CHAPTER FOUR
CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL PATTERN

4.1 ETHNOLINGUISTIC BACKGROUND OF THE TRIBAL AND NON-TRIBAL POPULATION:

Assam is an area of fusion of races and synthesis of cultures leading to the evolution of a composite society and a composite culture. Darrang district, as an old unit of Assam or ancient Kamarupa, depicts the habitation of the people of different ethnonilingual origin since long past. The earliest inhabitants of the area, the Austro-Asiatics, were driven to the south by the arrival of both the Mongoloids and the Indo-Aryans. While the Mongoloids settled in the hills and the foothill tracts of the study area, some of them also occupied the agricultural plain lands of the region, but apparently avoided the important river banks, which were frequently ravaged by seasonal floods. On the other hand, the descendants of the Indo-Aryans settled mainly on the plain lands of the river valleys, where settled agriculture offered them an easy return, thereby providing them a settled and secure agrarian life.

These prehistoric movements of the people of different ethnic origins can only be surmised from the traditional beliefs and mythological writings. In the historic times, the Ahoms, a Shan tribe, who came to this region in 1228 A.D. and established itself as a ruling dynasty over the Brahmaputra valley for long six hundred years, gave the region its present name ‘Asom’.

Assam was at the cross road of all the tribal movements from the east and the north, involving the advent of the Tibeto-Chinese language speaking Mongoloids. Assam and Nepal helped very largely in the absorption of these Mongolid or Kirata elements in the formation of the population base of north east India. With the advent of the Indo-Aryans from north India with the Vedic socio-cultural traits, the local people slowly, but irreversibly imbibed
Hinduism, extending Vedic cultural territory to this region. This can be looked upon as Assam's great contribution to the synthesis of cultures and fusion of races that took place in India - a synthesis, which started in the prehistoric times.

Simultaneous to the Ahoms, the second series of invasions to the north east was that of the Muslims, starting from the beginning (1206 A.D.) of the thirteenth century, which were encountered by the Koches and Ahoms. The history of Assam from 1200 to 1800 A.D. was characterised by the stabilisation of her people in its language and culture under the able leadership of the Ahoms and Koches which enabled various tribes to fuse into a single Assamese speaking nationality. Although the Ahoms continued their illustrious rule for over six hundred years in this land, the survival of Ahom words in Assamese vocabulary is significantly meagre. Such words like 'lang' which means 'back', 'poong' meaning 'mine', 'pukha' meaning 'offshoot', 'kareng' meaning 'palace' and some others attached to river and place names, viz. Namrup, Namsang, Namdang, etc., are a few survivals of Ahom words in modern Assamese.

Although the Ahoms build a stable kingdom in Assam, they chose abandoned their own language and adopted themselves to the language and religion of the people they ruled. The only people today, who have an elementary knowledge of their language are the Deodhais and Bailungs - the Ahom astronomers and priests, seen in the upper Assam region. About the extinction of Ahom language, Dr. S.K. Chatterjee says thus:

The Ahoms lost their language mainly for two reasons - first, they were much fewer in number, when compared with the Bodos and others, and secondly, they were certainly more receptive to new ideas and were in temperament, more adaptive.

During the Muslim invasion, tough resistances were offered by the Ahoms. Whenever the invaders were defeated, the soldiers of their infantry and artillery soldiers were captivated. These captives were settled from Hajo in Kamrup district to Sipajhar in Darrang district. In the later age, the descendants of these Muslims came to be a predominant group in the

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western part of the district, covering the present Sipajhar thana and the western parts of Kalaigaon and Mangaldai thanas. In course of time, these Muslims along with the descendants of the early settlers of the region, that is, the early Indo-Aryans and the Mongoloids, came to be known as the indigenous Assamese of this area. Since the beginning of the present century, immigrants from the erstwhile East Bengal started pouring into the district and the density of population began to increase. All the above groups of people, who spoke different languages and dialects among them, adopted Assamese as their mother tongue in course of time.

To have a clear linguistic picture of the people of Darrang district and of Assam as a whole, the help of Dr. Grierson's 'Linguistic Survey of India' and Dr. S.K. Chaterjee's 'Kirata - Jana - Kruti' need to be taken. In their views, the Sino-Tibetan languages, which were the medium of expression among the people of Mongoloid origin, have two groups - (a) the Tibeto-Burman and (b) the Siamese-Chinese.

The Tibeto-Burman family of languages are divided into six sub-groups, such as -

(i) the Himalayan group, viz. Monpa, Bhutia, etc.

(ii) the north Assam (Arunachal Pradesh) group, viz. Adi, Nisi, Mishimi, etc.

(iii) the Bodo group, viz. Bodo-Kachari, Rabha, Garo, etc.

(iv) the Naga group, viz. Ao, Angami, Sema, Lotha, etc.

(v) Kuki-Chin group, viz. Kuki, Lusai, etc.

(vi) the Kachin group, viz. Sinhpho, Lo, etc.

The Siamese-Chinese language speaking group includes the Khamyang, Phakial, Aitonia, etc. of eastern Assam. While all other groups remained confined to hilly terrains, the Bodos spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley, Barak valley, Tripura plains, Garo Hills and North Bengal as shown in the map (Fig. 7). The main unifying bond of these Bodo group of languages is Assamese, which is enriched by the Tibeto-Burman vocabulary and which is used by the tribals as a regional lingua-franca.
The population of Darrang district consists of the persons of the indigenous Indo-Aryan and Indo-Mongoloid groups, supplemented later on by the Aryo-Mongolian immigrants from Nepal. The Assamese language and culture have been highly enriched by the indigenous Indo-Mongoloids.

The Bodo-Kacharis live in scattered groups of villages that spread out from the extreme north east corner of Assam to the districts of northern Bengal. They are the people, who lived mostly in the plains and came in almost daily contact with the Indo-Aryan co-dwellers. It is natural to expect that they made some contribution to the vocabulary of the people with whom they lived in close neighbourhood.

Living long in the plains and in immediate neighbourhood, the Bodos borrowed words freely from the Aryan languages and without careful examination. In case of some words, it is often difficult to ascertain whether these are of Indo-Aryan origin borrowed by the Bodo-Kacharis or Tibeto-Burman used by the former. Some of the words of probable Bodo origin in Assamese language are noted below:

(a) Sākur, Cēkur, meaning run at full speed as a horse or a calf, is probably of Bodo origin.

Similarly, zira, jira, to refresh oneself; gora, gorā, to season something by keeping under water (as jute plants, etc.).

Other Assamese words of probable Bodo origin are:

(b) hāphalu, a mound, an ant-hill;

(c) hāmāhi, laziness;

(d) bondā, the male of a cat;

(e) hāo-phao, lungs, etc.
The Bodo affixes -ma, and -sa, to indicate something big and small respectively. The affix -ma suggests biggishness in an object and -sa suggests smallness. In Bodo language ‘rung’ means boat. But rang-ma, means a big boat; rang-sa, a small boat. Similarly, dikhong-ma, a big stream; dikhong-sa, a small stream. So also, ‘thamphi’ means a mosquito. But thamphi-ma means a gnat, etc.

On the other hand, the Bodo -sa > (Assamese -ca), persists in a diminutive sense in Assamese adjectives indicating ‘a little’, viz.

Kalca (blackish), bagacâ (whitish), dhepcâ (a little flat), etc.

A Bodo past participle affix ‘-iya’ and its adoption in Assamese formations have been noticed in many places, e.g.

jugamiyâ, juga-m-iyâ, means long lasting,

daheciyâ, half matured,

ädahiyâ, middle aged, etc.

### Bodo influence on the place and river names:

The Bodos built their settlements nearabout the streams, although they avoided the large rivers. It is now found that most of the river names in eastern Assam are of Bodo origin. The Bodo equivalent of water is ‘di’ or ‘dai’, viz. Mangal-dai, Bhog-dai, etc.

They also re-christened a river name of other origins by placing their own equivalent for water before it, e.g. di-hong, where Bodo -di was placed before Austric word hong meaning water.

In the development of Assamese, a basically Indo-Aryan language, the influence of Bodo is noteworthy. Dr. B.K. Kakati in his valuable treatise - ‘Assamese, Its Formation and
Development has given lists of words and toponyms of Bodo origin in Assamese. In Assamese phonetics, the influence of the Bodo language is noticed in many occasions, as in the following observations:

(i) Loss of distinction between the cerebrals and pure-dental, both of these being substituted by alveolars (teeth-ridge sounds),

(ii) the dentalisation of the palatal affricates of c, ch to s and of j, jh to z, and

(iii) the change of s to h and then to x, etc.

These novel pronunciations were introduced into the Aryan-Assamese, when it was being adopted by the Indo-Aryans and some Indo-Mongoloid people, who abandoned their own dialects, several centuries ago.

There are different reasons as to why the Indo-Mongoloid tribes like the Ahoms, Rabhas, etc. had forsaken their dialects in favour of Assamese language. Assamese was the language of the Hindu priests. In the process of conversion of these people from their traditional beliefs to Hinduism, the Aryan priests introduced their own language. The reference to the kingdom of Kamarupa and its people in the epics and the Puranas, testified the fact that the Aryan-priests and warriors came to Assam at a very early date and they brought with them, their Hindu religion and the priests used Sanskrit language as the medium of ethical expression. These diverse influences from different sources had combined to make Assamese – which is basically an Indo-Aryan language – what it is today.

Languages and Dialects in Recent Years:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, i.e., in 1901, Assamese and Bodo were regarded to be the only two forms of speech natural to the indigenous inhabitants of Darrang district, which was known as Mangaldai sub-division at that time. Assamese was found to have

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been spoken by 51 per cent of the district's population and Bodo by 16 per cent. The bulk of the Bodo-Kachari speakers who lived in the grassy plains at the foot of the Bhutan Himalayas, north of Mangaldai, could understand and speak Assamese well. However, the Bodo-Kacharis have kept up, to a large extent, their tribal identity by maintaining their dialect and this dialect was found dispersed in several detached pockets, namely in central and western districts of the Brahmaputra valley, Cachar, some parts of the northern parts of West Bengal, in some hill and foothill areas of the present Bangladesh, Garo hills of Meghalaya and Tripura.

Apart from Assamese and Bodo, Bengali language was reported to be spoken by 19 per cent of the people in Darrang district in 1901. However, it is doubtful, if Bengali indicated, in many cases, more than a foreign language. Because, the Assamese people, in those days commonly termed the foreigner as 'Bangal' and their language as 'Bangali'. It is a common habit among the Assamese even today to name the non-indigenous vegetables and fruits with the prefix 'Bangali' (Bengali), literary meaning non-indigenous. In Darrang district, viz. 'Bangali - Dhania' (Bengali coriander), 'Bangla - Bagari' (Bengali plum), 'Bangla - Pan' (Bengali Betel leaf), etc. are common names for such non-local varieties of fruits and vegetables.

Hindi had been shown to be spoken by 4 per cent of the total population, especially by the Bihari traders, and Mundari by 2 per cent among the tea-tribes. The rest of the people spoke different languages and different dialects. The percentage of them was insignificant.

Bengali Hindu refugees and Nepali immigrants speak Bengali and Nepali languages respectively during conversation among themselves, but they often use Assamese when they talk at a public place or when they exchange their views with the people of other languages.

The immigrant Muslims from the erstwhile East Bengal (now Bangladesh), speak Bengali, which is akin to that spoken in East Bengal. But the intonation with which the older of these immigrants speak comes closer to Assamese than to Bengali.

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4 Census of India, 1961, Assam.
The flow of the immigrant Muslims to Darrang district was reasonably high. Because, large areas of the wasteland in the Brahmaputra flood-plains had become the veritable ‘El Dorado’ for them, of whom seven thousand in 1911, twenty thousand in 1921 and forty thousand in 1931 were found in the district. This figure has increased to 257,671 in 1991 covering 22.2 per cent of the total population and 62.03 per cent of the total Muslim population of the district.

The immigrant Muslims speak Mymensingia Bengali dialect among them, but they exchange their views in broken Assamese, when they, especially the male members, come in contact with other indigenous people, during business hours. Interestingly, there is no Bengali medium school in the immigrant areas of Darrang district, even at the primary level. Thus, it is found that these people are bi-lingual.

Apart from the immigrant Muslims, influx of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) since 1947 till 1971, has been quite considerable. During 1951 census, 18,853 Hindu refugees were censused in this district, which increased to 87,276 in 1991. They have been intermixing with the indigenous non-tribals, along the northern built up areas, covering the old professional grazing reserves (PGR), village grazing reserves (VGR) and other reserved lands. Although Bengali is their main language, they use Assamese while interacting with other social groups. So, they are also bi-lingual.

A considerable percentage of tea garden and ex-tea garden labourers (6%), who are inhabiting in the district, numbering 67,923 (1991), came to Darrang district during the opening up of large tea estates by the British Companies, during the early part of the twentieth century. Although some of them speak different dialects, Assamese is spoken by all of them. They have now become the part and parcel of the greater Assamese society.

Nepalis constitute a small social group of the district population (4%), with 42,440 people (1991). They prefer submontane tracts along the northern margin of the built up zone, where they get sufficient grazing lands along with agricultural fields. They have accepted Assamese as their medium of instruction, although they speak Nepali language among themselves.
Besides these, insignificant number of Hindi speaking people from Bihar, U.P., Rajasthan, etc. are found as permanent settlers of the district. They number 16,284, constituting nearly 1.0 per cent of the district’s population. They also speak Assamese in their day-to-day transactions. They are, therefore, bi-lingual.

4.2 GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION OF DARRANG DISTRICT:

As per 1991 census record, the total population of Darrang district is 12,98,860, including 670,244 males and 628,616 females, with a density of 373 persons per km². It is higher than the average density of Assam, which is 286 per km². The density of population increased abnormally over that of 1971, when the figure recorded was 241. The total population of the district accounts for 5.79 per cent of the total population of Assam, occupying the sixth position among the districts of Assam.

Regular census operation started in Darrang district (a sub-division till July 1, 1983) in 1872, when the total population was recorded to be 168,240. But it decreased by 1.29 per cent in 1881, when the total population figure enumerated was found to be 166,055.

During the next decade between 1881 and 1891, the population in the district again increased by 13.22 per cent, and the total population stood at 188,050. This increase of population was attributed to the influx of numerous tea garden labourers imported from outside the state, especially from Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, along with the opening up of tea gardens in the northern Bhabar zone of the district. It is, however, noticed that in the last decade of the last century (1891-1901), the population in the district recorded a decrease to 173,580 (-7.69%) in 1901. This decrease was perhaps due to Kala-azar, an acute and contagious form of fever, which broke out in epidemic form from place to place, particularly in the northern tribal villages. A proverbial saying still persists among the tribal people that, whenever Kala-azar appears in a village, it spares none, and as such for their self survival, everyone of the affected area is to abandon the village bare hand. Consequently, many tribal people left the district and emigrated to North Lakhimpur sub-division, now Lakhimpur district.
The stagnation or decrease of population was not a new phenomenon in the district demography. It is found to decrease again by 1.67 per cent during the period 1901-1911, when the total population fell down to 170,159. The outbreak of cholera epidemic in 1906, in the central built up zone, was mainly responsible for this decrease of population. But during the same period, despite overall decrease in the district, the population increased by 15.16 per cent in Mangaldai thana area. This increase was attributable largely to immigration of East Bengal (now Bangladesh) settlers to the riverine tracts of the Brahmaputra, which was till then left fallow.

During the period 1911-1921, the district showed a steady increase of population by 12.52 per cent, due to the influx of Muslim peasants from Mymensingh district of East Bengal; Nepali graziers from Nepal and many new tea garden labourers from outside the state and the total population stood at 191,473 in 1921.

During the next decade from 1921-1931, Darrang district recorded a growth of population by 25.16 per cent, a much higher growth rate, than the state average of 20.05. The total population then became 239,649. According to Mr. C.S. Mullan, the then Director of Census, Assam, this abnormal increase of population was apparently due to two main causes - (a) immigration of East Bengal colonists, who settled in large numbers in the district, and (b) the natural growth. Area wise, the greatest increase (151 per cent) in this decade took place in Dalgaon thana, as against only 5.4 per cent increase in Kalaigaon thana area. This abrupt increase in Dalgaon thana might be the outcome of the encouragement given by the then government of Assam to Muslim immigrant peasants of Mymensingh district to come and settle in Assam and to bring the riverine tracts of the Brahmaputra under cultivation.

The population of the district increased to 324,649 during the next decade ending at 1941, when the percentage of increase was recorded at 35.30 against the state’s average of 20.49. It was Dalgaon thana again, that recorded an increase of 108.19 per cent. The reason of this disparity in the growth rate is attributable largely again to the influx of Muslim immigrants from Mymensingh to that thana area.

During the next decade, i.e., 1941-1951, the pattern of growth rate was slightly changed and it increased to 24.13 per cent against 20.49 per cent of the state. Apart from the
regular influx of the East Bengal Muslim peasants, this time, the decadal growth was attributable to a new factor, i.e., the entry of large number of Bengali Hindu refugees to the district from East Pakistan, after the partition of the country in 1947. These together, effected an increase of the total population to 402,501. Most of the Hindu refugees settled in Kalaigaon thana area, and contrary to the earlier trend, this thana area registered the largest increase of 51.72 per cent during this decade, while Udalguri and Dalgaon thana registered 35.4 and 35.3 per cent increase respectively. Not a single thana area of this district showed a rate of increase lesser than 18.7 per cent, which was the minimum, shown by Mazbat.

The growth of population was much higher even in 1951-1961, registering an increase of 44.75 per cent against 35.06 per cent of the state. The total population of the district rose to 582,624 in 1961. During the decade, the highest growth rate was recorded by Udalguri thana area (75.84 per cent), followed by Kalaigaon thana (62.61%), Paneri thana (52.52%), Dalgaon thana (48.19%), Mazbat thana (45.5%) and Mangaldai thana (24.52%). The abrupt rise in population in Udalguri thana, was due to the development of Udalguri, as a growth centre, which attracted many in-migrants from Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam. Thus the increase of population of the northern thana areas, was more pronounced than those of the southern part of the district.

During 1961-1971, Darrang district registered a percentage growth of 43.24, and the total population rose to 834,574 in 1971, with the fresh waves of immigrants from East Pakistan and Nepal. The former group of immigrants concentrated mainly in the south and east, along the Brahmaputra and the lower Dhansiri basin, while the latter, i.e., the Nepalis settled in the north, supplemented by the Bengali Hindu refugees. Consequently the thana areas of Udalguri (61.61%), Paneri (61.08%), Kalaigaon (42.02%) and Mazbat (36.71%), recorded the high growth rates. On the other hand in Mangaldai and Dalgaon thana, where growth rate accelerated in the earlier decades, remained below that of the state average of 34.38.

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The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) launched a massive agitation from 1979-1985, demanding detection and deportation of the illegal infiltrators from Bangladesh and Nepal to Assam and resisted the enumeration work in the state. As such, no census operation could be carried out in 1981.

The latest census operation in 1991 shows the district population to be 12,98,860 with a growth rate of 55.63 per cent over the two decades from 1971-1991. This enhanced growth rate is perhaps due to - (I) influx of land hungry immigrant Muslims from Bangladesh, (ii) entry of large number of Hindu refugees from the then East Pakistan during the liberation of Bangladesh in 1972; (iii) unabated influx of Nepali graziers from Nepal; (iv) natural increase of growth rate and (v) gradual fall of death rate for increasing medical facilities, increasing percentage of literacy, etc. (Table 4.2.1).

### TABLE 4.2.1
DARRANG DISTRICT
GROWTH OF POPULATION
(1872 - 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Variation of population</th>
<th>Percentage of variation</th>
<th>Percentage of variation in Assam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>174,066</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>166,055</td>
<td>-8,011</td>
<td>-4.6</td>
<td>+9.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>188,050</td>
<td>+21,995</td>
<td>+11.7</td>
<td>+11.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>173,380</td>
<td>-14,470</td>
<td>-7.75</td>
<td>+14.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>170,159</td>
<td>-3,421</td>
<td>-1.97</td>
<td>+16.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>191,473</td>
<td>+21,314</td>
<td>+11.60</td>
<td>+19.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>239,649</td>
<td>+48,176</td>
<td>+25.16</td>
<td>+20.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>324,246</td>
<td>+84,597</td>
<td>+35.30</td>
<td>+20.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>402,501</td>
<td>+78,255</td>
<td>+24.13</td>
<td>+20.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>582,624</td>
<td>+180,123</td>
<td>+44.75</td>
<td>+35.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>834,574</td>
<td>+251,950</td>
<td>+43.24</td>
<td>+34.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1,298,860</td>
<td>+464,286</td>
<td>+55.63</td>
<td>+53.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:  
*Census of India*, 1911, Vol. Ill, Assam, Shillong.  
The above discussion shows that immigration has contributed substantially to the population make up of Darrang district, during the last one hundred years. Although, the majority of the immigrants belonged to the East Bengal and Nepal, inter-district and inter-state migration of the tea garden labourers, businessmen and job-seekers from the other Indian states, has also been there. As a result of this, many new areas have been opened up for cultivation in the district. The advent of these new settlers, with different languages and cultures, has given rise to new socio-economic and socio-cultural problems in the district.

Darrang district is predominantly inhabited by rural people with 95.08 per cent of the total population of 1991 inhabiting in 1274 villages. Out of them, 665 villages have so far been included in the area of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC). Town-dwellers, living in four towns, namely Mangaldai, Tangla, Kharupetia and Udalguri account for only 4.92 per cent. These towns have come into being in the district only in the twentieth century, with Mangaldai coming up as town in 1921, followed by Kharupetia and Tangla in 1961 and Udalguri in 1990. It is, however, interesting to note that the urban population of Darrang district registered a tremendous growth during the decades 1971-1991. The total urban population of the district in 1961 was 19,772 as against 32,210 in 1971, which increased to 63,984 in 1991. Urban population has increased by 70.75 per cent in Mangaldai, 65.15 per cent in Kharupetia and 46.28 per cent in Tangla, during the decades 1971-1991.

