

# **THE RABHAS AND THE HAJONGS: A SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS SINCE 1950**

**A Thesis  
Submitted to  
Gauhati University  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**



By  
**PRASANTA CHAKRABARTY**  
Lecturer in  
Political Science  
Bikali College  
Dhupdhara, Goalpara,  
Assam  
2003



# **THE RABHAS AND THE HAJONGS: A SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS SINCE 1950**

**A Thesis  
Submitted to  
Gauhati University  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**



By

**PRASANTA CHAKRABARTY**

Lecturer in  
Political Science  
Bikali College  
Dhupdhara, Goalpara,  
Assam  
2003

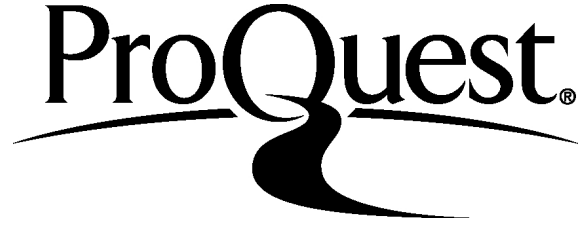
ProQuest Number: 10116799

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10116799

Published by ProQuest LLC (2016). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346



*Prof. (Miss) Niru Hazarika,*

M.A., Ph. D., D. Litt.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

PHONE : 571186 (Res.)

570443 (Off.)

671525 (Off.)

8, GAUHATI UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

GOPINATH BARDOLOI NAGAR

GUWAHATI-781 014

Assam :: India

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Prasanta Chakrabarty**, Lecturer in Political Science, Bikali College, Dhupdhara, has prepared the thesis on **“The Rabhas and the Hajongs : A Socio-Political Analysis since 1950”** under my guidance. He has conformed to the rules and regulations relating to the preparation of the Ph.D. thesis of Gauhati University. The thesis as a whole or any part thereof has not been submitted to any other university for any research degree. This is his own work.



(Niru Hazarika)

Professor in Political Science  
GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the very beginning I express my sincere respect and gratitude to my revered teacher Prof. (Dr.) Niru Hazarika, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University for her guidance and supervision of my research work. In spite of her busy schedule she has left no stone unturned to inspire and suggest me as and when I approached her during the entire period of the research. Virtually, it would have been not possible on my part to complete the thesis without her guidance.

I offer my deep respect and gratitude to my teacher Sri Mafizuddin Sheikh, retd. Vice-Principal, Satrasal Higher Secondary Vidyapith, for his constant inspiration for the research work.

I express my indebtedness to my esteemed colleagues, Dr. M.G. Singh and Dr. Malina Rabha for their encouragement to undertake the research work and the valuable suggestions I received from them for the purpose. I express my sincere gratitude to Dr. B.N. Raychoudhury and Sri H.K. Baruah, ex-Principals of Bikali College, Dhupdhara for their encouragement and suggestions.

I also express my gratefulness to Sri Dhaneswar Rabha, ex-Executive Member, Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council, Sri Bhabani Kanta Rabha, currently Executive Member, Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council, Sri Dwijen Rabha, Rangjuli, Sri Sunil Rabha, Rabhapara, Dhupdhara, Sri Mohen Ch. Rabha, Belguri, Sri Biren Hajong, Tura, as they extended their helping hands by providing relevant books, magazines, documents etc. required for the purpose. I also record my deep sense of gratitude to all the informants for their co-operation and help.

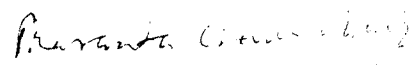
I acknowledge my gratitude to the Directorate of Census Operations and the Directorate of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, from where I received relevant data, census reports and other publications.

I am also thankful to the Library Authorities of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes and Omeo Kr. Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, for permitting me to use the libraries. I offer my thanks to the Librarian and the Staff of Bikali College Library, Dhupdhara, for their co-operation and help I received during the period of my study.

I am grateful to Sri Jyotirmoy Gogoi, Sri Harish Kalita, Sri Kabir Hussain, Sri Kamala Kanta Adhikari, Sri Mrinal Kr. Sarkar, Sri Sankar Barman and Sri Haradhan Ganguly for helping me in the field study carried out in the remote villages. Miss Dipika Rabha, Sri Sunil Rabha, Sri Kamal Krishna Hajong and Sri Ranjit Hajong made necessary arrangement for the photographs for which I offer my thanks to all of them. I offer my thanks to my colleague Sri Girindra Thakuria who has helped me by doing the cartographic works required for the thesis.

I offer my deep respect to my mother Smt. Nirupama Chakrabarty and my eldest sister Smt. Ranjita Chakrabarty for their constant inspiration for the research work. I shall remain grateful to my wife Smt. Ujjala Chakrabarty for the encouragement and co-operation I received from her during the entire period of the research.

In fine I offer my thanks to the proprietor and the staff of 'Martinet Computer', Jalukbari Chariali, Guwahati, for doing the computer printing and binding work of the thesis.

  
(Prasanta Chakrabarty) 25/12/2012

## PREFACE

Assam is a habitation of various tribal communities. The Rabhas and the Hajongs are two plains tribes of Assam. Though both the tribes are more or less found in several districts of Assam, they are mainly concentrated in the district of Goalpara.

The Rabhas have a distinct social life of their own. The social life of the Rabhas is enriched with traditional customs, fairs and festivals, religious beliefs, dresses etc. They perform their various socio-religious rites and festivals according to their customary laws. But a trend of change has been noticed in the social life of the Rabhas in recent times. A section of the Rabhas has converted to the different sects of Hinduism. They have deviated from their customary laws and perform their various socio-religious activities according to the methods followed by the Hindus. This is the result of their close association and living with the neighbouring Hindu people. On the other hand, a number of organizations came into existence in the Rabha society during the second half of the twentieth century. These organizations have tremendous impact on the Rabhas.

Like the Rabhas the Hajongs have also got changes in their social life. The Hajongs consider themselves to be Hindus and perform their various socio-religious rites and festivals according to the methods followed by the Hindus. This is the result of their close association and living with the neighbouring Hindu people for centuries together.

Besides changes in the social life of the Rabhas and the Hajongs, significant changes have taken place in the political life of the Rabhas. The Rabhas have got the

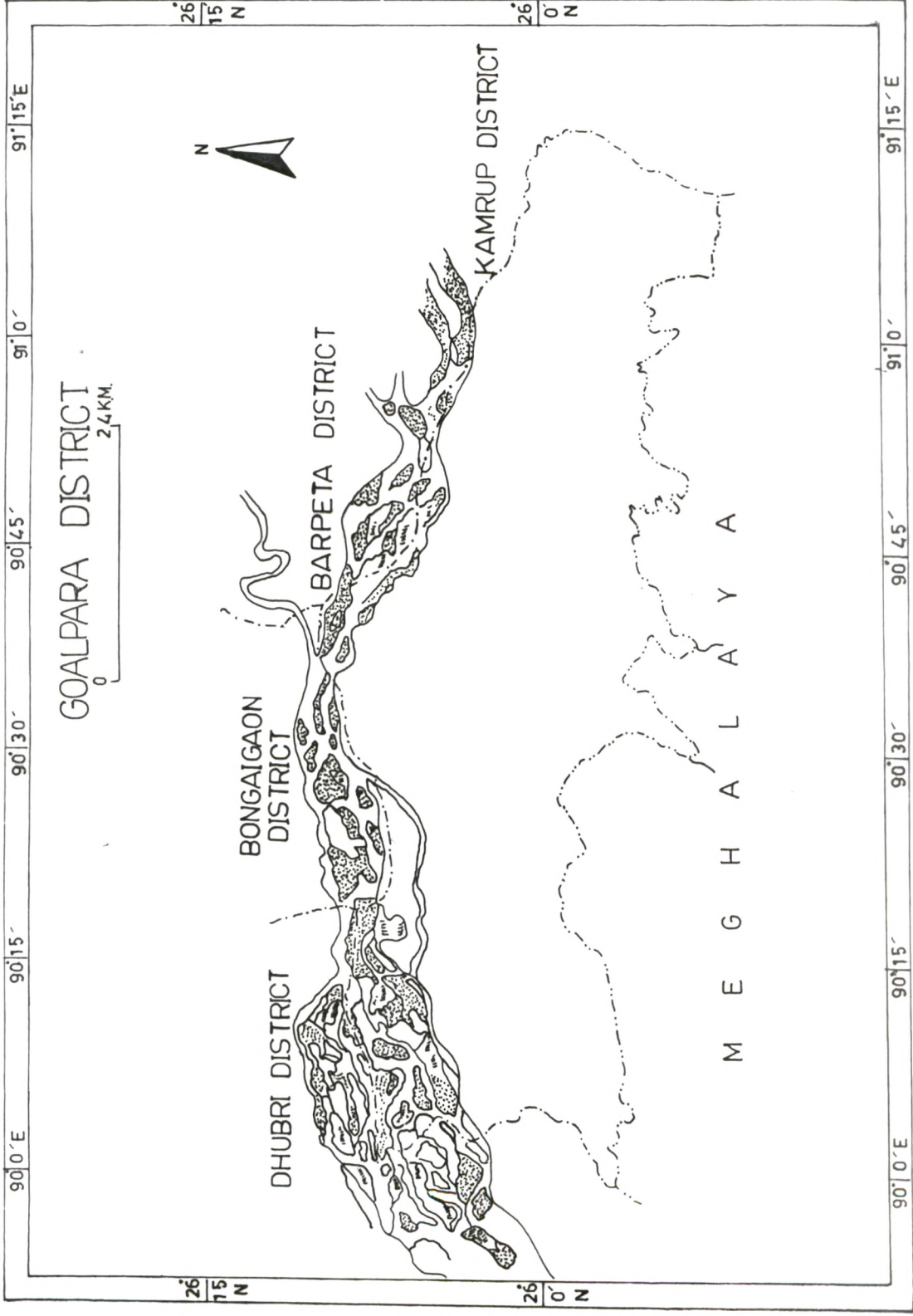
Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council as a result of the Rabha Accord signed in the last decade of the twentieth century. Unlike the Rabhas, the Hajongs have got no change in their political life. Their political activity in the district of Goalpara is not significant. Their political activity is confined only as voters.

So the socio political changes noticed among the Rabhas and the Hajongs have tremendous academic importance, which should be investigated and studied. That is why I have selected the subject 'The Rabhas and the Hajongs: A Socio-Political Analysis since 1950' for study.

During the course of the study I faced several problems. The necessary data, information and up-to-date census reports are not available. Apart from this, adequate written literature about the political life of the Rabhas is also not available. The Hajongs have no significant publications about their socio-political life. So, I had to depend on persons interviewed. But their response in this regard was not up to expectation.

In the midst of all these problems I have, however, made sincere attempt to bring to light the different aspects of the topic under study.

*Prasanta Chakrabarty*  
(Prasanta Chakrabarty) 28/12/2001

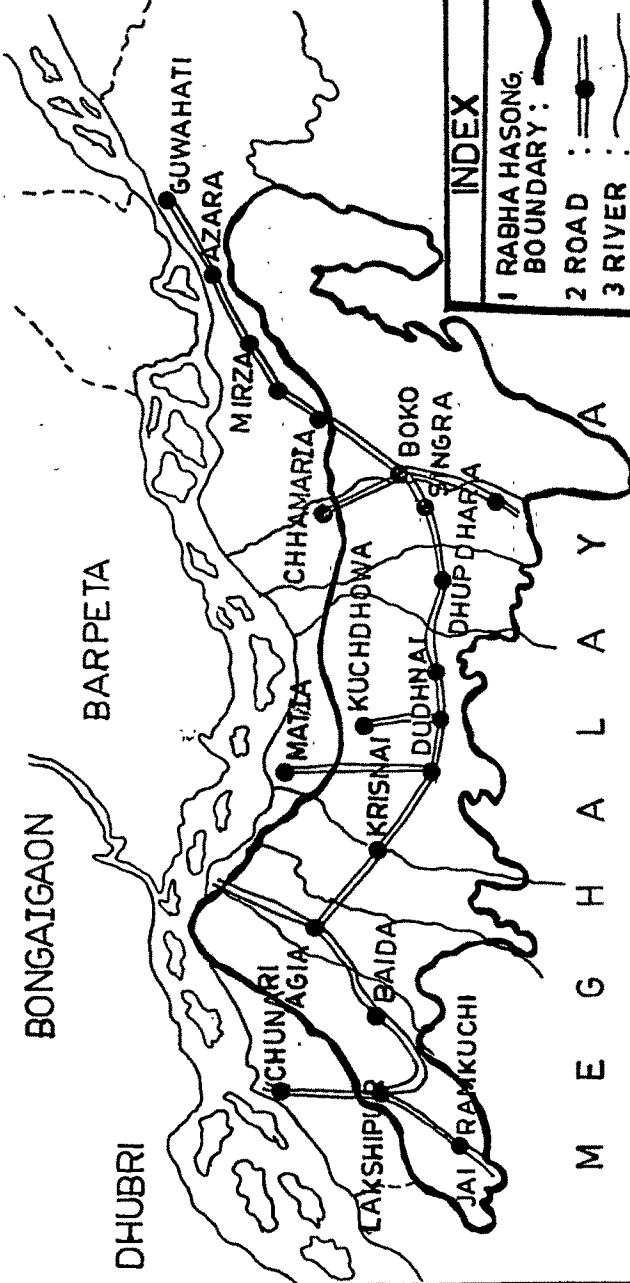
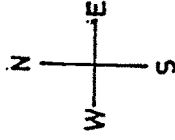


# RABHA HASONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL

AREA : 3161 sq. K.M.

TOTAL POPULATION : 582476

S.T. POPULATION : 393451



## INDEX

- 1 RABHA HASONG BOUNDARY :
- 2 ROAD :
- 3 RIVER :
- 4 PLACES :

BONGAIGAON

BARPETA

DHUBRI

M E G H A L A Y A

# CONTENTS

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page no.</b>
	Acknowledgement	
	Preface	
	Map	
<b>CHAPTER – I</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	: 1
	<b>Objectives of the Study</b>	: 10
	<b>Source and Methodology</b>	: 10
	<b>Scope and Limitations</b>	: 11
	<b>References</b>	: 12
<b>CHAPTER – II</b>	<b>HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RABHAS AND THE HAJONGS</b>	: 16
	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	: 16
	<b>HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b>	: 19
	<b>THE RABHAS</b>	: 19
	<b>THE HAJONGS</b>	: 23
	<b>Socio-Political Conditions</b>	: 29
	The Rabhas	: 29
	The Hajongs	: 33
	<b>References</b>	: 34
<b>CHAPTER – III</b>	<b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LIFE</b>	: 38
	<b>SOCIAL LIFE</b>	38
	<b>THE RABHAS</b>	: 38
	1. Family structure	: 39
	2. <u>Dresses</u>	: 40
	3. Fairs and festivals	: 40
	4. Religious beliefs	: 41
	5. Birth ceremony	: 44
	Pachuti	: 44
	Namkaran	: 45
	Annaprasan	: 45
	Chudakaran	: 46



Title	Page no.
6. Marriage	46
a. Kambung bibah	47
b. Gopan bibah or Jachuki bibah	50
c. Sadari ana bibah	51
d. Samajik bibah	52
e. Gharjoain bibah	54
f. Bidhaba bibah	55
g. Charkari registration or in the Temple	55
7. Disposal of dead and death rites	56
Funeral Rites	56
(i) Funeral rites relating to normal death	56
(ii) Funeral rites relating to unnatural death	57
<b>Death Rites</b>	57
<b>THE HAJONGS</b>	58
(a) Village structure	59
(b) Housing pattern	60
(c) Family structure	60
(d) Dresses	61
(e) Food habits	61
(f) Fairs and festivals	61
Lakshmi puja	64
Kartik puja	64
Bihu	65
Traditional worships, ceremonies and festivals of the Hajongs	66
Kamakhya goddess	67
Chormaga/Chorkhela festival	67
(g) Birth rites	68
(h) Disposal of dead and death rites	69
(i) Marriage	70
<b>ECONOMIC LIFE</b>	73
<b>THE RABHAS</b>	73
<b>THE HAJONGS</b>	76

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page no.</b>
	<b>POLITICAL LIFE</b>	79
	<b>THE RABHAS</b>	79
	<b>THE HAJONGS</b>	82
	References	83a
<b>CHAPTER – IV</b>	<b>SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGES</b>	98
	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	98
	Social changes among the Rabhas	100
	Religion	100
	Changes in socio-religious rites and rituals	109
	Dresses	116
	Language	117
	Social organisations	120
	(1) Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj	126
	(2) Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sanmilan	127
	(3) Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj	128
	(4) Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj	129
	All Rabha Students' Union and All Rabha Women Council	130
	Social changes among the Hajongs	134
	Village structure	134
	Marriage	135
	Religion / Festival	137
	Dresses	139
	Language and literature	140
	Social organisations	141
	Political changes among the Rabhas	142
	Political changes among the Hajongs	148
	References	150
<b>CHAPTER – V</b>	<b>SOCIO-POLITICAL PROBLEMS</b>	168
	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	168
	(a) Lack of awareness about the need and significance of education	169
	(b) Non-availability of educational institutions	169

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page no.</b>
	(c) Lack of transport and communication facilities	169
	(d) Traditional methods of cultivation	170
	(e) Preparation of beer	170
	Social problems of the Rabhas	171
	(a) Illiteracy	171
	(b) Unemployment	174
	Educational unemployment	175
	Seasonal unemployment	175
	Disguised unemployment	175
	(c) Superstition	176
	Superstition relating to the treatment of diseases	176
	Superstition relating to cultivation	177
	Superstition relating to Daini (Witch)	178
	(d) Preparation of Beer	180
	(e) Poverty	181
	Social problems of the Hajongs	182
	(a) Illiteracy	183
	(b) Unemployment	184
	(c) Poverty	186
	(d) Superstition	187
	<b>POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF THE RABHAS</b>	189
	<b>POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF THE HAJONGS</b>	191
	References	193
<b>CHAPTER – VI</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	204
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	212
<b>APPENDIX-I</b>	<b>LIST OF INFORMANTS</b>	:
<b>APPENDIX-II</b>	<b>PHOTOGRAPHS</b>	:

# ***CHAPTER I***

## **INTRODUCTION**

Assam, a constituent state of Indian Union, is situated in the north-eastern part of the country. It is blended with hills and plains. Moreover, Assam is inhabited by different tribal communities both in hills and plains. So, the tribal communities are divided into two groups on the basis of their habitation. The tribals who are dwelling in the plains areas are called the plains tribes and those of the hills areas are called the hills tribes. There are nine (9) plains tribes and fourteen (14) hills tribes in Assam.<sup>1</sup>

The Rabhas and the Hajongs<sup>2</sup> are two important plains tribes of Assam.

The Rabhas are scattered in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Dhubri, Nalbari, Darrang and Kokrajhar in the State of Assam and Garo Hills in the State of Meghalaya. A considerable number of Rabhas are living in some places in West Bengal. However, the tribe is predominantly confined in the district of Goalpara. As per 1991 census people having Rabha language as their mother tongue are found in the districts of Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang and Dhemaji<sup>3</sup>.

The Hajongs are one of the numerically small tribal communities of Assam. The Hajongs originally inhabited in the Mymensingh and Sylhet districts of erstwhile East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh). A considerable number of Hajongs migrated to India due to political and other disturbances and settled in some places of Assam and Meghalaya<sup>4</sup>. Though nominal migration of Hajongs from East Pakistan continued since the partition of India (1947), large scale migration started in 1965<sup>5</sup>. The Hajongs are found in Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, and two districts of West Bengal, viz., Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri. Major portion of Hajong population live in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya, a small number of them are found in Assam. In Assam their main

concentration is found in some places in the district of Goalpara. A limited number of Hajong families are also found in the Miao sub-division of the Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Hajongs were recognized as one of the Scheduled Tribes (Hills) of Garo Hills Autonomous District in the then Assam in 1950 according to the Scheduled Tribe order, 1950. Later they were recognized as Scheduled Tribe (Hills) in Meghalaya, Autonomous districts of Assam (viz. Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills) and other Hills states of North-East region according to the North-Eastern (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.

In 1982 the Hajongs living in the plains districts of Assam were declared as a "Hills Tribes in Plains" for the purpose of giving them economic, educational and employment benefits.<sup>6</sup>

As per 1991 census people having Hajong language as their mother tongue are found in the districts of Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Nalbari, Darrang, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Marigaon.<sup>7</sup>

As per 1991 census present Goalpara<sup>8</sup> district consists of 745 villages fall under 5(five) revenue circle with a population of 616, 042. The revenue circle are Balijana, Dudhnoi, Lakhipur, Matia and Rangjuli. The Rabhas are found in almost all the villages. There are some villages which are exclusively inhabited by the Rabha tribes. As per 1991 census Goalpara district recorded highest number of Rabha language speaking (mother tongue) population than the other districts having Rabha tribes.<sup>9</sup>

Rabha language speaking (mother tongue) population as per 1991 census:-  
(Districtwise)<sup>10</sup>

Sl. No.	Name of District	Total Population (Rabha as mother tongue)
1.	Dhubri	8586
2.	Kokrajhar	10672
3.	Bongaigaon	2563
4.	Goalpara	49,744
5.	Nalbari	8344
6.	Kamrup	15,068
7.	Darrang	14,442
8.	Demaji	836

Total (Assam State) = 112408

As per 1971<sup>11</sup> census also, the then Goalpara district recorded highest Rabha population followed by Kamrup.

Districtwise Rabha population as per 1971 census:<sup>12</sup>

Sl. No.	Name of the District	Total Rabha Population
1.	Goalpara	68,219
2.	Kamrup	55,057
3.	Darrang	13,711
4.	Nowgong	781
5.	Sibsagar	117
6.	Dibrugarh	330
7.	Lakhimpur	345
8.	Cachar	70
	Total (Assam State)	138630

According to 1971 census the total population of Assam was 14957542 and according to the same census the total scheduled tribe population was 1606648. The percentage of scheduled tribe population to total population was 19.98%. Total state population of the Rabhas was 138630 and their percentage to total population was

0.63% and 10.31% to total scheduled tribe population. Total population of Goalpara district was 2,225,103 and total Rabha population was 68219.

According to 1991 census the total population of Assam is 2,24,14,322, out of this 28,74,441 are scheduled tribes and so their percentage to total population is 12.82%. Total population of Goalpara district is 668138, out of which 115099 are tribes and their percentage is 17.23% which is higher than the state's percentage. Due to the non-publication of tribewise social and cultural tables, it is not possible to mention the number of Rabha population of the state of Assam and also the district of Goalpara. However, the total number of population having Rabha language as mother tongue of Assam as well as Goalpara district is 112,408 and 49,744 respectively.<sup>13</sup>

In Assam most of the Hajong settlements are found in the district of Goalpara. There are Hajong villages in the Lakhipur area and South Salmara sub-division of Goalpara district. There are also some Hajong villages under Rangjuli circle bordering Kamrup district.<sup>14</sup>

As per 1971 census total state population of Hajong tribe was 386. A total of 384 Hajongs lived in Karbi Anglong district and the remaining 2 lived in the North Cachar Hills district.

As per 1991 census total state population of Hajongs having Hajong language as mother tongue are 19,325. According to the same census the highest number of 6500 population having Hajong language as mother tongue is found in the district of Goalpara followed by the district of Dhemaji having 4232. Like the Rabhas the Goalpara district also recorded the highest number of Hajong population in Assam.<sup>15</sup>

The Rabhas are one of the most colourful tribes of Assam. They have a distinct social life which differentiates them from the other tribes. The Rabhas are a very

disciplined community. Their social life is based on customs, traditions, usages and religious beliefs. Different social rites and rituals are performed according to the customary laws. The social life of the Rabhas includes birth and birth rites, types of marriage, marriage rites, death rites, religious beliefs, juridical power of the society, inheritance, dresses, etc. The Rabhas strictly follow their age old customs whenever they perform the above mentioned rites and festivals.

The Rabhas are very strict in preserving their age old traditions and customs. There are some social organizations<sup>16</sup> found in the Rabha society organized in hierarchical order in order to keep the social heritage intact and to get cemented different sections of the Rabhas<sup>17</sup>. Three distinct types of social organizations are noticed in the Rabha society, viz, the village or clan organization, the jamad or branch organization, and the district, state or regional organization.<sup>18</sup>

The village or clan organization is the smallest and grass-root organization of the Rabhas. Besides these organizations there are a large number of regional organizations exist in the Rabha society. For example in the district of Goalpara several such organizations are found, viz., Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sanmilan, Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Mechpara Paschimanchal Rabha Samaj, Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, Pub Ajagar Rabha Samaj, Maurchi Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad, Phulbari Anchalik Rabha Samaj, Goalpara Jila Rabha Jatiya Parishad and Pubjawar Rabha Samaj.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, the Rabha National Council (R.N.C.) is the supreme administrative organization in the Rabha society. It is above all the village, jamad and district, state or regional organizations.<sup>20</sup> The primary aims and objectives of this organization are to bring all the Rabhas to a common organization to



1. protect and maintain the age old identity, unity and integrity,
2. preserve and safeguard language, culture and art,
3. uplift and improve the standard of living,
4. spread of education,
5. develop socio-economic condition, and
6. remove the age old superstitions prevailing among the Rabha samaj.<sup>21</sup>

In spite of strict and disciplined social structure, notable changes i.e. acculturation have taken place in various aspects of the Rabha society in recent years. The acculturation process has taken place as a result of the development of education and economic situations, trend of urbanization and emergence of various religious sects in the neighbourhood.<sup>22</sup>

The acculturation process includes the change over from matriliney to patriliney. As a result of this change, the traditional law of inheritance also changed i.e., from female line to male line.<sup>23</sup> Acculturation process is also noticed in the performance of marriage rites, religious beliefs. The Pati Rabhas of Dudhnoi and Boko areas have become hinduised by abandoning their traditional animistic beliefs.<sup>24</sup> The institution of the vedic prescription of “Hom Yajna” as a marital rite has come to be practised in recent years in some Pati Rabhas residing in Dudhnoi areas of Goalpara district. This is a glaring example of departure from the traditional marital rites. Besides, a considerable number of Rabhas in various areas of Goalpara district have adopted “Chaitanya Pantha”, and “Christianity”. So the social life of the Rabhas and the changes taken place in different aspects of the Rabha society need a sincere and extensive study.

Like other tribal communities the Hajongs have a distinct social life based on traditions, customs, usages and beliefs. They have a colourful social life which includes

kinship and inheritance, birth and birth rites, marriage system and marriage rites, death rites, religious beliefs, traditions, traditional worships and festivals, dresses and food habits. The various socio-religious rites and festivals of the Hajongs are performed according to their customary laws.

Besides the traditional worships and festivals the Hajongs perform some Hindu worships,<sup>25</sup> such as Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Kali Puja, Kartik Puja, Manasa Puja, Saraswati Puja etc. Moreover some Hindu festivals are performed by the Hajongs with some variations, such as, Bihu, Ambubachi Nibritti, Akash bati, Naya Khawa etc.

The Hajongs follow the patrilineal system of kinship and inheritance.<sup>26</sup> Kinship is counted in the line of patrilineal relations which is known as “Daidibhagi”. On the other hand the senior most male member is the head of the family. After the death of father the son or sons inherit the properties of father.

The Hajongs are very strict in so far as the performance of marriage is concerned. The marriage between a boy and a girl belonging to the same clan can take place.<sup>27</sup> Moreover no one is allowed to marry outside his or her community. If anyone violates this customary law, he or she is ex-communicated from the Hajong society. However, at present marital union with people belonging to Hindu caste hierarchy is not objected by the Hajongs.<sup>28</sup>

The social life of the Hajongs has been tremendously influenced by the Hindus. It is perhaps due to their close association with the Hindu people for centuries together. They now consider themselves to be Hindus. At the same time their traditional religious beliefs and practices are also prevalent. The religion professed by the Hajongs is a combination of traditional religious practices and Hindu religious beliefs.

The Rabhas have no strong hold in the political life of Assam.<sup>29</sup> Except in the district of Goalpara, in the rest of the districts of Assam, the political role of the Rabhas is not so active because of their numerical strength. However, the Rabhas have succeeded to elect their candidates from Tezpur, and Barama constituencies in the Assembly elections held in 1967, 1991 and 2001 respectively.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand the political role of the Rabhas in the district of Goalpara is noteworthy. Goalpara district records the highest Rabha population in the state. They are scattered in all the Legislative Assembly constituencies<sup>31</sup> of the district. Unfortunately, the Rabhas have no equal political hold in all the constituencies. Of the four constituents only the Dudhnoi (ST) constituency has been retained several times by the Rabha candidates. The political role of the Rabhas is limited to only casting their votes in the rest of the constituencies *viz*, Goalpara East, Goalpara West and Jaleswar.

From the above discussion it is clear that the Rabhas have failed to exert expected influence in the political process of Assam. Because in a 126 members Assembly one or two members belonging to a particular community are not adequate to influence the Assembly. It happens so in case of the Rabhas. The Rabhas were even not represented in the Assembly in several times. This state of affairs compelled the Rabhas to feel that the existing political rights and constitutional provisions are not adequate to solve their various problems. So the Rabhas began agitation for more political rights under the leadership of the Rabha Hasong Demand committee and the All Rabha Students' union. As a result of the agitation the "Rabha Accord" was signed between the Government of Assam and the Rabha leaders on 10<sup>th</sup> March / 1995.<sup>32</sup>

According to the provisions of the “Accord” the “Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council” was formed in July, 1995<sup>33</sup>. The Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council has been functioning since its formation for the all round development of the Rabhas.

The Hajongs are one of the most backward tribals of Assam. They are educationally and economically most backward. One of the factors of their backwardness is the non-involvement in active politics. The Hajongs have very little impact in the political life of the district of Goalpara, the largest Hajong inhabited district in Assam. The Hajongs are scattered in various places in the Assembly Constituencies of Goalpara district.<sup>34</sup>

For this reason they have very little possibility of becoming members of Legislative Assembly. Moreover, the Hajongs are not interested in active politics.<sup>35</sup> This is due to their large scale illiteracy which has also led to the Hajongs remained politically unconscious.

In Assam the Rabhas are scattered in several districts, viz, Goalpara, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang and Dhemaji. But their main concentration is found in the district of Goalpara.

Similarly, the Hajongs are found in the districts of Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Nalbari, Darrang, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Marigaon. But their main concentration is found in the district of Goalpara. As the highest numbers of Rabhas and Hajongs are found in the district of Goalpara, I have confined my jurisdiction of study in the district of Goalpara only.

The topic “The Rabhas and the Hajongs: A Socio-Political Analysis since 1950” is relevant both from academic and practical points of view. The Rabhas have been

playing a major role in the political process of Assam. Further the political activities of the Rabhas of the district of Goalpara are noteworthy.

On the other hand the Hajongs constitute an important part of social as well as political life in some areas of Goalpara district.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The main objectives of the study may be outlined as follows:-

- (i) To analyse the historical background of the Tribes i.e., the Rabhas and the Hajongs;
- (ii) To analyse the socio-political conditions of the Rabhas and the Hajongs;
- (iii) To identify the socio-political problems of the Rabhas and the Hajongs;
- (iv) To examine the socio-political transformation of the Rabhas and the Hajongs;
- (v) To evaluate the role of the Rabhas and the Hajongs in the political process in the district of Goalpara in particular and the state of Assam in general;
- (vi) To suggest remedial measures and ways and means for the upliftment of the Rabhas and the Hajongs.

### **SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY:**

The present study is based on different sources of data. The study may be divided into four major stages, viz.,

- (i) First hand data collection by adequate field works;
- (ii) Secondary data collection from Government Publications, such as census reports, census handbook, district gazetteer, bulletins etc.;
- (iii) Extensive study of relevant books, monographs, journals etc.

Interview and questionnaire methods are useful to study and investigate various problems, such as social, economic, political etc. of a particular community or communities. Since the subject-matter of our study is the Rabha tribes and the Hajong tribes, I had to depend mainly on the unstructured interview method for collecting data.

### **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS:**

The scope of present study is very wide and extensive. Because the study is concerned with two plains tribes of Assam *viz.*, the Rabha tribe and the Hajong tribe. The study is expected to investigate and analyse the social and political aspects of the aforesaid tribes. The study has been limited by non-availability of relevant data. The necessary up-to-date census reports are also not available. Moreover, the aforesaid two tribes have not yet been studied in the arena of socio-political aspects. The researcher faces problems due to the lack of relevant published works. The data and information collected from various sources are also found to be not adequate.

In the midst of all these problems the researcher has, however, made sincere attempt to focus and bring to light different aspects under study of the Rabhas and the Hajongs.

