquor and other Prasad are distributed among the votaries.
The Puja is divided into three parts: (1) Kon Bakalinggi, (ii) Songbai and (iii) care okaam tangngi. Care Cakam tangngi is worshipped when the first flood appears in the village. Songbai is worshipped on the first day of the month of Behao. In this puja a peculiar function called dgeokhada (Chasing off evil spirits) is performed. Ragged clothes, fishing tools or any bad things are taken from every house and kept hanging on a bamboo at the place of the puja.

5. Darang bāi

Darang Bai is the god of health and wealth. When the family members are often suffered from fever or other diseases or the pecuniary condition of the family goes down, the deity is then worshipped by sacrificing a pig. The deity, as it is believed, lives on the Darang hill.

6. Serā or Perā Macubāi

This deity is the protector of domestic animals. The deity is propitiated by sacrificing a goat and a red cock. The puja is held in front of the house.

7. Hay Mayarang Bāi or Bākhra Bāi

Hay May rang or Bākhra Bāi is a household deity of
some Rabhas. The deity is worshipped to get rid of any illness such as lameness, short of hearing etc. The puja is held adjacent to the main house. Twelve cocks and a he-goat are sacrificed in the name of the deity two jonas of country liquor are offered.

8. Machani Gosain

When somebody loses domestic animals the deity is then worshipped. According to the belief, the lost animal is sure to come back to the owner's house if she is propitiated. As soon as a person loses an animal, he selects a plantain tree of his garden, which is known as nanasa (corrupted word of Skt. Renasa, the meaning of which is volition). When the plant will bear fruits and it becomes edible the deity is propitiated. The than of the goddess is cleaned and smeared with water and cow-dung and at the altar, a quadrilateral shape is drawn with rice powder. On the altar two Pathalis are placed. Near the Pathalis the bunch of banana is kept over a piece of banana leaf. The head of the family perform the rite. The bananas are distributed among the coward boys and the children of the village.

The deity seems to be analogous with that of Rakhal gosain of the district of Kamrup. Rakhal gosain is also
propitiated by offering ripe banana when somebody loses domestic animal. But Rakhal gosain is always a male deity whereas Nachani Goseini is a female one.

9. Bhageswari

Goddess Bhageswari is the goddess of strength and vigour. She can protect the votaries and their assets from all evils and destructions. She moves throughout the world sitting on the back of a tiger. She is worshipped in a cow-shed. The cow-shed is cleared and smeared with cow-dung. At a particular place the devari draws ritualistic drawings with rice powder. Over the drawing (mandal) unboiled rice, areca-nut and betel leaves are offered on two pieces of plantain leaves. Rice-beer is offered in a bamboo tube. Then all the offerings are purified by sprinkling water mixed with rice powder. Two fowls are sacrificed. The birds are purified by sprinkling water on them by basil leaves. The severed heads are placed separately on both the pieces of plantain leaves with offerings and blood from the severed heads are allowed to flow freely on the rice powder. After a while, the blood absorbing rice powder is stuffed in bamboo tubes and baked well over fire. Some portions of the livers of the fowls are cooked with rice and pulse and remaining portion
is roasted. All the preparations are offered to the deity and after the ritual, they are eaten by the devotees. The Puja is performed by the Pati Rabhas.

10. Bagheswari/Lampeti

Bagheswari is a tiger deity worshipped by the Pati Rabhas. According to the legend Lampeti became Bagheswari after she killed a cow in the guise of a tiger. Some are of opinion that Bagheswari and Lampeti are two sisters and Siva and Parvati are their parents. Both of them are worshipped together. The following articles are required for their propitiation; four red cocks, ten pairs of areca-nuts and betal leaves, boiled rice and country liquor. The Puja is held on the puja day of Langa Mara. Lampeti is worshipped on the eastern side and Bagheswari on the west. The puja is held under a particular Sal tree. The symbol of the deity is a stone and a trident. The place is made clean. The deurgi offered the belongings mentioned above, on four pathulis. Cocks are sacrificed. Country liquor may be offered in a single Langa. The object of worship is the welfare of the village, cattle etc. and to avoid calamities which may occur due to snake-bite or depredation by tiger. The devotees believe that if there occurs any wrong in time of worship, some positive symptoms such as hauling of tiger, or killing
of cow by a tiger may happen. Even the worshipper may turn into a mad man.

