Chapter – I

Rationale of the study

(“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of women.”
Jawaharlal Nehru.1)

1.1. Introduction:

The educational status of women is a long standing world wide issue, which has been a major issue even in Karbi Anglong. If population and literacy is any indication than women are also coming up. The real life situation is that education means any new experiences that we come across in life, and it starts at home. From sociological point of view, home is the primary socialization which is considered as the first institution where basic education is imparted and mother is regarded as the first teacher of any child. Therefore, women education is very important.

The importance of women education can be better understood on the quotations of J.L. Nehru’s as, “Education of a boy is education for one person, but education of a girl is education for the entire family.”

There is a silver lining in every dark cloud. Women are benefited in various sphere of life and are trying to come out from her age old inferiority complex. Education is rightly considered as the panacea of all evils. Parents and the girls themselves consider education as an asset for raising their status, dignity and self-confidence. This shows that women have woken up from her slumber of the millennia and now she asks for her due place in society.

To be true educational status of Karbi women in the 21st century has obviously improved immensely. Today, their prospect and progress have no limits. It is heartening to acknowledge that Karbi educated women are keen on taking up all types of work including administrative and decision making: who are cool headed, dispassionate and impartial. The reality of women in realizing the importance of education can also be supported by the fact that even undeducated women are seeking works as daily wages and labourer inorder to make possible for their children’s

education. In all the endeavours women have shown positive inclination towards gaining education even in the remotest places of Karbi Anglong.

The conclusion is not women have come a long way but has to go a long way. Thus, women’s study is considered as a powerful instrument, which together with education will lead further to the development and improvements of women’s status in particular, and society in general.

1.2. Progressive education:

Education is one of the basic activities of people in all human societies. The continued existence of society depends upon the transmission of culture to the young. Education has come to be one of the main agents for this transmission of culture which women is no exception to avail this access. Of late, women education has received utmost importance in Indian society. In ancient India, the position of women was one of the authority and honor. During Vedic period, women were highly honored and respected. They were given full freedom to receive education. They got full status with men. In the early parts of Buddhist period, women were not permitted to enter into educational Institutions. But, in the later parts, Lord Buddha allowed them to enter into the educational institutions, with many restrictions. In medieval period, Muslims women were not permitted to receive formal education; they were kept behind ‘purdah.’ The British government introduced western education in our country. The famous minutes of Macaulay, 1934 introduced English education for the preparation of Indians for jobs, the education was bookish and theoretical and it hardly made preparation for life. The Christian missionaries opened schools for sexes-men and women. The wood dispatch of 1854 is regarded as an important landmark in the educational policy in relation to women, it extended support on “frank and cordial support.” It made specific mention to the need to encourage the education commission 1881, issued a policy of liberalizing grants in aid to girls schools and the inequality in education between boys and girls continued. But, however, the substantial increase in women education took place after 1881.

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6 Rai ppp.76,102,111
Women education has made rapid strides only after independence. Eradication of illiteracy continued to be the major program of the society as well as by the governments. Education is the constitutional rights to every Indian citizen. It has a vital role in the national development.

The Indian constitution guarantees that every Indian should get equal educational opportunities irrespective of caste, creed, or sex. To quote the legislative framework on education: Art 15(3) of the constitution empowers the State to make any special provision for women and this includes their education also. Art 15 (1) provides that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only on sex. The following was cited:

a. Free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years of age.
b. Special grants for women colleges.
c. Separate schools institutions.
d. Separate hostels/boarding for women students.
e. Scholarship for studentship.
f. Free books and uniform.
g. Special concessions on fees and tuitions fees.

After independence in 1947, Maulana Azad, India's first education minister envisaged strong central government control over education throughout the country, with a uniform educational system. However, keeping in mind the cultural and linguistic diversity of India, it was only the higher education dealing with science and technology that came under the jurisdiction of the central government. The government also held powers to make national policies for educational development and could regulate selected aspects of education throughout India.

The central government of India formulated the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986 and also re-enforced the Program of Action (POA) in 1986. The government initiated several measures including the setting up of Navodaya Vidyalaya selective schools in every district, advances in female education, inter-

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10 Four Authors p.332
disciplinary research and establishment of open universities. India's NPE also contains the National System of Education, which ensures some uniformity while taking into account regional education needs. The NPE also stresses on higher spending on education, envisaging a budget of more than six percent of the overall national budget. While the need for wider reform in the primary and secondary sectors is recognized as an issue, the emphasis is also on the development of science and technology education infrastructure.¹¹

Further, Education policy has adopted certain steps for women empowerment. They are:” Provide opportunities to poor and illiterate women in setting self employed by promoting self-help group.¹²

1. Reserve 30% of Government jobs and contract jobs for women.
2. To ensure and to make arrangement for all women to take part in schemes as in operation black board, total literacy Mission, Sarva Shiksha Abhijan etc.
3. Increase in maternity leaves to 135 days instead of 90 days.
4. To pass women reservation Bill in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha ensuring politics protection and empowerment.
5. Establishment of ‘women Bank’ where will have the privilege to get engaged in all types of activities.
6. 33% seats are reserved for women.

The facts on women’s empowerment was well furnished by Dr. Haseen Taj in his book, “Current challenges in education,” as¹³

- Women are the poorest of the world’s poor representing 70% or almost 900 million of the 1.3 billion people who live in absolute poverty.
- Two-thirds of the world's illiterate population of 876 million.

¹³Dr. Haseen Taj, 2008 “Current challenges in education” Neelkamal publications Sultan Bazar, Hyderabad. P.33
Between 1987 and 1996 the number of female ministers in national government worldwide increased two-fold from a mere 3.4% to still just 6.8%. As of 1996, 48 countries had no female.

As of March 2002, women held just 14.2% of representative posts in national parliaments around the world. As of 1999, women occupied more than 30% of parliamentary positions in just five countries worldwide. In 31 countries at that same time, they held less than 5% of positions.

An estimated one in three women worldwide has been subjected to violence in an intimate relationship.

India has made a huge progress in terms of increasing primary education attendance rate and expanding literacy to approximately two thirds of the population. India's improved education system is often cited as one of the main contributors to the economic rise of India. Much of the progress in education has been credited to various private institutions. The private education market in India is estimated to be worth $40 billion in 2008 and will increase to $68 billion by 2012. However, India continues to face challenges. Despite growing investment in education, 40% of the population is illiterate and only 15% of the students reach high school. As of 2008, India's post-secondary high schools offer only enough seats for 7% of India's college-age population, 25% of teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57% of college professors lack either a master's or Ph.D degree. As of 2007, there is 1522 degree-granting engineering colleges in India with an annual student intake of 582,000, plus 1,244 polytechnics with an annual intake of 265,000. However, these institutions face shortage of faculty and concerns have been raised over the quality of education. According to the websites of the Ministry of human resource development (2009), Higher education in India is considered among the largest education systems of the world. And, in order to enhance this system further, the Indian government has adopted various measures. These measures are thought of at numerous levels and then, executed. These include:

- Forming education policy and supervising its implementation.
- Making development plans for university, higher education and technical education.
- Emphasizing on the education needs of unprivileged groups, such as SC/ST/OBC and girls, physically challenged and minority groups.
- Providing scholarship to proficient candidates.
- Focusing on the growth of all Indian languages.
- Encouraging international relationship in the sphere of education (such as with UNESCO).
- Promoting books and copyright Act.

1.3. Need and importance of women education:

The importance of women education was realized and spread all over the country. It is the women who are capable of building each child who may lead the country to the path of progress and prosperity. Educated women make the family and the society cultured. Manu (Circa -B.C) had therefore rightly remarked that God resides at the places where women are worshipped. By worship of women does not mean the worship through conventional means, but where women are respected and honored, proper provision of education should be made available for women and equal freedom be given in the society. It is of utmost importance for the expansion of women education for achievement of all side development in any society.\(^\text{16}\)

A family is not made without women and so as the society or the nation being made without women. Women constitute one half of the world population and occupy a prominent place in the family. They have their own duties and responsibilities towards the family as well as society. Education helps them to understand well in discharging their duties, which will in turn lead them to be equal member of society in contributing to the progress of society and the nation.

Women education is needed for better education of children as the entire family depends upon a mother, the children of the family are naturally very close to

\(^{\text{16}}\text{www.Manu http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manu } (\text{Hinduism})\)
their mother. A well-educated mother can mould their children’s behavior and character to be a better and responsible citizen in a society.

Education as a powerful instrument helps in removing various superstitions and old beliefs which are very harmful in the progress of any society. Women, being a part of a society have an equal share in the reformation of society. So, education for women also means, helping her to come out of such old belief.

If proper education is given, women can have a well balanced personality physically, mentally and emotionally. Women can also freely express their valuable views, ideas and philosophies for the building up of a healthy society. Education of women is very important for the progress and development of the country. This should be regarded as major programs in education. A social movement requires to be reviewed to create the necessary atmosphere for the spread of girl’s education.

Women being in a dual role in our country, she is responsible towards the family as well as the society. Education should enable her to become a better daughter, wife and a mother. The scheme of women’s education should emphasis family education for parents as well as for children. Knowledge of motherhood including childcare, home crafts and home economies should become an integral part of education of women.

Women is a core member of society, she must possess good personality. So, the main function of women education is to direct the systematic growth of the individuality of a girl child. It must be so planned in a harmonious integration of three modes of expressions- physical, mental and spiritual.

Lately, women education received greater importance, now it has come to the forefront that women should be prepared for any type of responsibility. So, the importance should be given in accordance to her interest and capacities. The role of women outside the homes has become an important feature of the social and economic life of the country. There should be special programme for preparation of girls for different vocations. Education at the pre-primary and adult stages would ensure that the intervening age-group is educated and this would provide fulltime and part-time work to many educated unemployed women.
Education at the secondary stage should be vocational with a view to divert the students into different walks of life.\textsuperscript{17} This will enable them to be economically independent and serve the purpose of all pupils according to their mental abilities and efficiency.

Today, women are taking a leading role in various fields. Hence, they should be adequately trained. The national institutes for higher education and training should train women to compete to position of high level leadership and responsibility. Moreover, industrial training centers should be established in adequate numbers to provide training for women to the fields where women personnel are needed.

\textbf{1.4. Literacy in India:}

2001 government statistics hold the national literacy to be around 64.84\%. Government statistics of 2001 also hold that the rate of increase of literacy is more in rural areas than in urban areas. Female literacy is at a national average of 53.63\% whereas the male literacy was 75.26\%. Within the Indian states, Kerala has shown the highest literacy rates of 90.02\% whereas Bihar averaged lower than 50\% literacy, the lowest in India. The 2001 statistics also indicated that the total number of 'absolute non literates' in the country was 304 million.\textsuperscript{18}

World Bank statistics found that fewer than 40 percent of adolescents in India attend secondary schools. The Economist reports that half of 10-year-old rural children could not read at a basic level, over 60\% were unable to do division, and half dropped out by the age.\textsuperscript{19}

Only one in ten young people have access to \textit{tertiary education}. Out of those who receive higher education, \textit{Mercer Consulting} estimates that only a quarter of graduates are "employable." An optimistic estimate is that only one in five job-seekers in India have ever had any sort of \textit{vocational training}.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17}Rai B.C. 2003, The curriculum for Higher secondary Schools P.209
\textsuperscript{18}http://indiaonlinepages.com/population/literacy_rate_in_india.html (Google search-Literacy rate in India)
\textsuperscript{19}www.indianetzone.com/3a/women_education.html.cached
\textsuperscript{20}www.indianetzone.com/3a/women_education.html.cached
Table No. 1.1 Decadal Literacy rate of India:21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census year</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>9.83</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>10.56</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1021</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>12.21</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>15.59</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>24.95</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>24.02</td>
<td>34.44</td>
<td>12.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>29.45</td>
<td>39.45</td>
<td>18.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
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<td>42.84</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>64.83</td>
<td>75.26</td>
<td>53.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>74.04</td>
<td>82.14</td>
<td>65.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source- Internet decadal rate of literacy

1.5. Overview of the school education system in India:

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is the apex body for school education in India. The NCERT provides support and technical assistance to a number of schools in India and oversees many aspects of enforcement of education policies. In India, the various bodies governing school education system are:22

- The state government boards, in which the majority of Indian children are enrolled.
- The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) board.
- The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) board.

