Chapter 3
The Village Profile

This chapter will present a brief sketch about the land and the people within the study area Viz. the seven villages of Kekohati, Bhatkuchi, Deulkuchi, Dholkuchi, Khundikar, Jhargaon, and Patkijuli in North Kamrup area. As the study is based on the samples drawn from these selected seven Bodo dominated villages, in this chapter, an attempt will be made to represent the physical location of these villages along with its administrative control, population pattern, and a glimpse of the socio-economic conditions of the village.

The present study is aimed at reflecting the process of women’s empowerment amongst Bodo community, the most significant ethnic group in the Brahmaputra valley. Bodos are found in scattered pockets of Kamrup, Goalpara, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Darrang, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts of Assam. But population concentration is not same in all the districts. So far the concentration of Bodo population in north Kamrup area is concerned it is substantial in the northern part of the Rangia Sub-Division of the present Kamrup (rural) district. Of course, most of these areas are now under the newly constituted Bagsa district of BTAD.

After the formation of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), the separate self-governing area for the Bodos within the state of Assam came into existence with all constitutional status on December 7, 2003. A new mapping has been craved out within the state of Assam by integrating the Bodo dominated areas within the Brahmaputra valley. This has been done under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India (Amendment) Bill,
FIG. 3.1 LOCATION OF BTAD IN INDIA
2003 (Bill no. 39-C of 2003) as passed by the Lok Sabha on 6th August 2003. According to the new formation, the BTAD consists of four districts – (1) Kokrajhar, (2) Chirang, (3) Bagsa, and (4) Udalguri. The population patterns of the districts are as follows: (as per 2001 population census, Govt. of India.)

Table 3.1 District wise population pattern of the BTC area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>ST population</th>
<th>% of ST population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kokrajhar</td>
<td>8,98,991</td>
<td>5,28,774</td>
<td>58.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chirang</td>
<td>3,43,626</td>
<td>1,69,811</td>
<td>49.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagsa</td>
<td>7,17,642</td>
<td>3,38,630</td>
<td>47.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udalguri</td>
<td>6,71,030</td>
<td>3,17,412</td>
<td>47.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although majority of the Bodo villages in the Brahmaputra valley have been included within the BTC area, a good number of them are still left outside the jurisdiction of the BTAD area. These villages remained outside the BTAD area mainly because non-Bodo villages surround these scattered Bodo villages and has no territorial linkage.

Out of the seven Bodo villages selected for the present study, five are within the BTAD area while the remaining two are outside of it. The villages outside the BTAD area are Kekohati and Bhatkuchi, which fall within Rangia Civil Sub-Division of Kamrup (rural) district. These two villages are under the administrative control of Rangia Civil circle. The remaining five villages covered under this study, which are within the BTAD, are
Deulkuchi, Dholkuchi, Khundikar, Jhargaon and Patkijuli. All these villages are located within the newly constituted Bagsa district of BTAD. Of these Deulkuchi, Dholkuchi and Khundikar are the three villages under the administrative control of Goreswar Civil Circle and the remaining two villages of Jhargaon and Patkijuli are under Tamulpur Civil Circle. Goreswar and Tamulpur Civil Circles are within the administrative jurisdiction of Tamulpur Sub-Division under Bagsa district of the BTAD.

While selecting the villages, two have been selected from outside the BTAD area Viz. Kekohati and Bhatkuchi village. Here Kekohati village is 100% Bodo dominated village. These two villages are surrounded by non-Bodo villages but in the vicinity of the BTAD. Villagers from both the villages have seen the changing life style of their community members now living in BTAD area for which once they also actively participated in the Bodoland Movement. Another three villages selected Viz. Deulkuchi, Dholkuchi and Khundikar are within the BTAD area, but at its borderline and very close to the non-Bodo settlement. Finally, other two villages Viz. Jhargaon and Patkijuli have been selected which are well within the BTAD area and surrounded by different Bodo villages only. Therefore, these three sets of villages have difference in terms of geopolitical situation.