11. Maram or Marang

The Pati Rabhas of Dudsnaa area worship the deity for good harvests and protection of the rice plants from any disease or insects. The puja is performed in the month of Puh (Dec. January) or Meph (January-February). The puja is held at the paddy field. For the occasion a small hut is constructed. In side the hut an earthen altar and some portion of mud as if prepared for plantation of paddy are kept. On the front side of the altar a bamboo fan and a lautokora (dried pipkin) are kept hanging. On the back side also similar articles are kept. Then the deuriga (Preferably two in number) chanted some mantras and a pair of cocks are sacrificed. The flesh of the sacrificed cocks is prepared with the leaves of bhedeli lata in a bamboo tube. The Pathelle containing unboiled rice, areca-nuts and betel leaves, basil leaves pieces of flash of the cocks are offered in the name of Marang and Rachang or Matham. Rachang or Matham is believed to be the brother of Marang. The offered articles are distributed among the votaries. It is forbidden to bring the offered things home. The Puja may be performed individually or collectively.
12. Chāl mātri

If any infant cries constantly at night, Chāl mātri is propitiated. The puja is performed on the roof of a house. Earth is put inside an earthen pot (hari or caru) and either a basil plant or paddy plant is planted. Four Pathelia containing rice, basil leaves are placed in front of the pot. Then a chicken is beheaded on the roof. The severed head is placed on the Pathelia and the remaining portion is thrown to the courtyard. Then the people who are standing on the courtyard roasted the bird and offered as bhog.

13. Tapā mātri

Tapā mātri is propitiated when children are suffering from disorder of bowels. The method of worship is very simple. A tape fish (janastup) is offered in the name of the deity. There is no image of the deity.

14. Mayrā mātri

A peacock is made of bamboo tengal. Two earthen lamps are lighted under the two wings of the bird. Three naivedyas containing unboiled rice, flowers, areca-nuts and betel leaves are offered. The deity is worshipped when a child suffers from convulsion.
15. Garo-Garowani

Garo-Garowani is perhaps the Garo couple who is worshipped to cure a baby when he or she suffers from any disease. For the purpose a statue of human is prepared by straw of paddy. Three naivedyas are offered. A black cock is sacrificed curry prepared from the flesh of the sacrificed cock is offered in the naivedyas.

16. Jalkumari (Kumari)

Jal Kumari is the water goddess. The Pati Rabhas may adopt this deity from the Hindus. Puja of the deity is performed on the bank of a river. The deuri goes on fasting on the day of worship. The place is made clean and a white cloth is suspended over the place. An earthen pot besmeared with vermillion is installed. Water, milk, unboiled rice, leaves of mango tree and two coins are placed inside the pot. Unboiled rice, dubari basil leaves are put on a banana leaf which is called thagi. The thagi is kept in front of the earthen pot. Then a pair of white pigeons are let loose in the name of the deity. The object of the worship is the welfare of the villagers.

17. Jakua/Bakhra Bai

Jakua or Bakhra Bai is a malignant spirit of the
Rabhas. It is the common belief of the people that if one suffers from headache, high fever, body pain, epilepsy etc., the patient is overpowered by the spirit. According to the condition of the disease there are three types of Puja known as Bar Bakra, Mei Killa and chota Bakra. Bar Bakra puja is a gorgeous one and a good number of people are required to perform the puja. An image of horse is made by banana stem and is placed on the courtyard of the patient. A chariot is also made of banana stem and kept on the back of the horse. Sometimes (alpana) is drawn by the rice powder in the front of the horse image and incense are burnt. Some other deities are also propitiated along with Jakua. The images of other deities are made of the stem of Kerendai (an indigenous) tree and placed beside the deity. The numbers of animals for sacrifice are eight pigs, one goat, one goose, one tortoise and five eggs. If the tortoise is not available, a packet of rice powder symbolising the tortoise is offered.

The number of animals for sacrifice may be more. After sacrificing one animal before a particular deity, the image of the said deity is made asleep. The pig and the ha-goat are sacrificed before the image of the horse which symbolises Jakua. The concluding function of the puja is that the chief devri rides upon the image of the horse taking a duck in
one hand and a cock on the other. The birds are strangled to death. Another cock is also strangled to death and then the banana made horse and the chariot are broken into pieces by the *deuri*. Then the place of worship is made clean. The *deuri* and other persons take their baths and take rice beer etc. The puja starts in the afternoon and ends on the following morning. The *deuri* and other expert persons sing songs in praise of *Jakua* through out the night. A small cymbal is played. Sleeping is forbidden for the night.

