CHAPTER-3

STUDY SITE
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The state of Assam is comprised of three physical divisions, namely, the Brahmaputra Valley, the Barak Valley and the Hill region. The Barak Valley region is situated between Longitude 92°15' and 93°15' East and Latitude 24°8' and 25°8' North covering an area of 6922 sq. km. The valley constitutes 8.9 percent of the geographical area of the State but contains 11.22 % of the populations as per 2001 census. The region shares its border with North Cachar Hill District and the state of Meghalaya in the North; the state of Manipur in the East; the state of Mizoram in the South and the state of Tripura and the Sylhet District of Bangladesh in the West. Administratively, the region is composed of three districts, namely, the Cachar, the Karimganj and the Hailakandi. The Cachar is the largest district with total geographical area of 3786 sq. km. The Barak Valley region has an undulating topography characterized by hills, hillocks, (locally known as tillah), wide plains and low lying waterlogged areas (locally called beels). The study was carried out in Chailtabasti and Dargakona areas (24°41' N Latitude and 92°41' E Longitude) of Cachar districts of Barak Valley, Assam, North-East India. (Fig Map). The forest type in the area is semi-evergreen and moist-deciduous. The climate of the study site is subtropical, warm and humid, with annual rainfall of 2660 mm, most of which is received during the south-west monsoon rain (May-Sept). The mean maximum temperature ranges from 25.4°C (Jan) to 32.6°C (Aug). The mean minimum temperature ranges from 1°C (Jan) to 25°C (Aug). The study site is originally a tea plantation area dominated by tea-garden laborers. The labours in the area like any other tea plantations sites in Assam were brought in from the state of West Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu during the early 19th century with the rise of the tea-industry in the state (Sengupta, 1996). They are mostly concentrated in the tea gardener areas and one important demographic component of the valley and the least investigated homegarding community. The dominant communities in these areas are Bagdi, Rabidas, Maal, Maalakar and Bhardwaj. The areas were originally a tea garden areas surrounded by natural forests. Portions of the forest were cleared for establishment of migrant tea labours. Also some portions were used for sugarcane and paddy cultivation.
Homegardening is a part of their cultural and social system and has been practised from the beginning of the establishment of the tea labours in the area. The resource management activities of the community include cultivation of paddy, areca nut, *Vetiveria* grassland, *Imperata* grassland, bamboo groves, vegetables and Pisciculture etc.
Fig (i) :- Map of the study site.
Fig:- Meteorological data of the study site of the years 2008 and 2009.