In case of the two villages of Jhargaon and Patkijuli a very distinct feature is the strong influence of religious ethics and practices upon the villagers. In case of Jhargaon it is the *Brahma* cult practiced by the Bodos while in Patkijuli village, the stronghold of Christianity is quite prominent. Religion has a strong bearing on the lifestyle of the villagers of both the villages. In fact, in their day-to-day life and socio-cultural
movements, the influence of the religion they are practicing is distinctly visible. For example, in Jhargaon village, the villagers do not use pork or rice beer as the Bodo people do normally, as this is not permissible according to Brahma religious faith. Likewise, in Patkijuli, under the influence of Christian missionary, the people particularly the younger generations are educationally advanced. The mothers in the village use to drop their children at the school. Even elderly citizens of the village are also smart and sober in presenting themselves with the outsiders. They do not use rice beer or pork on the consideration of health.

The selection of the villages is also done keeping in mind the changes observed in terms of economic activities, educational advancement and social awareness amongst the villagers during the pre and post Bodoland movement period. Because, the Bodoland Movement was aimed at providing an autonomous area for the Bodos, as the Movement leadership believed that this will only open up access for the all round development of the community members. The study will reflect the trend of development amongst the Bodo people living in different locations within the Bodoland Area and outside of it.

The population statistics of the villages covered under the present study is represented in the Table 3.2
### Table 3.2 Population pattern of the villages covered under the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Villages</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total non-ST Population</th>
<th>Total ST Population</th>
<th>% of ST Population</th>
<th>% of Female Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kekohati</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>48.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>47.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>46.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>47.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhatkuchi</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>33.55%</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35.19%</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>35.79%</td>
<td>51.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>35.86%</td>
<td>50.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deulkuchi</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1375</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>1211</td>
<td>88.07%</td>
<td>50.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1455</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>1282</td>
<td>88.11%</td>
<td>50.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1634</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1431</td>
<td>87.58%</td>
<td>49.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1728</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>1520</td>
<td>87.96%</td>
<td>49.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dholkuchi</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1422</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>60.48%</td>
<td>50.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>60.39%</td>
<td>50.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>58.16%</td>
<td>49.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1742</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>1019</td>
<td>58.50%</td>
<td>49.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khundikar</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>3214</td>
<td>2621</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>18.45%</td>
<td>49.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3384</td>
<td>2771</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>18.11%</td>
<td>47.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>4226</td>
<td>3527</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>16.54%</td>
<td>49.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>4435</td>
<td>3671</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>17.23%</td>
<td>49.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharghona</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1428</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>39.78%</td>
<td>48.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1505</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>40.33%</td>
<td>47.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1627</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>39.34%</td>
<td>51.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1708</td>
<td>1022</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>40.16%</td>
<td>48.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patkijuli</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>47.90%</td>
<td>46.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>48.61%</td>
<td>48.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>58.20%</td>
<td>49.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>58.23%</td>
<td>49.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 3.2 Pattern of Bodo population in the study area
The population pattern of the villages represents a mixed picture. While Kekohati village is a fully Bodo dominated village, in all other villages have a mix population pattern. In village Deulkuchi and Dholkuchi, the majority population is Bodo whereas in case of village Khundikar, the percentage of Bodo population is significantly low. In case of village Jhargaon and Patkijuli Bodo population is in near majority status. Again in case of village Bhatkuchi the percentage of Bodo population at a significant level though not in majority status. As the present study covers the period from 1985 up to 2005, the population figures for the census year of 1991 and 2001 has been reported from the Population Census figure provided by the Registrar of Census, Government of India. The population data for the year 1985 and 2005 has been arrived at undertaking house-to-house survey throughout the villages. Necessary information in this regard has also been collected from the records maintained by the village headman (Gaonburah).

3.1 About the villages

3.1.1 Kekohati

Kekohati village is located within Rangia Civil Circle under Rangia Sub-Division of Kamrup district in Assam. This village is adjacent to Bhatkuchi village. This village is a fully Bodo dominated village. Out of the total population of 850 the percentage of women population is 47.29%. Rangia is the nearest town from the village providing all urban amenities to support an easy life to the villagers. NH 37 is also just two and a half kilometers away from the villages. A cluster of non-Bodo villages from all sides covers the village; In fact, the non-Bodo villages in the north and northeast side can be seen as
the dividing zone between the BTC and non-BTC area. Cultivating land owned by the villagers mostly covers the southern and western side of the villages. There is good road communication link from the village to Rangia town. The village has the facility of electricity. But the village is yet to be covered under telephonic network. They do not have any Government health center or hospital. Neither, there is any water supply scheme. The main road runs through the village is still a gravel road. Other village roads are also not in good shape. There is one provincialised LP school in the village providing both Bodo and Assamese as medium of instruction. Some of the students attend school at nearby Jamtola H.S. School which is in the adjacent non-Bodo village of Jamtola. During the survey, the lady teacher, working in that LP school for the last 16 years informed that the number of students is increasing particularly in last few years. Even young girls are also attending school. But as we do not have sufficient accommodation and manpower to meet the growing needs, we have not been able to deliver justice to the needy one. Beyond that level the students are to depend upon the educational institutions located at Rangia town.

