Chapter – II

LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Geographical Outlines

2.1 Location

Morigaon district is situated on the south bank of the Brahmaputra river in Assam valley. Till September 1989, Morigaon had been a sub-division of Nagaon district. It was upgraded as a district with its headquarter at Morigaon vide Govt. Notification No. GAG/CB/370/87/102 dated Sept. 1989.1

The district has one subdivision and is comprised of five revenue circles. It has four community development blocks. Morigaon district is having a geographical area of 1587.7 sq km.2

The district lies between 26.31" and 26.33" North Latitude and 91.59" and 92.35" East Longitudes.3 The district is bounded by Nagaon

3. District Map, Survey Department, Govt. of Assam.
district on the east, the Brahmaputra river on the north, Karbi Anglong
district and Meghalaya state of the south and Kamrup district on the
west. The topography of the district is similar to that of the nearest
district. The district is situated on flat alluvial plain. It comprises of
scattered small hills on the western part. There are many beels and
marches lying scattered in the district.

The principal river is the Brahmaputra which flows along with
the entire Northern boundary of the district. The Brahmaputra is
bounded on either side by stretches of marshy land covered with
thick grassy jungles. The other important rivers of the district are Kapili,
Kolong, Killing, Sonai and Poikaria etc. During rainy seasons, all the
rivers get flooded with water. Floods are frequent in the district every
year and causes tremendous change in the river courses and raise the
river bed by depositing the debries carried from the upper reaches.

2.2 Climate

The climate of the district is characterised by a highly humid
atmosphere all through the year. Summer heat is relieved to a great
extent by the cool breeze of the river Brahmaputra. The monsoon
usually starts from the month of May and continues upto the month of
August. The winter is cold and starts from November and continues
upto February. Generally weather is dry and moisture is less and quite pleasant from the month of February to April. The maximum and minimum temperature varies from 29.9\(^\circ\) C to 18.9\(^\circ\) C centregrade and the average annual rainfall of the district is 170 cm while that of Assam is 204 cm. The rainfall has not been even throughout the year. The rainfall in the four seasons of the year of the district as well as of the state for the period from June 2004 to May 2005 is depicted in the table 2.1

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Months} & \textbf{Morigaon District} & \textbf{Assam} \\
\hline
June to September & 119.53 cm & 170.21 cm \\
October to November & 11.90 cm & 16.74 cm \\
December to February & 5.77 cm & 6.62 cm \\
March to May & 40.02 cm & 47.46 cm \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Average Rainfall (in cm)}
\end{table}

(From June 2004 to May 2005)

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2005.
2.3 Origin of the name of Morigaon

According to some historians, in the 17th century, during the reign of Ahom king Chandra Kanta Singha, two princes of the king Darrang (Darangi Konwar) fled from Darrang due to some internal conflict with the king. The two princes along with 72 families crossed the mighty Brahmaputra river at Chaulkhowa Ghat, came towards south and took shelter in a place known as Borbari. The place Borbari was then under sixth subordinate kings of Ahom. They allowed the two princes along with 72 families to settle temporarily in Borbari. Later on Supradhawas Singha, one of the prime was declared as king of Sukhangog by these sixth local king as a mark of hospitality.

Due to the insufficient land, the two princes left Sukhangog in search of new land. After few days, they came a long distance and took rest by the side of a big tank (beel). There, they made some bhur (a kind of boat) from a botabari (a kind of local herb available in the jungle of that area) and with the help of those bhur they went further in search of new land. Thus, from that time this place was known as Bhurbandha. They settled in Bhurbandha for a short period.

Later on prince Bhim Singha went forward and found a tank (beel) which was the dead stream of the river Kolong and they named the place as Morikolong (Mori – Dead and Kolong – river Kolong). To the east of that Morikolong, princes Bhim Singha established a small village and named it as Morigaon. From that period the place is known as Morigaon.

2.4 History of the District

Morigaon district has no independent history of its own. It was an integral part of Nagaon district till September 1989. Thus history of Morigaon is inseparable from the history of the Nagaon District.

