Chapter- I
INTRODUCTION
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1.1 Generalities

There is a close relationship between the population migration and the consequent distribution of a particular group of people and both these factors are responsible for subsequent social and economic development of that group of people. The determinants and the pattern of population migration, their redistribution, and socio-economic and cultural changes are becoming inertly important for researcher, policy makers and planners.

Migration is a geographical observable fact that seems to be a human necessity in every age. Since man has a tendency to leave the areas where life is intricate, people migrate to the areas where life may be effortless and better. The term ‘Migration’ may be originally defined as the relatively permanent movement of persons over a significant distance. Migration may be permanent or semi-permanent. Migration may be international, inter-regional, inter-urban, rural-urban or intra-urban. The south Asian subcontinent long experienced virtually uninterrupted demographic mobility, which was reflected in the almost unchecked transfer and re-settlement of population in a number of places. Such population mobility was due to both environmental and socio-economic causes. The causes of migration may be numerous and these may range from natural calamities, climatic change, epidemics, and drought to socio-economic, cultural and political.
LOCATION OF STUDY AREA

Map No.-1
The population composition of India includes different ethnic groups with different socio-cultural identities. A fairly sizable tribal population contributes to the Indian culture with their own traditional socio-cultural traits. The tribal segment is far from homogeneity and displays a fairly high degree of diversity in its socio-cultural traits and the stage of social evaluation and their spatial distribution. A common feature of all tribal groups is that historically they have remained away from the main centre of population agglomeration. They have a tendency to live in isolation i.e. the forested areas, hills, and sometimes riverbanks are the common place for their settlements.

The tribal population of India (67.6 million) is greater than that of any other country in the world. In fact, it is almost equal to the tribal population of nineteen countries that have substantial tribal population. Myanmar has a tribal population of 14 million and is the second largest tribal populated nation in the world. India has four times more than Myanmar and six times more than Mexico (10.9 million). The tribal population in India constitutes 8.08 percent of the total population. They are the most adversely affected ethnic group due to developmental projects like dams, factories and mines. In fact, they constitute 40 percent of the displaced person due to developmental projects. On the other hand, tribal population of Assam is not pretentious in a similar manner as very little industrial development has taken place in this region.

The tribal of Assam seems to be living out side the mainstream of general population, but their villages are not exclusive. Traditionally they live in clusters
in hamlets, generally in remote areas. They have their own socio cultural life, which are at varying stages of development. Since independence with more than half a century of efforts by the government to bring them at par with the rest of the society not much has been achieved. Education opportunities have not been taking advantage of economic activities centers around agriculture and savings are unheard of. Their social life is unique. Because of contacts with outside societies, they have adopted Hindu religious practices, but their original religious practices are a mixture of Animism and superstitious beliefs, which are retained by many.

1.2 Migration among the Tribes

In the historic past various tribes migrated to India from different parts of the world and settled in such places where they can be tenable. But in course of time many tribal groups had to migrate from their original settlement to different locations within the region due to various socio-economic and political causes like natural calamities, epidemics, intrusion by non-tribal people etc. The process of migration of the tribal people perhaps began during colonial period, when the resource-rich tribal areas (particularly in mid- India) are exposed to colonial exploitation. Encroachment of non-tribal groups or other ethnic groups in the tribal areas have made the tribal people to be redistributed in different places. The tribal groups who are in any case distributed in geographically off-putting area even further squeezed into in hospitable tracts within the region or had to move out to nearby emerging towns. The redistribution of tribal groups in different
locations of the region influences the existing society and *vice-versa* (especially in social, cultural, and also economic aspects).

In North East India, large concentration of Scheduled Tribe population is found with different ethnic identities. Each of the seven states of North East India has a large number of tribal populations either in hilly areas or in rivarine tracts and also in frontiers. There is a significant redistribution of tribal population especially in the Brahmaputra valley as a result of migration within the region under specific circumstances. The *Deoris* are a major community (Scheduled Tribe) in Assam especially in the upper Assam area. The present spatial distribution of *Deori* population in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam and in the Lohit and Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh is due to the result of their migration from their original settlements during the last century in various circumstances.

