CHAPTER - IV.

POPULATION.

Lakhimpur is the biggest district of the plains division of Assam but stands second to Kamrup, so far the strength of population is concerned. According to the 1961 census figures the total number of population was 15,59,352 persons distributed at an average rate of 312 persons per square mile, which accounts for about 13 percent of the total population of the State of Assam. During the last decade between 1951 and 1961, there has been an increase of population by about 38.85 percent. These general statistics of population depict a very simple demographic pattern of the area in question. But a thorough analysis of it reveals very interesting as well as features of great significance especially in this age of planning and Development.

Splitting the administrative tie, if the Dhemaji thana and the north bank portion of Sadiya thana are added to the North Lakhimpur Sub-division, the district could be divided into two distinct natural regions viz. the Northern plain and the southern plain. So far the distribution and the density of population is concerned a great disparity is observed in between the regions. The southern plain contains about 70 percent of the total population of Lakhimpur, which are scattered at an average rate of 440 persons per square miles. On the other hand the north plain supports the rest, but the average density is little more than 186 persons per sq. miles. The disparity in distribution is clearly understood from the thana-wise density of population.

*Source - Superintendent of Census Operation, Assam - 1961, Shillong.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thana</th>
<th>Density per sq.miles</th>
<th>Thana</th>
<th>Density per sq.miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doom Dooma</td>
<td>- 541</td>
<td>Sadiya</td>
<td>- 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinsukia</td>
<td>- 631</td>
<td>Dhemaji</td>
<td>- 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
<td>- 419</td>
<td>Dhakuakhana</td>
<td>- 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moran</td>
<td>- 552</td>
<td>N. Lakhimpur</td>
<td>- 267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has already been pointed out in a former chapter under the heading - Early settlement, that a continuous western migration of people is observed in the northern plain. The single most important factor, effecting this migration is the perpetual flood ravages of the plain. This natural eviction has caused the concentration of population in the western part of the northern plain, especially in Bihpuria thana.

Migration of population from the southern districts and from Mynansing to these areas began prior to 1931. Mr. C.S. Mullan, I.C.S. census commissioner 1931, in his report noted that the migration was due to rapid growth of Tea gardens. Lands were not sufficient for their needs and the close proximity of the Tea gardens created a great nuisance to them as their cattle were continually impounded for straying into the gardens. The availability of waste and unsettled land, in Dhalpur, Kherajkhat mauzas of Bihpuria Thana, in Bordoloni, Nakari and Kadam Mauzas of Subansiri region, Laluk mauza of Dhakuakhana region, were the great attraction for these land hungry people. During this decade i.e. 1921-31, Swarms of refugees from Mynansing entered into this plains and settled round the earlier nucleus of settlement in

LAKHIMPUR

ONE DOT REPRESENTS ONE THOUSAND PERSONS.
SOURCE: CENSUS REPORT 1961

1. DIBRUGARH
2. TINSUKIA
3. DOOM DOOMA
4. DIGBOI
5. JOYPUR
6. MARGHERITA
7. MORAN
8. BORDUBI
9. SADIYA
10. DHEMAJI
11. DHAKUAKHANA
12. NORTH LAKHIMPUR
13. BIHPURIA

THANA AREAS.

1,000,000 PERSONS.
50,000 PERSONS.
25,000 PERSONS.
Laluk maura. Apart from the urban areas a good deal of differential densities are observed in the different rural areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thana(rural)</th>
<th>Density per sq. mile.</th>
<th>Thana(rural)</th>
<th>Density per sq. mile.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bihpuria</td>
<td>- 439</td>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
<td>- 314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.Lakhimpur</td>
<td>- 256</td>
<td>Tinsukia</td>
<td>- 529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhakuakhana</td>
<td>- 180</td>
<td>Deom Dooma</td>
<td>- 517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhemaji</td>
<td>- 145</td>
<td>Meram</td>
<td>- 552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadiya</td>
<td>- 46</td>
<td>Bordsubi</td>
<td>- 475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joypur</td>
<td>- 438</td>
<td>Margherita</td>
<td>- 196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Migration.**

The natural calamities, usually set the permanent settlements into movements as already noted. The local migration did affect the socio-economic stability of the district, but other migrations - that took place waves after waves from outside the province which over crowded a good many places was more significant. The greatest wave of East Bengal refugees came during year of partition in 1949. In 1951, 13,965 settled displaced persons were censused in Lakhimpur, though there were much more floating refugees which escaped counting, because of their uncertain habitat. Out of this mass 2,959 persons were counted in the urban tract, consisting of the towns of North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Deom Dooma and

*Source - Superintendent of Census Operation - Assam, 1961, Shillong.