21www.literacyratein_india/education.
22http:// education system in Indian (Google search)
• International schools affiliated to the International Baccalaureate Program and/or the Cambridge International Examinations.
• Islamic Madrasah schools, whose boards are controlled by local state governments, or autonomous, or affiliated with Darul Uloom Deoband.
• Autonomous schools like Woodstock School, Auroville, Patha Bhavan and Ananda Marga Gurukula.

1.6. Higher education system in India:

Higher education plays a significant role in the development of the nation which is required in every sphere of human activity, from administration to agriculture, business, industry, health, communication and culture. Its main objective is to develop the total personality of the individual by providing him the highest knowledge, by improving his conduct and behaviour, by refining his soul and by inculcating cultural knowledge.

The World Bank document states that “Higher education is a paramount importance for economic and social development.” UNESCO (1995) in its policy paper on “Change and Development of Higher Education,” emphasizes that state and society must perceive higher education, not as a burden but as a long time investment, in order to increase economic competitiveness, cultural development and social cohesion. The UNESCO World Conference on higher education (1998) proclaimed that education is a fundamental pillar of human rights, democracy, sustainable development and peace. The draft proposal on higher education for the 21st century envisages the quality of higher education as a multidimensional concept and institution of higher learning must play a role in identifying and addressing the issues that affect the well being of communities, nations and global society. Hence, universities are required to redefine the mission and establish the priorities as per the need of the society.23

India’s higher education system is the third largest in the world, after China and the United States. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission (India), which enforces its standards, advises the government,

and helps coordinate between the centre and the state. Accreditation for higher learning is overseen by 12 autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission.24

As of 2009, India has 20 central universities, 215 state universities, 100 deemed universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 13 institutes which are of national importance. Other institutions include 16000 colleges, including 1800 exclusive women’s colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions. The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology. Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of a large number of technology institutes. Distance learning is also a feature of the Indian higher education system.25

Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education. The IITs enroll about 4000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and the public sectors of India.26

1.7. An overview of Educational status of women in India:

The educational status of women in India is increasing every year still have much lower literacy rate compared to boys. In most of the part of India fewer girls are enrolled in the schools, and many of them drop out. According, to a 1998 report by U.S. Department of Commerce, the chief barrier to female education in India are inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities), shortage of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum (majority of the female characters being depicted as weak and helpless).

The number of literate women among the female population of India was between 2-6% from the British Raj onwards to the formation of the Republic of India in 1947. Concerted efforts led to improvement from 15.3% in 1961 to 28.5% in 1981. By 2001 the literacy for women had exceeded 50% of the overall female population,

24http://www.higher education system in india. (Google search)
25(Journal of AIAER, vol.17, nos 3 & 4, September and December, 2005).p.6
26http://www.Indian institutes of technology,(IITs) 2009 (Google search)
though these statistics were still very low compared to world standards and even male literacy within India.27

Sita Anantha Raman (2000) outlines the progress of women's education in India:

Since 1947 the Indian government has tried to provide incentives for girls’ school attendance through programs for midday meals, free books, and uniforms. This welfare thrust raised primary enrollment between 1951 and 1981. In 1986 the National Policy on Education decided to restructure education in tune with the social framework of each state, and with larger national goals. It emphasized that education was necessary for democracy, and central to the improvement of women’s condition. The new policy aimed at social change through revised texts, curricula, increased funding for schools, expansion in the numbers of schools, and policy improvements. Emphasis was placed on expanding girls’ Occupational centers and primary education; secondary and higher education; and rural and urban institutions. The report tried to connect problems like low school attendance with poverty, and the dependence on girls for housework and sibling day care.28 The National Literacy Mission 1988 also worked through female tutors in villages.29 Although the minimum marriage age is now eighteen for girls, many continue to be married much earlier. Therefore, at the secondary level, female dropout rates are high.

Sita Anantha Raman also maintains that while educated Indian women workforce maintains professionalism, the men outnumber them in most fields and, in some cases, receive higher income for the same positions.30

1.8. Tribal women of the North-east India

The tribal women are beautiful, fair skin and having moderate heights. They are simple, direct, tolerant, generous, and possess good quality of hospitality. Women wear different kinds of indigenous dresses and ornaments having cultural values and

27www.indianetzone.com/3a/women_education.html.ca hed
29A group of experienced & retired professors 2011, by BLJ Publications guwahati A new approach Model questions & answers for H.S. Final Year examination As per NCERT/AHSEC course. p. 9
30Http//www. Raman 2009 educational status of women in India. P.7
traditions. Most of the tribal areas are patriarchal with the exception of Khasis and Garos of Meghalaya who are matrilineal.

The one most common thing among the tribal’s in the North-eastern part of India is their sociability and boldness, besides their inherent innocence and honesty. In all the tribal society we see women are hardworking and creative. Most women enjoy great freedom and are honored greatly. As such women have proven to be better people after education if given a chance; they will reach its zenith of achievements.

1.9. Brief background of Assam:

The North eastern region of India has an area of approximately 2, 39,847 sq. km. Out of which Assom which is also known as, 'The land of Red-Rivers and Blue Hills', occupies an area of 78, 523 Sq. km. having 27 districts. It attained State-hood on 20th February '1987, using English as its official language. It has 126 (nos) of Legislative Seats, seven Rajya Sabha seats and fourteen Lok Sabha seats. Rhino is the state animal of Assom and white-winged wood duck is the State bird. Fox tail orchid stands as its flower.31

According to 2001 census, the population of Assom is 2, 66, 38, and 407 with 932 females per 1000 males. The density per sq.km.is 340. The literacy rate as on 2001 census is 64-28%.

The State capital of Assom is Guwahati and the inhabitant’s tribes of Assom are Karbis, Bodo Kachari, Rabbas, Mishings, Sonowal Kacharis, Tiwas, Garo, Deuris, Dimasa Kacharis, Chutias, Barmans, Hajong etc.32

Assom is known for its highest productions of Tea in the North-East, as well as in India having 450.13 Million kg out of the total production of 853.70 million kg., in India. The forest area is approximately 17, 4 24 sq.km. The major plantations found in Assam are Tea, Rubber and coffee. Rice, wheat, jute, coconuts, sugarcane, cotton etc. are the major crops of Assom.

Some of the historical monuments and structures in Assom are Kareng Ghar, Talatal ghar, rang ghar and manad Kamdeva, which was build in seventeen A.D's.

The attractive national parks found in Assam are Kaziranga, Manas, Namere, Dibru-Saikhowa, Orang (Rajiv Gandhi National park) and as many as 13 wild life sanctuaries. It has as many as 129 (nos) of units comprising of large and medium industries and 33,276(nos) of unit under small scale industries.\textsuperscript{33}

The main festivals of Assom are Bhogali Bihu, Brahmaputra Beach festival celebrated on January and Rongali Bihu and Kati Bihu falling in the month of April and May respectively.\textsuperscript{34}

The amazing fact of Assom is that both the world's biggest river island 'Majuli' and the smallest inhabitant river island 'Umanda' are situated in the State and oil was first struck in Assam at a place called Digboi in the year, 1889.\textsuperscript{35}

The State is situated approximately between 24.10 - 29.30 latitude North of equator and between 89.49 E - 97.30 East Longitude.

\textbf{Map No.1.1: Map of Assam}

\textit{Source Atlas}

\textsuperscript{33}Jain Manoj, 2006-2007, All in one General knowledge Revised edition 2007. p.6
\textsuperscript{34}Jain Manoj, 2006-2007, All in one General knowledge Revised edition 2007. p.7
\textsuperscript{35}Jain Manoj, 2006-2007, All in one General knowledge Revised edition 2007. p.8
1.10. Population and literacy of Asam

According to 2011 census the total population of Asom is 31169272. Out of which male constitutes 15964927 and female 15214345. Sex ratio per 1000 males is 954 and the average population density per sq. km is 16.93.

The 2001 literacy rate of Asom holds at 73.18% with male and female literacy rate of 78.81% and 67.27% according to 2011 provisional census.36

Table 1.2: Literacy rate of Assam 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literates</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19507017</td>
<td>73.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>107556937</td>
<td>78.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8750080</td>
<td>67.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.11. Historical background of Karbi Anglong:

Initially, there was no specific area or kingdom for Karbi people. Due to numerous reasons they had migrated from one place to another and finally settled at Socheng Pahar crossing the Kopili River.37 They started their social as well as political life there. In due course of time a Karbi empire began to form with Rongkhang, Chinthong and Amri. The boundary of Karbi Empire had extended from Jaintia to Nowgong. Lyall in 1908 wrote that, “The Mikirs are one of the numerous and homogenous of the many Tibeto-Burman inhabiting the province of Assam.”38

The Karbis hailed as one of the earliest human groups that entered the north-eastern part and made their homes in the State of Assam are rich in folklore, relics and legends. The unrecorded past of the Karbis are lying in the rural backward in the form of reigns and relics which are waiting for documentations before they disappear into total oblivion.39

The history of legendary king of the Karbis was first believed to be, Biswokoida Rongphar who was the kith and kin of Longki Sanveri Rongphar, the

36http//www.population and literacy rate of Assam provisional p.1 2011 April
38Lyall C.J. 1908, The Mikirs. P.1
39CD and DVD presented by Karbi Phurkimo Asong, “The Historical places of Karbi Anglong”
Karbi hero who won a battle fought between the Mikirs and Parok (Non- Mikirs) at Hajong believed to be the present Longkat or Lonka.\textsuperscript{40}

It is believed that while returning from the battle field they were taking rest on the sand dune of river Kopili and fell asleep: it was during this time Longki Sangveri Rongphar was slained by the enemies along with others. In this connection, Biswokoida Rongphar was regarded as a king, who was passed on till his grandson name as Borpu Ronphar who was considered to be last Rongphar kings,\textsuperscript{41} he was also believed to have became the Jaintia kings in his later life, as could be heard from the folk songs. Thereafter, the Ronghang clan began to occupy the Karbi Kingship after Borpu Rongphar as early as 1280 AD -1200. The first being Har Lindok (Harpikkang) Ronghang.\textsuperscript{42}

Bey further writes that the capital of the longri is called ‘Rongbong’ in Karbi. Therefore the capital of the Ronghang Longri is popularly known as ‘Ronghang Rongbong’.\textsuperscript{43}

But darkness came to the life of Karbi people for the strong influence of Ahom kingdom and the advent of the British. The empire had been totally lost leaving hardly any trace. During that time Karbi people were exploited very badly.