The vigorous growth of urban population is chiefly due to the influx of people in large number into the urban centres, not only from within the district, but also from outside, for increasing employment opportunities and business facilities. While the population of Mangaldai town increased along with its upgradation to district headquarters in 1983, Udalguri also started becoming crowded since 1983, when it was not declared a town, but chosen as the sub-divisional headquarters.

The following table (4.2.2) shows the growth of urban population in Darrang district since 1921.
### TABLE 4.2.2
DARRANG DISTRICT
GROWTH OF URBAN POPULATION
(1921 - 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Town</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage of decadal variation</th>
<th>No. of tribal population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1,023</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1,696</td>
<td>+65.79</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>2,093</td>
<td>+23.41</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANGALDAI</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>3,571</td>
<td>+70.62</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>8,547</td>
<td>+139.34</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>12,150</td>
<td>+42.16</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>20,747</td>
<td>+70.75</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANGALDAI</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>6,906</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KCHARUPETIA</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>10,488</td>
<td>+51.29</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>15,342</td>
<td>+65.15</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANGLA</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>4,319</td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>9,572</td>
<td>+121.63</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>15,809</td>
<td>+46.28</td>
<td>808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDALGURI</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>12,086</td>
<td></td>
<td>1132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of the Chairman of Municipal Board, Mangaldai and that of the Town Committees of Kharupetia, Tangla and Udalguri, 1995

In the census report of 1991, towns have been divided into different classes, based on population data. Mangaldai has been included in the class V group of town having a population between 20,000 and 25,000. Tangla and Kharupetia came under the class VI group of town with populations ranging from 15,000 to 19,999 and Udalguri has been categorised as a class VII group of town with less than 15,000 people.

The presence of tribal population in all the four towns stated above, is insignificant. As per 1991 census, the number of tribal population in the towns are: Mangaldai 220; Kharupetia 44; Tangla 808 and Udalguri 1132 only. It may be mentioned here that Tangla town, although surrounded by the BAC area, has remained outside the BAC area, as yet
4.3 DISTRIBUTION AND DENSITY OF POPULATION OF DARRANG DISTRICT:

Old authentic reports on the density and distribution of population of Darrang district are not readily available. Since 1872, population data of the district has been recorded after every ten years.

In 1901, Darrang district, with only 170,580 people was sparsely populated, except the central part of the district covering Mangaldai thana area and the density of population of the district was 48.54 persons per km². Kalaigaon and Patharighat Tehsils in 1901, supported a thicker density of population with about 81 per km².

The situation remained almost the same during the next decade till 1911. There was a marked spatial difference in the distribution of population due mainly to varying geo-economic setting of the district. The central rice belt stretching from the lower Bhabar zone in the north, to the edge of the active flood plain of the Brahmaputra in the south, was the thickly populated area. The high density of population of this region, was not new. There had been relatively thicker density in this region as indicated by the presence of 361 tanks dug out during the Bhuyan and Koch regimes. This is because the region has fertile alluvial soil capable of growing rich rice and other crops, yet having been free from inundation⁶.

The fifth census operation in 1911, recorded a very high density of population per km² mainly in four mauzas of the central built up zone; viz. Rainakuchi (695), Hindughopa (694), Dahi (398) and Lokrai (341). However, the average density in the district remained 52.67. Such an average low density was due to the incidence of Kala-azar and cholera that broke out in 1906 in epidemic form in the northern mauzas, reducing the population to minimum.

The density of population began to increase during the decade ending in 1921, when it stood at 55.25 persons per km². Although the outbreak of cholera in 1912, 1916 and 1919 and influenza in epidemic form in 1918 and 1919 in the northern mauzas took a heavy toll of

human lives, yet the census records show a high density of the district population during the period. This increase of density was due to immigration from erstwhile East Bengal, for whom the wastelands of Darrang district had been the veritable lebensraum, where over twenty thousand of them settled during 1911-1921.

The density of population of the district increased to 69.15 per km² by 1931, with both the Kalaigaon and Mangaldai thana areas maintaining the traditional high density with 80.95 and 104.18 persons per km² respectively. However, Dalgaon thana came to be heavily settled with new influx of Muslim peasant immigrants from East Bengal during the decade. Mymensingh district had been the largest source of this influx. During this decade, nearly thirty thousand persons migrated into Darrang district from Mymensingh. Most of them settled in Dalgaon mauza, thereby increasing its population by 151 per cent against only 5.4 per cent increase in Kalaigaon mauza. Moreover, the opening up of a number of tea gardens in the north added large number of tea garden labourers coming from outside the state. So, the total population of the district during the decade 1921-1931 increased by 25.3 per cent as against 11.6 per cent in the 1911-1921 period.

The demographic scenario further changed in 1941, when the density of population increased to 93.56 persons per km², with an increase of 35.3 per cent of the district’s overall population. The two thana areas, Mangaldai and Dalgaon again maintained its traditional lead in the density of population by 128.24 and 92.58 persons per km² respectively. On the other hand, along with the influx of Nepali graziers from Nepal and in-migration of both tribal and non-tribal population from Kokrajhar, Goalpara and Kamrup districts, density of population increased in Mazbat thana to 64.33 per km², followed by Udalguri thana, with 63.10 per km². In the three northern thana areas, the increase of density of population was the result of opening up of a number of grazing reserves.

According to the census of 1951, the district’s density of population increased to 116.15 persons per km², which was higher than the state average of 112.46. Every thana area

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recorded a high density, the highest being in Mangaldai (153.37), followed by Kalaigaon (137.33), Udalguri (125.76) and Dalgaon (125.31). Increase of density was recorded in Harisinga and Sekhar mauzas of Paneri thana; undivided Dalgaon and Sialmari mauzas in Dalgaon thana, and Rangamati and Shyamabari mauzas in Mangaldai thana, for huge influx of immigrant people. However, the lowest density was recorded by Mazbat thana (about 30 persons per km²).

During the decade of 1951-1961, there was an overall increase of population reflecting the density of 168.70 per km², as against the state average of 151.20. After the rejection of Cabinet Mission Plan in 1946, communal riots broke out in India and especially after the Hindu-Muslim riots in August 16 to August 18 in Bengal, a lot of Muslim immigrants and Bengali Hindu refugees entered Assam as also Darrang district. While the Muslims moved into the areas where their earlier counterparts settled in the Rangamati and Dalgaon mauzas, the Bengali Hindu refugees, settled mostly in Kalaigaon and Khairabari areas. The Kalaigaon thana area became the most densely populated region with 223.33 persons per km², followed by Udalguri thana (218.19), where the refugees encroached upon all the wastelands created by the abandoned channels of the river Dhansiri, even violating the norms of the tribal belts. This tremendous spurt in population during this decade was a common feature, not only in Darrang district, but also all over the plains districts of Assam.

The district population rose abruptly to 834,574 in 1971, the increase of population being 43.22 per cent. This resulted in the increase of density of population to 241 per km², which was higher than the average density of the Brahmaputra valley (221) and the state's average of 186. The availability of abundant wastelands in the chars and chapories of the Brahmaputra, development of growth points and service centres in the district, de-reservation of former grazing lands in the north, fall of child mortality due to increased medical facilities, gradual increase of employment opportunity, etc. were the main factors responsible for this increase of population.

No census operation could be carried out in 1981 as mentioned earlier. The census of 1991 recorded the district population to be 12,98,860 with a density of 373 per km², which was much higher than the state average of 286. The unabated influx of Muslim peasant
immigrants from Bangladesh, and Nepali graziers from Nepal, has brought into being this high density in the district population. A good percentage of the immigrant population has also managed to enter their names in the voters' list, thereby creating a new socio-political problem. Moreover, although the Illegal Migrants Detection by Tribunal (IMDT) Act, 1983, persists in the state of Assam, the encouraging attitude of sheltering the new illegal immigrants by their old counterparts, seems to have made it difficult for the government machinery to detect and deport them, resulting in an abnormal rise in the district population. The advent of a large number of immigrants and refugees, whose language, manners and customs differ widely from that of the indigenous people, affected the socio-political and socio-economic structure of the district. They have brought under plough, vast tracts of wastelands for cultivation, but on many occasions violating the norms related to the reservation of land for public purposes. Many instances of friction between the indigenous peasants and the immigrants, have come to the light from Udalguri, Kalaigaon, Rowta and Khairabari areas, during the recent years, relating to the land encroachments. As India is a democratic country and as democracy is the game of numbers, it is said that the future of this region of India may be entirely determined by the illegal immigrants and their descendants. This may pose, the local people fear, a serious challenge to the very existence of indigenous culture.

The settlement of immigrants from foreign countries and in-migrants from the other Indian states, has given rise to a peculiar social landscape in the district, with specific characters of each of the regions, predominated by different groups of people. A look into the district's socio-economic landscape reveals four regions, which coincide with ecological settings of the district, as shown below:

(a) The Tarai-Bhabar Zones of the North:

The two belts, Tarai and Bhabar, stretching from the foothills of the Bhutan Himalayas in the north and covering the northern part of the Paneri, Udalguri and Mazbat thana areas, were the traditional homelands of the indigenous tribal people. But at the beginning of the present century, several tea gardens were opened up in these areas and subsequently these belts have come under the occupation of the tea garden and ex-tea garden labourers along with the
Nepali graziers and after partition, the Hindu refugees from the then East Pakistan. Some indigenous non-tribal people have also recently settled in these belts. Many of the government reserved forests are situated within this tract. It may be noted that out of 28 tea gardens of Darrang district, 22 are located within these belts. The single ambitious irrigation scheme of the district, the ‘Dhansiri Irrigation Project’, which is coming up, is likely to help the agricultural economy of the area, if completed as planned.

(b) The Central Built Up Zone:

Stretching from the south of the old Gohain Kamal Ali up to the National Highway No. 52, and from the Barnadi river in the west to the villages like Puthimary, Kabirali, Punna, Mahaliapara, etc. along the eastern margin of the Kalaigaon and Mangaldai thana, this belt is the abode of over 75 per cent of the district’s population. Being free from the floods and other calamities like cyclone, and the land being fertile, this belt gives a good return to the agrarian people of the district. Both the indigenous Hindus and Muslims have been occupying this belt traditionally. The tribal people live along its northern fringe. Under the protracted rule of the Bhuyan and Koch kings in the past, people lived peacefully within this belt, thereby offering a heavy concentration of human population, which was over 60 persons per km² even as back as in 1872.

(c) The Southern Flood Plains:

Beginning from the south of the National Highway No. 52, from Kotahi, Aparia, Chowlkhowa Chapori, etc. under Sipajhar thana, up to the Dhansiri river in the east, covering an area of 150 km², is the vast active flood plain of the Brahmaputra, with many chars and chapories, and is liable to flood during each summer season. Formerly, some areas of this flood plain was used by the indigenous people from Sipajhar and Rangamati areas for growing winter crops and for grazing cattle. They termed these char areas as ‘Mojeli’, meaning island. But from the beginning of this century, the dexterous Muslim immigrants from East Bengal settled in this belt and started producing summer rice, jute, pulses, vegetables, etc. satisfying the market demand of the locality.
The above description of the four fold physiographic units project a clear picture of distribution and density of the district’s population, showing the northern Tarai-Bhabar zones with indigenous tribals and immigrant tea tribes, Nepalis and Hindu refugees; Central Built Up zone with indigenous non-tribal Hindus and Muslims, coupled with indigenous tribals, along its northern fringe, and the Southern Flood Plain zone with the Muslim immigrant population.

4.4 GROWTH OF TRIBAL POPULATION:

Darrang district, being at the middle of the gateway of migration, has been a synthesis of races and cultures. The great Bodo people have said to have entered into this area of the country, from the north east, through different ways, as indicated by legends. There are no written records to prove that the tribal people had migrated to this area during the pre-historic days. But mention has been made in the Mahabharata and Puranas, the presence of the Indo-Mongoloid tribes in this part of the country. This is clear from the reference of these tribals as ‘Kiratas’ in different epics and Hindu scriptures. So it can be reasonably concluded that at least some of the tribal people of the region must have migrated to this part of the country, during the pre-Mahabharata period.

The greatest contribution of these Indo-Mongoloid people is that they first brought into the north east India, the technique of food production by plant cultivation and domestication of animals. They are, in all likelihood, the first cultivators of rice in India. They introduced for the first time in India, the art of rearing silkworm, as well as spinning and weaving of silk clothes. 

As per 1991 census, out of the total population of 12,98,860 of the district, the tribes numbered 224,957, accounting for 17.3 per cent. They represent 7.00 per cent of the total scheduled tribes population of Assam. Almost all the tribal people are rural and the number of town dwellers from among them is insignificant. The important scheduled tribes of the district are the Bodo-Kacharis, the Rabhas and the Garos. They mostly live in the northern part of the

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district. They include a broad spectrum of population, ranging from the Pati Rabhas, living on the plains around Tangla and Jamuguri to the Bodo-Kacharis clustering mainly along the fringe of central built up zone of the district. The traditional socio-cultural life of each of the tribal group has given rise to a distinct character to the zone it occupies. Besides, there is a discernible social difference among them also.

In the past, the tribal people of the district were found to have suffered from a virulent disease called Kala-azar, an acute and very contagious form of fever, which in most cases was fatal. Sometimes, it broke out in the form of epidemic, as happened in 1906 in the northern areas of the district in and around Tangla, Paneri, etc. The tribal people, because of their socio-cultural background, suffered more from it, in addition to suffering from malaria, which was common in their forested Tarai situation. Their beliefs and customs led them to consider these diseases and epidemics to be the curse of their village deities, like 'Mero-Raja', 'Burha-Mahadeo', etc. In case of occurrence of such epidemics in the past, the tribal people used to change their village sites. However, many of them died in the process. This is one of the causes why the tribal population showed a fluctuating growth in the earlier decades of the twentieth century.

During the nineteenth century, the demographic figures of the tribes of the district were found to be recorded in the Hunter's Report (Statistical Account of the District of Darrang), Mill's Report (Report on the Province of Assam) and Census Reports of 1872, 1881, 1891 and 1901. But all these reports were based on undivided Darrang district, which included both the present Darrang and Sonitpur districts. So, it is very difficult to draw a clear picture of scheduled tribes population during the British period concerning the present district of Darrang. But during the post-independence period, detailed report of tribal demography with their concentration and clustering have been prepared separately for the Mangaldai Sub-Division (the present Darrang district) and the Tezpur Sub-Division (the present Sonitpur district).

According to 1951 census, the total population of Darrang district was 402,501, of which the tribal people comprised 60,604, with 32,383 males and 28,221 females (the percentage of tribal population being 14.9). It may be noted that, during the same period, the percentage of the state's scheduled tribes population was only 7.30 per cent. This difference shows clearly that
Darrang district was relatively heavily populated by the plains-tribal people. The sex ratio of the tribal population was 875 females per one thousand males, but the corresponding figure for the state was 860. It shows a higher tribal sex ratio in the district than in the state. Table 4.4.1 shows the number and sex ratio of the scheduled tribes population of the district from 1951 to 1991.
### TABLE 4.4.1
DARRANG DISTRICT
NUMBER, PROPORTION AND SEX RATIO OF SCHEDULED TRIBES
(1951-1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Scheduled tribes</th>
<th>Percentage of S.T.</th>
<th>Sex ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>402,501</td>
<td>60,604</td>
<td>32,383</td>
<td>28,221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>582,624</td>
<td>95,531</td>
<td>49,718</td>
<td>45,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>854,574</td>
<td>128,494</td>
<td>64,887</td>
<td>63,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>12,98,860</td>
<td>224,957</td>
<td>127,752</td>
<td>112,205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:**
- Census Hand Book of India, 1951, Vol. XII, Part II-A.
- Census Of India, 1961, Vol. XII, Part II-A.
- Census of India, 1971, Series III, Assam, Part II-A.
- Director, ITDP, Mangaldai and Udalguri, 1993.
During the decade of 1951-61, out of the total population of 582,624 of the district, the tribal population numbered 95,531. The tribal people experienced an increase of 57.6 per cent as against the overall growth of 44.75 per cent of the district during the corresponding period. This abrupt increase was mainly due to improved medical facility in the district after independence, when the number of hospitals and health centres increased from six in 1931-41 to over thirty in 1951-61, resulting in the fall of child mortality. Moreover, in-migration of tribal people from Goalpara and Kamrup districts, following the opening up of some reserved lands like the village grazing reserves (V.G.R.) and professional grazing reserves (P.G.R.) in the northern part of the district, accelerated the increase of tribal population. Thus, their proportion in the district increased to 16.3 per cent in 1961, when the corresponding state percentage was 9.0.

Out of the total of 95,531 tribal people, with 49,718 males and 45,813 females, the sex ratio of the tribal people of Darrang district in 1961 increased to 922 females per one thousand males, when it was 862 in case of Assam as a whole. A greater percentage of the district population was rural (96.15 per cent) and town dwellers living in the then three towns, namely Mangaldai, Kharupetia and Tangla, accounted for only 3.85 per cent. The percentage of tribal population, living in the towns was too insignificant. Incidentally, the first town in Darrang district (then Mangaldai sub-division), i.e., Mangaldai, came to be so recognised only in 1921, followed by Kharupetia and Tangla in 1961.

The 1971 census report depicted an alarming growth of population in Darrang district, enumerating 854,574 souls with an increase of 43.24 per cent. But during the corresponding period, the tribal population increased to 128,494, with 64,887 male and 63,607 female population, their percentage of growth being 34.5. The sex ratio of the tribal population increased further to 984, which was much higher than the state average of 896. During the decade 1961-1971, however, the percentage of tribal population slightly decreased to 15.4 per cent, although it remained much higher than the corresponding state figure of 10.99.

No census operation could be held in 1981.
The 1991 census report shows an abrupt rise in the district population, which numbered 12,98,860, with a sex ratio of 938. During this period, the number of tribal people was 224,957 accounting for 17.32 per cent of the total population. Their sex ratio during this count was found to be 983, as opposed to the state (923) and the district (938).

From the above discussion of sex ratio, it may be concluded that in all the decades starting from 1951 to 1991, the ratio of the female to the male among the tribal population was higher than that of the district's total population. It is mainly due to the fact that the tribal people, who are essentially agricultural - whether local or in-migrants from other districts of the state, live with their families as opposed to some of the non-tribal, non-agricultural in-migrants, who come to the district for business or in search of other employment opportunities, leaving their families in their original homelands. Besides, a large number of young males from among the non-tribal indigenous people also stay outside the district, associated with secondary and tertiary activities.

From the religious point of view - the tribal people follow different religious faiths. Formerly, the Bodo-Kacharis followed their traditional religion - 'Bathow'. But in course of time, a section of them accepted Hinduism and converted themselves into Saranias. Besides, conversion into Christianity during the British period, influenced a good percentage of them. Among the Rabhas, a greater percentage accepted Hinduism since long past, although in recent years, a small section of them have adopted Christianity.

The Garo people, formerly followed their traditional religion. But recently, nearly fifty per cent of them accepted Christianity. The detailed figures of conversion into Christianity has been shown in Table 4.4.2.
TABLE 4.4.2
DARRANG DISTRICT
NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS OF DIFFERENT TRIBAL ORIGIN
(1995-96)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Former community</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total number</th>
<th>Location of Church</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>Bodo</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>17000</td>
<td>Tangla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rabha</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
<td>Habigaon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Garo</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tea-tribes</td>
<td>13,900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Church of North India (CNI)</td>
<td>Bodo</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bengbari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rabha</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Garo</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tea-tribes</td>
<td>700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Baptist Mission</td>
<td>Bodo</td>
<td>37,125</td>
<td></td>
<td>Harisinga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rabha</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Garo</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tea-tribes</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>39540</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nepali</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bihari Hindu</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|         | **Total**                |                  | 59140  | 26.28% of the tribal people |}

Sources: Roman Catholic Church, Tangla, 1996.
CNI, Bengbari, 1996.
Baptist Mission Church, Harisinga, 1996.
Catholic Church, Habigaon, 1996.

4.5 SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF THE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES:

4.5.1 THE BODO-KACHARIS:

Among the tribal population of Darrang district, the Bodo-Kacharis constitute the largest social group. They, with 202,000 people, account for 91 per cent of the total tribal population of the district. All scheduled tribes of the district belong to the great Bodo group. The Bodo-Kacharis of Assam are a Tibeto-Burman language speaking Indo-Mongoloid tribe. They migrated to Assam in the prehistoric days from western China and Tibet. Reverend S. Endle
described them as the original autochthons of Assam. In the Mahabharata and
other Hindu scriptures, they have been identified as the Kiratas, Mlechas, Assamese. However, their common residence with the Aryans, who were largely Hindus, led them to embrace Hinduism. These Hinduised Kacharis abandoned their original language and culture. But those who did not embrace Hinduism, continued to retain these to a certain extent. They have also retained their own clan organisation. Hence, partial conversion to Hinduism did not result in any distinction between the Hinduised and the non-Hinduised in their social intercourse, especially marriage and interdining.

Although the non-Hinduised section of the Bodo-Kacharis still follow their customs and traditions, they cannot be called animists, because of the fact that in the midst of their religious life, Saivism seems to play a prominent role. They believe in the worship of Siva, whom they call ‘Bathow-Barai’, and is represented by a Siju (Bamia) plant, which they plant in the north east corner of their courtyards. But they do not restrict their pursuit of God only by this, as they basically follow polytheistic practices. With the non-tribal Hindus, the Bodo-Kacharis do not appear to be idolaters. They have no fixed place and time of worship. But now-a-days some Bodo-Kacharis also started to follow the practice of construction of a common religious house in each community. This is called ‘Namghar’ or temple of the non-tribal Hindus. This is similar to the ‘Bathow-Chali’, a homestead representing their deity on the north east corner of the Bathow-Chali premises.

Apart from ‘Bathow’, the Bodo-Kacharis also worship a number of deities for appeasing them. This they often do by sacrificing pigs and fowls and offering them rice and fruit. Of the Bodo-Kacharis, who accepted Kali Charan Brahma, as their protector deity, ‘Brahmas’. They practice the vedic rituals, adopt Hom-Yajnas and do not restrict their pursuit of God only by this, as they basically follow polytheistic practices. Now-a-days, a percentage (over 20 per cent) of Bodo-Kacharis of Darrang district have been converted to Hinduism.