The word *Jakua* may have come from the Assamese plural suffix *jak* the meaning of which is 'many'. In Kamrup the word *Jakua* is used to indicate a good number of evil spirits who may do harm when somebody passes an open field or a crematory. They are supposed to live in some isolated places or in small or big ponds. *Pangba* is a word of Rongdania Rabhas which means assembly of spirits or gods and goddesses. It is observed that the Rabhas propitiate other deities along with the chief deities. It is already mentioned that some other deities numbering nine to eighteen are propitiated along with *Jakua*. They believe that they are his sisters. *Pangba* is the substitute word for *Jakua* in Rongdania dialect. Thus *Jakua* may be an adoption of *Jakua*.

*Jarang* is another deity of fever of the Rabhas. The articles required for the propitiation of *Jarang* are almost
the same with those of Jakua. Some people think that Jakua and Jarang are the same deity. In the Cabbie Pargana District of West Bengal there is a local deity namely, Jvrasur who is an attendant of Dharma and Sitala. Jvrasur has three heads, nine eyes, six hands and three legs. There are Mukuta (hats) on its heads and hands and necks are decorated with ornaments. The colour of his body is blue. Sometimes he is represented by a rock of tortoise shape. A horse is also engraved beside the tortoise. The symbol of tortoise may be due to his companion with Dharma Thakur. In Orissa Jvra Maravana is a local deity of fever. Similarly, Meri Dhamma is also a deity of the south who is propitiated for removal of disease. The Puja of Jvrasur is held on the Daul Purnima day of the month of Faoun or Chat (March-April). After careful study the following similarities between Jvrasur and Jakua are observed:

(i) Both the deities are propitiated for remission of fever.

(ii) Tortoise and horse symbols are used for both the deities.

(iii) Both are malignant deities.

But there is no mention of any sacrifice of animals in the worship of Jyaresura. The worship of Jakua is occasional. Jakua is worshipped for rheumatic pain whereas Jyaresaur is only for fever. So it is difficult to establish that Jakua and Jyaresaur are identical.

Another point may be raised that there may be some relation with Dharma Thakur and Jakua. Dharma Thakur is also worshipped for removal of rheumatic pain. In West Bengal, clay made horse is dedicated in the name of Dharma Thakur. Moreover, Dharma is conceived in the form of tortoise. Dharma is none but the sun-god. The horse and chariot made of banana, the sacrifice of tortoise, the malignant nature of the deity may indicate its identification with Dharma Thakur. Strangle to death of birds and damaging of images remind us about contagious magic. The name of Langa or Burma langa in the songs of Jakua is mentioned off and on.

18. Banabasi

Banabasi is now a popular and powerful deity of the Rabhas of Dudhmai area. Not only the Rabhas, other Hindu people also propitiate her. The dauri belongs to the Rabha tribe. As regards to the existence of the Than of Banabasi, there is a legend that a hunter came to the place for
catching wild elephants. He tried and tried but failed to catch a single elephant. The pet elephant sometimes bowed down on a particular place. A Rabha, Mangalai by name, lived near the jungle. The hunter met him and on the following morning Mangala lit an earthen lamp in that place. The same night he dreamt that the deity was Banabasi. They are three sisters namely Banabasi, Mirbasai and Girbasai. One resides at Damra, the other at Topalakhowa village and the third one at Phafal near Dudhnai. The hunter after propitiating the deity by offering goat, pigeons, buffalo etc. was able to catch wild elephants abundantly.

The Puja is generally held in the month of Phagun or Chat (March-April). There are three alters of earth representing the three sisters. Another altar is for Mahadeswa. At a little distance from the than, Bagheswari is also worshipped under a Sali tree. Bagheswari is propitiated by offering pigeons. Dharme and Jagannatha are also worshipped.

The purpose of the worship is the welfare of the villagers.

Banabasi seems to be the goddess of hunting though she has now lost her old identity.

19. Tikkar Bai or Daini

Tikkar Bai or Daini is a malignant spirit. The women,
by dint of some magical power take the form of a Daini. The shape of the spirit is that the upward portion from the neck of a human body. When somebody suffers from severe colic pain or pain in the chest or remains in a state of senselessness, it is supposed, the patient is overpowered by Daini. Then the spirit is to be propitiated by offering Cocks, goats or pigs. The Puja may be performed within the campus of the patient or outside the village. Generally when a cock is sacrificed the puja is held within the campus. The pig or the goat is killed before the puja, and a peculiar curry is prepared from the three fourth portion of meat. Rice is also prepared. In the place of puja a bamboo cot of four feet high, four feet long and two feet bread is constructed. The prepared curry and rice are kept on the cot and then propitiated the spirit at dead of night. People believe that the spirit takes the offered things in the guise of a dog or a fox. Even it can move freely and can take jackfruits climbing the tree. Tikkar or Daini is not a deity of any unknown origin. The women are the custodian of this secret practice. The village medicine man applies some contagious magic to subjugate the spirit. Yet, the Rabhas believe its existence and worship it along with other deities.