The cultural and traditional kingdom which exists before British advent and the Ronghang Kingdoms as early as 1280 AD – 1299 Ad.

The history of the Karbis will not be complete without the inclusion of Ronghang Kingdom that has been in existence in its originality which now are been preserved by Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council for historical and cultural purpose. It is seen that Ronghang Recho (king) does not have any weapons, riches and wealth at his disposal, first of its kind to accord king. It is because of these reasons that Ronghang kingdom is not at all popular and so not recognized by the concerned governments till today. As such, the kingdom did not have much significance for the whole of the Karbi people if not for historical significance.

\textsuperscript{40}Bey Mondol Sing 2005, A glimpse of the socio-political evolution of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong p.3
\textsuperscript{41}Bey Mondol Sing 2005, A glimpse of the socio-political evolution of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong p.3
\textsuperscript{42}Bey Mondol Sing 2005, A glimpse of the socio-political evolution of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong p.4
\textsuperscript{43}Bey Mondol Sing 2005, A glimpse of the socio-political evolution of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong, p. 10
The kingdom which was once wiped away with no remains has to be shifted to the present Ronghang Rongbong from Socheng. If we could turn the pages back we find that for many generations Ronghang Rongbong was kept unattended. Though the intellectual and elite section of the people in Karbi Anglong did not forgot to take up as a part of history. It was only in 21st century that people began to understand the importance of its history and by 2000 to 2004 there was significant progress and developments under the leadership of Chief of Executive Members Dr. Jayanta Rongpi, who was also once a member of parliament. During his time, Permanent King (Recho) Bungalow was built.44

Again, in 2008 development started. Since, then the wise and intellectual people are also taking keen interest at it, with the list of important program scheduled as told by the Kathar po when I inquired. The cultural meeting due on 20th January 2012 where all the traditional and cultural leaders, educated and enlightened persons will gather. Again, the invitation by the Government of India as extended by the president of India on 26th January for acknowledgment of Karbi Kingdoms.

To mention on 6th July 2008, there was a public meeting to form a committee with the customary law of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council for this purpose there are 31 drafting committee, Now, the drafting committee has changed into customary law of Karbi Anglong.

During, my visit to Ronghang Rongbong, I had a privilege to meet the following signatories, Ronghang Recho (King), Rongphar Senot, Katharpo, Killing Lindok, Inti Chilai, Terang Senot, Bor Dili Pharangki, Phura Senot, Inghi Senot and Brutmen. At present there are 24 houses and 29 councilors, 15 houses including Lingdokpo, from Rongkechu Teron, 7 houses including Lingdokpo from Killing Artu, 5 Houses including Lingdokpo from Rongpi Artu. There is a strict division of Artu (Village of clans) in the making of houses. Altogether, there are 158 population including children as on October ‘2011.

In Ronghang Recho there is a royal law known as Kido (Judicial constitutions) modified on 23rd October 2011, which is in use in connection with Karbi culture and tradition. Through, which the laws will be applicable having rights to explanation call

44Personal Interview with Recho and Katharpo, dated 20th oct’2011
on violation of laws, anti culture, suspensions, discharge and new induction. It is functioning according to the democratic system of India.

In any type of worshipping women are not allowed, as worshipping is not meant for women according to the Ronghang Recho (King) Women are not even allowed to enter the worshipping place as they are considered impure and dirty. On a worshipping day women will have to be in a separate house where they will cook, make wine, even for serving a man having a rank of Pator will serve. There are so many do (s) and do not (s) for this very purpose as seen in any other worshipping.

**Photo No. 1.1. Riso Terank**

Riso Terank or ‘Deka chang’ in Assamese meaning youth working group during day time. Only men are allowed to enter Terank house, as it is considered as holy and pure place as worshipping is done here. On a particular worshipping day, assigned boys will cook rice, meat and wine for themselves as well as for offering. No remain or leftover should be carried out for women as no female are entertain in any form. There is a separate house where girls will confine to cooking, stitching, weaving and knitting during rest hour. Terank house was repaired through Chief Minister Package, financial assistant under Art and Culture and implemented works under Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.45

To go on, the Karbi society underwent lots of struggle and tribulations like any of the neighbouring tribes and India before independence. During the time of social degradation and political crises of the Karbis, Karbi youths like Semson Sing Ingti,

45Personal Interview with Recho and Katharlo, dated 20th oct’2011
Khorsing Terang, Chatra Sing Teron, Nihang Rongphar, Song Bey, etc., came forward to save Karbi people and formed “Mikir Students’ Organization.” The first meeting of this organization was held in Kathalguri way back in 1945.46

At this time only people began to form significant organisations. “Karbi Adorbar” was one of the Mikir organizations which were formed in 1946 at Hawaiipur with a view to making the Mikirs aware of their own socio-economic and political conditions. Sarsing Teron Habe was the first chairman and Semson Sing Engti was the first secretary of this organization. The British Government of India also felt that the backward hilly areas of then Assam should be brought under separate administration within the constitution of India.47

For that purpose, the Governor General declared the Hill Tracts predominantly inhabited by the Karbis and the Dimasas along with other hill areas as Backward Tracts under section 52A (2) of Government of India Act 1919. Thereafter the Statutory Commission (known as Simon Commission) examined the case in 1930 and recommended that there should be centralised administration for these areas under the direct responsibility of the Governor. Accordingly, a separate chapter was devoted in these areas in the Government of India Act 1935. This act renamed these areas as Excluded or Partially Excluded areas. The hills of Dima Hasao formerly North Cachar were categorised as Excluded Areas while the hills of the Karbis (Mikir Hills) were categorised as Partially Excluded Areas.

It was on 18th May, 1947 that the “Karbi Adorbar” the Mikir organization submitted a memorandum to Bordoloi committee with a special purpose. The memorandum demanded for the creation of separate hill district so that all the Mikirs could be placed under single administration. They suggested that the Mikir area (4,174 sq. miles) of partially Excluded area, the Mikir portion of the Nowgong, Sibsagar plains, Dima Hasao and Khasi and Jaintia hills should be taken to form the new district. The areas taken from Nagaon and Sivasagar districts were ‘Partially Excluded’ areas of the two districts and were called ‘Mikir Hills Tracts,’ while the area taken out from the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills were known as ‘Excluded Area.’ A boundary commission should be set up immediately by the Assam

46Bey Mondol Sing 2005, A glimpse of the socio-evolution of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong p.63
47Bey Mondol Sing 2005, A glimpse of the socio-evolution of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong pp.59.72
Government to report on the areas which could conveniently be added to the existing Mikir hills particularly Excluded area. Acting upon, the 4,421.12 sq. Kms. From Nowgong, 4382.28 sq. kms from Sivasagar and 1543.64 sq. Kms. From Khasi Jaintia Hills had been taken in the forming of the then district. On 28th Oct '1940 Governor Robert Reid went to Mahendijua via Diphu to see the conditions of people. After a long struggle by the members of Karbi Adorbar and the people of Mikir Hills and Dima Hasao district spearheaded by Semson Sing Ingti, Song Bey, Sarsing Teron Habe and Khorsing Terang had conceded the demand and passed the bill in the Lok Sabha of the Indian parliament and it was approved by the president of India. Subsequently, the Government of Assam had created the “United Mikir and North Cachar Hills districts” vide Govt. Notification No. TAD/R/31/50/151 dated 17.11.1951.

1.12. **Formation of the Karbi Anglong district Head Quarter:**

The districts formally came into being on 17th Nov'1951. The present Karbi Anglong by then was a sub-division, namely the Mikir Hills which was further upgraded and renamed into Mikir Hills Districts Council provided by the sixth schedule of the constitution of India. The Mikir Hills district council was again, rechristened as “Karbi Anglong District,” w.e.f. the 14th Oct '1976. Vide Govt. notification No.TAD/R/115/74/471 DT.14.10.7. Thus, the name KARBI ANGLONG officially came into being with full fledged separate district in the map of Assam. It is the largest districts of Assam and second largest in India.

Amidst all these it was decided by the members of United Mikir and Dima Hasao that a head quarter is required in the district for administration purpose. The selection of the head quarter started but in dilemma. Different people had chosen different places like Diphu, Singhason, Langlokso, Siloni and Dengaon. Khorsing Terang, Member of Legislative Assembly (M.L.A) took special initiative in this regard and suggested to form an enquiry committee with Song Bey. The members of the Karbi Adorbar were entrusted with the responsibility to select a suitable place for the head quarter of United Mikir and Dima Hasao district. They decided to establish the head quarter at ‘Siloni’ and invited Amiyo Kumar Das, the then Education

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48Bey Mondol Sing 2005, A glimpse of the socio-evolution of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong p.59
49Bey Mondol Sing 2005, A glimpse of the socio-evolution of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong p.85
Minister of Assam for declaring it as a permanent head quarter. He visited the area from Diphu to Siloni via Mohendijua but unfortunately he did not like the place for the head quarter. Instead, he had recommended for ‘Diphu’ as the permanent head quarter of both the districts because of railway communication and other facilities. Accordingly, the head quarter of the United Mikir and Dima Hasao districts was set up at DIPHU. The demand for separation of the Mikir & Dima Hasao district from Assam was at first started in the year 1960 led by “All Party Hills Leaders Conference” (A.P.H.L.C) under the leadership of Captain Williamson Sangma, Meghalaya.\(^5\) The 22\(^{nd}\) Amendment in 1969 inserted the Article 244(A) in the Indian Constitution which facilitated the formation of a new autonomous state, Meghalaya, within the state of Assam comprising specified tribal areas. Accordingly, Meghalaya was created as an Autonomous state in the year 1970 and also elevated to full-fledged state in the year 1971. Therefore, the provision for creation of an Autonomous district for the people of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao district has been the constitutional right for them.

1.13. Karbi Anglong district:

Karbi Anglong is the homeland of the ethnic tribal group of Karbi people (formerly called Mikir). This enchanting hill district with its diversely rare flora and fauna lies in the centre of Assam and may be called the heart-beat of it. The district is divided into two physiographic unit viz. hills and plains. About 85\% of the district is covered by hills and the highest peak is Singhason. The area located between the northern and southern hill in Diphu, the head quarter of Karbi Anglong, is characterized by undulating plains of subdued relief. The plain areas consist of valleys of the Jamuna, Kopili and Dhansiri rivers lying in its eastern part. With the rich biodiversity, the forest areas of the district are natural museums of living giant trees, a treasure house of rare, endemic and endangered species, a dispensary of medicinal plants and paradise for nature lovers.

The topography of Karbi Anglong shows that there are actually two parts in the district. The western part is bifurcated from the eastern side by a part of Nagaon district. The western side is decorated with rolling hills, dense forests, waterfalls,

\(^5\)Bey Mondol Sing 2005, A glimpse of the socio-evolution of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong p.85
rivers and streams. On the other hand, flat paddy lands, green hills interspersed with blue meandering rivers are found in the eastern side.