The family economy of most of the villagers is mainly agro based though government employees are also there. Self-employed man and women are also there in different field of activities like weaving and sericulture, piggery and poultry farming. A section of women are also engaged in commercial production of rice beer, which they consider indispensable for them to have solvency in family economy. The surrounding agricultural fields of the villages are affected by the floodwater of Nona River almost every year during rainy season. Therefore the farmer class is not very financially sound and in some cases some of them have been compelled to look for other avenues of
income generation. In the growth of the village economy, of late the adaptation of Self Help Groups (SHG) by the villagers, particularly by the women have changed the economic scenario in a significant way. At present eight SHGs are actively functioning in this village. Mostly women have constituted SHGs to promote activities like weaving and sericulture, poultry and pig farming etc.

As the village is adjacent to non-Bodo settlement, the non-Bodo component has a strong influence in the day-to-day social life of the villagers. Particularly, in the issues of socio-political interest of the locality, they are very much united and maintain a very cordial relationship. *Dwipen Basumatary, a degree level college student opines that as the village is surrounded by non-Bodo settlements and considering the long-standing cordial relationship with them, the intensity of Bodoland movement was not very high in this village even during the peak days of movement.*

In the village, there is a unit of the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU). During Bodoland movement this unit played a leading role in organizing the villagers to participate in the movement programmes. During movement period the villages ABSU unit took the leading role towards active participation of the villagers in different agitation programmes chalked by the ABSU leadership. The youth fraction of the village, both male and female, joined in the *Bodo Volunteer Force*. But after the formation of the BTAD, when the village had not been included therein, the ABSU unit in the village has become less active in comparison to those functioning within the BTAD. Of course, still they are actively participating in all the ABSU sponsored programme at their village level. The movement has brought a sense of awareness amongst the young villagers as a
result of which they have now taken up issues of development in their own areas. For instance, as a result of their repeated persuasion to the state government, the State Health Ministry recently sanctioned a state dispensary to the village. They have even started building up the village roads with the financial assistance drawn from District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). This social resurgence has equally touched the women fraction of the village. Their approach towards girl’s education has changed in a positive direction. Their adaptation of different traditional economic activities in a commercial manner and participation in Self Help Group activities involves decision-making demands going outside of home. This is an indication of women’s presence in the public sphere.
FIG. 3.3 SKETCH MAP OF VILLAGE KEKOHATI

LEGENDS
- Village Route
- Kuccha Road
- PWD Road
- Human Settlement
- Paddy Field
3.1.2 Bhatkuchi

Village Bhatkuchi is just adjacent to village Kekohati. Compared to village Kekohati, this village is both area and population wise a small village. Its population pattern reflects a mixed variety where the Bodo component is in majority and the non-Bodo fraction consists of mainly members from Assamese community along with a few Hindu Bengali families. Out of the total population of 198, the number of ST population is 127 of which 50.70 % is women. But they are living a very harmonious life. It is interesting to note that all the villagers (both Bodo and non-Bodo) can fluently speak Bodo language. It is invariably a sign of unity and mutual trust.

To the north and northeast side of the village, the human habitation and agricultural land belonging to the residents of Kekohati village is spreading over while to the south and west of the village, the cultivable land of the local villagers is spreading up to the Nona river in western direction and up to the NH 37 in the southern direction. The villagers are badly affected by the floodwater of Nona River during rainy season every year.