**REFERENCES:**

1. Bordoloi, B.N. "Womens' Education in the Tribal Areas of Assam – A Few Basic Issues," published in the "Bulletin," Vol. I, No. V, of Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, edited and published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati, 1987 pp. 23-24. The plains tribes are – (1) Barmans of Cachar, (2) Boro or Boro Kachari, (3) Deori, (4) Hajai, (5) Kachari, Sonowal, (6) Tiwa (Lalung), (7) Mech, (8) Mising (Miri) and (9) Rabha. The Hills tribes are – (1) Chakma, (2) Dimasa, Kachari, (3) Garo, (4) Hajong, (5) Hmar, (6) Khasi, Jaintia, Syntong, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lynggam, (7) Any Kuki Tribes (37 groups), (8) Lakher, (9) Man (Tai speaking), (10) Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes, (11) Mikir, (12) Any Naga Tribes (2 groups), (13) Pawi, (14) Sybtheng.
2. Saikia, M.C. "Constitutional Provisions and Reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes – A Brief Analysis", an article, published in the "Bulletin," Vol. I, No. IX, of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Assam, edited and published by B.K. Hazarika, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Caste, Guwahati, 1994, p-15.
3. Source – Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, Guwahati.
4. Roy (Hajong) Biren, "A Note on the Festivals of the Hajongs", published in the "The Tribes of North East India, Shillong", First Edition – 1984 P-52.
5. Ghosh, G.K. "Hajong", an article published in the "Tribals and their Culture" (Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram), Volume-I, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1992, P-37.

6. Saikia, M.C. "Constitutional Provisions and Reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes– A Brief Analysis", published in the Bulletin, Volume-I, No. IX, 1994, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, edited and published by B.K. Hazarika, Director Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Caste, Guwahati, P-15.
7. Source – Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, Guwahati.
8. A Major Jurisdictional changes took place in the administrative set up right from district level to administrative units above the village level. As per 1971 census there were 9 (nine) districts in Assam. The number of districts in 1991 census went upto 23 out of 9 districts. Three (3) more districts viz.- 1; Dhubri, Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon were formed from the existing Goalpara district. Present Goalpara district is situated on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra.
9. Source – Directorate of Census Operation, Assam Guwahati.
10. Source – Directorate of Census Operation, Assam, Guwahati.
11. There was no census in Assam in 1981 due to Assam Agitation.
12. Source – Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, Guwahati.
13. Source – Directorate of Census Operation, Assam, Guwahati.
14. Source – Directorate of Census Operation, Assam, Guwahati
15. Source - Directorate of Census Operation, Assam, Guwahati
16. Singh, M. Gopal, "Socio-Culture and Economic Development of the Rabhas – an analytical approach", published in the "Twnai", Magazine of Goalpara



District Rabha Students' Union edited by Niranjan Rabha Rungdung and published by Dhruba Narayan Rabha, 1998-99, P-53.

17. Ibid.

18. Rabha, Moni, "The Rabhas of Meghalaya," published in the Souvenir, 30th Annual Conference, All Rabha National Council, edited by Kailash Rabha, published by Laba Ram Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Beltola, Bangaon, Guwahati, 1995, P-13.

19. Ibid. P-88.

20. Ibid, P-89.

21. Rabha Deben, "Concise History of All Rabha National Council", published in the Souvenir, 30th Annual Conference of All Rabha National Council, edited by Kailash Rabha, published by Laba Ram Rabha, Beltola, Bangaon, Guwahati, 1995, P-38.

22. Saikia, M.C., "The Rabhas: A Peep into their Acculturation Process", an article published in the Bulletin, Volume-I, No.-1, 1983, Tribal Research Institute, edited and published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati, P-21.

23. Ibid, PP-22-23.

24. Ibid, P-22.

25. Hajong, Biren. "The Hajongs and Their Struggle," published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhona, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, PP-34-35.

26. Ibid, P-18.

27. Bordoloi, B.N. "Tribes of Assam" Part-III, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Caste, Assam, First Edition, Guwahati 1991, P-25.
28. Hajong, Biren, "The Hajongs and Their Struggle published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhona, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, P-29.
29. Rabha, (Ronkho) Listi, "The Rabha at a Glance," published in the Souvenir, Dodan Mela Silver Jubilee, edited by Durjyodhan Rabha, published by Bhabendra Ch. Rabha, Baida, Goalpara, 1995, P-7.
30. Bishnu Prasad Rabha was elected MLA from the Tezpur Legislative Assembly Constituency of undivided Darrang district in the Assembly Election held in 1967. Paniram Rava was elected MLA from Barama Constituency of present Nalbari district in the Assembly elections held in 1991 and 2001 respectively.
31. There are four Legislative Assembly Constituencies in the district of Goalpara, viz., Goalpara East, Goalpara West, Dudhnoi (ST) and Jaleswar.
32. Source – Memorandum of Settlement (Rabha Accord).
33. Rabha, Dhaneswar, "Rabha Hasong Prosangat Kishu Sowanran," published in the "Purbanchal," Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha, published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara, (R.A.C.) 1997, P-26.
34. Informant – Hajong, Kanu Ram, age 40 years, Dhamor Reserve, Dt. Goalpara.
35. Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RABHAS AND THE HAJONGS

#### INTRODUCTION:

Assam is situated in the north-eastern part of Indian union. It is bounded by latitudes 24°08'10"N and 27°58'15"N and longitudes 89°42'05"E and 96°01'14"E. The state with a total area of 78,523 square kilometers is bounded by two foreign countries and seven Indian States. To the north of it is the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur, to the south Mizoram and Meghalaya and to the west there are West Bengal, Tripura and Bangladesh.<sup>1</sup>

As per 1971 census there were 9 (nine)<sup>2</sup> districts in Assam. They are –

1. Goalpara, 2. Kamrup, 3. Darrang, 4. Lakhimpur, 5. Nagaon, 6. Sibsagar, 7. Karbi-Anglong, 8 North Cachar Hills and 9. Cachar.

As per 1991 census the number of districts rose upto 23 (twenty-three)<sup>3</sup>.

The present districtwise position is as follows –

Old district as per 1971 census	New districts as per 1991 census	Formed with effect from
1. Goalpara	1. Dhubri	1-7-83
	2. Kokrajhar	1-7-83
	3. Bongaigaon	1-10-89
	4. Goalpara	
2. Kamrup	5. Barpeta	1-7-83
	6. Nalbari	14-8-85
	7. Kamrup	

*Table contd.*

Old district as per 1971 census	New districts as per 1991 census	Formed with effect from
3. Darrang (Sonitpur)	8. Sonitpur 9. Darrang	1-7-83
4. Lakhimpur	10. Lakhimpur 11. Dhemaji 12. Dibrugarh 13. Tinsukia	1-10-89 2-10-71 1-10-89
5. Sibsagar	14. Golaghat 15. Jorhat 16. Sibsagar	23-10-87 1-7-83
6. Nagaon	17. Marigaon 18. Nagaon	1-10-89
7. Cachar	19. Hailakandi 20. Karimganj 21. Cachar	1-10-89 1-7-83
8. Mikir Hills (Karbi-Anglong)	22. Karbi-Anglong	
9. North-Cachar Hills	23. North Cachar Hills	

Assam is a habitation of various tribal communities viz., Boro, Garo, Missing, Sonowal, Karbi, Rabha, Hajong etc. Census reports reveal that tribal communities are found in almost all the districts of Assam. They are divided into two categories on the basis of their habitation viz., Plains tribes and Hills tribes. The tribes living in the plains districts of Assam are known as Plains tribes and those of the Hills districts are known as Hills tribes. There are at present 23 districts in Assam. Out of which 21 are plains districts and remaining two districts are hills districts. The Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts are the only two Hills districts in Assam and the remaining 21 districts are Plains districts.

There are 9 (nine) Scheduled Tribes in the plains districts of Assam. The Rabha tribe is one of them. On the other hand the Hajong tribe has been recognized as a Hill tribe in the two Hills districts of Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills. As most of the Hajongs are living in the plains districts of Assam and so they have been recognized as a Hills tribes in plains by the Government of Assam.

The Rabhas are found scattered in different districts of Assam but they are mostly concentrated in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Dhubri, Nalbari and Dhemaji. But their main concentration is found in the present district of Goalpara.

Similarly, the people belonging to the Hajong community are found more or less in the districts of Goalpara, Dhubri, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Bongaigaon, Nalbari and Marigaon. But their main concentration is found in the district of Goalpara.

Where so ever their present habitation might be each of the communities has historical background of its own. The Rabha who have been living for centuries<sup>4</sup> in the large areas of Goalpara and South Kamrup possess a rich historical background. They have rich cultural heritage, language, customs and manners of their own. Moreover they have several traditional social organizations which are responsible for smooth management of their society and preservation of their customary laws, distinct cultural heritage etc. All those possessed by the community are the results of a long period of evolution.

As the study relates to the social and political aspects of the Rabhas, it will be incomplete without an investigation of their historical background. So it is absolutely necessary to go into the historical background of the community.

Similarly, the Hajongs being a tribal community have a distinct social life of their own. They have also their own cultural heritage, customary laws, religious belief, language. They have historical background of their own. So the study of their social and political lives require a sincere investigation of their historical background.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

### **The Rabhas:**

The Rabha tribe is one of the aboriginal tribes of Assam. From the racial point of view the Rabha tribe belongs to the family of Bodo group<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand the Rabha language belongs to the Assam-Burmese group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the great Sino-Tibetan family of languages.<sup>6</sup>

The Scholars have expressed divergent views about the original place of habitation of the Rabha people. They are also not unanimous as to how and which direction they came to Assam and settled there.

Major Playfair tried to trace the origin of the Rabhas. According to him the Rabhas came down to Assam from Tibetan region and settled first at Garo Hills and then came to Assam and settled in the plain areas of Assam. Major Playfair also found out linguistic<sup>7</sup> and cultural similarities between the Garos and the Rabhas. Hodson's observations reveal that the Rabhas constitute a major segment of the Bodo linguistic group further testify their affinities with other constituents of the Bodo groups like Garo, Kachari, Mech, Hajong etc. who belonged to the Mongoloid stock.

According to L.A. Waddell the Rabhas were an offshoot of the Kachari tribe who had adopted Hinduism although the process of conversion was of lesser intensity than that of the Koches<sup>8</sup>. Again he said they are divided into Pati, the highest, who

lived mostly in Kamrup and Darrang districts, Rong-dhaniya in Goalpara district and Totala the lowest also in Goalpara district. No intermarriage might take place among them<sup>9</sup>.

According to Grierson also the Rabha was a Hindu name of the Kacharis. On the other hand E.A. Gait identified the Rabhas as a distinct tribe. They were also known as Totlas and Datiyal Kacharis<sup>10</sup>.

Rev. S. Endle seemed to have supported Gait's view. He said that the Rabhas of Darrang district used to call themselves sometimes as 'Totlas', which may be a nickname. He also referred to the term 'Datiyal Kachari' signifying the Rabhas of Darrang district, i.e., Borderer Kachari (dati-border). It was held that the original home and habitat of the Rabhas was the region bordering on the northern slopes of the Garo Hills<sup>11</sup>. This supposition is partly confirmed by the fact that a considerable number of Rabhas are still to be found at the base of the northern slope of the Garo Hills. Moreover, Goalpara district, bordering Garo Hills, recorded a total of 30,000 Rabha population. Besides Goalpara district, Rabhas were also found in Kamrup and Darrang districts<sup>12</sup>.

✓ The Rabhas were said to be descended from a Hindu father who lost his caste by marrying a Kachari woman. The language spoken by the Rabhas forms a link between the Garo and Kachari<sup>13</sup>.

Endle had shown seven sub-tribes of the Rabhas, viz., 'Rangdaniya', 'Maitariya', 'Pati', 'Koch', 'Bitliya', 'Dahuriya', and 'Sangha'<sup>14</sup>. The first three sub-tribes, i.e., 'Rangdaniya', 'Maitariya' and 'Pati' occupy a superior status than the rest and inter-marriage is allowed among themselves<sup>15</sup>.

About the origin and migration of the Rongdaniya Rabhas, Friend-Pereira says,

“The Rangdaniya Rabhas have a tradition that at an earlier period in their history they dwelt in the Garo Hills, and that after many conflicts with the Garo tribes they were finally driven down to the plains which they now occupy. They say the cradle of their race was at Sumsang, which is the Garo name for the modern Someswari river and the valley it waters before its descent into Paraganas Shushang in the district of Mymensingh.

In this connection a legend prevalent among the Garos may be mentioned.

When Husheng was the chief of the powerful Atong clan, he brought the Rabhas into the Someswari Valley to till the land. Because at that time the Garos were nomads and so not acquainted with the more settled methods of husbandry. Afterwards when the Brahman minister of Husheng treacherously slew his master and seized the supreme power, a period of bloodshed and anarchy followed, and the Rabhas were driven out of the valley.

This legend appears to have some truth. Because, the dialect spoken by the Atong section of the Garos, has a closer affinity to the Rangdaniya language than to the other Garo dialects spoken in the hills<sup>16</sup>.

According to Hunter, “The Rabhas are also an aboriginal people, but they have now no language of their own, and speak either Assamese or Bengali. Their religion is a curious mixture of belief in their own demons and spirits, and in the Hindu gods, whom they also worship after their own fashion. The Rabhas are sub-divided into several classes or clans. In their mode of living they resemble the Cacharis, but unlike them, they do not as a rule live near hills or forests<sup>17</sup>.

According to B.M. Das, an eminent Anthropologist of North-East India, “It seems probable that Mongoloid people came in successive waves from the north and



north-eastern region. They have partly or wholly absorbed the autochthonous Austroloid and later on formed various tribes like the Rabha, the Garo etc.<sup>18</sup>

So from the above paragraph, it is evident that, Das supported the view of E.A. Gait that the Rabhas were ethnically and culturally a distinct tribe. Moreover he held the view that the Rabhas were more closely allied to the Garos rather than any other tribe of the Bodo Group.

According to the traditional belief prevalent among the Rabhas, there is a story about the origin of the tribe.

Once there was a powerful king named Dadan. The name of Dadan's queen was Nadai. She had one widowed sister named Champaimari Jimari. She had a beautiful daughter named Tabourani. Champaimari Jimari along with her daughter lived with Dadan. In course of time Tabourani grew up and so Dadan began to look for a suitable bridegroom for her. At last he met a disguised prince at Sonapur. The name of the prince was Marukhetri. Tabourani was married to Marukhetri. He became the General of Dadan. He was an intelligent and strong person. Dadan had been running the administration of his state very efficiently with the help of Marukhetri. As a result of which peace and happiness prevailed in his kingdom. Unfortunately this happiness did not last long. A king named Kasiraja along with his military forces attacked Dadan's kingdom. He was defeated and killed by Marukhetri. After Kasiraja's invasion, Brek, Bruk, Mermer, Murrur, Soror and Chikrang, these six kings attacked Dadan's kingdom one after another. All the six kings were defeated and killed by Marukhetri. At last two kings named Arimanda and Ghorbimon jointly attacked Dadan's kingdom. Unfortunately Marukhetri was defeated and arrested. When Dadan heard about this he himself proceeded to the battlefield along with rest of his forces. But he could not

proceed more. He was struck by enemy's arrows and as a result he fell down. When Dadan's subjects heard about his defeat they divided into five groups started to flee away from their kingdom under the leadership of five women. Nothing about the identity of these five women or their relationship with Dadan is known. The five women were Suchari, Daduri, Nakkati, Tamai and Duri. Suchari was the mother of the remaining four.

The first group led by Suchari reached Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang etc., while the second group led by Daduri reached the rivers Didak and Diti in Garo Hills. The third group was led by Nakkati to the rivers Diti and Sabang-Similarly the fourth group was led by Tamai to the areas covered by the rivers Sabang and Rangai, while the last group led by Duri took shelter in the areas covered by the rivers Rangai and Mashangpani. Thus the different Rabha barais (clans) originated among different groups.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Hajongs:**

Ethnologically the Hajongs are said to belong to the great Bodo family of Indo-Mongoloid stock. On the other hand Hajong language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group of the great Sino-Tibetan family of languages.<sup>20</sup>

The scholars are not in agreement in regard to the origin of the Hajongs. Divergent views are expressed by different scholars. According to the traditional belief prevalent among the community, they originally inhabited in the 'Has Paragana' or in the Hajo area of Assam. Due to some historical reasons they were compelled to leave Hajo area and fled to Garo Hills and from there they spread to Mymensingh, Sylhet etc.<sup>21</sup>

The scholars belonging to Hajongs have expressed divergent views as to why they are called Hajong. In this connection the view of Mr. Paresch Hajong, a reputed writer belonging to this tribe may be discussed as follows.

The Hajongs are the descendants of Kartayabirjarjun, one of the greatest Khasatriya kings of the Mahabharata era. The great saint Parasuram who promised to destroy all the Khasatriyas from the earth for taking revenge on king Kartayabirjarjun who was responsible for killing his father Jamadagni. Ultimately he killed the king. His wife queen Swarupa Devi was pregnant at that time. The queen fled away and took shelter in the hermitage of Kamdatta in Kamrup. She gave birth to a son there. He came to be known as Padangsku who occupied the ancient Hajo township. Kumar Bhaskar Barman was one of his descendants. During the time of Bharat Barman, the last king of the Dynasty, the Hajo township was destroyed and about twelve thousand people fled away to Garo Hills. The place in the Garo Hills where they settled first was known as Hajari. From this place they spread over to different areas. They called themselves 'Haj' corresponding to their place of origin 'Hajo'. In course of time 'Haj' became Hajong.

According to Ratan Kumar Rai Hajong, another reputed writer of Hajong community, the term Hajong has been derived from 'Harajan' which means a section of the people who accepted a new occupation by abandoning the traditional one. According to him 'Ha' means to express sorrow and 'Jan' means people. The Hajongs were a part of larger community. In course of time they broke away from the larger community and formed a separate one.

Some scholars have expressed the view that the word 'Hajong' has been derived from a Kachari word 'Haju' which means the people who live in high hills. Majority of

the scholars, however, are in agreement in one thing that the word 'Hajong' originates from Garo word 'Ha-Jong'. In Garo, 'Ha' means land and 'Jong' means worm. So the term 'Hajong' means land worms. Here the term 'Jong' indicates not worms but the people who are expert in ploughing. As the main source of livelihood of the Hajongs is cultivation, and so to indicate this they are called Hajong.

According to Biren Hajong, an eminent educationist and reputed writer belonging to the community, before the partition of India, the Hajongs were mostly confined in the northern region of Mymensingh and Sylhet districts (now Bangladesh). They were found in compact in Susanga Durgapur and Daskahaniya Pargonas (northern Mymensingh of present Bangladesh) and scattered in Karaibari, Baarhaazaari Pargonas (western portion of west Garo Hills and bordering of Goalpara district of Assam). Bangshikunda and Laur Pargonas (north-western portion of Sylhet district of present Bangladesh).

A section of the tribe migrated to Bhawal and Jaydevpur areas (near Dacca-present capital of Bangladesh) due to fear of raids and head hunting by the Garos, which is called by the Hajongs as "Garo Katadhoom".<sup>22</sup>

Again according to the same writer the Hajongs migrated from Mithila to Jalpaiguri, 24 Porganas, Coochbehar of present West Bangal, Rangpur (now in Bangladesh). Goalpara and southern Kamrup districts of present Assam, after 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century. They perhaps, migrated first to 'Baarhaazaari' Pargonas from the above mentioned places. As the Hajongs were primarily cultivators, they were in search of virgin land which they found in the areas bordering Goalpara-Garo Hills, Garo Hills-Rangpur, Garo-Hills Mymensingh and Khasi Hills-Sylhet. They also found plenty of trees-bamboo, thatch etc. in the above mentioned areas for building their homes. When

they first migrated to Baarhaazaari their number was about twelve thousand (Baar Hazzar) from this place, the tribe gradually got spread in other places.<sup>23</sup>

In pre-partition days of India the Hajong habitats were bounded by Suwarkona village in the north near Lakhipur of Goalpara district of Assam, by Jamkona or Jongkona village in the south-east, now in Sylhet district of Bangladesh, and by Morkona village in the west in the extreme western border of west Garo Hills district near Mankachar of Assam.<sup>24</sup>

During the post independence period a substantial number of Hajong population deserted their hearths and homes in erstwhile East Pakistan and migrated to India during the years of 1950 to 1964<sup>25</sup> in different places due to political and other reasons. These displaced Hajong people were rehabilitated by the Government of India in different parts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh<sup>26</sup>.

At present majority of the tribe are living in Meghalaya and Assam and a very negligible number is in Arunachal Pradesh<sup>27</sup>.

According to Brahmacharan Hajong Rai, before the partition of India the Hajongs were mostly confined in Laur and Rangchikunda Pargonas of Sylhet district, Susanga and Dahkahaniya Pargonas of Mymensingh district, (Both Sylhet and Mymensingh districts are now in Bangladesh) in some portions of Karaibari and Baarhaazaari Pargonas of Garo Hills, southern portion in the district of Goalpara and Bhawal Jaydevpur (near Dakha, the present capital of Bangladesh). The large areas inhabited by the Hajongs was bounded on the north by Sowarkona (situated in the district of Goalpara), on the south by Jongkona (now in Bangladesh), on the east by Jamkona (now in Bangladesh) and on the west Morkona (Garo Hills district).<sup>28</sup>

After the partition of India they got spread in different states of India due to political and economic causes. They are scattered in Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and in some areas of Bangladesh<sup>29</sup>.

Due to the Second World War there was no census in 1941. During 1944-45 the community undertook a census of their own and according to which their total population was 1,33,000<sup>30</sup> (approx.).

It is evident from the above discussion that there are much similarities between the views of two eminent personalities belonging to Hajong Community about their past and present habitation.

Kanu Ram Hajong, an educated and reputed writer of Hajong tribe, is of the opinion that the Hajong people entered into north-eastern region in the remote past through the north western route of Assam. In course of their migration they settled in north of Coochbehar and in the border of Bhutan for a few centuries where a place named Hajong is still there. Wherefrom they migrated to the south bank of the river Brahmaputra in the old Goalpara district.<sup>31</sup> Later a large number of them got spread and settled in the south western parts of the Brahmaputra valley in Lower Assam, west and southern part of Meghalaya and northern part of Mymensingh. The habitat of Hajongs was bounded by Suwarkona on the north Goalpara district), Jamkona (Sylhet) on the east, Jongkona (Mymensingh) on the south and Morkona (near Mankachar and south Dhubri district) on the west<sup>32</sup>.

The people belonging to the tribe were concentrated in the above large area till the end of the nineteenth century. Subsequently they got spread beyond the area due to political and historical reasons. However their concentration was found in different areas extending from Mechpara, Barohazari, Koraibari of Assam and Meghalaya to

Dashkahaniya, Serpur, Susong, Durgapur, Bansikunda and Laur Paragonas of Mymensingh and Sylhet districts (present Bangladesh)<sup>33</sup>.

Horatio Bickerstaffe Rowney is of the opinion that several tribes were confined in the small area of Cachar district of Assam. The tribes were pushed into this district as a result of Naga raids. Amongst the tribes, the Cacharise, the Naga tribes, the Meekirs and the Kookis were most important.

To quote in the words of Horatio, Bickerstaffe Rowney, "The Cacharise are a large race whose proper name is Rangtsa, and their original country that situated to the north-east of Assam. They were at one time limited to Cachar, and still form the dominant class of the district, but are now also scattered all over Assam; and even the Hajongs of Mymensingh are held to be a branch of the same family. They are a fine hardy race, quiet, industrious, and thriving and have strongly marked Mongolian features. The primary divisions of the race are two, namely, the Hazai, or the people of the plains, and the Purbutteahs, or people of the Hills."<sup>34</sup>

From the above quotation it is clear that the original habitation of the Hajongs is the Cachar district of Assam. Even the Hajongs of Mymensingh area of erstwhile East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) originally inhabited in the Cachar district of Assam.

Stephen Funchs is of the view that, Hajong is a small tribe of Bodo group. They are akin to the Garos. A part of the tribe migrated to the Surama Valley from Garo Hills. This part formed two sections. The first one settled in upper valley and they maintained the tribal ways of living, while the second section settled in lower valley and they became Hinduised and abandoned tribal dialect for a corrupt form of Bengali<sup>35</sup>.

A similarity is noticed between the views of Stephen Fuch and G.A. Grierson regarding the Hajong tribe. In his "Linguistic Survey of India" Grierson remarks about the Hajong language as,

"This is a corrupt form of Eastern Bengali spoken by members of the Haijong (often incorrectly called Hajong) tribe, a Tibeto-Burman clan settled in the districts of Mymensingh and Sylhet, principally in the country at the foot of the Garo Hills. Haijong (or Hajong) has hitherto been described as a Tibeto-Burman language, but the tribe has long abandoned its original form of speech."<sup>36</sup>

## **SOCIO POLITICAL CONDITIONS:**

### **The Rabhas:**

Like other tribes, social system of the Rabhas is also very disciplined and intact<sup>37</sup>. The society of the community is strictly governed by some traditional organizations, which have been existed from remotest past. These organizations are at the root of smooth administration of the Rabha society and also preservation of their traditional customs, manners, practices, religious beliefs etc<sup>38</sup>. Besides the social organizations there are some democratic institutions found in the Rabha society. These institutions are traditional and have existed from the past. They have been taking important role in the management of the Rabha society. The aim and objective of the different organizations and institutions is to keep the social and customary heritage intact and also to get cemented the different sections of the tribe.

Three distinct types of administrative social organizations are found in the Rabha society, viz.,

1. The village or clan organization,
2. The Jamad or Branch organization, and
3. District, State or Regional organisation<sup>39</sup>.



It is also relevant to mention here is that the organizations are formed in hierarchical order.

The village organization is the smallest and said to be the grass-root organization in the Rabha society. The jurisdiction of the organization consists of a village. Besides village organizations a large number of regional organizations are in existence in the different Rabha inhabited areas. In Goalpara district several such organizations are found, viz., Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sanmilan, Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, Pub-Ajagar Rabha Samaj, Maurchi Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad, Phulbari Anchalik Rabha Samaj, Goalpara Zila Rabha Jatiya Parishad etc. Similarly in the Kamrup district also, there are several such organizations in existence viz., Brihattar Guwahati Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad, Dimoria-Sonapur Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad, Luki-Bekeli Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad<sup>40</sup> etc. These types of organizations are also found in other districts of Assam viz., Dhubri, Barpeta, Nalbari, Dibrugarh, Sonitpur etc. Moreover, in Meghalaya and West Bengal also such types of organizations are in existence among the Rabhas.

In Meghalaya, the organizations viz., Pub-Gari Pahar Jila Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad, Paschim Garo Pahar Jila Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad are in existence. Similarly, in West Bengal, Kamakhyaguri Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad, Borshalbari Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad, Alipur Duwar Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad, etc., are found.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, each regional organization consists of a number of branch organizations. As for examples, Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj of Goalpara district has several branch organizations under its jurisdiction, viz., Uttar Rangjuli, Dakhin

Rangjuli, Bangaon Sikiajuli, Uttar Bikali, Pub-Bikali, Dakhin Bikali, Progati Rabha Sakha Samaj, Daranggiri, Madang Tilapara, Amjonga and Nabagathita Rabha Samaj.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj in the same district has the following organizations under its jurisdiction.

1. Hadalapara, 2. Kuruabhasu, 3. Garaimari, 4. Lempara Ujanpara, 5. Lempara Namapara, 6. Majaipara, 7. Gajapara, 8. Ghilajhari, 9. Borjhora, 10. Chhota Damal, 11. Darani Chhotadal, 12. Bamundanga, 13. Charimandal Chutki, 14. Bairong, 15. Dariduri Maitori, 16. Lengapara, 17. Samajik Milan Satmandal, 18. Kalyanpur, 19. Bardamal Bordal, 20. Nasikai Zamad.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, the remaining regional organizations in the district have also branch organizations under their respective jurisdiction.

Above all these organizations a national level organization namely the All Rabha National Council (R.N.C.) is in existence as the supreme administrative organization in the Rabha society. As supreme organization it includes all the Rabhas residing in Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura and also those of the foreign countries<sup>44</sup>.

The Regional organizations have been playing important roles in the administration of Rabha society since their inception. The organizations gave written shape of the customary laws relating to the performance of socio-religious rites and rituals. The customary laws were unwritten and so the Rabha people of different areas faced problems in observing these. The different Regional organizations of Goalpara district removed the problems by framing Pandulipis<sup>45</sup> (constitutions containing the customary rules) dealing with the socio-religious rites and other matters. As a result the administration of Rabha society has become more disciplined and orderly. Now the

Rabha people do not face any problem in so far as the performance of their social activities is concerned.

Another important feature of the administration of the Rabha society is the institutions of Mandal and Gaonburah. Mandal is the chief of a Rabha village and the Gaonburah (village headman) is the chief of a number of villages taken together (generally 5 to 6 villages).<sup>46</sup>

The Gaonburah is elected by democratic method by the people of 5 to 6 villages assembled at a particular place. So the Gaonburah is the head of several villages. He is in charge of the administration of the villages under his jurisdiction and so he has a lot of powers and functions. He is to see that the administrations of the villages are running normally. He has some judicial powers also. He is to try and punish the criminals responsible for theft or robbery or any other anti-social activities referred to him by the Mandal. In this connection it may be stated that first the criminals are tried by the Gaonburah before handing over to the Police.<sup>47</sup> The post of the Mandal is hereditary, on the other hand the Gaonburah is elected by the people and required the approval of the Government. Generally it is approved by the Deputy Commissioner or the Sub-Divisional Officer.<sup>48</sup>

So from the above discussion it is clear that administration of the Rabha society is very disciplined. As a result of the existence of traditional administrative system, the Rabha society is very disciplined which led to the preservation of their age-old customs, manners, heritage and maintenance of unity and integrity among the community.

**The Hajongs:**

The Hajongs are one of the numerically small but colourful tribes of Assam. They have their own culture and tradition. Moreover they have their traditional dances, music, fairs and festivals, religious beliefs. In spite of being a tribal community, unlike other tribe it does not have any administrative social organizations for the smooth management of their society. But the Hajongs of north-east India have organizations like Uttar Pub-Bharat Hajongs Unnayan Samiti, Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti Hajong Sanskritik Sangathan founded for the development of the community. These organizations have nothing to do with the administration of the Hajongs society. Rather they are concerned with the all round development of the community residing in different parts of north-east India.

**REFERENCES:**

1. Source – Gazetteer of India, Assam State Gazetteer, Vol. I. edited by Amlan Baruah & S.B. Roychoudhury, published by the Editor-in-chief, District Gazetteers, Government of Assam, Guwahati, 1999, P-3.
2. Source – Directorate of Census Operation, Assam, Guwahati.
3. Source – Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, Guwahati.
4. Rabha, Listi (Ronkho) “The Rabhas At A Glance”, an article published in the Souvenir of Silver Jubilee Celebration of Dadan Mela edited by Durjyodhan Rabha and published by Bhabendra Ch. Rabha, General Secretary, Dadan Than Committee, Baida, Goalpara, 1995, P-I.
5. Fuchs Stephen, “The Aboriginal Tribes of India”, published in India by Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1992, P-194.
6. Chatterji, Suniti Kumar, “Kirata-Jana-Krti”, published by The Asiatic Society, 1994, PP-22-23.
7. Playfair, Major, A. “The Garos”, published by United Publishers, Second Reprint, Guwahati, 1998-P-14.
8. Waddell, L.A. “The Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley”, published by Logos Press, Second Indian Reprint, New Delhi, 2000, P-65.
9. Ibid.
10. Pakyntein, E.H. “Report of the Census of Assam, 1891”, as reprinted in the census of 1961, Volume-III, Assam. Part-V-A, published by the Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1964, P-62.
11. Endle, Rev. Sidney, “The Kacharis”, Low Price Publications, Delhi, Reprint, 1997, P-83.

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Pakyntein, E.H. "Census of India, 1961, Volume-III. Assam, Part-V-A. Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, published by the Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1964, P-132.
17. Hunter, W.W. "A Statistical Account of Assam", Volume-2, published by Low Price Publications, Delhi, Reprinted, 1990, P-37.
18. Das, B.M. "Ethnic Affinities of the Rabha", published by the Department of Publication, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam, 1960, P-117.
19. Bantho, Jogendra Nath, "Rabha Jatir Itibritta", published by Jogendra Nath Bantho, village Naguapara, P.O. Lakhipur, Dt. – Garo Hills (Meghalaya) Second Edition, 1974, PP-19-23.
20. Grierson, G.A. "Linguistic Survey of India", Volume-V, Indo-Aryan Family (Eastern Group) Part-I, published by Motilal Banarsidaso, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna, Reprint-1968, P-214.
21. Bordoloi, B-N. "The Hajongs" an article published in the "Tribes of Assam", Part-III, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, First Edition, 1991, PP-18-21.
22. Hajong Biren, "The Hajongs and Their Struggle", published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, P-7.

23. Hajong, Biren, "A Synopsis on Hajong", submitted to the Deputy Director, Audience Research, All India Radio, Calcutta, demanding for Radio Programme in Hajong.
24. Hajong, Biren, "The Hajongs and Their Struggle", published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, First Editior, 2002, PP-6-7.
25. Ibid, PP-8.
26. Ibid, PP-9.
27. Ibid.
28. Hajong Rai, Brahmacharan, "Hajong Upabhasha Aru Samaj Byavastha", an article published in "Chetana" Souvenir of Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti, edited by Lakhindar Hajong and published by Rathindra Nath Hajong, 1983, P-11.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Hajong, Kanu Ram, "Hajongs: A Lesser known Indigenous People", an article published in the "The Assam Tribune", an English Daily, edited by P.G. Baruah, published by Ramani Choudhury, Guwahati, dated July, 3, 1997, P-4.
32. Ibid..
33. Ibid.
34. Rowney, Horatio Bickerstaffe, "The Wild Tribes of India", published by Low Price Publications, Delhi, Second Reprint 1993, PP-175-176.
35. Fuch, Stephen, "The Aboriginal Tribes of India" published in India by Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1992, P-215.