**Map No. 1.2. Location Map of Karbi Anglong District.**

![Location Map of Karbi Anglong District](image)

**Source:** Atlas map.

### 1.14. Regional division:

The hill district of Karbi Anglong comprises of two detached parts, each constituting a sub-division: the eastern part with its headquarter at Diphu and the western part with its headquarter at Hamren. Hemren sub-division is considered as the seat of Karbi culture. The Karbi people who live in hills are divided into three broad sections namely Chinthong, Ronghang and Amri. But these groups do not differ from each other. These names do not indicate true tribal divisions, supposed to be derived from a common ancestor and united in blood and are probably in reality local or place name. They follow the real tribal exogamous divisions which are called ‘kur (clans).’ Each section has the same kurs within it and the individuals belonging to these kurs, whether in Chinthong, Ronghang or Amri, observe the same rules of exogamy.

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51 Karbi young writers’ Guild, 2008 first edition of Karbi studies. Published by Angik Prakashan Panbazar Guwahati - I p.115
1.15. Inception of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC):

The constituent Assembly of India appointed, ‘The North-Eastern Frontier (Assam) tribal and excluded area Sub-committee’ which recommended that in each of the hill district of Assam a district council should be established.\textsuperscript{52} On 1\textsuperscript{st} April 1995 the Union Government, by granting more power to the Autonomous district council, upgraded it to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

Initially, the District Council had altogether 12 constituencies with 8 elected and 4 nominated members. Later on the number of constituencies increased to 18 and nominated members increased to 6. Again, the numbers changed and up till 2011, there were 26 constituencies.

\textbf{Photo No. 1.2. Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council:}

Presently, there are 30 members altogether in the council, out of which 26 elected and 4 nominated. The List of Constituencies of Karbi Anglong district are the following, Amreng, Amri, Bithung Rengthama, Bokajan, Borjan, Chinghong,

\textsuperscript{52}Bhattacharjee, 1986, The North –Eastern Frontier Assam. B.R. publishing corporation delhi-110052 p.56
Deopani, Dhansiri, Duar Amla, Duar Bagori, Howraghat, Hamren, Korkantri, Kopili, Langpher, Langhin, Lumbajong, Mohamaya, Namati, Nilip, Phuloni, RongKhan, Sarupathar, Singhasan, Socheng and Socheng Dhenta.

The Members of the Autonomous Council (MAC) elect their chairman, Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Member (CEM). The CEM himself select other Executive Members (EM) and he distributes the portfolios. Thus, the EC (Executive Committee) is formed which is the supreme body of the Council. The Governor acts as the supreme authority above the CEM and the EC, and his formal approval is a must in all matters such as Acts, Regulations etc. passed by the EC for implementation. All matters relating to election of the Council also come under the discretion of the Governor. The Principal Secretary and under him Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries act as representatives of the State govt and assist the Council in running the administration of the district. The State assembly does not have the power to interfere the functions of the EC or the Governor in the affairs of the Council.

1.16. Community Development Block with its head quarter:

Karbi Anglong district has three sub-divisions- Diphu, Hamren and Bokajan. To provide administration at the grass root level there are seven nominated Community Development Block (CDB) and three Integrated Tribal Development Programme (I.T.D.P) in the district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of CDB</th>
<th>Head quarter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bokajan</td>
<td>Bokajan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howraghat</td>
<td>Howraghat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumbajong</td>
<td>Manja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nilip</td>
<td>Chokihola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rongkhang</td>
<td>Donkamokam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amri</td>
<td>Ulukunchi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53Bey Mondol Sing 2005, A glimpse of the socio-evolution of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong, p.69
54Office of the Joint Director of Economics and Statistics (Hills),Diphu, Karbi Anglong
1.17. Climatical condition:

Due to variation in the topography, this hill zone experiences different climates in different parts. The winter commences from October and continued till February or March. It is the general phenomenon that the average annual rainfall gradually decreases towards the central portion from above 1,300 mm to below 11,100 mm. Such a phenomenon could be due to no other factor than the rain shadow effect; on the whole winter is dry and comfortable. During true monsoon, most areas except high altitudes experiences damp and oppressive weather leading to sickly and malarial conditions.

During summer the atmosphere becomes sultry. Normally, temperature increases from south to north-average annual isotherm could be drawn showing temperature from little over 20°C in Barial range to little over 25°C in Dhansiri valley. During summer, however, places lying at low altitudes record as high as 36’C that creates rather an unbearable condition. Usually the temperature ranges from 6-12 °C and 23-32 °C in summer. The average rainfall is about 2,416 mm.

1.18. Geographical compositions:

Karbi Anglong is centrally located in the south east part of Assam. It is bounded by hills of Nagaland and Manipur on the east and by the plateau of Jaintia hills on the west. On the north there lies the plain of the Brahmaputra River and on the south the plain of the upper Barak River. The district with, dense tropical forest
covered hills and flat plains with a variety of flora and fauna, is situated between 24°56'N to 26°36'N latitude and 92°7'E to 93°54' E longitude.55

Karbi Anglong district is the largest district of Assam, area wise. Its total area is 10,434 sq. km.,56 Which accounts for 13.3% of the total geographical area of the state. Out of it the total rural area is 10,397 sq. km and the total urban area is only 37 sq. km. From the total area 4,421.12 sq. km. was taken from the Nagaon district, 4,382.28 sq. km. from Sibsagar district and 1,540 sq. km. from Khasi and Jyantia Hills. The area, full of verities of plants and animals, has extensive hills and plateau. Its height is from 600 mts. in the north to 900 mts. in the south. Likewise, the height of the plateau is started form 75 mt. to 150 mts.

Map No.1.3 Map of Karbi Anglong District

Source Atlas Map

1.18.1. Occupation:

84% of the total population earns their livelihood by agriculture. ‘Jhum’ (Slash and Burn method of agriculture) is the main cultivation in Karbi Anglong. This type of cultivation is usually done by burning the trees and shrubs and planting many seeds

55http://wikidepea.org/wiki/karbi_Anglong_district
56http://wikidepea.org/wiki/karbi_Anglong_district
together. Apart from agriculture, Karbi people keep domestic animals and fowls for social and economic purposes. Some family earn from the rates of articles made in the household industries such as handloom products and other handicrafts including bamboo mats, baskets, agricultural implements, iron tools etc. Some other ways of earning are through job employment, daily wage, trade and commerce, contract and supply and construction etc.

1.18.2. Geographical features:

The forest area covered is about 4,922.019 sq. Km with 14 State Reserved Forest (R.F) and 17 district council R.F. in the district. The district is abundant with natural resources. The different kinds of minerals found in this are hill district which are as below:

a. Coal : found in Koliajan and silbheta.
d. Feldspar : Found in Koliajan area

There are numerous rivers and tributaries in this district. Among these, the most important are Amrang, Borapani, Dhansiri, Deopani, Dikhoru, Doigrung, Jamuna, Longnit, Kolioni, Kopili, Nambor, Patradisha.

Even though, the district is dotted with hills, a few of which can be categorized into Mountain. Among them, the highest is the Singhason Peak which is at about 1360 meters above the sea level.

1.18.3. Roads & Communications:

The district is well connected with other districts of Assam through various routes. On the south it is covered by NH-37 and on the east by NH-39 and NH - 36. The internal routes are covered by the P.W.D.

The NF Railways passes through the district touching only a few points along the boundary. They are Hawaiipur, Lamsakhang, Barlangphar, Langsoliet, Nilalung, Diphu, Doldoli, Dhonsiri, Rongapahar, Khotkhoti and Bokajan. There is no airport in the district. The nearest airport being Dimapur is 54 km away from Diphu and Guwahati followed.

57http://karbiinformatics.hpage.co.in//karbi_anglong_29719296.html
58http://karbiinformatics.hpage.co.in//karbi_anglong_29719296.htm
1.18.4. **Industries**: Although the district is abundant in raw materials, only a few industries have sprung up. They are shown below:

**a. Cement Plant**
1. Bokajan Cement Plant.
2. Karbi Chemical Mini Cement plant.

**b. Agro - base:**
1. Rubber Plantation Industry

**c. Tea Garden**: There are a total of 12 numbers of Tea Gardens in this district.

**Table No 1.4: Tea Gardens of Karbi Anglong**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Tea Gardens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nambor Nadi TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Borpathar TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Banaspati TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sobhonswari TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lahorijan TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nirmal TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Deopani TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dhansiri TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Methunguri TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rama Nagar TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Lengri TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Methoni TE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source**: Office of the Joint Director of Economics and Statistics (Hills), Diphu, Karbi Anglong.

1.19. **Administrative system:**

59http://karbiinformatics.hpage.co.in//karbi_anglong_29719296.html
60http://karbiinformatics.hpage.co.in//karbi_anglong_29719296.html
As per para 2 of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution a District Council was constituted on June 23, 1952 in Karbi Anglong district. The powers and functions of the council may be divided mainly into four heads viz. Legislative, Executive, Financial and Judicial. The term of the Council is for five years. There are 30 members in the Council out of which 26 are elected by adult franchise and the remaining four members are nominated by the government. The chairman and deputy chairman are elected by the members of the Council. The executive committee consists of one Chief Executive Member (CEM) elected by other members (EM) who is appointed by the Governor on the advice of the CEM.

There is civil administrative system besides Karbi Anglong Autonomous council (KAAC). The civil administration is headed by Deputy Commissioner and the sub-divisional officers. The executive body is again helped in administration by the principal Secretary and the secretaries under him. The entire region (i.e.) Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills is represented to the Parliament by a single Member of Parliament (MP).

There are as many 2,782 villages in Karbi Anglong and 6 Police Thana, in Diphu, Howraghat, Baithalangso, Bokajan, Hemren and Dillai.61

Today, both the Hills claim one MP for each; the number of constituencies are as follows:

1. Parliamentery – One Autonomous parliamentary (ST)
2. Assembly –
   1. Howraghat LA
   2. Diphu
   3. Bokajan
   4. Baithalangro

1.20. Population and literacy rate of Karbi Anglong:

The total population of Karbi Anglong according to 2001 census is 813,311, out of which female constitutes 3,91,061 i.e., 48%. And male population is 4, 22,250 which constitutes 62%. Though, area of the district is the largest; still density of population is low. The district with the lowest population in Assam is Dima Hasao.

61http://karbiinformatics.hpage.co.in//karbi_anglong_29719296.html
Karbi Anglong district has the second lowest population according to 1971 census. The population density is only 37 per sq. km. According to 1991 census, its population density increased up to 63 per sq. km. and the total population was 6,62,723. The density of population is 78 per sq. km.\textsuperscript{62}

According to the provisional census of 2011, the population of Karbi Anglong stands at 965,280 out of which male constitutes 493,482 and female 471,798.\textsuperscript{63}

The district is a home to ethnic variety of people. It is a fascinating mosaic demographically, ethnographically and called as ‘Ethnographers Museum,’ a virtual anthropological hotspot with over 25 tribes of different races like Aryan, Mongoloid etc., religions like Christians, Buddhist, Hindus, Islamic etc and languages. The chief population of the district consist of Karbis. Other major ethnic groups of the district are Bodos, Kukis, Dimasas, Hmars, Garos, Rengma, Nagas, Tiwas, Man (Tai speakings). Besides a large number of non-tribals also live together in this hill region like Assamese, Bengali, and Bihari, Muslim, Nepali, Santal and other Hindi speaking people.

The literacy rate in the districts according to 2001 and 2011 census were 58.83\% and 73.52\% respectively with male having 68.11\% and 82.12\% and female with 48.65\% ans 64.62\%. Literacy rate in the region is increasing but still so much has to be done as the records clearly shows that 35\% of the female populations are still illiterate uptill 2011.