** - Lakhimpur - District Census Hand Book - 1951, Shillong.
Tinsukia, the remaining 11,006 persons censused in the rural area of the district.

It is interesting to note that most of these rural settlers were Muslims from East Bengal, especially Mymensing and were productive agricultural population. The Hindu refugees on the contrary, were dependents, parasites and unproductive population. The affect of the immigration of East Bengal colonists to Lakhimpur, is clearly understood from the statement of the census officer, Mr. C.S. Kullan, I.C.S. 1931. He writes, "Probably the most important event in the province during the last twenty five years an event, moreover, which seems likely to alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than did the Burmese invaders of 1820, the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilization has been the invasion of a vast horde of land-hungry Bengali immigrants, mostly Muslims, from the districts of Eastern Bengal and in particular from Mymensing. The invasion began some time before 1911 and the census report of that year is the first report which makes mention of the advancing host."

The immigrants though constituted of vast majority of Bengalis, may conveniently be divided into four classes:

1. Immigration of tea garden labourers.
2. Immigration of East Bengal colonists.
3. Immigration of Nepalis.
4. Immigration of traders - Marwaris, Beharis, Punjabis etc.

The immigration of tea garden labourers took place since the inception of the tea industry in Lakhimpur and may be classed as productive population. According to the official statement there were 144,000 persons

2. Ibid.
who migrated to Assam as labourers in 1931. But it can not be ascer-
tained as to the total number of persons remained in Lakhimpur after the
expiry of agreement. In the year 1957, 161,842 labourers were registered
in Lakhimpur, including 71680 females and 11,787 children. This does
not give the actual picture of the total immigrants to Lakhimpur. An
equal number, though not less, have settled permanently in various parts
of the districts, who do not directly depend upon tea gardens but are
agriculturists. Every year, after termination of the agreement, consider-
able number of such labourers settle in the neighbourhood of the tea
gardens and become agriculturists, though they seasonally work in the
gardens as daily "out labourers". The expanding tea industry, provides
ample scope for further influx and residual increase of such population.

The fertile cultivable waste shapari lands of the North bank
of Brahmaputra have been the great source of attraction to the hardy
land hungry people from Pakistan. They are by nature productive and are
never parasites or floating mass, and constitute a strong working force.
Unfortunately, the colossal inflow of these muslims have become, threat
to the political security and economic stability of the country. This
unabated unflux even after the partition is due mainly to (a) absence
of natural frontier line, (b) disputed boundary zones, (c) inspiration
and asylum offered by the already migrated muslims, (d) lack of effective
control against such movements. Therefore, the abrupt increase of popula-
tion by 4,37,548 persons during the last decade is not only for natural
growth, but due largely to the pouring in of muslims and hindu immigrants
from East Bengal.

3. Ibid.

4. Statistical Abstract - Assam 1958 - Department of Economics and
The Nepali immigrants may be termed as dairy men. Large grazing
and rich chappari land with luxuriant fodder attracted these Nepalis to
Lakhimpur. In the year 1921, total number of Nepali immigrants in
Lakhimpur was 6,440 in 1931 it was 11,951 and by 1951 the total number
increased to 22,440 of which 1,283 were urban dwellers. These urban Nepalis
are either petty shop keepers or employees in various industrial concerns,
but by nature they prefer the rural areas.

North Lakhimpur Sub-division and the Digboi - Dooom Doooma - Margha-
ritha thana area of the Dibrugarh Sub-division are the Nepali predominating
regions. These reserved minded, docile and peace loving migrants remain
happy with their cattle herds and generally live on milk and milk products.

One peculiarity is seen with Nepalis that they are migratory by nature
and this group of population can not be called permanent settlers. It
is seen in most cases, that after settling in a place for a generation
or two they migrate to a new place or return to their home land. Whatever
might be their habits, it is true that Nepali migrants constitute a class
of working force and are not menacing as that of East Bengal refugees.