36. Grierson, G.A. "Linguistic Survey of India", Volume-V, Indo Aryan Family (Eastern Group), Part-I, published by Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna, Reprinted, 1968, P-214.
37. Majumder, Surjya Kumar, "Dakshin Kamrupar Rava Sanskritit Abhumuki", published by Pragati Granthapith, Sarapara, Kamrup, 1<sup>st</sup> publication, 1989, P-14.
38. Singha, M. Gopal, "The Social Organisations and Institutions of the Rabhas : Their Impact on Development", published in the Souvenir of the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Khenapara Conference of the Boko-Bangaon Anchalik Jatiya Parishad, edited by Lalit Ch. Rabha, published by Madhav Rabha and Anil Kumar Rabha, President and General Secretary respectively of the Reception Committee of the Conference, Khenepara, Boko, 2002, P-44.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Source – "Purbanchal", Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (R.A.C.), 1997, PP-143-146.
43. Source- "Souvenir" Silver Jubilee Celebration of Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Someswar Rabha, published by the Silver Jubilee Celebration Committee, Bardamal, Goalpara, 1995, PP-28-29.
44. Rabha, Deben, "Concise History of All Rabha National Council", an article published in the Souvenir, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the All Rabha National Council, edited by Kailash Rabha, published by Laba Ram



Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Beltola, Bongaon, Guwahati, 1995, P-37.

45. Rabha, Listi (Ronkho) "The Rabhas At A Glance", an article published in the Souvenir, Silver Jubilee Celebration of Dadan Mela, edited by Durjyodhan Rabha, published by Bhabendra Ch. Rabha, General Secretary, Dadan Than Committee, Baida, Goalpara, 1995, PP-6-7.
46. Rabha Mani, "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarmah, for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First publication, 1994, P-32.
47. Ibid – P-33.
48. Ibid.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LIFE**

#### **SOCIAL LIFE:**

#### **THE RABHAS:**

The basic social structure of the Rabha tribe is governed by the local customary laws. The customary laws contain the ethological ideas of the tribe. The customary laws are collectively known as “Pandulipis”<sup>1</sup>. These ‘Pandulipis’ have been framed by the consensus of the village people on the basis of customs, usages, traditions and religious beliefs. The Pandulipis cover the various aspects of the Rabha society, viz., juridical power of the society, inheritance, succession to office of socio-religious nature, types of marriage, marital relationship, birth and death rites etc.<sup>2</sup>

The main objective behind the framing of Pandulipis is to synthesise the diversities of customary practices prevalent in different Rabha localities. There are several such Pandulipis found in the various Rabha inhabited areas of Goalpara district. They are Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha, Mechapara Madhyanchal Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha, Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha, and Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sammilanar Bidhi-Byavastha. The jurisdiction of operation of the Pandulipis has been clearly demarcated. For example, Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha covers from Dudhnoi to Western part of Kamrup and the jurisdiction of Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha extends from Dudhnoi to Lakhipur in the west and upto the foothills of Meghalaya.<sup>3</sup>

Each one of the Pandulipis covers the whole of social life of the Rabhas residing under its jurisdiction.

The basic customary laws dealing with the various socio-religious activities of the Rabhas inhabiting in different areas are almost same with minor differences. In spite of so different Pandulipis have been framed in different Rabha inhabited areas. It has created problems in the Rabha society. The Rabhas belonging to one samaj can not be compelled to abide by the Pandulipis of another samaj. Moreover, the existence of different Pandulipis in one and the same community has become a barrier in the way of their development. To remove the difficulties a single Pandulipi known as the “Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha” comprising all the Rabha inhabited areas of Goalpara district and the north-west areas of Meghalaya came into existence in 1995.<sup>4</sup>

The social life of the Rabhas includes the various aspects of the Rabha society.

These are –

1. Family structure,
2. Dresses,
3. Fairs and festivals,
4. Religious belief,
5. Birth ceremony,
6. Marriage, and
7. Disposal of dead and death rites.

1. ***Family structure:***

The Rabhas were a matriarchal tribe in the past.<sup>5</sup> But now they seem to be in a transition from the matriarchal to the patriarchal form of family life. Clan heredity is traced in the female i.e. mother’s line. Children are inducted into mother’s “Barai”<sup>6</sup> (for

example, if the father's Barai is 'Rangkho' and mother's "Charchung", then the children will identify them as 'Charchung'). On the other hand, inheritance is counted in fathers' line i.e. inheritance always goes from father to son. Sons inherit the properties of father.<sup>7</sup> Daughters have no right over the properties of their father. They inherit only the properties of their mother. The sons have no right over the properties<sup>8</sup> of their mother.

## 2. ✓ *Dresses:*

The Rabhas have traditional dresses of their own. These dresses distinguish the Rabhas from the other communities. The dresses used by the Rabha women include 'Rifan', 'Kambung' and 'Thaprong'. On the hand, the dresses used by the Rabha men include 'Pajal', 'Khasne', 'Fali', 'Buksil' and 'Pasra'. The Rabha men, who perform dance at the festivals like 'Puktarang', 'Farkanti' etc. use a long shirt from neck to heel. This is known as 'Jama'. The 'Pasra' is made out of endi yarn and the rest are made out of cotton. All these dresses are made by the Rabha women in their family looms.

## 3. *Fairs and festivals:*

"Khoksi" Puja is the principal festival of the Rabhas.<sup>9</sup> Besides 'Khoksi', the Rabhas also celebrate 'Magh Bihu' or 'Bhogali Bihu' (Domashi) and 'Bohag Bihu' or 'Rangali Bihu' (Bisuwa).<sup>10</sup> Of course both the Bihu festivals are celebrated only by the Pati Rabhas.<sup>11</sup> 'Khoksi' puja, which is also known as 'Baikho,' is celebrated by the Rangdani and Maitori sections of the Rabhas.<sup>12</sup> It is relevant to mention here is that 'Baikho' is the goddess of wealth and property and so the Khoksi or Baikho Puja is celebrated to propitiate the goddess.<sup>13</sup>

'Khoksi Puja' is celebrated once in a year.<sup>14</sup> The Rangdani Rabhas celebrate this festival in the months of Bohag and Jeth (mid April to mid June)<sup>15</sup> and the Maitori

Rabhas celebrate it in the months of Jeth and Ahar (mid June to mid August).<sup>16</sup> The process of celebration of 'Khoksi Puja' by the Rangdani and Maitori Rabhas is not same. 'Khoksi Puja' celebrated by the Rangdani Rabhas is very expensive, time consuming and dangerous.<sup>17</sup> So the Rangdani Rabhas have now-a-days abandoned the festival.<sup>18</sup> Instead of Khoksi Puja, they now perform the 'Hachong Puja' at the specified place called 'Hachong Than'. Of course the 'Sathargeet' or 'Khoksigeet' is still sung during the festival of 'Hachong Puja'.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the 'Khoksi Puja' celebrated by the Maitori Rabhas is like the Assamese 'Bihu Festival'.<sup>20</sup> The Maitori Rabhas celebrate the festival in such a manner where the young boys and girls dance and sing freely. Many young boys and girls choose their future life companions in this festival.<sup>21</sup>

Besides 'Khoksi Puja' there are several other festivals celebrated by the Rabhas. These are 'Langa Puja', 'Marepuja', or 'MaraiPuja', 'Tukura Deo Puja', 'Gohalideo Puja', 'Hanaghora Puja', 'Langamara Puja', 'Lakhor Puja',<sup>22</sup> and 'Dodan Mela',<sup>23</sup>

These festivals are indispensable parts of Rabha society and so without these the existence of Rabha society can not be imagined. The celebration of these festivals reflect the various aspects of the social life of the Rabhas

#### 4. *Religious belief:*

The Rabhas are animists (Jaraupasak) in their religious outlook.<sup>24</sup> They are worshippers of inanimate objects.

"Rishi" is the principal deity<sup>25</sup> of the Rabhas. It is a customary rule on the part of the Rabhas to recall the 'Rishi' before worshipping any Deity.<sup>26</sup> The following are the eminent deities worshipped by the Rabhas.

- (a) "Khoksi" and "Baikho",

- (b) "Hasang",
- (c) "Rontak" or "Runtuk",
- (d) "Chhongbai Tangi",
- (e) "Langa Puja",
- (f) "Kacha-Khaiti Puja",
- (g) "Marai Puja" (Manasa Puja),
- (h) "Darmang Bai",
- (i) "Bera-Huchubai",
- (j) "Langachara Bai",
- (k) "Hai Mairong Bai",
- (l) "Khelaram Bai",
- (m) "Marang Bai" and
- (n) "The Gods of Nabanna" viz.,
  1. Subachani,
  2. Dharma,
  3. Langa,
  4. Bura Deo, and
  5. Pirbasu.<sup>27</sup>

Besides these deities, the Rabhas also worship several "Demons" and Evil Spirits. They are –

- (a) 'Tikkar Bai' or 'Daini' (witch),
- (b) 'Bira Bai',
- (c) 'Bakra Bai' (Jhakua),
- (d) 'Baima Bai,

- (e) 'Rambanga Bai,
- (f) 'Budaba Bai',
- (g) 'Kama Hachu Bai',
- (h) 'Khisam Bai' (Khusami Bai),
- (i) 'Bisoyali Bai' (Bihuli),
- (j) 'Chhingra Bai',
- (k) 'Kuber Bai',
- (l) 'Koncho Bai' (Jakhini),
- (m) 'Huduma Bai',
- (n) 'Bagru Bai',
- (o) 'Laikos Bai' (Rakshas),
- (p) 'Mora Bai',
- (q) 'Marang-Mathang Bai',
- (r) 'Koncho Bai' (Laksmi),
- (s) 'Maranga Bai, and
- (t) "'Lambang Bai'<sup>28</sup>.

The Rabhas worship their various 'Deities' in traditional system. The deities are represented by stones.<sup>29</sup> Along with other things rice beer is offered to the deities. Moreover, animals viz., he-goat, pig, fowls are sacrificed during the worships of the deities.

The Rabhas are accustomed to propitiate various evil spirits, dime-gods and witches. The Rabhas believe that the evil-spirits, deme-gods and witches cause various diseases and do harm to the people and the society. That is why the Rabhas worship them.

### 5. *Birth Ceremony:*

Birth ceremonies of the Rabhas irrespective of their section-wise differentiation are governed by their traditional customs and beliefs.

The people belonging to Rabha tribe propitiate a household deity called “Bai-ma-ba” for relieving labour pain and other complications cause to a mother at the time birth of a baby.<sup>30</sup>

The mother and the baby are treated as unclean till the day on which the umbilical cord of the baby falls. They are not allowed to enter the main apartment of the house, temple, kitchen, and cow-shed. Food is kept at the beranda of their dwelling house.<sup>31</sup> In case of the ‘Pati’ section of the Rabhas, the expecting mother is not kept in a separate house. Delivery is performed in her main dwelling room.<sup>32</sup> The whole family is treated as unclean, for seven days in case of a male baby and five days in case of a female baby.<sup>33</sup> During the period the members of the family are not allowed to attend public institutions, temples and pond.<sup>34</sup> They are also not allowed to go for cultivation.<sup>35</sup>

On the day of purification (after the umbilical cord of the baby falls) the father of the baby gets his head totally shaved and the hair of the baby is slightly touched by the razor. The umbilical cord is tied by a small piece of new cloth and kept it in a bottle.<sup>36</sup> After the provisional purification is completed, a big he-fowl is sacrificed in the name of a deity called “Khetor” for the welfare of the mother and the baby.<sup>37</sup>

#### **Pachuti:**

The auspicious ceremony which is performed on the day of purification is known as “Pachuti”. This ceremony is performed for the well-being of the baby.<sup>38</sup> For the occasion entire campus of the house is made clean by cowdung. The cloths and



utensils are also washed. The baby is brought to yard for some auspicious performances. An altar is made on the east direction of the yard and a low stool is placed on the altar. Five pieces of bow-arrow are kept near the altar. A boat with an oar in case of a male baby and a scutching instrument in case of a female baby is kept on a milkfull of pot. The baby is bathed with sacred water and raped with new cloth. A lamp is placed on the east and food containing pulse, husked rice, ginger, sesame and banana is placed before the lamp. The baby is kept on a soft bed. An old woman blows lightly to the different parts of the bed with a stone for the well-being of the baby. After that the old woman gives the baby to the mother.<sup>39</sup>

Through this ceremony the baby is formally included in the Rabha community.<sup>40</sup> At the end of the ceremony food is served among the persons present on the occasion.

#### **Namkaran:**

'Namkaran' ceremony is held on the day of 'Pachuti'. The midwives present on the occasion recommend different names according to their choice. Sometimes parents accept one of the names. If it is not possible then the parents give a name according to their choice approved by the persons present.<sup>41</sup> On the occasion of 'Namakaran' feast with a pig is arranged for the neighbours.<sup>42</sup>

#### **Annaprasan:**

The performance of the auspicious ceremony of 'Annaprasan' of a new born baby is obligatory in the Rabha society.<sup>43</sup> This ceremony is arranged within six to eight months in case of a male baby and five to seven months in case of a female baby.<sup>44</sup>

On the day of 'Annaprasan' the body of the baby is bathed and dressed with new cloths. The hands and feet of the baby are rubbed by the leaves of dambaru tree.

This is done in order to enable the baby to walk soon and to discharge all activities quickly. The baby is fed rice curry and wine first by his or her maternal uncle followed by parents, other members of the family and persons present on the occasion. As a token of this auspicious occasion money, cloths, cattle, etc. may be given as gifts.<sup>45</sup>

As a part of this auspicious ceremony 'Prasads' are offered to the deity 'Rishi'. Moreover, a big red fowl is sacrificed in the name of 'Rishi'<sup>46</sup>. The worship of 'Rishi' is performed by the father of the baby or by the 'Khamal'.<sup>47</sup> All these sacred formalities are performed before feeding the baby.

It is relevant to mention here is that now-a-days the traditional process of the performance of the Annaprasan ceremony of the Rabhas has got changed. Most of the educated Rabha youths are seen to perform this ceremony in accordance with the process followed by the other communities.<sup>48</sup> This deviation is, of course, not objected by the Rabha society.<sup>49</sup>

#### **Chudakaran:**

It is not obligatory for the Rabhas to perform the 'Chudakaran' ceremony. This ceremony is performed in special circumstances. The parents, whose children die within months of their birth, perform the 'Chudakaran' ceremony for the well-being and long life of their children.<sup>50</sup>

#### **6. Marriage:**

Marriage is the basic institution of every human society. However, the nature of celebration of marriage differs from community to community. The system of marriage in the Rabha society is unique because of its multiple in character.

The system of marriage prevalent in the Rabha society is governed by some customary rules. The customary rules dialing with the marriage system of the Rabhas

have been included in the “Bidhi-Byavastha” of the Rabha society. It is relevant to mention here is that four types of marriage<sup>51</sup> prevailed among the Rabhas in the past. These are Bori Bikay, Krangsi Bori, Borichhekay, and Nok Dhangkay.<sup>52</sup> But in the “Bidhi-Byavastha” of the Rabha society seven types of marriage<sup>53</sup> are socially recognised through the customs and traditions. These are –

- (a) Kambung Bibah (Kambung Marriage),
- (b) Gopan Bibah or Jachuki Bibah, (Gopan Marriage or Jachuki Marriage),
- (c) Sadari Ana Bibah, (Sadari Ana Marriage),
- (d) Samajik Bibah (Social Marriage),
- (e) Gharjoain Bibah, (Ghorjoain Marriage),
- (f) Bidhaba Bibah, (Widow Marriage) and
- (g) Charkari Registration or in the Temple (Marriage through Govt.,  
Registration or in the Temple)

**(a) Kambung Bibah (Kambung Marriage):**

One of the systems of marriage prevalent in the Rabha society is ‘Kambung’ marriage, which is also known as “Pauranik Rajasik Bibah”. This system of marriage has been prevailing in the Rabha society from remotest past which is still prevalent. This system of marriage is performed with pomp and grandeur. According to the provision of this marriage bride is brought to the house of the groom. The parents of the groom first go to the house of the bride already chosen and consult about the marriage with her parents. After that the girl is brought to the house of the groom and the marriage is celebrated at the later’s house.

The entire process including the different stages of the ‘Kambung Marriage’ is as follows.

This marriage is initiated by two ladies, who are the relatives of the groom by conveying the willingness of the parents of the groom personally to the bride's parents. It is followed by the process of negotiation between both the parties. Then the bride's parents ask the 'Barai', Huri', occupation and character of the groom. If all conditions are alright then the parents of the bride will proceed to the next stage.<sup>54</sup>

The second stage of this marriage begins with the communication of the information about the marriage to the society by the groom's parents.<sup>55</sup> On the same day a couple (Jorkay) is sent to the house of the bride. Generally no widow or widower is allowed to visit the bride's house. The couple leads a party to the bride's house with the following materials.<sup>56</sup>

1. Lungkha or Khok – 1 piece,  
(A bamboo basket used for carrying load on the left side of the waist)
2. Kambung Cloth – 2 pieces,  
(A piece of long narrow cloth measuring approximately 3 ½ feet length and 1 ½ feet breadth wrapped over the chest of Rabha women)
3. Rifan Chhakba – 1 piece,  
(A price of cloth measuring approximately 6 feet length and 3 ½ feet breadth wrapped over from waist to knees of Rabha women)
4. Mati Mah – 1 packet,  
(A kind of pulse)
5. Khadar Chham – 1 piece,  
(A comb made of bamboo)
6. A pipeful of mustard oil,
7. Vermillion – 1 packet,

8. Chako (Beer) – 1 Jonga  
(An earthen vessel containing beer)

9. To chakkai (one red he-fowl)

All the materials excluding the vessel containing beer and the fowl are carried in a khok (bamboo basket) to the bride's house by an unmarried girl. The 'Jonga' is carried on shoulder by two persons and the fowl is also carried on shoulder by two boys to the bride's house. After the arrival of the party at bride's house, if the former comes to know that the bride has not agreed to the marriage, then she is asked to sit in the east direction on a low stool. The girl belonging to the groom's party besmears her hair with oil and gives vermilion mark on her forehead and combs her head. Simultaneously the boys, who carried the fowl, worship the deity 'Rishi' by sacrificing the fowl. This is the customary process by which the consent of the bride is obtained. Even after this if no settlement about the marriage comes out the groom's party leaves the bride's house keeping the 'Khok'. If the materials of the Khok are found missing it is assumed that the marriage is confirmed. Otherwise, the 'Khok' must be returned as it is on the very day. On the other hand, if the 'Khok' is kept for one night the groom's party will have no alternative but to fetch the bride. At this juncture if the bride's party has no objection, the groom is dressed with the bridal apparels and brought to the groom's house for the celebration of marriage rites.<sup>57</sup>

As soon as the bride arrives at the groom's house she is required to stand on a low stool for washing her feet followed by the performance of the first ritual i.e., 'Chalani-Bati Sarakowa'. Along with this a minor ritual known as 'Dhup-Chaul-Chhatioya' takes place. She is then led to the 'Borghor' (main house). Before this she is required to bow down her head towards the 'Borghor'. On the other hand any one from

amongst the assemblage who knows 'Bachan' (moral saying) or the priest of the village pronounces hymns in the name of deity 'Rishi'. Along with this a pair of fowls is sacrificed by tearing their heads. This is known as 'Dara Kainar Ayu Nirdharan' or 'Rishi Chare Kata'<sup>58</sup>. This ritual is followed by 'Lagun Ganthi'. The bride and groom are required to sit together on the floor of the 'Borghor', where both of them are tied in a knot. This is known as 'Lagun Ganthi'. This is most important rite as it implies that both of them are inseparable from each other and become life-long companion. Now-a-days the rite of Lagun-Ganthi is performed on the yard.<sup>59</sup>

After the performance of the rite of 'Lagun Ganthi' the khamal (priest) pronounces hymns for their happy and prosperous married life. Then the assemblage present on the occasion blesses the couple through "Haridhani" followed by presentation of gifts<sup>60</sup>. The couple then bows down their heads and pay respects to the elder members of the family and the other elder persons present on the occasion. After that the couple is invited to play the game of 'Kadi' and 'Ring'. Finally the couple bow down their heads to the 'Ghor-Gosani' and after this the 'Lagun Ganthi' is loosed.<sup>61</sup>

When the marriage rituals come to an end, a feast is arranged for the assemblage.

**(b) Gopan or Jachuki Bibah (Gopan or Jachuki Marriage):**

Gopan or Jachuki marriage is one of the systems of marriage prevalent in the Rabha Society.

When a Rabha girl intends to marry a boy of her own choice is known as "Gopan or Jachuki marriage. Gopan marriage is divided into two categories. These are discussed as follows.

- (1) The groom's side, with due consent of the bride, conveys the matter to the later's guardians. Subsequently, the bride is brought to the groom's house for performing the actual marriage rites. The marriage rites are performed according to the prevalent customary laws<sup>62</sup> at the groom's house in presence of the invited people of the Rabha society.
- (2) According to the customary laws of the Rabhas, any Rabha girl may go to the house of the boy of her choice in order to marry the later. The guardians of the boy after obtaining consent of the girl make arrangement for the performance of their marriage rites. The nearest relatives of the boy and elderly people of the village are informed and they are required to be present on the occasion. The marriage rites are performed in accordance with the prevailing customary rules. The marriage is performed by exchange of garlands between the bride and the groom. A red he-fowl is sacrificed for the purpose.<sup>63</sup> The guardians of the bride are conveyed the information of the marriage after the entire process is completed.

According to the customary laws dealing with the 'Gopan Marriage' presentation of dowry or gifts are not socially allowed. Gifts may be given provided a feast is arranged. The guardians of the groom may arrange a light dinner after the marriage rites are performed in accordance with the rules of 'Jamad'<sup>64</sup>.

**(c) Sadari Ana Bibah (Sadari Ana Marriage):**

This is one of the systems of marriage prevalent among the Rabhas. This marriage is performed at the house of groom. For this purpose groom's party goes to the bride's house for fetching the later to the house of the former. According to the prevalent social rules the bride's party is required to receive the groom's party by

offering them betel-nuts and leaves. After that the bride is provided with her bridal apparels, ornaments, and vermilion mark on her forehead so as to get ready for marriage. Then she is openly brought to the house of the groom by both the parties.<sup>65</sup> Necessary arrangements are made on the yard of the groom's house for the performance of marriage rites. The arrangements include lighting of lamp, 'Dhup-Chaul-Chhatioya' etc. The actual marriage rites are performed by mutual exchange of garlands between the bride and the groom.<sup>66</sup> When the performance of marriage rites come to an end, the guardians, according to their capacity, arrange a dinner for the assemblage.

**(d) Samajik Bibah (Social Marriage):**

Two kinds of social marriage are found among the Rabhas.

- a. Bride is brought to groom's house where marriage rites are performed, and
- b. Groom attired with prescribed dresses goes to the bride's house, where the marriage rites are performed.

The entire process dealing with the 'Samajik Marriage' is as follows

- a. In the first stage, a group of ladies from groom's side visit the bride's house to convey the choice of the groom's parents for the girl. During the visit the ladies carry a bag of 'Chira' (pounded rice) and keep it in the bride's house in the name of the bride after obtaining her consent. Moreover, during this visit a day for the occasion of "Tamul-Pan-Khuoya" is fixed.<sup>67</sup> This occasion is the most significant part of the entire process of marriage because here the consent of village elders is obtained regarding the marriage.

For the ceremony of "Tamul-Pan-Khuoya", a group of ten ladies and gents belonging to groom's side arrives at the bride's house with a number of materials, viz.,



a four angular bag, a knife, and a lime-pot.<sup>68</sup> The groom's party is to offer a pair of betel-nut-leaves to each member of the bride's party with utmost care. This being done the approval of the village elders is presumed to have been obtained, a suitable date for the next step i.e. Joron is fixed.<sup>69</sup>

On the day of Joron a groom party, accompanied by 'Ayoti-Namati', 'Drummers' with 'Dhol-Pepa' arrives at the bride's house which creates a mirthful atmosphere. After observing the traditional formalities, the reception of the groom's party, betel-nut and leaves of the groom's side are distributed among the members of the bride's party. After this is over, oil, vermilion and bridal apparels from the groom's side are given to the bride. Her hair is besmeared with oil and vermilion mark is given on her forehead. At the end of the ceremony a light dinner is arranged by the bride's side. This is known as 'Pan-Chini'.<sup>70</sup>

After the Joron is over, both the parties (bride and groom) after necessary consultation fixed an auspicious date for the performance of actual marriage rites.

After performing the formalities the groom's party goes to the bride's house to fetch her. As soon as the groom's party arrives at the bride's house the guardians of the later receive them according to their customary laws. Before fetching the bride her hair is besmeared with oil, vermilion mark is given on her forehead and she is attired with bridal apparels.

As soon as the bride arrives at the groom's house she is required to stand on the low stool kept just beneath the gateway, where the first ritual known as 'Chalani-bati-solona-solani' is performed. Her feet are washed and led to the 'Borghor'. According to the custom prevalent among the Rabhas both the bride and groom are required to take bath before performing the marriage rites. Both of them are again attired with

prescribed dresses and brought to the particular place where the bride is seated to the right of the groom. Both of them are tied in a knot which is known as "Lagun Ganthi", is followed by a ritual known as "Dhup-Chaul-Chhatioya". This ritual is performed by a married woman or an unmarried girl. This is followed by the pronouncing of hymns by the priest. Next stage is the presentation of dowry and gifts, which is done first by bride's side followed by the groom's side. After this is over, the couple bows down their heads before the entire assemblage in order to receive blessings and good-wishes from them. The entire assembly blesses the couple through "Haridhani". Simultaneously, the 'Lagun-Ganthi' of the couple is let loose by the 'Tikoni Dhara' who is nominated by the guardians of the bride. Then the couple is led to the 'Borghor' where the 'Kadi-Khel' is held. After this the couple is required to bow down again before the assembly and the 'Ghor-Gosani', with this the marriage rituals come to an end. A feast is arranged for the members present on the occasion.

b. The same process is followed in case of the second kind of social marriage which is performed at the house of the bride.<sup>71</sup> Here the groom attired with prescribed dresses goes to the bride's house where the marriage rites are performed.

**(e) Ghorjoain Bibah (Ghorjoain Marriage):**

This type of marriage has been prevailing in the Rabha society from the remotest past. According to the provisions of this marriage the groom is required to stay at the house of his in-laws after his marriage. Generally, the Rabha couple, who have no male child prefer this type of marriage.<sup>72</sup> According to the customary laws prevalent among the Rabhas, the groom is brought to the bride's house where marriage rituals are performed. Any type of marriage process viz., Social marriage, Gopan

marriage, or Sadari ana marriage may be adopted for the performance of Ghor joian marriage.<sup>73</sup>

**(f) Bidhaba Bibah (Widow Marriage):**

Widow marriage has been prevailing in the Rabha society from the remotest past. This marriage is divided into two categories, *viz.*,

(1) Sadari Ana Bidhaba Bibah, and (2) Gopan Bidhaba Bibah.

(1) Sadari Ana Bidhaba Bibah: When the widow is brought to the groom's house and openly performed the marriage rites in presence of the relatives and villagers is known as Sadari Ana Bidhaba Bibah. Same rule is applicable in case of the marriage of a widower also.<sup>74</sup>

(2) Gopan Bidhaba Bibah. When the marriage rites are performed secretly is known as Gopan Bidhaba Bibah. In this case the widow is brought secretly keeping the family members and the relatives ignorant about the marriage.<sup>75</sup>

It may be mentioned here is that in both the cases arrangement of feast is not obligatory. Of course, there is no bar for the arrangement of feast.

**(g) Sarkari (Govt.) Registration and in the Temple:**

Marriage through Government Registration has been approved by the Rabha society. Accordingly any Rabha boy or girl may get married through registration in the government office.<sup>76</sup> Of course after the marriage feast<sup>77</sup> is to be arranged for the relatives and other persons of the society.

The Rabha society has also approved the performance of marriage rites in the temples. Any Rabha boy or girl may perform the marriage rites at the temples *viz.*, Dodan Temple, Banabasi Than at Dudhnoi and other temples.<sup>78</sup> But after the

performance of marriage the couple must receive the blessings and approval of the Rabha society. Feast may be arranged by the guardians according to their capacity.<sup>79</sup>

### 7. *Disposal of Dead and death Rites:*

Funeral rites and death rites of the Rabhas are performed according to their customary laws.

**Funeral Rites:** There are two kinds of funeral rights prevalent in the Rabha society.<sup>80</sup> these are –

- (i) Funeral rites relating to normal death, and
- (ii) Funeral rites relating to unnatural death.

**(i) Funeral Rites relating to Normal Death:** The Rabhas cremate the bodies of those who die due to normal causes. First, the dead body is washed with 'Santi Jal' (Sanctified water) and then it is dressed with new cloths.<sup>81</sup> In case of a male it must have 'turban' on the head. Similarly, if it is female it must have 'Khadanbang' (A piece of cloth by which the Rabha women tie their heads), oil in hair and vermilion on her forehead.<sup>82</sup> Leaves of plum are kept on the body. Then the body is kept in an outer house for a night in order to enable the distant relatives to attend the last rites. The body is cremated in the next morning. Shortly before the corpse is taken away for cremation, a libation of rice beer is offered to the manes of all the barai, beginning with Tengtung barai.<sup>83</sup> The corpse is then carried to some convenient spot on the outskirts of the village for cremation. The dead body is placed on the pyre inclining towards one side. It is kept in north direction facing east irrespective of male and female. The person, who will perform the final death rites, is required to put fire on the face of the corpse.<sup>84</sup> According to the customary rules of the Rabhas the 'Mukhagni' is performed after moving seven times in case of male and five times in case of female around the pyre.

Generally this rite is performed by the eldest or the youngest child of the deceased.<sup>85</sup> In their absence this rite is performed by a nearest relative of the deceased.<sup>86</sup> After the cremation, the ashes and fragments of bones are gathered together and covered over with an earthen pot. A fence is built round the cremation spot and a small thatched covering is erected over the funeral reliquary. Long bamboo poles are planted at the four corners of the shed at the top of which a streamer made of white cloth is attached. After the funeral the people attending it return home.<sup>87</sup>

**(ii) Funeral Rites relating to Unnatural Death:** Funeral rites of the unnatural death among the Rabhas are performed in accordance with the prescribed customary laws. Unnatural death caused either by some epidemic diseases, suicide, or meeting with a violent death, the corpse is buried and not burnt.<sup>88</sup>

**Death Rites:** The whole family of the deceased is treated unclean until the death rites are performed.<sup>89</sup> There are several kinds of death rites prevalent among the Rabhas, which are performed for the peace of the departed souls. These are –

- (i) Kalpani,
- (ii) Farkanti,
- (iii) Torangkaji,
- (iv) Badungdupa, and
- (v) Sarbajanin Sraddhakriya.<sup>90</sup>

The death rites of the Rabhas are performed from seven to fifteen days.<sup>91</sup>

Of all the death rites prevalent among the Rabhas, 'Farkanti' is the best. It is very expensive and so it can not be performed by the ordinary Rabhas. They can not afford the huge expenditure of this rite. And so it is not widely prevalent among the

Rabhas. Generally the well-to-do Rabhas perform this type of rites.<sup>92</sup> Of course in case of the dead of eminent Rabha personalities, 'Farkanti' is performed.<sup>93</sup>

'Kalpani' is very simple and so less expensive. This rite is prevalent among the Rabhas who are poorest of the poor. Moreover, the death rites of the minors and those who are buried, are also performed according to this rites.<sup>94</sup>

'Sarbanjanin Sraddhakriya' is the widely prevalent death rites among the Rabhas.<sup>95</sup>

The person who performs the 'Mukhagni' does not take meat or fish till the death rites are completed. The Rabhas offer 'Maychako' (an offering consists of boiled rice, meat, egg, fish, rice-beer) to the dead.<sup>96</sup>

At the end of the death rites feast is arranged for the neighbours and the relatives. Non-vegetarian feast was a must in the past Rabha society. Those who could not arrange non-begetarian feast were penalized by the society. Now-a-days this rule has been relaxed. At present feast is arranged according to the financial capacity of the family of the deceased. But, the vegetarian feast must include rice beer and the non-vegetarian feast must include pig and rice beer.<sup>97</sup>

## **THE HAJONGS:**

The Hajongs, being a tribal community, have a distinct social life of their own. The different aspects of their social life are governed by their traditional customary laws and Hindu beliefs.

The social life of the Hajong tribes includes:

- (a) Village Structure,
- (b) Housing Pattern,
- (c) Family Structure,

- (d) Dresses,
- (e) Food Habits,
- (f) Fairs and Festivals,
- (g) Birth Rites,
- (h) Disposal of Dead and Death Rites and
- (i) Marriage.

