Geographical Features -174
Population - 176
Resources - 178
Language - 179
Tribal Groups - 180
Religion - 182
State of Education in the Mangaldai Sub-Division with particular reference to the Bodo-Kacharis: Education before and after independence - 182
Educational levels - 199
Enrolment of the Children in the Schools - 204
Main causes of Educational Backwardness of the Bodo-Kacharis in the Mangaldai Sub-Division:

- Poverty and Poor Economic Condition - 207
- Ignorant Parents - 208
- Irregular attendance - 211
- Dearth of Properly qualified teachers - 211
The School Building and Equipment - 212
Communication - 213; Medium of Instruction-213
Irregularities in attendance of teachers - 214
Role of the School Inspectors - 214; Problems of women education - 215; Programme of Adult education - 216; Stagnation and Wastage - 216
PROGRESS AND PROBLEM OF EDUCATION
OF THE BODO-KACHARIS OF THE
MANGALDAI SUB-DIVISION

For the purpose of making a special study of a particular area inhabited by the Bodo-Kachari tribe, we have selected the area of the Mangaldai Sub-Division. The idea is to focus the problems, as well as the progress so far made, in respect of their educational development. In order to focus the problems and progress of education of the Bodo-Kacharis it is also necessary to make a study of the geographical features, composition of the population, socio-cultural system, religion, etc., of that particular area.

As has been mentioned earlier, there are two Sub-Divisions in the District of Darrang, viz., Tezpur and Mangaldai. The Mangaldai Sub-Division
Map of Mangaldai Sub-Division showing the areas of Bodo-Kachari Concentration (Police Station-wise). (The figures within the parentheses indicate the total population of the Police Station). Bodo-Kachari populated area.
has been selected for the purpose of our study because of the fact that there is a tribal belt in this Sub-Division which is thickly populated by the Bodo-Kachari tribe.

**GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES:**

The Mangaldai Sub-Division lying along the north bank of the River Brahmaputra is situated between 26°12' and 26°54' North Latitudes, and 91°42' and 92°24' East Longitudes. The Sub-Division covers an area of 3,465.3 square kilometres. The entire Mangaldai Sub-Division intersected by numerous hill-streams is almost a quadrilateral block of alluvial plain with an abrupt south-ward slope in the north and the level falls in the south with a dip towards the south-west. The tract falls into three natural divisions. The northern submontane tract which is about 19 to 22 kilometres in width is inhabited mainly by the Bodo-Kacharis and Nepalis. This tract has a steep south-ward slope of 150 to 120 Metres in about four to six kilometres. The elevation, where this slope ends, is 76 Metres above mean sea level and falls in the middle of the plain. The soil is composed of loose sandy texture with occasional sands and gravels. Water is scarce in the
upland country primarily because the turbulent hill rivers do not inundate large tracts for long and the rain water is quickly soaked in the sandy soil. The local people, however, cultivate the land with the help of small irrigation channels called 'dongs' of which there is a wide net-work in the region. The northern part of this area is largely covered by tea gardens fringed here and there by villages of ex-tea garden labourers. The middle part of the Sub-Division forming the second natural division where the slope of the landscape is gentler than the northern submontane tract is an alluvial plain. The third division lying in the extreme south is the most populous part of the Sub-Division where the flat alluvial plain is covered with stretches of paddy lands interspersed with homesteads of the Assamese Hindus and Muslims. The old villages abound in 'Pan' (betel vine) and 'Tamul' (areca nut), bamboos and other fruit trees. The tract on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra is a low flat alluvial plain, covered with reeds or tall grasses and villages of Muslim immigrants. Dexterous cultivators as they are, a number of crops such as rice, pulses and mustard are grown in the sandy soil. The 'Chaparis' (high lands) also form
good grazing ground. In the eastern part of this division lies the Dalgaon Mouza where the plain, situated on higher level and broken here and there by the old bed of the Dhansiri river, was covered with wild jungles till the early years of the current century; but with the advent of the Muslim immigrants a few decades later, the jungle-covered waste lands were reclaimed and made fit for cultivation.

In the Mangaldai Sub-Division, there are no hills in the main land except a range of nine low hills in the south-western corner of the Sipajhar Mouza on the bank of the Brahmaputra. One of these hills is known as 'Kurua' which is traditionally associated with the Kauravas for whom some camps were pitched up on this hill by the king Bhagadatta on the occasion of his daughter Bhanumati's 'Sayambara' (marriage). On another hill there is a shrine of Ganesha. Besides, there are few spurs on the northern submontane tract, which are offshoots of the Bhutan Hills. 1

POPULATION:

The total population of the Mangaldai Sub-Division according to 1971 Census is 8,34,574 of whom

the Bodo-Kachari population is 1,02,227 and their (Bodo-Kachari population's) percentage to the total population is 12.25%.

The following table shows the Police Station-wise Bodo-Kachari population in the Mangaldai Sub-Division according to 1971 Census.

TABLE 24

Police Station-wise Bodo-Kachari Population (Males and Females) of the Mangaldai Sub-Division, 1971.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Police Station</th>
<th>Bodo-Kachari Population</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Paneri</td>
<td>19,162</td>
<td>18,737</td>
<td>37,899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Udalguri</td>
<td>15,628</td>
<td>15,556</td>
<td>31,184</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Majbat</td>
<td>3,046</td>
<td>3,021</td>
<td>6,067</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kalaigaon</td>
<td>7,817</td>
<td>7,751</td>
<td>15,568</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dalgaon</td>
<td>2,884</td>
<td>2,685</td>
<td>5,569</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mangaldai</td>
<td>3,045</td>
<td>2,895</td>
<td>5,940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>51,582</td>
<td>50,645</td>
<td>1,02,227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Census Report of India, Assam State, Darrang District, 1971.)