With the advent of the second world war, there had been a plight
of the non-indigenous population for which, the percentage growth of
population fell from 22.70 p.c. in 1941 to 17.94 p.c. in 1951, but during
the last decade the growth was more than double. The war actually opened
the avenues for traders, businessmen and skilled and unskilled labourers
from all over India to Lakhimpur. These migrants mostly settled in urban
tracts. This is the reason for which the urban population increased by
more than 160 percent during the last decade. The various industrial
concerns of Lakhimpur especially Dibrugarh Sub-division have widened
the scope for immigrations from as far as Kerala, Madras, Rajasthan and

other States of India. This abnormal rush of immigrants to the urban regions has created unprecedented congestions and has developed a great strain on the urban economy. The rapid urban growth has necessitated immediate town planning. Probably it will take years together to eliminate the centuries old defects of unplanned growth.

**Density Group.**

The northern plain including Dhemaji and Sadiya thana constitute 50.47 percent of the total land area but registers only 30.15 percent of the total population of the district. The three thanas viz. Dhemaji, Sadiya and Dhakuakhana, covering 33.08 percent of the land area, accounts for only 11.77 percent of population. Lakhimpur is the only plain district in Assam, which has as large as 14.74 percent of its area in the density group under 100. Actually the density of Sadiya as has already been shown above is only 46 persons per sq.mile. Again Dhakuakhana and Dhemaji thana together account for about 18.31 percent of the total area which fall under the density group of 100-200. These three thanas together account for 65.53 percent of the northern plain area, but registered only 39.10 percent of the population. The rest 60.90 percent of the population squeeze into 34.47 percent of the plain. Hence the region east of north-Lakhimpur thana falls under 200-400 density group where as the area west of North-Lakhimpur falls under 400-600 density group.

In the southern plain another slice of 6.16 percent of the land viz. Maharkatia comes under the density group of 100-200.

Excluding the regions of low density group, such as Dhemaji, Sadiya, Margherita and the medium density group, such as Digboi thana, the southern plain occupying 37.86 percent of the total area contains 60.30 percent
of the total population of the district. Thus this small tract of land fall under the high density group of 400-600 persons per sq.mile. Of this Tinsukia thana, covering an area of 5.54 percent and supporting 11.21 percent population of the district fall under density group of above 600. So, at present 25.36 percent of the population live in as large as 50.60 percent of the land area of the district, whereas the remaining 74.64 percent of the people remain in the rest of 49.40 percent of the area only. This position remained almost unchanged for the last three decades.

WORKING FORCE.

The strength of a nation depends upon the working force of the country. Hunger and wants, riches and comforts are the fruits of the performances of the working force of a country. Economic and social status of a community or a nation is based upon the ability and strength to produce human essentials. Dr. Jose de Castro of the University of Brasil said, "We should not be frightened by the fact that each day in the world there appear 80,000 new mouths to feed, provided that they are matched by 80,000 brains to think and create and 80,000 pairs of hands to work and produce." Recent growth of population in Lakhimpur, should not be considered as alarming in the sense that the growth has been gradually making up the deficit of working force in the potentially rich district.

Response of Lakhimpur in regard to the growth of working force is quite satisfactory. Out of the total population there were 48.2 P.C. of workers of all age group as seen from the enumeration of 1961,** compared to 43.3 P.C. of the State. So far active population is concerned it is 51.2 P.C. between the age group of 15-59 and the potential working force (growing generation of children), below 15 years of age constitute

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*Editorial—Careers and Commerce—Population and Hunger, Vol. IV, May 1964*
about 45.1 percent of the total population whereas the potential workforce and the retired force of above 60 years of age combined together gives a percentage of 45.8 percent of the total mass. This is but encouraging as she has and will have, more hands to work and produce during the immediate future.