Dhemaji the easternmost district of Assam, is constituted bifurcating Lakhimpur district and is the homeland of a large number of scheduled tribes namely the Mishings, the Deoris, the Sonowal Kacharis, the Bodos, the Tiwas besides other ethnic groups like the Chutias, the Ahoms, the Koch and others.

1.3 The Tribes at a Glance

The tribal communities of Assam constitute 12.82 percent of the total population (2001 census). The tribal societies of this region are more or less isolated from outside world and from other similar societies until recent past.
However, since independence, the gradual exposure to people of outside societies caused a gradual transition of their work, culture and way of living. The Bodos are the largest group of Scheduled Tribe of Assam and they constitute 44.1 percent of total S.T. population of the state. Their total population is 14,58,334 according to 2001 census. They are distributed in the most of the plain districts of Assam. Their settlements in the new locations are still in progress under some ecological causes.

The Mishings are the second largest group of scheduled tribe (plains) of Assam after the Bodos. They constitute 16 percent of total S.T. population (5,38,333 person, 2001). They are distributed in the reverine areas of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Tinsukia and Sonitpur districts of Assam. The population of Mishing language speakers in Assam is 3,81,562 (1.7%). After Mishings, Karbis constitute 10 percent (3,28,968 person, 2001) of the total S.T. population followed by Sonowal Kachari 8.70 percent (2,89,735 person, 2001), Rabha 8 percent (2,72,707 person), Dimasa Kachari & Hojai 3 percent, (80,099 persons), and Deori 1.30 percent, (44,262, persons) respectively.

1.4 Acculturation: Leads to Socio-Cultural Transformation

Bowell used the term acculturation in 1880 to signify the changes from a purely traditional to a modern way of life (Deori, et. al 2007). Moore in 1959 described that, “it is a transfer of cultural or social elements from one society to
another” (Deori, et. al 2007). Through this process of social change, certain changes voluntarily or involuntarily occur in a society but mostly the core of the culture remains intact. The process however, has both positive and negative aspects. Socio-political, environmental and planned development factors play a decisive role in bringing about changes. Fiser, in 1973 described that the capacity for culture is essentially a capacity for learning an arbitrary, traditional way of life through social communication and for changing his way of life when environmental or social circumstances require (Deori, 1988).

The socio-cultural traits discussed in the chapter (Chapter IV) are practiced by Deoris before 1950s, which was a traditional Deori culture. After the independence till 1970s, they were performing their rituals in the same traditional way but with lot of flexibility. After 1970s substantial changes have occurred among their culture. The ecological environment in the present settlement has influenced their traditional culture to a great extent. The developmental activities adopted by the Assamese society also persuade their life significantly. So, these factors are mainly responsible for large-scale cultural transformations of Deoris.

1.5 History of Deoris

According to ‘Kalika Purana’ and ‘Yogini Tantra’, prior to the sixth century, Deoris had been performing religious practices in the ‘Tamreswari or Kechaikhati’ temple, ‘Burha-Burhi’ temple, ‘Baliababa’ temple and in ‘Patar Shaal’ (which is in the north-east of Sadiya). The chief deities of the Deori are—
Source: Political History of Assam by H.K. Barpujari
This region was a part of 'Saumar Pith' of ancient Kamrup and was known as 'Bidarva' kingdom (lately Sadiya) in the time of Mahabharata and 'Kundil Nagar' was its capital during that period. The name 'Kundil' came into existence from the Deori supreme God 'Kundimama'.

*Deoris* served as priests at four different temples all situated in the present Sadiya and at three of which a human sacrifice was offered yearly and at the fourth a white buffalo. Latterly these sacrifices have been offered to the Hindu Goddess Durga (Deori, 1964). The practice of human sacrifice was abolished during the reign of Swargadeo Rudra Singha (Ahom King).

Many religious people from China, Tibet and Burma and many Hindus of India came to the temples that were worshipped by *Deoris* in the month of 'Saon' (July-August) and 'Bohag' (April-May) with a view to worship there (Deori, 1964). Chutias for the same reason accepted the 'Sakta' religion and became disciples of the *Deori* priests.