(a) ***Village Structure:***

The Hajong villages are situated on high grounds near their wet paddy lands. The tribe do not have definite plan in constructing the houses. Rather the houses are huddled together in a disorderly manner. Generally, they construct their dwelling houses in clusters in the courtyard of 'Adhikari'.<sup>98</sup>

Twenty five to thirty houses are huddled together in each village in the courtyard of the Adhikari. Some of the houses are too small even to accommodate a small family. Some of them, of course, are of standard size. The only standard house in a Hajong village is that of the Adhikari.

There are some causes behind the peculiar village structure of the Hajong tribes. First, in the past there were frequent outside attack in the Hajong villages due to inter-community feuds. So, the village structure was made in a peculiar manner in order to protect and defend the village from outside attacks.

Secondly, since the Adhikari has to provide dwelling site for each and every family, it is not possible on his part to provide adequate land for each family.

This is due to the above reasons that houses of the Hajong tribes are constructed in unplanned and disorderly manner.

(b) ***Housing Pattern:***

The houses of the ordinary Hajongs are almost similar in pattern with variations in size. The house of a villager has an earthen plinth and two thatched roofs on both sides. Bamboos and also timbers are used for construction of houses. The walls are made of bamboos and plastered with mud and cowdung. The house consists of three to four rooms. There is a protruding veranda either in the front side or in the back side of the house. The loom, which is a common feature of the Hajong household, is installed on the veranda. The women weave in these simple looms. The kitchen is very small which is attached to the house. Poor families do not have separate kitchens and they cook inside the dwelling house. A number of families possess a common courtyard which is used for threshing paddy during the time of harvest. Each family possesses a granary constructed on piles with floor made of bamboos.

The houses of the 'Adhikari' and the well-to-do families are not same as those of the common villagers as discussed above.

(c) ***Family Structure:***

According to the scholars, the Hajongs had a matrilineal society in the recent past.<sup>99</sup> But now they have become patrilineal in respect of their family structure. The line of descent is traced through the father only. The father is the head of the family in all respects. At the death of the father the sons inherit the properties of the former. According to the customary laws of the Hajongs, the daughters have no right over their father's property. Even if a man has no son, not the daughters, but the nearest male kin will inherit his properties. But this customary law has got changed and according to the changing law, in case of a man having no son, the daughter will inherit his property after his death.<sup>100</sup> This change, of course, has been noticed among the educated



Hajongs, This change has taken place due to their living in close proximity with the Bengali people.<sup>101</sup>

**(d) *Dresses:***

The Hajongs have their own traditional dresses. The main dresses used by Hajong women include 'Patin', or 'Rangapatni', 'Pasra' or 'Argun' and 'Kamarbandha'. On the other hand, the dresses used by the Hajong men include 'Gamosa', or 'Ningti' and 'Kampesh'. These dresses are made by the Hajong women in their family looms.

**(e) *Food habits:***

In respect of food habits the Hajong community does not have basic differences from the other communities. So, rice is the principal food of the Hajongs. Vegetables are day-to-day items which are generally taken with rice. They are fond of fish very much. Meat specially, of goat and pigeons are taken by them. But they do not take pork and fowls. Rice beer is taken occasionally. But it is not used in the performance of socio-religious festivals and other rituals. Milk and items made from it are taken. Betel nuts with betel leaves are very favourite of the Hajongs and all of them including females take these regularly. On the other hand, the male persons have a habit of smoking tobacco.

**(f) *Fairs and Festivals:***

The Hajong tribes celebrate many festivals. Their traditional culture is very rich which differentiates them from the other communities.

According to Biren Hajong, first graduate of the Hajong tribes, an eminent educationist and a reputed writer, the Hajongs feel very proud to identify themselves as

Hindus. They have been practising Hindu rites and customs for a long time. It cannot be said when this process of acculturation began in the social life of this tribe.

The worships, fairs and festivals performed by the Hajong community may be divided into two categories.

1. Festivals similar to those of the neighbouring Hindu people and
  2. Traditional festivals of tribal nature.
1. The various worships and festivals of the Hindus, viz., Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Kali Puja, Manasa Puja, Saraswati Puja are also performed by the Hajongs.

Generally Durga Puja is not performed individually by the common Hajongs. Because this Puja needs a huge expenditure which can not be borne by a single person. So, Durga Puja is collectively performed by this tribe. It is, however, found in the old records that some well-to-do Hajong families performed Durga Puja individually, that too, during the time of undivided Bengal.

Manasa Puja (Padma Puja): Manasa or Padma Puja is an important worship of the Hajongs. It is almost obligatory for every Hajong family to perform this Puja prior to the celebration of marriage.<sup>102</sup>

According to Biren hajong<sup>103</sup> Manasa Puja was very popular among the Hajongs of the north Mymensingh areas of the erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and was widely performed by them. But this Puja was less popular among the Hajongs of Assam and Garo hills.

Manasa or Padma, the goddess of snakes is worshipped by the head of the family. A peculiar feature of the Manasa Puja is that the offerings must be given by left hand only and this is performed by the head of the family. A goat is sacrificed in the

Puja. Padma Puja is performed in the marriage ceremony in order to protect the couple from snake bite.

During the by-gone-days goddess Manasa was treated with great reverence and that is why she was worshipped by every household; as if it was their national festival.

Manasa Devi is known to the Hajongs as “Kanideo” and her worship is called “Kani Puja”. The Puja continued for one month which started from 1<sup>st</sup> of Shravana (the fourth month of the Bengali calendar) and concluded on the last day of the same month. On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Shravana, the “Padma Purana” was ceremonially taken out and placed for daily recitation. And it was read over in the assemblage of villagers every evening till the last day of Shravana. On this day, the final worship was performed. Virtually, Manasa Puja was performed in every household on the said day. Pigeons, drake, he-goat etc. were sacrificed on the occasion, Feast, comprising various items such as, chira, muri, curds, khoi, sweets and fruits, was arranged. The Manasa Puja was performed once in a year.

Satya Narayan Puja is also performed by the Hajongs. This puja is performed by a family generally in the month of Baisakh (the first month of the Bengali calendar). Prasad made of powdered rice or flour mixed with ripe banana, milk, honey, ghee, is offered on this occasion. The villagers are invited and they sing the hymns in the name of “Hari” and take the prasad.

The ‘Doljatra’, an important festival of the Hindus, is also performed by the Hajongs.

As a part of this festival fairs are organised in some places where “Gopal Thakur” is worshipped. Abir, mud etc. are played freely by both the males and females.

A specific kind of songs i.e. “Holi” is sung in this festival. This is a devotional song on the life of Radha and Krishna.

The “Namyajna” is also performed by the Hajong community. It extends from eight prahars to fifty-six prahars, where Namkirtan is sung by invited parties. The parties and the individuals are served with vegetarian food.

Bash (Bamboo) Puja is an important religious ceremony performed by the Hajongs. This Puja is performed in the month of Baisag (the first month of the Bengali calendar) and continues for three days. Three newly cut bamboos are required for this puja. These bamboos are decorated with new white or red cloths and fixed on the ground and then worshipped. Two main bamboos represent two gods. There are divergent views about the gods. According to some, the two bamboos represent Madan and Gopal, while to others they represent Siva and Parvati. Some scholars, however, regard the Bash Puja as a kind of worship to Indra. But majority are of the opinion that two bamboos represent Madan Kam, the god of sex. During the entire three days dancing, singing by young boys and geetals and professional singers are performed. The songs include devotional songs and love songs. The women cannot take part in the singing and dancing programmes but can enjoy them.

**Lakshmi Puja:** ‘Lakshmi Puja’, one of the important worships of the Hindus, is also performed by the Hajongs. ‘Lakshmi Puja’ is known as the ‘Kujai Ghor’<sup>104</sup> among the Hajongs.

**Kartik Puja:** ‘Kartik Puja,’ a festival of the Hindus, is also performed by the Hajongs. This Puja is exclusively performed by women only. Men can not participate in this Puja and they are not even allowed to visit the place where the Puja is performed. This Puja is performed in the end of the month of Kati (The seventh month

of the Assamese Calendar). Kartik is considered by the Hajongs as the god who can give sons. The women who want sons come to the place of worship and pray for sons. On the day of this Puja singing and dancing performed by women continue throughout the whole night.<sup>105</sup>

Some Hindu festivals are observed by the Hajong community with some variations. These festivals are –

1. Bihu,
2. Amati
3. Katigacha
4. Naya Khawa or Chinik Kora.

The aforesaid festivals are observed by both the Hindus and also the Hajongs. But the nature and form of celebration are different among the Hajongs.

**1. Bihu:** Like the Assamese society the Hajongs also observe three Bihus. In the Hajong society the Rangali Bihu is called ‘Chaitra Sangkranti.’ It is observed on the last day of the month of Chaitra (the last month of the Bengali Calendar) and on the first day of Baishakha (the first month of the Bengali Calendar). On the last day of Chaitra the mudfloors and the surrounding courtyard are plastered with cowdung mixed mud. All the household materials are washed and cleansed. The cows are bathed, and worshipped in the evening. Cake, curd and various items made from rice are prepared and served to each other by the villagers. Moreover, “Tipa” is made of a reed plant and erected in the river or waterpool where people take bath. “Gaur Pankha” (an orchid plant with broad leaves) is preserved in the dwelling house to keep away snakes. Bull fighting and wrestling are organized in some villages. On the second day activities are confined among the family members and the relatives. Neem leaves are fixed on the

roofs of the houses. The Hajongs believe that the Neem leaves have medicinal value and it would keep diseases away from the family. Apart from this, on this day the younger members pay respects to elder members of the family.

Like the Assamese people Magh Bihu is also observed by the Hajongs. In the Hajong society 'Magh Bihu' is called 'Poshna' and it is observed on the last day of 'Pausha' (the 9<sup>th</sup> month of Bengali Calendar). On the occasion of 'Poshna' feast comprises cake, curd, chira, is arranged and served among the villagers. Moreover, picnic is also arranged in some areas.

'Kati Bihu' is also observed by the Hajongs. 'Kati Bihu' or 'Kangali Bihu' is called "Katigacha" in the Hajong society. It is observed on the last day of the month of Aswina (the 6<sup>th</sup> month of the Bengali Calendar). On this day solemn illumination is done in the paddy field in the evening. Moreover, some Hajong families raise and start lighting elevated lamp in the sky. This lamp is lighted in every evening throughout the month of 'Kartika' (the seventh month of the Bengali Calendar). On the last day of 'Kartika' the lighting of the elevated lamp comes to an end and on this occasion 'Satya Narayan' puja is performed and feast is arranged.

#### **Traditional Worships, Ceremonies and Festivals of the Hajongs:**

The Hajongs have their own traditional worships, ceremonies and festivals. The Hajongs worship two categories of traditional deities. According to Biren Hajong, the first category of deities are worshipped by a "Deoshi" or village priest for the well being of the society and for the safety of the lives of the members of the tribe. The second categories of deities are worshipped in order to get rid of various diseases. There is a belief prevalent in the Hajong society that there are some diseases which are

caused by some deities. Any individual can worship these deities when necessity arises provided he is conversant with the method of worship.

Of the first category of deities, the “Bastu” group is prominent. This group includes ‘Bastu’, ‘Lakshmi Thakur’ and ‘Barodeo’. These deities are worshipped once in a year, in the month of Magha in the northern Mymensingh areas, and that of the Balachanda and Marak areas of Garo Hills in the month of Baishakha. The worship is performed in a sacred place known as “Bastu Than”, where an altar is made in a small hut for Bastu and Lakshmi Thakur deities. It is notable to mention here is that for the worship of ‘Bastu deity’ small horse and elephant made of clay are used. The symbol of these two animals bear the trace of “Hayograbo” temple at Hajo in Kamrup district. It is believed that the Hajongs migrated from the Hajo Pargona of Kamrup district of Assam.

**Kamakhya Goddess:** Kamakhya goddess is an important traditional deity of the Hajongs. There are Kamakhya temples at Ghusgaon, Mouzakhali in present Bangladesh and at Kharonggiri in West Garo Hills.<sup>106</sup> In these temples grand puja is performed annually besides daily pujas. Where there is no temple, the Hajong villagers establish such temple in the village and perform puja annually. In the past the Hajong priest visited Kamakhya temple near Netrokona in Mymensingh district of erstwhile East Pakistan and offered Puja every year.<sup>107</sup>

So from the above picture it is evident that the Hajongs are earnest devotees of the Kamakhya deity.

#### **Chormaga / Chorkhela Festival:**

The social life of the Hajong community is enriched by a number of indigenous festivals. ‘Chormaga’ or ‘Chorkhela’ festival is one of them. One peculiarity of this

festival is that it is characterized by dance and music. After the works relating to cultivation, which starts in April and ends in August, the hard working Hajong people want some relaxation and recreation. It is relevant to mention here is that this festival is called 'Chormaga' in northern Mymensingh and 'Chorkhela' in Garo Hills.

The festival is performed during Shyama Puja or Dewali. The preparation of the festival is started one / two months ahead of the date of the festival. The Chormaga party is formed by ten to twenty five boys of a village. The Chorkhela parties go round the village from house to house displaying their dances and music one or two days earlier of Dewali. There are two systems of Chorkhela celebration prevalent among the Hajongs. According to one system, the parties display their performances going round the village from house to house and return on the same day. This is known as 'Dhawa Maga'.<sup>108</sup> According to the another system the Chormaga parties come out of their own village and display their performances from village to village which requires halting the nights in different villages. The display continues for four to eight days. During the display the chormaga parties receive cash and in kind i.e. rice. After the end of the festival the parties perform Satya Narayana Puja. Feast is also arranged. Sometimes the surplus money used for welfare activities for the people.<sup>109</sup>

**(g) Birth Rites:**

The Hajongs perform some rituals at the time of birth of a baby. When delivery of a pregnant woman is due, she is kept in a separate room for delivery. Delivery is performed with the help of a local midwife.<sup>110</sup> Iron made knife or a piece of iron is kept under the bed of the mother in order to protect both the mother and the baby from evil spirits. After the birth a drop of honey is poured into the mouth of the baby.<sup>111</sup> According to the customary rules the Hajongs observe a period of defilement which



varies according to the sex of the baby. It is seven to nine days in case of a male baby and five days in case of a female baby.<sup>112</sup> At the end of defilement the parents and the close family members of the baby do some shaving work (kamani) by a barber and the houses and the compound are purified by holy water (shantijol).

When the baby attains six or seven months “Bhat Chhua” (first eating of rice) ceremony is performed. On this auspicious occasion Home deities are worshipped and feast is arranged for the neighbours and relatives. At the age of five or six the ‘Adhikari’, the headman of the village and village priest, initiates the child to the Hajong society by reciting some mantras (Kanmantra).<sup>113</sup>

**(h) *Disposal of Dead and Death Rites:***

The Hajongs consider themselves to be Hindus. So all the rituals connected with the death of a person are performed according to the Hindu way with some variations.

When a person dies, the dead body is taken out of the house. The body is bathed with turmeric mixed water and it is covered with new cloths.<sup>114</sup> In order to prevent the entry of any evil spirit the thumbs of both the hands are tied together with white thread. The dead body is then taken to the cremation ground and burnt on a pure. The remnant portion of the body is collected, wrapped in a new cloth and buried under the ground.

A few burnt pieces of bones are brought home and preserved under a ‘Tulsitree’ (Basil). Every evening earthen lights are lighted and incense is burnt at the site where the charred bones are buried in order to pay respect and homage to the departed soul. The period of defilement is observed thirteen days by the ‘Kshatriyas’ and ten days by the ‘Non-Kshatriyas’.<sup>115</sup> During the period only vegetarian food is taken. On the eleventh or thirteenth day the “Sraddha” ceremony (death rites) is performed by an ‘Adhikari’ or by a ‘Brahmin’ priest.<sup>116</sup> And the day before the “Sraddha” ceremony all

the houses and the compound are purified by plastering with mud and the sons of the deceased shave their heads by a barber. The “Sradha” ceremony comes to an end with the entertainment of the relatives of the deceased and the villagers with feast.

**(i) *Marriage:***

The Hajongs are an exogamous group of tribe. So no marriage can take place between a boy and a girl belonging to the same clan.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand no one is allowed to marry outside his or her community. If any one violates this customary law, he or she is ex-communicated from the Hajong society.<sup>118</sup>

Marriage system of the Hajongs has some important aspects. These are –

- (a) **Khalti or Bride Price:** The Hajongs do not have such dowry system which prevails in the society of many other communities. The practice of giving dowry to the groom’s guardians is not prevalent in the Hajong society. Rather the guardians of the bride are to be paid a nominal amount in cash as a bride price. This is called “Pun Pratha.”<sup>119</sup>
- (b) **Ghar Jangoi:** The practice of keeping the son-in-law at the residence of his in-laws after marriage called “Ghar Jangoi” is not prevalent in the Hajong society.<sup>120</sup>
- (c) **Monogamy:** The Hajongs are monogamous. The Hajongs do not have more than one wife. Any Hajong having no issue does not marry a second wife, even if his wife permits to do so.<sup>121</sup>
- (d) **Divorce or Remarriage:** Divorce is rare in the Hajong society. It is allowed in exceptional cases. A divorcee or widow can remarry with the consent of the village elders. But in such marriages, rituals are not performed. A simple feast is arranged for the villagers.<sup>122</sup>

- (e) Absence of child marriage: The system of child marriage is totally absent in the Hajong society. The marriageable age for a boy is twenty-five years and above and for a girl it is sixteen years and above.<sup>123</sup>

There are three types of marriage found prevalent among the Hajongs. These are –

- (1) Negotiated Marriage called Subha Bibah,
- (2) Marriage Between a Widower and a Widow or a divorcee called Hango, and
- (3) Marriage by Elopement called Dai Para.

Of the three types of marriage, most remarkable is the Subha Bibah (Negotiated marriage). This marriage is performed with pomp and splendour. On the other hand, marriage between a widower and a widow or a divorcee is very rare in the Hajong society. If so happens the ritualistic performances are too few. And the marriage by elopement is totally disfavoured by the Hajongs. So the entire process of only the Subha Bibah is discussed here.

The negotiated marriage is settled through a mediator called 'Jasu'.<sup>124</sup> As soon as the marriage is settled, a party from the groom's side attends a ritual at the house of the bride. This ritual is known as "Pan-Chini" or Gua-khowa. This ritual is performed in presence of the villagers and the family members. The groom's party entertains them with tea and betel-nut and also offers ornaments, cloths, oil meant for the bride. An auspicious day is fixed for the performance of actual marriage ceremony in consultation between the two parties. The marriage rites are performed at the house of the groom.<sup>125</sup>

The Hajong marriage has two parts. The main ceremony is called the 'Bhor Bia' and the second part of the marriage is called 'Basi or Bahi Bia'. The 'Bhor Bia' is held at night and the 'Basi or Bahi Bia' is performed in the next morning.<sup>126</sup> The Bhor Bia which is the vital part of the ceremony is performed through the exchange of rings

between the bride and the groom. The marriage rituals are performed by Adhikari or a Hindu Brahmin priest in presence of all the villagers and the groom party.

But prior to the performance of marriage rites a 'Mitar' (friend)<sup>127</sup> is to be selected for the groom who acts as a witness of marriage ceremony and becomes the life-long friend of the married couple. Secondly services of an elderly couple as Dharmabap and Dharmamao (god-father and god-mother) are required. After the marriage ceremony is over the god-father and the god-mother take the newly married couple to the room meant for them.<sup>128</sup>

The services of five women are very much essential for the performance of marriage rites. These women must not be widows. They help the bride and the groom in all matters concerning the marriage and make "Uludhwani"<sup>129</sup> (auspicious sound by females in Hindu religious rites).

There must be Gitalu or Kirtan Parties in the Hajong marriage ceremony. The Gitalu or Kirtan Parties sing marriage songs during the performance of marriage rituals. The songs depict the marriage of Shiva Parvati and the story of Lakhindar and Behula.<sup>130</sup>

On the occasion of marriage feast including vegetarian and non-vegetarian is arranged for the relatives and the people of the village. In this connection it may be mentioned that not only the relatives of both the sides-bride and groom – but also all the people of the village must be invited to the marriage ceremony. From the beginning to the end of the marriage ceremony all are to be entertained with food and drinks.

## **ECONOMIC LIFE:**

### **The Rabhas:**

The economic condition of the people belonging to Rabha tribe is not good. The primary source of livelihood of the community is agriculture. About 90%<sup>131</sup> of the Rabha population depends on agriculture. This has come to the knowledge of the researcher during his field works carried out in a number of Rabha villages in the district of Goalpara.<sup>132</sup>

The different sections of the Rabha tribe viz. Pati, Maitori, Rangdani, Dahuri etc. have been living in the plain areas in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, and Dhurbi and in foothills of Meghalaya. In the district of Goalpara they are found scattered in all the five Revenue Circles viz., Lakhipur, Balijana, Matia, Dudhnoi, and Rangjuli. The main source of livelihood of the different communities inhabiting in these circles is agriculture. Naturally the Rabhas are also not exception to this. They have been doing cultivation from remotest past.

The Rabhas have been dwelling in the different plain areas of Goalpara district of Assam and in the foot hills of the Garo Hills of Meghalaya. The lands in the Rabha habitats of Goalpara and Garo Hills are fertile for cultivation. These lands are suitable for paddy cultivation which is the primary crop cultivated by the Rabhas. The lands are not only suitable for paddy cultivation but also other crops<sup>133</sup> viz., wheat, maize, sugarcane, jute etc. So besides paddy they also cultivate the above crops to a limited extent. Of the different kinds of paddy the 'Sali' is dominated among the community. 'Ahu' and 'Boro' are cultivated to a limited extent. In some areas "Early Ahu" and "Chinese Boro"<sup>134</sup> are also cultivated by the Rabhas. Early Ahu is cultivated in Baida, Maladhora, Rangjai, areas under Balijana Development Block and Chinese Boro is

cultivated in the Jairamkuchi, Chhaibari, Basengpara areas under Lakhipur Development Block. Most of the Rabhas cultivate different crops only to meet their domestic needs. Generally they do not cultivate any crops for earning money. The Rabha people are simple and their mode of living also very plain. They are also pleased with as much grains as required for their domestic consumption. But, of late, a trend of change has been noticed among a section of Rabhas in regard to their traditional attitude to agriculture. They are now seen to have taken Husbandry as an industry.

Besides paddy and Rabi crops the Rabhas of different areas of Goalpara district cultivate horticultural crops such as banana, betel-nut, pineapple, papaya etc.

Although agriculture is the primary source of livelihood of the Rabhas, they are still following the traditional methods of cultivation. Modern scientific methods of cultivation have little impact of them. Due to their conservative nature and superstition prevalent in the society, they do not like to use the modern implements of cultivation.<sup>135</sup> Of course a section of enterprising farmers are seen to have their cultivation by using modern implements such as mini tractor, power tiller, power pump etc.

Besides cultivation other sources of livelihood are also found among some Rabhas of Goalpara district.

Weaving is an important source of earning of the Rabha tribe. Virtually the Rabha women are expert weavers. There are a number of reputed weavers belonging to the community who have got national award for weaving. Miss Apila Rabha of village Ambari under Dhubri district received National Award in weaving in 1991. In the same year Lady Rabha of village Gajapara, under Goalpara district also received National Award. Similarly Aprika Rabha of village Dalmaka under Dhubri district received

National Award in 1995. On the other hand Miss Nichaswari Rabha of village Dalmaka under Dhubri district received 'Merit Award' for weaving in 1994.<sup>136</sup>

Loom is found in almost every Rabha household. The Rabha women make necessary cloths required both for male and female members of their families at their family looms. Besides meeting up their necessary cloths, they also earn money by selling the surplus cloths in the market.

It has been noticed that a section of Rabha people have started business which they did not like in the recent past. As a plain, peace loving and simple community the Rabhas do not like business. And so they did not choose business as a source of livelihood. But due to the unemployment problem some Rabha youths are seen to have accepted business as a source of income, though they have got little progress in this aspect. Besides business some Rabha youths are seen to have started mini industries by obtaining necessary training in technical aspects such as still fabrication, electronics etc.

From the field work carried out in some Rabha villages it has been noticed that the number of service holders working in educational institutions, government offices and other establishments may be counted on finger's end.

It is observed that a section of educated Rabha youths are maintaining their families by driving auto-ricksaws. This is a recent development noticed among the community. Moreover a considerable number of Rabha people are seen driving ricksaws, in their nearby towns and localities. In the past the Rabhas did not work as daily labourers. But it is seen now-a-days, in the Rabha inhabited areas in Goalpara district that a section of the community maintain their families by working as daily labourers. There are many Rabhas who have no land for cultivation and hence having

no other source of income they have been compelled to earn by working as labourers in their own villages or nearby areas.

### **The Hajongs:**

Like any other neighbouring tribe, the primary source of livelihood of the Hajong community is agriculture. About 80% of the Hajong population depend on agriculture.<sup>137</sup> They are good agriculturist. Both males and females belonging to the Hajong tribe are very laborious. In the past, during the full season of cultivation a Hajong farmer went to his agricultural field at dawn and returned home in the evening. The Hajongs are mainly found in Meghalaya and Assam and a limited number of the tribe in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. In Meghalaya they are mainly concentrated in West Garo Hills district and in Assam they are found settled in different places of Goalpara district.

According to Harah Kumar Hajong, in Meghalaya 90% of the tribe earn their living from agriculture and remaining 10% include service holders, wage earners, carpenters, businessmen etc.<sup>138</sup>

Unlike the tribal communities of the hill areas of the North-Eastern region who practise shifting cultivation, the Hajongs in spite of Hill tribes are more or less settled cultivators. They mainly produce paddy for domestic consumption. Besides paddy they also produce mustard seed, jute etc. partly for domestic consumption and partly for market.

The Hajongs follow the traditional methods in so far as the technique of cultivation is concerned. There is no basic difference between the methods followed by the Hajongs and that which is prevalent in the rural areas of Assam. They plough their lands with a pair of bullock. They are self sufficient in respect of cultivation. They



prepare the necessary agricultural implements such as plough, yoke, ladder, hoe etc. for themselves. Modern methods of cultivation has got little impact on their agricultural practices.

Both the males and females belonging to Hajong community are very laborious and both the sexes work in the agricultural field. Of course the women do not plough land. They perform all activities relating to cultivation except ploughing.

Besides cultivation the Hajong people rear cattle, goats, ducks and pigeons. The Hajong women are expert weavers. Every household possesses a loom and every woman married or unmarried know spinning and weaving. The cloths necessary for the female members of a family are made by themselves in their family looms. The cloths viz., 'nengti' necessary for the male members are also made in their family looms. ✓

Carpentry is also the source of livelihood of some Hajong people. Virtually there are some good carpenters found among the community. They manufacture articles out of bamboo and canes. They make the necessary household articles out of bamboo and canes for themselves. On the other hand surplus articles are sold in the market.

The economic condition of the Hajongs inhabiting in different areas of Assam specially in the district of Goalpara is not good. But before independence of India, the economic conditions of the Hajongs were by and large good. They were not landless peasants. About 80% of the Hajongs had their landed properties ranging from 3 acres to more than 1000 acres, owned by one individual.<sup>139</sup>

So from the above picture it may be assumed that about 80% of the Hajongs were self-sufficient in so far as their economic condition was concerned. So the number of poor among the community was very less. They, even, did not need to go outside in search of work.

But after the independence of India a large number of Hajongs migrated to India from erstwhile East Pakistan. They were rehabilitated by the Government in different areas in the district of Goalpara. Government has provided to each family a small plot of land for construction of their houses. The researcher has carried out field works in several Hajongs villages in the district of Goalpara, viz., Rupnagar, Bishnupur, Kadamtola Paschim. During the field work he has been informed that Government has provided to each household half bigha of land for construction of houses.<sup>140</sup> Of course, in some areas they have been provided seven bighas of land per household both for construction of houses and cultivation. This has come to the knowledge of the researcher during his field work carried out in Dhamar, a village inhabited by about six hundred Hajong families in the district of Goalpara.<sup>141</sup>

So from the above discussion it is clear that the economic condition of most of the Hajongs in various areas of Goalpara district is very miserable. In spite of being good cultivators most of them have no land for cultivation. As a result of which most of them have been compelled to accept other means of livelihood. During the field work it has been observed that most of them are daily wage earners.

Moreover, some of the Hajongs have to go to the nearest towns and business centres for their daily jobs. Among the daily wage earners most of them, both males and females, are either agricultural labourers or domestic workers. Number of service holders working in educational institutions, government offices and other establishments may be counted on finger's end. Of course a few of the Hajongs have started small business.

By and large it may be noted that the economic condition of most of the Hajongs of Goalpara district is very miserable. They are living from hand to mouth by

earning daily wages. Both the male and female members of every household require to come out from home in the morning in search of works.

## **POLITICAL LIFE :**

### **The Rabhas:**

The constitutions of democratic states provide equal political right to the citizens, irrespective of caste, religion, sex. So all the citizens take active part in the formation of Government. They have the rights to elect and be elected. The constitution of India, which came into force on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950, provide equal political rights to all the citizens. Moreover, the constitution also provides special provisions including the reservation of seats in the Union Parliament and State Legislatures for the backward classes.

So the Rabhas have also equal political rights like the other communities. Moreover, the Rabhas, being a tribal community, can enjoy special reservations in so far as the political rights are concerned. But they have failed to take effective political role in the state of Assam. Except in the district of Goalpara, in other districts they have no strong political hold. But they have been taking active role in the politics of Goalpara district since the independence of India.

The Rabha habitations are found scattered throughout the district of Goalpara which consists of four Legislative Assembly Constituencies viz., Golapara East, Goalpara West, Jaleswar, and Dudhnoi (ST). The Rabhas are found more or less in all the constituencies.

The First General Election of the Assam Legislative Assembly was held in 1952. At that time Goalpara was a Double-Member<sup>142</sup> (one seat reserved for Scheduled Tribes) constituency. Hakim Chandra Rabha<sup>143</sup> was elected a Member of Assam

Legislative Assembly from the reserved seat of the Goalpara constituency. He was also elected from the same seat of the same constituency in the Second General Election held in 1957.<sup>144</sup> In both the elections he belonged to the Indian National Congress.

In the meanwhile, the Double-Member constituency of Goalpara was split into two constituencies, viz., Goalpara and Dudhnoi (reserved for Scheduled Tribes), according to the provisions of Two-Member Constituencies (Abolition) Act, 1961<sup>145</sup>.

Hakim Chandra Rabha retained the newly created Dudhnoi (ST) Assembly constituency in the Third General Election held in 1962<sup>146</sup>. He was a candidate nominated by the Indian National Congress.

Fourth General Election of Assam Legislative Assembly was held in 1967. In this election Sarat Chandra Rabha<sup>147</sup> was elected a Member of Assam Legislative Assembly from the Dudhnoi (ST) constituency. He was a candidate nominated by the Communist Party of India.<sup>148</sup>

On the otherhand, Anandi Bala Rabha<sup>149</sup> retained the Dudhnoi (ST) constituency of Asam Legislative Assembly in the Fifth General Election held in 1972. She was nominated as a candidate by the Indian National Congress.

So far the Rabhas have succeeded to retain one of the Legislative Assembly Constituencies in the district of Goalpara right from the First General Election to the Fifth General Election. But in the Sixth and Seventh General Elections held in 1978 and 1983<sup>150</sup>, the Rabha candidates were not elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly.

Next General Election of the Assam Legislative Assembly was held in 1985. Akan Rabha was elected Member of Assam Legislative Assembly from Dudhnoi (ST) constituency. He was nominated by the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). He became a Minister of State in 1989 and continued in that capacity till the next election held in

1991. But in the Assembly Elections held in 1991, Rabha candidates from Dudhnoi (ST) constituency were defeated. However, in the next two Assembly Elections held in 1996 and 2001 candidates belonging to Rabha community retained the Dudhnoi (ST) constituency. Akan Rabha was elected in the Election held in 1996. On the other hand, Pranay Rabha<sup>151</sup> has been elected Member of Legislative Assembly in the Election held in 2001.

It may be noted here is that after the election of 1996, Assam Council of Ministers was formed, in which Akan Rabha was a Minister of State<sup>152</sup>. Later he was elevated to the cabinet rank. On the other hand, Pranay Rabha has been elected a Member of Assam Legislative Assembly nominated by the Indian National Congress<sup>153</sup>. He has become a Minister of State<sup>154</sup> of the State Council of Ministers.

So from the above picture it is clear that the political role played by the Rabhas in the district of Goalpara is noteworthy. In most of the elections the Rabhas have succeeded to retain one of the Assembly constituencies in the district. So the Rabhas have strong political hold in the district of Goalpara.

But in other districts of Assam, the political role played by the Rabhas is not as effective as in the district of Goalpara. Besides the district of Goalpara, the Rabhas are found in Kamrup, Nalbari, Darrang, Sonitpur, Bongaigaon and Dhemaji. But since the First General Election held in 1952, only two persons belonging to the Rabha community have become Members of Assam Legislative Assembly. Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha<sup>155</sup>, a great personality of Assam, was elected a Member of Assam Legislative Assembly from Tezpur (unreserved) constituency of undivided Darrang district in the Fourth General Election held in 1967. He was an independent candidate.<sup>156</sup>

On the otherhand, Paniram Rava has been elected member of Assam Legislative Assembly in the General Elections held in 1991 and again in 2001. First he was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly from the Barama (ST) Constituency of Nalbari District in the Election held in 1991<sup>157</sup>. He was a candidate nominated by the Natun Asom Gana Parishad. He has also been elected an MLA, from the same constituency in the Election held in 2001<sup>158</sup>. He contested as a candidate nominated by the Indian National Congress.