The village is well connected with Rangia town by road communication and depends upon Rangia town for all day-to-day requirements of family life. Most of the villagers are marginal farmer with small land holding and therefore use to have some alternative source of income for fulfillment of their economic needs. Even the women of the village also work outside home. On the whole, the villagers in this village are economically poor, at least compared to the adjacent village of Kekohati.
The village has got electricity facility but telephone link is yet to be established. No government sponsored health service facility is available in the village. The main road of the village starts from the NH 37, which ends at Kekohati village entry point. This is a gravel road looked after by the state government. During rainy season most parts of the road remains submerged under water. The remaining village roads are kuccha underdeveloped road mostly leading to the paddy field. There is one LP school with both Assamese and Bodo language as medium of instruction. According to the only teacher who is from the same village and working in that school for the last eighteen years, the school has about 80 students but they are not regular in attending school. The girl students are comparatively more regular and they are better students also. According to her observation, during recent years, almost all the guardians try provide education to their wards irrespective of boys or girls. A few students from the village also attend school at Rangia so as to get better education.

As poverty is at large in the village, in almost all families, males and females are equally engaged in different avenues of earnings except for the time of cropping season. The females are engaged in weaving and sericulture, poultry and pig farming and commercial production of rice beer. To promote these activities, they have formed Self Help Group (SHG). This village has six SHGs and most of them are engaged in weaving and sericulture and poultry farming. In the interest of these economic activities, the women folk in the villages has got an opportunity of outside exposure as they are to go out of home in connection with different activities related with their business venture. Rice beer business is, of course, carried out at individual level and they hesitate to express it to others. One Ramani Boro opined that they are aware of the fact that rice
beer business is not a socially acceptable avenue of income generation but at the same
time, living in such a condition of poverty where two square meals is not possible, there
is no such profitable and easy alternative source of income generation, which they can
adopt.

During Bodoland Movement, the villagers actively participated in it under the guidance
of the local ABSU unit. Still the ABSU unit is actively guiding the villagers in solving
their local problems. ABSU activists Dharanidhar Boro, a Degree level college student,
expressed unhappiness over the non-inclusion of the village within the BTAD area. They
had actively participated in the Movement but could not get the benefit. The ABSU
members of the villages have the feelings that had their village been included into
BTAD, the villagers would have been more benefited in terms of physical development
of the village like road communication, development school building and its up
gradation to High School level, establishment of hospital etc.
FIG. 3.4 SKETCH MAP OF VILLAGE BHATKUCHI
3.1.3 Deukuchi

Village Deukuchi is in the northeast direction of the Rangia town. The village is located in the borderline of the BTAD area bifurcating it from the non-BTAD area. The administrative control of the village is vested with the Goreswar Civil Circle within Tamulpur Civil Sub-Division under Bagsa district of the BTAD. The population pattern of the village reflects a mixed trend. Majority is Bodo. Others include Assamese Hindu community members in significant number and the remaining is indigenous Assamese Muslims and immigrant Bengali Muslims. Out of the total population of 1728, ST population stands at 1520 out of which 49.74% is women. The village has good road link with Rangia town. The general economy of the village is agro-based but a few of the villagers have government and non-government jobs also. Moreover, under the aegis of different Self Help Groups, an array of entrepreneurial activities has been taken up by a large number of villagers, particularly by the female. These activities include pig and poultry farming, weaving and sericulture and ‘Soam’ plantation by women’s cooperative body. The Self Help Groups (SHG) is very active in this village, particularly amongst the women. There are altogether eleven SHGs functioning in the village and in several cases one woman becomes the member of different SHGs. The weaving and sericulture industry and poultry farming have achieved success in this village and their handloom products have reached the overseas market. Of late, a good number of women have adopted commercial production of rice beer as a source of income generation. Simultaneously, they practice pig farming from the waste of the rice beer, which is again a very profitable business. But most of these women initially started this venture to strengthen their family economy and later they continued it as a
profitable business. In fact, many of them express willingness to continue, though it is socially not an acceptable profession. *One respondent woman, Jayamati Basumatary opines that after putting in seven days labour and raw materials what one woman can earn from weaving, the same amount of raw materials plus half the labour within the same time period produce more than double the income from the sale of rice beer. So, why do I sacrifice such a lucrative profession only because of social ethics. After all, I am to look after my family out my own income.*

This village has one H.S. School, one Junior Basic School and two L.P. Schools. All these educational institutions have the provisions for Bodo as well as Asamese medium. The village has a government health sub-center. The entire village is electrified and has partial telephone connectivity also.