The figures in the following table will indicate the growth of population of the Scheduled Tribes and the Bodo-Kacharis during the decade 1961 to 1971.
TABLE - 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification of Population</th>
<th>Population 1961 (Number)</th>
<th>Population 1971 (Number)</th>
<th>Increase of Population %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>5,82,624</td>
<td>8,34,574</td>
<td>43.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribes</td>
<td>95,531</td>
<td>1,28,494</td>
<td>34.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodo-Kacharis</td>
<td>33,247</td>
<td>1,02,227</td>
<td>207.48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: 1971 Census Figures, Darrang District.)

It is seen from the above table that during the decade 1961-71, the growth rate of the total population of the Mangaldai Sub-Division is 43.24%, while the populations of the Scheduled Tribes and the Bodo-Kacharis increased by 34.51% and 207.48% respectively during the same period.

RESOURCES:

The Mangaldai Sub-Division is agriculturally rich. It abundantly produces jute, paddy, wheat, maize, mustard, sugarcane, pulses, etc. There are several tea gardens in the Sub-Division numbering twenty nine. The Sub-Division is also rich in forestry; rare and valuable timbers, canes, bamboos, etc., are produced in large quantities every year.
In spite of abundant natural resources, the Sub-Division is even now lagging far behind other areas of the State in respect of industries. From the time immemorial, the Sub-Division had a number of industries such as sericulture and weaving, cane and bamboo works, gold and silversmithy, pottery and blacksmithy, etc. But these industries are gradually on the verge of near extinction for many reasons. There are, however, a few small industries such as oil mills, rice mills, and saw mills. In the over all analysis it is found that the Mangaldai Sub-Division is industrially backward.

LANGUAGE:

Assamese, Bengali, Nepali, Hindi, Oriya, Bodo, Miri, Oran are the principal languages and dialects spoken by the inhabitants of the Mangaldai Sub-Division.

In 1901, Assamese and Bodo or Kachari were regarded to be the only two forms of speech natural to the indigenous inhabitants of the Sub-Division. Assamese was spoken by 51 per cent of the population and latter by 16 per cent. The bulk of the Kachari speakers lived in the grassy plains at the foot of the Himalayan ranges on the northern
part of Mangaldai. They could understand and speak Assamese well. Bengali was returned by 19 per cent of the people. However, it is doubtful if Bengali indicated in many cases, more than a foreign language. 2

Most of the tribal people in the Mangaldai Sub-Division know a subsidiary language besides their own. According to the 1961 Census, 71,111 tribal people spoke Assamese as their mother tongue, and out of them, only 644 persons were bilingual, of whom 3,463 spoke the Bodo as a subsidiary language. But in case of other tribal people speaking their own dialects as mother tongue, most know Assamese and a very few know other languages. 37,618 tribals belonging to the Bodo linguistic group, viz., Bodo-Kachari, Rabha people spoke the Bodo dialect as their mother tongue and of them 33,064 were bilingual. 32,890 persons of this group spoke Assamese as a secondary language. 3 It is pertinent to mention here that the Bodo language is now used as medium of instruction upto the High School stage.

TRIBAL GROUPS:

The Scheduled Tribes population in the

3. Ibid., pp. 333-336.
Mangaldai Sub-Division consists mainly of Bodo-Kachari, Hojai, Kachari including Sonowal, Miri, and Rabha. The following table shows the tribal population of the Mangaldai Sub-Division according to the Census Report of 1971.

**TABLE 26**

Tribal Group-wise Population of the Mangaldai Sub-Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Tribal Population</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Bodo-Kachari</td>
<td>51,582</td>
<td>50,645</td>
<td>1,02,227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hojai</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kachari (including Sonowal)</td>
<td>7,215</td>
<td>7,135</td>
<td>14,350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rabha</td>
<td>6,047</td>
<td>5,808</td>
<td>11,855</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Census Report of 1971, Darrang District)

It would be interesting to mention that there is a symbiotic relation among the different tribes. The status and position of each of these tribal groups can be better understood by studying the social organisation of each of the tribes with the inter-group relations in a larger tribal society.
RELIGION:

There are mainly three religions in the Mangaldai Sub-Division, viz., Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Hinduism is professed by more than three-fourths of the total population, Islam by less than one-fifth, and Christianity by one-twentieth, according to the 1961 Census.

The Bodo-Kachari population has been converted either into Christianity or they have embraced some forms of Hinduism. In other words, the religious life of the Bodo-Kacharis has been moulded mainly by Hinduism and Christianity. The influence of Buddhism and Jainism is almost negligible on them.