### **The Hajongs:**

The role played by the Hajongs in the politics of Assam is insignificant. Though the constitution of India provides equal political rights to all the citizens, the Hajongs have failed to enjoy these rights. So far no person belonging to Hajong community has become Member of Assam Legislative Assembly. This is one of the main factors of the backwardness of the community<sup>159</sup>. Without capturing political power it is not possible to solve the various problems faced by the Hajong community.

The Hajongs are more or less found in the districts of Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Nalbari, Darrang, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Marigaon. But their main concentration is found in various areas in the district of Goalpara. On the otherhand, in the district of Goalpara the Hajong settlements are found mainly in three Assembly Constituency, viz. Goalpara East, Goalpara West and Dudhnoi (ST). Kadamtola Paschim, Sidhabari, Dubapura, Harimura are some villages inhabited by the Hajongs, fall under Goalpara East constituency.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, Dhamar Reserve, a big village inhabited by the Hajongs fall under Goalpara West Constituency.<sup>161</sup> On the other hand, two Hajong villages viz., Rupnagar and Bishnupur, fall under Dudhnoi (ST) constituency.<sup>162</sup>

The Hajongs living in the various areas in the district of Goalpara have failed to play significant role in the election politics in their respective constituencies. Their numerical strength in each of the constituencies is not sufficient to draw the attention of the political parties and the leaders before any election.<sup>163</sup> That is why, the political parties do not give much importance on the Hajongs.

## References:

1. Bordoloi, B.N., G.C. Sharmah Thakur, M.C. Saikia. "The Rabhas", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam" Part-I, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, First Edition, 1987, P-124.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. Source – Editorial (Sampadakiya) of "Rabha Samajār Bidhi-Byavastha", edited by Bholanath Rabha and published by the Editorial Board of Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha Pranayan Samiti, Salpara, Goalpara, First Edition, 1996.
5. Bordoloi, B.N. G.C. Sharma Thakur and M.C. Saikia. "The Rabhas", an article published in the Tribes of Assam" Part-I, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, First Edition, 1987, P-125.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Rabha (Ronkho) Listi, "The Rabha At A Glance", an article published in the Souvenir, Dodan Mela Silver Jubilee, edited by Durjyodhan Rabha, published by Bhabendra Ch. Rabha, General secretary, Dodan Than Committee, Baida, Goalpara, 1995, P-3.



published by Bhabendra Ch. Rabha, General secretary, Dodan Than Committee, Baida, Goalpara, 1995, P-3.

8. Rabha Mani, "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of "Pines" Shillong, First Publication, 1994. PP-57-58.
9. Bantho, Jogendra Nath, "Rabha Jatir Itibritta", published by Jogendra Nath Bantho, Vill- Naguapara, P.O.- Lakhipur, Garo Hills (Meghalaya), Second Edition, 1974, P-59.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Bordoloi, B.N., G.C. Sharma Thakur, and M.C. Saikia. "The Rabhas", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam" Part-I, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, First Edition, 1987, P-128.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. Bantho, Jogendra Nath. "Rabha Jatir Itibritta", published by Jogendra Nath Bantho, Vill- Naguapara, P.O.- Lakhipur, Garo Hills (Meghalaya), Second edition, 1974, P-61.
16. *Ibid.* P-63.
17. *Ibid.*, P-61.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Bordoloi, B.N., G.C. Sharma Thakur, and M.C. Saikia. "The Rabhas", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam", Part-I, published by B.N. Bordoloi,

Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, First Edition, 1987, P-128.

20. Bantho, Jogendra Nath. "Rabha Jatir Itibritta", published by Jogendra Nath Bantho, Vill- Naguapara, P.O.- Lakhipur, Garo Hills (Meghalaya), Second Edition, 1974, P-63.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Rabha Malina Devi. "Asomiya aru Rabha Samaj-Sanskritir Swarup", published by M.F.L. Publications, Dhupdhara, Goalpara, First Edition, 1999, P-60.

23. Bordoloi, B.N., G.C. Sharma Thakur, and M.C. Saikia. "The Rabhas", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam" Part-I, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, First Edition, 1987, P-131.

24. Bantho, Jogendra Nath. "Rabha Jatir Itibritta", published by Jogendra Nath Bantho, Vill- Naguapara, P.O.- Lakhipur, Garo Hills (Meghalaya), 1994, Second Edition, 1974, P-36.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. Rabha, Rajen. "Rabha Janajati", published by S.R. Dey, Bina Library, Panbazar, Guwahati, Second Revised Edition, 2002, PP-87-100.

28. *Ibid*, PP-101-108.

29. Bordoloi, B.N., G.C. Sharma Thakur, and M.C. Saikia. "The Rabhas", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam" Part-I, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, First Edition, 1987, P-129.

30. Rabha, Heramba Kumar. "Rabha Janogosthi", an article published in the "Rangkarang" Souvenir, 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchun), edited by Kailash Rabha, and published by The Secretary, Reception Committee, Tamulpur, Nalbari, 2001, P-21.
31. Rabha, Mani. "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First Publication, 1994, PP-70-71.
32. Rabha Biren. "Pati Rabha Samaj Aru Sanskriti", an article published in the "Purbanchal" Souvenir, Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (R.A.C.), 1997, P-18.
33. Rabha, Mani, "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Sandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First Publication, 1994, P-71.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Rabha Bholanath (ed.). "Rabha Samajar Bidhi Byavastha", published by Rabha Samajar Bidhi Byavastha Pranayan Samiti, Salpara, Krishnai, Goalpara, 1996, P-6.
36. Rabha, Mani. "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First Publication, 1994, P-71.

37. Rabha Bholanath (ed.). "Rabha Samajar Bidhi Byavastha", published by Rabha Samajar Bidhi Byavastha Pranayan Samiti, Salpara, Krishnai, Goalpara, 1996, P-6.
38. Rabha, Malina Devi. "Asomiya Aru Rabha Samaj-Sanskritir Swarup", published by M.F.L. Publications, Dhupdhara, Goalpara, First Edition, 1999, P-33.
39. Rabha Bholanath, (ed.). "Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha", published by Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha Pranayan Samiti, Salpara, Krishnai, Goalpara, 1996, PP-6-7.
40. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
41. Rabha Mani, "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First Publication, 1994, P-73.
42. Rabha, Rajen. "Rabha Janajati", published by S.R. Dey, Bina Library, Panbazar, Guwahati, Second Revised Edition, 2002, P-108.
43. Rabha, Mani, "Rabha, Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First Publication, 1994, P-74.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*
47. Priest of the village.
48. Rabha, Mani. "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma for and on behalf of 'Pines' Shillong, First Publication, 1994, P-75.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

51. Rabha, Rajen. "Rabha Janajati", published by S.R. Dey, Bina Library, Panbazar, Guwahati, Second Revised Edition, 2002, P-63.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Rabha, Bholanath (ed.), "Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha", published by Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha Pranayan Samiti, Salpara, Krishnai, Goalpara, 1996, P-10.

54. Rabha, Bholanath (ed.). "Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha", published by Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha Pranayan Samiti, Salpara, Krishnai, Goalpara, 1996, P-12.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.* PP-13-14.

58. Rabha, Mani. "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines' Shillong, First Publication, 1994, P-85.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.* P-88.

61. *Ibid.* P-89.

62. Rabha Bholanath (ed.). "Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha", published by Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha Pranayan Samiti, Salpara, Krishnai, Goalpara, 1996, P-15.

63. *Ibid.* P-16.

64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.* P-17.
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.* PP-17-18.
68. *Ibid.* P-8.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.* P-19.
71. *Ibid.* P-27.
72. Rabha, Mani. "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First Publication, 1994, P-93.
73. Rabha Bholanath (ed.). "Rbha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha", published by Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha Pranayan Samiti, Salpara, Krishnai, Goalpara, 1996, P-27.
74. *Ibid.* P-28
75. *Ibid.*
76. Rabha, Malina Devi. "Asomiya Aru Rabha Samaj Sanskritir Swarup", published by M.F.L. Publications, Dhupdhara, Goalpara, First Edition, 1999, P-31.
77. *Ibid.*
78. Rabha Bholanath (ed.). "Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha", published by Rabha Samjar Bidhi-Byavastha Pranayan Samiti, Salpara, Krishnai, Goalpara, 1996, P-29.
79. *Ibid.*

80. Rabha, Mani, "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines' Shillong, First Publication, 1994, P-114.
81. Bordoloi, B.N., G.C. Sarmah, Thakur, and M.C. Saikia. "Tribes of Assam" Part-I, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, First Edition, 1987, P-136.
82. Rabha, Bholanath (ed.). "Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Byavastha", published by Rabha Samajar Bidhi Byavastha Pranayan Samiti, Salpara, Krishnai, Goalpara, 1996, P-46.
83. Rabha, Rajen. "Rabha Janajati", published by S.R. Dey, Bina Library, Panbazar, Guwahati, Second Revised Edition, 2002, P-109.
84. Rabha, Mani. "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First Edition, 1994, P-114.
85. *Ibid.*
86. *Ibid.*
87. Pakyntein, E.H. "Census of India, 1961", Volume III, Assam, Part-V-A. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, published by the Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1964, P-130.
88. *Ibid.*
89. Rabha, Malina Devi. "Asomiya Aru Rabha Sanskritir Swarup", published by M.F.L. Publications, Dhupdhara, Goalpara, First Edition, 1999, P-38.

90. Rabha, Mani. "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First Publication, 1994, P-116.
91. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
92. Informant. Jayanta Rabha, age 36 years, Mukri, Goalpara. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
93. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
94. Rabha, Mani. "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First Publication, 1994, PP-116-117.
95. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
96. Rabha, Rajen. "Rabha Janajati", published by S.R. Dey, Bina Library, Panbazar, Guwahati, Second Revised Edition, 2002, PP-110-111.
97. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
98. The village headman of the Hajongs is called 'Adhikari'. He is also their priest. He discharges the socio-religious rites of the Hajongs.
99. Majumdar, D.N. "An Account of the Hinduized Communities of Western Meghalaya" an article published in the "Garo Hills Land and The People" edited by L.S. Gassah, published by Omsons Publications, Guwahati, New Delhi, First Edition, 1984, PP-156-157.
100. Bordoloi, B.N. "The Hajongs", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam" Part III, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, First Edition, 1991, P-24.
101. *Ibid*, P-25.



102. *Ibid*, P-33.
103. First Graduate, an eminent educationist and a reputed writer of the Hajong community.
104. Barua Cheni Ram, "Hajong Samajot Abhumuki", an article published in the "Chetana", Mouthpiece of the Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti, edited by Lakhindar Hajong and published by Rathindra Nath Hajong, 1983, P-33.
105. Bordoloi, B.N. "The Hajongs" an article published in the "Tribes of Assam, Part - III", published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, First edition, 1991, P-33.
106. Hajong, Biren, "The Hajongs and Their Struggle" published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, P-38.
107. *Ibid*.
108. P-44.
109. *Ibid*.
110. Bordoloi, B.N. "The Hajongs", an article published in the Tribes of Assam, Part III, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, First Edition, 1991, P-29.
111. Hajong, Biren, "The Hajongs and Their Struggle", published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, P-27.
112. *Ibid*. PP-27-28.
113. *Ibid*. P-28.
114. *Ibid*.

115. *Ibid.*
116. *Ibid.*
117. Bordoloi, B.N. "The Hajongs", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam", Part-III, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, First Edition, 1991, P-25.
118. Hajong, Paresh. "Hajong Bia Aru Bibah Paddhati", an article in Assamese published in the "Dainik Asom", an Assamese Daily edited by Kirti Nath Hazarika and published by Mohan Tamuly, Guwahati, dated 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1985, P-3.
119. *Ibid.* P-4.
120. Bordoloi, B.N. "The Hajongs", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam", Part-III, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, First Edition, 1991, P-26.
121. *Ibid.*
122. *Ibid.*
123. Hajong, Paresh. "Hajong Bia Aru Bibah Paddhati", an article in Assamese published in the "Dainik Asom", and Assamese Daily, edited by Kirti Nath Hazarika and published by Mohan Tamuly, Guwahati, dated 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1985, P-3.
124. *Ibid.*
125. Bordoloi, B.N. "The Hajongs", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam", Part-III, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of

- Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, First Edition, 1991, P-27.
126. Hajong, Biren. "The Hajongs and Their Struggle", published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, P-30.
127. *Ibid.* P-31.
128. Bordoloi, B.N. "The Hajongs", an article published in the 'Tribes of Assam', Part-III, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, First Edition, 1991, PP-27-28.
129. Hajong, Biren. "The Hajongs and Their Struggle", published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, P-31.
130. *Ibid.*
131. Singha, M. Gopal. "Rabha Jonogosthir Artha Samajik Bikash : Samashya Aru Sambhabana", an article published in the "Hasongi Khurang", Souvenir of the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Bidur Kr. Rabha and published by the General Secretary, Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, Baida, Goalpara, 2000, P-38.
132. Informants: Sunil Rabha, age 44 years, Rabhapara, Dhupdhara, Goalpara. Bishnu Das, age 35 years, Mogho, Goalpara; Sarbananda Rabha, age 56 years, Muslum, Goalpara; Jayanta Rabha, age 36 years, Mukri, Goalpara.
133. Singha, M.G., "Goalpara Zilar Prosongat Rabha Jonogosthir Artha – Samajik Adhyayanar Ruprekha", an article published in the Souvenir, 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial conference of the All Rabha Students' Union, edited by

Sarbeswar Rabha and published by Bhakat Ch. Chira, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, 1996, P-24.

134. *Ibid.*

135. Rabha, Dhaniram. "Arthanaitik Abastha", an article published in the Souvenir of Thekashu Rabha Jamat, edited by Shobha Ram Rabha and Karuna Kanta Rabha, published by Nirbhay Kumar Rabha, General Secretary, Thekashu Rabha Jamat, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, 1992, P-23.

136. Source: Souvenir, Silver Jubilee Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum) edited by Satyajit Rabha, published by Ganga Raj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup, 1998.

137. Hajong, Biren. "The Hajongs and their Struggle", published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, P-12.

138. Hajong, Harah Kumar. "Agriculture: A Tradition of the Hajongs", an article published in the "Smritigrantha" of the Golden Jubilee Celebration of Uttar Pub-Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti, Lakhimpur, 1987, P-7.

139. Hajong, Biren. "The Hajongs and Their Struggle" published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, P-13.

140. Informants: Nidhan Ch. Hajong. age 62 years, Rupnagar, Goalpara. Haranath Hajong, age 45 years, Kadamtola Paschim, Goalpara, Amulya Hajong, age 55 years, Bishnupur, Goalpara.

141. Informant: Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.

142. Barooah, D.P. (ed.) "Assam District Gazetteers", Goalpara District, published by the Editor-in-chief, District Gazetteers, Government of Assam, Gauhati, 1979, P-513.
143. Informant: Anandi Bala Rabha, age 71 years, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, ex-MLA, Dudhnoi (ST) constituency, wife of Hakim Chandra Rabha.
144. *Ibid.*
145. Barooah, D.P. (ed.) "Assam District Gazetteers", Goalpara District, published by the Editor-in-chief, District Gazetteers, Government of Assam, Gauhati, 1979, P-504.
146. Informant. Anandi Bala Rabha, age 71 years, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, ex-MLA, Dudhnoi (ST) Constituency, wife of Hakim Chandra Rabha.
147. Rabha Krishna Kanta (ed) "Smaranika", Jananeta Late Sarat Chandra Rabha, published by Jananeta Late Sarat Chandra Rabha Adya Sraddha aru Smriticharan Sabha Parichalana Samiti, 2002, P-4.
148. *Ibid.*
149. Informant. Anandi Bala Rabha, age 71 years, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, ex-MLA, Dudhnoi (ST) constituency, wife of Hakim Chandra Rabha.
150. The Seventh General Election of Assam Legislative Assembly was held in 1983 amidst Assam Agitation. This election was boycotted by the people of Assam and some political parties also abstained from contesting this election.
151. Source: "Statistical Hand Book", Assam, 2001. Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati, P-269.

152. Source: "Purbanchal", Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha, published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (RAC), 1997.
153. Source: "Statistical Hand Book", Assam, 2001. Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati, P-269.
154. Source: "Tikrirao", Souvenir, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum), edited by Jantri Cherenga, Tikrikilla, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, 2002.
155. Dutta, N.C., "Assam District Gazetteers", Darrang District, published by the Editor-in-Chief, District Gazetteers, Government of Assam, Guwahati, P-522.
156. *Ibid.*, P-521.
157. Source: "Statistical Hand Book", Assam, 1993, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati, P-456.
158. Source: "Statistical Hand Book", Assam, 2001. Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati, P-269.
159. Informant : Biren Hajong, age 72 years, Tura, Meghalay.
160. Informant, Haranath Hajong, age 45 years, Kadamtola Paschim, Goalpara.
161. Informant. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
162. Informant, Kamal Krishna Hajong, age 28 years, Rupnagar, Goalpara.
163. Informant. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara, Haranath Hajong, 45 years, Kadamtola Paschim, Goalpara.

## ***CHAPTER IV***

### **SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGES**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Rabha tribe has a different social life. The basic structure of the social life of the Rabhas is based on customs, traditions and religious beliefs which distinguish the tribe from other communities. Like other communities the social life of the Rabhas also include marriage, festivals relating to birth, disposal of the dead and death rites, religious outlook etc. These different activities of the social life of the Rabhas are governed by their traditional customs and beliefs. But during the twentieth century a trend of change has been noticed in regard to the different aspects of the social life of the community. This trend gained momentum during the post independence period. These trends are termed as the acculturation and sanskritization by the social scientists. Apart from these a number of new social organizations came into existence in the Rabha society during the second half of the twentieth century. These organizations have tremendous impact in the social life of the community.

Besides the changes in the social life of the Rabhas, considerable change has been noticed in the political life of the tribe. Change in the political life of the community has taken place due to many factors such as spread of education, special provisions for the backward classes enshrined in the constitution.

In spite of the special provisions provided in the constitution for the upliftment of the scheduled tribes of the plains districts of Assam, they were not satisfied with these. The

two dominant plains tribes *viz.* the Boros and the Rabhas have become afraid of losing their identity. The special provisions provided in the constitution, according to the aforesaid tribes, were not adequate for the preservation of their separate identity. For which they began the autonomy movement which culminated in the formation of the Plains Tribes Council of Assam (PTCA) in 1967. Though the PTCA was represented by the Boro community only it demanded full autonomy for all tribes in the tribal areas of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts. PTCA could not fulfil the aspirations of the tribals of plains districts and in due course it became a defunct organization and as a result of the incessant efforts of the All Bodo Students' Union and its associate organizations Bodo Accord was signed which brought for the Bodos the Bodoland Autonomous Council.

The Rabhas of Assam also started their movement for autonomy. The Rabhas of the Goalpara and Kamrup Districts launched their autonomy movement under the banners of Rabha Husong Demand Committee and All Rabha Students' Union. The movement came to an end with the signing of Rabha Accord in 1995 which provided the Rabhas the "Rabha-Hasong Autonomous Council".

So during the second half the 20<sup>th</sup> century tremendous changes in regard to the social and political life of the Rabhas took place which need sincere study and investigation.

Like the Rabha tribes the Hajong tribes have also a different social life of their own. The Hajongs have a rich social and cultural heritage. The social activities of the Hajongs are governed by their traditions, customs and beliefs. The social life of the



Hajongs include marriage, birth, dead and death rites, traditional cultural and religious festivals religious beliefs etc. The Hajong tribes have got considerable changes in the aforesaid social activities in recent times. Besides changes in social aspects, trend of change has been noticed in regard to the political life of the tribe. The Hajongs have also conscious about their identity. Several organizations have come into existence in the Hajong society in recent times. These organizations exert considerable impact in the Hajong society. So the recent developments in regard to the socio-political aspects of the Hajongs require sincere investigation.

### **Social Changes Among the Rabhas:**

Acculturation has become an important phenomenon in the social structure of Indian society in recent times. The acculturation process has been noticed in the Rabha society also. The trend of change occurred in the Rabha society is multi-dimensional in character. The trend of change is seen in different aspects of social life *viz.*, religious, cultural, economic etc. Though the changes have been noticed during the pre-independence period, it gained momentum during the post-independence period. This has come to the knowledge of the researcher during the time of his personal investigation carried out in a number of Rabha villages.

### **Religion:**

The Rabhas are Saktos in so far as their religious belief is concerned. They worship various gods and goddesses by sacrificing birds and animals. Their methods of worship are traditional. The eminent gods and goddesses worshipped by the Rabhas are Rhishi, Hasi, Langa, Kuber, Dharam, Kali, Thakurani, Lakshmi, Barmani, Nakati etc.<sup>1</sup>

In the last quarter of nineteenth century a trend of conversion to Hinduism began among the Rabhas. From 1882 large number of people belonging to different communities of Lower Assam, North Bengal, Coochbehar, Rangpur were initiated to Kshatriya Religion by Panchanan Burma. During this conversion, hundreds of Rabhas of Coochbehar district were converted to Kshatriya Religion before Panchanan Burma,<sup>2</sup> a great social reformer belonging to Rajbangshi community<sup>3</sup>.

In Assam a section of Rabhas converted to Hinduism and abandoned their Rabha titles and assimilated to Hindu sections by taking the titles Roy, Das, Sarania etc.<sup>4</sup>

Acculturation process has been noticed among the Pati Rabhas of Assam. Pati Rabhas has been residing in and around Dudhnoi and Dhupdhara areas of Goalpara district. The religious conversion process among the Pati Rabhas of the areas mentioned above started sometime in 1933 and continued upto 1950<sup>5</sup>. Ambuk, Salpara, Chekowary, Ambari, Madang are villages situated in and around Dhupdhara are inhabited by Pati Rabhas. A large number of the Rabhas of those villages converted to Rajbangshi before the independence of India. They abandoned their Rabha titles and accepted the titles such as Ray, Das, Sarania. They not only abandoned their Rabha titles but also all the customary laws in regard to the various social activities, such as, marriage, birth, dead and death rites. Since their conversion to Rajbangshi they have been performing all the socio-religious activities according to Hindu methods<sup>6</sup>.

It has come to the knowledge of the researcher during his field study that there are some Pati Rabhas who, without converting to Rajbangshi, use the services of Brahmin priests in performing their socio-religious activities. These Rabhas perform their socio-

religious activities according to 'Baidik' methods. There are a few Pati Rabhas in Pipalibari village of Goalpara district who perform their socio-religious ceremonies according to Baidik methods by using the services of Brahmin priest.<sup>7</sup>

This is perhaps due to their living in close proximity with the non-tribal Hindu people for long time. The researcher has observed that the above mentioned Pati Rabhas of Pipalibari village have been living together with the non-tribal Hindu people for long period. So as a result of their long association with the non tribal Hindu people the Rabhas have been tremendously influenced by the system of performing their socio-religious activities.

The acculturation has been occurred among the Rabhas of different areas of Goalpara district. The induction into different religious faiths by the Rabhas irrespective of their sections has become an inevitable phenomenon. The conversion to Hindu religious faith has not only been noticed among the Pati Rabhas, it has been noticed among the other sections of Rabhas also *viz.* Rangdani, Maitori, Dahuri etc. At the time of field study carried out in some villages inhabited by Rangdani Rabhas, the existence of Chaitanya Panthi Rabhas came to the knowledge of the researcher. Mogho, a village under Lakhipur Revenue Circle of Goalpara district is a habitat of Rangdani Rabhas. In this village several Rangdani Rabha families converted to Chaitanya Pantha (sect). The conversion to Chaitanya Pantha started during late forties and it has been gradually continuing from then and still continues.<sup>8</sup> Some of the Chaitanya Panthi Rabhas abandoned their title 'Rabha' and accepted the title 'Das'. Some of the Chaitanya Panthi Rabhas abandoned their traditional customs in performing their social rites. Now they perform these activities

according to the methods of Chaitanya Pantha. But some of the Rabhas in spite of being converted to Chaitanya Pantha, perform their social rites according to their traditional customs.<sup>9</sup> The number of Chaitanya Panthi Rabhas increased as a result of induction of few more families into the said Pantha in some villages *viz.*, Maladhara, Depalchung, Bardamal, Thakurbila and Borjhora. These villages under Goalpara district are inhabited by Rangdani and Maitori Rabhas. The Rabhas have not been attracted towards Chaitanya Pantha only, there are some Rabhas (both Rangdani and Maitori) who have been inducted into Gita Dharmalambi and Anukul Pantha (Satganga) in recent times. Gita Dharmalambi Rabhas are found in Rangasai, Hatisila, Borjuli, Kantapara and Salpara villages of Goalpara district. All the Gita Dharmalambi families belong to Rangdani section of the Rabha community.<sup>10</sup> The researcher has also come in contact with some persons belonging to Maitori section of the Rabhas who have inducted into Anukul Pantha. There are about 50 Anukul Panthi Rabha families in and around Baida area.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to mention here is that the Anukul Panthi Rabhas still perform their socio-religious activities and rites according to their customary rules. All the Anukul Panthi families belong to both Rangdani and Maitori sections of the Rabha community.

The Chaitanya Panthi Rabhas of different areas as mentioned above light 'Akashbanti' through out the month of 'Kati'. Moreover they worship 'Tulsi Plant' regularly in the morning and evening. Virtually each and every Rabha household belonging to the said Pantha has 'Tulsi plant' on the courtyard. Besides these, they take chandan (Sandal) mark on their forehead and face and wear wooden mala (chain) on the

neck. The Chaitanya Panthis maintain the religious formalities of the Pantha. Two groups of Chaitanya Panthis are there among the Rabhas, *viz.*, Vegetarian and Non-vegetarian.<sup>12</sup>

A considerable number of Rabhas, belonging to its different sections in Goalpara and Kamrup districts have been inducted into Satsanga (Anukul Pantha) in recent times. There are Satsangi Pati Rabha villages in Rangjuli and Boko areas of Goalpara and Kamrup districts respectively.<sup>13</sup> Moreover there are a few families of Satsangi in and around Sildanga and Chutki areas of Goalpara district. These families have been inducted into the said religious faith in recent times and they belong to the Dahuri section of the Rabha community.<sup>14</sup>

The Rabhas have not been attracted towards Chaitanya Pantha and Satsanga only, a considerable number of them have been initiated to Sankarite Vaishnavism in recent times. This trend has been noticed more or less among the different sections of the Rabha community. But the number of this religious faith is higher among the Pati Rabhas than the other sections of the community and they are found both in Goalpara and Kamrup districts. A considerable number of Pati Rabhas belonging to this faith are found in Boko area of Kamrup district.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Rabhas belonging to this faith are found scattered in various areas of the district of Goalpara. During field study the existence of them in the areas *viz.*, Muslum, Baida, Dipkai, Borjhora, Mukri, Dariduri, Bardamal, Chutki areas has come to the knowledge of the researcher. But their number varies from place to place.

Muslum, a village under Rangjuli Revenue circle of Goalpara district, is completely inhabited by Pati Rabhas. Conversion to Sankarite Vaishnavism started in this village in 1964<sup>16</sup>. Since then the process of conversion has been going on gradually, and the total

number of households now reaches at about thirty. A few families belonging to Anukul Pantha and Rajbangshi are also there in this village. These families belong to the Pati section of the Rabhas and they converted to Satsanga and Rajbangshi about 25 (twenty five) years ago.<sup>17</sup>

The Sankar Panthi. Rabhas have become members of “Sankar Sangha” and they celebrate both the “Tithis” of Mahapurush Sri Sri Sankaradeva every year. It is interesting to note here is that some of the Rabhas belonging to this faith perform their social rites according to the rules of “Sankar Sangha” and some of them according to their customary rules. It is relevant to mention here is that some of the “Sankari Rabhas” have left this religious faith and came back to their original one.<sup>18</sup> On the other, hand converted Rajbangshis perform their social rites according “Baidik Pratha” using the services of Brahmin Priest.<sup>19</sup>

The conversion to ‘Aksaran Nam Dharma’ of Sri Sri Sankardeva has not confined only in Muslum areas of Goalpara district, rather it has got spread in other Rabha inhabited areas of the district. Dariduri, Bardamal and Chutki are such villages where a section of the Rabhas has been initiated into Aksaran Dharma in recent times. Dariduri, a village under Balijana Revenue Circle of Goalpara district is inhabited by Dahuri section of the Rabhas. There are sixty households in this village and out of these 22 (twenty-two) converted to Sankarite Vaishnavism in 1978<sup>20</sup>. In the same year a few Rabhas of village Bardamal were also initiated into this religious faith. Chutki, a village under Balijana Revenue Circle under the district of Goalpara is inhabited by Dahuri section of the Rabha

community. There are 60 households in this village and a few of them have been converted into the said religious faith in recent times.

The Rabhas converted to the Sankarite Vaishnavism have become members of 'Sankar Sangha' and every household possesses a temple and an altar inside it. All of them perform the regular religious activities of Sankar Sangha.<sup>21</sup> They abandoned all their customary laws in regard to the performance of the various social rites. Rather they perform the activities according to the rules of Sankar Sangha. Mukri, a village under Balijana Revenue Circle of Goalpara district is dominated by Rabhas and they belong to the Maitori section of the community. There are 130 households and a few of them have accepted Sankari Vaishnavism in 1978. They have also abandoned their customary laws relating to the various social activities and rites. They perform all these according to the rules of Sankar Sangha. Each of the household possesses a temple on the courtyard and daily prayer is performed there.<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to mention here is that a section of Rabhas was attracted towards the "Brahmo Dharma" founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Bengal during the first half of the twentieth century. Late Pandit Darikanath Rabha of Salpara village of Goalpara district came in contact with Abinash Lahiri, the organizer of Brahmo Dharma; and was initiated into the said Dharma.<sup>23</sup> So Late Darikanath Rabha was the first person belonging to the Rabha community to become the follower of Brahma Dharmo. He was followed by Late Rajendra Rongkho and Late Kalta Ram Rabha of Chhoto Matia. Unfortunately Brahmo Dharma could not spread more among the Rabhas due to strong protest by some eminent leaders<sup>24</sup> of the community. So from the above discussion it is clear that a section of

Rabhas has been converted to different sects of Hinduism during the twentieth century. In this connection it may be noted that a section of Rabhas was attracted towards the Christianity in the twentieth century. Some of the Rabhas converted to Christianity in various places of Goalpara district. Reverend Jahaj Rabha was the first person of the Rabha community to be initiated into Christianity. He was from Miapara village under Dudhnoi Revenue Circle and was followed by a group led by Hariprasanna Rabha of village Amguri and a group led by Haliram Rabha of Barpathar<sup>25</sup>. Later a considerable number of Pati Rabhas have been converted to Christianity in Bagulamari and Topolakhowa areas near Dudhnoi.<sup>26</sup> At present also Pati Rabha villages are found in these areas. So the conversion to Christianity is a clear indication of the process of acculturation taken place among the Rabha community.

Conversion to Christianity has not confined only in Dudhnoi areas, it has got spread in some other places in the district of Goalpara. Dudhnoi, a village under Balijana Revenue Circle is inhabited by the Rangdani section of the Rabha community. About 20 Rangdani Rabha families in this village have been converted to Christianity during the last two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>27</sup> So from the above picture it is clear that Christian religion has become popular not only among the Pati Rabhas it has gained much popularity among the other sections of the Rabha community. The conversion to Christianity in different areas are going on gradually with the induction of number of families into this faith every year.

Conversion to Christianity among the Rabhas has not only been noticed in the district of Goalpara. Debitola is a village under Bagribari Revenue Circle of Dhubri district



where large number of Rabhas have been living from remotest past. The Rabhas of this village belong to the Koch section of the Rabha community. Sometimes they are also called Koch. There are about one thousand and four hundred (1400) Rabha households in this village.<sup>28</sup>

A considerable number of Rabhas of this village have become Christian. The conversion to Christianity began about thirty years ago which still continues. Christian Rabhas comprise twenty five (25%) percent of the total Rabha population. It is relevant to mention here is that the Christian Rabhas have established a 'Baptist Mission' in this village. This Mission is known as the "Rabha Baptist Mission Head Quarter", Debitola. The jurisdiction of this Mission extends to a portion of Bengal also.<sup>29</sup>

A section of the Rabhas of Debitola area became Sarania by becoming the disciple of Swami Krishnananda Brahmachari. They were initiated into Sarania twenty two (22)years ago. A total of about one hundred fifty (150) households have become Sarania which comprise about 10% of the total Rabha population in Debitola area. The Saranias perform their socio-religious rites according to the Gita and the Bhagawat using the services of their own priests.<sup>30</sup>

Trend of change in religious belief is also noticed among the Totla Rabhas. This section of the Rabha community is found in Nalbari, Darrang and Sonitpur districts. But their number is greater in Nalbari and Darrang districts than Sonitpur district.<sup>31</sup> The Totla Rabhas of Nalbari district like to introduce themselves as 'Madahi' and 'Sarania'. They have converted themselves to 'Mahapurusia Dharma' and changed their titles from Rabhas

to Das, Deka, Sarania, Choudhury, Bora, Saikia, Barman, Medhi, Pathak, Barua etc.<sup>32</sup> The conversion of religious beliefs has happened in recent times.