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Christianity. But this conversion is, however, only in name, as they have still retained most of their traditional manners and customs intact.

_Social Structure:_


Although they have different clans, every clan has equal right and position in the society. Irrespective of differences in clan and religious faiths among them, a group of Bodo-Kacharis live together in a village in amity and cooperation. In every village, there is a village headman, called ‘Gaonbuhra’, who is selected unanimously by the villagers from amongst the elderly unbiased persons. He is, in fact, the supreme in all matters concerning the village. The next functionary of the Bodo-Kachari society at village level is the Helmaji, the courier of errands, who is also responsible for organising village level social works. There is a village council headed by the Gaonbuhra, to settle the dispute among the dwellers of a village. The Helmaji informs the villagers about the date and venue of the village council meeting, whenever it is to be held. He is given a remuneration annually by each household in kind, like paddy grain or plough work. The functionary in the third order of a Bodo-Kachari society is the Ojah (Priest), who, besides presiding over the religious rites, guides the atonement proceedings, while the Deori assists the Ojah in performing all the socio-religious rituals. The ojah, in every village is selected from among the elderly persons, who is without any blemish in his personal life. Although, he is held in high esteem in the society, he gets no remuneration, either in cash or in kind.
The Bodo-Kacharis follow the patriarchal system of family structure, where the father is the head of the family. Sons inherit the father’s property. In the event of the death of a sonless father, the close male relative may claim the property, even when there are his widow and married daughters living. Adopted son, if any, cannot claim the right on the property. The eldest son enjoys the lions share of the paternal property. But in case, a person dying without paying the ‘bride price’, his property will go to his daughter or to his wife’s relatives. Unmarried daughters cannot claim the father’s property.

In the Bodo-Kachari society, the social status of women is not considered inferior to men and so they occupy an equal status with their menfolk. As they follow a patriarchal system, the women play a role, somewhat inferior to that of men. But the women are found to be more labourious than men and in reality, they work more than men, without practically having any leisure in between their daily chores. Throughout the district, tribal women are found to do all the indoor and outdoor works except the construction of houses and ploughing of land.

**Bodo Social Organisation:**

The Bodo-Kachari society prescribe atonement proceedings for purification of a person for his or her misdeeds. The Deori, an assistant to the village priest, and the Ojah, usually conduct the atonement proceedings. The Deori is elected on the general consensus of all the villagers, on the basis of his character and ability to guide the socio-religious rites. The Deori and the Gaonbuhra have a distinct place of honour in the Bodo society.

There are two important social organisations in the Bodo society - ‘Hadengoura’ and ‘Hachung-goura’, the former having tribal judicial authority on a group of twelve adjoining villages, and the latter as the subordinate institution helps the Hadengoura. Petty cases of thefts, assaults, quarrels, land partition disputes and any other social crimes arising out of the disobedience of the customary rules and rituals are tried by the village council. Moreover, the most common traditional social institution of the Bodo-Kacharis is the ‘Rajani Metheng’ or the village panchayat (council). The decision of the panchayat is binding and everyone abides by it.
reflects a more democratic outlook of the Bodo-Kachari socio-religious organisation. The Gaonbuhra and his assistant Helmaji organise all the village level social works and the Deori presides over them. The unsettled disputed matter, however, ultimately goes to the civil court\(^3\). It is an admitted fact that these village panchayats have some positive role in minimising the heinous crimes due to the fear of estracism, usually prescribed by these councils as punishment to the wrongdoers.

**Bodo-Kachari Social Customs and Traditions:**

The Bodo-Kachari society maintains a mutual cooperation among their neighbouring villages. Events of mutual cooperation is commonly discernible through such social institutions like ‘Sanguri’ - a helping hand among the co-villagers in any major work, which an individual is not capable to do himself. On being sought for such help, he is to provide a meal along with sufficient quantity of drinks. For comparatively less time consuming work, a lunch is deemed to be enough. During summer ploughing and winter harvesting periods, this type of Sanguri is a common feature in the agricultural fields in the tribal inhabited areas of Darrang district.

Another system of mutual cooperation in the tribal villages is ‘Gatha’, in which ploughing and harvesting is done by a number of people together in rotation for mutual advantage for all concerned. This type of social practice mitigates the difference of rich and poor.

Bodo-Kacharis are exogamous and no marriage is socially admissible between a boy and a girl of the same clan. Bride price is still prevalent. Marriage through negotiation has been entering into their society in recent years. But marriage through elopement was formerly the usual practice. They are generally monogamous and polygamy is not at all encouraged. Polyandry is totally absent. Bodo-Kachari girls maintain chastity. According to their common belief, adultery before marriage results in acute labour pain\(^4\). Widow remarriage is in vogue, but cross cousin

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\(^4\) Endlc, Rev. S.: op. cit. p.3.
marriage is a taboo. In the widow remarriage, the bride groom must cut off all his patrilineal relationship and induct himself to the clan of the widow.  

**House Type:**  
The house type of the Bodo-Kachari people is not much different from that of the non-tribal people of the district although these appear to be less substantial. They often live in two-roofed simple houses, made of bamboo and thatches, erected on a raised earthen plinth, with scanty or no ventilation. Three or four such mud-plastered houses are built around a courtyard. Every dwelling unit consists of a three-roomed living house, with doors facing to the south, a cow-shed and a granary. Besides, there may be a separate structure for guests and for sundry uses. The easternmost portion of the living house is used for cooking and worship. The courtyard provides an altar for their supreme god ‘Bathow’, represented traditionally by a siju plant on its northeast corner (Plate 1).  

Very few of the Bodo-Kachari people use corrugated iron sheets for roofing. But their villages can easily be recognised by the absence of such social establishments, as the Public Namghar or Church, which is a common feature of a non-tribal village, however small in size it may be.  

The Bodo-Kachari people believe in big house to be a potential challenge to storm, which they generally avoid. They keep their poultry in a cubby-hole type of structure attached to the main dwelling house. Bodo women are expert weavers and their family looms are placed on the backyard facing the orchard of the compound. Despite all these, they do not hesitate to change their settlement, and to move to a new place, sometimes hundreds of kilometers away, even for a minor reason. The sudden death of a child or a constant sickness in the household or perch of a vulture on the rooftop, can be a strong enough ground for a Bodo-Kachari to leave his home-stead and shift to some other place. It is found that, many tribal people of Darrang district  

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PLATE 1. Typical House Type of Bodo-Kacharis
shifted to North Lakhimpur district in 1906, 1911, 1912 and 1916, just because outbreaks like Kala-Azar, Cholera, etc., recurred in their habitats.

The Village Economy:

Bodo-Kacharis of the district depend mainly on subsistence agriculture. Most of them are wet paddy cultivators and rice is their staple food, supplemented by vegetables, roots and herbs. In recent years, growing of early ‘Aijong variety’ of paddy in the months of February-March in the agricultural fields of Paneri, Kachubil, Bengbari, Harisinga, etc., appears to be a new shift from their traditional wet-paddy cultivation. Pork and chicken also find place in their menu. Dried fish is a special delicacy. Both these are costly affairs.

Economically, Darrang is a backward district. Agriculture still plays the dominant role in the village economy. Despite this, agricultural development is almost absent due to the smallness of their landholdings, the average being 1.87 hectares per family. Small landholdings, absence of facilities for winter cultivation, lack of use of chemical fertilizer, etc., are the main factors responsible for keeping the Bodo-Kachari people within the category of marginal farmers. However, one significant factor of tribal agriculture in the district is that, these people are real experts in distributing the water of the braided streams of the Bhutan foothills into their agricultural fields through the ‘Dongs’ (means canals) dug with their indigenous technique. No. 8 gives a picture of Dong irrigation technique in the tribal villages of Paneri area.

The food habit of the Bodo-Kacharis appear to have adversely affected their village economy. Open use of rice-beer (Jumay) and the habit of keeping the pigs and hogs unattended, are the two main causes of a huge wastage of foodgrains. Although they keep cattle, drinking of milk was a taboo in the earlier days. There was an age-old belief among the Bodo-Kacharis that drinking milk and rice-beer together, caused leprosy. So, they preferred to give up drinking of milk. But the belief is waning gradually and the member of the younger generation freely partake milk now-a-days.
SAMPL OF DONG (CANAL) SYSTEM IN TRIBAL AREAS UNDER PANERI THANA AREA BY MORA BHOLA-NADI

VILLAGES UNDER IRRIGATION (BY DONG SYSTEM)
1. BATIAMARI 11. MERBENGCHUBA
2. CHRISTANPARA 12. PANIPOTA
3. PANERI GRANT 13. SA STRAPUR
4. BHARGAO 14. BAHINIGAON
5. JAPARABARI 15. PURANDIA
6. PUB PANERI 16. TICKLOW CHUBA
7. ANADHUAPARA 17. GARKAKH
8. RATAPUR 18. BANGAON
9. KHTOWAL PARA 19. MAJGAON
10. TARABARI 20. UTTAR JANGAL PARA
21. CHAMUAPARA

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FIG. 8
The Bodo-Kachari women rear all kinds of silk-worm. They are good spinners and weavers too. But the industry has failed to contribute much towards the village economy, so much so that it still sticks to the ancient unproductive technology consistent with subsistence economy of the olden times. As per 1993-94 record, 9416 families of Darrang district were associated with sericulture industry, bifurcation of which may be shown as follows:

(a) Eri culture: 5513 families, over 80 per cent belongs to tribal group.

(b) Muga culture: 40 families, over 50% belongs to the S.T. people.

(c) Mulberry culture: 1530 families, over 60% belongs to S.T. people.

Although their Eri-chaddar is a special craft, inadequate credit and marketing facilities, have deprived many of them from their due reputation. Being the expert weavers, the Bodo women weave colourful dresses for themselves and for other members of the family which share a certain part of their village economy. They prefer green and yellow costumes.

Many Bodo-Kachari people work as labourers in the Public Works Department and many others work as labourers in the Forest Department, while a few families of northern Darrang work as tea-garden labourers to supplement their family income. Some Bodo women work even as daily wage earner in road construction.

But the ills which are plaguing the Bodo-Kacharis most are loss of land by land alienation, heavy indebtedness and usury of moneylanders. Poor housing condition in the village also adversely affects their economy. Each family has to repair their houses annually, spending Rupees six hundred to one thousand five hundred on building materials not including the expenditure on labour which is provided by ‘Sanguri’.

4.5.2 THE RABHAS:

The Mongoloid people who came to Assam in successive waves in the distant past from the north and north east, partly absorbed the Australoid people, who had settled earlier and
who later on got themselves divided into various tribes, like the Rabhas, the Garos, etc. Major Playfair, however, indicated that the Rabhas had come to Assam from the Tibetan region and settled first at Garo Hills from where they subsequently came over to Assam plains. Colonel Wadel stated that Rabhas are a section of the Bodo-Kacharis. On the Other hand, Dr. Grierson says that Rabha is the Hindu name of the Bodo-Kacharis. Another social scientist, Dalton correlates the Rabha people with the Garos. But as expressed by Gait, "it seems probable that the Rabhas are in reality a distinct tribe". But Endle’s view does not conform to any of the above. He states that the Rabhas are from a Hindu father and a Kachari mother. But Dr. B.M. Das scientifically establishes that the Rabhas were more closely allied to the Garos, rather than any other tribe of the Bodo group. Their hirsute type, large supraorbital ridges, broad face, low bridge nose and sparse body hair go to support the view held by Dr. B.M. Das.

The Rabha dialect forms a part of the Bodo language, which again belongs to the Assam-Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group.

Grierson points out that "this is a language, which is fast dying out and regarding which it has been very difficult to obtain any information. It certainly belongs to Bodo group". Most of the Pati and Baitiau Rabhas have, however, abandoned their tribal dialect in favour of Assamese.


The Rabha people of Darrang district, who form the second largest tribal group of the study area comprising about twenty thousand souls (9 per cent of the district’s tribal

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population), are distributed over 28 villages. They have been living amidst the indigenous non-tribal people since long past. In course of time, they began to identify themselves as the semi-Hinduised Kacharis of the plains. The endogamous Rabha tribe consists of Rongdonia, Totla, Pati, Maitory, Dahuri, Madahi, Hana, Sunga, etc., subgroups. The Rabha people of Darrang district belong mainly to the Pati Rabha group. They differ greatly from the other two major groups, namely Rongdonia and Maitory, who inhabit the northern part of Garo Hills and southern part of Goalpara districts. Although Hinduised, the Pati Rabhas of Darrang district, have been able to maintain their separate identity in respect of some of their socio-cultural traits. In Darrang district, their villages are - Jamuguri, Kenduguri, Nalkamara, Ratanpur, Kukurakata, Chintagaon, Rowta, Udalguri, Hugrajuli, Bhokelikanda, Patalagaon, Mougaon, Kaporpora, Habigaon, Tokonkata, etc. Although they have different sub-groups, inter-marriage among these sub-groups of the tribe with lesser number of population, viz. the Totla Rabha is seen in the northern belt of Darrang district, around Rowta, Udalguri and Hugrajuli.

Rabha Social Structure:

The Rabha people are broadly divided into several sub-groups, as referred to above, of which the three - the Rongdonia, Pati and Maitory are numerically prominent. Apart from the Pati Rabha, Darrang district also has some Totla Rabhas.

Rabha social structure is basically matriarchal with a few striking patriarchal characteristics. For instance, after marriage of the couple the offsprings take the mother’s clan, which is a characteristic feature of matrilineal society. On the other hand, as regards inheritance, they follow a patriarchal system, i.e. sons inherit the father’s property. After marriage the girl goes to live in her husband’s house. These may be the result of their closer cultural contact for a long time with the neighbouring non-tribal people. Another deviation from their original culture is noticed in the field of exogamy. In the past, strict adherence to exogamous marriage was followed, but sufficient laxity has been allowed in this regard now-a-days.
Rabha Social Organisation:

The social organisation of the Rabha people is basically governed by the ethnological ideas contained in the ‘Pandulipis’. The simple meaning of Pandulipi is ‘Social Laws of the Rabha People’ (Rabha Samaj Bidhi). It deals with the local customary laws, framed by the consensus of the village people. Based on the customs and traditions, religious rites and rituals, mode of inheritance, judicial powers, degree of prohibition, liability for atonement on committing mischiefs and social offenses, marital relationship, birth and death rites, etc. In other words, Pandulipi embodies the diversities of customary rules, prevalent in the Rabha society. The Rabha people strictly abides by the maxims of the Pandulipis, and the things barred by the said ethical system, are generally not done by them.

Under the Pandulipi, there are the lower level of village units called Jamad or Mandal, for the constituent members to follow the dictum. But in Darrang district, as a good percentage of Rabha people follow the Hindu rites and rituals and as a small percentage of them, has recently been converted to Christianity, the prevalence of the traditional social organisation, as stated above, is now a rarity.

Social Customs, Traditions and Religious Faiths:

The Rabhas are peace loving people by nature. They seem to be happy and content in the closed and withdrawn world of their own. A Rabha village is so calm and quite that, even a child is not heard crying loudly. They often try to make their village look like an integrated entity.

The Rabha people are monogamous in practice. Formerly, a Rabha youth would prefer to marry the daughter of their maternal uncle as the bride. But time has changed this practice and it is no longer prevalent. Till recent years they were hypergamous, but owing to the commendable work done by a few dedicated social workers, the process is gradually waning. Acculturation has changed the whole gamut and now a married Rabha woman smear vermillion marks on her forehead, a practice which is not very much prevalent among most of the other
scheduled tribes. The degree of acculturation with the Assamese Hindus is relatively deep among the Rabhas, and in Darrang district, the assimilation is of such a degree that there is hardly any difference between the Other Backward Class (O.B.C.) Hindus of the Assamese on the one hand and the Rabhas on the other.

Formerly elopement as a means of securing a bride, was widely prevalent, but with the spread of education and a higher degree of social awareness, elopement has now practically been replaced by normal marriage through negotiation. The Pati Rabhas of Darrang district abstain from ploughing on the full moon and new moon days and also consult astrology before performing any auspicious function. Transplantation of paddy seedlings by a female during the period of her menstruation is strictly prohibited in the Rabha society.

The Rabhas cremate their dead. They observe a yearly festival for the dead kins of the clan. The institution of ‘Hom-Yajna’ as a marital rite in accordance with the vedic prescription, has come to be a practice in recent days, in the area. This depicts a distinct departure from their traditional marital rites. Thus, the deviation from the traditional customs of the Rabha society appears to be a direct impact of their cultural contact with the other sanskritised section of the people of Assam.

Pati Rabhas of Darrang district have adopted Hinduism. But a few instances of conversion into Christianity in recent years have also been noticed. Dr. Kuppuswamy has rightly remarked - "...a society may run the risk of extinguishing itself by preventing change, or on the contrary, may extinguish itself in pursuit of change". In another words, both maximum reluctance to change and maximum readiness to accept change, are suicidal. No society can survive under either condition. Survival depends upon some flexible approach, which takes into account the situation, when exigency demands. The effect of this ‘reluctance to change and readiness to accept’ policy by the Rabhas in their social system will more closely be known after a sufficient time gap.

The Rabha people follow the cult of polydemonism. The biggest annual festival of the Rabhas, is the Khokshi Puja (Baikhu), which appears to be a fertility festival and is celebrated in the spring season. During the festival, the Rabha youths indulge in high glee and sing songs full of romantic fervour, to the accompaniment of varieties of Rabha musical instruments. But the pomp and grandeur of the festival is gradually declining now-a-days.

**House Type:**

The Rabha house type does not substantially differ from that of the Assamese people. A common Rabha house is a two roofed structure, erected on a low plinth with unplastered reed walls. It is elongated in shape. The dwelling house facing the south, normally has three rooms, with only one door at the end of the house and with no ventilation. The biggest and spacious room located at the easternmost side, is called 'Nakshreb', and is used by the eldest member of the house as his bedroom. The middle one is the kitchen, known as 'Rasinak'. The third and the westernmost room is called 'Maja', and is used as living room by the other members. They have no separate granary. A part of the Rasinak is used for storing grain and other commodities.

A traditional Rabha village, seems not to be very clean, with heaps of cowdung, growing higher gradually with additional daily throw, touching the backwall of the house, which makes the atmosphere unappetising. The mucky pigsty, out in a corner of the courtyard and the box type pan of the domestic fowl or pigeon - protruding from the house make the air putrescent.

Now-a-days, the elongated Rabha house has also become rare. They now prefer the type of house usually built by the Bodo-Kachari, which is short in size and has a high roof.

**The Village Economy:**

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of the Rabha people of Darrang district. Almost hundred per cent of the Rabha people are agriculturists, as observed by this
researcher in his field investigation in the villages like Kukurakata, Jamuguri, Bhokelikanda, etc. The percentage of people engaged otherwise, is too negligible to make any impact upon the village economy. Their main crop is paddy. Both the summer and winter varieties of paddy are grown by them. Mustard is widely grown in the villages like Tokonkata, Habigaon, Jamuguri and Mougaon area around Tangla, which supplement their source of income.

Although community fishing is a common phenomenon of the Rabha social life, it is very limited in the Rabha inhabited areas of Darrang district, probably due to lack of sufficient marshy lands. Even then it is not uncommon during the winter season, when a large number of people of this community is found fishing together in the ditches along the Mangaldai-Bhutiachang main road.

Every Rabha household brews rice beer for domestic consumption. It is offered to the guests and forms an essential item in their festivals, marriage and other religious ceremonies.

The Rabha women are expert weavers. They love the amber colour for their costumes, which consists of three pieces - a petticoat, one blouse and a scarf of the same amber colour. The entire costume of a lady is home made. They not only weave their own garments, but also prepare apparels for their menfolk and children. Formerly they used to dye the yarns locally, but now-a-days, this practice is not in vogue. The menfolk and the school-going children prefer using modern mill made garments available from the markets.

4.5.3 THE GAROS:

In Darrang district, the Garos constitute a small ethnic community. There are only twenty-seven villages inhabited by Garo people, namely Dalakati-gaon, Dalakati-jungle, Santipur, Bhalukmari, Namati, Rajagarh No. 3, Nayapara, Raonagarh, Khaorang, Garo-gaon, Garo-basti, Dalbari, Oar-para, Khairasali, Ulupara, Punia-gaon, Jhargaon No. 2, Bagicha-chuba, Bon-nagari, Barbari-gaon, Bara-bazar, Batabari, Lodabari, Suklai, Bardoa-bil, Bardoa-Neja and Mora Begarpar, with a total population of over 3000 souls. Except only three villages - namely
Bagicha-chuba, Bon-nagari and Garo-gaon, having exclusive Garo population, the others are mixed with non-tribal communities. Although the Garos are not enlisted as Scheduled Tribes in the plains of Assam, they are constitutionally scheduled tribes in the neighbouring state of Meghalaya.

The Garo people of Darrang district, being detached from their original homeland of Garo Hills of Meghalaya, live amidst the Bodo-Kacharis. They, however, maintain, some of their original customs and traditions, beliefs and practices and rites and rituals, even though they are living with other tribal groups. It is very difficult to ascertain the actual cause and time of immigration of these Garo people from Garo Hills to Darrang district.

The Garo people, who belong to the Mongoloid group, call themselves ‘Ashik-Mande’ (Ashik - hills and Mande-man). Like other Mongoloid people of North East India, their original homeland is believed to be Tibet\(^\text{16}\), and they belong to Tibeto-Burman linguistic family, having close affinity with the Bodo-Kacharis.

**Garo social structure:**

Socially the Garos are divided into various clans like any other tribal community. These are - Momin, Marak, Sangma, Chira, Sire and Areng, of which the first three constitute the major part of their population. The Garo people of Darrang district belong to the Marak and Sangma clans. ‘Laskar’, the village headman has the supreme authority and all village disputes are settled by him and sometimes a ‘Dai’\(^\text{17}\) is imposed on the guilty person, after being convicted.