STATE OF EDUCATION IN THE MANGALDAI SUB-DIVISION WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE BODO-KACHARIS: EDUCATION BEFORE AND AFTER INDEPENDENCE:

Historical references are scanty about a clear description regarding the system of education that was prevalent in ancient times in the Mangaldai Sub-Division. It is believed that the people of the Darrang District basked under the sunshine of the
Aryan culture and civilization and the 'Gurukula' system was prevalent. Existence of some 'Tols' in different parts of the State provides an example of 'Gurukula' system of education in Assam. "There were 11 Nos. of 'Tols' for Sanskrit teaching in Darrang District in 1970-71." 4 "Those who had a thirst for knowledge usually flocked to a 'Guru' who had assignments of lands from the State for his maintenance and even for the maintenance of those who came to him." 5 Sanskrit was the vehicle of thought and expression, and lessons were imparted in various branches of classical learning such as grammar, astronomy, law (Samhita), poetry and philosophy (Vedanta, Sankhya Veda, etc.). The students received their education in the dormitories managed by their 'Guru' (teacher). Education was free. The pupils were not required to pay the tuition fee but usually offered voluntary gifts called 'Guru Dakshina', on completion of their studies. Education was not a matter of State policy but a voluntary enterprise of teacher and free from any official interference. But higher education was generally restricted to the Brahmins. These 'Gurukulas' or 'Tols' further expanded and assumed popular forms during the Ahom days.

With the spread of Neo-Vaishnavism in the Sixteenth Century, a new institution called 'Satra', gradually developed in different parts of the State and became a potent source of education and cultural activities. In the words of S.N. Sarma, "The cultural history of Assam in respect of the fine arts and crafts of education and learning since the beginning of the Sixteenth Century till the advent of the British, largely developed centering round Vaishnava movement which in turn found expression through the Satra institution. Besides Namghars (Prayer Halls), these Satras used to maintain Sanskrit schools and the services of reputed teachers were requisitioned to run these schools. Thus a Satra was not only a religious institution but also a school and library and encouraged the spread of education among the masses. Vaishnavite movement also gave fillip to the development and study of Assamese language. A number of Sanskrit works, particularly religious scriptures, were rendered into Assamese and gradually Assamese language took the place of Sanskrit as a medium of instruction and expression. In the Tols and Satras education on the subjects, both secular and spiritual, was generally imparted. The curriculum of studies included Sanskrit literature, grammar, philosophy, law, astrology, the Vedas, the Bhagavata,
Gita and Puranas. Much stress was laid on memorization of Sutras and commentaries. Subsequently with the increase of the number of Muslim population, Madrassas were opened. Both in Tols and Madrassas, the three 'R's were also taught but in the Madrassas, Urdu and Islamic learning were additional subjects.

But by the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, these Satras due to the decline of former royal patronage ceased to be important educational institutions. The history of the Satra institution since the beginning of the Nineteenth Century was marked by a growing spirit of conservatism and orthodoxy in place of catholicity which characterised the early history of the institution. Women and so called socially backward people were debarred from entering the prayer-halls of the Satras.  

Intolerance towards the beliefs of other sects, undue emphasis on anything bearing the stamp of tradition, superstition, lack of missionary zeal on the part of Satradhikars and their assistants and similar trends were the causes of the malice from which the institution suffered, despite the brilliant contributions it made in the cultural

life of the people. The Satra no longer enjoys the same enviable status which it used to do formerly.

Education in Assam at the close of the Ahom Rule was in doldrums due to the confusions created by civil strifes, insurrections, Burmese aggression, and depredations of the hill-tribes. As such, when the British took over the possession of Assam, education reached its lowest ebb. No doubt there were some Tols where instructions were imparted by the Pundits and the attainments of some of these Tols, in the words of Prof. Lidden, on the whole were respectable. Initially, the British Government was not enthusiastic about the introduction of English education but was inclined to promote indigenous system of education. Accordingly, Mr. Scott, the then Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, obtained in 1826 the sanction of the Government of India for the establishment of a number of schools in Assam. Eleven schools were established which were mostly in lower Assam. These were at Guwahati, Milachal, Naduar, Patidarrang, Hajo, Bajali, Seela, Vishwanath, Nowgong and Desh Darrang (Mangaldai).

"However, for various reasons these schools could not attract the indigenous people at the beginning. The aftermath of the turmoil unleashed
by the Burmese invaders had led to the virtual
closure of all the traditional educational insti-
tutions. The Ahom nobility was also not very much
enthusiastic about the modern education imparted
in the English schools. One more important feature
of the educational system of the period was the
introduction of Bengali in schools as well as in
offices. This measure alienated the indigenous
people from the ruling section and the former mostly
kept themselves aloof from the precincts of the
schools. The British Rulers inducted a large number
of Bengalis as clerks and the petty officers in all
districts of Assam, and the local people were
generally deprived of the benefits of employment.
Gradually the popular zeal for education was whetted
up by the prospects of Government jobs such as
Mandals, who were petty Government officials. In
the Court also the services of English knowing
lawyers were indispensable. According to the Report
of the Public Instruction, 1857-58, a number of
schools were established in the interior area, and
the villagers not only erected buildings but also
helped in the management of the schools. The number
of pupils in these schools in the Darrang District,
according to the Report, was 86 in 1857-58. During
the same year, to encourage these institutions,
Government also introduced a scheme of subsidy, under which a grant of Re. 1/- per mensem was made for every ten boys under instruction.  

"Mr. Jenkins did the pioneering work in propagating western education amongst the Assamese. He was also successful in achieving his objectives of paving the ground of training local Assamese youths for filling up the vacancies in Government offices.