20. Baim Bāi or Raj Khater

The spirit is propitiated for easy delivery. The spirit
is worshipped on the bank of a river or a big pond by sacrificing a duck or a goat. No function is held on the occasion of its worship.

21. Rambānga Bāi

When a child faints due to severe cold, Rambanga Bāi is propitiated. The Puja is performed by covering the door way by a fishing net. A cock or a duck is sacrificed.

22. Kama Hācu or Singra or Gimbudā

This deity is worshipped when somebody suffers from Leprosy. The Puja is held nearer to the house of the patient. Two daurias are engaged for the performance of the puja. One offers the belonging in the name of the deity and the other be headed the offered animal which is either a cock or a pig.

23. Khisan or Phedar Bāidi

Khisan or Phedar Bāidi is the god of optical diseases such as night blindness, conjunctivities and septic inside the eye. The puja is performed on the verandah of the house where the patient lives. Appropriate time for the puja is dead of night. A cock is sacrificed. Country liquor is offered.
24. Kuvar Bai

Kuvar Bai is worshipped when somebody suffers from indigestion and malarial (trembling) fever. A human skeleton is made of rice straw to symbolise the deity. The puja is performed under the bamboo groves. A chicken or a red cock is sacrificed. The liver of the sacrificed bird is baked and mixed with mustard oil, offered to the deity. It is a malignant deity. The author is informed by one Manindra Rabha of Damra that in old days black cat was sacrificed in the name of Kuvar. Kuvar is perhaps an imported deity from the Hindus.

25. Yokhini

There is an interesting folk tale, in vogue, among the Pati Rabhas of Boko area as regards to the birth of Yokhini. The tale goes like this: once there occurred a panicky of death in the world due to the wrath of the gods and goddesses. The mortal human being finding no way out sent one Kucha, the son of a widow to the hermitage of sage Sukracharyya to learn the mantra of resurrection from the sage. Kucha was debarred from meeting Sukracharyya for three days. Afterwards, by the help of Sukracharyya’s daughter vajrdevi alias chintamani, kucha was successful in his attempt to meet the sage. The gods and goddesses of heaven came to
learn from the cowherd boys that Kucha went to Sukracharyya
to learn the secret mantra. They became impatient. They
killed Kucha and Sukracharyya was feasted by the flesh of
Kucha. Voisdevi then enquired her father where about of
Kucha. Sukracharyya called these Kucha and he replied from
the belly of the sage. Sukracharyya was then able to
understand the plot of the gods and as per instruction of
the sage, Kucha came out of the belly by tearing it. He was
able to learn the mantra remaining in the belly of the sage.

A day was fixed for his departure from the hermitage,
to the earth. Kucha met Chintamani under a jora tree on his
way. Chintamani fell in love with Kucha and forced him to
marry her. Kucha refused her proposal and Chintamani being
angry cursed him that he would forget the mantra. Kucha
also cursed Chintamani that she would be a Yakhini and would
have to live in a well. It is the belief of the people that
the Yakhini takes her bath by making a peculiar sound at
noon, she catches fish by a jake under the arum bush.
Sometimes she creates trouble in the womb of a pregnant woman,
kills a child in the womb. Then Yakhini is to be propitiated.11

The spirit is at first propitiated by offering a
chicken. The chicken is kept inside a Khalal and then the

Khalei is put inside a Jakai. The Jakai is whirled seven times over the patient. Afterwards, Jakai, Khalei and the chicken inside the Khalei are kept under a Saora tree. If the spirit is not contended, the patient does not get relief and the spirit is to be worshipped again. This puja is called Bar-Jokhini Puja. For the Bar Jokhini puja the following articles are needed. One banana tree having flower, Jakai, Khalei, a chicken, little quantity of rice cooked one day before, branches of black arum and scull of snails. The banana tree is planted on the juncture of three roads. A curry is prepared from the branches of arum bush and snails. The curry is then mixed with rice and offered to the spirit along with the chicken. Afterwards putting the offered articles inside the Jakai, the Jakai kept hanging on the tree.

Yokhini is worshipped for getting a male child, property, to relieve from any danger or even for victory.

The word Jokhini may be the corrupt form of the Sanskrit word Yekshini. Yekshinis are female counterpart of the Yakeas. According to the Jaina scripture the Yakeas or the Yekshinis are malignant spirit and they even take human flesh.12 In Kamrup Yokhinis are evil spirit and some people believe that

a child becomes weaker and weaker when he or she is visited by Jokhinis.