'Ahom' and 'Kachari' kingdom appointed the *Deoris* as their priests in different temples. It has been observed that the original seat of *Deori* was in the region beyond Sadiya. It is only about a century ago that they moved to their present settlements, and some of them still occasionally visit Sadiya for religious purposes (Gait, 1905). Further the pre-history indicates that the *Deoris* had come
to India in the dim and distant past from northeast Asia i.e. from Chinese and Mongolian territories. Deoris had settled in Yunnan Pradesh of South China, Mongolia and later on they settled at Jaimal-Jaidham before settled at Sadiya. They lived in the valleys in the rivers of Brahmaputra, Tsangpo, Lassa, Siddhakhetri, Swati, Bidarva or Banzul, Kundil, Chengchukul, Laibari, Laphabari, Sadiya etc (Deori, 2002). The pre-historical legends as well as historical accounts by and large have made the Deori as the ‘Tribal Brahmin’ or ‘Tribal Priest’ of the ancient north east India. Their religious faiths, rituals and the language used in ‘Deva –Puja’ (Worshipping the God), were prevalent all over Assam, i.e. the Kamata-Kamrup region (Deori, 1964).

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Deoris were settled on the banks of the river ‘Dibang’, ‘Tengapani’ and ‘Patarsal’ which is now fall within the jurisdiction of Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh and ‘Chapakhowa’ area that is in ‘Sadiya’ subdivision of Tinsukia district of Assam.

Available records show that prior to the sixth century Deoris had been living in around Sadiya (Chapakhowa area). The term ‘Deori’ is attached to the religious or priestly functionaries of various tribal as well as non-tribal communities of Assam (Bose, 1990). As in some other parts in mid-India; the tribal population in Brahmaputra valley has witnessed substantial migration and redistribution of its population in the past. Of particular importance that invites
research efforts is the Deori population, which is confined to a few districts on both bank of the mighty Brahmaputra in upper Assam.

The process and the pattern of migration and consequent distribution of Deoris in Assam are quite significant and it influences the socio-economic and cultural life of the three ‘foids’ or khels’ (sub-groups) of the community to a great extent. Till the end of the Ahom kingdom Deoris lived peacefully in Sadiya. They got ‘Devottar’ and ‘Brahmottar’ lands (donated by king) from Sadiyakhowa Gohain (Deori, 1964). During the time of Moran, Matak uprising most of the people from Sadiya had left the place. Still Deoris performed their duties in the temples. (Deori, 1964)

But, as a result of the attack of ‘Manns’ and ‘Mishmi’ (during the first part of seventeenth century), epidemic and diseases and influx of hill tribes from some parts of Arunachal Pradesh created problems of shelter and settlement in the large part of erstwhile Deori dominant areas (Deori, 1964). Gradually the hill tribes captured the lands of Deoris. Internal migration too took place from various parts of Arunachal Pradesh and this had a debilitating effect on availability of land for the community as a whole and the people were migrated to the south of their origin settlements through the Brahmaputra valley.

There was another inflow of migration of Deori’s in the last century, which was caused due to the devastating earth quake in 1950s, Consequent flood and river bank erosion in the areas of Deori settlement had forced them to move around to different parts of the Brahmaputra valley in search of cultivable lands.
They migrated to different districts of upper (both the banks of the Brahmaputra) and middle Assam forming some groups in their own ‘Khels’. This process continued up to last century and they are now distributed in eight districts of Brahmaputra valley.

As a result of the migration and consequent spatial distribution of Deoris the socio-cultural, economic and religious life of the community is affected to a great extent.

Physical and Social ecology of the community is altered to a great extent in the new settlements as compared to that of Sadiya. Their economic activities have been influenced by the ecological conditions prevailing in the newly settled areas and their earlier pattern of livelihood has changed in a considerable way. A new social transformation has taken place with the assimilation of different ethnic groups. It is in this context that the present problem assumes significance, it is clear that the migration of Deoris from the last century has been an on going process. It is not the purpose here to examine this long drawn process of migration of Deoris, but to detain the study only to causes of migration, socio cultural traits, existing economic activities and over all cultural transformation among them. The cultural transformations of Deoris form the core of the proposed research.