The combined high participation rate (the percentage of working force to the total population) of both sex, is constituted of 29.8% of males and 18.4 percent of females. In Lakhimpur, the working force comprises a large number of women, 62 per 100 men. This is largely due to employment of female labourers in the tea industry and to a greater degree of participation of rural female folk in agriculture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour Force Participation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(In thousands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1961)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>1554</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>1664</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>421</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>6328</td>
<td>5545</td>
<td>11873</td>
<td>3422</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td>5137</td>
<td>2262</td>
<td>4399</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 830531 employable persons of the district 16.6 percent are recorded as non workers, of this 67.1 percent comprise of women. These people are mostly engaged in household works or are invalids. Contrary to the high participation rate of 49.3 percent in the rural areas, the urban areas recorded very low percentage of working force, about 7.2 percent. In urban areas female workers are least, 7 per 100 men. Whereas population of employable age (15-60) constituted 57.2 percent of the total population of the district. In urban areas 61.8 percent of the total population is recorded as non workers compared to 50.7 p.c. in rural areas.
The majority of the urban non-workers comprise of women numbering 54,315 against 39,271 males of which 8,655 belong to employable age-group. The position of rural areas in this regard is more precarious because the number of non-workers, having employable age is much greater - 34,538 males and 66,058 females. Considering of the conventional participation of the females in agriculture and other productive activities, the existence of large number of non-workers of employable age group indicates an acute unemployment condition in the rural areas. Further, due to duplication of work a huge number of working force is wasted in villages. It has been observed in the sample survey of the rural economic condition of Lakhimpur, conducted by the Government of Assam, that there were 25.15 p.c. of families, holding 3 to less than 10 bighas of land and 6.66 percent of families, having less than 3 bighas of land per family. It was further observed that on an average there were 6.1 members per family. A family of two persons, belonging to the employable age group can cultivate 9.7 bighas of farm land by a pair draught cattle. Therefore, the extra members either help or duplicate the work, that could be conveniently be performed by two persons only. Thus a huge wastage of man power is committed in rural areas. Now if these extra member could be provided with some subsidiary productive works, this will not only arrest the wastage of man power, but will also enhance the standard of living and will indirectly increase production. The three-consecutive development plane could touch the outer brink of this sphere and have utterly failed to give effective solutions to the age long problem of rural unemployment.


OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION.

The occupational distribution in Lakhimpur does not go at par
with the rest of the State. Agriculture being the single most important
source of employment, absorbs only 57.06 percent of the total working
force, compared to 68.3 percent of the State. Lakhimpur is the lending
industrialised district in Assam. The principal industries are tea
manufacturing, oil refineries engineering industries, saw mills, plywood factories, coal mining, timber treatment, quarrying and livestock
industries. These industries along with the household crafts engage
287 persons of every thousand workers in the district where the State
average of industrial workers is about 176 per thousand. In the previous
decade 54.5 percent and 35.5 percent of the gross population were accounted as agriculture and production class respectively. Of course this
high percentages of agricultural and industrial population included
552 per 1000 persons of non earning dependent in the former case and
436 per thousand persons in the later. Thus during the decade 1951-61,
there has been an increase of employment in both the agricultural and
industrial sectors — agriculture - 12.2 p.c. and industry 8.7 p.c.*

In agriculture two types of workers are noted — (1) cultivator
(2) cultivating labourer. There were 4,19,702 and 10,407 persons belonging
to the first and the second category in 1961 and the corresponding figures
for 1951 were 5,82,122 and 5,445. This implies that a fall of 27.9 p.c.
and an increase of 91.1 percent in the categories of cultivators and
cultivating labourers respectively in 1961 over 1951, which goes contrary
to the State or all India trend.

Next to agriculture and industry, miscellaneous sources
absorb a good amount of population. This miscellaneous sources include,
the people in administrative, educational, medical, judicial etc., jobs which provided employment to about 3.4 percent of the gross population or 7.06 percent of the total working force. The other sources of employment are construction, trade and commerce, transport and communication departments of the Central, State and private enterprises. Actual number of persons engaged in these activities are shown in Table-VIII.

**TABLE - VIII.**

(1961) *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District/State</th>
<th>In construction</th>
<th>Total p.c. of</th>
<th>In trade &amp; Commerce</th>
<th>Total p.c. of</th>
<th>In transport, storage &amp; communication</th>
<th>Total p.c. of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nos. working</td>
<td>p.c. of the</td>
<td>Total working</td>
<td>p.c. of the</td>
<td>Nos. working</td>
<td>p.c. of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>11735</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>29306</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>13281</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>33175</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>115386</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>30657</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The industry, though absorbs 28.7 percent of the total working force, includes a great variety of production works - such as mining, quarrying livestock raising, fishing, plantation, house-hold industry. The distribution of workers in these activities, as enumerated in the last census, shown in table I). In house-hold industries like weaving, spinning, cane and bamboo works, bee keeping, poultry raising etc., etc. females plays the leading role than males where the ratio of male to female is 1:3.76. The mining, quarrying, plantation, forest and livestock industries again absorbs the highest percentage of labourers.