The non-Bodo component of population of this village is mainly the Assamese Hindu families with a small fraction of Bengali speaking Muslim population. Prior to the Bodoland movement these villagers had very happy and peaceful social life and now in post movement period also they do not have any problem in living together. *As reported by Hitesh Nath, an Assamese Hindu Higher Secondary subject teacher that during the height of the Bodoland movement, the extremist elements had created some problem like demanding money or forcefully taking away their scooters etc. but that was an exceptional situation. The entire state was under fire and political situation was also very fluid. While the Bengali Muslim faction are mainly engaged in fishing trade along with agricultural activities, the Assamese section, like the Bodos, are either cultivators*
or having some jobs or business. On the whole, the Bodo population in this village is educationally advanced and financially also more or less stable.

Like most of the other Bodo villages, this village has also a local unit of All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and during the post movement period it is doing commendable job of rural reconstruction for the benefit of the community life with the assistance of different governmental and non-governmental agencies. They have constructed a good village library. Due to their efforts, the Rangia Deulkuchi gravel road has been improved to black topped one in 2004. They have developed awareness amongst the mothers of the village so that no child is left out from admission to the primary level education. They had put significant efforts in the prohibition of liquor amongst the community members. With the assistance of Assam Police, the ABSU unit of this village arranged a programme where free handloom and yarn and even cash were distributed amongst the women who are engaged in rice beer business. Its aim was to clean the village from the social evils resulting from the use of liquor (rice beer). But the scheme had not been able to achieve the desired success as the target group women are already into this business. In addition to these developmental activities, it also maintains a close link with the BTC leadership so that all government sponsored development programme can be affectively implemented in the area. Through SHG activities, the women have adopted different society oriented activities like granting loan to the community members, providing employment as weavers, which have benefited the society in general and the women in particular. The adaptation of SHG culture by the village women has involved them in activities outside of home and developed their awareness towards the social issues.
FIG. 3.5 SKETCH MAP OF VILLAGE DEULKUCHI

LEGENDS

Village Route
Kuccha Road
PWD Road
Human Settlement
Paddy Field
3.1.4 Dholkuchi

Village Dholkuchi is situated towards the east of Deulkuchi. This village also falls within Goreswar civil circle under Tamulpur Sub-Division of Bagsa district. River Puthimari flows through the eastern border of the village. The village has smooth road link with nearest town Rangia but during rainy season the flood water of River Puthimari disturbs this. Heavy floods of the river also affect the agricultural productivity of the village. The population pattern reflects the Bodos as majority. Out of the remaining population, although Assamese Hindu population is in majority, the village has both Assamese and Bengali Muslim population also. Out of the total population of 1742, ST population is 1019, out of which 49.85% is women. Most of the villagers are dependent on agricultural income but some of them are having government jobs also. Self Help Groups (SHG) are very active in the villages particularly among women in the areas of weaving and sericulture, pig and poultry farming. Within the village, twelve SHGs are functioning to promote different economic activities. Jamini Boro (38) and Monomati Boro (35) two young entrepreneur reported that they have jointly started a handloom unit some six years back after having a training in Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati and now they are having a big working shed where 12 weavers work regularly and products are directly sent to Guwahati market. A large section of women have opted for the commercial production of rice beer as a means of generating income for family solvency. Of course, this is done at individual level. The enlighten section of the villagers consider it as a social evil. The group of women also initially started it to get rid of poverty but now they have adopted it as a
very profitable business. In fact, ABSU and some other NGOs are trying to stop this but with a very negligible success.

Although this village is a Bodo majority one the overall population reflects a mixed population pattern. Non-Bodo fraction consists of mainly Assamese Hindu people along with some families of Bengali Muslims, Assamese Muslims and Bengali Hindu. The family economy of the entire population of the village is mainly either agriculture or some job or small business. The Bengali Muslim fraction has the tradition of fishery business. This village has twelve numbers of fisheries owned by both Bodo and non-Bodo people.

Within the village there is one High School, one M.V. School, one Junior Basic School and two L.P.Schools. All the schools have the provisions of both Bodo and Assamese medium. For higher education the village students have easy access to Rangia town. One government health sub-center is also there. The village has got electricity but no telephone connectivity.