The Garos are matrilineal. In family affairs, the position of the father is secondary, as the mother plays the dominant role. Each Garo clan is exogamous, with varying customs and manners. The offsprings take the mother’s clan. No male child is entitled to inherit the family property. After marriage, the husband comes to his wife’s house. His post marital earnings,


\(^{17}\) Dai is a fine imposed on a guilty person, after being convicted. It is customary among the Garo people.
belong to his wife and children. Daughters inherit the property of the family. When a mother bears no female child, the property of her family is inherited by a female of the same clan, nearer to her. Polygamy is admissible in Garo society, but the Garos under reference, practise monogamy. Bride-price system is not in vogue among them. Divorce is common and can be obtained easily in the case of adultery.

The Garos of Darrang district has individual land holdings like any other plains tribes and recognises individual right of ownership over land. The traditional group-ownership of land is no longer found among them in this district.

**Social customs and traditions:**

The Garo people are by nature generous and hospitable. They never stint to welcome a guest cordially. They freely exchange their happiness and sorrows with their guests, and share with them whatever they have. Although, a sizable section of the Garo people of Darrang district profess Christianity, the preponderance of the traditional beliefs in different deities still persists. They religiously invoke their god for a good harvest. Every Garo family brew rice-beer at home and take it as a beverage irrespective of age and sex. Along with drinking, dancing to the accompaniment of music produced by bamboo-flutes, buffalo-horn-pipes, drums, etc. is an integral part of their religious ceremony and social functions. Propitiation of different gods and goddesses and spirits through sacrifice of birds and animals, is a Garo customary rule.

**House type:**

The Garos are mainly agriculturists. Unlike their original homeland of Garo-Hills, jhum cultivation in Darrang district is neither possible nor necessary. They have taken to sedentary cultivation as practised by other plainsmen. Paddy is their main agricultural product. Both summer and winter varieties of paddy are cultivated. Apart from this, maize, vegetables, chilli and a small amount of short staple cotton are also grown. Mustard is abundantly grown
during the winter months, especially in and around the Bhakatpara area, covering parts of Mangaldai and Kalaigaon thana. It is mainly because of the fact that this area is relatively high being away from the Mangaldai river in the west and Galandi river in the east. Irrigation facility is much less. Lands left fallow during the period of winter paddy is, therefore, cultured for mustard cultivation. Land being fertile, it gives a good return. Recently irrigation facility has been extended to some of these areas covering Jhargaon, Tetelibari, etc. from the Dhansiri Irrigation Project. Provision of shallow tubewell system of irrigation has also been introduced by the Irrigation Department in the Bhakat-para-Mudoibari area, but it has been able to produce less or no yield for frequent power failures.

Garo people living in Rajagarh-Suklai area in Paneri thana, near the Bhutan foothills, grow abundant sugarcane, maize, colocasia and pineapple, and send them to the local markets for sale. Some of them, living in Orang region, under Mazbat thana, raise cattle for milk, meant for sale. On the other hand, the Garo people living in Garo-gaon, Batabari and Bara-bazar area near Kopati are mainly small time crop growers.

The Garo women are also expert weavers. They weave clothes for their family members. Except weaving, making of bamboo and cane-mats and manufacturing of some rudimentary metal implements, they have hardly any other cottage industry.

4.6 SOCIAL BASIS OF THE TRIBAL PEOPLE:

The social life of the tribal people comprising Bodo-Kacharis, Rabhas and Garos of Darrang district, seems to be different in some ways from those of the non-tribal population, especially when it is observed minutely. Although the district is inhabited by people of different ethnic groups, having their distinct social, cultural and linguistic identities, yet an age old process of social interaction has been going on among them and the prolonged contact and social
dynamics have brought them together sometimes through social conflicts and sometimes through mutual goodwill.\footnote{Dubey, S.M.: \textit{North East India: A Sociological Study}. Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, 1938. P.1}

\textit{Birth Ceremony of the tribal people:}

At the time of birth of a child, a tribal family normally call in a respectable and competent matron to attend and assist a would-be mother, while the family also propitiates the household deity for assuaging labour pain. In severing the umbilical chord, a thin and hard strip of bamboo with sharp edge is used. Naming of the new-born baby is often accomplished with the severing of the umbilical chord. The matron, who officiates as a mid-wife, receives no money for her service, but is entertained with a feast of pork and other delicious items. The mother is technically treated to be 'unclean' for a period of one month or till the fall of the umbilical chord of the baby and is subjected to certain social and religious restrictions. The period of 'uncleanliness' ceremonially terminates with the use of holy water sprinkled by the Deori on the mother and the new born baby. The mother is then at full liberty to resume all the domestic chores and social intercourse. On the day of purification, after the completion of all the rituals, the neighbours are entertained in a feast. In case, the baby is not surviving, the mother can discharge her obligation very simply.

Naming of the new born baby is often done with the name of the day or the month in which the baby is born. But in a literate family, suitable name is ceremoniously given by the Deori. In recent days, some of the tribal families take up the help of astrologers and use a Hindu almanac for the purpose. However, in case of the Christian tribal people, naming is ceremoniously done by the Bishop of the nearest church.
Initiation:

In case of traditional tribal life, there is no provision of initiation. But sometimes, the Bodo-Kacharis, willing to be received into the Rabha sub-group, which is recognised to be higher in social ladder, has to pass through a somewhat elaborate initiation. In the social upliftment from Bodo-Kachari to Rabha, the initiation is performed by a Rabha-Deori. The Deori is usually an aged man and has recognised prestige and position in the society. But this office is not hereditary. It may be mentioned here, that there is no authorised priestly caste among the tribal communities, nor are the Brahmins (Hindu priests) ever employed in their religious rituals.

During the initiation the Deori, after performing the rituals, ask the person initiated to drink ‘padajal’ in public and then declare him pure. The person so initiated then must pay certain amount of money along with rice beer to his newly acquired brotherhood of other Rabha persons, with a feast of delicious pork.

Sometimes, some tribesmen in large number may like to embrace Hinduism and want to be initiated into Hinduism by a Gosain (a religious mentor of the Hindu priestly community). Once such a group is initiated, it finds place in the Hindu caste hierarchy as Sarama and follow the Brahmanical religion and give up their former habits of rearing pigs and fowl and follow the Vedic rituals. But such conversions are rare now. Following conversion, these new ‘Saranias’ observe ceremonially the attainment of puberty by their girls. But the traditional tribal people do not hold any ceremony to observe the attainment of puberty. In Garo society, there is no system of initiation. Child marriage is forbidden in all tribal societies.

Marriage ceremony:

The impact of modernisation has brought many changes to the social life of the tribal people. However, some of the old customs and traditions still persist. In regard to marriage, the system of paying ‘bride price’ still exists in Darrang district in the tribal society.

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The Bodo-Kacharis constitute a patrilineal group comprising a number of certain exogamous clans. They perform their usual negotiated marriage ceremony through the ‘Hathachuni’ system, in which the bride, on her arrival at the groom’s house, must cook and distribute the marriage feast. ‘Gorjia-system’ is another form of Bodo-Kachari marriage in servitude, in which the bride-groom is to stay and render his manual labour in the house of his would-be father-in-law, for a year or two. Marriage is granted with satisfaction only after the probationary period is over and then only he returns home with his bride. But this system is not in vogue now a days. In recent times, the more usual practice is the marriage through negotiation by the parents, in which the marriage materialises if only parents of the bride accept the marriage proposal made by the groom’s parents. It seems mainly to be the impact of the Hinduism borne out of contact with the non-tribal population. The traditional system of marriage through elopement is now strictly forbidden, and regarded as contemptuous. Junior levirate marriage is socially admissible, but in no case, senior levirate marriage is socially allowed. This system is common in case of both the Bodo-Kachari and the Rabhas.

Divorce is easily admissible in the Rabha society for unhappy conjugal life. They follow widow remarriage and marriage of the divorcee.

Marriage among the Garo is strictly exogamous. The proposal of the marriage comes from the bride’s side. The traditional system of ‘Deka-chang’ or the ‘bachelors’ dormitory’, for choosing the life partner is not common among the Garo people of Darrang district. After marriage, the groom comes to live in the bride’s home. A Garo male can marry as many wives as he wishes, but in Darrang district, monogamy is generally preferred. Divorce is common and can be obtained easily on grounds of adultery. Widow remarriage is admissible in Garo society.

Religious practices:

The religious philosophy of the Bodo-Kachari tribe centres round the super-power of ‘Bathow-Barai’, which can be compared to Sibrai of Siva of the Hindu Trinity. They also
believe in many other gods, goddesses, ghosts and spirits. Unlike traditional Hindus, they do not appear to be idolaters. They have neither temple nor any fixed place or time for worshipping. But in recent times, many traditional Bodo-Kachari people have started the practice of construction of a common house in the village called ‘Bathow-Chali’, for carrying out religious discourses. It has been witnessed by this author during his field study at Dalakati and Bara-bazar area near Kopati. Such ‘Bathow-Chali’ has no altar, but has a Bathow plant on the northeast corner outside it.

A section of the Bodo-Kacharis has been initiated to Kali Charan Brahma, a religious mentor and call themselves the ‘Brahmas’. The religious belief of these Brahmas, based primarily on Hinduism, differ substantially from that of the traditional Bodo-Kacharis. They institute Hom-Yajna before a sacred fire in all socio-religious obligations. This section practise Vedic-rites like other Hindus and do not resort to sacrifice of animal, birds, etc.

Some of the Bodo-Kacharis have been initiated to Hindu religion through the Gosain (Hindu religious priest) and have been converted to Saranias. During the field investigation, this author came in contact with many such Saranias in Sekhar, Majikuchi and Kalaigaon mauza.

Among the Rabhas, the influence of Hinduism is more prominent. However, they observe their Khoksi Puja, which is a community affair having sufficient socio-cultural significance. It is observed in the months of May and June, and in reality, it is a fertility festival. Rabha people of Chaibari, Jamuguri, Nalkamora, Habigaon, etc. of Sekhar, Majikuchi, Ambagaon, Orang and Udalguri mauza, observe this festival with pomp and gaiety.

The chief religious ceremony of the Garos is Wangala. Other religious festivals include - Agalmaca, Rongchugala, Yahaya, etc. Most of their religious festivals are associated with agriculture. To remove the sorrows and misfortunes from the society, the Garo people worship the Sun-god also.

About 26.3 per cent of the tribal people of Darrang district have been converted into Christianity. They comprise 41,525 (20.25%) Bodo-Kacharis, about 300 (1.5%) Rabhas and
about 1,600 (53.00%) Garos. Dakua, Harisinga, Ambagaon, Udalguri, Paneri, Barchilajhar and Orang mauzas are the main areas of Christian tribals. Like their other non-tribal Christian counterparts of the district, they also observe the Christmas Day, New Year Day, etc.

**Fairs and Festivals:**

The different scheduled tribes have their independent traditional festivals, observed in different times of the year. The greatest religious festival of the Bodo-Kachari people is the Kherai, a religious annual community festival, which is found to be associated with agriculture. This is the occasion when the entire atmosphere is agog with much enthusiasm and festive fervour (Plate 2). The basic philosophical idea of this festival is the propitiation of Bathow (which can be equated to Lord Siva). The propitiatory ritual is associated with dance-recital and singing of ballads. It is observed everywhere in the early spring, to propitiate their traditional deities for their good harvest and to protect them from sufferings and misfortunes. The Deori (folk priest) recites the hymns, offers sacrifices of birds and animals and the Deohani speaks oracles (Plate 3). In creating a festive mood of much gaiety and merriment, the Bodo-Kachari girls perform their auspicious dance 'Bagarumba', where no male participant is allowed (Plate 4). The girls make their graceful debut in natural surroundings, wearing their traditional costumes, especially woven for the purpose, with artistic manoeuvre of colour and shade.

Another spring festival of the Bodo-Kacharis is the Baisakhu, synchronous to the Rongali Bihu of the Assamese non-tribal communities in mid-April. The programme of merry-making like community singing and dancing continues for seven days since the last day of the month of Chaitra (March-April). It begins with the cow worshipping on the first day, smearing their horns and hooves with turmeric and mustard oil and also smearing of the human bodies with a paste made of several items like turmeric, black-gram, brinjal, gourd, tender mango fruits and

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20 Data collected by the researcher during field investigation in 1995 from (i) Catholic church of Tangla, (ii) CNI (Church of N.E. India) of Bengabari and from (iii) Baptist Mission of Harisinga.

21 Deohani: A devotee dedicated to a temple who use to perform worship to the particular deity through dance under divine spell.
PLATE 2. Kherai Dance

PLATE 3. Deodhani Dance
PLATE 4. Bagrumba Dance

PLATE 5. Rabha Dance
some other herbs, before bath. This practice is also common to all the Assamese Hindus and it is believed, that smearing of this paste on the body on the auspicious day, prevents one in suffering from skin diseases. It is followed in the second day by merry making, offering of ‘gamocha’ (hand-woven towel) to the near and dear ones and singing and dancing from home to home. During the Baisakhu festival, the Bodo-Kacharis observe certain taboos, which includes prohibition of entry in the household granary, disposal of any property by way of sale, husking paddy or rice, etc.

In the northern part of the district, around Paneri, Kochubil, Gulmagaon, etc., another festival after a month of Baisakhu is observed, which is known as ‘Putuli-Haba’ - a symbolic folk marriage of Lord Siva and Parbati, the ritualistic part of which unfolds the legendary saga of their history. Along with Baisakhu, they also worship ‘Parowa’ or ‘Bhathehi’ - A Parowa is a representation of the phallic worship, where a Parowa takes the place of the ‘Lingami’ or phallus of the Lord Siva.

The traditional festival of the Rabhas, is the Khokshi Puja, observed in the month of Baishag (April-May), to propitiate the goddess of wealth and property (Plate 5). They also propitiate some other Hindu gods and goddesses. Maroi-Puja is a typical one of them, to propitiate goddess Manasa (the goddess of serpent).

The Garo people of the district observe the Wangla ceremony during Baishag. It lasts for several days and is marked with feasting, dancing and drinking. The village headman manages all the affairs with the active help and cooperation of the village people.

**Death rites and disposal of the dead:**

The Bodo-Kacharis practise both cremation and burial. In normal death, cremation is a common practice, but burial is done in epidemic death. They believe that human beings cannot escape destiny, and destiny is guided by one’s own action (karma). They also believe in the transmigration of the soul.
On the tenth-day after the death of a person, the first phase of the funeral rites begin, but the final ritual is solemnised on the twelveth day or long thereafter.

The Rabhas also cremate their dead. But in case of unnatural death, like epidemic, suicide, etc., burial is the common practice. The dead body is washed with santijal (Holy water) and cremated or buried only on the following morning of the day of death. It is customary for the whole village of the dead not to take any food, till the dead body is removed to the cremation ground. Formerly, drinking of rice beer was indulged in heavily after the funeral ceremony. But now, it has almost been abandoned at the initiative of the Rabha Council.

In case of the Garos, the dead body is preserved for four days at home and then only it is cremated. Villagers are to be entertained during these four days with food and liquor. An earthen lamp is lit every night for a month on the cremation ground. The death of a Garo individual thus, involves a large expenditure for the family.

4.7 SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE TRIBAL POPULATION:

The scheduled tribes population have been densely settled in the middle and northern parts of Darrang district. The zone of contact of the central rice belt and the northern tea belt, is the zone of concentration of the tribal people. The main areas of tribal population comprise the southern parts of Paneri, Udalguri and Mazbat thana areas, almost the whole of Kalaigaon thana and the northern parts of Mangaldai and Dalgaon thana areas. A few of them are also found in small pockets in the southern and southeastern areas of Dalgaon thana as shown in Fig. 9.

The tribal people are found to live in small and scattered settlements, by the side of the streams, but away from the big and torrential rivers, which are common in Darrang district. As such, the tribal people shifted from the lower courses of Na-noi-Bar-Nadi group of rivers, comprising an area of about 500 km², and the lower riverine tract of the Dhansiri group of river, representing an area of about 800 km², which turned out to be flood affected in the past. The names of some villages like Kacharipara, Kacharibheti, Kacharipara-jungle, Kachari-Bheti-Top,
etc., in the East Sialmari mauza under Dalgaon police thana, where there is not a single tribal family today, indicate the presence of tribal people in these villages in the past. At present, the chief areas of the tribal habitation are in the four northerly thanas, namely Kalaigaon, Paneri, Udalguri and Mazbat.

An Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), has been constituted in the district in 1976-77. An ITDP area is an area of tribal concentration in an administrative subdivision or a district and comprises a number of villages predominantly inhabited by tribal people. A project-area is the operational spatial unit for the purpose of planning and its execution, for economic and social development of the tribal people in the region. The Mangaldai ITDP covers almost the whole of Paneri, Khairabari, Udalguri, Mazbat and Kalaigaon thana, where tribal population constitute 50 per cent or more of the individual thana population. Very small areas of each of Mangaldai, Dhula and Dalgaon thanas have also been included within the said ITDP. More than 85 per cent of the tribal people of Darrang district, live within the limits of this ITDP, covering an area of 635.20 km². For the purpose of development of the tribal people, the areas of tribal concentration in the state of Assam, were formed into 19 sub-plan areas. Each of these 19 sub-plan areas has been sanctioned an ITDP. The tribal villages of Darrang district, within the areas mentioned above, constitute the ITDP No. 9. The remaining 15 per cent of the tribal people live outside the project area and are mixed with the non-tribal people.

The census report of 1991 shows that, there are 1274 inhabited villages in Darrang district, supporting 95.08 per cent of the district’s total population. In the whole of Darrang district, there are 614 villages, inhabited by tribal people wholly or partly and 660 villages, having no tribal population at all. There are 39 villages in the district, each inhabited by hundred per cent tribal people, while in each of other 194 villages, tribal people constitute more than 50 per cent of the population. In 1994, after the constitution of Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC), 665 villages of Darrang district have been brought under BAC. In doing so, some of the non-tribal villages, surrounded by tribal villages, have also been included within the BAC. This has, created a sense of dissatisfaction among the non-tribals. The All Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU), a student organisation of the Bodo people and the Bodoland Peoples Party (BPP), a state level political party of the Bodos, are not satisfied with the BAC limit and are still insisting on the inclusion of
all the forest villages, within the 10 km limit of the Indo-Bhutan international boundary. They argue that the Indo-Bhutan border areas are tribal belts and blocks, and the BAC was created to protect the interest of the tribal people. They are also claiming the inclusion of Tangla town within the BAC. Udalguri town has already been included within the BAC.

4.8 CONCENTRATION AND CLUSTERING OF THE TRIBAL POPULATION OF DARRANG DISTRICT:

Darrang district has a tribal population of 224,957 as per 1991 census. Different groups of the tribal people, possess diverse socio-cultural and socio-religious characteristics. The spatial distribution of the tribal population is characterised by a tendency to cluster in some pockets, away from the non-tribals, within an aloof environmental setting. Their pattern of concentration is so peculiar that a cognate tribe, like the Bodo-Kachari, does not have to have socio-cultural interaction, with the Rabhas, although once they belonged to the same ethnic complex. Moreover, the typical ethnic clustering and concentration have contributed significantly to the lack of interaction between the tribals and non-tribals. This typical aloofness accentuating socio-cultural differences, causes stagnation. Table 4.7.1 (shown earlier) depicts the demographic pattern of different groups of tribal population of Darrang district, since 1961.

The mauzawise breakup of the tribal population and their clustering and concentration have been calculated by Location Quotient (L.Q.)\(^2\). the L.Q. value, as calculated for each of the mauzas, have been shown in column 8 of the table 4.8.1.

The L.Q. values have been classified and represented in the Fig. 10.

The analysis of table 4.8.1, shows that out of the total scheduled tribes population of Darrang district, about 90 per cent concentrate in the Udalguri, Ambagaon, Barchilajhar, Sekhar, Harisinga, Majikuchi, Silpota, Orang, Dakua, Dalgaon-East, Kalaigaon and Shyamabari

CLUSTERING AND CONCENTRATION OF TRIBAL POPULATION 1991

DARRANG DISTRICT

L.Q. INDEX

VERY HIGH >3.75
HIGH 3.00 - 3.74
MEDIUM HIGH 2.25 - 3.00
MEDIUM 1.50 - 2.24
LOW 0.75 - 1.49
VERY LOW <0.75

FIG. 10
mauzas. This has been depicted in Fig. 10. Out of the remaining 10 per cent, nearly 5 per cent live in a scattered manner in Chapai and Rangamati mauzas. Tribal population seems to be insignificant in all the other mauzas.

As per 1991 census, the total scheduled tribes population of the district is 224,957. But this figure increases slightly, when the Garo people are included. The scheduled tribes enumerate 17.32 per cent of the district’s population and it accounts for 12.82 per cent of the state’s total scheduled tribes population. They are concentrated spatially to a few mauzas of the district, as stated above.

Bodo-Kachari, the largest group of scheduled tribes population, has its main concentration in Ambagaon, Barchilajhar, Udalguri, Majikuchi and Chinakona mauzas, along the northern part of the district.

The Rabhas inhabit in Sekhar, Silpota, Kalaigaon, Udalguri, Ambagaon, Dakua, Majikuchi and Orang mauzas. While the Garos are scattered in Shyamabari, Dalgaon East, Sialmari East, Orang and Sekhar mauzas.

It has already been mentioned that the tribal villages of Darrang district constitute the ITDP No. 9 in Assam. The aims and objectives of the ITDPs formulated to bring about effective coordinated development programmes for the tribal areas and thereby to narrow the gap between the level of development of the tribal and non-tribal communities, are found to face with certain difficulties in the district. Most of these Project-areas are neither exclusively inhabited by the tribal people nor predominated by a single group of tribal community. Thus, different ethnic collaboration inside the project area is inevitable. The Mangaldai ITDP covers 22 Gram-Panchayat areas, with a population of 318,450, of which 186,167 belong to the tribal communities.

Government of India constituted six tribal blocks and belts in Darrang district in 1947, to safeguard the socio-economic interest of the tribal people, particularly regarding landholdings. These blocks and belts are:
(i) Tetelibhanguria Tribal Block,

(ii) Kacharipara Tribal Block,

(iii) Dalgaon Tribal Block, under the Mangaldai Revenue Circle\textsuperscript{23},

(iv) Tezial Tribal Block,

(v) Bhuyakhat Tribal Block, under the Kalaigaon Revenue Circle, and

(vi) Kalaigaon Tribal Belt, comprising the mauzas of Sekhar, Majikuchi, Harisinga, Dakua, Silpota, Ambagaon, Barchilajhar, Orang, Udalguri and Chinakona.