Among the unofficial organisations, the Christian Missionaries rendered the greatest service to the cause of spreading of western education among the Assamese. A number of vernacular schools were established by these Missionaries to encourage the study of English as well as Assamese language. In this regard, the contribution made by the American Baptist Mission is notable. The benevolent Commissioner Major Jenkins will be remembered by all for his untiring efforts of preparing the ground and who sowed the seeds which germinated and bore fruit early in the next Century.

The schools of the District were divided into five distinct grades, viz., High, Middle English, Middle Vernacular, Upper Primary and Lower Primary.

High schools were recognised by the Calcutta University and they prepared the students for the Entrance Examination. The boys were taught from the earliest stage of their education up to Entrance course as was prescribed by the University of Calcutta. English was the medium of instruction in the first four classes of High schools. In the lower classes and other schools, vernacular was the medium of instruction. The course of instruction in the Middle English and Middle Vernacular schools was the same except that English was taught in the former and not in the latter. The standard of instruction was not up to the mark and efforts were made to improve the same by raising the rates of pay of the teachers to Rs. 8/- per mensem for certificated and Rs. 5/- per mensem for uncertificated teachers supplemented by capitation grants at rates ranging from 3 annas to 6 annas for pupils in three highest classes.

Although schools were opened in different parts of the Darrang District, the orthodox Hindus were sceptical about the outcome of education that was divested of the long cherished social values. To the tribal people the education did not appear to be need oriented. However, the 20th Century witnessed a remarkable change in the social outlook.
and phenomenal growth of literacy in the District of Darrang."

As mentioned in the preceding Chapter, the Bodo-Kacharis did not avail of any educational facilities which were available at that time due to many reasons.

A large concentration of Bodo-Kachari population is found in the tribal belt comprising Tangla, Paneri, Udalguri, Kalaigaon, Dalgaon, Majbat and Mangaldai areas in the Mangaldai Sub-Division of the Darrang District. From our investigation in these places, we found that the percentage of literacy among the Bodo-Kacharis living in these areas is much lower than that obtained among other communities of the same areas. It is also evident that prior to the independence of the country, the Bodo-Kacharis used to attend the local schools in Assamese medium where the percentage of literacy was quite negligible. After the attainment of independence, however, more and more Bodo-Kachari people became education-conscious and began to attend general schools through Assamese medium.

Until 1960, they appeared not to be concerned much about the problem of medium of instruction, though some attempts were made by the tribal people, in general, for the development of tribal education before 1940 as mentioned in the foregoing Chapter. But with the passage of time, they became conscious of their own language. Some enthusiastic Bodo-Kachari elites took up the work of culture and improvement of the Bodo dialect into a language. And ultimately they have developed it to a considerable level and demanded introduction of the Bodo language as medium of instruction in schools. It is heartening to note that the Bodo language has since been introduced as medium of instruction from Primary to Higher Secondary level in the schools situated in the localities predominantly inhabited by the Bodo-Kacharis. But our investigation through personal contacts with the people during our visits to the fields reveal that the larger number of the Bodo-Kacharis did not opt for the Bodo medium of instruction due to certain reasons.

The need for expanding the facilities for pre-school education is being increasingly stressed upon. Unfortunately, in the tribal belt
of the Mangaldai Sub-Division, no efforts appeared to have been made for providing facilities for pre-school education. There was a Balwadi in Kalaigaon which was expected to have provided facilities for pre-school education. But its wretched condition at present has nullified all hopes for such facilities in future.

The Constitution of India envisages the provision of free, universal and compulsory education for children up to the age of fourteen years. Article 46 lays down that the State should provide with special care for the educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the people in general and of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in particular and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Keeping this end in view, the State Governments as well as the Central Government envisage some schemes to be implemented for the progress of the tribal people — educationally, socially and economically. This point has been dealt with in greater detail in the preceding Chapter.

The state of education in the Mangaldai Sub-Division including the Bodo medium of instruction has been adequately narrated in the Report of
the Secretary of the Mangaldai District Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1975-77. The said Report is reproduced below.

"In Mangaldai Sub-Division, the children of the Bodo-medium Primary Schools received the 'Thorai-Bijoib' in Devanagari script in the later part of the month of August, 1975. The one month Devanagari Script Seminar for the Bodo-medium Primary teachers was held in a few centres in the Mangaldai Sub-Division in between the months of October and November, 1975.

The Eighth Annual Session of the Mangaldai District Bodo Sahitya Sabha was held at Nouherua on the 8th and 9th February, 1976. The Session appreciated the Bodo Sahitya Sabha's acceptance of the Devanagari Script for the Bodo language.

The Executive Committee Meeting of the Mangaldai District Bodo Sahitya Sabha was held four times during 1975-77. It is painful to say that the Mangaldai District Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the Bodo
people have always been facing numerous serious problems on the way of implementing Bodo medium in Mangaldai Sub-Division. Many serious problems have been explained to the Government for finding out solution. But to our utter disappointment it has been found that the already existed problems in Bodo medium education in the Mangaldai Sub-Division have been further deteriorating during the last few years.

Bodo medium has been introduced in secondary stage in Class V in Mangaldai Sub-Division in 1973 and it has been upgraded to Class VIII in 1976. The medium has so far been introduced in 17 Middle Schools and 5 High Schools in this Sub-Division. During the last three academic sessions beginning from 1973, the posts of only 10 teachers have been sanctioned as against the minimum requirement of 61 posts of teachers for Bodo-medium implemented Middle Schools including 12 Bodo-medium implemented High Schools. The Managing Committees of these Schools are voluntarily managing the Bodo-medium sections by
appointing teachers from their own fund which is not possible to be continued for long.