During Bodoland movement the villagers actively participated in all the agitation programmes under the leadership of All Bodo Students Union (ABSU). The local ABSU unit of the village spearheaded the agitation programmes in the village. There was always a good relationship amongst the members of different communities and it is still there after the formation of the BTC. Now the ABSU leaders are taking initiative in reconstruction of the village in terms of both man and material. They have made the parents aware about the education of their child so that every child can have their
education. At the same time they are rebuilding the government buildings and bridges that were once damaged during the movement period. Maneswar Boro, an ABSU activist says that without proper education of the common people, a progressive Bodoland is not just possible. Therefore, our first aim is to propagate free and affective education to the new generation at all levels. In addition to the ABSU unit, this village has a number of women’s organization working for the development of the women. One such prominent women’s organization is ‘Mahila Samabai Samiti’ runs under the leadership of one Golapi Boro. These organizations are very active, particularly with issues of social reformations like prohibition of liquor, women’s property right, prohibition of early marriage and polygamy etc.

This village is rich in weaving and sericulture. A good number of women are engaged in this activity on commercial basis. They have constituted Self Help Groups amongst themselves, which are playing a significant role in flourishing this activity. Some twelve SHGs have been formed amongst the women within the village. Two young entrepreneurs from this village had attended International Trade Fair at New Delhi with their products and have been able to send their ‘eri’ products to overseas customers. The involvement of the women in the Self Help Group works and these commercial activities forced them to work beyond the limitation of family boundary, which is a significant move towards women’s development.
FIG. 3.6 SKETCH MAP OF VILLAGE DHOLKUCHI

LEGENDS

- Enbankment
- Village Route
- Kuccha Road
- PWD Road
- River
- Paddy Field
- Human Settlement

M.E. School
High School
3.1.5 Khundikar

Khundikar is another village in the northern direction of village Deulkuchi. This village also falls under the administrative control of Goreswar civil circle within Tamulpur Sub-Division in BTC area. The village has road link with Rangia town. Most of the villagers are engaged in agricultural activities but a substantial percentage of immigrant Bengali Muslims population are engaged in small trade of fish and poultry in addition to their normal agricultural activities. In the population pattern of the village around eighteen percent population is Bodo. Next to them is the population from Assamese Hindu community. The remaining population is from Assamese Muslim and Bengali Muslim community where the former is majority. Out of the total population of 4435, the number of ST population is 764 out of which 49.48% is women. A good number of villagers are also engaged in timber business. With the beginning of Boroland movement, this timber business has started here. The people involve in this activity in Belsiri area are all Bodo people and they prefer to handover the logs to another Bodo group of Bodo businessman so as to avoid harassment from police authority. Logs are brought here by train from Belsiri area of Darrang district and processed in the village. Thus, a significant number of young Bodo people from the village get involved in this trade. Although it is an illegal business, it has brought substantial additional income to a large section of people.

The village has two L.P.Schools and a government health sub-center. Electricity has already reached the village but it is yet to have telephone link. Like the other two villages of Deulkuchi and Dholkuchi, this village also has Self Help Group (SHG)
activity particularly amongst the women. Now eight different SHGs are functioning in the village. The main areas covered under the SHGs are weaving and sericulture, poultry farming, pig farming etc. Practice of commercial production of rice beer by women for income generation of the family is also a significant economic activity in these days. The involvement of the women folk in SHG activity has given them an opportunity to work outside the private domain, which has given them an exposure to the public arena.

During Bodoland movement under the guidance of the local ABSU unit, the Bodo people in the village had active participation in all agitation programmes chalked out by ABSU leadership. Even during those days the non-Bodo fraction in the village did not like to take them into confidence. But now the situation has changed. In all socio-cultural activities, members of different communities express solidarity and show respect to each other. The non-Bodos are also enjoying amenities like pucca road, school building etc. provided by the newly created BTC authority. The village ABSU unit is looking after the interest the entire developmental programmes pertaining to the village under the new regime of the BTC. But as the Bodo population is numerically less in this village, role of the ABSU unit in this village is also less significant in comparisation to the other villages.
FIG. 3.7 SKETCH MAP OF VILLAGE KHUNDIKAR
3.1.6 Jhargaon

Another village that is included in this study is village Jhargaon. By the side of the Rangia Bhutan Road, this village is located nearing Tamulpur Bazar. In fact, Rangia Bhutan road is dividing the village into two halves of East and West Jhargaon as the local people use to demarcate it. The administrative control of the village is with Tamulpur Civil circle under Tamulpur Civil Sub-Division in Bagla district of BTAD. This village has a total population of 1708 out of which ST population is 686. The percentage of women population is 48.56%. The western part of the village is actually bigger in size and thickly populated also in comparison to the eastern part. The main occupation of the villagers is agriculture. Other economic activities like weaving and sericulture, mushroom cultivation, honeybee farming etc. are being adopted by the villagers more particularly the women. Some of the villagers including women are of course doing government job also. The residents of the eastern part have the tradition of poultry and pig farming, but the same is not seen in the western part of the village. The practice of pig farming is very rare in this village and confined with four families in the eastern part of the village. The village is well connected by road communication with Rangia town and Tamulpur bazaar. Electricity is there in the village but telephonic link is at its initial stage.