Tribal people are fairly widespread in these blocks and belts, the mauzawise L.Q. indices of which are as follows: Ambagaon (3.30), Majikuchi (3.02), Dakua (2.76) and Chinakona (2.68) have high concentration; Udalguri (2.57), Silpota (2.01) and Barchilajhar (1.71), have medium high concentration; Harisinga (1.58), Sekhar (1.19), Dalgaon East (1.07), Chapai mauza (1.05) and Kalaigaon (0.98), have normal concentration, while Orang (0.75) has low and Shyamabari (0.41), has very low concentration of tribal population (Fig. No. 10).

The distribution pattern stated above, shows that a sizeable section of the tribal people live outside the tribal blocks and belts also, i.e., in areas inhabited predominantly by non-tribal population requiring them to intermingle with the latter in their day-to-day life. The clustering of tribal people is insignificant in Dalgaon West (0.16), Lokrai (0.17), Bonmoja (0.16) and Sialmari East (0.13); while it is too insignificant in the other mauzas, viz., Sarabari (0.06), Rangamati (0.02), Sialmari West (0.00), Kharupetia (0.00), Dipila (0.00), Rainakuchi (0.00), Sipajhar (0.00), Hindughopa (0.00) and Dahi (0.00).

\textsuperscript{23} Revenue Circle: It is an administrative unit consisting of some mauzas formed for maintaining land records and administering land deals.
The reason behind the insignificant and negative concentration of tribal population is assumed to be the fact that either these areas are prone to floods or are traditionally crowded by non-tribal population.

4.9 TREND OF CHANGE OF SETTLEMENT PATTERN IN SOME TYPICAL VILLAGES OF DARRANG DISTRICT:

Darrang is basically a district of rural population. Over 95 per cent of the district’s population live in 1274 inhabited villages, from Bar-Nadi to Panch-noi and from the Brahmaputra to the Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh border. It is customary that members of a community prefer to live together, name their villages according to their choice - sometimes relevant to their caste and community and sometimes according to their profession and occupation. Along with the increasing population and increasing facilities provided by modern amenities, many a people changed their village outlay, renamed many of them meaningfully; but still there are numerous villages in the district, with the same names given in the long past by their ancestors.

In Dalgaon thana of Darrang district, villages like Bongaligaon, Deorigaon, Garogaon, etc., indicate the naming of villages after the particular community that resided there. In some cases, these villages are still occupied by these communities after whom they (the villages) are named, viz., Garogaon, where Garo people are still inhabiting. Similarly Kacharibheti Top, Kacharipara, etc., are also some of the villages of Dalgaon thana. The very names of these villages, clearly indicate that these villages were named after their Kachari inhabitants. But change has occurred in respect of many of them. The table 4.9.1 shows the change of the community of inhabitants of these villages from 1921 to 1991.

Table 4.9.1 shows that these villages were traditionally inhabited by the Bodo-Kachari people, before 1921. But after 1921, most of these areas were encroached by the immigrant Muslim population. Mr. G.T. Lloyed, the Superintendent of Census Operation, Assam, in 1921, in his census report had clearly pointed out the gravity of the problem of immigration of the Muslims from the Mymensingh district of East Bengal, with statistical data. He mentioned that
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<td>Simaluguri</td>
<td>Dalgaon West</td>
<td>Total popn(T)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1179</td>
<td>1886</td>
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<td>Tribal popn.(ST)</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>11PH</td>
<td>4PH</td>
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<td>Kacharipara</td>
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<td>ImmigrantMuslim(IM)</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>21IM</td>
<td>37PH</td>
<td>217V</td>
<td>1179</td>
<td>1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kacharipara</td>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>114</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kacharipara</td>
<td></td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>18PH</td>
<td>13PH</td>
<td>11PH</td>
<td>24V</td>
<td>NIL</td>
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<td>Kacharipara</td>
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<td>IM</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>21PH</td>
<td>31PH</td>
<td>97V</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>755</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>5PH</td>
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<td>NIL</td>
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<td>Kacharibheti Top</td>
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<td>T</td>
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<td>NA</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>711</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>PH = Patta holders, V = Voters</td>
<td></td>
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### TABLE 49.2

**DARRANG DISTRICT**

**INCREASING DENSITY OF POPULATION PER KM² IN SOME THANĀ AREAS OF DARRANG DISTRICT (1872-1991)**

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<td>Total (T)</td>
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<td>47.90</td>
<td>54.25</td>
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<td>49.10</td>
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<td>93.56</td>
<td>116.15</td>
<td>168.70</td>
<td>240.83</td>
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<td>Muslim (M)</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>25.40</td>
<td>31.12</td>
<td>47.85</td>
<td>57.81</td>
<td>119.31</td>
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<td>Mangaldai</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>58.27</td>
<td>59.74</td>
<td>59.64</td>
<td>58.57</td>
<td>51.00</td>
<td>56.70</td>
<td>104.20</td>
<td>123.23</td>
<td>153.37</td>
<td>191.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>9.23</td>
<td>9.85</td>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>14.43</td>
<td>30.63</td>
<td>45.22</td>
<td>56.67</td>
<td>67.15</td>
<td>84.92</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalaigaon</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>76.90</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>69.80</td>
<td>65.00</td>
<td>80.95</td>
<td>90.34</td>
<td>137.53</td>
<td>223.53</td>
<td>317.18</td>
<td>527.00</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>11.55</td>
<td>35.47</td>
<td>48.23</td>
<td>52.16</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalgaon</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>44.47</td>
<td>92.60</td>
<td>125.31</td>
<td>185.70</td>
<td>259.00</td>
<td>144.70</td>
<td>132.01</td>
<td>158.52</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>51.00</td>
<td>73.46</td>
<td>90.47</td>
<td>132.61</td>
<td>158.52</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Including Daigaon and Kalaigaon thana
2 Including Dalgaon thana

**Sources**
- Census of India. 1872-1971
- Computer data. Director of Census. Guwahati. 1991
5/7th of the increase of population in Darrang district in the decade 1911-1921 was due to the immigration from Mymensingh district.

After 1931-1941, the number of Kachari people declined in the said areas abruptly. It was only because of the fact that settlement of immigrant Muslims started in Darrang district vigorously after 1921. In 1931, Mr. C.S. Mullan, the next Superintendent of Census Operation, Assam, highlighted the gravity of the problem of immigration in a more befitting way. He cautioned that in near future, the problem of immigration may destroy the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilization.

During 1931-41, the problem became more vigorous, when the population of the immigrant Muslims multiplied their numerical strength. The increasing trend of the density and growth of Muslim population have been shown in the table 4.9.2 below and 4.9.3 in Appendix F.

Tables above show that Mangaldai thana area, which had a population of 82,680 in 1921, recorded an absolute increase of population to 120,520, accounting for an increase of 45.76 per cent during 1921-1931. Thereafter, the eastern part of Mangaldai thana had to be reconstituted into the separate Dalgaon thana, to look after the law and order situation of the increasing immigrant Muslim population.

The increasing trend of the immigrant Muslims in the Dalgaon thana continued during 1931-41, when it recorded the highest increase of 108.19 per cent. Table 4.9.2 above, gives an idea of increase of immigrant Muslim population. In 1941, a coalition ministry headed by Sir Md. Saadulla, came into power in Assam. Being a Muslim League Ministry, it introduced a 'Development Scheme' and started colonization in Nagaon, Kamrup and Darrang districts by opening more lands for these immigrant people. His government, by a resolution24 even proposed to de-reserve some parts of the Professional Grazing Reserves (PGR) and also some portions of Laokhowa Reserve Forest of Nagaon district and Orang Forest Reserve in Darrang district, in the name of 'Grow More Food Campaign'. The implication of this policy helped in vigorous increase of immigrant population in Dalgaon thana area in Darrang district.

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Even after independence, the influx of immigrants continued unabated. The volume of immigration rather increased by the addition of Hindu refugees from the then East Pakistan. Dalgaon thana recorded an increase of 35.34 per cent during 1941-1951, due mainly to immigrant Muslims along with the settlement of some Hindu refugees in the villages like Baruajhar, Barabazar, Bagichakakh, Nadikakh, etc., along the northern part of the thana area. These immigrant Muslim settlers first occupied the charlands of the Brahmaputra, which remained fallow for many years. They gradually encroached upon the agricultural lands of the neighbouring indigenous non-tribal and tribal villages. Even they purchased some cultivable lands from the indigenous residents on nominal value.

The people of Assam in general and the tribal people of the state in particular, did not like the presence of these unknown people near their habitation and when the tribal people found that the vacant lands adjacent to their villages were occupied by people, which differed from them ethnically, linguistically and in religion, they abandoned their villages and went deeper towards the submontane areas. For example, the tribal people of the villages like Kacharibheti, Kacharibheti Top, Kacharigaon, Kacharichuba, etc., left their villages disposing their lands to the immigrant Muslim people and moved to the north of the district. The land settlement records shows the transfer of the tribal lands to the immigrant Muslims (table 4.9.2) from 1931 to 1960. Today, the said villages, with the original tribal names, are occupied with hundred per cent immigrant Muslims. It proves the reality of our first research statement that the present settlements of the tribal people in socio-economically backward areas, is perhaps the result of their traditional choice of living away from the non-tribal settlements.

4.10 DISTRIBUTION OF NON-TRIBAL COMMUNITIES:

As per 1991 census, the total strength of rural population of non-tribal communities in Darrang district is 1,030,378. They include -

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25 The land settlement records had been collected from the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Darrang district, Mangaldai, during field investigation by the researcher in 1995.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous non-tribals (INT) comprising both Hindus and Muslims</td>
<td>483,758</td>
<td>46.94 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Immigrant Muslims (IM)</td>
<td>257,671</td>
<td>25.00 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Immigrant Hindus (IH) and Hindu refugees</td>
<td>87,276</td>
<td>8.47 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Indigenous and immigrant Nepalis (IN)</td>
<td>42,440</td>
<td>4.14 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Ex-tea garden labourers (ETL)</td>
<td>67,923</td>
<td>6.59 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi) Hindusthani and Rajasthani people (HM)</td>
<td>16,284</td>
<td>1.58 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vii) Tea-garden labourers (TL)</td>
<td>75,026</td>
<td>7.28 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,030,378</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00 per cent</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the tea garden labourers as shown in (vii) above may be treated as industrial labourers. All the non-tribal rural people live in 1237 inhabited villages comprising 77.54 per cent of the districts’ total population. The other rural inhabitants are the tribal people comprising 222,753 (17.15%) as shown in chapter IV. Only 63,984 people (4.93%) live in the four towns namely Mangaldai (20,747), Kharupetia (15342), Tangla (15809) and Udalguri (12086), with the percentage of tribal and non-tribal urban population being 0.17 (2204) and 4.76 (61,780) respectively.

The non-tribal rural population is composed of different social groups of people as has been shown above. The indigenous non-tribals including both the Hindus and Muslims are found to be heavily concentrated (with L.Q. > 4.75) in Sipajhar (61,586), Lokrai (17,938), Hindughopa (7598), Bonmoja (18,167), Dipila (19,224), Sarabari (27,549), Rainakuchi (15,847) and Dahi (17,458) mauza (Fig. 11 & Table 4.10.1).
DARRANG DISTRICT

CLUSTERING AND CONCENTRATION OF NONTRIBAL POPULATION
1991

FIG. 11

L.Q. INDEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VERY HIGH</td>
<td>&gt; 4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM HIGH</td>
<td>3.75 - 4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>2.75 - 3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>1.75 - 2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERY LOW</td>
<td>&lt; 1.75</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### TABLE 4.10.1
DARRANG DISTRICT
MAUZAWISE BREAKUP OF INDIGENOUS NON-TRIBAL POPULATION (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Mauza</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>INT population</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>L.Q.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sekhar</td>
<td>238868</td>
<td>79830</td>
<td>33.42</td>
<td>19.21</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Majikuchi</td>
<td>34394</td>
<td>17311</td>
<td>50.33</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Daku</td>
<td>27389</td>
<td>14204</td>
<td>51.86</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Harisinga</td>
<td>98495</td>
<td>51651</td>
<td>52.44</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ambagaon</td>
<td>50930</td>
<td>21131</td>
<td>41.49</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Udalguri</td>
<td>54453</td>
<td>21237</td>
<td>39.00</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Barchilajhar</td>
<td>103269</td>
<td>53752</td>
<td>52.05</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Orang</td>
<td>259311</td>
<td>86662</td>
<td>33.42</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chinakona</td>
<td>33656</td>
<td>23792</td>
<td>70.69</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sarabari</td>
<td>29208</td>
<td>27549</td>
<td>94.32</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>4.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kalaigaon</td>
<td>58139</td>
<td>42884</td>
<td>73.76</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Silpota</td>
<td>38868</td>
<td>26652</td>
<td>68.57</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Shyamabari</td>
<td>305972</td>
<td>99900</td>
<td>32.65</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dalgaon East</td>
<td>143034</td>
<td>46429</td>
<td>32.46</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dalgaon West</td>
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<td>14780</td>
<td>16.13</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>0.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sialmari East</td>
<td>139936</td>
<td>46501</td>
<td>33.23</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Sialmari West</td>
<td>38701</td>
<td>5724</td>
<td>14.79</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Bonmoja</td>
<td>19744</td>
<td>18167</td>
<td>92.01</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Dipila</td>
<td>20591</td>
<td>19224</td>
<td>93.36</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Rainakuchi</td>
<td>16767</td>
<td>15847</td>
<td>94.51</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Lokrai</td>
<td>19619</td>
<td>17938</td>
<td>91.43</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Sipajhar</td>
<td>65565</td>
<td>61568</td>
<td>93.93</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Hindughopa</td>
<td>8023</td>
<td>7598</td>
<td>94.70</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Dahi</td>
<td>18462</td>
<td>17458</td>
<td>94.56</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Chapai</td>
<td>23494</td>
<td>13448</td>
<td>57.24</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Rangamati</td>
<td>71103</td>
<td>43160</td>
<td>60.70</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Kharupetia</td>
<td>15441</td>
<td>6896</td>
<td>44.95</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 1298860 483758

Sources: Census of India, Assam (Computer data), 1991.
Lat Mandals of the area concerned, 1995.
Medium high concentration of INT people (L.Q. 3.75-4.74) is observed in Kalaigaon mauza (42,884).

Medium concentration (L.Q. 2.74-3.74) of INT people is observed in the mauzas of Chinakona (23,792), Silpota (26,652), Rangamati (43,160) and Chapai (13,448).

Low concentration (L.Q. 1.75-2.74) of INT people is observed in Majikuchi (17,311), Dakua (14,204), Harisinga (51,651), Ambagaon (21,131), Udalguri (21,237) and Barchilajhar (53,752) mauzas.

Very low concentration of INT people (L.Q. <1.75), is well observed in Sekhar (79,830), Shyamabari (99,900), Dalgaon East (46,429), Sialmari East (46,501) and Orang (86,662) mauzas.

Among the above mauzas, concentration of more indigenous Muslim people is observed in Sipajhar, Hindughopa, Rangamati, Chapai, Shyamabari, Sialmari East and Dalgaon East mauzas.

The flow of immigrant Muslims to Darrang district is socio-economically as well as socio-politically very significant. Large areas of the wastelands of the district were settled by them. Their numbers were recorded at seven thousand in 1911, twenty thousand in 1921 and forty one thousand in 1931. They opened up vast areas of charlands for winter cultivation, but on many occasions with utter disregard to the standing rules and regulations. Many a times, friction developed between these people and the indigenous villagers. To reduce such conflicts, government of Assam introduced “Line System” in 1920, imposing restriction on their settlement. Abdul Hamid Khan (Maulana Bhasani), the then vice-president of Muslim League of Assam, encouraged the immigrant Muslims to settle in the wastelands of Darrang district. His slogan was - “chal chal Darrang chal, jungal bhangia abad kar, patit mati abad kar” (let us march to Darrang, clear the jungles and occupy the wastelands). The indigenous people could not take it easily and

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the Koch-Rajbangshi Sanmiloni President Ramani Barua, opposed it, organised public meetings and raised slogans to deport Mymensingia immigrants from Darrang in 1930.

These immigrant Muslims vigorously settled in Dalgaon (East and West), Sialmari (East and West) and Shyamabari mauzas\(^2\). They also settled in some parts of Rangamati and Chapai mauzas. Besides being concentrated in the above mauzas, influx of fresh immigrants continued unabated even in the later period and occupied the whole of the char areas of Brahmaputra from Chaulkhowa chaporin in the west to Panch-noi river in the east. The immigrant Muslims encroached many indigenous tribal villages in Dalgaon-Sialmari mauzas and the affected tribal people shifted northwards. Many other areas formerly identified as grazing and forest lands were also occupied by the immigrant settlers, who comprise a total strength of 2.57 lakh (19.74 %) in 1991.

Apart from the entire char areas of the Brahmaputra, the immigrant Muslims have settled in the eastern parts of the central built-up zones also, constituting 35.27 per cent of the total population of Udalguri sub-division and 14.22 per cent of the Mangaldai sub-division. Thus, they comprise nearly twenty per cent of the whole district’s total population. Immigrant Muslim settlers of the eastern part of the Darrang district, comprising the mauzas of Dalgaon (East and West), Sialmari (East and West), Shyamabari and Chapai came earlier. But the immigrant settlers of Rangamati and Sipajhar mauzas are new. While most of the immigrant villages of Dalgaon-Sialmari mauzas and also the villages like Kharpori, Baghpuri, Nangeli, Kariakhowa, etc., of Rangamati mauza were settled earlier than 1971, the char villages of the west, like Aparia, Dhalpur, Bontapu, Ganesh-bali, Chaulkhowa, Rowmari, Baghpuri, Kirakata, etc., in Rangamati and Sipajhar mauza, were settled only after 1971. Moreover, along with the northward encroachment of the river Brahmaputra, many char villages were eroded and those villages gradually shifted further northwards.

In recent years, many of them settled in the northern areas of the district, along the upstreams of the Dhansiri, Golandi, Chandana, Na-noi, etc., even approaching the Bhutan border.

\(^2\) Data collected from Lat Mandals of the concerned Revenue Circles and village Directory, Settlement Deptt., Darrang, 1972.
The immigrant Muslims constitute absolute majority in Dalgaon West and Sialmari West mauzas accounting for more than 97 per cent of the population of these two mauzas (L.Q. > 4.75). Their concentration is high (L.Q. 3.75-4.74) in Sialmari East mauza also. Concentration of immigrant Muslims is medium (L.Q. 2.75-3.74) in Shyamabari mauza and low (L.Q. 1.75-2.74) in Rangamati, Dalgaon East and Barchilajhar mauza. Other mauzas having very low concentration of immigrant Muslims are Orang and Chapai (L.Q. < 1.74), as shown in Fig. 12 and Table 4.10.2.

**TABLE 4.10.2**

**DARRANG DISTRICT**

**MAUZAWISE BREAKUP OF IMMIGRANT MUSLIM POPULATION**

(1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Mauza</th>
<th>Total population (in '000)</th>
<th>IM population (in '000)</th>
<th>P.C. of IM population to Dist. pop</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>L.Q.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dalgaon West</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>63.04</td>
<td>19.74</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shyamabari</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>54.60</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sialmari West</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>79.48</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sialmari East</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>45.83</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rangamati</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>23.40</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chapai</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dalgaon East</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>31.60</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Orang</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kalaigaon</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.46</td>
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<td>-do-</td>
<td>0.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Barchilajhar</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>-do-</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sipajhar</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Udalguri</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sekhar</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Silpota</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>924</strong></td>
<td><strong>257</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>19.74</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Tea garden labourers (TL) and ex-tea garden labourers (ETL) are found in the northern mauzas of Darrang district where the tea gardens are located. Their concentration is
comparatively high (L.Q. 2.75-3.74) in Ambagaon and Majikuchi mauzas; medium (L.Q. 1.75-2.74) in Barchilajhar, Dakua, Harisinga and Chinakona mauzas and low (L.Q. < 1.75) in Orang, Dalgaon East, Sekhar and Silpota mauzas. However, a few ex-tea garden labourers have also settled in some small pockets among the INT people, viz., Gosaigaon and Punia in Rangamati mauza, Ranthali in Kalaigaon mauza, etc., (Table 4.10.3).

TABLE 4.10.3
DARRANG DISTRICT
MAUZAWISE BREAKUP OF TEA-GARDEN LABOUR (TL) AND EX-TEA GARDEN LABOUR (ETL) POPULATION (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Mauza</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>TL &amp; ETL population</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>L.Q.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ambagaon</td>
<td>50930</td>
<td>15574</td>
<td>30.58</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Majikuchi</td>
<td>34394</td>
<td>11588</td>
<td>33.69</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Barchilajhar</td>
<td>103269</td>
<td>19992</td>
<td>19.36</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dakua</td>
<td>27389</td>
<td>6688</td>
<td>24.41</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Harisinga</td>
<td>98495</td>
<td>16068</td>
<td>19.58</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chinakona</td>
<td>33656</td>
<td>6552</td>
<td>19.46</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Orang</td>
<td>259311</td>
<td>18668</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dalgaon East</td>
<td>143034</td>
<td>17141</td>
<td>11.98</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sekhar</td>
<td>238868</td>
<td>23538</td>
<td>9.85</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Silpota</td>
<td>38867</td>
<td>7140</td>
<td>18.36</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>142949</strong></td>
<td><strong>15823</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.66</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.67</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Nepali people form a small social group of the district's population, who are more interested in rearing of cattle for milk rather than agriculture. They are chiefly concentrated in the mauzas of Harisinga, Ambagaon, Udalguri, Barchilajhar and Orang.