1.21. Urban areas and its population composition:

The region as a whole is rural in character in Karbi Anglong with total area of 10, 434 sq. k.m. where 10,397 sq.km constitutes rural. The Urban/Town area has 36.99\%. In the entire region basically the urbanization is due to setting up of administrative centers, such as sub-divisional, district head quarters or block head quarters. Only a few urban/Semi urban centers have developed depending on non-administration function in the region in recent times.

Table No.1.5: Karbi Anglong Population; Urban and Rural wise:

\textsuperscript{62}Census of Karbi Anglong 2001.
\textsuperscript{63}Google - 2011 census of Karbi Anglong population. P.1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total popln</th>
<th>Sex ratio per 1000 males</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Urban populn</th>
<th>Rural populn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>379310</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>97.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>662723</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>45.57%</td>
<td>10.63</td>
<td>89.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>813311</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>58.83%</td>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>88.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source - Census of India 1991 and 2001

**Fig 1.1 Karbi Anglong Population; Urban and Rural wise.**

Slow urbanization or lesser growth rate of urban population in the hill region is mainly due to lesser industrialization or lesser growth of the industrial activities. This has again led to lesser growth of trade and commercial activities. Which is why, there are only six (6) town committee in Karbi Anglong. The population figures within the Town committee area of the urban centers are given below.

**Table No. 1.6. Urban centres of the region (2001)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the town</th>
<th>Population under town committee area</th>
<th>Principal functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diphu</td>
<td>52,310</td>
<td>Administration, cultural.Transport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although, the districts is abundant in raw materials only a few industries have come up. All possible changes of growth and development are closely related with urbanization. Good, happy and fast access to easier life for both men and women depend upon the country’s urbanization. Here, it is seen that urbanization is yet to be developed in Karbi Anglong.

1.22. Profile of the people and its land:

The Karbis are a group of tribal people living in the hills, plateaus and plains of the central part of North East India, specifically in Assam. According, to Tanmay Bhattacharjee, 1986, The Karbis who inhibits areas very near Gauhati city
(Hengrabari, Beltola, Sonapur and many others have lost all vital contacts with the hills and do not speak the language for all practical purposes.\textsuperscript{64}

The Mikirs call themselves as ‘Karbis’ or ‘Arleng Munit’ which means hill dwellers or hill men in simple words as man.\textsuperscript{65} They were also known as “meng kire” meaning one who searches for a cat in a forest, according to some legends. According, to tradition, some Mikirs went to the forest for hunting, were searching for their pet cat, which was lost in it. At this time, they met non-Mikirs who asked as to what they are searching for? The Mikirs replied, “Meng kire” – searching for a cat. Thereafter, they were called as “meng kire”, which in course of time become ‘Mikirs.’\textsuperscript{66}

There is yet another meaning of Mikirs as been taken out from Mi-Kiri which means Hilly men. The Mikirs today are known as ‘Karbi’. The word Karbi is derived from the ‘Thekar Kibi’ which means consecration to god. Traditionally, the Mikirs are used to set apart of the materials that offered to god in time of worship before eating. This, consecration is called ‘Thekar Kibi.’ Therefore, they are called as Thekar Kibi which in course of time becomes Karbi.\textsuperscript{67} They are Scheduled tribe Hills, by the census of India.

The original home of various Tibeto-Burman languages speaking people was in western China near Yang-Tee-Kiang and Howang-ho rivers. From these places they went down the courses of the Chindwin and the Irrawaty rivers and entered Burma and then to India. Then they entered Assam by the north-east route along with other groups from Central Asia in one of the waves of migration. According, to their own legends, they originally settled in Tularam Senapati’s territory (in Dima Hasao) but were driven from there. During the reign of Kachari kings, they were driven to the hills, some of them entered in Jaintia hills and some of them entered in Rongkhang ranges. There they established their capital at a place called Socheng. Being harassed by the Khasi or Synteng chiefs they moved into the Ahom territory, and placed themselves under the protection of the ‘Rajas’ of Assam. Since then Karbis are living peacefully in their hilly country assigned to them. One section of the Karbis migrated

\textsuperscript{64}Bhattacharjee 1986, The sociology of the Karbis p. 13
\textsuperscript{65}Phangcho 2003, The Karbis of North East India p.1
\textsuperscript{66}Bhattacharjee 1986, The sociology of the Karbis p. 14
\textsuperscript{67}Karbi studies publishers Angik prakashan panbazar, Guwahati-1 p.21
to the Ahom kingdom had to face Burmese invasion. For protecting themselves from the oppression of the Burmese, they took refuge in the deep jungles and the hills. During that time the contribution of their freedom fighters was remarkable. Another section of the Karbi people migrated to lower Assam and some other crossed the Brahmaputra and settled in the north bank. In this way, Karbi people were scattered in whole of Assam.

Karbis, Dimasas, Kukis, Nagas, Hmar etc predominantly inhabit the eastern part of Karbi Anglong, while the western part is pre-dominantly dominated by Karbis, Hill Tiwas, Khasis, and Jaintias etc. In the plains there live a good number of Assamese speaking people. The Karbis however are the most numerous.

1.23. The Karbi culture:

A relevant feature which identifies the Karbis from other neighboring tribes is their non-aggressiveness for generations. The Karbis have maintained homogeneity with their clans. In the net-work of social organization the Karbis are found to have five major Kur or clans: INGHI, INGTI, TERANG, TERON and TIMUNG. These clans are again divided into a number of sub-clans. All the clans follow complete exogamy. The offspring belongs to the fathers’ clan and marriage within the clan is strictly prohibited as all the members of a clan are regarded as brothers and sisters. Breaking of this rule may lead to excommunication from the society. Monogamy, marriage with one person only is the general rule but in few instances polygamy is not rare. Widow Re-marriage among the Karbis is permissible with some conditions.

1.24. Appearances and languages:

The people are sturdy and as tall as majority of the hills tribes, having brownish to yellowish complexion. It is commonly accepted that the Karbis belong to the Mongolian race. Into this region poured the great Tibeto-Burma language speaking people. Bhathacharjee has to say, “The Karbis belong to the great Tibeto-Burman stock which inhibits this vast north-eastern region of the country.” Each tribe has a separate language. Among, the Karbis, there is a single language which is known as ‘Arleng Alam’, meaning Karbi language. It is used for communication by

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69Bhatacharjee 1986, The sociology of the Karbis, P.11
majority of the people especially in rural areas. Assamese language, being the regional language is spoken by majority of the people in urban areas. It is used as medium of instruction or other-wise used parallel with English, as translation methods in almost all the institutions like different offices, Schools, Higher Secondary Schools, colleges. The official language is English.

1.25. Foods and drinks:

Rice is the staple food of the Karbis and is non-vegetarian. Wild leaves, vegetables including bamboo shoots, fungi’s, ferns, tubers etc are usually taken as items of curries. Powder of Sesame seeds fried or not is a common ingredient in Karbi cuisines. Their finest delicacy is the chrysalis and silk-worms. It is found that most of the meats consumed are preferred to be fried, even pork which is so oily in itself are also fried with mustard oils, which hygienically may be thought provoking. Pulses, potatoes, pumpkins, brinjals, beans etc. are very much being reared and used. Major part of the their food in the hills comes from the Jhum fields where they produce varieties of crops like Maize, Bajra, etc in addition to hill rice. Important vegetables produce in Jhum fields are Sesame, Ginger, Brinjal, Turmeric, and Chilli etc.

Photo No. 1.3. Foods and vegetables:

In interior places or typical habit of the Karbis is to take vegetables as either boiled or burnt. Khar (soda) is often used to prepare a vegetarian curry. They are not habituated to taking fried items and spices. Using of oils and spices was of recent and
town dwellers way. Non-vegetarian food consists mainly of pork, chicken, dry fish, egg etc. Chewing of Betel nuts at every intervals of the day is a common thing for majority of the people in Karbi Anglong.

Photo No. 1.4. Horlang/Rice beers used as a Welcoming/acceptance:

Photo No.1.3

Rice beer and distilled liquor, Known as ‘Horlang,’ are all time beverages of everyday life especially in villages. It is a main component in every occasion. This is used to attain a great social value in which it is freely drunk by all, young and old, men and women. Tea is consumed with little or no sugar and salt. Today, various types of drinks, juices, milks are used in almost every home.

1.26. Dress and ornaments:

Photo No. 1.5. Men’s Dress:

Photo : No. 1.5.
Karbi dress for men is simple. A man generally remains bare-body. Usually the head is covered with a red or white turban. On some occasion he might wear jackets. The main dress for Karbi man is a loin cloth, called ‘Rikong’ with some design in it, is worn keeping two ends measuring about one and a half feet free only to hang in the front and in the rear. Sometimes he wears dhoti down to the calf. Putting on various traditional shawls or mufflers by man is not a new thing.

The upper garment is a front open sleeveless stripped jacket with a long fringe covering the buttocks which is called “Choi.” They used a long, narrow cloth on their head as a turban which is called “Poho.” The feathers of Bhim-raj bird are put in the turban of men at the time of festival.

**Photo No. 1.6. Women’s Dress:**

The dress of the females is very colorful, which constitutes ‘Pini’ a lower garments fastened around the waist, by a decorative woven belt called ‘Van kok’ and the ‘Pey kok’ is a wrapper of the upper part of the body which is fastened above the right shoulders by a knots.

The ornaments used by the Karbi men are very simple traditionally, but today many well to do men are wearing lot of expensive necklace and specially finger ring having different meaning and varieties of stones mostly having horoscope
significance, protection from evils, and from bad times as believed by them. The male adorn their head with hornbill feathers in festive occasion. Women wear varieties of ornaments such as necklace, earrings, fingerings and bracelets, which is traditionally made of woods, bamboo, various form of metals brass, silver and gold. Among all types of ear ornaments, ‘Nongthengpi’ or ear- stud which in Karbi version of the Assamese, ‘Thuria’, Noric’ another type of ornaments is also common. Necklace like ‘Lek tanka,’ Lek Jingjiri, Lek tita’ etc each having 50 paisa, or 25 paisa are worn even today in many villages, by the elderly women. Different types of modern ornaments are in use today. Women in marriages are decorated fully with ornaments, especially the rich and well do families are using costly and expensive jewelries made of silver and gold.

Photo No. 1.7. Ornaments and jeweleries

1.27. Festivals and Religion of the Karbis:

The Karbis believe in the multiplicity of Gods. They consider gods in plurality and call them ARNAM-ATUM where Atum is the plural suffix. Originally Karbis belong to traditional tribal religion which is animistic in character. They have no idols, temples or shrines. They believe that every object in this universe like Sun, Moon, star, stream, tree, hill, forest etc. has its own individual God. They worship God by sacrificing a fowl. Besides fowl, other animals like pig, goat and pigeon are
also sacrificed. Phangcho2003 says, Depending on the purpose of worship, the Gods in Karbi society are divided into the following groups: 70

1. Hem Angtar (Household God).
2. Rongker (village God) and Dengja (regional God).
3. Thenpi – Thengro (ailment recovery God).

When people get sick, the Karbis considered it to be the work of Gods and the people try to propitiate them. All the diseases are having their presiding deities and they are profusely propitiated. Lunse Timung has listed 115 Gods and Goddesses among the Karbis.