Assam was known in ancient time as Pragijyotisha and in medieval time as Kamrupa. The present Assam, including the old Nagaon district is a part of the ancient kingdom of Pragijyotisha ruled by dynasties like Barman, Salastambha, the Palas of Pusya Varman constitute the first historical dynasty of the Varman Naraka family. Bhaskarbarman was famous and the greatest monarch of the Varman family who ruled over Kamrup from 594 – 650 A.D. The discovery

of the Hayunthal grant in Kopili Valley proved that Nagaon was an integral part of his kingdom. Besides the Nagaon grant Sutargaon near Puranigudam and Uttarbarbil grant near Howraghat in Mikir Hills during the reign of Balavarma III definitely prove that the Nagaon formed an integral part of Kamrupa during 10th century A.D.\(^8\) In the 13th century Jongalbalahu, son of Ari-Matta, became the king of his territory, which formed the western part of Nagaon district. He established a fort near Raha known as Jongalbalahugarh which is still in existence. Jongalbalahu was said to have defeated by the Kacharis and drown himself in the Kolong river. After that the Hindu families began to decline and many small principalities were found by the Ahoms, the Kacharis, the Koches, the Khasis, the Jayantias and the Bhuyans.

In the 14th century A.D. the son-in-law of the Behali king established a kingdom at Barhampur near Nagaon and it extended up to Sonapur. In the middle of the 16th century the Northern part of Nagaon began to pass into the hands of Ahom kingdom. But from time to time it was overrun by the Koches, Mohammadans and Kacharies.

During the early period of British rule Nagaon district was first administered with Kamrup and Darrang districts, but in 1835 it was formed into a separate district with headquarter at Puranigudam. During British rule the Nagaon district included a considerable portion of the Naga Hills, Mikir Hills and North Cachar Hills till 1853. Later on Naga Hills and Mikir Hills were separated and formed into a separate district. In 1951 Mikir Hills portion of Nagaon was separated and combined with North Cachar Subdivision to form a new district to be known United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district. Finally in 1989 Morigaon sub-division was separated from Nagaon district and form a new district known as Morigaon district.

2.5 Administrative Set-up

The district consists of 1 (one) Sub-division, 5 (five) Community Development Blocks, 85 (eighty five) Gaon Panchayats as on 31st March 2005. There are 5 (five) Revenue Circles, 636 villages and 2 (two) towns as per 2001 census. The distribution of revenue circles with mouzas is depicted below in the table 2.2.

Table : 2.2

Revenue Circles with Mouzas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of Revenue Circle</th>
<th>Name of Mouzas under each Circle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Morigaon Sadar</td>
<td>1. Niz-Tetelia, 2. Uttarkhula,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mikirbheta Revenue Circle</td>
<td>1. Silpukhuri, 2. Mikirbheta,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Charaibahi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bhuragaon Revenue Circle</td>
<td>1. Bhuragaon, 2. Bokani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Laharighat Revenue Circle</td>
<td>1. Laharighat, 2. Moirabari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mayong Revenue Circle</td>
<td>1. Gova Mouza.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source : D. C. Office, Morigaon

2.6 Demographic Structure

Determination of human habitation depends on the geographical conditions which provides for its rural and urban areas according to physical as well as economic abundance or lack of it of the landscape.\(^\text{11}\)

Human resource in Morigaon district have developed through a long process of human occupancy. The total population of Morigaon district

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during 2001 census was 7,76,256, including 3,98,926 male and 3,77,330 female of the total population 7,88,268 person inhabit in rural areas and 37,988 person in urban areas.

The following table 2.3 shows the blockwise distribution of population and number of villages in the district.