The Rabhas of Darrang and Sonitpur districts like to introduce themselves as ‘Totla Rabhas’.<sup>33</sup>

From the above picture it is clear that ‘Sanskritization’ process has taken place among the ‘Totla’ section of Rabhas. In this connection it is relevant to mention that the process of Sanskritization has started among the Pati Rabhas and gradually it has got spread among the other sections of the community. The sanskritization process among the Rabhas is the result of direct impact of the culture contact with other sanskritised sections of the plains people.

### **Changes in Socio-Religious Rites and Rituals:**

Trend of change in the Rabha society has not only been noticed in their religious beliefs but also in other socio-religious rites and rituals. The Rabhas perform their various socio-religious activities, rites, rituals according to their customary laws. The activities include the rites and rituals relating to marriage, birth, death etc. As tribal community the Rabhas strictly follow their customary laws in performing the above activities. Like other tribal communities the Rabhas are also very conservative in so far as the preservation of their traditional customs and beliefs are concerned. But in recent times some changes have taken place more or less in different aspects of their social life.

According to customary law the Rabhas originally bought the bride to the bridegroom’s house where the marriage rites were performed. But a trend of change in this regard has been noticed in the Pati Rabha society. Now the groom goes to the bride’s

house where the marriage rites are performed. This practice came into existence about 45 years ago. This is the result of the impact of other non-tribal Hindu communities.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, elopement as a means of securing brides was widely prevalent in the Rabha society. But with the spread of education and higher degree of social awareness this system of marriage has practically ceased to exist.<sup>35</sup> In spite of the sanction of customary laws this form of marriage has been abandoned by the Rabha community. So, this is an indication of their gradual deviation from the customary laws. There are many instances of this deviation found among the Rabhas. The procurement of brides by means of rendering manual services at the prospective father-in-law's house was a custom existed in the Rabha society in the recent past has now come to be looked down upon as an act of the lower strata of the society.<sup>36</sup> The acceptance of brideprice which existed in the Rabha society till about 50 years back has been abandoned. This change has been noticed among the Pati Rabhas of Dudhnoi area. Of course it is still prevalent among the Rangdani Rabhas.<sup>37</sup>

The marriage by registration in the courts was not prevalent in the Rabha society. This is prevalent among the other communities. But now-a-days this type of marriage is also noticed among the Rabhas. There are many customs which are not confined in a particular community, rather these get spread among other communities also. The above mentioned marriage among the Rabhas is an example of the impact of other communities on the Rabhas. Virtually the marriage by registration has now been accepted by the Rabhas and this has been included in their 'Pandulipis'.<sup>38</sup>

Marriage is a sacred institution and performance of this by selecting suitable boys and girls is the responsibility of the guardians. No boy, not to speak of girl, could dare to

select his life companion keeping guardian ignorant, till recent past. This was a tradition prevalent among all communities. But as a result of the spread of education the practice has been changed and many educated youths choose their life partners by themselves. This has become a general feature among all communities in the society. Rabhas are also not exception to this. Many educated Rabha youths choose their life companion by themselves and get married at the temples or courts. This has now been accepted by the Rabha society.<sup>39</sup> This type of marriage is known as ‘Civil marriage’ or ‘Kamakhya Marriage’ among the Rabhas.

It is noticed that now-a-days most of the Rabha youths have abandoned their traditional methods of marriage and follow the Hindu methods. The institution of ‘Hom Yajna’ in accordance with the vedic prescription has come to be practised by the educated Rabhas in recent times.<sup>40</sup> ‘Athmongola’ an institution relating to marriage is performed within eight days of marriage. It is performed by all the Hindu communities. This institution is also prevalent among the Rabhas with a minor variation i.e. there is fixed time limit for the performance of this rite. But now-a-days the Rabhas who follow the Hindu method of marriage, perform this rite according to Hindu method.<sup>41</sup> Another change in so far as the marriage is concerned, seems to be practised by the Rabha community *viz.*, arrangement of feast. Feast is arranged on the occasion of marriage. Rabha customary laws clearly prescribed the items to be served to the assemblage which need a huge expenditure of money. There are many Rabhas who are so poor that it is not possible to arrange such feast. So feast is arranged according to the financial condition of the host. So the customary laws have been relaxed and adapted to the changing conditions.<sup>42</sup>

There are some customary laws about the performance of birth rites in the Rabha society. Pachuti is such an institution performed within five to seven days of the birth of a baby. Pachuti is a rite which is performed for the future welfare of the new born baby. According to the customary laws of the Rabhas name is given to the newborn baby on the day of Pachuti. Generally a name is selected by the midwives present on the occasion and recommended to the parents for acceptance. The parents either accept the name or give the same according to their own choice. Finally a name unanimously agreed by the persons present is given to the baby. But now a days a deviation from the customary laws is noticed among many Rabhas. They do so according to almanac or by a Ganak Brahmin.<sup>43</sup> This is an example of change in socio-religious rites in the Rabha society in recent times.

Another instance of change in Rabha society is noticed in the performance of 'Annaprasan' ceremony. Performance of Annaprasan of a newborn baby is socially obligatory for the Rabhas. There are prescribed customary laws about the performance of this rite. Rabha people being conservative in nature perform this rite according to customary rule. But a change has taken place among some educated Rabhas in so far as the performance of this festival is concerned. Most of the educated Rabhas seem to perform 'Annaprasan' according to the methods practised by other communities.<sup>44</sup> The Rabhas do not have objection against it. The Rabhas society has accepted it as natural.

Now-a-days celebration of birthday or birth anniversary has become a common phenomenon of all the communities. There was no tradition of celebration of this festival in the Rabha society. But many educated Rabhas have begun to celebrate the birthday or

birth anniversary festival influenced by the other communities.<sup>45</sup> This is the result of the spread of education among the tribe and their close proximity with the other communities.

Besides the changes taken place in the socio-religious rites among the Rabhas, changing trend has been noticed in the worship of gods and goddesses. The Rabhas have various gods and goddesses to whom they worship in their traditional methods. The gods are Rishi, Hasi, Langa, Kuber, Dharam etc. and goddesses are Kali, Thakurani, Laksmi, Barmani, Nakati, etc. Besides worshipping these gods and goddesses in their traditional methods, they now seem to worship the gods and goddesses of other communities. Originally the Rabhas did not worship the goddess Durga but now in some areas they co-operate with the other communities in the worship of Durga Puja. The people of Dhupdhara under Rangjuli Revenue Circle of Goalpara district have been performing the Durga puja from sixties. The Rabhas of Rabhapara village of Dhupdhara have been associating themselves with the puja from its very beginning.<sup>46</sup> To speak the truth the lone Durga puja of Dhupdhara is not possible to perform without the co-operation of the Rabhas.

It is relevant to mention here is that the said Durga puja of Dhupdhara is performed in the field of the 'Bisohari' temple at Rabhapara.

During the field study carried out by the researcher in several Rabha villages many examples of worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses by the tribe has come to his knowledge. One of the such instances is the Dariduri village under Balijara Revenue Circle of Goalpara district. Maitori and Dahuri Rabhas have been found living in this village. It has been noticed that Pati Rabhas are more Hinduised than the other sections of the Rabha

community *viz.*, Dahuri, Maitori, Rangdani, etc. The Pati Rabhas have forgotten their language and accepted the Assamese language. Moreover they have also abandoned their dresses and accepted the Assamese dresses. Virtually they have been totally assamised in so far as their language and dresses are concerned. On the other hand the Maitori, Dahuri and Rangdani Rabhas still retain their language and dresses. In this connection it is interesting to mention here is that the above mentioned Dahuri and Maitori Rabhas of Dariduri village have began to worship and celebrate some Hindu goddesses and festivals. The Rabhas of Dariduri village have been worshipping Kali for last thirty years. Simultaneously they have also been celebrating the Rash festival.<sup>47</sup> It is interesting to note that the Rabhas besides worshipping their traditional gods and goddesses also worship some Hindu gods and goddesses.

The Rabhas of the Dariduri village also perform Lakshmi puja and Saraswati puja. Lakshmi puja is performed in every households and that of the Saraswati Puja is performed in the schools. This is a recent development which did not exist in the past.

Kalipuja, Lakshmi puja and Kamakhya puja are performed by the Pati Rabhas of Muslum village under Rangjuli Revenue Circle of Goalpara district. They do not use idols for these pujas. Instead they use a mound of earth, a small water jar with a coconut and a stone as symbols of the above mentioned goddesses. The pujas are performed collectively. But in recent times a change has been noticed in this regard. Every household of Muslum village has been performing Lakshmi puja and Saraswati puja for the last ten years.<sup>48</sup>

Another significant change is the organizing of 'Dadan Mela' in the Rabha dominated area of Baida. The Rabhas have been organizing a 'Mela' at the foot of the

Dadan hills near Baida village in the district of Goalpara since 1971.<sup>49</sup> This Mela has come to be known as 'Dadan Mela'. This Mela is organized every year in the month of Chat – the last month of the Assamese almanac. The objectives of organizing the Mela are – first to pay obeisance to Sri Sri Rishi who is said to be the creator and protector of all the lives of the universe, and secondly to pay homage to Dadan – the first hero of the Rabhas and his General Marukhetri. People from all over the district specially the Rabhas come to this Mela.

Acculturation process has taken place in the various aspects of the social life of the Rabha community in recent years. Above discussion has proved the reality of this fact. It is an interesting fact that the acculturation process has gained ground more among the Pati Rabhas than the other sections of the tribe. The Pati Rabhas residing in and around Dudhnoi areas abstain from ploughing on the Full Moon and New Moon days. Moreover they consult astrology before performing any auspicious event.

Rabhas are the worshippers of their traditional gods and goddesses. They have never used idols for the worship of their gods and goddesses. Instead the community have worshipped stones, mounds of earth as symbols of them. But a change has occurred in this regard among a section of the tribe. The Rabhas who have been influenced by Hinduism now worship Durga, Kali, Shiba, Ganesh, Saraswati, Lakshmi, etc. – all are the gods – goddesses of the Hindus. They have even deviated from their traditional methods of worship and use idols for the purpose.<sup>50</sup>



### **Dresses:**

Being a tribal community the Rabhas have traditional dresses of their own. Rabha women are expert both in spinning and weaving. So, normally they prepare their own apparels in their family looms. They prepare dresses both for males and females. The female dresses include 'Rifan', 'Kambung' and 'Thaprong'.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, the male dresses include 'Pajal', 'Khasne', 'Fali', 'Bukasil', 'Passra'. The Passra is made out of endi yarn and the rest are made out of cotton.<sup>52</sup> The males who perform dance at the Festivals like 'Puktarang', Farkanti etc. use long shirts from neck to heel. This is known as 'Jama'.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, in day to day life the male Rabhas use 'Gamocho' made in their looms, smaller in size than loin cloth.<sup>54</sup>

The Rabhas are seen deviated from their traditional dresses in recent times. A trend of change has been noticed in so far as the traditional dresses of the Rabha tribe are concerned. Though this trend is noticed more or less among all the sections of the community, it is specially found among the Pati Rabhas. The Pati Rabhas, both males and females, have abandoned their traditional dresses in favour of Assamese dresses. Accordingly the males use 'dhuti' and 'panjabi' and those of the females 'Mekhela-chador' made out of endi and Muga.<sup>55</sup> This trend of change has taken place among the Pati Rabhas due to their long association with the neighbouring non-tribe Assamese communities and also the spread of education. Another change among the educated Pati Rabhas is noticed in so far as their dresses are concerned. Most of the educated persons who are employed in offices and other institutions seen to have taken long pant and shirt and also the youths take the same dress. Similarly, like other communities the Pati Rabha girls, specially the students of higher educational institutions are seen using 'Churidar' for last several years.

In spite of considerable changes taken place in the dresses of the Pati Rabhas, they still use their traditional dresses during the performance of their socio-religious rites and rituals.

In comparison with the Pati Rabhas, less impact is noticed among the other sections of the Rabhas in so far as their dresses are concerned. It has come to the knowledge of the researcher during his field study in some Rabha villages. Rangdani, Maitori, Dahuri are three sections of the Rabhas, other than the Pati section, found in different areas of Goalpara district. Both males and females belonging to these sections of the Rabha community still retain their traditional dresses. Unlike Pati Rabhas they use their traditional dresses not only during the celebration of their socio-religious rites and rituals, but also in day to day life. It will be not true to say that they have not been influenced in this respect by other communities. A trend of change in regard to the dresses has been noticed to a limited extent among the Rangdani, Maitori, and Dahuri Rabhas in recent years. The educated young women began to use Mekhela Chadar and Saree from early eighties. Similar is the case with the young college going girls. They are seen wearing Churidar for last several years. The educated and employed men and the school and college going young boys are seen wearing long pant shirt.<sup>56</sup> This trend of change is the impact of modern mode of living, close association with the other communities and above all the spread of education.

### **Language:**

Language is a constituent element of civilization. It raised man from a savage state to that of civilized one. It is one of the fundamental characteristic faculties of man without which they can not communicate with their fellow beings in the society.<sup>57</sup> So without the language human society and civilization are not possible. Every community must have its

own language and at the same time without a rich and developed language no community can achieve its multifold goals. This is hundred percent applicable in case of the Rabha tribe also.

Being a distinct community the Rabha tribe has its own language and literature. A trend of change has been noticed in regard to the Rabha language and literature during the last three decades. The languages spoken by the different sections of the community varies from section to section. The different sections of the Rabha tribe are, Pati, Rangdani, Maitori, Dahuri, Koch, Totla, Bitlia, Hana, etc. Most of the sections have lost their mother tongue, i.e., Rabha language. They speak either in Assamese or Bengali. Only three sections *viz.*, Rangdani, Maitori and Koch, speak the language.<sup>58</sup>

So from the linguistic point of view the Rabhas are classified into three groups *viz.*, Koch, Rangdani and Regional language speaking group. The Koch Rabhas speak the Koch language, Rangdani and Maitori Rabhas speak the Rangdani language and Pati, Dahuri, Hana, Totla, Rabhas speak the Regional language<sup>59</sup>. The sections included in the last group are Aryanised and they speak a patois of Assamese.<sup>60</sup> So, the Pati, Dahuri, Hana, Totla etc., Rabhas of Assam speak the Assamese language. The Pati Rabhas are found in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup and they abandoned their language in the past in favour of Assamese. The Pati Rabhas of Goalpara district are completely Assamised. Both in speaking and writing, and in educational purposes they use the Assamese language. It is due to their living and close association with the Assamese community for centuries together.

In this juncture a trend of change in linguistic outlook is noticed among the Rabhas irrespective of the different sections. The trend is nothing but to establish their separate identity for which the mother tongue is the prime factor. This sentiment began in late seventies and culminated in the establishment of the All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum) in 1973.<sup>61</sup>

The establishment of the Rabha Sahitya Sabha is an epoch-making event both for the development of language and literature and the Rabha society itself. Because the development of any community, to a great extent, depends on its language and literature. Moreover, the various aspects of any community including history, culture, customs, conventions, socio-economic conditions, all reflect in its literature. Since the inception Rabha Sahitya Sabha like any other Sahitya Sabha has been working very hard for the promotion and development of Rabha language and literature.<sup>62</sup>

There are several organizations in the Rabha society, of these the All Rabha Sahitya Sabha is most important and unique one. There were a number of organizations established in the Rabha society before the independence of India. But those organizations had limited jurisdiction because those organisations did not include all the Rabhas resided in various parts of the country. Moreover, they neither had any relationship with their mother tongue nor they did anything for the promotion and development of their language. But All Rabha Sahitya Sabha is the only organization established after the independence which includes all the Rabhas of North East and West Bengal and it is the only organization among the tribe which from its inception has been doing a lot for their mother tongue.

The All Rabha Sahitya Sabha was formed on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1973 as a result of the untiring effort made by “North Goalpara District Rabha Students’ Union”, at Ghaksha, a village inhabited by Rabhas under Kokrajhar sub-division of undivided Goalpara district.<sup>63</sup> First conference of the All Rabha Sahitya Sabha was held in 1973 under the Presidentship of Dukheswar Koch at Ghaksha of present Kokrajhar district and its Silver Jubilee Session was held at Boko of Kamrup district in 1998 under the Presidentship of Jagat Kama.<sup>64</sup> So during this twenty five years it has done a lot for Rabha language and literature. As a result of its incessant effort an agreement was signed with the Government of Assam by which Rabha language was introduced in seventy L.P. Schools on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1988. For the schools the Sabha made necessary arrangement for publication of necessary books and subsequently several books were published.<sup>65</sup>

Besides, the All Rabha Sahitya Sabha did a great job by bringing all sections of the Rabha community residing in Assam, Meghalaya and West Bengal under the one and the same Flag. So after independence of India all the Rabhas became united under the effort of the Sahitya Sabha and began to co-operate with it for the development of language, literature, preservation of traditional customs and above all established the separate identity of the Rabha community.

### **Social Organisations:**

Besides the All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, several other organizations came into existence before and after the independence of India in the Rabha society which tremendously influenced the tribe in various aspects. Moreover, as a result of the

establishment of the organizations tremendous changes have taken place among the Rabha community.

“Rabha Chhatra Sanmilian” was the first organization of the Rabhas came into existence in the first quarter of twentieth century. It was formed in February, 1916<sup>66</sup> at Rangjuli. Mihir Chandra Rabha and Gobardhan Sarkar were nominated as the President and Secretary respectively. The aim and objectives of the organization were,

- (a) spread of education among the Rabhas,
- (b) to reform the outdated manners and customs prevalent in the Rabha society,
- (c) to establish schools in the Rabha areas.<sup>67</sup>

Though the establishment of the Rabha Chhatra Sanmilian was a notable step taken by the then Rabha student leaders of Rangjuli area, it remained in existence upto 1921 and afterwards it became a defunct organization.

Though the first organization of the Rabha students, i.e., Rabha Chhatra Sanmilian became ineffective, the Rabha leaders did not come backward rather they proceeded forward to organize the people belonging to this community. In this connection it is relevant to mention here is that upto the first quarter of the twentieth century there was no unity, co-operation and understanding among the different sections of the Rabha tribe residing in various areas. So the leaders of the Rabha community felt badly the necessity of some kind of organization for the reformation and development of the community. As a result of this feeling, and efforts made by the then leaders<sup>68</sup> like Dwarika Nath Rabha, Gobardhan Sarkar, Rajen Rongkho, Jahaj Rabha, Kartik Rabha, Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha etc. “Asom Rabha Sanmilian” an organization comprising all the Rabhas of Assam

was formed and its first conference was held at Santipur (Krishnai) in 1926.<sup>69</sup> Dwarika Nath Rabha and Gobardhan Sarkar were the first president and secretary respectively of Asom Rabha Sanmilian.

The chief aim and objectives of this organization was to bring all the Rabhas under a common organization in order to

- (a) protect and maintain the age old identity, unity and integrity among the tribe;
- (b) preserve and safeguard language, culture, and art;
- (c) uplift and improve the standard of living;
- (d) spread of education;
- (e) develop socio-economic condition;
- (f) remove the age-old superstitions prevailing in the Rabha Samaj.

So Asom Rabha Sanmilian was the first organization comprising all the Rabhas of Assam, which besides uniting all the Rabhas under one flag took several steps for the reformation and development of the community. Being a tribal community, the Rabhas were backward in various aspects *viz.*, social, educational, economic, political and one of the vital causes of their backwardness was superstitions prevalent in the society. The Asom Rabha Sanmilian concerned itself with all these and served the Rabha society in that capacity upto 1948. In 1948 its Third Annual Conference was held at Boko under Kamrup district where the organization was renamed as "Asom Rabha Sangha".<sup>70</sup> During the pre-independence period 'Asom Rabha Sanmilian' performed several activities for the Rabhas. Under the efforts made by the Sanmilian a primary school was established at Singra, a Rabha dominated area.<sup>71</sup> This is definitely a laudable work done by the Asom Rabha

Sanmilian for the spread of education among the tribe. As already discussed there was no co-operation and communication among the Rabhas residing in various areas of Goalpara and Kamrup districts. Naturally there was no common and similar social rules for the performance of socio-religious rites and rituals. Divergent social rules were prevalent among the tribe<sup>72</sup> Asom Rabha Sanmilian took necessary steps to remove this diversity. Moreover, under its efforts necessary reformative measures were taken in so far as the customary rules concerning the performance of marriage rites were concerned. It took active role to minimize the expenditure for marriage and thereby helped the poor Rabha people. In this connection it is relevant to state here is that according to Rabha customary rules seven feasts were to be arranged during the process of performance of marriage rites. Asom Rabha Sanmilian observed that this system was very expensive as well as unnecessary. Under the efforts of the Sanmilian four out of seven feasts were abolished. Similarly a huge quantity of betel nut and betel leaves were necessary for the purpose of marriage. These were provided to the invitees right from children to old persons. As a result of the steps taken by the Sanmilian the quantity of the items mentioned above was reduced to a considerable extent.<sup>73</sup>

During the first half of the twentieth century a trend of religious conversion was taken place in the Rabha society specially among the Pati Rabhas of Goalpara and Kamrup districts. A considerable number of Pati Rabhas of Dhupdhara, Dhanubanga, Dudhnoi areas were converted to Rajbangshi. The converted Rabhas abandoned the Rabha title and accepted the titles Roy, Das, Sarania, Medhi, etc. They abandoned their customary rules regarding the performance of the socio-religious rites and accepted the Hindu vedic



methods. This trend decreased the number of Rabhas to a great extent. Asom Rabha Sanmilian under the leadership of Gobardhan Sarkar convinced the Rabhas about the consequences of the religious conversion and succeeded to stop this trend. If the Rabha Sanmilian did not take such a bold step there would have been not a single Rabha in the Rangjuli – Dhupdhara areas of Goalpara district. Gobardhan Sarkar is definitely the pioneer in this regard. According to the language of Mr. Sarkar, “Had I been converted to Rajbangshi there would have been not a single Rabha in Rangjuli – Dhupdhara areas”.<sup>74</sup> During the post independence period a radical change took place in so far as the ‘Asom Rabha Sangha’ was concerned. In its Tenth Annual Conference held at Singra in Kamrup district it was renamed as “All Asom Rabha Sangha”. It continued its activities in that capacity upto 1971. In its nineteenth historical conference held at Dhanubhanga in Goalpara district in 1971 it was rechristened as “All Rabha National Council”.<sup>75</sup> The establishment of the “All Rabha National Council” in the post-independence period is an epoch-making event in the Rabha society. Because it is the first organization which includes all the Rabhas residing in different parts in the country and those of the other neighbouring countries.<sup>76</sup>

The chief aims and objectives of the All Rabhas National Council were to bring all the Rabhas under a common organization in order to:

- (a) protect and maintain the age-old identity, unity and integrity among the community;
- (b) preserve and safeguard language, culture, and art;
- (c) uplift and improve the standard of living;

- (d) spread of education; and
- (e) develop socio-economic condition;
- (f) remove the age-old superstitions prevailing in the Rabha Samaj.<sup>77</sup>

From the above picture it is assumed that the All Rabha National Council is a unique organization that has been brought into existence after the post-independence period. It is the first organization among the Rabhas which aims to unite the people of this community living in various parts of the country and those of the neighbouring countries. Before the establishment of this organization no step was taken to unite the Rabhas scattered in different areas. So it is the first approach towards the development of the community. There are many problems found in the Rabha society which have become the barriers in the way of the development of the community. Being a tribal community they are very much conservative. They are reluctant to accept the modern and scientific ways of living. It is due to their backwardness in educational aspect. Moreover they are the victims of age-old superstitions prevalent in the society. Above all a section of the community has abandoned their mother tongue in favour of Assamese. All these factors have led to the stagnant of the development of the community. In this critical juncture the All Rabha National Council has been brought into existence. This organization, since its inception, has been working hard for the all round development of the community by removing the problems.

Besides, the All Rabha National Council (RNC) there are several organizations and institutions found in the Rabha society. Rabha National Council is the supreme administrative organization in the community which has already been discussed and

analysed. Like it several other organizations born during the post independence period have been exerting tremendous influence in the community in different aspects. These have bearing on some changes taken place in the Rabha society. These organizations have been formed by the Rabhas in order to keep the age-old social and customary rules and heritage intact and also to get cemented the different sections of the community. The organizations found among the Rabhas in the district of Goalpara are:

- (1) Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj,
- (2) Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sanmilan,
- (3) Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, and
- (4) Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj.

**(1) Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj:** Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj was formed in 1960<sup>78</sup> at Kothakuthi in the district of Goalpara. Late Gobardhan Sarkar was the first president of this organization. There are eleven Sakhas under its jurisdiction. These are Uttar Rangjuli Rabha Sakha Samaj, Dakhin Rangjuli Rabha Sakha Samaj, Bangaon Sikiajuli Rabha Sakha Samaj, Uttar Bikali Rabha Sakha Samaj, Pub-Bikali Rabha Sakha Samaj, Dakhin Bikali Rabha Sakha Samaj, Pragati Rabha Sakha Samaj, Daranggiri Rabha Sakha Samaj, Madang Tilapara Rabha Sakha Samaj, Amjonga Rabha Sakha Samaj and Nabagathita Rabha Sakha Samaj.<sup>79</sup>

The aims and objectives of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj were to prepare a 'Pandulipi' comprising the customary rules regarding the performance of the socio-religious rites, to reform the Rabhas by removing the out-dated manners and customs prevalent among the community and educate the community for their all-round

development. It is relevant to mention here is that the said 'Pandulipi' was framed and approved in 1961.<sup>80</sup> Since the inception the Samaj has been working hard for the development of the community under its jurisdiction.

It is worth while to mention here is that a trend of change has been noticed among the Rabhas after the formation of the Samaj. Virtually there was hardly any co-operation and communication among the Rabhas under its jurisdiction. They did not follow similar customary rules in performing the socio-religious rites. But this problem was solved by the Samaj by preparing a 'Pandulipi'. Now the Rabhas under its jurisdiction perform their socio-religious rites according to the Pandulipi. Moreover the Samaj has made the community conscious about their distinct identity, their rich cultural heritage. They have become conscious about their rights and liberties provided in the constitution.

**(2) Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sanmilian:** Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sanmilian was previously known as "Maj Jakhili Rabha Sanmilian". The second conference of Maj Jakhili Rabha Sanmilian was held in 1964 at Garaimari where it was renamed as "Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sanmilian".<sup>81</sup> There are eight Zamads under its jurisdiction viz., Thekasu Zamad, Topolakhowa Zamad, Khas Zamad, Dirma Zamad, Salpara Zamad, Khamar Zamad, Bari Anchalik Zamad, Taranga Zamad.<sup>82</sup> The primary objectives of this Sanmilian were to unite all the Rabhas under its jurisdiction. A 'Pandulipi' containing the customary laws relating to the performance of socio-religious rites and rituals was prepared and approved in 1965<sup>83</sup> under the efforts of the Sanmilian. All sections of the Rabhas residing under its jurisdiction were brought under this Pandulipi. Since the inception, the Sanmilian has been systematically running the social administration

of the community under its jurisdiction with the help of the Pandulipi. Moreover it has devoted itself for the educational, and economic development of the Rabhas.

**(3) Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj:** Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj is a notable social organization of the community in the district of Goalpara founded during the post-independence period and the first conference of which was held in 1971<sup>84</sup> at Kokowapara Primary School. The jurisdiction of this Samaj includes twenty Zamad Dal, *viz.*, Hadalapara, Kuruwabhasa, Garaimari Lempara Ujanpara, Lempara Namapara, Majaipara, Gajapara, Ghilajhari, Borjhora, Chhota Damal Dahari, Darani Chhotadal, Bamundanga, Charimandal Chutki, Bairong, Dariduri Maitori, Lengapara, Samajik Milan Satmandal, Kalyanpur, Bardamal Bardal, and Nasikai Zamad.

The birth of the Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj is responsible for some social changes among the community under its jurisdiction. Three sections of the community *viz.*, Rangdani, Maitori, and Dahuri Rabhas are living in different places under the jurisdiction of the Samaj. There was a communication gap among them. There was lack of unity and collaboration among them. They performed their socio-religious rites and rituals according to their customary rules which sometimes varied from place to place and section to section. This state of affair led to disorder and confusion among the Rabhas. And in such a situation the administration of the society could not be run smoothly and systematically.

Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj framed a Pandulipi comprising the customary laws. All the Zamads falling under its jurisdiction have accepted the Pandulipi. They have been performing their socio-religious activities according to this Pandulipi. As a result of which unity and integrity have prevailed among the community. The problems faced by

the community are discussed collectively and solved accordingly. They have become conscious about their distinct identity enriched with customs, heritage, art, language etc. Since its inception the Samaj has been working for the development of the community in different directions, *viz.*, educational, economic etc.

**(4) Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj:** Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj was formed in 1975<sup>85</sup>. Sri Lat Singh Kumar Rabha was the first president of this organization. There are 35 Zamads under the jurisdiction of the Samaj, *viz.*, Uttar Balachari, Balachari, Bangalpara, Mogho Hatisila, Amguri, Depalchung, Maladhara (Ka). Maladhara (Kha), Tesimpur, Ketekibari, Thakurbila, Dhaparbhita. Pandoba, Chhatabari, Tisimkali-Jongpara, Borjuli Salpara, Hatisila, Dipkai-Nehalibhita, Baida, Kerkha Baburkona, Batapara, Lahapara, Borsigri, Chhotasigri, Medhipara Balaikhamar, Ranarampur, Dhokapara, Kalapara, Bamundoba, Jairamkuchi, Bosengpara, No-2 Chhaibari, Borjhora, Sarapara and Haluapara.<sup>86</sup>

After the establishment of the Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj a lot of changes have been taken place among the Rabhas under its jurisdiction.

Being a tribal community the Rabhas perform their social rites and rituals according to their customary laws. Due to the absence of an approved “Bidhi-Vyavastha” the people of the community faced problems in discharging their socio-religious activities. Sometimes the customary laws regarding the performance of a particular rite varies from place to place. To remove these anomalies and to have common rules, “Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj Bidhivyavastha” was framed and published in 1976<sup>87</sup> under the efforts of the Samaj. It is the social constitution applicable for the Rabhas under the

jurisdiction of the Samaj. Since its publication, the Rabhas have been observing this constitution in performing their socio-religious rites and rituals. So this has brought unity among the community.

Another significant thing is that since its inception the Samaj has been working for the development of the community. For this the Samaj under its own effort conducted census in the villages under its jurisdiction in 1986 and in 2000.<sup>88</sup> This was done in order to get the picture of population ratio, education, their sources of livelihood etc. This is definitely a laudable attempt which has undoubtedly helped the Samaj to take necessary steps for the all round development of the community.

### **All Rabha Students' Union and All Rabha Women Council:**

The birth of the All Rabha Students' Union (ARSU) is a significant development in the Rabha society during the post-independence period. It was formed on 12<sup>th</sup> February, 1980<sup>89</sup> at Goalpara College, in the district of Goalpara. It is a socio-economic and cultural organization of the Rabha Students of Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal and other parts of the country.<sup>90</sup>

Since its inception this organization has been exerting tremendous influence in the Rabha society. The chief aim and objectives behind the formation of the organization are to strengthen unity, mutual co-operation, among the Rabha students, promote the welfare of the Rabha students, promote cultural activities including the preservation of the rich cultural heritage of the community, spread education by creating educational environment among the community, procure the constitutional rights of the Rabhas. All Rabha Students' Union is the apex body of the students, under its jurisdiction there are the

District, Sub-Divisional and Anchalik unions. The All Rabha Students' Union has been trying its best to solve the various problems faced by the Rabha community. For this purpose it has submitted several memoranda containing its demands to the State Government as well as the Central Government. It has succeeded to draw the attention of both the Governments towards their problems.

Moreover the All Rabha Students' Union was a co-associate of Rabha Hasong Demand Committee. The union was also one of the signatories of the 'Rabha Accord' signed on March, 10, 1995<sup>91</sup>. This Accord has brought about changes in the district of Goalpara and South Kamrup in Particular and other Rabha areas in general in the state of Assam.

So the Rabha Accord is undoubtedly an achievement of the All Rabha Students' Union.<sup>92</sup> Virtually, since its inception the Union had been taking active role in the 'Autonomy Movement' of the Rabhas along with the Rabha Hasong Demand committee. Even after the signing of the 'Rabha Accord' and the formation of the third consecutive Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council, the community is not satisfied with it. Now instead of the Autonomous Council the community is demanding inclusion of the council in the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian Constitution. According to the leaders of the community it is none but the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule which can fulfil their interests. This demand has been raised by the All Rabha Students' Union. The union along with the other associate organizations has been fighting to get this demand fulfilled. As a part of its movement the union opposed the holding of Panchayat Election in the Rabha Hasong area. The demand of the inclusion of the community in the 6<sup>th</sup> schedule has been raised by the All Rabha Students' Union in its



10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference<sup>93</sup> held at Tokankata in Tongla of Darrang district from 11 to 13 February, 2002.