Out of 28.7 percent of industrial workers, 23.8 percent are engaged in these industries and the rest are employed in house-hold and manufacturing activities. Again the plantation industry, of which tea is the biggest concern, absorbs 90.01 percent of the total labourers.—(under the category I, Table-IX).

GRAPH SHOWING GROWTH OF POPULATION SINCE 1901 INCLUDING RURAL GROWTH.

TOTAL
RURAL

YEARS

POPULATION IN LAKHS

1901 1911 1921 1931 1941 1951 1961
TABLE - IX.

Industrial Labourers.

LAKHIMPUR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total working</th>
<th>Mining, Quarrying, Plantation, Forestry, allied activities. (I)</th>
<th>House-hold industry(II)</th>
<th>Manufacturing (III)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>753750</td>
<td>179573</td>
<td>11580</td>
<td>25217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>23.8 %</td>
<td>1.6 %</td>
<td>3.4 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concentration of all these industries in Dibrugarh Sub-division excluding Dhemaji and Sadiya thana, has made it a big industrial belt.

In short, there has been a substantial increase in employment during the last decade - as mentioned above. The growing establishment, the discovery of oil fields in Mahakati-Moran region and the expansion of the tea industry, all have widened the future scope of employment in Lakhimpur. It may be presumed that after the completion of the industrial and power projects, the employment structure of Lakhimpur will undergo a radical change during the next decade.

POPULATION TREND.

The trend of population growth during the previous few decades was more or less phenomenal but the last census of 1961 shows a significant rise. During the last 60 years it grew by about 321.5 percent. The percentage increase was highest during the last census period which exceeded the percentage of the previous decade by about 20.91. Lakhimpur surpassed the districts of Cacnar, Goalpara, Sibsagar, Nowgong and Darrang in percentage growth of population during 1951-61. In the previous decades it surpassed not merely Goalpara and Kamrup but Sibsagar also though Nowgong had forged ahead of it, having registered the highest.
percentage rate of increase of all the district during 1951. In general, decennial growth rate during last 60 years with sex ratio exhibits a fluctuating tendency as shown below:

**LAKHIMPUR - 1901-1961.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>370,957</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>199,122</td>
<td>171,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>468,480</td>
<td>+97,523</td>
<td>+26.29</td>
<td>248,746</td>
<td>219,734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>628,101</td>
<td>+159,621</td>
<td>+34.07</td>
<td>335,685</td>
<td>292,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>778,313</td>
<td>+150,212</td>
<td>+23.92</td>
<td>428,012</td>
<td>350,301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>954,960</td>
<td>+176,647</td>
<td>+22.70</td>
<td>517,149</td>
<td>437,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>11,26,294</td>
<td>+171,334</td>
<td>+17.94</td>
<td>613,657</td>
<td>512,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>15,63,842</td>
<td>+437,548</td>
<td>+38.85</td>
<td>853,879</td>
<td>709,963</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fall in the percentage growth of population from 1931 to 1951, may be attributed to the out break of the 2nd world war. During the war years a large number of non-indigenous people moved out of the district. The great earthquake of 1950, followed by devastating floods, caused great damage to the economy and demography of Lakhimpur. For the cumulative affects of these three events, the growth of population was obviously lower than in the previous decades. The former census superintendent, for Assam, Mr. R.B. Vaghaiwalla, aptly remarked in the conclusion of his report, that "even if circumstances were normal leading to a cessation of this stream of refugees from East Pakistan, this district, would likely to reveal again heavy increase in the coming decade".


This forecast seems to be perfectly correct as the percentage increase of population has been more than doubled during 1951-61.