The Hindusthani and Rajasthani people, who are chiefly interested in trade and commerce are found to settle in the urban and semi-urban localities and very few of them are in the interior pockets also, where, there are chances of good return from trade. However, very few Hindusthani settlers and Hindu Bengali refugees are also observed in some small pockets of the
chars and chaporis of the Brahmaputra river in Rangamati mauza, who are chiefly associated with fishing and cultivation of winter vegetables. They are shifting their residential centres from time to time along with the general northward encroachment of the Brahmaputra. Apart from fishing a good percentage of Hindu Bengali refugees are earning their livelihood based on the sale of grasses in the Mangaldai town.

4.11 SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS OF THE NON-TRIBAL COMMUNITIES:

Darrang district is inhabited by people of different ethnic groups since long past, except the immigrant Muslims, Nepalis and refugee Hindus from East-Pakistan, who are comparatively new-comers. As such, an age old process of social interaction has developed among them and a new social structure has developed. Even then, some social characteristics specific to each of these ethnic groups still survive. Accordingly, the major non-tribal communities of the district may broadly be catagorised into (i) Indigenous non-tribals (INT), (ii) tea tribes (TT) and (iii) immigrant Muslims (IM).

Although a large number of Hindu Bengali and Nepali people poured into the district, since the British annexation of Assam in 1826, because of their settlement among the indigenous Assamese people and because of their social interaction with the neighbours, it is often difficult to isolate them as independent groups on the basis of their socio-cultural distinction. The Hindu-Bengalis, majority of whom came to the district after partition of the country, in search of refuge, settled mostly in Kalaigaon, Silpota, Sekhar, Majikuchi, Dakua, Chapai, Rangamati and Dalgaon East mauzas.

4.11.1 SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE INDIGENOUS NON-TRIBAL POPULATION (INT):

Out of the non-tribal population (indigenous and migrants taken together) of Darrang district, 1991, the Hindus, with 786,332 people (59.26%) and the Muslims with 415,323 people (33.03%), constitute the largest social groups. Except religious faiths, they have no major
social difference in house-type, manners and customs. Although 8,1952 (6.30%) people profess Christianity, majority of them belong to the tribal groups, a detailed description of which has already been given in sub-topic 4.4 (Table 4.4.2).

Hinduism which is professed by more than sixty per cent of the district’s population, has different sects in it, like Saktism, Vaisnavism and Saivism, and as such, their sub-religious identities also differ slightly from one another. While those following Saktism are the followers of Sakti or worshipers of the Mother Goddess as manifested in the female goddess Kali or Durga, Vaisnavism, on the other hand, profess worship of Lord Visnu. Saivism believes male god Lord Siva, to be the supreme deity.

Apart from the religious cults, Hindu people are divided into various castes. Brahmans, Grahapratas (Ganaks), Kayasthas, Kalitas, Koches, Yogis, etc., are the different castes in the Hindu society, according to the Hindu caste hierarchy. The old rigidity of caste distinction has been reduced to some extent along with the new social trend, consequent upon modernisation.

The indigenous Muslims of the district are the descendents of the early Muslim settlers and converts to Islam at different historical times. They may be divided into three broad classes - Syed, Sheikh and Maria, whose relative social status stands in the order given. These social divisions and status connotations are not as rigorous as in the case of Hindu caste system. As such, there are quite a few examples of exogamy among the indigenous Muslims of Darrang district. Even then, the Syeds and Marias prefer to establish matrimonial relations with people of their own social class.

**Social customs and traditions:**

The indigenous non-tribal people of the district of Darrang live a simple life, mostly in the rural areas, in premises comprising four or five mud-plastered houses around a courtyard. The orchard on the back of the living house contains bamboo, banana, betel-nut, betel-vine, mango, jack-fruit and other fruit trees. The Hindus maintain a Tulsi plant (basil), on the
eastern end of their courtyards, where they regularly place an earthen lamp every evening during 
the month of Kati (October-November) and occasionally during the other months. Due to scarcity 
of thatches and its less durability, many of the rural people, both the Hindus and Muslims, now-a­
days, use corrugated galvanised iron sheets for roofing.

Agriculture is the mainstay of all the indigenous non-tribal people, most of whom 
may be catagorised within the group of marginal farmers, with their bullocks and archaic ploughs.
Salaried government jobs are preferred by most of them to support their family, although 
agriculture is carried out side by side almost by all of them in the rural areas. People with higher 
education prefer to move out to towns.

*Birth ceremony:*

The birth of a child is welcomed in all spheres of indigenous non-tribal societies, 
both the Hindus and Muslims alike with pomp and gaiety. Among the Hindus, a simple ceremony 
is observed on the eleventh day of the birth, when the other members of the family, become 
ritually 'clean', except the mother. But the mother becomes 'clean' on the twenty-first day in case 
of male child and after a month in case of the female child. Naming ceremony is accomplished on 
these days consulting almanac, etc.

In the Muslim society, a similar function is observed called 'Baj-olowa', between 
seventh and tenth days, when the umbilical chord of the baby dries out. Naming ceremony is 
generally observed at the end of a month or so in consultation with a Maulavi (a Muslim priest).

*Initiation:*

Among the Hindu communities, particularly in the rural areas, initiation is a must 
and each and every married couple is initiated by a Gosain. There is a common belief that 
salvation in life is attained only after initiation. Even in case of people of ‘Ek-Saran Nam 
Dharma’, initiation by a ‘Padadhikar’, is a common practice. But among the indigenous Muslims, 
the system of initiation is not common, although some male members, after being married,
become disciple (Murid) of some ‘Peer’ (religious mentor) and try to live a clean life devoting themselves to the pursuit of spiritual knowledge.

Marriage:

Marriage through negotiation is the usual practice of all the indigenous non-tribal people. Among the Hindus, marriage ceremony is conducted by majority of them through ‘Hom-Yajna’ and other Vedic rituals, while it is solemnised through ‘Nam-kirtan’ by some belonging to ‘Ek-Saran Nam-Dharma’.

Muslim marriage, on the other hand, is not a religious sacrament, but a legal and religious contract. A Muslim marriage is solemnised by the religious ritual of Niquah, although some of them get their marriage registered by Quazi (Muslim marriage registrar) after the niquah is performed. Niquah is always followed by prayer to God for a happy conjugal life of the newly married couple. The marriage customs of the Assamese Muslims of Darrang district are characterised by a mixture of folk and Muslim rites. Widow remarriage is also practised by the Muslims, which is not an usual custom of their Hindu counterparts. The Hindus do not hold marriage ceremony in the months of Bhadra (Aug.-Sept.), Kati (Oct.-Nov.), Puh (Dec.-Jan.) and Chaitra (Mar.-Apr.). While the Muslims do not hold it during the Islamic month Ramjan as fasting is observed by them during that month and in the earlier part of the month of Muharrum29.

Other religious ceremonies:

Brahmins and Grahabipras among the Hindus, celebrate different religious rituals like Annaprasana, Churakarana, Upanayana, etc., at the age of six months, two and half years and fifteen years respectively, in case of a male-child. People of Yogi community also wear a ‘holy

thread’, which they call ‘Yagapatra’, but unlike the Brahmins, they plough the land by themselves. Among the other communities, these are rare.

Muslim people perform ‘Sunnat’ (circumcision) in case of a male child, when he attains an age between five and ten years.

Attending puberty by the girls is celebrated almost by all the Hindu communities, except the very poor, but not generally by their Muslim counterparts.

**Fairs and festivals:**

Hindu people of Shakta and Saiva sects, being idolaters, observe Durga puja, Manasa or Maroi puja, Laxshmi puja, Saraswati puja, etc. Of these, Maroi puja is a local tradition of Darrang district. The people belonging to the Vaishnava sect, do not directly observe these. All of them observe the three Bihu ceremonially in the district. The Bohag Bihu or the Rongali Bihu, is the spring festival, held in mid-April and is joined by all the indigenous Hindus and Muslims alike, with much enthusiasm. Rongali Bihu is gradually shedding its original spontaneous agricultural and pastoral background and is evolving into a nationality festival (Plate 6).

The Muslims observe Idd-ul-fitr and Idd-uz-zoha as the important public festivals, where mass prayers are held.

Bar geet, Loka geet, Sukhanani geet, etc., are the notable folk songs of the Hindu society, whereas Jikir, Jari, etc., are the important Muslim folk songs of the district. Of the folk dances, Bihu dance comes foremost. The Deodhani dance of Darrang district, associated with Maroi puja, is a spectacular and fine specimen of folk dance.

**Death and disposal:**

The Hindus cremate their dead. But under extra-ordinary circumstances, like death in epidemic, suicide, etc., burial is a rule. Darrang district is inhabited by a large number of people of Yogi community. Although, burial is a common practice of their counterparts in Cachar district.
PLATE 6. Bihu Dance
of Assam, cremation is their usual practice in this district. Among some of their new generations, an unusual practice has aroused, where the dead body is placed on the pyre with head toward south, instead of the traditional practice towards north. People of higher castes observe an unclean period for eleven days after the death in the concerned family and then observe the Sraddha ceremony (post death rituals), but others observe it at the end of a month.

In Muslim society, burial is the common practice, as per Islamic rites. A small function is held on the third day of the burial called ‘Jiyarat’, when the relatives and neighbours go to the graveyard of the dead and silently recite the verses from the Holy Quran. On the fortieth day, ‘Chalisha’ is held, when both Jiyarat and feasts are held. The well-to-do Muslim families observe ‘Milad-Sharif’ occasionally where many people are invited and a discourse on the teachings and life of the Prophet Mohammed is carried out. This is followed by a prayer to the God for the welfare of the family and for bestowing peace and solace on the departed souls.

4.11.2 SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE TEA TRIBES:

During the last few decades of the nineteenth century, when the British Companies started tea-plantation on the northern tracts of Darrang district, the indigenous people were reluctant to work as ‘coolie’ (tea-garden labourers), and as such, the companies recruited labour force from Andhra Pradesh, M.P., Bihar, Orissa, Madras (now Tamilnadu), etc. The descendents of these labour migrants finally settled in the district. According to the census of 1991, they number 142949, accounting for 11.0 per cent of the district’s population. These heterogenous groups of people belong to various tribes, like Santhal, Munda, Lohar, Oraon, Toda, Gond, Tanti, Goala, Kurmi, etc. In course of time, due to the influence of Christian Missioneries, a substantial percentage of them adopted Christianity. They, however, maintain some of their traditional socio-cultural traits.

All the tea-tribes observe birth ceremony with a very simple function. Those converted into Christianity, now-a-days, name the new-born baby as suggested by the priest of the nearby Church. Consultation of astrology and almanac is not a familiar custom of these people.
The tea-tribes are generally endogamous, but marriage among different clans is also not uncommon. Inter-tribe marriage among them is recognised by the society, after 'offenders' being subjected to some sort of fine. However, they are required to offer a feast. But when there is mutual love between a boy and a girl of different tribes, and when they are inclined to marry each other, the society does not stand in their way, and they are accepted liberally.

Monogamy is the general rule, although polygamy is permitted in case of barrenness of the first wife. On the other hand, among the Toda tribe, polygamy is a common practice. Most of the tribes permit junior sororate and junior levirate. Cross-cousin marriage is not allowed. Marriage by negotiation is the present rule, but elopement is not infrequent. Widow remarriage is permitted and divorce is common on trifling grounds. Payment of bride-price is prevalent among them in Darrang district, even now.

Initiation among the traditional tea-tribes is uncommon. But the Christian conversion, now, encourages the others to go to the priest for blessings.

Both burial and cremation are common among almost all the tea-tribes. But in case of unnatural death, burial is the common practice. The Gonds and Oraons prefer cremation more, which is the influence of the neighbouring Hindu society. Observance of 'Sraddha' ceremony in different manner by different tribes vary from the end of a month to that of a year. For example, the Gonds of Bettibari tea-estate, observe it at the end of one-month, while the Todas of Bhutiachang tea-estate, observe the same at the end of a year. Invitation of friends, relatives and neighbours to the 'Sraddha' ceremony and treating them with a feast, is the usual custom, among all the tea-tribes of the district.

4.11.3 SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE IMMIGRANT MUSLIMS:

Immigration of this social group of Muslim people, mainly from Mymensing district (now in Bangladesh) to Darrang district, took place mainly since 1911, and continued unabated till recently. As per 1991 census, they comprise 257,671 souls, covering 22 per cent of
the district’s population, and 62.03 per cent of the Muslim population of Darrang district. Most of them have settled in the Shyamabari, Dalgaon West and Sialmari West mauzas. But the L.Q. is somewhat different and the indices of the mauzas are as follows:

Sialmari West (4.02), Dalgaon West (3.19), Shyamabari (2.76), Chapai (2.52), Sialmari East (2.31), Dalgaon East (1.60), Rangamati (1.18), Barchilajhar (0.93), Kalaigaon (0.58), Silpota (0.49), Orang (0.45), Sipajhar (0.40), Udalguri (0.06) and Sekhar mauza (0.02), as has been depicted in Map No. 12. Because of their physical isolation and social segregation, they still maintain their separate identity. Some of these immigrant settlers have of late been advancing towards north, along the upstreams of the rivers, like Na-noi and Jia-Dhansiri, to occupy the wastelands along the river banks, even inside the tribal blocks and belts. The tribal people of the district, have not taken this land occupation easily and have formed different public organisations, to liberate their encroached lands. Perhaps, this is one of the prime causes of Bodo movement for restoration of their traditional territory and thus, maintain their ethnic identity.

The immigrant Muslims, who settled early in Dalgaon and Sialmari mauzas, could retain large plots of wasteland. But the immigrants who entered in the recent years have no land at all, and as such, most of them have been employed as agricultural labourers by their earlier counterparts.

The immigrant Muslims of Darrang district, may broadly be categorised into two classes: the ordinary peasants and the Dathias. While the former group is associated with traditional cultivation of rice, jute and vegetables, the Dathias are professionally fishermen and are maintaining their livelihood by catching fish and selling it to the local markets. But with the gradual decrease of fishes, many of them have come to engage themselves in pulling of rickshaw, push-cart, etc., in the Mangaldai, Kharupetia and Dalgaon towns, and also as daily wage labourers.

Akin to their indigenous Muslim counterparts, the immigrant Muslims also observe a simple ceremony, ‘Baj-olowa’, after seven to ten days of child-birth, when the neighbouring female members are entertained. In case of a male child, between five and ten years, an important
function ‘Sunnat’ (circumcision), is observed. Some friends and relatives are invited for this and entertained. It is often accompanied by Milad-e-Mehfil.

The immigrant Muslims follow monogamy, but polygamy is socially admissible. Polygamy depends on the economic condition of the person concerned and is often treated as a matter of prestige and position. Marriage is solemnised by ‘Niquah’ in the presence of a Quazi.

Inter-marriage between the indigenous and immigrant Muslims hardly takes place. As the ‘Parda-system’ still persists among the immigrant Muslim females, and as they are strictly dominated by their male-members in all the household affairs, the indigenous Assamese Muslims, do not take it easily, and as such, they prefer not to make any matrimonial alliance with them. Even then, there are a few cases, where immigrant Muslim girls have been brought to the indigenous boys in marriage and vice-versa.

The immigrant Muslims, like all other Muslims, bury their dead. On the third day after the burial, the friends and the relatives go to the graveyard of the dead and silently recite the verses from the Holy Quoran. This function is called ‘Jiyarat’. This death-rite is not obligatory but is observed only by all the families. The only obligatory death rite is the ‘Chalisha’. Neighbours are invited and entertained in a feast.

Idd-ul-Fitr and Idd-uz-Zoha are the two festivals of the immigrant Muslims, solemnised with mass-prayer, merry making, entertainment, etc.

Although the mosque plays a very dominant role in the Muslim society, where, apart from prayer, religious education, religious discourses, etc., are performed it seems to be less significant among the immigrant Muslims than the indigenous ones. It is probably due to the general poverty of most of the immigrant Muslims, who are more concerned to eke out a living.
4.12 EDUCATION AND LITERACY IN DARRANG DISTRICT:

Being a part of the ancient Kamarupa, Darrang was culturally developed in the past and intimately linked with the rest of India. Gurukula system of education was in vogue in ancient Kamarupa and the reputed Sanskrit scholars were requisitioned for the diffusion of Vedic culture, where the curriculum of studies included Sanskrit literature, grammar, philosophy (Vedanta), law (Samhita), astrology, the Vedas, Puranas, Bhagawat gita, etc. Sanskrit was the vehicle of instruction and scholarship of the Gurukula system\(^30\). However, this traditional education was restricted to the Brahmins and other high caste people and the people of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward communities, were not entitled to acquire education. However, in the mediaeval period Tols (Sanskrit schools) were established essentially for Sanskrit education. Existence of such Tols in different parts of Darrang district, provide an example of continuance of traditional education in the district. Even in 1970-71, there were eleven such Tols for Sanskrit teaching in Darrang district.

The institution of Satra\(^31\) achieved its popularity during the first stage of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement in the sixteenth century. These Satras were the institutions through which religious doctrines, political thoughts, art and culture, education and philosophy were disseminated. The institution of Satra still exists, which normally contain, among others, one Nam-ghar (hall for religious discourse), one Batchora (gate) and a few Hatis (rows of residences of the disciples), along with the Adhikar (head priest), Bhakats (devotees) and other disciples. Khatara Satra, near Dipila is an ideal example of it. Debananda Satra near Sipajhar and Khatara Satra are still maintaining their brilliance in the district. Ideally a Nam-ghar is the symbol of cooperation among its members and division of labour. Such Nam-ghars in Darrang district were restricted only to the central built-up zone, where the indigenous non-tribal people inhabited.

\(^30\) Gurukula system: An ancient Indian education system, where education in any vocation was imparted to the pupil by a teacher (Guru) at his own home. The Pupils were required to stay at the premises of the teacher's homestead and help the latter in his domestic chores until the education was completed.

\(^31\) Satra: A Vaishnavite religious institution, which can loosely be compared to a monastery.
However, the tribal people of the north did not have any opportunity even for this type of non-formal education.

Despite the brilliant contributions that these Satras made in the cultural life of the people, women and so-called socially backward people were debarred from entering into the Nam-ghars. However, this practice is not in vogue now, except the Barpeta Satra of Barpeta district, where women are not allowed to enter the Satra’s Nam-ghar, even today. The Satras used to receive royal patronage and once the Koch royal family of Darrang became weak in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the role of Satras as educational institution also ceased to be important.

Besides Nam-ghars, these Satras used to maintain Sanskrit schools (Tols), where the services of the reputed teachers were requisitioned. During the fourth decade of the twentieth century, a few other Tols of such kind were established in Hazarikapara-Debananda Satra, Dipila, Duni, Barthekerabari and Vyaspara. The last two institutions, were however, related mainly to astrological teaching.

British administration and education system in Darrang district:

Assam came under the East India Company after the treaty of Yandabu in 1826. David Scott, an agent of the Governor General, for the entire Eastern Frontier, favoured the encouragement of oriental learning by improving the indigenous system of education in Assam. For the promotion of indigenous education, David Scott, in 1826, procured the sanction of the East India Company to establish a number of traditional schools in Assam. This proposal was accepted by the Company in October, 1826 and eleven schools were established mostly in the western districts of Assam. Two such schools were established in Darrang district, one at Desh Darrang (Mangaldai) and the other at Patee Darrang, for teaching Sastras, through the medium of Sanskrit, in 1830. Another traditional school was started at Chatgari (Tangla) in 1837, which

was located essentially in the tribal area. In this school, the only language taught was Sanskrit and the curriculum consisted of the study of arithmetic, astronomy and indigenous medicine. In 1833, Lieutenant Mathie, the Collector of Central Assam, found that the curriculum of schools in Desh Darrang consisted of the Ratnamala (Grammar), Kubhee (Poetry), Streety (Smriti), Bhagawat, Silabati (Lilabati) and Batis (medicine). There was also a Upper Primary school at Pathorighat in 1872. At Bengbari, a Missionary Church was built by the Church of England, along with a school in the same year to educate the Bodo-Kachari converts, the majority of whom were agriculturists, although the indirect intention seems to be proselytisation. Another mission school was established at Harisinga, at the flag end of the nineteenth century, with the same aims and objectives as above.

Muslims of the district used to have a few Muktab (primary religious schools) attached to the mosques, where primary Arabic education used to be imparted to enable the students to read the holy Quran. Subsequently, with the increase of Muslim population in the district, Madrassas were opened, where, apart from imparting of general education, Urdu and Islamic theology were also taught.

Although Darrang district maintained some sort of traditional education, since the historical period, it was the suggestions made by Charles Wood in the despatch of 1854, that shaped and reconstituted the structure of modern education in the region. The Despatch of Wood stressed the importance of secular elementary education. It recommended the payment of grants-in-aid to private schools. In 1857-58, the number of pupils receiving instructions in such schools in Darrang district was 86.

Another education commission was instituted by the Governor General of India in 1882, under the Chairmanship of W.W. Hunter. The Commission recommended the handing over

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35 Data collected from Bapu Ram Chaliha, Retired Head Master, Rangamati Public M.E. School, during field study.
of the control of the primary education to the Municipal Boards/ Local Boards, with the power to 
levy taxes to provide for the schools. Being influenced by this recommendation, as many as 1925 
elementary schools were established in Assam from 1882 to 1902\(^{37}\). Three lower primary schools 
were established in the built-up zone of Darrang district, two of them in Pathorighat Tehsil and 
the third one in Mangaldai during that period sponsored by the Mangaldai Local Board.

After 1874-75, the British Government established a few more schools in Darrang 
district. The American Baptist Mission also made a notable contribution by establishing primary 
schools at Bengbari and Harisinga, during the 1880’s and at Tangla in 1910. The missionaries 
learnt the language of the people and acquainted themselves with the local cultures, traditions and 
habits of doing things. The style and functioning of the missionaries earned for them the 
confidence of the people and their self sacrificing spirit led them to travel long distances, even to 
normally inaccessible places for purpose of establishing mission societies\(^{38}\).

On the representation of David Scott, a branch of Serampur Missionary was set-up 
at Guwahati in 1829. The American Baptist Mission Foreign Society, sent a mission under Rev. 
Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter to Assam in 1836\(^{39}\).