There is one L.P. School and one High School in the village. In addition to this, there is another LP school in the western part of the village run by an NGO, 'Asha Darshan' with its HQ at Tamulpur. With regard to the social life of the village, a strong impact of religion is observed. The entire western part of the village is the follower of the
'Brahma' cult of Bodo religious system, which prohibits both use of pork and rice beer. This is due to a strong abhorrence for rice beer (jau) and pork (oma bedor) in this faith. (Devi, 2004.) This village has strong network of Self Help Groups (SHG) amongst the women. About eight different SHGs have been actively working amongst the women in the village. They have weaving and sericulture, mushroom cultivation and honeybee farming. Mina Brahma (28) is working as a Primary level teacher, she runs a small grocery shop at her residence with a PCO and battery-charging unit along with her shop. She admits that the other members of her family help her in mushroom cultivation and honeybee farming projects. A women’s cooperative is running a small tent house in the village since April 2005. Women are very conscious about the education of their children. A good number of students are sent to the nearby army school at Tamulpur and the ‘Shankardev Shishu Niketan’ located in the adjacent village in spite of having a government primary school in the village.

The family economy of the most of the villagers irrespective of Bodo and non-Bodo are based on agricultural activities. In pre movement period and now in post movement period also both the Bodo and non-Bodo component of the village are living a peaceful life in the village. Sri Monoram Boro, the ‘Gaonburah’ of the village reported that this village has a substantial amount non-tribal population where majority is Assamese Hindu, but to the northeastern side some Bengali Hindu and to the extreme eastern side some Bengali Muslim families reside. We were leading a very peace full life here in this village since long past and it is still there. During movement period actually, some outsiders (mostly youth) entered into our village and polluted our minds.
Under the leadership of the ABSU, the villagers particularly the youth fraction joined the Bodoland movement. During these days even the Bodo non-Bodo assimilated socio-cultural life in the village was also to some extent disturbed. *Recollecting the horrible days of Bodoland movement* Mrs. Sarumai Das, *a non-Bodo lady graduate teacher of the village high school said that the entire non-Bodo population of the village suffered from insecurity feelings because of ethnic violence but now it is not there.* Now the ABSU leaders are seriously engaged in spreading of education and social reformation like prohibition of liquor amongst the community members, impart female education, particularly compulsory schooling of the young children etc. They have arranged vocational training like computer operation, tailoring, motor driving, electrician etc. for a number of youths from the village (who had to drop their studies during Bodoland movement) with the assistance of the Army camp located at Tamulpur. The women in this village are very active in social life. In addition to their SHG activities, they have build up a community center in the village obtaining financial assistance from the nearby Indian army camp located at Tamulpur. All these issues are significant towards overall development of women in the village.
FIG. 3.8 SKETCH MAP OF VILLAGE JHARGAON
3.1.7 Patkijuli

Patkijuli is another village covered in this study. This village is located at the Indo-Bhutan border area. Administrative control of the village is with the Tamulpur civil circle under Tamulpur Sub-Division in Bagsa district of BTAD. The Rangia Darranga road leading to the neighboring Bhutanese Kingdom is the road link to the village. The population pattern of the village presents a mixed variety of Bengali, Nepali and ‘Chaotal’ (Santhal) residents along with the Bodos. Out of the total population of 857 of the village, 58.20% is Bodo. The percentage of Bodo women population is 49.10%. Of the remaining, the ‘Chaotals’ are the majority and next to them is the Nepali segment. Mostly the villagers are dependent on agricultural income but a good number of the village women are professionally engaged in weaving and sericulture, poultry farming, mushroom cultivation and honeybee farming. Pig farming is very rare in this village. Only a few families residing just behind the Daranga Mela township, an extended portion of the village practice pig farming. Christianity has a very strong influence in this village. The entire Bodo population of this village has adopted christinity. Of course, the ‘Chaotal’ peoples of the village are also Christian. Although the Nepali and Bengali community members do not subscribe to Christianity, the villagers depict a harmonious life. The villagers openly admit that under the influence of Christianity, they have been able to change their life style and converted themselves into a developed and cultured group. *Mrinilini Mushahary opines that the teaching of Christianity had even changed the attitude of the member of the volunteer force of ABSU during Bodoland Movement and they gave up the act of brutality. In fact, in the foothills of*
Bhutan this village was only a safe place for the members of the Bodo volunteer force but participation of the village youth in such movement activities was rare.