The physical and economic structures of the two subdivisions of Lakhimpur are dissimilar. Dibrugarh Sub-division is more suitable for tea, and is less affected by flood. It has, besides tea, coal and petroleum industry. In the recent years the discovery of new oil fields in the Maharkatia-Moran area and the establishment of Fertilizer Factory, the thermal power station at Numrup and various small scale manufacturing industries at Tinsukia and in the neighbouring regions have attracted a large amount of people, both from within and outside the country. Two exceptions of this area viz. Dhemaji and Sadiya having densities of 145 and 46 persons per sq. mile respectively, are the most backward and thinly populated part of the subdivision. Nevertheless, Dhemaji, shows a growth as high as 95.5 percent in the last decade. Sadiya and Dhemaji together have pulled quite a considerable mass of people in the recent years and their population strength is rapidly rising with the development of communications.

The three thanas of North Lakhimpur Sub-division differ from each other in population structure and in the trend of growth. The subdivision as a whole was not attractive to tea growers for its low lying and flood affected plains. The only tract in the neighbourhood of the hills, which is above the flood level contain few tea gardens. Except few saw, rice and oil mills, industrial growth has been extremely limited in North Lakhimpur. In fact this is the most backward region in whole of the Brahmaputra basin. The trend in the percentage growth of population during last three decades is shown below.
URBAN GROWTH OF POPULATION

LAKHIMPUR

1901-61
TABLE - V.

PERCENTAGE-GROWTH OF POPULATION.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Thana</th>
<th>1931-41</th>
<th>1941-51</th>
<th>1951-61</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bihpuria</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>N.Lakhimpur</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Dhakuakhana</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So far the population structure is concerned, it is seen that out of the three thanas, Bihpuria is the most attractive area having as high as 448 persons per sq. mile, whereas North Lakhimpur and Dhakuakhana have 256 and 180 persons per sq. mile respectively. There are a number of factors responsible for this heavy concentration such as (a) predominance of chappari lands suitable for agriculture and settlement (b) Disturbances from flood are minimum. (c) Influx of refugees from East and West Bengal; emigration of population from South bank, especially from Sibsagar and Nowgong district in search of cultivable land. (d) General migration of people from East to West. (e) Comparatively better communication system. In Dhakuakhana thana the abrupt rise in the percentage of population from 4.8% in 1941-51 to 59.4% during 1951-61, is due to the return of the people in large numbers who fled away after the great flood and Earthquake, besides a large number of people migrated from the Brahmaputra Char lands and from the Southern part of North Lakhimpur thana. The South eastern part of North Lakhimpur thana was woefully affected by the Subansir flood, where thousands of acres of fertile cultivable lands were made useless for extensive sand deposits.

In the Dibrugarh Sub-division, every thana is characterised by individual trend of growth. Dhamali thana surpassed all others by tremendous growth, which shot up from 11.7 percent in the previous decade to 95.2 percent during last decade. This abrupt rise is due to the same reasons as described in case of Dhakuakhana thana of North Lakhimpur Sub-division. Similarly Doom Dooma thana shows a considerable rise in percentage growth (35.5% against 4.9% in the previous decade). A large number of flood affected people from Sadiya, Saikhowa and tribal regions of N.E.F.A. migrated to Doom Dooma regions during this period. Settlement of refugees, import of tea garden labourers and their high birth rate, caused this rapid rise in the percentage. In Digboi, Bardubi, Moran and Joypur thanas, the growth rates were considerable because the natural increase was aided by a general concentration of people, due to oil exploration activities. The Margherita thana and the Dibrugarh thana, on the other hand recorded contradicting features having a rapid rise of 78% in the former and a low rate of 21.0% in the later, compared to the percentage increase of 23.8 and 28.6 percent respectively in the previous decade. The rapid growth of population in Margherita thana may be ascribed to the annexation of the Tirap transferred tract within its jurisdiction and the general influx of refugees. The retarding tendency in the Dibrugarh thana area is definitely due to plight of the population, caused by rapid erosion and flood of the Brahmaputra.

URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION.

The dissolution of the stratified society in the modern times, reformations and the industrial growth in the country developed a great urge for urban settlement. This is the main reason for which during the

2. New Railway Station at North-Lakhimpur.

3. Subansiri Bridge Construction.
last 60 years there has been rapid increase in urban population. In other
words this growth took place at a ratio of 1:4, for which one must not
be proud of. The reason is that this urban growth directly af-fected the
rural structure of our population on one hand, and stimulated the educated
mass to concentrate in urban area on the other, leaving the rural areas
under the leadership of uneducated people. Further the influx of people
into urban areas, has progressively been deteriorating the strength of
productive population in the villages, which has adversely affected the
evolutionary concept of panchayati Raj in our country.