As many as twelve schools were established by Walsh Mission during the period of 
1853-63, in Khasi-Jayantia and Naga Hills, Nagaon district and in Kacharimahal (near Bengbari) 
of Darrang district\(^{40}\). They taught the Bible in their schools, but espoused the cause of the 
vernacular of the people and made invaluable contribution to the Assamese language and 
literature.

The British rulers inducted a large number of Bengali people as clerks and petty 
officers in Assam, and on the direction of Mr. Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam, a 
scheme was submitted for the establishment of English schools in the state in 1835. Bengali was 
also taught in those schools. But the orthodox Hindus of the district were skeptical about the

\(^{39}\) Dr. Saikia, S.: *History of Education in India*. Mani Manik Prakash, Guwahati, 1975. p.3.
outcome of such western education, divested of the long traditional oriental social values. To the tribals, on the other hand, education did not appear to have any practical use. As such, the western education was not immediately received enthusiastically in Assam and also in this district.

With the exception of the missionary schools, instruction was imparted in all the government sponsored schools in Bengali medium in elementary reading, writing and arithmetic. In the missionary schools, however, Assamese was the medium of instruction. In the primary schools started by the East India Company in 1836, Bengali was the medium due to powerful lobbying of the Bengali officers, who came to Assam, associated with administrative jobs of the Company. It was from April 19, 1873 that Assamese became the medium of instruction with the pioneering efforts of the missionaries. It was also adopted as the official language of the lower courts from the same date.

The state of administration and organisation of primary education can be better understood from the ‘Report on the Province of Assam’ by A.J. Muffat Mills in 1883. The condition of the schools of the district, as also Assam as a whole, were deplorable at the initial period of British administration in Assam, because of insufficiency of teachers, books and lack of supervision.

Colonel Jenkins entrusted the supervision of the schools to the District Collectors. As per report of G.S.S. Vincent, the then Collector of Darrang district, there were five vernacular schools in the district (then Mangaldai sub-division) in 1863, details of which are given in table 4.12.1.
TABLE 4.12.1
DARRANG DISTRICT
NAMES OF LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOLS, SALARIES OF TEACHERS AND
ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS IN 1863.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the school (Location)</th>
<th>Name of the teacher</th>
<th>Salary given to the teacher</th>
<th>Enrollment of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Munguldye (Mangaldai)</td>
<td>Debajit</td>
<td>Rs. 8/-</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Monitor</td>
<td>Rs. 2/-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maheereepara (Mahuripara)</td>
<td>Jossodhar</td>
<td>Rs. 7/-</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lokrei (Lokrai)</td>
<td>Sohodev</td>
<td>Rs. 6/-</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cheepazar (Sipajhar)</td>
<td>Bhabanund</td>
<td>Rs. 7/-</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Setmadar (Setmodar)</td>
<td>Kistodev</td>
<td>Rs. 7/-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During 1900, the first Middle English school of the district was established at Pathorighat, with Bhabendra Nath Das as the Head Master, followed by another M.V. school at Sipajhar, during the first decade of the present century. This M.V. school had later been upgraded to Sipajhar Academy High School. In the mean time, it was in 1903, that the first High school was established at Mangaldai town. Enthusiastic boys of tribal and non-tribal communities, received their education from this school.

Rev. G.R. Camphor, started a primary school at Borigaon (12 km northeast of Udalguri town) village in 1914. There were four primary schools in the Bengbari-Harisinga area till 1917. There was also a night school at Borigaon in 1919. Rev. Camphor established a Middle English school at Borigaon in 1925. Shri Mani Ram Basumatary was the first Head Master of that school. That school had been shifted to Harisinga in 1931 and Solomon Deori was the Head Master. The school was recognised by the Government in 1938, with Dina Nath Sarma, as the
Head Master. The same school was upgraded to Harisinga High School in 1941, with Mohit Thomas, as the first Head Master\textsuperscript{41}.

Within the second decade of the twentieth century, several more lower primary and middle vernacular schools were established in the district. Bahmola Lower Primary School in Saloipara village, near Duni, is one of such L.P. schools, that celebrated its Diamond Jubilee on April, 1996.

After 1934, along with the formation of Mangaldai Local Board, the weekly and bi-weekly markets (hats) of the district, were brought under its control. Some of the important weekly markets were (i) Singimari hat near Kalaigaon, (ii) Paneri hat, (iii) Udalguri hat, (iv) Grandland hat, (v) Kopati hat, etc. A huge amount so collected, began to be disbursed as grants for the establishment and development of some high schools in the district. As many as 9 high schools were established with the financial help of the Local Board. In the non-tribal areas, school buildings constructed with such help included - Sipajhar Academy High School, Rangamati Public High School and Pathorighat High School, while in the tribal inhabited areas, such High School buildings were established at Khoirabari, Bhergaon, Puthimari, Harisinga, Paneri and Udalguri from 1940 to 1947.

During the post-independence period, different educational institutions were established in different parts of the district as per records of 1995-96, 1466 Lower Primary schools, 250 Middle English and Middle Vernacular schools, 195 High and Higher Secondary schools and 3 affiliated colleges were set-up in the Darrang district.

As regards literacy, Darrang district occupied the lowest position among the plains districts of Assam, excluding Goalpara. Analysing this protracted backwardness of the district, Mr. C.S. Mullan, the then Director of Census Operation, Assam, observed in 1931 as follows: "Darrang district had only 65 literates per thousand and was the worst plain district of Assam, excluding Goalpara, from the point of view of literacy. It was also the worst in 1911 and 1921. The apparent reason for the long continued backwardness of Darrang district was stated to be

\textsuperscript{41} Souvenir, Diamond Jubilee, Darrang Baptist Christian Association, 1989, Harisinga, Darrang (Editorial Report).
that a large number of its inhabitants belong to the 'Coolie-caste' and in addition, it has a large Kachari population, among whom literacy was almost negligible. It can only be added that since 1931, a huge number of illiterate immigrant Muslims have come to settle in this district, thereby adding to the number of illiteracy.

The condition prevailing in the nineteenth century, was less than congenial for the growth of literacy in the district. However, the mid-twentieth century witnessed some change in the social outlook of the people and phenomenal growth of literacy in the district.

The records of 1901 census, shows 5.2 per cent of the male population and 0.3 per cent of the female population as literates. However, a steady rise maintained in the district since 1911, when the average literacy was 3.4 per cent, with 6.2 per cent for male and 0.3 per cent for female population. In the two subsequent decadal censuses, average percentage of literacy rose to 5.3 in 1921 and to 6.5 in 1931. The male literacy was 9.1 per cent and female literacy stood at 0.7 per cent. The corresponding figures for 1931 were 10.9 per cent and 1.1 per cent.

During the next two decades of 1931-1951, percentage of male literacy in the district increased from 10.9 in 1931 to 25.3 in 1951 and the female literacy from 1.1 to 5.3.

The position of literacy was, however not encouraging after the independence of the country. Table 4.12.2 below gives an idea of the growth of literacy in the district and its comparison with that of the state of Assam:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Darrang district average</th>
<th>Tribal literacy of Darrang district</th>
<th>Assam average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>25.31</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>16.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>32.53</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is observed from the above table that the disturbing feature of the trend of literacy, since 1951, is the widening gap between the average rate of literacy of the state as a whole and that of Darrang district. Moreover, it is observed that both the percentages of literacy of general population and that of the tribal population of Darrang district in 1951, were lower than the respective state averages. Percentage of female literacy was in a further pitiable condition with only 5.33, against 7.9 in the state.

The percentage of literacy of Darrang district rose to 21.1 in 1961, that of the male and female being 30.2 and 10.5 respectively. In spite of getting increasing educational facilities, the percentage of literacy of the district declined to 20.0 in 1971, with 27.8 in case of male and 11.3 in female literacy. As a fairly high proportion of the district’s population is constituted by the tea-garden labourers, tribal population and immigrant Muslims, whose progress in the field of education, is extremely slow, the growth of literacy in the district was retarded. Further, the influx of new waves of illiterate immigrant Muslims continued into the district adding to the degree of illiteracy. Tribal literacy in the district also declined from 17.3 in 1961 to 17.1 in 1971. It was mainly because of the fact that many tribal people migrated into this district from Goalpara during 1961-71, along with the opening up of village grazing reserve (VGR) and professional grazing reserve (PGR), along the northern tract of Darrang district. As referred to above, literacy in the Goalpara district was the least in Assam, since long back. However, considerable progress has been recorded in expanding the educational facilities and improving the percentage of literacy in the district, during the last two decades from 1971 to 1991. The census records of 1991, show the average percentage of literacy in the district to be 42.00, the male percentage being 50.80 and female 32.53, against the state average of 52.89. However, the earlier figures of 1971 were based on total population, but the 1991 figures show effective literacy taking the population of the age-group of 7 years and above. So, there will be a slight increase in the percentage of literacy of 1971. But as the tribal people are comparatively more illiterate, the average percentage of their literacy has been recorded as 36.00 in the district, even in 1991. The percentage of tribal female literacy was however, increased from 6.4 in 1961 to 9.3 in 1971 and 25.4 in 1991.

The influence of Christianity is clearly seen in the district from the spread of education and literacy. Table 4.12.3 below, depicts such a picture. Christianity being more
prevalent in the tribal areas, such as Udalguri, Harisinga, etc., literacy is also comparatively high in those areas. Moreover, the mission schools located at Tangla, Harisinga, Udalguri, Bengbari and Habigaon extend their services as the diffusing centres, where facilities are provided to the people for imparting primary and secondary education, including the residential facility in some of them.

**TABLE 4.12.3**

**DARRANG DISTRICT**

**PERCENTAGE OF LITERACY IN BLOCK LEVEL, 1991**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue Circle</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Percentage of tribal population</th>
<th>Percentage of average literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sipajhar</td>
<td>Sipajhar</td>
<td>87732</td>
<td>0.69 (610)</td>
<td>50.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangaldai</td>
<td>Kalaigaon</td>
<td>127555</td>
<td>0.27 (3489)</td>
<td>36.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathorighat</td>
<td>Sipajhar</td>
<td>53800</td>
<td>1.03 (556)</td>
<td>54.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khairabari</td>
<td>27879</td>
<td>1.18 (330)</td>
<td>55.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khairabari</td>
<td>Khairabari</td>
<td>80834</td>
<td>49.15 (39731)</td>
<td>38.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalaigaon</td>
<td>Kalaigaon</td>
<td>92598</td>
<td>24.90 (23062)</td>
<td>43.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harisinga</td>
<td>Udalguri</td>
<td>98352</td>
<td>33.04 (32497)</td>
<td>30.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khairabari</td>
<td>100769</td>
<td>20.77 (20939)</td>
<td>23.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalgaon</td>
<td>Dalgaon-Sialmari-Mazbat</td>
<td>272186</td>
<td>7.29 (18758)</td>
<td>19.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udalguri</td>
<td>Mazbat</td>
<td>45466</td>
<td>22.81 (10374)</td>
<td>23.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Udalguri</td>
<td>118999</td>
<td>48.90 (58197)</td>
<td>32.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazbat</td>
<td>Mazbat</td>
<td>97772</td>
<td>13.40 (13110)</td>
<td>27.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1298860</strong></td>
<td><strong>17.3 (224957)</strong></td>
<td><strong>41.67</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Director of Census Operation, Assam, Guwahati (Computer data), 1991.

In spite of these, the picture of literacy in the tribal areas is not beyond reproach. This is because, the tribal subsistence economy is such that, even children are required to help their parents at home and in the agricultural fields, which prevent them from attending school. As a result of this, the percentages of literacy of the scheduled tribes of the district in 1961, 1971 and even in 1991, were low; being 17.3, 17.1 and 36.0 respectively against the district average of
It is however, interesting to note that the rate of growth of female literacy was higher than that of the males, although the number of literates remained lower among the females than among the males.

In some northern tribal villages, now-a-days, the tribal youths have started village cooperative farming to cultivate the government fallow lands. A separate educational fund is created from its production and financial assistance is extended to the poor school and college going students of the locality.

So far the immigrant Muslims are concerned, the percentage of literacy is extremely low. Over 95 per cent of the working population are engaged in marginal farming or agricultural labouring jobs with small or no landholding at all. These poor people, with their wretched general living standard, form the bulk of the residents in the char areas, and owing to extreme poverty, they cannot avail of the educational opportunities. Although, it is correct that improvement must be made in the field of education and primary education is the basis for improvement of a society, the question satisfying hunger comes before everything. In the case of these poor immigrant people, who hardly can get two square meals a day, literacy is a secondary need. It is not irrelevant to mention in this context that there is not a single secondary school, in those localities of the district which are inhabited by immigrant Muslims alone.

It is really very difficult to ascertain the actual percentage of literacy among the immigrant Muslims separately. Even then, from the ten sampled immigrant Muslim villages of Rangamati mauza, the average percentage of literacy is found to be 19.74, in which the percentage of male literacy is 25.98 and female literacy is only 9.46 as shown in table 4.12.4.
### TABLE 4.12.4

**DARRANG DISTRICT**

PERCENTAGE OF LITERACY AMONG I.M. POPULATION IN
TEN SAMPLED VILLAGES OF RANGAMATIMAUZA, 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>No. &amp; P.C. of literates</th>
<th>No. &amp; P.C. of male literates</th>
<th>No. &amp; P.C. of female literates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bandia Chapori</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>69(8.62)</td>
<td>59(14.82)</td>
<td>10(2.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gaderimari Chapori</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18(32.72)</td>
<td>16(45.71)</td>
<td>2(10.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Manitari Chapori</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>213(38.37)</td>
<td>137(48.92)</td>
<td>76(27.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hetow No.1 Chapori</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>16(6.77)</td>
<td>13(9.42)</td>
<td>3(10.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dhariakhaity No.1</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>111(30.41)</td>
<td>105(39.47)</td>
<td>6(6.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bhokelikanda</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>115(15.25)</td>
<td>89(18.61)</td>
<td>26(9.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rowmari No.1</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>59(15.44)</td>
<td>47(20.34)</td>
<td>12(7.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Baralikhaity No.1</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>101(37.82)</td>
<td>75(43.60)</td>
<td>26(27.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Piaji Char</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>30(11.11)</td>
<td>24(17.51)</td>
<td>6(0.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hilaikunda N.C.</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>7(0.89)</td>
<td>6(1.48)</td>
<td>1(0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4462</strong></td>
<td><strong>2539</strong></td>
<td><strong>1923</strong></td>
<td><strong>739(19.74)</strong></td>
<td><strong>571(25.98)</strong></td>
<td><strong>168(9.46)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Ms Roselin Jahan\(^43\), who conducted a sample survey among some immigrant Muslim families, in the vicinity of Mangaldai town, for her M.Phil. dissertation in 1985-86, found the following situation prevailing among them:

Out of 375 immigrant Muslim persons sampled by her, only 36.8 per cent was found to be literate, in which the percentage of male literacy was 53.89 and the female literacy was 20.42. However, these percentages may be considered to be sufficiently high as these concern the immigrants living in the neighbourhood of Mangaldai town, with good schooling facilities. Moreover, these so called literates include the minor entrants to lower primary schools, many of whom can hardly put their signatures. But the picture is quite different among the remote char areas of the Brahmaputra as has been shown in the table above (4.12.4).

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The regional disparity of literacy within the district is distinguishable among different Revenue circles also, mainly because of the difference of culture, tradition and schooling facilities. Percentage of literacy is high in Pathorighat Revenue circle (56.70 %) followed by Mangaldai (50.90 %), Kalaigaon (44.60 %) and Khairabari circles (39.20 %). It is mainly because of the fact that the above noted circles are inhabited by a greater percentage of non-tribal and non-immigrant population with a reasonably rich heritage from the point of educational centres. But along the northern circles, percentage of literacy is comparatively low, viz., Udalguri circle (32.60 %), Harisinga circle (30.60 %), and Mazbat circle (28.92 %) as shown in the table 4.12.5 and figure 13. As these circles are predominantly inhabited by tribal people and tea-garden labourers, where educational facilities were quite low during the past, percentage of literacy is also found to be very low. Even then, in Udalguri and Harisinga circles the moderately high percentage of literacy, seems to be due to Christian influence. About 30 per cent of the tribal people of Udalguri and Harisinga Revenue circles are Christians and the missionaries established mainly primary schools in the area even before the independence of the country. Moreover, Mangaldai Local Board extended financial help in constructing high school buildings at Harisinga, Bengbari and Udalguri during the period from 1940 to 1947 as stated earlier.

TABLE 4.12.5
DARRANG DISTRICT
REVENUE CIRCLEWISE PERCENTAGE OF LITERACY : 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue Circle</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Literates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Male Female</td>
<td>Total Average P.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sipajhar</td>
<td>87686 45226 42460</td>
<td>45902 52.34 27853 61.58 18049 42.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mangaldai</td>
<td>160283 85044 75239</td>
<td>88004 54.90 54550 64.14 33454 44.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pathorighat</td>
<td>81563 41759 39804</td>
<td>46249 56.70 27608 66.11 18641 46.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Khairabari</td>
<td>80637 41103 39534</td>
<td>31614 39.20 19617 47.72 11997 30.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Kalaigaon</td>
<td>92470 47101 45369</td>
<td>41258 44.60 24899 52.86 16359 36.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Harisinga</td>
<td>230794 110555 10239</td>
<td>65468 30.60 41727 37.74 23741 22.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Dalgaon</td>
<td>308327 158501 149826</td>
<td>65832 21.35 43932 27.71 21900 13.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Udalguri</td>
<td>176334 91286 85048</td>
<td>57566 32.60 36205 39.66 21361 25.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Mazbat</td>
<td>97766 50521 47245</td>
<td>28276 28.92 18990 37.58 9285 19.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang district</td>
<td>1298860 670244 628616</td>
<td>544972 41.89 340484 50.80 204488 32.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1991.
Director of Census Operation, Assam, Guwahati, 1991.
### TABLE 4.12.6

**DARRANG DISTRICT**

**COMMUNITYWISE RURAL POPULATION AT MAUZA LEVEL, 1991**

*(PERCENTAGE TO TOTAL POPULATION)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Revenue Circle</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Mauza</th>
<th>INT</th>
<th>IT</th>
<th>IM</th>
<th>IH</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>ETL/TL</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Literates (in P.C.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sipajhar</td>
<td>87686</td>
<td>Hindughopa</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sipajhar</td>
<td>86.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>44.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lokrai</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>32.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mangaldai</td>
<td>148056</td>
<td>Chapai</td>
<td>59.00</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dahi</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>30.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rangamati</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
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**Source:** Census of India, Assam, Guwahati. (Computer data), 1991

**Note:** Mandal level of the Revenue Circles concerned, 1995-96
But in Dalgaon circle, the percentage of literacy is the least (21.35 %), as it is predominantly inhabited by immigrant Muslim population. Table 4.12.6 shows the community-wise rural population at Revenue circles at mauza levels along with their percentage of literacy, which also confirms the findings of the table 4.12.4.

In this context, it may be mentioned here that there are two Civil sub-divisions in Darrang district - namely Mangaldai and Udalguri. In Mangaldai sub-division, there are seven Revenue circles - Sipajhar, Mangaldai, Pathorighat, Khairabari, Kalaigaon, Harisinga and one part of Dalgaon circle. On the other hand, in Udalguri sub-division, there are three Revenue circles - Udalguri, Mazbat and the other part of Dalgaon Revenue circle.

Among the tea-garden and ex-tea-garden labourers, percentage of literacy is not as low as those of the immigrant Muslims, because of the extension of school facilities which is one of the significant basic amenities as per Labour Law, especially at the primary level by the management of the tea-estates.

Although the Assamese society was free from the cruel rites, such as infanticides, sati, dowry, etc., negligence for female education still exists there. Even some economically well-off families evince little desire to educate their female members. In fact, positive attitude towards providing education to the females started emerging after the introduction of western education in the district. A demand for emancipation of women has started simmering only during the last three decades. This has inspired the protagonists of female education to accelerate their activities.

**General education:**

In 1874-75, Darrang district had only 78 primary schools, which rose to 95 in 1980-81, and 149 in 1900-01. The number if lower primary schools increased gradually and during the next 47 years, upto 1947, the total number of such schools in the district rose to 629. After independence, the primary education expanded both in respect of the number of the schools and enrollment in individual schools. In 1971, there were 959 lower primary schools, with an
enrollment of 76,629 pupils, which rose again in 1976-77 to 1066 schools with 77,784 pupils. It may be mentioned here that after the introduction of Bodo as the medium of instruction in 1963, there were 200 lower primary schools in the district in 1971 imparting education in Bodo medium. The number of other institutions of higher education also increased much rapidly as shown in table 4.12.7.

**TABLE 4.12.7**

**DARRANG DISTRICT**

**EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WITH ENROLLMENTS**

(1976-1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of L.P. Schools</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
<th>No. Of M.E./ M.V. schools</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
<th>No. of High Schools</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
<th>No. of H.S. Schools</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
<th>No. of Colleges</th>
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<td>1990-91</td>
<td>1471</td>
<td>172606</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>32814</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>40375</td>
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<td>20777</td>
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Office of the Principals of Colleges, Darrang district, 1995-96.

In 1975-76, there were 1066 lower primary schools, with 77,784 pupils, 136 M.V./M.E. schools with 17,107 pupils, 58 high schools with 16,476 students, 2 higher secondary schools with 1678 students and 3 colleges for general education with 2394 students in the district.

The collegiate education commenced in the district only from 1951, when the Mangaldai College started with arts faculty. Science faculty in the college started from 1972.

But the corresponding figures on 1991 show that there were 1471 L.P. schools with 172,606 pupils, and 250 M.E./M.V. schools in the district comprising 32,814 students. Moreover, the number of high schools increased to 269 with 40,375 students, higher secondary schools to 24, with 20,777 students, while there came up 18 colleges of general education with more than 14,500 students.
Apart from these, there were 4 B.Ed. colleges, one Law college and one Basic Training school in the district.