The village has the facility of electricity but telephonic connectivity has just been started in one part of the village. This village has been providing the age-old trade link with neighboring Bhutan. In fact, there was a time when during winter (middle of January), the practice of attending ‘Daranga Mela’ was very common and popular among the people from different parts of Assam. The small traders of both hills and plains exchanged their products which included mainly woolen garments, ginger, red chili, ‘saldhuna’, ‘laha’, ‘Bhutanese dog’ etc. from the Bhutanese side and salt, cotton cloth, tobacco etc. from the Indian traders. ‘Daranga Mela’ located in the border area, was an important link both economically and socially. However, at present due to anti-social activities like gambling in the ‘mela’ gradually it had lost its importance since the middle of the eighties. Moreover, insurgency is also a factor, which ultimately brought an end of the ‘Daranga Mela’ since 1985-86. Different insurgent groups has established their camp in the Bhutanese territory of the mela area and controlled their activities in different parts of the state, which forced the administrative authorities to seal the age-old trade link. After the Bodoland movement, an attempt was made to revive this ‘mela’ in the design of ‘Indo-Bhutan Friendship Meet’ in the year 2004 but with a very little success. However, as this village is located at the border area, there is always an informal link with the Bhutanese territory. The villagers use to sell their handloom and poultry products in the nearby Bhutan market. In fact, the women of this village produce ‘Bhutanese dress’ against order, on a regular basis. As reported by a few women of Patkijuli, it is a very profitable way of income generation.
The village has a unit of All Bodo Students Union (ABSU). The villagers were involved in the Bodoland Movement under the guidance of the local ABSU unit. During movement period it encouraged the villagers for total participation in it and in post-movement period, this they are now engaged in reconstruction of the village. Providing civic amenities to the villagers like safe drinking water, educational institution, roads and bridges, health and sanitation, women’s welfare and child development etc. are some of the areas where ABSU is creating awareness amongst the community member and maintaining linkage with appropriate authority of the BTC to provide guidance and funding. According to Subash Boro, an ABSU activist, “our first priority is to establish an academically advanced society”. In this manner the ABSU have undertaken a good mission towards social enlistment in the village.

There are two L.P schools, one M.E. School and one High School. In addition to these state run educational institutions, there is one Don Bosco School run by Christian Missionary. In fact, this school is a very popular center of learning throughout this area. The Missionary people have also established a multi-facility hospital in the village with seven doctors working round the clock. In fact, this hospital is a prominent center for health care in this tribal belt for the last three decades. It has also helped in the development of awareness among the Bodo women about health and hygienic living condition including reproductive healthcare. All these conditions are impetus towards women’s development.
FIG. 3.9 SKETCH MAP OF VILLAGE PATKIJULI

LEGENDS

- Village Route
- Kuccha Road
- PWD Road
- Highway
- River
- Paddy Field
- Human Settlement

Templo
High-School
Market
Church
L.P. School
Don Bosco School
H. M. Hospital
In all these villages, women’s organization is also very distinctive and active particularly since the beginning of the Bodoland movement. During informal chat with Manju Mushahary of Patkijuli village, a High School teacher by profession, she narrated how they treated the wounded volunteers of the Bodoland movement during the peak period of movement and now they are actively engaged in process of social reconstruction. All the villages have the unit of All Bodo Women’s Welfare Federation (ABWWF) to protect women’s rights and social justice. They have built up Self Help Groups (SHGs) to have economic development. Altogether twelve different SHGs are operating smoothly in various fields of economic activities within the village. In all these activities, the ABSU has very supporting role. As a result of the ABSU movement a strong social resurgence has come to the Bodo society, which can be seen more prominently with the women folk as if they have resolved to be educationally advanced, economically independent and socially aware to achieve their desired goal of development.