In the minimum, 21 posts of Bodo knowing Hindi teachers are required for the secondary stage in the Mangaldai Sub-Division. But no post of such Hindi teachers has yet been sanctioned and as a result, the Bodo-medium students are being deprived of proper facilities of learning Hindi.

Also, the Bodo-medium implemented Middle and High Schools in the Mangaldai Sub-Division are not provided with additional rooms for the Bodo-medium section.

The Bodo medium was introduced in Khoirabari High School in the beginning of the academic session 1975-76. But the medium was ousted from the school in the midst of 1975. 21 Bodo-medium students who were admitted had to discontinue their study in the said school. In 1976 also 30 Bodo-medium students
sought admission into this school in the beginning of the academic session. In spite of repeated requests by the students and the guardians, the authority remained reluctant to open Bodo-medium section in the said school and refused admission. So, a new Bodo-medium school of secondary stage had to be started at Khoirabari in the academic session 1976-77.

In Danda Saharia High School at Rowta Chariali, Bodo-medium was introduced in 1973 and it was to be upgraded to Class VIII in 1976. In spite of the great demand of the public, the said school had refused to upgrade the Bodo-medium to Class VIII. The Bodo-medium section had to be bifurcated from this school. A separate Bodo-medium school in the name of Joy Bhadra Hagjer High School has been started at Rowta Chariali in the beginning of the academic session 1976-77. Both the schools have no buildings and have to depend entirely upon the public contribution for the maintenance. The Government has taken a policy to remove
the difficulties in maintenance of classes in a Primary School with single teacher by appointing at least one additional teacher to it. There are a number of such Bodo-medium Primary Schools in the Mangaldai Sub-Division.

There are also a number of Bodo-medium implemented venture Primary Schools within the Bodo populated areas in the Mangaldai Sub-Division."

From the above-mentioned Report it becomes clear that the Bodo people want the implementation of the Bodo language as medium of instruction from the Primary level to the Secondary level of education.

The following table shows the total number of Bodo-medium Schools in the Mangaldai Sub-Division.

**TABLE 27**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Provincialised</th>
<th>Ad-hoc</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Primary Schools</td>
<td>225 Nos.</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>225 Nos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Middle Schools</td>
<td>17 Nos.</td>
<td>5 Nos.</td>
<td>22 Nos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. High Schools</td>
<td>2 Nos.</td>
<td>10 Nos.</td>
<td>12 Nos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Office of the Director of Public Instruction, Government of Assam)

In the following three Centres of the Mangaldai Sub-Division, the High School Leaving Certificate Examination in Bodo language is conducted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Centre</th>
<th>Name of the School</th>
<th>(*)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dalgaon</td>
<td>Danda Saharia High School, Rowta Chariali.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tangla</td>
<td>Harisinga High School, Harisinga.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dalgaon</td>
<td>Kabirali High School, Kalaigaon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is, however, to be noted that while I toured in the villages inhabited by the Bodo-Kachari people in the Mangaldai Sub-Division, it was gathered that most of the Bodo-Kacharis do not know their Bodo language; and that they even expressed their desire to get their children educated through the Assamese language. The reason for their preference to the Assamese language appears to be the non-availability of sufficient number of text books in Bodo language and other facilities. Moreover, the Bodo language is said to be still in a developing stage, and it will perhaps take quite some more time to come up to a certain standard of upliftment for the Bodo language. But it deserves appreciation that the Bodo-Kacharis are quite capable of raising the standard of the education among their own tribesmen.

(*) Source: Board of Secondary Education, Assam.
Most of the Bodo-Kacharis in the Mangaldai Sub-Division are illiterate in the sense that they can write their own names only, but they do not have any educational qualifications; and only 524 persons of the Bodo-Kacharis had their education up to the Primary level, and 30 persons among the Bodo-Kacharis became Matriculate as revealed by the 1961 Census Report. The following table shows the increase in the number of persons in the level of literacy and education among the Bodo-Kacharis during the decade 1961-71 in the Mangaldai Sub-Division.

**TABLE 28**

Growth of Literacy among the Bodo-Kacharis of the Mangaldai Sub-Division during the decade 1961 to 1971.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
<th>Increase Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Illiterate Persons</td>
<td>30,232</td>
<td>84,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Literate and Educa-ted Persons</td>
<td>3,015</td>
<td>17,943</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Census Reports of 1961 and 1971)

It is evident from the above table that there has been a galloping increase in the number of persons with literacy as well as in different educational levels during the decade. The following table shows the different levels of education among the Bodo-Kacharis of Mangaldai Sub-Division in 1971.
### TABLE 29: Educational Levels of the Bodo-Kacharis of the Mangaldai Sub-Division according to 1971 Census (Police Station-wise)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Paneri PS</th>
<th>Udalguri PS</th>
<th>Majbat PS</th>
<th>Kalaigaon</th>
<th>Dalgaon</th>
<th>Mangaldai</th>
<th>Sub-Division Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Literate without educational level</td>
<td>4489</td>
<td>77.52</td>
<td>5187</td>
<td>74.79</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>74.80</td>
<td>1849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Primary or Junior Basic</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td>21.76</td>
<td>1674</td>
<td>24.14</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>24.13</td>
<td>616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Matriculation or Higher Secondary</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. University Degree or Post-Graduate Degree other than technical Degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Technical Degree/Diploma equal to Degree/Post-Graduate Degree</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5791</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>6935</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2492</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Unpublished Figures of the 1971 Census relating to the Darrang District.)