Idol worship is not prevalent in Karbi society. A new religious movement was started by Lakhimon Ingti, for which this religion is called “Lakhimon religion.” Devotion is expressed by singing hymns and religious songs praising “Hemphu” whom they equate with the supreme God himself. It combines both Hindu and traditional Karbi beliefs.

Karbis especially those who reside in the plains of Nagaon used to follow Hinduism. Most of them were greatly influenced by Srimanta Sankardeva’s Vaisnavite movement and converted themselves in to Vaisnavism. Christian Missionaries also arrived in the district long ago with a view to preaching Christianity among the people of Karbi Anglong and converted many of them in to Christianity. In recent times some Karbis have also been converted into “Sat sang,” a reformed Hinduism propounded by Thakur Anukul. All these religions have not only introduced a new faith but also brought new social life to them.

The Karbis traditionally were animist and nature believers where feastivals and worshipping go together. The main festivals of the Karbis includes, ‘Hacha Kekan’ (dancing festival in harvesting period) and ‘Ronker.’ This “Hacha Kekan” festival is celebrated at the time of harvesting and after, for protecting of crops and paddies. After harvesting, the people worship, ‘Longle-Ahi, i.e. the malevolent deity, sacrificing rooster and offering beer in order to appease him, they pray in request for the welfare of the harvest, from insects, pests etc. in the granary, only than they carry

70 Phangcho2003, The Karbis of North East India p.58
home the harvest. After harvesting, the people worship, Longle-Ahi ‘i, that is malevolent deity.71

Mainly, Hacha is divided into four celebrations:

1. Sok ‘Keroi Ahacha (After storing all the paddies in granaries)
2. Hen ‘up A-hikiti Ahacha (Bambooshoot feasts and celebrations)
3. Riso Chojun (Farewell ceremony at Jirekedem)
4. Ok – Keroi A-Hacha (Fish harvesting or festival):

   Hacha is defined in many ways. According to Lt. Longkam teron, (the founder president of Karbi Lammet Amie, who dedicated his whole life for the literature of the Karbis) Hacha is Hachi meaning Ingkro (granary).

1.27.1. Sok’ Keroi Ahacha:

   Sok means paddy Keroi means carry Hacha of, after storing all in the paddies store or granaries. For taking a new rice known as (Sang kemi) after harvesting of jhum cultivation, the Karbis worship Peng (House God). It is practiced by all the Karbis till today except for non-christian.

1.27.2. Hen ‘up A-hikiti Ahacha:

   Hen ‘up A-hikiti Ahacha is celebrated only in the village where there is Jirkedem (Youth working group) there is no specific time for celebration as it depends on how soon they could collect the targeted amount of either paddies, wealth and riches in materials or surplus. So, it usually takes three to four years to achieve. It is celebrated by the youth working group itself under the guidance of Rong Asar (Head men).

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71 All the religious and festival are in concern with Personal interview and discussions with Shri. Sikari Tisso on 09/08/2007 to 07/10/2011
1.27.3. **Riso Chojun:** Riso chojun is also meant for Jirekedem at the time of farewell.

1.27.4. **Ok-Keroi Ahacha:**

Ok-Keroi Ahacha means fish harvesting or festival, it was practiced among the Karbis of Amri areas. Here all the man of the villages will take part in worshipping gods of plains’ known as deity ‘Hajongthoi Kiri.’ The entire months or two were concentrated in catching fishes of varieties as many as possible from a Beal. They will build a big camp on a Beal bank (besides the water body). There is a leader known as ‘Ucha’ or ‘oja’ in Assamese (usually a person is selected as Ucha on the basis of skills and knowing the ways of worshipping the plain deity as Hajongthoi’). During this period, all the participants should be well behaved and disciplined. Nobody can use/speak slang languages and they should not scold or speak ill of the beasts, if found hurting the beast. As it is believed and witnessed among them that the foxes during mid night when everyone is asleep will pull the man along with bed outside the camp and left him in a shivering and windy cold nights. Even the leader known as Ucha was not supposed to move or shake the bed for which he sleeps, following in strict sense of purity and holiness as practiced and narrated. Even the person who goes home to
fetch Rations for this purpose was not allowed to sleep with his wife. The entire process of fishing is meant for themselves and not for any commercial purpose. The varieties of fishes caught will be brought back to the leader house (Ucha Hem), the same village from where they started, and distributed among all the participants. In this way they will catch the fishes in many ways which were fermented, dried and preserved in their own traditional methods which can be used for the whole year.

An interesting point to ponder is the restrictions of women folk in this festival’ as they are considered as impure and dirty. Another reason is that for prohibitions of the women, the Karbis’ said as ‘chelongle’ which means of no match or unsuitable. In this way women are forbidden to participate on some important religion and festivals. As the main focus of any festival is for worshipping of different gods and according to the Karbis worshipping is meant for man only.

Some more festivals and worshipping are given below:

1.27.5. Chojun:

Photo No. 1.9. Cho-Jun in Hongkran Village in Western Karbi Anglong:

Photo : 1.9.

The feastival Chojun is the biggest worship in Karbi homes. Chojun is a combination of two words, ‘cho’ means eat and ‘jun’ means drink. The important thing is chojun comes periodically with no specific dates and time but depending on the success of their ability to gather their targeted paddies or surplus. As such chojun celebration comes after consecutive working for three to four years, on the goal till
desired and proposed at the beginning. The chojun festivals again leads to worshipping of 'Vophong.' By tradition after able to go through three chojun makes one ‘Vophong’ (a bamboo cut by the edge of it), it is a place where god resides at the time of worshipping. It is practiced till today with much joy and gaiety by all the Karbis except few Christian.

In all the festivals the Karbis worship different gods and goddess as they are mostly nature believers. Originally, there are three gods namely:

1. Hemphu (The eldest god)

2. Mukkrang (second)

3. Pi-Ransinja (Goddess)

For it is practiced that, in whatever festivals the three head gods as mentioned above have to be first offered and worship, then only will they go to other gods of the events, as sun god, fire god, households god etc. The Karbi god Hemphu will be placed at the far right and first to start from the right side then come Mukhrang the second god and third goddess Pi Ransinjha followed by all the others gods of events whom they wish to worship.

According to the Karbi mythology, these three head gods are brothers and sister in heaven having no clan of sure. Because heaven signifies holy, so there cannot be any earthly clans or tribes or classes. It is believed that they did not know that they brothers and sisters. On the process there happened a physical relationship between second god who is a male and third god who is female. Thereafter, the Mukrang the male god who is Ingti like his elder brother Hemphu’ who after coming to earth might first associate with Ingti family one of the Karbi clan and there on adapted to Ingti clan has to change himself to other clan as Terang’ (one of the Karbi clan) after committing the mistake as a way of covering up the guilty, but the female goddess did not change her clan. Here on, the female in the Karbi society never change her surname (clan) even after the marriage, which has significance in the goddess who did not change her clan and male will have to change after committing alike mistakes, just as male god who change his clan from Ingti to Terang. And if we could seriously ponder, it is for this rational reason that it is practiced till today by the people of Karbis.
1.27.6. Rongker festivals:

The festival Rongker is usually observed annually in the village on community basis, in order to appease Rong Arnam (village god), Longro Arnam and Langhi Arnam the territorial deity for the welfare of the village and to ward off diseases and other natural calamities. Usually by tradition on the first day known as ‘Rongker Karadi’ all the preparations will be done for the next day of actual worshipping day. By night all the man of the villages will gather at Sarthe’s place and together they will pronounce ‘Arnam Kapatam,’ calling out and inviting god’s presence for the next day, to bless them. It is found that women were not allowed to participate, to the extent of restricting them from entering into a place of worship. On the first evening, they will only invoke gods without any sacrifice of animal’s blood. The second day is known as ‘Rongker Karkli,’ which means the worshipping of deities. This is done by either offering betel nuts and leaves which is called, “Banta-Kibat.” Another way is by offering meals which is called, “Kebo-Kebet.” During this community feast women were not allowed to eat along with man and a separate arrangement is made for this purpose. Though the women were not allowed to enter the Rongker ground, women were to confine in Headmen’s (Sarthe) house and prepare for the feast. For this particular Rongker day, Hor (Rice Beer) known as Hor Kangthir (Hor means Rice beer and Kangthir means holy) are prepared by women folk in advance, a long time back, fit to be taken on this very Rongker day. It is said that, a particular Hor (rice beer) known as Hor Kangthir is to be used in all the worshipping day of the Karbis.

1.27.7. Botor Kikur:

Botor Kikur is another important festival among the Karbis especially in Ronghang Rongbong. It is celebrated on 11th march every year for Invocation of timely Monsoon prayer worship, praying to rain god to send rainy season to get started for cuiltivation. In Ronghang Rongbong there is a specific place which is repaired into a concrete place, for this very purpose of worshipping. Here, Kathar po of Ronghang Recho will take the lead in prayer for invocation of timely monsoon so that rain comes in time and wet the soil so that they can start with the agricultural seasons.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{72}Personal interview with Katharlo of Ronghang Recho on 19/10/11
1.27.8. Chomangkan or Chomkan:

According to Dhaneswar Engti (2011), Chomkan is commonly referred wrongly as Chomangkan. The term ‘Chom’ refers to the abode of the dead and ‘Kan’ means dance. This festival is held in the honour of the dead family members as a final farewell to the departed souls.\(^73\) It is a death ceremony for purifying the soul of the death among the Karbis. It consists of a week long five to three days. There is no specific time for holding this particular festival; everything depends on the ability and capacity of the people concerned. On the day of Chomkan (for final cremation) the ashes of the bone are collected from a particular cremation ground specified for the clan known as ‘Tipit.’ ‘Tipit’ is the area where the deceased is cremated.

There after this particular ashes and hay inserted inside the bamboos to erect in the image of human being as effigies of the dead bodies. It is a way of bringing back the soul of the deceased amongst the living people, so as to seek blessings from those who have died long time back. Chomkan is the final cremation, as practiced and believed by the Karbis.

The observance of Chomkan is obligatory for every Karbis, irrespective of economic position and social status. This is the most expensive and elaborate socio-religious ceremony which continues for four days and four nights at a stretch.\(^74\) Though it is compulsory the date should not be fixed, so that people can arrange in their own convenient way. As, it require inviting the guests in huge numbers, the relatives, village people and also neighboring villages near and far for blessings. It is believed that while the soul of the deceased bless the living persons, the living family will offer any kind of things to the soul of the deceased, like rice beers, rice, betal nuts, clothes all in a smaller form usually used by human beings when alive. Nazmeen said item of everyday use of the dead persons are made in miniature forms. Things to be offered are to be made only within the house of the hosts.

\(^{73}\)Engti Dhanswer 2011, Serdihun Jutang Asengkan, Lokimo, 37 Andeng Karbi Riso Nimso Rong Aje. p.91
\(^{74}\)Anam Nazmeen, 2000, “The Enchanting Karbi Hills.” Angik publications pp.16.18
Pharlo Abong is a two word pharlo meaning soul and Abong means Gourd. Here, Pharlo Abong signifies the soul of the deceased itself.

**Photo No.1.10.** Pharlo Abong signifying the soul of the deceased.

**Photo No.1.11.** Effigies of the deceased soul at Rongpi’s house during Chomangkan.

Effigies had been made representing the dead man’s body. The ashes are collected from the cremation ground (Tipit) for the festival of final cremation known as Chomkan. Anything can be offered as shown above in the picture. All the Guest may give offering to the deceased soul on ones capacity, in the olden days mainly
betal nuts, hor (wine), rice, food etc, are been given. Today various kinds of thing are offered.