Along with the All Rabha Students' Union Goalpara district Rabha Students' Union has been working for the development of the Rabhas in general and those of the Goalpara district in particular. Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union was formed on June 13, 1993 at Dudhnoi.<sup>94</sup> The main aims and objectives of the union are to solve the various problems faced by the Rabha Students of Goalpara district and to take active part in the Autonomy Movement of the Rabhas.<sup>95</sup> The union has taken several steps to encourage the Rabha students of the district for receiving higher education. As a part of this the union arranged a meeting at Dudhnoi College on September, 12, 1993 where the Rabha Students who secured first division in the H.S.L.C. Examination, 1993, were felicitated with a congratulation address, a 'Pajar' and a bundle of books to each students.<sup>96</sup>

The union, since its formation, has been taking active part in the Autonomy Movement of the Rabhas led by All Rabha Students' Union and the Rabha Hasong Demand Committee.<sup>97</sup>

Moreover, the district union has taken active role for the all round development of the Rabha women in the district of Goalpara, under auspices of the union 'Goalpara District Rabha Women Council' was formed on September, 17, 1993 at Dudhnoi. The chief motive of the district students' union behind the formation of the women wing was the development of the Rabha women and also to get them involved in the autonomy movement of the community.<sup>98</sup>

A noticeable change has been noticed among the Rabha women during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Though the Rabha women are indispensable part of every household, they are too backward in various aspects, be it educational or political. The women of every Rabha household are busy with the domestic affairs including agricultural activities from dawn till night. To speak the truth without the co-operation of women no Rabha family can be run smoothly. In spite of their active role in the family affairs, they have so far remained backward in other aspects. This is due to their illiteracy. Most of them are politically not conscious and so they are not aware of their constitutional rights. Under these circumstances the "All Rabha Women Council" was formed in 1993<sup>99</sup> as a result of incessant efforts made by Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union and some women leaders. The constitution of the council was approved in its First Annual Conference held in February 1994 at Khopati L.P. School, under Dhubri District.<sup>100</sup>

According to the constitution the aim and objectives of the council are, to organize the Rabha women and make them conscious; bring to light the cultural heritage of the community; create educational environment among the Rabhas; procure the constitutional rights of women; give stress on marriage relations among the community.<sup>101</sup>

The All Rabha Women Council is an associate organization of the All Rabha Students' Union which discharges its activities in conformity with the aims and objectives of the students union.<sup>102</sup> It is noticed that the women council has become a close associate of the Students' Union in discharging the activities relating to the interests of the Rabha community. It has also been taking part in the autonomy movement launched by the Students' Union and the Rabha Hasong Demand committee. It has become one of the

signatories of memorandum containing the demands of the community submitted to the Central and State Governments time to time.<sup>103</sup>

Since the inception, the All Rabha Women council has been working for the all round development of the Rabha women. For achieving its aims and objectives, there are the districts women councils, which are discharging their duties in conformity with the central body. Mention may be made of the Goalpara district Rabha women council, which has already been discussed.

### **Social Changes Among the Hajongs:**

A trend of change has been noticed in the social life of the Hajong community. Adaptability to changing situation is a characteristic of all the communities. The trend of adaptability is gradual in so far as the Hajongs are concerned.<sup>104</sup>

Although a tribal community, the Hajongs consider themselves to be Hindus. However some traditional religious practices are still found among the community. So, besides being a Hindu community, they still maintain some tribal characteristics. Hence it is definitely a deviation from their tribal way of living. Trend of change has been taken place more or less in the various aspects of social life including village structure, marriage, religion, food habits, dresses, language etc.

### **Village Structure**

According to the conventional rule, the Hajongs constructed their dwelling houses in clusters in the courtyard of "Adhikari".<sup>105</sup> But, this practice is no longer exist among the

Hajongs. This has come to the knowledge of the researcher during the field study carried out in some Hajong villages of Goalpara district.<sup>106</sup>

The traditional village structure has got radical changes. Hajong villages can be now compared with the villages of any other community. It may be due to their association with the other communities. The deviation from the traditional village structure may be due to their rehabilitation by the Government. It has already been discussed in the previous chapters that the Hajongs of Goalpara district migrated to India in 1964 from East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh). They were rehabilitated by the Government in various areas in the district of Goalpara.

### **Marriage:**

Some changes have been noticed among the Hajongs in recent times in so far as the performance of marriage rites are concerned. The Hajongs perform their marriage rites according to their traditional methods. Originally the 'Adhikari' the high class priest of the Hajongs performed the marriage rites. From recent past there appeared a tendency among the well-to-do Hajong families to perform the marriage ceremony according to vedic method by the Brahmin priests.<sup>107</sup>

Now-a-days, all the Hajongs irrespective of rich or poor, use the services of Brahmin priests instead of the 'Adhikari'. They perform the marriage rites according to the Vedic methods using the services of Brahmin priests. They abandoned the services of Adhikari, because the later does not know the Vedic methods.<sup>108</sup> This is definitely a major change taken place in the Hajong society.

The Hajongs, both Saktas and Bhaktas,<sup>109</sup> residing in various areas of Goalpara district use the services of Brahmin priests in so far as the performance of marriage ceremony is concerned.<sup>110</sup>

Though the services of Adhikari are not used now-a-days in the socio-religious activities but for the performance of 'Harinam'<sup>111</sup> i.e., 'Namkaran', festival of a newborn baby (both male and female) is obligatory in the Hajong community. And this rite must be performed by the Adhikari.<sup>112</sup>

Performance of marriage rites in Hajong society is very expensive. Not only the relatives of bride and groom, but also all the people of the village must be invited to the ceremony. So during the whole process i.e., from the beginning to the end of the marriage celebration all the invitees are to be entertained with food. But, this expensive arrangement has got changed due to the poor economic condition of the community. Now-a-days this arrangement is made according to ones financial capacity.<sup>113</sup>

A notable change has taken place in the Hajong society in recent times in regard to marriage. According to the customary laws prevalent in the Hajong society, the parents or the guardians of the bride were to be paid a nominal amount in cash as bride price. This is known as 'Khalti' among the Hajongs. But now-a-days the case has become reverse. Now the bridegroom is to be paid something by the parents or guardians of the bride.<sup>114</sup> This change has occurred probably due to the spread of education and also the influence of other communities.

### **Religion/Festival:**

Religion is an important aspect of human society. It takes a major role in the Hajong society. The scholars are not unanimous about the religion practised by the Hajong community in the past. According to some scholars they were animists like most of the tribal communities. Whatever might be the case in the past, but they now consider themselves to be Hindus. Besides performing some Hindu religious rites and festivals, some traditional religious practices are also still found among them. Considerable changes have taken place in regard to the religious beliefs among the community.

The Hajongs are divided into two classes on the basis of their religious beliefs, *viz.*, Saktas and vaishnavas or Bhaktas.<sup>115</sup> Of the two sects, most of them belong to the first one, i.e., Sakta.<sup>116</sup> A few of them belong to Bhakta or Vaishnava sect.

The Saktas are the worshippers of Durga, Kali, Chamundi, Lakshmi and the Bhaktas are the devotees of Bishnu. Both the sects use the services of Brahmin priests for the performance of their religious rites. Originally the 'Adhikari' performed these rites. This is a notable change taken place among the Hajongs. They abandoned their traditional methods of worshipping gods and goddesses in favour of the Hindu vedic methods. In the past the Hajongs, worshipped their gods and goddesses by offering rice beer and sacrificing tortoise, cock and pigs. At present they abandoned all these due to their scarcity and influence of the neighbouring high caste Hindus.<sup>117</sup> The Hajongs have been performing different pujas such as Durga puja, Lakshmi puja, Kali puja, Manasa puja, which actually belong to the Hindus. The Durga puja was not very popular among the Hajongs before 1950.<sup>118</sup> Because it involves a huge expenditure and so an ordinary Hajong could not afford this. A few well-to-do families performed this puja. Now collective Durga

puja is performed by the community. This puja was started by the Hajongs after 1950 and it is now increasing day by day. Apart from this, Saraswati puja is performed in almost every Hajong village which was very rare among the community of Garo Hills before 1950.<sup>119</sup>

The Hajongs have propitiated various evil spirits and demi-gods, who according to them cause various diseases. The demi-gods and spirits are Moila Deo, Daini, Pretni, Kalpisatch, Bon-Deo, Hudum and Haka, Phul Deo, Nikani Deo, etc. The worships of these demi-gods and spirits were very popular and widespread among the Hajongs before 30 years ago.<sup>120</sup> Now these worships are on the decrease due to spread of education and influence of the other advanced communities.

The Hajongs of various areas of Goalpara district perform their socio-religious rites and rituals, viz., marriage and death rites according to vedic methods using the services of Brahmin priest. A few Hajongs use the services of Adhikari in performing these rites.<sup>121</sup> Durga puja and Kali puja are performed collectively by the Hajongs of various areas of Goalpara district. For these pujas they use the Brahmin priest according to the Vedic methods.<sup>122</sup> Bash puja is one of the important religious ceremonies performed by the community. But this puja is not performed by the Hajongs of Goalpara district.<sup>123</sup>

Chorkhela or chormaga an important traditional festival of the Hajongs is performed annually. This festival is known as chorkhela among the community in Garo Hills of Meghalaya and Chormaga in Goalpara district of Assam. This festival is still performed annually by the Hajongs of Meghalaya. This festival has almost been abandoned by the Hajongs of Goalpara district due to their poor economic condition. The

Hajongs of Dhamor area of Goalpara district perform this festival according to their convenience that too not annually.<sup>124</sup>

Another change in regard to the religious conversion from Sakta to Vaishnava has been noticed among some Hajongs of Goalpara district. Nidhan Ch. Hajong, an inhabitant of Rupnagar village under Rangjuli Revenue Circle of Goalpara district, was a Sakta. He performed Durga, Kali and Lakshmi pujas. After conversion to Vaishnava in 1972 he abandoned all these pujas. He performs only the Lakshmi puja. He does not use idol of Goddess Lakshmi, rather a jar as a symbol of the goddess. As a Vaishnava he takes sandalwood mark on his forehead, wooden chain on his neck, keep a 'Tikani'.<sup>125</sup> All the Hajongs belonging to this faith do these.

### **Dresses:**

Dresses have an important role to play in the human society. Every community has its traditional dresses which establish its distinct identity in the society. Hajongs being a tribal community have their traditional dresses. The main dresses used by a Hajong woman include "Patin" or "Rangapatni", "Passra" or "Agrun" and "Kamarbandha". These are made by the Hajong women in their family looms. Similarly the dresses used by a man include 'Gamosa' or 'Ningti' and 'Kampesh'.

Though the Hajongs, both men and women, still use their traditional dresses, a trend of change has been noticed in this aspect among the Hajongs of Goalpara district. Educated women are appeared to have used Assamese Mekhela Chadar and Sarees. Similarly, the young educated and college going girls use churidar like those belonging to other communities.<sup>126</sup>



The educated and employed men and young boys use long pant and shirt purchased from the market. Of course the aged and old men and women still use their traditional dresses both at home and outside. The trend of change in regard to their dresses taken place due to spread of education and influence of the other neighbouring communities. It is relevant to mention here is that the Hajongs still use their traditional dresses during the performance of socio-religious rites and other festivals.<sup>127</sup>

The Hajong women originally made their necessary dresses both for men and women in family looms. But now due to poor economic condition they do not possess loom and so most of them purchase their necessary dresses and cloths from the market. Moreover, most of the Hajong women go for work in the morning and come back in the evening, so they have no time to make their necessary dresses by themselves.

### **Language and Literature:**

In the past the Hajong community had their own language which belonged to the great Tibeto-Burman Family of languages. Mr. Grierson in his Linguistic Survey of India said that the Hajongs abandoned their form of speech and speak a corrupt form of Eastern Bengali.<sup>128</sup>

On the other hand D.N. Majumdar calls the language spoken by the Hajongs as a Jharua dialect of Assamese.<sup>129</sup> Motilal Barman, however, calls it a branch of Kamrupi language.<sup>130</sup> But whatever may be the opinions about the original dialect of the Hajongs, the present language spoken by the community is a mixture of Assamese and Bengali. They have no written language and literature and it is still in a colloquial stage. This language is spoken by the members of the community among themselves. And with the

non-Hajong communities they communicate in the local colloquial language. The Hajongs inhabiting in different areas in Goalpara district speak their language among themselves and they use the local colloquial language with the other communities. However, a trend of change has been noticed among the Hajongs of Goalpara district in so far as the development of their language and literature are concerned. As a result of the efforts made by the educated Hajongs of Dhamar area of Goalpara district “Dohar” a magazine of the Hajong language and socio-cultural affairs was published for the first time in 1992.<sup>131</sup> In this magazine several persons wrote different articles relating to the society, language, culture, etc. of the Hajong community. This is definitely a change taken place in the community.

The Hajongs of Meghalaya worked for the development of their language and literature. Annual Mouthpieces have been published by the Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti, which was formed in 1979.<sup>132</sup> These magazines have contained various articles written in Hajong language. Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti, an organization of the Hajongs of North-East India, was formed in 1979.<sup>133</sup> Since its inception this organization has been publishing ‘souvenirs’ which contain many articles written by the educated persons of the community about their society, history, culture, language and other social aspects. This has brought about a change among the community in recent years.

### **Social Organisations:**

Several organizations have been formed in the Hajong society in recent years, viz., Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti, Asom Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti, Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti etc.

Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti, a social organization of the Hajongs, was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1979.<sup>134</sup> It was formed to work for the development of the Hajongs of Meghalaya in particular and those of the other parts of India in general. Its activities extended in the field of social, religious, educational and preservation of their traditional culture. For the spread of education among the community three M.E. Schools were established at Chhapalguri, Tarapara and Joifar under “its efforts”.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, it worked for the unity and integrity among the community. On the other hand, before the formation of this organization, “Sadau Asom Hajong Kshatriya Samiti” was formed. This organization also worked for the reform and development of the community. Later this organization was renamed as “Sadau Asom Hajong Unnayan Samiti”.<sup>136</sup>

The year 1979 is a historic year for the Hajong community. In this year “Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samitee”, an organization comprising all the Hajongs of North-East India, was formed.<sup>137</sup> This unique social organization of the community came into existence at Dhamar Reserve under Goalpara district, where the historic conference of all the Hajongs of North East was held in 1979. Since its formation, this organization has been working for the all round development of the community.

### **Political Changes Among the Rabhas:**

In comparison with the other tribes the Rabhas are still backward in various aspects, viz., economic, social, political, educational etc. Even they are lagging behind than the Bodos and the Karbis in so far as the autonomy movement is concerned. It is due to the fact that most of the Rabhas are illiterate and politically not conscious.<sup>138</sup> The constitution of India has provided special rights and facilities including reservation of seats in the State

Legislature and Union Legislature and those of Central and State Government services for the upliftment of the backward classes. In spite of so the Rabha people could not achieve much progress in so far as their political life is concerned. Though the political achievement is not upto expectation yet some political changes have taken place among the Rabhas during the post-independence period.

The Rabhas inhabiting in different areas in Assam are facing many problems. Most burning among them is “Land Problem”, “Socio-Economic Problem” and “Educational and Cultural Problem”.<sup>139</sup>

According to the leaders of the community the existing clauses and provisions enshrined in the constitution are not adequate for the solution of these problems. They have got their Members in the State Legislative Assembly from the First General Election held in 1952. They got only one MLA upto 1962 election. In 1967 election two MLAs were elected from the community. Their representation was nil in the State Assembly in two elections *viz.*, 1978 and 1983. On the other hand, the Rabhas have so far got two ministers that too one and the same person became ministers of the State Council of Ministers on two occasions. Akan Rabha became a member for a period in the Assam Council of Ministers in 1990 and again he became a cabinet Minister during 1996-2001.<sup>140</sup>

The above picture reveals the Rabhas’ participation in the state politics since the First General Election held in 1952, which is undoubtedly not significant. Due to the scattered habitations of the community in various Assembly Constituencies they have failed in most of the elections to send more than one member to the State Legislature. Even in the district of Goalpara where Rabha population is dominant, they could succeed to elect

only one MLA. So during the post-independence period the control of the Rabhas on state politics has been not influencing and encouraging, which to a great extent responsible for the backwardness of the community. So the leaders of the community felt that the transfer of political and administrative powers to them only can solve their burning problems. So for achieving the goals the Rabhas have demanded creation of Rabha Hasong Autonomous state under Articles 244(A) and 275(A) and Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in the Rabha dwelling areas in Assam.<sup>141</sup>

To organize the Rabhas in favour of their demands several steps have been taken. As a part of these Goalpara District Rabha National Council was formed on 18-12-88 at Salpara under Goalpara district. Sri Dhaneswar Rabha and Sri Sulochan Rabha became its president and secretary respectively.<sup>142</sup> Under the efforts of the Goalpara District Rabha National Council a State Level Conference was held from July 21 to 22, 1992 at Salpara where the leading organizations of the community viz. All Rabha National Council, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, All Rabha Students' Union, etc. took part. In this conference "The Rabha Hasong Demand Committee" was formed and Sarat Ch. Rabha and Sulochan Rabha became its first President and Secretary respectively.<sup>143</sup>

The Rabha Hasong Demand Committee demanded autonomy for the Rabha Community. It also took various agitational phases to create pressure on the government to fulfil their demands. In the autonomy movement, the All Rabha Students' Union extended active co-operation to the Rabha Hasong Demand Committee. These two leading organizations took various peaceful methods like demonstration, rally, dharna, bandh

including submission of memoranda to the government during the course of their autonomy movement.

They demanded<sup>144</sup>

- (1) Rabha Hasong Autonomous State within the State of Assam covering Joyramkuchi G.P. in Goalpara District to Dakshin Rani Mouza in Kamrup District.
- (2) Rabha Hasong Autonomous District within the District of Darrang.
- (3) Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council within the Districts of Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Nalbari and Sonitpur.
- (4) Rabha Hasong Autonomous Village Council in the Districts of Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Demaji, Nagaon, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Karbi-Anglong, and Demoria areas of Kamrup.
- (5) Reservation of 5 (five) seats for the Rabhas in the Bodoland Autonomous Council.

The above two organizations succeeded in uniting all the Rabhas dwelling in various parts of Assam, and received support of the community. The Autonomy Movement of the Rabhas came to an end with the signing of "Rabha Accord" with the Government of Assam on March, 10, 1995.<sup>145</sup>

The Rabha Accord was signed between the Government of Assam and the representatives of the Rabha Hasong Demand Committee and the All Rabha Students' Union in presence of the then Chief Minister of Assam Hiteswar Saikia. The signatories included the President and General Secretary of the Rabha Hasong Demand Committee and those of the All Rabha Students' Union.<sup>146</sup>

The Rabha Accord provides the setting up of Administrative Authority for the areas predominantly inhabited by the Rabhas. The objectives of the Administrative Authority are to provide maximum possible autonomy within the framework of the constitution of India for social, economic, educational, ethnic and cultural advancement of the Rabha people in the state.<sup>147</sup>

The Accord provides for constitution of a council which shall be known as “Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council”. The council shall be the Apex Council consisting of satellite areas of village council, called the Rabha Hasong Village Council. The village council shall be constituted with villages having more than 50% of the tribal population in the Rabha dominated areas with population of 6000-8000. The Accord has also provided for suitable legislation to be made by the State Government for the constitution of the Apex Council.<sup>148</sup>

It has also been included in the Accord that the provisions of Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 and the Assam Municipal Act, 1994 (amended) shall not apply to the areas of the villages included in Rabha Hasong Village Council. Moreover, the Apex Council shall have the power to make bye-laws / rules and orders which shall apply to all the village councils.<sup>149</sup>

The Accord provides long lists of powers and functions in respect of execution of developmental schemes both for the Apex Council and Village Councils. Accordingly the Apex Council shall have jurisdiction over 34 subjects and those of the village councils 29 subjects.<sup>150</sup>

In accordance with the provision of the Accord the “Assam Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council” Act was passed in 1995 and accordingly first interim Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council was constituted in 1995 with Sri Sabyasachi Rabha as the Chief Executive Member. Dudhnoi in Goalpara district was made its Headquarter. Similarly, the second Autonomous Council was constituted in 1997 with Sri Sarat Ch. Rabhas as the Chief Executive Member. And the third interim council was constituted in 2001 with Dr. Sarat Ch. Rabha as the Chief Executive Member.<sup>151</sup>

The Rabha Accord has provided the Rabhas with substantial political and administrative powers and functions with necessary funds. As a first step of the implementation of the Accord, “Assam Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council Act” was passed in 1995. In the same year the first interim Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council was constituted which covers the jurisdiction from Jayramkuchi of Goalpara district to Rani of Kamrup district. So far three consecutive interim councils have been constituted. In spite of such developments different Rabha organizations seem not satisfied with these. Several factors have been raised by the community in support of their dissatisfaction. It has been alleged that the State Government has failed to implement the different clauses and provisions of the Rabha Accord. Even after passing several years the elections to the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council and Rabha Hasong Village Councils have not yet been held. Government has failed to amend the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 to exempt the Rabha Autonomous Council areas from the purview of the Panchayat Act. Under these circumstances the leading Rabha organizations *viz.*, All Rabha Students’ Union, All Rabha Women Council and Autonomy Demand Committee, demanded amendment of the “Rabha



Hasong Autonomous Council Act 1995". Moreover they have also demanded amendment of the Rabha Autonomous Council and its inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution.<sup>152</sup>

From the above discussion it is clear that though in theory the Rabha Accord has brought about substantial Political – Administrative changes in the Rabha inhabited areas of Assam, the people belonging to the community are not satisfied due to the non-implementation of the Accord. They have been demanding the inclusion of Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council in the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian Constitution. This has been reflected in the 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial conference of "All Rabha Students' Union" and 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial conference of "All Rabha Women Council" held from February 11 to February 13, 2002 at Tokankata (Tongla) in Darrang district.<sup>153</sup>

### **Political Changes among the Hajongs:**

Unlike the Rabhas, no such notable political changes have been noticed among the Hajongs of Goalpara district. Hajong inhabited villages in the district are Rupnagar, Bishnupur, Sidhabari, Kadamtola Paschim, Matia, Dubapara, Baguan, Rakshasini Pahar, Dhamor Reserve, Harimura, Bhalukdubi, Medhipara, Bhaibaini, Takimari and Suarkona. Except Suarkona the Hajongs of all other villages migrated to India from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1964. They were first kept at Matia camp established by the Government and then rehabilitated in phased manner in the above mentioned villages. On the other hand, the Hajongs of Suarkona village are the original inhabitants.<sup>154</sup>

The above mentioned villages fall under three Legislative Assembly Constituencies of the district, *viz.*, Dudhnoi (ST), Goalpara East and Goalpara West. The Hajongs are not

confined in one constituency, rather they are found scattered more or less in these three constituencies. So their numerical strength is too insufficient to influence the electoral politics of each of the constituencies. Political parties also give less importance on them. Due to this reason they are still very backward. The people belonging to this community are educationally very backward. Most of them are illiterate. Due to their illiteracy they are politically not conscious.

They are even not conscious about their rights and liberties provided in the constitution. That is why they are lagging far far behind in comparison with the other tribal communities in so far as their political development is concerned. Not only in Goalpara district but the political role of the community in other districts of Assam has remained the same.

So from the above discussion it is found that no considerable change in political activity of the Hajong community has taken place in the district of Goalpara. Of course as a result of the growth of some social organizations *viz.*, Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Sammttee, Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti, Asom Meghalaya Hajong Unnayan Samiti a change in the outlook among the community has been noticed. The said organizations, at least have succeeded in uniting all the Hajongs of various part of North East India. The leaders of the Hajong community have to a great extent succeeded to arouse consciousness among the community which was reflected in the 12<sup>th</sup> conference of Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti held from February 10 to February 12, 1979 at Dhamor Reserve in Goalpara district.<sup>155</sup> It is hoped that in near future the community will be able to play an active role in the political life of the state and also enjoy the political rights provided in the constitution like the other tribal communities.

## References:

1. Rabha (Ronkho). Listi, "The Rabhas at a Glance", an article published in the Souvenir of Dodan Mela Silver Jubilee, edited by Durjyodhan Rabha, published by Bhabendra Ch. Rabha, General Secretary, Dodan Than Committee, Baida, Goalpara, 1995, P. 6
2. Kama. Jagat, "Dharmantor-Jatyantor, Bhasantor", an article published in the "Singi Hurang" Mouthpiece (Second issue) of All Rabha Students' Union, edited by Hitesh Rabha, published by Mati Ram Rabha, General Secretary, All Rabha Students' Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara (R.A.C.), 1999, pp. 16-17
3. Mandal. R.K. "Ray Saheb Panchanan Barma", (The Great Emancipator for the farmers), an article published in "The Pioneering Social Reformers of India" edited by J. Kishore and P.C. Ray, published by Wisdom Publications, New Delhi, First Edition, 2001, p. 171.
4. Rabha (Ronkho). Listi, "The Rabhas at a Glance" an article published in the Souvenir of Dodan Mela Silver Jubilee, edited by Durjyodhan Rabha, published by Bhabendra Ch. Rabha, General Secretary, Dodan Than Committee, Baida, Goalpara, 1995, p. 6.
5. Informant. Mihir, Rabha. age 75 years, Pipalibari, Goalpara.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

8. Informant. Dhaneswar, Das. age 72 years, Mogho, Goalpara (He belongs to Rangdani section of the Rabhas) He was initiated into the "Chaitanyapantha" in 1949. He abandoned his original title 'Rabha' and accepted the title 'Das'. There are 15 (fifteen) 'Chaitanya Panthi' Rabha families at Mogho).
9. Ibid.
10. Informant. Bishnu, Das. age 35 years, Mogho, Goalpara. He belongs to the Rangdani section of the Rabhas. He belongs to a family which converted to Chaitanya Pantha.
11. Informant. Dhaneswar, Das. age, 72 years, Mogho, Goalpara. (First conversion to the 'Anukul Pantha' started in 1964. In that year one family of Baida area was initiated into this faith. Since then gradual conversion has been going on and the total number of families reached at 50).
12. Ibid.
13. Saikia, M.C. "The Rabhas: A peep into their Acculturation Process", an article published in the Bulletin, Volume- I, Number- I, 1983, of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, edited and published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, 1983, p. 24
14. Informant. Jayanta, Rabha, age 36 years, Mukri, Goalpara.
15. Saikia, M.C. "The Rabhas: A peep into their Acculturation Process", an article published in the Bulletin, Volume- I, Number- I, 1983, of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, edited and published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, 1993, p. 24

16. Informants: Dhaneswar Rabha, age 75 years, Kothakuthi, Goalpara, (He was initiated into the Sankarite Vaisnavism in 1964 and in the same year he became a member of 'Sankar Sangha').
17. Informant. Sarbananda Rabha, age 56 years, Muslum Goalpara.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Informant. Pati Ram Rabha, age 63 years, Mukri, Goalpara.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Rabha Mani, "Dharmiya Sanskritir Prabhab", an article published in the Souvenir, Silver Jubilee of Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sanmilan, edited by Ganapati Pam, Chhota Matia, 1987, p. 44
24. Rabha, Heramba Kr. "Jatiya Jibanar Kandari", an article published in the "Purbanchal", Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (RAC), 1997, p. 11 (Late Gobardhan Chandra Sarkar of village Chitalmari Bongaon under Rangjuli Revenue Circle of Goalpara district, an eminent personality, educationist and social worker belonging to Rabha Community protested against the conversion of the Rabhas to Brahma Dharma).

25. Rabha, Mani, "Dharmiya Sanskritir Prabhab", an article published in the Souvenir, Silver Jubilee of Dudhnoi Pachimanchal Rabha Sanmilan, edited by Ganapati Pam, Chhota Matia, 1987, p. 43
26. Saikia, M.C. "The Rabhas: A Peep into their Acculturation Process", an article published in the Bulletin, Volume- I, Number- I, 1983, of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, edited and published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, 1983, p. 24
27. Informant. Bishnu Das, age 35 years, Mógho, Goalpara.
28. Informant. Tishilal Rabha, age 50 years, Debitola, Dhubri.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
- 31 Saha, Rebati Mohan, "Rabha Janajati Artha-Samajik Samashya", an article published in the "Mouthpiece" of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum), edited by Mugacharan Rangag and published by Prakash Rabha, General Secretary, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, Dudhnoi, Goalpara (R.H.A.C), 2001, p. 9
32. Hakacham. Upen Rabha, "Rabha Janogosthi", an article published in the 'Asomiya Khabor', an Assamese Daily (Budhboria Paripurika), edited by Atanu Bhuyan and published by Mayur Talukdar, Guwahati, dated, December, 5, 2001, p. ka.
33. Hakacham. Upen Rabha, "Pati Rabha Sakalar Katitha Asomiyat Rabha Bhasar Upadan", an article published in the "Purbanchal", Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi

- Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Bhaben Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (R.H.A.C),2002, p.I.
34. Informant. Sarbananda Rabha, age 56 years, Muslum, Goalpara.
35. Saikia, M.C. "The Rabhas: A Peep into their Acculturation Process", an article published in the Bulletin, Volume- I, Number- I, 1983 of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, edited and published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, 1983, p. 23
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Rabha Mani, "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines', Shillong, First publication,1994, p. 95
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid, p. 97.
41. Ibid.
42. Informant. Sunil Rabha age 44 years, Rabhapara, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
43. Rabha, Mani, "Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi", published by Manash Jyoti Sarma, for and on behalf of 'Pines' Shillong, First Publication, 1994, p. 73
44. Ibid. p 75
45. Ibid. p. 77
46. Informant Sunil Rabha, age 44 years, Rabhapara, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.

47. Informant. Pati Ram Rabha, age 63 years, Mukri, Goalpara.
48. Informant. Sarbananda Rabha, age 56 years, Muslum, Goalpara.
49. Bordoloi, B.N., G.C. Sharma Thakur, M.C. Saikia, "The Rabhas", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam" Part- I published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, First edition, 1987, p. 131
50. Rabha. Gunadhar, "Baikho Pujar Chamu Janma Kahini", an article published in the "Enajari", Souvenir of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Hira Prabha Rabha, published by the Reception Committee, 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Daranggiri, Goalpara, 2002, p. 8
51. Rabha. Malina Devi, "Asomiya Aru Rabha Samaj Sanskritir Swarup", published by M.F.L. Publications, Dhupdhara, Goalpara, First edition, 1999, p. 70.
52. Bordoloi, B.N., G.C. Sharma Thakur, M.C. Saikia, "The Rabhas", an article published in the Tribes of Assam, Part- I, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam Guwahati, First Edition, 1987, p. 123.
53. Rabha. Malina Devi, "Asomiya Aru Rabha Samaj Sanskritir Swarup", published by M.F.L. Publications, Dhupdhara, Goalpara, First Edition, 1999, p. 70.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid. p. 71.
56. Informant. Jayanta Rabha, age 36 years, Mukri, Goalpara.
57. Bhushan. Vidya, D.R. Sachdeva, "An Introduction to Sociology", published by Kitab Mahal, Allagabad, Seventeenth Edition, 1987, p. 102.



58. Rabha (Ronkho) Listi, "The Rabhas at a Glance", an article published in the Souvenir of Dodan Mela Silver Jubilee, edited by Durjyodhan Rabha, published by Bhabendra Ch. Rabha, General Secretary, Dodan Than Committee, Baida, Goalpara, 1995, p. 6.
59. Rabha. Malina Devi, "Asomiya Aru Rabha Samaj Sanskritir Swarup", published by M.F.L. Publications, Dhupdhara, Goalpara, First Edition, 1999, pp. 12-13.
60. Hakacham. Upen Rabha, "A Brief Introduction to Rabha Language and Literature", an article published in the Souvenir of Dodan Mela Silver Jubilee, edited by Durjyodhan Rabha, published by Bhabendra Ch. Rabha, General Secretary, Dodan Than Committee, Baida, Goalpara, 1995, p. 14.
61. Koch. Jibeswar, "Uttar-Purbanchalor Gosthigata Chetana Aru Rabhasakal", an article published in the 'Souvenir', All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, edited by Jibeswar Koch and published by Ratan Kr. Koch, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Kachugaon, Kokrajhar, 1994, p. 33.
62. Baruah, P.N. Dutta, "Directions for Rabha Sahitya Sabha", an article published in the Souvenir of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, edited by Jibeswar Koch, published by Ratan Kr. Koch, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Kachugaon, Kokrajhar, 1994, p. I.
63. Koch. Jibeswar, "Rabha Sahitya Sabhar 25 Basor : Eti Parikrama", an article published in the 'Mouthpiece', All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum), edited by Jibeswar Koch and published by Shabya Shachi Rabha, General Secretary, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, 1998, p. 2.