(Note: The Figures of percentage shown in the table are in relation to the total number of literate persons among the Bodo-Kacharis as given in the "Total" column of the table.)
The Table 29 at page 200 shows that the Paneri Police Station has the highest percentage of literates without educational level while the Mangaldai Police Station gives the lowest percentage (that is to say, 77.52% and 70.28% respectively). In the level of Primary or Junior Basic, however, the position is just the reverse — with 27.48% Mangaldai goes to the top, and Paneri returns the lowest 21.76%

In case of Matriculation/Higher Secondary level and also University Degree or Post-Graduate Degree level as well the Mangaldai Police Station showed the highest percentage (1.74% and 0.50% respectively), while the Paneri Police Station has again found itself at the bottom (0.69% and 0.03% respectively) in regard to both the levels of education mentioned above.

In the ultimate analysis it may be said that the Bodo-Kacharis showed a marked progress in the field of education during the decade 1961 to 1971 as is evident from the data exhibited in table 28 at page 199.

The progress of education among different tribal groups has also been marked. There is variation in literacy among the tribal groups themselves in the Mangaldai Sub-Division as shown in table 30.
TABLE 30

Tribe-wise Literacy in the Mangaldai Sub-Division according to 1971 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Literate &amp; Educated Persons</th>
<th>Percentage of Literacy</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bodo-Kachari</td>
<td>1,02,227</td>
<td>17,943</td>
<td>17.55%</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rabha</td>
<td>11,855</td>
<td>1,886</td>
<td>15.91%</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kachari including Sonowal</td>
<td>14,350</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>15.30%</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Census Report of 1971 (Provisional))

The above table shows that the literacy and education among the Bodo-Kacharis of the Mangaldai Sub-Division reached comparatively the highest level amongst all the tribal groups of people as they ranked first among the important tribal groups of the Sub-Division in the matter of literacy and education. This is so perhaps because of their superior position in the degree of acculturation and exposure to different culture which makes considerable contribution towards adoption of education at a faster rate than that of the other tribal groups.
**TABLE 31**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Literate &amp; Educated Persons</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. General Population</td>
<td>8,34,574</td>
<td>1,21,845</td>
<td>44,924</td>
<td>1,66,769</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(14.60%)</td>
<td>(5.38%)</td>
<td>(19.98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bodo-Kacharis</td>
<td>1,02,227</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>4,943</td>
<td></td>
<td>17,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(12.72%)</td>
<td>(4.83%)</td>
<td>(17.55%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Census of 1971, Darrang District)

(Note: The figures within the parentheses indicate the percentage of Literate and Educated Persons of each class to the total population of the respective group.)

The table above shows that the progress of the Bodo-Kacharis in the matter of literacy and education is well comparable with that of the General population of the Sub-Division. The literacy among the Bodo-Kacharis is 17.55% as against the General population's 19.98% for 1971. Moreover, the overall
percentage of literacy of the Bodo-Kacharis has recorded an improvement over the position obtained in 1961. According to 1961 Census, there were only 3,015 persons who were literate and educated among the Bodo-Kacharis of the Mangaldai Sub-Division numbering 33,247 in all. Thus, the percentage of literacy among the Bodo-Kacharis of the Mangaldai Sub-Division was 9.07% in 1961 which increased almost two-fold during the decade 1961-1971. Besides, it is found that the percentage of male literacy of the tribe is higher than that of their female folk.

**ENROLMENT OF THE CHILDREN IN THE SCHOOLS:**

In most of the schools of the Mangaldai Sub-Division, the position in regard to enrolment of the Bodo-Kachari children is found to be very low. From our investigation we have found that this is mainly due to parental indifference and apathy towards education. In the sampled villages only 38 per cent of the school-going children of the age-group of 6-11 years have been attending schools. There are a number of reasons advanced for not sending their children to the schools. The main reasons, which are also very common, are stated in the following table.
TABLE 32

Reasons for Poor Enrolment of Bodo-Kachari Children in Schools (Parents’ Explanation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons stated by the Parents</th>
<th>No. of Responses Received</th>
<th>Percentage of Responses Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Help in the household work</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Occupied with cattle grazing</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Children not interested in education</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Children's ill-health</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total :</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons for poor enrolment of the Bodo-Kachari children in the schools as tabulated above were revealed to us by the parents interviewed during our field investigation in the Mangaldai Sub-Division for the purpose ascertaining the causes of poor enrolment in the schools. Out of 175 parents interviewed by us, 70 parents (40%) stated that the children were needed to help the parents in household works and as such they could not afford to send their children to schools. Some 40 parents (22.86%) stated that their children had to be engaged in cattle-grazing work, while some others numbering 30 parents (17.14%) told us that the children were not interested at all in education nor did they like to go to schools. Ill health of the children again was another reason for poor enrolment in the schools as revealed by some parents numbering 35 (20%) interviewed by us.
The teachers and some distinguished persons of the Mangaldai Sub-Division were also asked to give reasons for the poor enrolment of the Bodo-Kachari children in the schools in those areas. The opinions are given in the following table.