**Photo No.12. Lunsepi playing and singing Mir Ringrang kapakan alun.**

Mir-ring-rang Mir Koi is in square shape. It has different significance in different area. Some said it is for entertainment purpose for the soul of the deceased during chomangkan and some said it is used as a sign and signal of showing the way for the deceased soul. Further, the string of the thread usually consist of three colors, black, white and red making it as a way of distinctness from any other activity then the purpose of coming during chomkan, so that they can come and bless all the living descendents of the family and go back after blessings and accepts the offerings being given to them out of love and respect. Yet, Dharamsing Teron (2009) speaks about Mir-ring-rang song as, lightened up the long and gloomy vigil for the dead body: the ‘recreation’ of explicitly sexual and erotic, as if to balance deaths with rebirth and regeneration. 

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75 Teron Dharamsing, 2009. Lokimo, Understanding Karbi folk religion, Ingdeng 35 Karbi Riso Nimso Rong Aje P.86
The importance of Jambili Athon was seen in chomkan. Here, the song of the Jambili Athon is chanted as ‘Kacharhe,’ a form of balled singing being chanted orally by an old woman, who has knowledge on the origin of Jambili Athon during the performance of Chomkan.76 During chomkan, a procession known as ‘Rong Ketong’ is organized where Klengsarpo is to lead the procession with the Jambili Athon in his hand. Each Jumbli represent one habe and pinpo which was given to them as a sign of social honour for the customary signatories.

76Engti 2011, pp.93.94
Photo No. 1.15. Hebe and Pinpo taking parts in Chomkan:

Photo No.1.16. Obokpi a women who carries Pharlo Abong:

Photo No.1.16

Just as Obokbi brought all the soul of the deceased from the cremation ground, ‘Tipit’ during Chomangkan, she has to carry back all the deceased soul for the final cremations. Here, a particular rappers known as ‘Piba’, (pi means cloth and ba means carry on back), used for carrying babies are used in carrying, Pharlo Abong which is the soul of the deceased itself. Piba to be used during Chomangkan has to be new and woven only inside the house of the hosts.
Banjar Kikan is a part of Chomangkan which is being performed on the second and third day of Chomkan. In some areas they performed at the courtyard of the host, while some perform at the edge of the village far from home. Banjar Kikan is a form of dancing where a historical journey of the Karbis of a life time are been sung and showed in action, as to whatever things, incidents, obstacles as joy, sadness, love, hatred they have come across all through their life time. It is a form of dancing with bamboo which denotes the migration history of the Karbis which will need a deeper study, but for understanding. Banjar is all about the history of the first place where the Karbis resides known as, ‘Chom Arong.’ It is believed that heaven is meant for god alone and no man can enter. The Karbi people will go to the first and happy place called, ‘Chom Arong’ which is an imaginary paradise to many Karbis. The Karbis believed that the soul of the dead ones will go to this place but they would not stay there forever as they comes back in a form of a new born babies in his or her own clan, which is known as, ‘Men Kachaveng’ meaning rebirth or reincarnation.
The Karbis believed to have brought back the soul of the deceased during Chomkan amongst them till the final cremation which has to be dropped by the women known as Lunsepi and Uchepi. Here, Uchepi, the one who cooks meals for the soul of the deceased as she mourns has to carry all the utensils, rice and eatables things in a smaller quantity (model of all the things which are used for cooking purpose) to the cremation ground.

It is said that just as mother takes care of cooking and carry the babies, female has to carry the soul of the deceased and sends them off to the death world during the Chomkan. All the things are burnt there and then and no remains being taken home. In order to completely cut off between living and death the guns are to be fired for three times.

1.28. Social life:

Tribal social life makes for a basically classless society. There being no high or low, rich or poor. There is no social stratification in true Karbi society. They are classless in economic, social and political aspects. But after the coming of modernization, which is taking shape in the society: the Karbi society can be divided in to two parts, as ‘Haves’ and ‘Haves not.’ Some blames it as the political problems, nepotism, and laziness. Those who work hard, ‘Haves’ and those who do not work,
‘Haves not.’ Also, the developments tend to reach only in towns and urban areas. Again, misuse of education is observed amongst the few privilege people in the district just as in other part of the world which results in mismanagement of the powers. The fact that the privilege people become selfish and showing off, which lies in the very nature of Men.

**Photo No. 1.19. The category of Haves (Photo taken in Diphu Oct 2010):**

The photo depicts the random shots during one of the cultural program held in Diphu, Stadium. Just to cite here, using of crackers and toy bombs, unlimitedly in all the occasions is not the culture of the Karbis in true sense. Though not against the shape of modernization or any well to do people, it is to understand that there are so many people living below poverty line in our district especially in the rural areas and that with the amount of spending on the momentary crackers can be distributed to the poor ones who can fill their stomach and spend money for the education and procure basic things like clothing, foods and shelter. It is through the combine efforts of the entire intellectuals and well to do people will our district gain equality in all the human endeavors.
Source: Photo taken in Langpher MAC Constituency of Karbi Anglong on February 2011.

There is none in a Karbi society who has alliance to only the clan, as the co-clan constitutes a village and which in turn forms tribe. An individual in tribal society finds it difficult to exist without the security of belongingness to a group which will share the joys and sorrows, well being and where one can identify oneself.

A clan is a ‘kur’ in Karbi. In Karbi society, there are five kurs namely Ingti, Terang, Inghi, Timung and Teron and each clan has several sub divisions. Of course, the number and names of the kurs are differently given by different authorities. All the kurs are now socially equal having no objection on eating together or inter-marriage. ‘Ingti’ is said to have been in former times the priestly clan. ‘Terang’ also claims the same dignity, but thought to be of lower rank. ‘Inghi’ is said to have been the military clan, while ‘Timung’ and ‘Teron’ represented the rest of the people.

a) **Traditional Karbi House:**

A typical Karbi hut is known as ‘Hem Tun.’ This of two understanding the first meaning is the House itself and the other implies the contented family members which includes the parent or in laws, all the brothers and the daughters in laws and all the family members. Typically, the traditional house is built on a bamboo
platform using timber posts for super structure. The platform is several feet high above the ground. For roofing purpose, thatch is used. The walls made of split bamboos are mud-plastered. The house has two verandas - one at the front and the other at the rear. A wooden or bamboo ladder is used as an approach to the front veranda. Cattle are generally kept under the bamboo platform.

**Photo No. 1.21. Traditional Karbi House:**

![Photo: 1.20.](image)

b). **The Jambili Athon:**

Jambili means ‘bag’ and Athon means ‘stand’ this came in to be netted in the culture of the Karbis after the love affairs which occurred between uncle and Niece, which was forbidden in Karbi society, so unable to undergo the intensity of the society the niece sacrifice herself with unnatural death (suicide). It needs a separate research on this subject.

The Jambili-Athon is the cultural symbol of the Karbis, where female especially niece known in Karbi as, ‘Philipi’ is regarded as ‘Rali,’ even today out of love, sympathy and regards. ‘Rali’ is a Karbi word meaning, the name of the tree which grows up on the grave yard of the niece who suicide herself, after indulging in a love affairs with her uncle.77

77Personal Interview with Tisso Dated: 7/09/11
c. Rongpharpi Rongbe:

Rongpharpi Rongbe is one of the most inevitable historical significance in Karbi society; step of bravery by a karbi mother. Whose name was Kareng Rongpharpi; she was from Rongphar family, who hails from a very poor home, as narrated by the Karbis of Umrangso subdivision, of the N/C Hills now Dima Hasao.78

Photo No. 1.23. Rongpharpi Rongbe:

78Personal interview with Rongpi dated 8/7/2008
In earlier times known as, ‘Langjen’ and ‘Langlai’ now Umrangso, according to the political division, they migrated from Mahur and Langtin village. It is in this place that, this poor women lives, in a Dimasa dominated areas in those days under the dominant rule of Dimasa Kacharis Kingdom, known as, “Parok Recho” means ‘(Non-Karbi) Dimasa Kings.’

Since time immemorial the Karbis and dimasa have been neighbours of both good and bad times. Sometimes, the Karbis inhibiting North Cahar side, experience the harsh and unwanted time under the rule of Dimasas, till today a good number of Karbis still staying in the area ‘Dima Hasao’ and Dimasa staying in Karbi Anglong also, as they share same political and geographical areas. This is one of those incidents, when many of the chieftains under, “Parok Recho,” who wanted to drive the Karbis out from Dimasa Kingdom only on ‘ism’ basis during the times of ignorance.

It so happened that the “Parok Recho,” plotted a plan to chase them away: usually, they intruded Karbi home and disturb them out of nothing. On one particular day, the parok came and started abusing the Karbis as ever and convey the message that the king wants Human breast milk from Karbi mothers for feeding, tiger calves (Teke aso). Kareeng Rongpharpi who was on her way back home after collecting the fire woods was also been asked for same, who unable to tolerate the situation after pleading for her small children. But, the parok did not hold back and approach for her, so, out of defence and an act of bravery on the part of the Karbi women, retaliated back at them, by taking out the axe and killed one of the men of ‘Parok Recho.’ Thereafter, with the fear of the troops who may follow them left the Mahur and migrated to the North West direction of Mahur to the place called Langjin and Langlai, now known as Umrangso. As there is no original writings about this so, the exact date and time was not known just that it took place during the time of Dimasa Kingdom. Ever after that the Karbis took an oath that they will never in life drink from the streamlet of Mahur and Langtik which is practiced by them till today as narrated by them.

d) **Tattooing:**

Tattooing was prevalent in ancient Karbi society, interestingly Karbi women was found to be drawing of a vertical black line from the forehead to the chin which is
known as “duk.” No other part of the body tattooed. Opinion differs on its origin. Some people say that it was the result of the frequent kidnappings of Karbi women by Kacharis and some other say that it was the result of Burmese invasion. In order to save their women from the greedy eyes of Kacharis or Burmese invaders, the Karbi society make the women folk to tattoo their face to make them ugly. Some says, tattooing concept was not meant for beauty but was the fear that drove them to do it. It was not followed by those who adopted Christianity. According to Phangcho, tattooing and painting teeth were considered to be important care of beautifying a women.79

Photo No. 1.24.Tattooing (Duk)

Yet, some says rationally to point out if it is to drive away the Burmese invasions or Kacharis then the women of that period would have only used it or the Christian would also be scared and do so. But, it was in use even before the time of Burmese invasion and Kachari kingdoms as shared by Tisso80 who himself is studying on this. Further, there is no written documents; the actual reason could not be drawn. Tattooing by women was believed to have been prevalent around 15th and 16th century. Where as, it was only in the 18th century that the Burmese invaded Assam and other North-eastern parts. And the words like Dukjir duksang aso and Dukjir duksang Kar ‘i was in use long before the Burmese invasion. So the reason of ‘Duk’ in Karbi society is to be further research.

79 Phangho 2003, the Karbis of of North-east India .p.73
80 Discussion with Tisso dated 17/10/2011
1.29. Political life:

The Karbis over the past has been naming their village after the goan bura, which is a striking feature indeed. Thereby, every Karbi village has a goan bura and each have a revenue system of village goanbura who is selected by the district council. The Karbi had once had its kingdom which did not last long. The traditional king of the Karbis is the Recho and Lindokpo. He exercises his power in socio-religious sphere, in those times.