This research aims at identifying the spatial patterns in the process of migration from earlier settlements to the present locations and the degree of cultural transformation of the community. The research also makes a modest
attempt at getting an insight into the causes and consequences of migration of
Deoris from their original settlements.

1.7 Choice of the Study Area

Deoris are mostly found in the eight districts of upper and middle Assam and in some pockets of Lohit and Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, near the Assam Arunachal Pradesh border. For the purpose of the present study the districts in Assam where this community is distributed have been selected as the study area. Needless to say, the quantum and quality of cultural transformation has been different in different tribes in this part of the state compared to other parts of northeast India. The state of Assam occupies a unique position amidst complex geologic and physiographic make up of the northeastern regions of India. The concentrations of Deori villages are found in Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, and Sonitpur districts of north bank and in Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar and Jorhat districts of south bank of the Brahmaputra Valley. Some villages are also found in Guwahati area of Kamrup district.

All the three foids (clans) are not found together in one district except Dhemaji district. Dhemaji district significantly represents villages of Dibongiyas, Tengaponiyas and Borgoyans . Hence, the case study for the present research is done in Dhemaji district.
1.8 Brief Overview of Literature

Studies on migration of population are not of recent origin and the literature and records these fields are more or less available. However, much of the studies done earlier are mostly confined to areas outside the northeast India. Secondly such studies are inherent in analysis pertaining to population distribution itself.

The south Asian subcontinent long experienced virtually uninterrupted demographic mobility, which was reflected in the almost unchecked transfer and resettlement of population in a number of places. A large number of studies on population migration relate to displacement of population due to various developmental activities in India as well as whole south Asia.

Ahmed (1987) deals with the population trends in Pakistan and discusses the impact of the early refugee influx on the internal migration and urbanization of the country. Elahi and Sultana (1991) discussed major and minor population shift in south Asia in different historical period: Pre-British, British and Post independence. Skeldon (1991) observed that the migration in south Asia is concerned with contemporary mobility of population as reflected in population census survey and survey work reaching back to the 1950s. The discussion includes overall spatial patterns of flows, rural transfers, socio-cultural transformation of migrants. Shrestha (1991) analyzed general trends in change and redistribution of population in Nepal for the country as a whole and for the main ecological zones. Ahmed (1991) discussed the size, character and
distribution of population in Pakistan and held the view this way very much
influenced by the 1947 partition of the subcontinent. Pareek et.al (1974) and Jain
(1975) reviewed the trends and outcome of current research on population,
including population distribution, migration, cultural change and development
perspective in India. Patra (2003) analysed ethnic conflict as a force in internal
displacement of people along ethnic lines in the areas of Bodo concentration in
Assam.