The rural settlements are dispersed, linear or nucleated, depend-
ing on the available means of livelihood. The average density is 263
persons per sq. mile, one of the lowest in whole of the plain districts
of Assam. In the northern plain the urban growth is comparatively slower
than in the south. She has a total urban area of 2.6 sq. miles and 9774
persons, distributed at an average of 3833 persons per sq. mile. There
are two main reasons for such a lower pace of urban development in this
part. The first is the lack of well developed communication and the second
is the absence of industry. The few tea gardens situated on the south
of the foot hill region, a few saw mills in the Borzeng-selek-Jonai
region are the only industries, of whole of the northern plain, which
have not been able to stimulate the development of better communication
and urban growth. Trade and commercial activities are equally less
developed and even today most of the villagers exchange hand woven
cloth, rice, fish, goats, ducks, chickens, peacocks, cows, bulls for salt,
milk, cloths, stationeries and other requirements. This barter is still
very actively practiced by the villagers in Dhemaji, Dhakuakhana, southern
part of North Lakhimpur thana and in Sadiya region. Since the year 1959,
with the formation of the Blocks and in the recent years the construction
of railway lines to North-Lakhipur Town and the improvement of the north
trunk road, now a National High Way, have widened the scope for rapid
development of the area. The developed villages like Dhemaji, Chauldhowa,
Barreloni, Sarayanpur, Laluk, Morkongselek etc. might achieve the status of
township within a short time if the present rate of improvement continues
unabated.

The southern plain has comparatively larger urban areas covering
18.6 sq. miles and registered 1,41,578 persons of urban dwellers in 1961,
which were distributed at an average rate of 7,604 persons per sq. mile.
The urban growth was very fast in this region as revealed by the fact that
during the previous decade the total urban area was only 6.0 sq. miles
and the total urban population was 58,335 persons. Within a period of ten
years it expanded more than three times and the population increased by
142.5 percent. The density of population varies in different towns and
in some cases it shows abrupt rise due to certain abnormal circumstances.
Dibrugarh town registered the highest density of 16,614 persons per sq.
mile. This high concentration is primarily due to reduction of the town
area by the Brahmaputra erosion. The people from the eroded areas squeezed
into the existing urban tract that has caused this high density. Next to
Dibrugarh, in order of densities come the towns of Doom Dooma, Tinsukia,
Digboi and Joypore with 8,192, 7,117, 4,899, 4,552 persons per sq.
mile respectively. Above all these areas, Digboi thana region has the lar­
gest urban tracts in the whole district.

The southern plain of the Dibrugarh subdivision is commercially
and industrially much developed. The famous tea belt of the Brahmaputra
valley lies in this plain, besides the petroleum refining industry, small
scale manufacturing industry, saw mill and plywood industry, timber treatment
industry, Brick works, Rail-way and automobile repairing workshops,
rice and oil mills etc. are found scattered in this plain. With the
discovery of the new oil fields, new townships like Duliajan, Maharkatia and Moran are rapidly developing, which has been stimulating commercial and industrial activities and its attendant services. The factor that contributed to the growth therefore, is the quantum of the economic activities in the region since the 2nd great world war.

It is true that rapid urban growth is a sign of development but an unplanned and haphazard growth inhibit the lasting effect of such growth. Our country has already been suffering from the most unfortunate effects of centuries old unplanned and disorganised activities. The evil effects of such unplanned growth, obviously come on the way of rapid regional progress.