The tale mentioned above, has some significance. The death of Kucha and his resurrection may be inferred the death of a desire and regain. The purpose of her worship as conceived by the Rabhas, indicates some connection with the productivity.

26. Huduma Bai

Huduma Bai is worshipped when somebody suffers from rheumatic pain. A black goat is sacrificed and the head of the sacrificed animal is graved under earth.

27. Bagru Bai

If anybody suffers from parkaricha he or she is to propitiate Bagru Bai. The place where the wild pigs take their bathes, is selected for the puja. The puja is to be performed before launch. A pig is sacrificed in the name of the deity.

28. Laikach Bai

Laikach Bai is a ferocious demon who eat living human being. Jungles and hills are their place of abode. The Rabhas usually go to forest for collecting fuel etc. So they worship
the demon by sacrificing a pig. (In old days cow was sacrificed as reported by R. Rabha). The word Laikaa may come from the word Rakasa.

29. Balthong or Long Dao or Long Jara

Balthong or Long Dao or Long Jara is a Garo spirit. According to their belief, he resides under bamboo grove, who is responsible for madness and such other ailment. When the village medicineman ascertains that Long Dao is responsible for the disease, then the spirit is propitiated under bamboo grove. The performance is restricted to male folk only. A pair of pigeons and a cock are sacrificed and offered to the spirit with rice-beer and rice cooked with meat. After the ritual the offered articles are consumed by the attendants. He is worshipped usually along with Barmani or goddess Manasa.

30. Ai chara

When a child's disease cannot be detected then Ai chara is propitiated in the evening. Qia makes a four handed image with plantain stem and rice straw with bow and arrow, a spear, a sword and a stick in four hands. The costume of the spirit is made of plantain leaves. Qia clears the
courtyard, lights an earthen lamp and offers a red cock, two bananas, two areca nuts, two betel leaves and a handful of unboiled rice. The mother and the ailing child sit near the image, while oja moves the image uttering spells around the head of the child.

Then with the help of other persons, all the things of the ritual are carried outside the compound and placed near the road, purifying the place by sprinkling water with basil leaves. In a piece of banana leaf, two bananas, two areca nuts, two pieces of betel leaves and a handful of unboiled rice are offered. The cock is sacrificed and the roasted liver is offered to the spirit. The two men with the oja return home, leaving all the articles and image there. At the gate one of them asks the mother of the ailing child whether the child is cured or not and the mother replies the child has got rid of illness.

31. Sānti Gosani

Sānti Gosani is not so harmful in comparison to other malignant spirit. She wears white clothes and moves at midnight near Lane-Then with long hair left loose. If she is seen by some one accidentally, then the person may fall sick and may embrace death. The only way to appease her wrath is to go and
clean and wipe the spot where she was seen with cow dung and water and offer her a pair of pigeons and a pipkin full of water on which a cloth to be wound. The pigeon offered to Santi Goaani must not be eaten by the householders, but may be domesticated.

32. Cakouk

Cakouk is a malevolent spirit. When somebody is possessed by him he or she becomes senseless keeping eyes open. Then an pia is summoned to drive away the spirit. The pia beats the man with bih dhekiya an endogenous fern and utters spell. An idol of the spirit is made by paddy straw and a foul is sacrificed. Rice bear is also offered.

33. Lāi Rājā

According to the belief of the Pati Rabhas of Boko area, Lai Raja was a ferocious dacoit who was killed by somebody and his soul became a dreadful spirit. Lairaja is responsible for different diseases of stomach and body pain. A curry of black gram and snails is prepared and is offered to the spirit. The curry after the propitiation is eaten by the attendants of the ritual and the shells of the snails are offered to the spirit.
34. Phira-Phireni

This couple (Phira male Phireni female) live in fruit bearing trees who are responsible for the death of a new born baby. If a couple loose their child, Phira-Phireni is worshipped under a fruit bearing tree. Two gimes are engaged. The two gime sit turning their back to each other under a fruit bearing tree, each of them taking a piece of plantain leaf in hand where grotesque figures are drawn by vermilion. In front of them unboiled and fermented rice is offered to the spirits in a plantain leaf. Rice beer is also offered in two bamboo tubes. One cock for Phira and a hen for Phereni are to be sacrificed.

35. Jethi-Burhi

Jethi-Burhi is a female spirit who is supposed to be responsible for stomach pain of the children. To propitiate her, two effigies of house lizards are made to which cooked rice is offered and at last both are hanged in a big tree outside the homestead.