In a micro level study based on sample survey Das (1980) attempted to
assess the impact of various developmental schemes upon socio-economic
transformation in the Dimoria Tribal developmental Block of Assam. Nath et.al
(1988) dealt with the position of women in the traditional tribal societies of
northeast India citing example from social and cultural transformation from
different tribes. Sharma (1981) examined the extent of socio-economic
transformation of the urban community situated near the Guwahati city. Borah
et.al (1984) studied the impact of Guwahati city on the socio-economic as well as
cultural transformation in the peri-urban areas through gradient analysis. Jafri and
Sahu (1978) analysed the impact of Shillong city in its fringe areas in terms of
social transformation and levels of social development. Mahanta (1986) attempted
an analysis of the ongoing social transformation and emerging conflicts among
the different social groups in the Shillong urban agglomeration. Saharia (1985)
made study on rural transformation in Dolgaon area, Assam.
Barclay (1958) rightly remarked that the fact that migrant, is a person, who travels, is the only unambiguous element involved in the entire processes of transformation. Bogue (1959) considers a movement of people as an instrument of cultural diffusion and social integration that result into more meaningful distribution of population. Beaujeu-Garnier (1966) rightly remarked that area from which people out migrate, the area to which they immigrate and the migrants themselves never remain the same. Migration cannot be considered a mere shift of people from one place of residence to another as it is the most fundamental to the understanding of continuously changing space-content and space relationships of an area (Gosal, 1961). Migration holds a place of prominence in a geographical analysis of population change (like fertility and mortality) in any area (Trewartha, 1969). Origin, distribution and ecological adaptation of hill tribe in selected areas of Arunachal Pradesh were studied by (Roy Burman, 1970). Unlike fertility and mortality, migration is not just an unequivocal biological event but also a physical and social transaction (Zelinsky, 1971). Waddle (1975) has made distinction between cultural environment and physical setting in the Brahmaputra valley. Prothero (1979) stated that spatial mobility embraces all sorts of terrestrial movements but all forms of spatial mobility cannot be regarded as migration. Grigg (1980) studied migration and its consequences on underdeveloped countries. Jones (1980) showed the migration variations in different metropolitan cities using statistical techniques. Of the three major components of population change (i.e. Fertility, Mortality and Migration), migration is the most difficult to
conceptualize and measure (Jones, 1981). Fellmann (1985) studied concentration and redistribution of American black in northern cities. The migrants not only try to preserve their socio-cultural traits but also try to spread them (Merrick, 1986). Ahmad (1987) has attempted redistribution of tribal population in India on account of developmental processes. Migration or out going population influences the society, culture, economy and environment both at the places of origin and destination (Ravenstein, 1989). Bose (1990) emphasizes the distributional pattern of hill tribes in northeast India on the basis of regional development. Chandna (1990) has remarked that, the places of origin, the places of destination and individuals and families of the migrants undergo a qualitative and quantitative change in their population and demographic structure. Chube (1990) has analyzed the economic activity is the main cause of population migration concerned with other related problems. Rubenstein (1990) stated that the interactions of people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds when they stay together lead to the enrichment of civilization. Migrants often not only lose their culture but also amalgamate new tradition of the area concerned (Kosinski, 1991).

1.9 Literatures Pertaining to Deoris

The northeastern part of India comprises of many tribal communities each with its perceived separate cultural identity. The state of Assam, one of the seven sister states of northeast India, also has a number of racial groups with significant cultural variation among them. Assam is a melting pot of different races,
languages and cultures. Brown in 1895 stated that the Deoris are a small tribe in the Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts of upper Assam (Deuri, 1992).

Deoris served as priests at four different temples all situated above the present Sadiya (Deori, 1964). Goswami (1962) studied the origin and changing nature of Deoris in the Assam. Deoris were the royal priests of king Bhismaka and the god and goddesses they worshipped were the same god and goddesses that were worshipped by king Bhismaka (Deori, 1964). It is only about a century ago that the community moved to their present settlements, and some of them still occasionally visit Sadiya for religious purposes (Deori, 2002). Deori (1964) had mad an attempt to reveal the complete culture and history of Deori society. Redistribution of Deoris after the 1950s and their settlement and social problems were studied by (Deori, 1964). Barkakati (1969) studied the origin and migration of tribal people in Assam and their nature of settlement. Bhuyan (1969-71) showed the change of cultural settings among the tribes of undivided Assam. Bhuyan (1973) showed how the migrant has changed the socio-economic structure of Brahmaputra valley. The wise and noble people performing priestly functionaries in four Deo-Shaals in Sadiya were known as Deori (Saikia, 1974). Migrations of different tribes in the riverine tract of Brahmaputra valley were studied (Baruah, 1987). Historical description of tribal origin and distribution in Assam was described by (Barpujari, 1988). Deuri (1991) has made an attempt to show the distribution of Deoris and concentration in an around the Sadiya. Bhuyan (1991) highlighted the nature of immigration and population pressure of
tribal communities in some selected areas in Assam. Taher (1993) studied the changing pattern of ethnicity among tribal community in Assam due to migration wave. Tribal redistribution in the bordering areas of Assam and its social impact was highlighted by (Barthakur, 1997). Changing patterns of tribal settlements in Bodo dominated areas were studied by (Baishya, 1997). Deori (2002) defined the cultural impact of the Deori community in relation to redistribution among other tribe in the Brahmaputra valley. The forefathers of Deoris came to India in the dim and distant past from northeast Asia i.e. from Chinese and Mongolian territories. They settled in the valleys in the river Brahmaputra, The Tsangpo, Lassa, Siddhakhetri, Swati, Bidarva or Banzul, Kundil, Chengchukul, Laibari, Laphabari, Sadiya etc (Deori, 2002).