**TABLE 33**

Reasons for Poor Enrolment of Bodo-Kachari Children in Schools (Opinions of the Teachers and some other Prominent Persons of the Area).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons Stated</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lack of interest in education among the parents</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Poverty</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>46.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lack of Interest in education among the children</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong>:</td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in the above table show that the Bodo-Kachari children do not attend schools mostly for economic reasons. Lack of interest among the parents towards education of their children, as disclosed by the teachers and others, may be due to the priority given by the parents to the economic pursuits over the necessity of schooling of their children. For the above mentioned reasons, the enrolment of the children of the Bodo-Kacharis is poor in the schools.
"Extreme poverty is the main problem of backwardness in the field of education."

Photograph of poverty-stricken children in a Bodo-Kachari village.
MAIN CAUSES OF EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS OF THE BODO-KACHARIS IN THE MANGALDAI SUB-DIVISION:

POVERTY AND POOR ECONOMIC CONDITION:

Extreme poverty is the main problem of backwardness in the field of education. It is found that most of the Bodo-Kacharis have been facing grinding poverty. Poverty is also said to be one of the contributory factors of population growth. In a family there are more than seven or eight children and they are living in the most pathetic conditions. The children remain naked or half-naked as their parents are not in a position to provide them even with a single piece of cloth. They can not think of sending their children to the nearby school nor can they improve their economic conditions due to certain factors. Though they are agriculturists by occupation, they do not have enough of land for cultivation. Whatever meagre income they earn from cultivation is quite inadequate to meet even the bare minimum needs of their life. It has also come to our knowledge that in their villages and townships, there is not found any organisation of their own to motivate and encourage the Bodo-Kacharis for their well-being and upliftment. As a result, the
kids are engaged either in the household work or to render help and assistance to their parents in the fields.

**IGNORANT PARENTS:**

It is also a serious concern that the parents are quite ignorant as well as indifferent about education of their children. Many a parents do not even realise the importance and necessity of education. They are basically interested in the matter of earning some livelihood through their traditional ways, that is to say, the primitive way of cultivation of land. Naturally, they are not interested in the matter of education, and are very much afraid of sending their children to the school. This is regarded one of the major handicaps to the educational development among the Bodo-Kacharis. Although the Adult Education Programmes have been implemented to a certain extent, it is not found to be successful due to lack of enthusiasm on the part of the parents. Formal education of the Bodo-Kacharis is also not so satisfactory. Adoption of an innovation and its spread largely depends not only on the facilities and resources but also on the attitude of the people towards the new elements.
But one should know that attitude itself is conditioned by other factors. Sachchidanand observed, "Acceptance, willing participation and the wholehearted co-operation between the people and the change agents facilitate the process of extension of an innovation to a greater extent. When an innovation does not come into conflict with and does not jeopardise the existing socio-cultural system, there will not be any opposition for its acceptance or for its diffusion. Several writers pointed out that the tribals look upon modern formal education with suspicion, for they feel that it engenders disequilibrium in their socio-cultural system and detribalises the younger generations." 10

Another observation, as reported by the Elwin Committee, indicates, "Many tribal parents regard the spread of education with apprehension, for they feel that their boys and girls will be turned into 'Sahibs' and 'Mem-Sahibs' with new and expensive habits which they can ill-afford and that when they have left school they will leave their homes." 11


In order to know the attitude of the parents (Bodo-Kachari) in the Mangaldai Sub-Division towards education of their children, we have collected opinions both from the heads of the families and the teachers as well of the particular area (Kindly refer to the tables 32 and 33 at pages 205 and 206 respectively). The purpose of collecting those opinions is to know the two sides of the problem so that we can have a clear perspective. In some cases, it has been revealed that the parents are in favour of modern education.

But from the opinions of the teachers, it could be gathered that the Bodo-Kacharis are negatively inclined to education. They are quite indifferent towards education. Though in certain cases, they are found to be in favour of education, they do not actively participate in the process of education of their children; thus practically there is no involvement of the Bodo-Kachari parents in educating their children. They do not take interest in the development of education either of their own children or in their village or locality. It is also gathered from our discussion with, and the opinions of, some teachers and prominent Bodo-Kachari persons that the tribal leaders do not seem to be taking any
sort of interest or active part in the education of the children of the tribe. They do not take interest in the development of the schools and education of the tribal children.

**IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE:**

Most of the Bodo-Kachari children are very irregular in attending the school. This is perhaps largely due to the indifferent attitude of the parents concerned regarding maintenance of regularity in attendance by their children. In this respect, the role of the teacher is also equally important in ensuring the regularity in attendance of his pupils; but from our field investigation, we had had the painful impression that the teachers, in some cases, were found to have played a passive role in maintaining the regular attendance of the pupils, which is undoubtedly detrimental to the spread and development of education under any given condition.

**DEARTH OF PROPERLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS:**

Dearth of properly qualified teachers is one of the reasons for educational backwardness among the Bodo-Kacharis. The number of
teachers is not adequate. Moreover, the teachers are not trained in Devanagari scripts. It may be mentioned here that the Bodo-Kacharis are the original inhabitants of Assam, and they are directly influenced by the Assamese language. In other words, they are quite familiar with the Assamese language. The use of Devanagari script, which is unfamiliar and foreign to them, appears to have hampered the process of learning among the Bodo-Kachari children.