The rural landscape of the southern plain excluding the Sadiya and Dhemaji thanas of Dibrugarh Sub-division does not present a pleasing scene. This plain is constituted of 2463.4 sq. miles of area, and records 95,0751 persons which are distributed at an average rate of 385 persons per sq. mile. The settlements are mostly nucleated and linear. The line of communication; the raised lands, undisturbed by seasonal floods, the proximity of the cultivable lands are the main factors which normally determine the settlements. The poor communication systems in the interior regions, the seasonal flood ravages in the flood plains and the river banks, commonly discourage decentralised settlements. Excepting the high lands in the south east erosion and flood always threaten the permanent settlements in rural areas and a movements of rural population in search of secured and cultivable lands is a common feature of this region. In Digboi division alone, as much as 9929 acres of forest lands have been opened up since 1960 for rehabilitation of people from flood affected areas. This division since its creation in 1.10.60 alone has rehabilitated 7574 persons naturally evicted from once fertile land.
URBAN TREND IN LAKHIMPUR.
The largest of the Tillages so far opened is the Laskhi-p«thar in the Upper Dihing Reserved Forest west block, covered an area of 3602 acres. Such forest villages are very common in the Dibrugarh division. The recent census report reveals that out of the total 3548 villages of the District 277 are uninhabited or abandoned. Dibrugarh Sub-division records the largest number of such abandoned villages amounting to 188 whereas North Lakhimpur Sub-division has 89. All these features signify an unstable position of the rural settlement.

SEX-PERCENTAGE.

The common Indian characteristics of predominance of males with exception of Matriarchal tribes is very nicely exhibited in Lakhimpur. The total population of Lakhimpur in 1961 stands at 15,63,842 of which 853,879 males and 709,963 are females or there are 831 females per thousand of males compared to the State average of 876 females per thousand males. The table-V shows the distribution females per thousand of males for the last seventy years. The variation of the ratio is not very remarkable but significant from the point of view that the female ratio remained lowest among the districts of Assam throughout the decades.

TABLE - V.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam plains</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>877</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons for this low proportion of females in the demographic structures are (i) predominance of male immigration from East Bengal, e.g. in the year 1951 there were 34,596 females for 48,991 male Bengalis in Lakhimpur of which Muslims constituted of 19,748 females and 31,706 males, (ii) low proportion of Nepali female immigrants, e.g. there were 13,542 males and 8,898 females in 1951 (iii) high proportion of males among some of the plain-tribes, e.g. Miris (iv) import of more male tea garden labourers and (v) male bias - greater care for highly prized sons than for daughters.

The fall in the female ratio during the decade 1921-31 was due to import of large male labourers for the petroleum and coal mining industries. In 1961 the decrease in female population may also be ascribed to similar reasons. Employment of more male workers in the oil industry, in light manufacturing industries and engineering works, considerable male immigration from East Pakistan and from outside the district caused a considerable fall in female population.

A good deal of variation in the sex-proportion is also marked in different sub-divisional and thana units. This variation is primarily due to varied economic activities.

**DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALES PER THOUSAND OF MALES IN VARIOUS SUBDIVISIONS AND THANAS OF LAKHIMPUR.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thana</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Thana</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dibrugarh</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>4. Dighoi</td>
<td>803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tinsukia</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>5. Jyopur</td>
<td>854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Dhakuakhana</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>8. Borojuli</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. N. Lakhimpur</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>12. Sadiya</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. North Lakhimpur</td>
<td>801</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Dibrugarh Sub-Division</td>
<td>826</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


** Source: Superintendent, Census Operation - Assam 1961, Shillong.
GROWTH OF POPULATION BY SEX RATIO
North Lakhimpur sub-division in general has higher sex ratio, and Dnakuakhana thana, an absolutely rural area records the highest female proportion. The industrial regions, viz. Dibrugarh thana, Tinsukia thana, Digboi thana and the mining region, Margherita thana show lower proportion of females for reasons mentioned above. Doom Dooma, Bordubi, Moran record slightly higher number of females, because amongst some of the tea garden labourers females outnumber the males. In 1951 census a higher female population was marked amongst some of the Tea garden labourers as shown in table-VI.

### TABLE - VI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribes</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orson</td>
<td>3846</td>
<td>5191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santal</td>
<td>17641</td>
<td>19177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munda</td>
<td>18112</td>
<td>18828</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of the female population amongst the indigenous people is low, which is neither improved by birth rate nor by influx of immigrants to Lakhimpur. The birth statistics show that from the year 1950 to 1957 there were 7302 registered male births against 7083 female births. These figures cannot be relied upon, nevertheless it conforms with sex-ratio of the indigenous population. Therefore, it seems that the disparity in sex-proportion is a common phenomenon in Lakhimpur and it will continue to remain for years to come.

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**Source:** Lakhimpur-District Census Handbook, 1951 Assam, pp. 279-283.

***
6. A typical soil creep. (Foot Hills, North Lakhimpur region).

8. A flowering Rice Field (Tengakhat)