Table 2.3

C.D. Blockwise distribution of population and Nos. of villages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of C. D. Block</th>
<th>Village Population</th>
<th>No.of Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Laharighat C.D. Block</td>
<td>127,545</td>
<td>118,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mayong C.D. Block</td>
<td>97,479</td>
<td>92,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bhurbandha C.D. Block</td>
<td>68,954</td>
<td>67,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kapili C.D. Block</td>
<td>17,377</td>
<td>16,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>311,755</td>
<td>294,938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Census of India 2001, District Census Handbook, Morigaon
As regard to population pattern, the distribution of population in different C. D. Blocks are not proportionate to the total villages in the block. The highest population recorded in Laharighat C. D. Block and the Kapili Development Block. The percentage of rural population to the total population is 94.84 percent.

Out of the 592 inhabited villages in the district 266 villages of 46.75 percent, they do not have scheduled tribe population. The highest no of villages with scheduled tribe population is 112 or 19.69 percent and having a proportion of the scheduled tribe population in the 51 and above percentage range. 58 and 10.19 percent of villages are found in the lowest percentage range of 0–5. 30 nos. of villages having scheduled tribe population is recorded in each of 16–25 and 26–35 ranges. A small proportion i.e. 1.10 percent of villages of the district come under 36–50 percentage range.

The Tiwas are the single dominated tribe in the Morigaon district.\textsuperscript{12} Due to the migration of non-tribal people to tribal areas the proportion of tribal population is decreasing over the time.

The table 2.4 shows the ST population structure in the Morigaon district.

**Table 2.4**

Scheduled Tribe population in various villages of Morigaon District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Range of ST population</th>
<th>Nos. of S.T. Villages</th>
<th>% of ST Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 5</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 50</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 &amp; above</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>19.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>53.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2005.*
2.7 Educational Profile

Literacy rate is one of the most important indicator of human resource development and social change. In 2001 census report, literate is defined as a person aged 7 and above who can both read and write with understanding in any language is taken as literate. A person who can only read but cannot write, is not literate.\(^\text{13}\) According to 2001 census, the literacy rate of Morigaon district is 58.53 percent. On the contrary the rate is 63.25 in case of Assam and 65.38 in the all India level. The literacy rate in Morigaon district is shown in the table 2.5

### Table 2.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Literacy Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>58.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>65.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>57.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>84.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{13}\) Census of India, 2001, Series – 19, Assam, p-10.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Literacy Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scheduled caste</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>60.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>70.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scheduled Tribe</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>60.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>71.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam 2005*

A block level study reveals that 91 percent villages of the district have been brought under the primary education facilities. Nos. of educational institutions in Morigaon district as per records of SSA. Morigaon and I.S. office of the Morigaon district are in table no. 5.6
Table No. 2.6

**Nos. of Govt. Educational Institutions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Educational Institution</th>
<th>Nos. of Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Primary and Junior Basic</td>
<td>816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>High School/Senior Madrasa</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Higher Secondary School</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Law College</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Provintialised College</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>DIET</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam 2005*

Apart from these Govt. institutes the district have a Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, one Kendriya Vidyalaya, seven non-government Colleges, one B.Ed College and many private English medium and Assamese medium High Schools. These institutions serve the needs of the society and contribute a lot in the process of social and educational development of the district.
2.8 Tiwas migration to Morigaon District

The indigenous tribal people living in Morigaon district are Tiwas or Lalungs, who in fact form the socio-cultural base of the area. Other than Tiwas a small section of Bodo and Karbi population also there in the district with non-tribal people.

In terms of Tiwas ethnic origin, they belong to the Mongolian Tibeto-Burman group. This ethnic group is referred in the ancient Aryan literature as the Kiratas. The tribes of Bodo, Garo, Dimasa, Lalung, Koch, Kachari, Sonowal, Rabha, Miri, Mikir etc. of Assam are all including in the Mongolian group.\(^\text{14}\) On the other hand some Tiwa intellectuals wants to say that the Tiwas are assumed to the aboriginals of the Tibet.\(^\text{15}\) Originally they lived in Khasi-Jayantiya region and wherefrom they came down to the plains. Having partially accepted Hinduism they became Assamese in dress, manners and speech. They worship all the Hindu deities. But they have not totally discarded their tribal beliefs, customs and observances. They are an endogamous community but don’t marry within the clan. Before the occupation of Assam by the British the Lalungs had their own petty kings who were


\(^{15}\) Lalung Kakati, P. R. : *Govar Lalung Buranji*, 1984. p-5.
feudatories to the Ahom monarch. There are many similarities between Tiwa and Karbi people so far as culture and society is concerned.