THE SCHOOL BUILDING AND EQUIPMENT:

Dilapidated conditions of the school buildings do not attract the tender minds of the children. Most of the school buildings do not have roof or walls even. The children use to sit on gunny sacks or 'Dharis' (bamboo mats) while taking lessons in the class-room. Furniture like desks and benches for the children in the class-room are very rare things to be found in a school of the area. Besides, non-availability of the essential items of teaching aids such as maps, charts, chalks, blackboards, globes, etc. is also marked badly.
COMMUNICATION:

Communication has been a major problem in the villages. Further, the number of schools in the tribal areas being very scanty and situated so far apart, and the surrounding villages being, at the same time, so scattered — even extending to a radius of 8 to 10 kilometres from the location of the schools — that the students have to travel a long distance to attend schools. There are no adequate facilities or arrangements for transport and communication. Because of these difficulties, enrolment as well as attendance of students in the schools situated in the tribal areas have been miserably low.

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION:

Language is a major problem in tribal education. It is a controversial aspect even now in regard to the medium of instruction. Previously the Bodo-Kacharis got themselves educated through the medium of Assamese language. Now their dialect has been cultured and improved and the Bodo language has been recognized as a medium of instruction from the Primary School level. But mention may be
made here that in the Bodo-medium sections of the schools, the enrolment as well as the attendance are found to be very low than that in the Assamese medium sections. Most of the Bodo-Kachari students are found to have preferred Assamese-medium to Bodo-medium. It is also worthwhile to mention here that a large number of Bodo-Kacharis speak Assamese language instead of their own dialect at home.

IRREGULARITIES IN ATTENDANCE OF TEACHERS:

Irregularity in attendance of the teachers is found to be a common feature in the schools situated in the interior villages. This irregularity in attendance on the part of the teachers as well as of the students has combinedly brought about a cyclical affect in that, expecting one to be irregular, the other would not be regular. Consequently, the schools virtually remain closed for a number of days together.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL INSPECTORS:

It is also gathered that the Inspectors of the schools hardly pay any visit to the schools. One can not deny the fact that the proper functioning of a school depends largely on the effective and regular
supervision and inspection by the authorities concerned who must be sincere and serious in their purpose.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN EDUCATION:

It should be known to all that a child learns from his mother's lap. In our country the period of infancy, the very basis of human life, is neglected very much. It is because the mothers are not educated properly and adequately. In Bodo-Kachari society though the women are enjoying the same status like their man-folk yet they are not advanced educationally. As mentioned earlier, the percentage of the male literacy of the Bodo-Kachari population is 12.72%, whereas the percentage of female literacy to the total Bodo-Kachari population is 4.83% only according to 1971 Census in the Mangaldai Sub-Division: (Kindly refer to table 31 at page 203). We find that the Bodo-Kachari women are lagging behind in many respects. It is also found that the males among the Bodo-Kacharis do not encourage their females for the education of the latter. Moreover, among the children who do not go the schools, the girls of the Bodo-Kachari tribe constitute the bulk of the lot. It is because their services are utilised mostly for house-hold work.
PROGRAMME OF ADULT EDUCATION:

It is to be pointed out that the number of illiterate persons among the Bodo-Kacharis is far greater than the number of literates. The percentage of literate and educated persons to the total population of the Bodo-Kacharis is 17.55 per cent only. In view of this fact, emphasis should be given on the importance and effective implementation of the Adult Education Programmes. A few Adult Education Centres have been set up in some places of the Mangaldai Sub-Division. But, according to our information, these are not functioning as expected of them.

STAGNATION AND WASTAGE:

Stagnation and wastage being the main problems affect all educational institutions. Absenteeism, irregularity in attendance and lack of interest of the students in their studies have been reflected in stagnation. The students remain in the same class for years together. This hinders the progress of development of education. The Bodo-Kachari students are also not immune from this vicious problem.
The problem of drop out in case of the Bodo-Kachari children is a serious one and it has virtually pushed the children into the reign of ignorance. The survey in the Mangaldai Sub-Division undertaken by us reveals that the incidence of drop out among the children in the age-group of 6-14 years is 96.60 per cent. The table below prepared on the basis of our observation in some thirty schools of the Mangaldai Sub-Division will show the effect of wastage in the progress of education among the Bodo-Kachari students.

TABLE 34
Incidence of Drop Out among the Bodo-Kachari Students of Mangaldai Sub-Division (Taken from the records of 30 Schools from the year 1971 to 1978).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pupils on the Rolls of Class</th>
<th>No. of Pupils Enrolled</th>
<th>No. of Drop Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Class I</td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Class II</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Class III</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Class IV</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Class V</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Class VI</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Class VII</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Class VIII</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total No. of Drop Out (1971-78) = 1,080

(Percentage of Drop Out = 96.60%)
From the table 34 at page 217 it will be seen that out of a total Bodo-Kachari students numbering 1,118 on the rolls of some thirty different schools of the Mangaldai Sub-Division in Class I in 1971, only 38 could reach upto the Class VIII in due course in 1978, thus leaving as many as 1,080 drop out behind them throughout the years from 1971 to 1978. The above noted table gives us the percentage of drop out as 96.60% which is rather abnormally high by any standard. Such an abnormally high rate of wastage is considered extremely detrimental to the spread and development of education among the Bodo-Kacharis of the Sub-Division.