Out of the educational institutions stated above, there are 298 (20.25%) lower primary schools, 41 (16.9%) M.E./M.V. schools, 30 (11.15%) high schools with Bodo as the medium of instruction. There are also 6 Bengali medium high schools and one Hindi medium high school in the district. Moreover, in 91 lower primary schools and 22 M.E./M.V. schools, both Bodo and Assamese are used as the medium of instruction. Table 4.12.8 shows the status of educational institutions of different levels in Darrang district from 1971 to 1991.

**TABLE 4.12.8**  
**DARRANG DISTRICT**  
**EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**  
(1971-1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>L.P. Schools</th>
<th>M.E./M.V. Schools</th>
<th>High Schools</th>
<th>H.S. Schools</th>
<th>Colleges (general)</th>
<th>Colleges (professional)</th>
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<td>1977</td>
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<td>141</td>
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Office of the Principals of the Colleges of Darrang district, 1996.

During the post-independence period, although the number of educational institutions of all kinds has increased, the percentage of literacy in the district has remained comparatively low, i.e., 42.00. There are only two districts in Assam, such as Dhubri (38.31) and Kokrajhar (40.57), which have lower percentages of literacy than that of Darrang district.
It has been stated earlier that the average percentage of literacy in Darrang district in 1991 was 42.00 and that the tribal literacy was 36.00, when the corresponding figures in the state of Assam, were 52.89 and 43.23 respectively.

The district comprises a huge number of tribal population with 2,24,957 souls, out of the district’s population of 12,98,860. The percentage of tribal literacy was only 36.00 in 1991. Therefore, the percentage of literacy among the 10,73,903 non-tribal population stood at 43.25, which is much higher than the average percentage of district’s tribal literacy. The research statement in this regard was - The educational backwardness of the tribal people, who constitute a considerable section of the population of the district, has contributed partly towards the educational backwardness of Darrang district in general.

Thus, it is seen that the tribal people, who constitute 17.3 per cent of the district’s population has a percentage of literacy of only 36.00. It has clearly affected the average literacy of the district. In spite of getting the schools of their own, with Bodo as the medium of instruction, the tribal people till 1991, have not been able to show a significant progress in literacy.

The statement thus holds good.

4.13 SOCIO-CULTURAL COHESION OF THE TRIBAL AND NON-TRIBAL POPULATION OF DARRANG DISTRICT:

Darrang is a district with a cultural mosaic of the peoples of diverse ethnic identity. The district has the peoples belonging to the Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan ethno-linguistic groups, each of these having its distinct socio-cultural identity, and thus the district can be regarded as a living anthropological museum. Although their cohabitation of the same milieu for a very long time has led to the development of homogeneity in certain socio-cultural aspects, there are identifiable distinctions in some other social and cultural spheres. Besides, there are spatial variations in the degree of such distinctions.
4.13.1 SOCIAL COHESION AMONG THE TRIBAL PEOPLE:

The tribal people of Darrang district today assert themselves as the ‘Bhumiputras’ - meaning the sons of the soil, as they demand to be the most indigenous to the state of Assam, who have maintained their distinct socio-cultural identity and assert their rights on their homeland. It is clear that in the modern world no society can remain static and this is true in case of the tribal society of Darrang district also, which has undergone some radical changes in recent years. Modernisation has influenced their cultural life to a certain extent. However, they try to maintain their socio-cultural traits, without throwing away all of their traditional customs and ethos. The tribal people of the district prefer a selective assimilation rather than completely merging their identities. The tribal communities of the study area possess certain socio-cultural uniformities within themselves, distinguishable from the non-tribal communities as noted below:

**Food Habit:**

The dietary habit of all the tribal people of the district is almost the same, while it differs from the non-tribal counterparts to a certain extent. Rice is the staple food of all the tribal people of the district with an inherent liking for dried fish, pork and vegetables as their economy is basically agrarian. Over ninety seven per cent of the tribal people live in the northern foot hills of the district and with a sprinkle over the central built up zone. Their homeland being free from the havoc of flood, almost all of them are paddy cultivators, comprising both Ahu and Sali paddy and they cultivate their lands with plough and a pair of bullock or buffalo.

Brewing of rice beer (Jumai) and its regular consumption is a socially admissible practice of all the tribal people. Another distinct characteristic feature of the aged ones was their aversion to milk for reasons stated earlier. But the young generation forgo the belief and freely take milk.

Their food habit has adversely affected their village economy. Regular use of rice beer and keeping of their domestic pigs and fowls unattended, are the main causes of huge
wastage of village foodgrains that brings a significant proportion of tribal population below the poverty line. But the members of the Brahma sect of the Bodo-Kacharis and the Pati Rabhas, who get themselves initiated into the Mahapurusia sect, no longer indulge in pork and rice beer.

**Community Life:**

The tribal people prefer to live a corporate life. Being the occupants of the plain lands of Darrang district, covering the Bhabar-Tarai zone, north of the central built up zone, which are free from the flood havoc, they are mainly agrarian in occupation. They cultivate both the winter and summer paddy. In doing so, they show ingenious application of skill in irrigating their agricultural fields by river water. They utilise the water of the numerous braided streams of Sekhar, Majikuchi, Dakua, Harisinga, Ambagaon, Udalguri, Chinakona and Orang mauzas for irrigation, whenever there is a shortage of seasonal rainfall. They exhibit their unique ability in constructing the irrigation canals, locally called 'Dongs' to divert the water from the streams to the agricultural fields. Map No. 8 shows such a dong system in the Paneri area. When the tribal cultivators of a village, face a normal set back, they assemble as per instruction of the village headman, i.e., ‘Gaonburha’ and put up a blockade (earthen dam) indigenously across the shallow rivulets and divert the water to the paddy fields. In doing so, they use only a few pointed bamboo sticks, leaves of arecanut, straw and clods. Sometimes, they spend the whole day in such an operation, till they achieve success. The Gaonburha imposes penalty on absentees. This type of corporate life is rare in the non-tribal villages.

**Community Transplantation and Harvesting:**

Examples of corporate life in the tribal society is very well observed even in the day-to-day life. During the transplantation of winter paddy seedlings, tribal people of a village, both men and women work together to help their co-villagers in the field. This type of group work is rarely observed in the non-tribal society.
Harvesting of winter paddy is also often carried out in the form of group work, while that of summer paddy, which is a minor crop in the district, is left to the individual families. Very often a tribal villager would request his co-villager to extend their helping hand in the harvesting of winter paddy. The neighbours respond promptly in harvesting the crop. This type of group work is referred to as ‘Sanguri’. During the months of October and November, one can easily observe this type of community harvesting in the agricultural fields of Udalguri, Harisingha, Ambagaon, Sekhar, etc., mauzas, which are the granaries of Darrang district (Plate 7).

Community ploughing is also observed often in the paddy fields of tribal villages. However, in ploughing, instead of ‘Sanguri’, rotation ploughing, known as ‘Gatha’, is more commonly practiced. In this system, ploughing of the fields of the involved cultivators is done in rotation, to the mutual advantage of all concerned (Plate 8).

**Community Hunting and Fishing:**

Formerly, when population pressure was much less and many areas were covered by forest lands, community hunting, by the tribal people during the early monsoon period, was a traditional affair. The chief equipments, they used in hunting, were the spears, pointed iron rods, bamboo sticks, etc. They were helped in such an operation by their pet dogs. Wild bear, wild fowl, wild cat, mongoose, etc., were the objects of prey. But in recent days, with the decline of forest lands, this traditional practice is gradually dying out. Even then, in the northern parts of Sekhar, Ambagaon and Harisinga mauzas, on the outskirts of the Nonai forests, Bengbari forests, Kaling-duar forests, Rowta forests, etc., community hunting is still seen to be carried out occasionally.

Although government has imposed restrictions on the killing of migratory birds, some tribal people are still found to assemble in the paddy fields, during the early monsoon (in the month of May - June) for hunting teals and water cocks. In this case, their main weapon is the bamboo sticks.
PLATE 7. Cooperative Harvesting (Sanguri) of the Bodo-Kacharis

PLATE 8. Cooperative Ploughing of the Bodo-Kacharis
Community fishing is a common sight among the tribal males and females of Darrang district. Both males and females assemble to fish in the streams or marshy tracts, with their fishing equipments like 'Jakai' (a tetrahedral bamboo device, used for catching fish in shallow water), 'Palha' (an ordinary circular hen coop made of split bamboo, for catching fish in deep water), fishing nets, etc. (Plate 9). While 'Palha' is commonly used by the males, 'Jakai' comes handy for women. Community fishing on the eve of the Bhogali Bihu (in mid-January), is of special significance to the people of the district.

Catching of swamp eels (locally known as 'Kuchia') with a long pointed metallic spear, is another unique way of fishing by the tribal people, which is uncommon among their non-tribal neighbours.

**Fairs and Festivals**:

All the three tribal communities - the Bodo-Kachari, Rabha and Garo, each observes their own fairs and festivals. The Bodo-Kacharis observe 'Kherai', the most prestigious religious festival during the early summer. It is really a fertility festival, where the supreme god 'Bathow', is worshipped for peace and prosperity.

It is almost during the same period, i.e., in May - June, that the Rabha people also observe their 'Khoksi Puja', which is also a fertility festival, with almost the same objectives as above.

The Garos, on the other hand, observe their 'Wangala' festival, during November - December, after the winter harvest is over.

Other important festivals include 'Parowa', 'Bathameli', etc. Bihu, a festival of the Assamese, is observed jointly by the tribal and non-tribal people of the district. It is now found to be organised more often in the urban and trade centres, rather than in the interior villages. The exquisite and colourful tribal dances are the reminiscent of their glorious traditions.
PLATE 9. Fishing by Bodo Women
House Building Techniques:

The house building pattern of the tribal villages is much more compact than the non-tribal villages. A tribal village is itself a self sufficient unit. They prepare the outlay of the village meaningfully, so that they might get almost all the daily necessities of life in the village itself. Each homestead has a combination of a dwelling house, a granary on a raised bamboo platform and a cow shed around a courtyard, with a backyard orchard of arecanut and other fruit trees. The homestead is surrounded by a ditch, with a well fenced boundary. Bodo-Kachari houses are simple and two-roofed, constructed by bamboo and thatches. The plinth is usually two to three feet high. A typical Bodo house has scanty or no ventilation. The Rabha people on the other hand, do not construct their houses on raised plinths. The family loom, in case of both the groups, are placed on the backyard, facing the orchards.

The Bodo-Kacharis draw a horizontal line with cow dung, about a metre above the plinth level on outside of the mud plastered walls of their houses. The line is renewed annually on the first day of Magh (mid-January) with a folk belief of getting relief from all ominous events for the year. This practice is, however, not observed by all now.

Akin to this traditional tribal custom, the non-tribal Hindus of the district tie their arecanut and coconut trees with straw ropes about a metre above the ground, on the same day, hoping for a fruitful harvest from them.

Dresses and costumes:

The tribal people traditionally use such dresses as are not akin to their non-tribal neighbours. The tribes normally prefer multicoloured costumes. Green and yellow colours, seen to be preferred by the Bodo-Kacharis. The traditional dress of their women consists of 'Dokhna' (a yellow coloured one piece garment covering from below the neck to ankles) and a blouse. So, unlike the non-tribal women of Darrang district, a third piece of cloth in the form of a wrapper is not used by them. But the Rabha and Garo women of the district, put on 'Mekhela' (a cover for
the lower part), a blouse and a ‘Chaddar’ (a wrapper for the upper part), as the non-tribal ones. Tribal men and women usually put on the handloom garments, but the school going children use mill made clothes. Women are credited for their special craftmanships in making dresses from Eri (Endi) silk. They rear all kinds of silk worms. In fact, spinning of Endi-yarns and weaving form a traditional household industry, every tribal women is expected to excel in handloom craftsmanship. Their weaving excellence was testified by their intense knowledge in the art of dying yarn and clothes which was a community secret of the tribal people of the district. This technique has, however, been gradually fading out. An important difference of the tribal males’ dress, from that of the non-tribal is that, the former use a hand woven towel like piece of cloth (Gamocha) that covers the body from waist to knee as a common domestic attire. In case of the non-tribal people, however, a common domestic attire is a dhoti.

Self Identity in Village Economy:

One of the greatest problems of tribal economy in Darrang district centres round the non-availability of sufficient agricultural land on the one hand and their indebtedness on the other. To protect the poor tribal people from land alienation and to generate a spirit of self assertion, some of the tribal cultural organisations have started village cooperative farming on some grazing reserves and other government fallow lands. The production is deposited in the common village granary and out of this, loan in kind is given to the poor villagers, at the time of distress, at a minimum interest.

Thus a good deal of resistance to indebtedness to the village mahajans, has been made possible. This system is seen to be in operation at Krishi Bikash Kendra of Ambagaon and Tribal Yubak Sangha of Udalguri in the district. The following is the brief account of one of them as found in the field study:

Majgaon is a typical village of Ambagaon mauza, having 52 families, with 253 people. 224 of them belong to the tribal community. The average land holding of the villagers is 5.87 hectares. But each of 39 families has less than 2.3 hectares of land. From 1975 onwards, the
tribal youths began to cultivate the nearby grazing reserve on cooperative basis, and established their traditional institution ‘Raijani Bokhari’ (common village granary). The basic objective of this granary is to render mutual help at the time of distress to the needy people of the village. The rate of interest is charged @ 25 per cent for one harvesting season, and is payable in kind. Generally no formal reminder is required for the recovery of the loan, but if it so requires occasionally, the village ‘Helmaji’ does the needful.

The account of the granary is maintained by the secretary (Wilson Daimary, 1995), selected by the village council and the ‘Gaonburha’ (Akhil Mussahari, 1995) is the president of it. In fact, it develops a cooperative spirit among the villagers and reduces the exploitative tendency of the village mahajans and the new entrant Afgan money lenders.

Tribal people maintain some common bonds among them. These are reflected in different spheres of life, from household activities to agricultural works and from hunting of wild games to the religious festivals. Smith enumerated thirteen established characteristics of Mongoloid culture in the tribal life of the North East India1. The tribal people of Assam preserve five characteristics in them. These are:

(i) habit of betel chewing,

(ii) aversion to milk as an article of food,

(iii) maintaining a simple loom at home for weaving clothes,

(iv) use of large type of shields in the battle in the past, which they now exhibit in their cultural functions, and

(v) change of residence to isolated regions with a backward form of agriculture.

Except (iv), the other four characteristics are observed to be fully in vogue in Darrang district.

Internal socio-cultural cohesion among the tribal people, as stated above, have contributed much to the development of a socio-cultural isolation from the non-tribal population of the district. Emergence of the spirit of self assertion among them started after the independence of the country. For some time, after independence, the tribal people of the district were the staunch supporter of either this or that national political party. The assembly constituency reserved for the scheduled tribes in the district, covering the areas of their high concentration, like Udalguri Legislative Assembly Constituency, used to return earlier candidates of national political parties. But slowly the tribal people began to feel that their interest would be best served through their own political parties of regional dimension, like Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA), Peoples Democratic Front (PDF), Bodoland Peoples’ Party (BPP), etc. As such, PTCA was formed in 1967, BPP was formed in 1990 and PDF in 1995, which claim to stand for safeguarding the interest of the tribal people of the state of Assam. This is a sign of awakening. In fact, the resurgence is such that some extremist members of the PTCA party, raised their voice demanding a separate state, named ‘Udayachal’, exclusively for the tribal people of Assam. Later on, the Bodo Security Force (BrSF), another extremist wing, of the All Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU), with the support and cooperation of a section of tribal people of Assam, demanded the creation of ‘Bodoland’, a separate state with full autonomy. Under constant political pressure and with some sporadic ugly incidents here and there, the Government of India, granted them the ‘Bodoland Autonomous Council’ (BAC) in 1995, covering 2570 villages of Assam, of which 665 villages are from Darrang district. Other villages are from Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, etc., along the north bank of the Brahmaputra, where the tribal concentration is more. However, BAC included some villages with very few or no tribal population at all, but surrounded by tribal inhabited villages. It has already created a great dissatisfaction among the non-tribal inhabitants and some sporadic incidents have already been reported from Udalguri, Rowta, Kalaigaon, etc., of the district, wherefrom some of the non-tribal victims had been compelled to leave their hearth and home by some Bodo extremists. In Darrang district, Udalguri mauza is reported to be the centre of this type of political resurgence. However, the loss of lives and properties here is much less than that due to such ethnic violence in Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon districts.
Bodo-Kachari people of the district have their own dialect as in other parts of Assam. But the Rabhas and the Garos of the district have not. The late Bishnu Prasad Rabha, a well known Assamese artist, mentioned that Bodo people had their own scripts, known as 'Deodhai'. Traces of such scripts were found from the remains of the old Kachari capital of Dimapur. These were lost in course of time, and the Bodo people accepted Assamese scripts. Assamese language used to be the medium of instruction in all the educational institutions, even in the tribal inhabited areas until 1962. But on demand of the Bodo-Kachari people, the Bodo language, with Assamese scripts was recognised as the medium of instruction for the primary stage of education, in 1962; for the middle school stage of education in 1968 and for the secondary stage of education in 1972. Simultaneously, they also demanded Roman scripts in lieu of Assamese. Naturally, the departure from the medium of instruction from Assamese to Bodo has gradually been creating a socio-cultural distance between the Bodo-Kachari people from their non-tribal neighbours. To meet their demand, the Government of India granted them Devanagari script in 1974 in their books, in lieu of Assamese, although their demand was the introduction of Roman scripts. The Bodo-Kacharis are still not satisfied with the decision of the Government of India and are adopting resolutions in the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, even now to get their demand for Roman script materialised.

It becomes apparent from the above account that a tendency has developed gradually among the tribal people of the district, more so among the Bodo-Kacharis, to assert their ethnic identity. This tends to isolate the tribal people from the non-tribal neighbours of the district. In fact, the assertion on separate ethnic identity has led to increasing isolation. Our statement in this regard that - ‘Socio-cultural isolation from the non-tribal population, has accentuated the feeling for a separate identity among the tribal people' seems to be confirmed and accepted.

As among the tribal groups themselves, some features of socio-cultural cohesion can be observed among the non-tribal groups also.
Among the indigenous non-tribal Hindus, village Namghar is a unique socio-cultural institution that stimulates the growth and development of the Assamese Hindu culture. Village Namghar is not only a centre of religion, but in practice, it is the spinal chord of the Assamese Hindu society in the rural setting. Though inter-dining and inter-marriage among the different Hindu castes are not socially approved, the bond of fellowship fostered by a sense of amity has considerably reduced the rigours of caste distinction. It exercises a close spiritual control over all members of the community and holds them back from social degeneration. Petty quarrels of village disputes are often settled by the villagers themselves at the village Namghar. It plays the role of a primary court of justice in the village community and it is very rarely that one can venture to disregard the verdict pronounced by the village elders. Through Namghar, the Assamese Hindu people get some political ideas and acquaint themselves with democratic principles also.

The mosques among the Muslim and the Churches among the Christian people of the district are the similar social institutions among those communities in maintaining the societal discipline and internal harmony.

Petty village disputes are often settled within the villages through the 'Mels' (village court), headed by the Gaonburha. A Mel is often organised on land disputes and on violation of social ethics. In response to the invitation of the complainant, the village elders assemble on the Namghar or the Mosque and settle the dispute. The critical cases that cannot be resolved in the Mel, ultimately go to the civil court. However, the women and children are not allowed to participate in the Mels. When a major problem arises concerning a number of villages of an area, a 'Raij Mel' (Peoples' court) is organised by the responsible citizens of the locality and try to resolve the same by creating a public opinion. Raij Mel of 1894, just before the 'Patharughator Raan', was an exemplary venture. Organising Raij Mel on some political issues at Sipajhar in 1995 in recent years is also notable.
Offering of goodwill and prosperity by presenting a ‘Gamocha’ during the Rongali Bihu is another distinct and spectacular example of social cohesion among the indigenous Hindu people of the district. This, of course, holds good in case of the whole of Assamese society.

4.13.3 SOCIAL COHESION AMONG THE IMMIGRANT MUSLIM POPULATION:

Social cohesion can also distinctly be observed among the immigrant Muslim population of the district. In the immigrant Muslim inhabited areas like Dhula, Kharupetia, Besimari, Rajapukhuri, Dalgaon, etc., one can easily observe the spirit of corporate life, when thirty to forty people are seen to weed together the summer paddy and tender jute plants in the open field of any one of the farmers in turn, ignoring the sultry insolation (Plates 10 and 11).

Jute cultivation seems to be a monopoly business of the immigrant Muslim population of Darrang district along the charlands of the Brahmaputra and the wastelands of the lower Dhansiri basin. The matured jute plants are bundled and put into ponds or pool of stagnant water for retting. When the retting is completed, the bark is peeled from the stalk and washed and dried. All these are done by manual labour and it is a very common sight in the immigrant Muslim inhabited areas from July to September that the entire operation is completed in a corporate way (Plate 12).

Some of the distinct special characteristics of the immigrant Muslim people that are often observed in the localities inhabited by them are:

(i) community weeding of summer paddy and jute plants in the agricultural fields.

(ii) peeling of the fibre from the jute stalks together,

(iii) preference of the use of small country boats in lieu of road construction,

(iv) preference in fishing with varieties of fishing nets by the Dathia group of immigrant Muslims,
PLATE 10. Cooperative Weeding of Rice Plants by Immigrant Muslims

PLATE 11. Cooperative Weeding of Jute Plants by Immigrant Muslims
PLATE 12. Cooperative Peeling of Jute Fibre by Immigrant Muslims

PLATE 13. Typical House Type of the Immigrant Muslims
(v) selling of grass as fodder and gathering of fuelwood that come floating in the river Brahmaputra,

(vi) unique dress type (cross-checked lungi and pyjama-kurta unlike the green coloured lungi of the indigenous Assamese Muslims), and

(vii) small arched roofed thatched huts with unplastered walls often made of jute stalks (Plate 13).

The walls remain unplastered, only because of the fact that these areas are annually inundated by floods of the Brahmaputra, and the use of jute stalks indicate their wretched economic condition. The design of the arched roof has been brought by them from their original homeland, i.e., East Bengal.

These are some of the examples of uniqueness observed among the people of different communities of the district that maintain the spiritual bond of unity and fraternity.