The Tiwas are divided into a number of exogamous clans (wali or kul). They are divided into twelve clans – Macharang, Madur, Maloi, Dafor, Sukai, Amtli, Lasa, Chalang, Amsong, Kakhor, Darnong, Loram. But these main clans are now sub-divided into a number of sub-clans. They also maintain clan superiority. Thus Bara Bhuni, Na Bhuni, Sat Bhuni divisions are noticed in the Tiwa society.

The Tiwas have been all along associated with the Jaintias living on the North-Eastern slope of the Khasi Hills on the boarder land of the plain districts of Kamrupa and Nagaon. From earliest time, they appear to have been twelve states within a small area under the ruler of Jaintia. Gobha was the biggest state and then there were Neli, Khola, Tupakuchi, Raha, Baropujia, Rani, Luki, Beltola etc. The majority of the Tiwa population specially in the plains were scattered in old Nagaon and Karbi Anglong district. There is no any specific date and year mentioned in any book about the migration of the Tiwa people to Morigaon area.

Long ago, the Lalungs or Tiwas came to settle in the fertile land of the Brahmaputra valley through the north-eastern passes of the Tibet. According to some aged old Tiwa, they originally lived in the hilly areas of Kashi (Banaras).

The folk songs sung during harvesting and purification ceremonies after child birth reveal that Tiwas once lived in the Hillali Kingdom, the boundaries of which extended the whole of old Nagaon district and eastern Darrang district. As time passed the people preferred to call themselves subject to Lali, an abbreviated form of Hillali, on the northern part of Nagaon district there is a dead branch called Lali.18 Probably the Hillali kingdom was on the north western part of Nagaon district presently called as Morigaon district.

In the middle of the 16th century when the Ahom rule prevailed in the other part of the Nagaon district, the Gova kingdom was established at Gova on the bank of the river Gova. Presently known as Killing, a place about 14 km south east of present Jagiroad and it was ruled by the Lalung kings.19 Later on the capital was shifted to

Nakhola for better administrative purpose. (Na-means new, Khola –
means administrative headquarter)

In 1658 Promota Rai rebelled against his grand father Jasa Manta
Rai, king of Jayantia and called on the tributary chief of Gova to help
him. When he refused Pramata Rai there upon destroyed four of his
villages. He appealed for help to the Kacharies, who were preparing to
come to his assistance, when the local Ahom officials intervened and
said that as the Ahom were the paramount power, it was they, whose
protection should be sought. The Gova chief accordingly went with
seven hundred men to Jayadhvaj Singh and begged for help. Orders
were issued to the Bar Pukhan to establish him in Khagarijan,
corresponding more or less to the modern Nowgaon, and this was
accordingly done.20

The process of migration thus started along with this incident
and later on batches after batches of Tiwas began to enter the plains
of Assam, specially in the Morigaon area due to various socio-religious
as well as political reasons.

Lyall mentions that Tiwas were living in the contiguous areas of the Mikirs. Side by side with the Mikirs dwell in the Mikir Hills, the Rengma Naga in the Jamuna and Diyang valley, the Dimasa or Kacharis in the Jayantia Hills and along the Nagaon and Kamrup boarders of Lalungs and a few settlements of Khasis.\(^{21}\)

After the defeat of the Kacharis by the Ahom, the Jayantias extended their kingdom to the Kolong and Kapili of the Nagaon district. The Jayantia king established this area as the tributary chief of the Lalungs. Under the Jayantia king Ram Singha, four brothers were ruling in Gova, Neli, Khola and Sahari as tributary heads.\(^{22}\)

As recorded in the History of Assam that there were seven principalities (*Sato Rajya*) established under the Jagi administrative circle. Later on five principalities (*Pancho Rajya*) were established namely Topakuchia, Baropujia, Mikir Gonya, Phuloguria and Khagoria under Raha administrative circle.