Generally, the Karbis have scattered settlement each under one Headman. This village head man is called “Sarthe” or “Rong Asar”, who manages and organizes the village. Women had no history of being a head in a village.

Patriarchy is the family structural system of the Karbis. Line of decent is traced through the male members. The sons inherit the property of their father. In absence of a son, the nearest male relative of his clan inherits. A childless couple can adopt a son which must belong to the clan of his foster father. The adopted son will be entitled to inherit the property. Women have no say over inheritance of property, even in the case of absence of son. With the spread of education, women in some family are asserting for inheritance of her parent’s property, especially where there is no son.

1.30. Need and significance of study:

Woman is indeed a very mysterious and marvelous creation of Almighty. She is the eternal mother and nucleus of this universe, through which the Lord manifests himself in every life. There will be no society, if there is no woman.

This is to say, women occupies a very important place in the society. They have their own duties and responsibilities towards the family and society. A woman is called the first guru of a child. A child is nurtured physically, emotionally, and spiritually by the mother. Therefore, the mother is the key to the quality of the next generation. If a mother is aware of the values, if she is valued and respected by the family and society, if she is well educated, if she enjoys her rights, and privileges as a mother, wife and daughter, then these elements are transmitted to her daughters and sons.

The need for investigating on the educational status and problems of Karbi women is strongly felt because of the following reasons:

1. In the traditional Karbi society, there are so many do(s) and do not(s) for
women. Like most of the neighboring tribes the Karbis are having a patriarchal system, where, there is no right for women in the governance of village, though indirectly in the form of sharing of views and ideas with their husbands are observed.

2. In the inheritance rights women has no say over an ancestral property and the property shared among male children, for which boy child is very much adored over girl child for lineage of family. But, it cannot be ignored that some rich and well to do families’ are handing some property to their girl child also; may be moveable but it happened only after the spread of education. Also, the attitude of child preference against the nature is also been replaced by way of saying girls are better these days, they are more dedicated, sincere and helpful in many cases: it was made possible because of the educational impact on their socio-cultural life.

3. In the festivals and religious fronts there are some instances where women are prohibited to take active participation: women are forbidden to do certain rites and rituals on some important occasion. Though, women are respected and held high as said and heard from the mouth of each and every one, the real life situations is different. But, education being so instrumental at every stage of life. There is a chain of change penetrating even to these areas.

4. The practices and beliefs of superstitions among the Karbi women, in varying degree cannot be overlooked, the only way to come out is only through analysis of truth and that is education. In the words of Ravindra Nath Tagore, “Education means enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipate us from the bondage of the dust and gives us the wealth, not of things light not of power but of love, making this truth own and giving expression to it.”81 Thus, education enables a man to find the ultimate truth within, leading to modifying behaviour, happiness and expressing the truth. It has also been considered as the ‘panacea’ for all social evils. A society’s progress cannot be attained until and unless enlightened by education.

5. The most important activity in Karbi Anglong is agriculture. People also

81 Sarma Akhtar and Goswami 2005, An introduction to higher secondary education for first year. p.3
engage themselves in small scale industries like weaving, handloom, crafting, blacksmithing and other handicrafts to meet their daily needs. The second important activity is salaried job. According, to 2001 census the percentage of working population to total of the district were 40.57. The worker population ratio for male was 49.02 against 31.42 for female. It is striking to note that more than half of the populations have registered as non-workers and about 69% of female population were found to be not engaged in economy activity. Among the total workers main workers i.e., those who work for 183 or more days of the year constitute 30.40%. As high as 53.75% of total female workers were registered as marginal workers.  

In the words of vice president of India, (2011) according to the reputed Assam newspaper, ‘The Assam Tribune.’ The level of female economic activity is lower and so is female participation in professional and technical works. He said according to the five year strategic plan of the ministry of women and child development for 2011-2016, it has been noted that just 14% of women are employed, while 54 percent of men are employed in the urban sectors. In rural sector, the figure is 31 percent for women and 55 percent for men. He also said that, “Since Independence there have been only five women judges of the Supreme Court constituting just 3 percent of the appointments” and thus he said, “The picture of discrimination and deprivation that emerges is disturbingly stark.” In this way women participate in the economic field. So, the study is also directed to study about the change in outlook of economic participations of Karbi women after education.

6. Political status of women throughout the world is very low. In spite of the spread of education the representation of women in voluntary and social organization is very inadequate. Dutta N, L. in her paper captioned, “Political status of women in Assam, since independence,” analyses the reasons for poor representation of women in the State legislature and parliament. She is of opinion that women’s organizations of Assam are

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82Office of the Joint Director of Economics and Statistics (Hills), Diphu, Karbi Anglong. Statistics of Assam P.9
not strong enough to fight political battles. Besides, politics has become so nasty and corrupt that, women hesitate to enter the world.83

Speaking about the status of Indian participation in politics at the 19th convocation of the North Eastern Hills University in Shillong, Shri M. Hamid Ansari, the present vice presidents of India (2011), said that less than 11 per cent of the seats in the parliament are held by women. The situation is worst in state Assemblies. Moreover, women hold less than ten percent of the ministerial position at the centre with a lone Cabinet Minister.84 If we have to say about the situation in Karbi Anglong, it is at the grassroots level, and so the way to out is, “not to camaflouge reality” by restoring to tokenism and parading exceptions, but by addressing the problem head on.

We have both literate and illiterate women in our society. The status of women is one of respect and adoration, but in real life situation, it has not much improved. There are numerous problems that women face at home and society. The economic condition of many Karbis especially in rural areas is deplorable for which they cannot educate their female wards and want to use them for earning livelihood, as such 85% of the areas in Karbi Anglong is rural. Girls are still considered as burdens by their parents. Parents become eager to betroth them no sooner they attain marriageable age. Their education seems to be of least importance, because after marriage girls are sent to her in-laws house, where from her all round development is extremely limited.

A large number of factors act as obstacles for acquiring equal status with their counterparts in our society where education is considered as the right path to rise. Rights, privileges and position: culture, economy and political structures may be the barriers of women status in our society. Still, women are marching ahead with great conviction and confidence to keep at par with their counterparts in every field.

A breakthrough of gender inequality that has forceful impact on the life of women in the country is the beginning of the National Policy for empowerment, 2001. In the policy it has proposed to make the legal system more responsive and gender sensitive for women’s needs: women must be economically and socially empowered. May or may not be implemented by the whole of the state, by launching it in March

84The daily news paper of Assam, ‘The Assam Tribune, Oct’ 1st 2011
2010, it is an important development that will enable coordinated assessment of current government interventions and align future programmes. So, as to translate the recommendations and approaches of the National policy of women empowerment into reality.

Against these backdrops it is attempted to envisage into the educational status and problems of Karbi women with the view to know the impacts of education in their socio, culture, economy and political life as a result of the spread of education in the districts and to create awareness among Karbi women as to their roles, and rights in the society. Importantly, to probe into their problems inside and outside her home. So, as to offer possible suggestions for solutions of various problems they confront and for improvement of their educational status and empowerment.

With the help of survey and descriptive methods, the facts and figures of literacy rates and educational status of Karbi women in higher education, was collected personally from educational Institutions and various offices, departments also related documents was presented in the form conceptual frame work and for the impact of education, which is the main focus of my study their actual life conditions have been sought through self made questionnaires which is the reflective part and analyzed critically because through records and documents we will be able to find out only the records, facts in the form of various writings in general but with the help of self made questionnaires an attempts has been made to bring out the actual standing and positions of Karbi women in higher education including higher secondary and their relative problems.

Thus, the present study deals with:

1.31. **Statement of the problem:**

The Statement of the present study is stated as, "A study of educational Status and Problems of Karbi women in Karbi Anglong District of Assam."

1.32. **Definitions of the terms used:**

1. **Educational Status:** Refers to the awareness and attainment of educational degrees by Karbi women in Karbi Anglong District. The impact of education; it is a mark of the amount of recognition, honor, and acceptance received by Karbi women in society.

2. **Problems:** Refers to the difficulties and obstacles that Karbi women face. All round aspects of human suffering- social, economy, political, also includes physical, mental, moral aspects of person, at home and outside in acquiring new experiences.
3. **Karbi women:** Refers to the Karbi women living in rural and urban areas of Karbi Anglong.

4. **Karbi Anglong:** refers to one of the hill district of Assam, which is an abode of the Karbis. It is the largest district in Assam and second largest in India.

1.33. **Objectives of the study:**

The objectives of the present study may be listed thus:

1. To study the educational status of women in higher education of Karbi Anglong district.

2. To examine the impact of education on the life of Karbi women with reference to their participation in:
   a. Socio-cultural
   b. Socio-economy
   c. Socio-political

3. To identify the problems of educated and uneducated Karbi women in Karbi Karbi Anglong district of Assam.

4. To assess the opinion of the policy makers and teachers towards woman education.

5. To offer possible suggestions for solutions to their problems and for improvement of their educational status and empowerment.

1.34. **Delimitation of the study:**

The study delimited to the Karbi women as educated and uneducated living and pursuance of education only in Karbi Anglong District and Institutions of higher education including higher secondary, Assam University Diphu Campus and professional colleges prevalent only in the said district.

1.35. **Scope of the study:**

The scope of the study is so wide and comprehensive. It covers almost all the major areas of life as socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political areas of the Karbi women highlighting their status and participations acknowledged. For which, the necessary historical background of Karbi Anglong, tradition and culture and about its people and the lands are taken care of intensively.

The study includes all the various stages of educational development in the district. Right from primary level to the prevailing university inclusive of professional colleges are explored. For this study, special references are given to higher education. Since higher education in Karbi Anglong are few in numbers the study of higher
secondary is been included to the list. Both government and non-government that are running in the district are included this is to get clearer status of Karbi women population in higher education. All the head of Institutions of Higher secondary, colleges, professional institutions and all the head of department of the Assam university Diphu Campus. Again, the teaching faculty members of all the specified higher education are also been a part of this study its main objective is to get their opinion and suggestions for the upliftment of women education in the district.

The study mainly deals with Karbi women, all types of women are included at stretch as students, married, and unmarried, illiterates, educated and uneducated of both rural and urban areas.

1.36. Limitations of the study:
The present study is subjected to certain limitations:

1. The present study is limited only to Karbi women living within Karbi Anglong district divided into two groups as educated and uneducated.
2. The educated Karbi women were randomly drawn from the urban areas of Karbi Anglong district.
3. The uneducated Karbi women were randomly drawn from rural areas of Karbi Anglong District.
4. The study limited to only the institutions of higher education from Higher Secondary and above including professional colleges existing in Karbi Anglong district of Assam.
5. The study limited to availability of relevant records and documents, official records and documents regarding the progress and development of higher education in Karbi Anglong and also the status of Karbi women only confined to Karbi Anglong district.
6. Questionnaires were administered to all the head of the institutions. Teachers were randomly selected from higher secondary, colleges, professional colleges and universities for separate questionnaires. Karbi women were studied under two captions as educated and uneducated to get first information about the status and problems of Karbi women in higher education. And, policy makers of the districts are included to share their opinion about the status and improvements of women in higher education of the districts.