1.10 Objectives

The objectives of this research as follows:

i) to study the reasons of migration of Deoris from the earlier settlements to the present locations

ii) to examine the change in their cultural identity subsequent to their settlement in the present area and

iii) to understand the socio-cultural transformation among Deoris that are undergoing as a result of their assimilation with different culture and their interaction with other ethnic groups in Assam.
1.11 Hypotheses

i) The loss of Deori culture is directly proportionate to their assimilation with other culture and their contact to other ethnic groups.

ii) Greater the loss of cultural identity greater is the socio-cultural transformation among the Deoris. The above hypotheses shall be tested on the basis of Cultural Transformation Index of the study area.

1.12 Data Base and Methodology

Data required for this research is obtained from primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources particularly those published successive census enumeration, Deori Autonomous Council and those available district headquarter, Sub deputy collector office of the concerned area. Secondary data also collected from i) Census reports on Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe, Language Tables etc. ii) Bulletins of AADSU iii) Publications of Deori Sahitya Sabha, Assam iv) Community block development documents, v) Published documents and articles, vi) Reports of Assam Plains Tribe Development Corporation.

Data also required for this research is obtained from primary sources.

i) Personal interviews ii) Household questionnaires iii) Field visits etc.

The methodology for present research adopted is outlined below:
1. Zonation of study area is made on the basis of concentration of Deori population in Assam; following three zones have been identified-
   a) High concentration zone
   b) Moderate concentration zone and
   c) Least concentration zone

2. The distribution of population in Deori distributed areas is defined by segregating the data into four sets (Total population, Total non-tribal population, Total non-Deori population and Total scheduled tribe population). Distribution of these categories of population is examined at district and sub divisional level. A micro level analysis has been done to identify the concentration on village level, which is dominantly inhabited by Deoris.

3. At least three villages representing three foids (clans) i.e. Dibongia, Tengaponia and Borgoyan and a built up area (mixed of all clans) are selected to investigate the nature and consequences of migration and degree of cultural transformation.

4. A household survey of at least 40 percent of the households chosen on random basis to get the information on places of last residence, causes of migration, past and present occupation, relationship with nearby community and other related phenomena. For the built up area (Dhemaji Town) 100 percent of population is considered.
5. The degree of cultural transformation in the field study is done considering all the social parameters of the community in percentage basis from the primary data collected.

1.13 Organization of Manuscript

The manuscript is organized into six broad chapters. The first chapter outlines the design of the research work. The second chapter deals with the spatial distribution of ethnic composition of population in Assam at state and district levels. The spatial distribution of different ethnic groups is also disaggregated for rural and urban population separately. Distribution of Deori population is disaggregated at district levels of Assam. The population of different tribes of Assam including Deori population is also recorded in this chapter. The third chapter deals with migration of Deoris from their original habitats to present locations. The routes of migration of ancestors of Deoris are depicted and pattern of migration during different periods till present is analyzed. The ecological pattern of distribution in the present settlements of the community is also discussed in the third chapter. The causes of migration from the original place to the present locations are analyzed.

The fourth chapter deals with socio cultural traits of Deoris. This chapter includes the traditional rituals and customs of the community. The fifth chapter deals with the socio-cultural changes of Deoris as a result of migration. Different attributes like education, religion, health care, occupation, dress pattern, marriage
etc. is taken to study the socio-cultural transformations of the community. The field study data are analyzed and examined by the proposed hypotheses. The last and sixth chapter includes the findings and conclusion of the research study.
References:


Baishya, P. (1997): 'From Tribal Belt to Autonomous Council: Genesis of the Leap' in L.S.


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