The chief of these principalities area designated as *Powali Raja* or mini king. In return for the prevailing these mini kingdom they had

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to paid taxes to Ahom king and also associated the Ahom king with soldiers at the time of war.

In 1824 A.D. the Britishers took Raha, Kaliabor and ultimately the whole district of Nagaon. Soon after this the Gova kingdom also came under the British Rule. The name of the last famous king of the Lalung was Rai Singh, whom the then chief Commissioner of Assam Mr. Fuller appointed the Mouzadar of Gova Mouza.23

2.9 Major Characteristics of the District

i. Forestry

Forestry occupies a significant place in the economy of the district. Considerable portion of people depends on forest for firewood to cook their food and also to construct their houses. The district is rich in forest resources. The forest area of the Morigaon district includes the Pobitora Game Sanctuary, Sonaikuchi Reserve Forest, Khola Hat Reserved Forest and Bura Mayong Reserved Forest. The Pobitora National Park and Wild Life sanctuary is one of the important sanctuaries of the state. The total area of this park is 16 sq km.

The important forest wealth of the district are Koroi (Albizia Procera) Ajhar (Lagerstroemi flos Reginac) Sagun (Tick) Simul (Bobax Malabaricam) Khokan (Duabanga Sonneratioids) Sonaru (Cassia firluta) Gomari (Gmelina arborea) Kako Bamboo (Dendro calamues hamiltori), Bhaluka Bamboo (Bambusa falcuoa), Amara (Amoora Wallichi) and Sopa (Talauma phedocarpa).

ii. Agriculture

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the people in the district. The soil of the district is soft and sandy which is suitable for the growth of agricultural products and various kinds of vegetables. Abundant rain and highly humid climate of the district help to accelerate the growth of agricultural crops and various kinds of vegetables. The highest proportion of cultivable land of the district is put under paddy cultivation. Besides paddy, the other important crops cultivated in the district are Jute, Sugarcane, Mustard. Pulses, Tea, Tobacco, Potato, Chilli and other vegetables. The staple food of the people of the district is rice. The farmers always depend upon the wet cultivation.

iii. Health

There are three primary health centres one each in Mayang, Bhurbandha and Laharighat Development Blocks and one 100 beded
Civil Hospital at Morigaon town. In the entire district 18 dispensaries and 88 sub centres are rendering health service in the fully operational development blocks.

iv. Handloom and Textile

Weaving is still one of the most common household industry of the district. This traditional industry has been the subsidiary occupation of the women folks of the district since long. The Tiwa womenfolk are expert weavers and almost every household possess loom. They also know the method of indigenous dyeing. In the district all the Tiwa women know the art of rearing silk cocoons particularly endi and spinning yarn out of it Riha, Chadar, Mekhala, Borkapur, Pani Gamucha (ordinary towel) etc. are worn by ladies at their homes.

To promote this traditional industry the government has opened 4 Handloom Training Centers, 2 Weavers Extention Service units in the district. According to 2003-2004 statistics of the government there are 55,466 weavers covering 128 villages of the district.

v. Trade and Commerce

Morigaon is basically agricultural district. It produces large quantity of paddy, pulses, vegetables, jute and tea. It also produce
large quantity of dried fishes. Besides the above products the district manufactures paper from Hindustan Paper Mill which is situated at Jagiroad, 23 km from the district headquarter.

Trade and commerce is another important economic activity of the district. But trade in the district has completely been dominated by the people from outside the state. However, very recently a small proportion of local people are also found to be engaged in various trade and commerce in the district.

The principal trade centres for wholesale business in the district are Morigaon, Laharighat, Moirabari and Jagiroad. The place are well connected by network of roads with other important trade centres and markets inside and outside the district. Daily bazaars and weekly hats are held regularly in different parts of the district where commodities imported and locally grown are open for retail sale. Over and above, good number of shops dealing in various items particularly stationary etc. are increasing in every year both in rural and urban areas of the district.