64. Rangag. Mugacharan, (ed.) "Mouthpiece", All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, published by Prakash Rabha, General Secretary, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, Dudhnoi, Goalpara (R.H.A.C), 2001, p. 50.
65. Koch. Jibeswar, "Rabha Sahitya Sabhar 25 Basor : Eti Parikrama", an article published in the 'Mouthpiece', All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, edited by Jibeswar Koch and published by Shabya Shachi Rabha, General Secretary, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, 1998, p. 13.
66. Sarkar. Harimohan, "Rabha Jatir Kandari Gobardhan Chandra Sarkar", an article published in the 'Purbanchal', Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (R.A.C), 1997, pp. 74-75.
67. Ibid. p. 75.
68. Rabha. Mani, "Rabha Sakalar Samajik Aru Rajnaitik Chetana", an article published in the Souvenir, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, edited by Jibeswar Koch and published by Ratan Kr. Koch, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Kachugaon, Kokrajhar, 1994, p. 21.
69. Rabha. Deben, "Concise History of All Rabha National Council", an article published in the Souvenir, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of All Rabha National Council, edited by Kailash Rabha, published by Laba Ram Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Beltola-Bangaon, Guwahati, 1995, p. 37.
70. Ibid.

71. Sarkar. Harimohan, “Rabha Jatir Kandari Gobardhan Chandra Sarkar”, an article published in the ‘Purbanchal’, Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha, and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (R.A.C), 1997, p. 76.
72. Ibid. p. 75.
73. Ibid. p. 76.
74. Ibid. p. 80.
75. Rabha. Deben, “Concise History of All Rabha National Council”, an article published in the Souvenir, 30<sup>th</sup> annual Conference of All Rabha National Council, edited by Kailash Rabha, published by Laba Ram Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Beltola-Bangaon, Guwahati, 1995, p. 37.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., p. 38.
78. Sarkar. Harimohan, “Rabha Jatir kandari Gobardhan Chandra Sarkar”, an article published in the ‘Purbanchal’, Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (R.A.C.) 1997, p. 78.
79. Source: “Purbanchal”, Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (R.A.C.), 1997, pp. 143-146.
80. Sarkar. Harimohan, “Rabha Jatir Kandari Gobardhan Chandra Sarkar”, an article published in the ‘Purbanchal’, Mouthpiece of Didhnoi Purbanchal Rabha

Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (R.A.C), 1997, p.78.

81. Pam. Rabin, “Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sanmilan Sangathanar Gati Prabah”, an article published in the ‘Souvenir’, Silver Jubilee, Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rabha Sanmilan, edited by Ganapati Pam, Chhotamatia, Goalpara, 1987, p.5.
82. Ibid., p. 6
83. Ibid., p. 5
84. Source: “Souvenir”, Silver Jubilee, Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Someswar Rabha, and published by Silver Jubilee Celebration Samiti, Bardamal, Goalpara, 1995, p. 30.
85. Rabha. Charumohan, “Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samajar Karyakalapar Eti Khatiyar”, an article published in the ‘Hasongi Khurang’, Mouthpiece of Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj (Silver Jubilee Special Issue), edited by Bidur Kumar Rabha, published by Sita Ram Rabha, General Secretary, Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, Baida Goalpara, 2002, p.24.
86. Rabha. Bidur Kumar, “Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samajar Artha-Samajik, Bhaugalik Aru Saikhyik Disar Rengani”, an article published in the ‘Hasongi Khurang’, Mouthpiece of Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj (Silver Jubilee Special Issue), edited by Bidur Kumar Rabha, published by Sita Ram Rabha, General Secretary, Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, Baida, Goalpara, 2000, pp. 54-55.

87. Source: Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Vyvastha, edited by Listi Ram Rabha, Prakash Chandra Rabha, and Charu Mohan Rabha, published by the General Secretary, Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, Rongsai, Baida, Goalpara, Second Revised Edition, 1982-83.
88. Rabha. Bidur Kumar, "Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samajar Artha-Samajik, Bhaugalik Aru Saikhyik Disar Rengani", an article published in the 'Hasongi Khurang', Mouthpiece of Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj (Silver Jubilee Special Issue) edited by Bidur Kumar Rabha, published by Sita Ram Rabha, General Secretary, Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, Baida, Goalpara, 2000, p. 53.
89. Hazarika, Niru, "Profile of Youth Organisations in North-East India", Volume- I, Assam, published by V.V. Rao Institute of Micro Studies and Research, Guwahati, Assam, First edition, 1998, p.246.
90. Ibid.
91. Source: Memorandum of Settlement (Rabha Accord) March 10, 1995, Guwahati.
92. Hazarika. Niru, "Profile of Youth organisations in North-East India", Volume- I, Assam, published by V.V. Rao Institute of Micro Studies and Research, Guwahati, Assam, First Edition, 1998, p. 254.
93. Source: "The Assam Tribune", an English Daily, edited by P.G. Baruah, published by Mahim Patowary, Guwahati, dated, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2002, p. 6.
94. Source: "Twnai", a Magazine of Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, edited by Girish Rabha and published by Bhakat Ch. Chira, General secretary,

Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, First Publication, 1994-95.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

97. Source: "Twnai", Magazine of Goalpara district Rabha Students' Union, edited by Niranjan Rabha Rungdung, and published by Dhruba Narayan Rabha, General secretary, Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Second Publication, 1998-99.

98. Source: "Twnai", Magazine of Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, edited by Girish Rabha, and published by Bhakat Ch. Chira, General secretary, Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, First Publication, 1994-95.

99. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.

100. Sources: "The Constitution of the All Rabha Women Council".

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.

103. Source: "Singi Hurang", Mouthpiece (Second Issue) of the All Rabha Students' Union, edited by Hitesh Rabha, and published by Mati Ram Rabha, General Secretary, All Rabha Students' Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, (R.A.C), 1999.

104. Bordoloi. Dr. B.N. "The Hajongs", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam" Part- III, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes. Guwahati, First Edition, 1991. p. 42.

105. Village 'Headman' and 'Priest'. He discharges the socio-religious rites of the Hajongs.
106. Rupnagar, Bishnupur, Kadamtola Paschim, Dhamor Reserve. These four villages under district of Goalpara, are inhabited by the Hajongs.
107. Bordoloi. B.N. "The Hajongs", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam" Part-III, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, First Edition, 1991, p. 27.
108. Hajong. Paresh, "Hajong Bia Aru Bibah Paddhati", an article in Assamese published in the 'Dainik Assam', an Assamese Daily, edited by Kirti Nath Hazarika, published by Mohan Tamuly, Guwahati, dated 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1985, p.3.
109. The Hajongs are divided into two groups on the basis of their religious beliefs, *viz.*, "Saktas" and 'Bhaktas'. Most of the Hajongs are 'Saktas' and only a few are 'Bhaktas' i.e. 'Vaisnavas'.
110. Informant. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
111. 'Namkaran' of a new born baby is known as the 'Harinam' in the Hajong society.
112. Informant. Nidhan Ch. Hajong, age 62 years, Rupnagar, Goalpara.
113. Hajong. Paresh, "Hajong Bia Aru Bibah Paddhati", an article in Assamese published in the 'Dainik Asom' an Assamese Daily, Edited by Kirti Nath Hazarika, an published by Mohan Tamuly, Guwahati, dated 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1985, p. 4.

114. Bordoloi. B.N. "The Hajongs", an article published in the "Tribes of Assam" Part-III published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, First edition, 1001, p. 25.
115. Ghosh. G.K. "Tribals and Their Culture", (Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram) Volume-I, published by Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1992, p. 38.
116. Sen. Sipra, "Tribes and Castes of Assam", published by Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991, p. 136.
117. Informant. Biren Hajong, age 72 years, Tura, Meghalaya.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. Informant. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
122. Ibid.
123. Informant. Haranath Hajong, age 45 years, Kadamtola Paschim, Goalpara.
124. Informants. Haranath Hajong, age 45 years, Kadamtola Paschim, Goalpara, Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
125. Informant. Nidhan Ch. Hajong, age 62 years, Rupnagar, Goalpara.
126. Informant. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
127. Ibid.
128. Grierson. G.A. "Linguistic Survey of India", Volume- V, Indo-Aryan Family, Eastern Group, Part- I, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna, Reprint, 1968, p. 214.



129. Majumdar. D.N. "An Account of the Hinduised Communities of Western Meghalaya", an article published in the "Garo Hills Land and the People", edited by L.S. Gassah, published by Omsons Publications, New Delhi, First Edition, 1984, p. 151.
130. Barman. Motilal, "Hajong Samaj Aru Sanskriti", an article published in the Souvenir, Golden Jubilee Celebration of Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti, edited by Kanu Ram Hajong, Lakhimpur, 1987, p. 40
131. Source: 'Dohar', a Magazine of the Hajong Language and Socio-Cultural Affairs, edited by Kanu Ram Hajong Dhamar, Goalpara, First Issue, 1992.
132. Hajong. Rathindra Nath, "Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samitir Karya Bibarani", an article published in the 'Chetana', Mouthpiece of Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti, edited by Lakhindar Hajong, and published by Rathindra Nath Hajong, Tura, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, 1984.
133. Hajong. Biren, "Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samitila Khatak Itibritta", an article published in the Souvenir of the Fourteenth Conference of Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti, edited by Bhadreswar Hajong, Karaigara, West Khasi Hill, Meghalaya, 1985, p. 3.
134. Hajong. Rathindra Nath, "Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samitir Karya Bibarani", an article published in the 'Chetana' Mouthpiece of Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti, edited by Lakhindar Hajong, and published by Rathindra Nath Hajong, Tura, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, 1984.
135. Ibid.

136. Hajong. Biren, "Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samitila Khatak Itibritta", an article published in the 'Souvenir' of the Fourteenth Conference of Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti, edited by Bhadreswar Hajong, Karaigora, West Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, 1985, p. 3.
137. Ibid.
138. Rabha. Utpal Chandra, "Rabha Chhatra Santhai Kar Pratinidhitta Kariba", an article published in the 'Twnai' Magazine of Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, edited by Niranjana Rabha Rungdung and published by Dhruba Narayan Rabha, General Secretary, Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Second Publication, 1998-99, p. 22.
139. Source: "A Humble Memorandum to the Honourable Chief Minister of Assam", submitted by the Rabha Hasong Demand Committee, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Dated 10-11-93.
140. Hakim Chandra Rabha was elected MLA in 1952 and 1957 elections from one of the Double-Member Goalpara Constituency. He was also elected MLA from the Dudhnoi (ST) constituency in 1962 election. Sarat Ch. Rabha and Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha were elected MLAs from Dudhnoi (ST) and Tezpur constituencies respectively in 1967 election Mrs. Anandi Bala Rabha was elected MLA from Dudhnoi (ST) constituency in 1972 election Akan Rabha was elected MLA in 1985 election and again in 1996 election from the Dudhnoi (ST) constituency. Pranay Rabha has been elected MLA in 2001 election from Dudhnoi (ST) constituency. On the other hand Pani

Ram Rabha was elected MLA. Twice in 1991 and 2001 elections from Barama constituency.

141. Source: "A Humble Memorandum to the Honourable Chief Minister of Assam", submitted by the Rabha Hasong Demand Committee, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Dated 10-11-93.
142. Rabha Dhaneswar, "Rabha Hajong Prasongat Kishu Sonwaran", an article published in the 'Purbanchal', Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (RAC), 1997, pp. 23-24.
143. Rabha. Dhaneswar, "Rabha Hasongar Abhash", an article published in the 'Purbanchal', Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Bhaben Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (RAC), 2002, p. 9.
144. Source: A Humble memorandum to the Honourable Chief Minister of Assam", submitted by the Rabha Hasong Demand Committee, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Dated 10-11-93.
145. Source: "Memorandum of Settlement" (Rabha Accord), Guwahati, March' 10, 1995.
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid.

150. Ibid.
151. Dhaneswar, "Rabha Hasongor Abhash", an article published in the 'Purbanchal', Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Bhaben Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (RAC), 2002, p. 10.
152. Source: "A Memorandum of the Question of Granting Autonomy to the Rabha Tribal Inhabited Areas of Assam", dated September' 3, 1998.
153. "Inclusion of Rabhas in the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule Demanded", under this caption a report published in the "The Assam Tribune" an English daily published from Guwahati, edited by P.G. Baruah and published by Mahim Patowary, dated February, 25, 2002, p. 6.
154. Informant. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
156. Sarkar, Suddagshu, "Hajong Unnayan Samitir Aitihashik Dwadash Adhibeson", an article published in the 'Souvenir' of Golden Jubilee Celebration of Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti edited by Kanu Ram Hajong, published by Abani Hajong, Lakhimpur, Assam, 1987, p. 8.

## ***CHAPTER V***

### **SOCIO-POLITICAL PROBLEMS**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Rabhas and the Hajongs are two tribal communities inhabiting in Assam and Meghalaya.

In Assam the Rabhas are found in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Darrang, and Sonitpur. But they are mainly concentrated in the district of Goalpara. In Meghalaya they are found in East and West Garo Hills districts.<sup>1</sup> There are about 80 (eighty) Rabha villages in Meghalaya and the tribe has been recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in Meghalaya.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, in Assam the Hajongs are found in the districts of Goalpara, Dhubri, Marigaon, Lakhimpur and Dhemaji. But their main concentration is found in the district of Goalpara. In Meghalaya they are mainly found in Garo Hills.<sup>3</sup> The Hajongs and the Rabhas have been recognized as Scheduled Tribes in Meghalaya.

Besides Assam and Meghalaya, a considerable number of Rabhas are dwelling in Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal.<sup>4</sup>

The Rabha people dwelling in the aforesaid three states are very backward even after fifty years of the independence of India.

The Rabhas are economically very backward. The economic condition of the Rabhas residing in Meghalaya and West Bengal is not better than those in Assam.

The economic condition of the community inhabiting in the district of Goalpara is bad in comparison to the other non-tribal communities.

The Rabhas of Goalpara district are also educationally most backward.

Various causes of the backwardness of the Rabhas of Goalpara district are briefly highlighted as follows:

- (a) Lack of awareness about the need and significance of education.
- (b) Non-availability of educational institutions.
- (c) Lack of transport and communication facilities.
- (d) Traditional methods of cultivation, and
- (e) Preparation of beer.

**(a) Lack of awareness about the need and significance of education:**

Most of the Rabhas living in the interior areas of Goalpara district are not aware about the need and significance of education. But it is a well-known fact that education is the vital factor for the development of any community. A considerable number of Rabhas do not send their sons and daughters to schools.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, a section of them even do not think about the education of their daughters. As a result of which most of the Rabha boys and girls remain illiterate, which has become a barrier in the way of the development of the community.

**(b) Non-availability of educational institutions:**

The Rabhas living in the interior villages do not get necessary facilities for imparting education to their sons and daughters. There are some Rabha villages where there is not even a Primary School,<sup>6</sup> not to speak of high schools. This is due to this reason that many Rabha guardians can not impart education to their sons and daughters.

**(c) Lack of transport and communication facilities:**

Many Rabha villages are deprived of the necessary facilities for transport and communication. As a result of which many Rabhas living in the interior villages are

ignorant about the development taken place in various aspects including science and technology, computer etc. On the other hand the roads connecting the interior Rabha villages and the P.W.D. roads are not developed and so not conducive for motor transport. As a result of which the rural people suffer a lot at the time of any emergency situation. For example, patients are very often carried by 'thelas' to the State Dispensaries or Primary Health Centres.

**(d) Traditional methods of cultivation:**

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood of the Rabhas. But they still follow the traditional methods of cultivation. Modern scientific methods has very little impact on the Rabhas<sup>7</sup>.

As a result of which agricultural production has not been increased. Apart from this the Rabhas produce only paddy required for domestic consumption. They have so far failed to transform husbandry into an industry.

**(e) Preparation of beer:**

Above all preparation of rice beer is a vital cause of the backwardness of the Rabhas<sup>8</sup>, specially those living in the rural areas. Taking rice beer is a regular phenomenon of some Rabhas.<sup>9</sup> They use major portion of paddy for the preparation of beer. This, undoubtedly, is responsible for the poor economic condition of a section of the Rabhas.<sup>10</sup>

The economic condition of the Hajongs is beyond description. The people belonging to Hajong community are so backward that they are even not aware of the modern developments of science, technology and computer. Their day to day life has not any bearing that they are human beings of twenty first century. They are lagging far far behind than the other neighbouring communities. It is observed that there are

various socio-political problems which have become barriers in the way of the development of the community. For taking necessary steps for the upliftment of the Hajongs, it is necessary to detect the problems and only then it will be possible to provide solutions. That is why it is absolutely relevant to investigate and analyse the various problems of the community.

### **Social Problems of the Rabhas:**

The problems noticed in the Rabha society may be discussed under the following heads.

- (a) Illiteracy,
- (b) Unemployment,
- (c) Superstition,
- (d) Preparation of beer, and
- (e) Poverty

#### **(a) *Illiteracy:***

Educationally the Rabhas are most backward.<sup>11</sup> It is the root cause of many other social problems among the community. To ascertain the educational scenario among the Rabhas latest available census report is analysed below.

As per 1971<sup>12</sup> census total population of the Rabhas in Assam was 1,38,630, out of which 71,497 were males and 67,133 were females. Their percentage to total state population was 0.95 and 8.63% to total scheduled tribe population. According to the same census the percentage of Rabhas to total plains tribes population was 10.31.<sup>13</sup>



On the other hand total literate population among the Rabhas in the state of Assam was 30,828 which accounts only 22.24 percent. The percentage of male literacy was 31.23% and that of the female literacy was 12.66%.

As per the same census total population of the Rabhas in the district of Goalpara was 68,219, out of which 35,099 were males and the remaining 33,120 were females. The percentage of Rabhas to total population in the district was 17.23% which is higher than the state's percentage. On the other hand total literate population among the Rabhas in the district was 17,462 out of which 12,436 were males and the remaining 5,026 were females.<sup>14</sup>

The percentage of literates among the community in the district was 25.59%. On the other hand, the percentage of literates among the males was 35.43% and the percentage among the females was 15.17%.

A glimpse into the above picture clearly shows the gloomy picture of literacy among the Rabhas. The percentage of literates among the females is less than half of the males. This is definitely a pathetic condition of educational progress among the females of the Rabhas, which is one of the vital reasons for the backwardness of the community.<sup>15</sup>

There are many factors which stand in the way of the educational progress among the Rabhas. First and foremost of them is that most of the Rabhas live in rural and remote areas.<sup>16</sup>

As per the census report of 1971, the total population of the Rabhas in the state of Assam was 138,630, out of which 138,007 lived in rural areas and the remaining 623 lived in urban areas.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the total population of the community in the

district of Goalpara was 68,219 and out of which 67,851 lived in the rural areas and the remaining 386 lived in the urban areas.<sup>18</sup>

According to the census report of 1991 total number of Rabha language (Mother tongue)<sup>19</sup> speaking population in the state of Assam is 112,408 and out of which 111,542 live in rural areas and the remaining 866 live in urban areas. On the other hand, total number of Rabha language (Mother tongue) speaking population in the district of Goalpara is 49,744, out of which 49,437 live in rural areas and the remaining 307 live in urban areas.<sup>20</sup>

Though most of the Rabhas live in rural areas, educational facilities are too limited in these areas. There are some villages inhabited by the Rabhas where there are no High Schools. It is noticed that these are some Rabha villages where there are not even Primary schools. There is only one primary school between two or more villages. There is no high school at 'Mogho' a big village inhabited by the Rabha people under Lakhipur Revenue Circle in the district of Goalpara.<sup>21</sup> Another such example is 'Mukri', a village inhabited by the Maitori Rabhas under Balijana Revenue Circle in the district of Goalpara, has no High School for imparting secondary education to the boys and girls of the village.<sup>22</sup> There is no High School at 'Muslum' a big village inhabited by the Pati Rabhas, under Rangjuli Revenue Circle of Goalpara district.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, this village comprises two parts, each part should have one Primary School but there is only one Primary School for the whole village which can not accommodate all the boys and girls of the village.<sup>24</sup>

Under the circumstances, many Rabha boys and girls in spite of strong desire do not receive education.

On the other hand, most of the illiterate Rabha people living in the interior villages are not conscious about the significance of education. As a result, instead of sending their sons to schools, they send them to herd cattles.<sup>25</sup>

The daughters are engaged in the domestic activities. The Rabhas living in the interior areas have no conception as to the need of girls' education. They give more importance on the education of boys. Because the boys are considered to be an asset of the family. They are the earning sources of the family. Since the daughter after marriage, will go away to her husband's house, that is why the guardians are not interested to send her to school.<sup>26</sup>

**(b) *Unemployment:***

Unemployment is one of the serious burning problems facing India. This problem has engulfed more or less all the constituent states of the Republic of India. Assam, being a constituent state of India is also equally facing this problem. This problem is found among all the ethnic groups inhabiting in the state of Assam.

The Rabha people comprise a major ethnic group found in different district of Assam. As the study area of this research work is confined in the district of Goalpara, the highest Rabha inhabited district in the State, the unemployment problem is analysed in the light of the district of Goalpara.

Like other communities the problem of unemployment has taken a serious turn among the Rabhas.<sup>27</sup> This has come to the knowledge of the researcher when he has conducted field work in Rabha inhabited areas and met persons belonging to the community.

Different kinds of unemployment viz., educational unemployment, seasonal unemployment, disguised unemployment are found among the Rabhas.<sup>28</sup>

**Educational unemployment:**

Educational unemployment has created a major problem in the Rabha society in recent years. Even few years back there was hardly any educated youth found unemployed among the Rabha community. Now the picture is quite different. There are many educated including matriculate, intermediate, graduate and even post-graduate youths found among the Rabhas who have got no employment.<sup>29</sup>

The list of educated unemployed youths among the Rabhas will increase as a result of coming out of youths after completion of education from various educational institutions every year. This has disastrous consequences. Because this problem will create disorganization in the Rabha society.<sup>30</sup> So it is appropriate time to take necessary steps for the solution of unemployed problem in the Rabha society.

**Seasonal unemployment:**

Seasonal unemployment is found among those Rabha people who are engaged in agriculture. About 90% (ninety per cent) of the Rabha population depends on agriculture and paddy is their only cultivable crop.<sup>31</sup> They cultivate paddy once or twice a year. As most of the Rabha cultivators do not cultivate other crops except paddy and so many of them remained unemployed for months after the harvesting of paddy is over.

**Disguised unemployment:**

Disguised unemployment is also related to the Rabhas who are engaged in agriculture. In spite of being farmers, most of the Rabha people do not possess necessary and sufficient cultivable land. The lands possessed by the families are not proportionate to the working members of the families. As a result of which, having no alternative work they are compelled to engage themselves in the agricultural fields.

(c) ***Superstition:***

Superstition exists, more or less, in all societies. But it is deep rooted in the tribal societies. With the advancement of education and the development of science and technology it has been to a great extent extinguished from the non-tribal societies. But it still exists in the tribal societies. Though superstition has been extinguished to a great extent from the educationally advanced tribals, but it is still found among the illiterate and backward tribals living in the rural and interior areas.

Being a tribal community the Rabha people are not free from this social disease. Different kinds of superstition are noticed in the Rabha society. Virtually this is one of the major social problems which has become a barrier in the way of the development of the Rabhas.

**Superstition Relating to the Treatment of Diseases:**

The tribal people of Assam specially, those residing in the rural and interior areas are not conscious about their health. The vital cause of this is their illiteracy.<sup>32</sup>

The illiterate Rabha people are not conscious about their health and treatment of diseases. Superstition is so deep rooted among the Rabhas that they do not like to afford the modern medical treatments. They do not like to treat their patients by the doctors. In this age of science and technology they still think that diseases are caused by ghost and satans, gods, goddesses etc. And to get rid of the diseases they worship various ghosts, satans, gods, goddesses such as, 'ghor gosani', 'Nachini sila', 'Aai Daini', 'Baghdeu', 'Batordeu', 'Sildeu', 'Naodue', 'Chordue', 'Hamdeu', 'Banariya Gasain', etc.<sup>33</sup>

In spite of the availability of Hospitals, most of the Rabhas residing in the rural areas, do not go there for treatment of their patients. Instead, they go to the exorcists and conventional physicians for the treatment of their patients.<sup>34</sup> Due to large scale

illiteracy among the community, a considerable number of them have no faith on the modern scientific methods of treatment.<sup>35</sup> This section of the Rabhas have more faith on the native physicians and exorcists than the doctors. That is why they never go to hospitals.

#### **Superstition Relating to Cultivation:**

The Rabha people are primarily cultivators. Ninety percent (90%)<sup>36</sup> of the Rabhas residing in the rural areas depend on agriculture. Though agriculture is their main source of livelihood they have failed to achieve much success in this in comparison with the other neighbouring communities. They produce only such amount of crops *viz.*, paddy required for their domestic consumption. They have not taken agriculture as an industry. It is said that this is their inherent nature. They are very simple living community and so satisfied with what they need for their domestic consumption. So they do not want more than this. They still follow the traditional methods of cultivation. Most of the Rabha farmers do not utilize the modern methods of cultivation.<sup>37</sup> That is why in spite of being cultivators they have failed to achieve much progress in agriculture. Due to the prevalence of superstition, most of the cultivators do not use modern implements of cultivation, fertilizers, which lead to low production of crops.<sup>38</sup>

Many common Rabha farmers think that fertilizers harm the cultivable land and spread diseases to the crops. They also think that land should not be tilled by modern implements such as plough made of iron.<sup>39</sup> These are the instances of blind faith and superstition prevalent among the Rabhas. These blind faiths have debarred the Rabha farmers from adopting modern scientific methods of cultivation. As a result, the Rabha

farmers have failed to produce necessary crops to meet their domestic consumption. That is why the economic condition of many Rabhas has become miserable.

#### **Superstition Relating to Daini (witch):**

Another glaring example of superstition is the existence of the blind faith regarding 'Daini' among the tribal communities. The blind faith relating to daini has brought darkness in many tribal families. The superstition on daini is so deep rooted in the tribal societies that sometimes persons are mercilessly killed by the people on suspicion of being dainis. It is a major social disease exists in the tribal societies even in the present age of science.

Like other tribals this superstitious disease is found in the Rabha society also.<sup>40</sup> It is noteworthy to mention here is that daini is not a supernatural being, rather human beings, mostly woman, who according to the ordinary people become dainis by learning exorcism. According to the ordinary Rabha people the daini causes harm and diseases to the people. If any person detected on suspicion of being daini, he or she is not spared, rather mercilessly killed. The existence of daini is a clear indication of superstition in the Rabha society. The root cause of this disease is large scale illiteracy among the Rabhas.<sup>41</sup>

The superstition regarding daini is found among the Rabhas residing in various areas in the district of Goalpara.<sup>42</sup> In these areas the "Daini" is known as the "Than-Thin" daini. According to the common Rabha people this daini causes harm to the people in two ways. First, the person attacked by daini can not be cured and so ultimately dies. So this attack is very serious. And the second type of attack by daini is not so serious as the first one. Here the patient may be cured if worship is offered to the daini.<sup>43</sup>

The concept of daini has not yet been extinguished from the Rabha society. Some incidents of daini have been noticed in the Rabha society recently. The researcher has been informed about two such incidents occurred recently. First of this kind was occurred at village Rabha Para (Dhupdhara) in the district of Goalpara, where two persons i.e., husband and wife belonging to Rabha community were mercilessly killed by the people on suspicion of being dainies sometime in 2001.<sup>44</sup> Second incident occurred at Jyotigaon in the same district, where one woman was killed by the people on suspicion of being daini in 2001.<sup>45</sup>

Yet another incident relating to daini in the Rabha society occurred in 2001. Jonali Rabha aged 40, mother of four children of village Borjhora, Bhaparbhita under Lakhipur Police Station of Goalpara district, was suspected of being daini. She was required to pay a fine of Rs. 3001/- (Three thousand one) to the villagers. Her husband paid the amount by mortgaging his land. In the meanwhile Hajai Rabha, a villager became ill, for which Jonali Rabha was made responsible. She was again demanded a huge amount as fine. Otherwise she was threatened of disastrous consequences including capital punishment. It was not possible on the part of her husband to pay so huge amount. So she was compelled to leave her in-law's house and went to her father's house. Fortunately, the incident came to the knowledge of Goalpara unit of Assam Mahila Samata Society under its effort a case was filed at the Police Station. The Police arrested the guilty persons. Later the persons involved in the incident came to a compromise with Jonali Rabha.<sup>46</sup>

Though this social disease has been decreased to a considerable extent as a result of the advancement of education, but it has not yet been totally extinguished.



(d) *Preparation of Beer:*

Taking of home-made beer is largely prevalent in the tribal societies. Drinking of wine may be considered as a culture if it is done so within a limit i.e., taking drink in the various socio-religious festivals which is customary for many tribal communities. But it is observed that a section of the tribals do not maintain this custom, rather drinking beer has become a regular phenomenon for them, which cause harms to the society in many ways.

The Rabha people also is accustomed to this. According to the customary rules prevalent in the Rabha society wine is necessary for the performance of some socio-religious functions. But in practice it is observed that a section of the Rabhas is always busy with the drinking and sale of wine. This section is found specially among the illiterate Rabhas who reside in the interior and rural areas. This is one of the major social diseases found among the Rabhas which causes great harm to health and economy of the community.<sup>47</sup> The researcher has been informed that there is also such Rabha village where most of the households are busy with preparation of wine.<sup>48</sup> This is their only source of livelihood.

According to some eminent personalities belonging to the Rabha community, preparation of wine is the main reason of backwardness of the community.<sup>49</sup> It is a well known fact that wine causes harm in different ways. First it is harmful for the health.<sup>50</sup> Secondly it is harmful for the society and then families. It breaks peace and creates disorders in the society as well as in the families. And finally it causes economic harm to the families which prepare it.

It may be mentioned here is that preparation of wine is the vital cause of economic backwardness of a section of the Rabhas. They are lagging far behind than

the non-tribal Aryyas. It is due to excessive wine culture that the Rabhas have become mentally, physically and economically weak.<sup>51</sup> It may be mentioned here is that a section of the Rabhas uses major portion of paddy for the preparation of wine.<sup>52</sup> So the preparation of wine has brought economic problems to many families of the community and the consequence of which is disastrous.

**(e) Poverty:**

Poverty is one of the social problems faced by the Rabhas inhabiting in the rural areas. Most of the Rabha people live in villages and the primary source of their livelihood is agriculture. But in this age of science they still follow the traditional methods of cultivation.<sup>53</sup> They are yet to follow the modern scientific methods of cultivation. As a result of which production of food grain is not in proportion to the increased population.<sup>54</sup> And so the economic condition of the Rabhas become very worse.

On the other hand the number of persons working in Government Departments and in other institutions can be counted on fingers' end. It has come to the knowledge of the researcher during the time of his field study. Dhupdhara Rabhapara, a village under the district of Goalpara, has 66 households with a total population of about 400. Out of these only 5 service holders are there at the village.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Muslum, a village inhabited by Pati Rabhas, under the district of Goalpara, has 250 households with a population of about 1500. Out of these only 13 service holders are there.<sup>56</sup> So the aforesaid two instances show the pathetic economic condition of the Rabhas.

Rabha people living in the villages are economically very backward.<sup>57</sup> There are many Rabhas living in the rural areas who are daily wage earners.<sup>58</sup> The researcher has noticed many Rabha people who come out from homes every morning in search of

work in their own villages or the nearby areas. Besides wage earners there are beggars also. The researcher has met old persons belonging to Rabha community who regularly beg from house to house for bread.

Poverty is at the root of many other problems in the Rabha society. A section of the community fail to provide necessary food and clothing to the children and other members of their families. As a result of which they suffer from mal-nutrition which cause many diseases. Moreover due to poverty many guardians are not in a position to send their sons and daughters to schools. Instead, the sons help their parents in earning their livelihood. On the other hand, the daughters take care of their younger brothers and sisters thereby enable their mothers to manage the domestic affairs. On many occasions they also help their mothers in their day to day household activities. It is noteworthy to mention here is that sometimes parents keep their daughters as domestic servants and the earnings of whose are spent after the education of their sons.<sup>59</sup>

#### **Social Problems of the Hajongs:**

Various problems are noticed in the Hajongs society. These problems are responsible for the backwardness of the community. It may be mentioned here is that the Hajongs are more backward than the Rabhas.

The problems found in the Hajong society are discussed under the following heads.

- (a) Illiteracy
- (b) Unemployment
- (c) Poverty, and
- (d) Superstition

### Illiteracy:

The Hajongs are educationally most backward. Literacy level among the Hajongs is lower than the other backward tribals.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, literacy level among the Hajong women is lower than that of men. Majority of the Hajong women donot know how to write and how to read.<sup>61</sup> Available census reports and the data collected during the field study conducted in some Hajong villages reveal the pathetic and gloomy picture of educational progress among the Hajongs.

As per 1971<sup>62</sup> census total population of Hajongs in the state of Assam was 387, and out of which 228 were males and the remaining 159 were females. According to the same census total literate population among the community was 42 and out of which 34 males and 8 females.<sup>63</sup> The percentage of literates was 10.88%. On the other hand, the percentage of male literates was 14.98% and that of the females was 5.03%.<sup>64</sup>

So from the above statistics a gloomy picture of literacy scenario is noticed among the Hajongs. But the literacy level found in the census report of 1971 has changed to a great extent as a result of the increase of the number of literates among the Hajongs. This has come to the knowledge of the researcher during his field study conducted recently in a Hajong village.

Rupnagar, a village inhabited by the Hajongs under Rangjuli Revenue Circle of Goalpara district, has a total of 44 households. Total population of the village is 225 and out of which 111 are males and the remaining 114 are females. Total number of literates is 99. The percentage of literates is about 40. The researcher has been informed that the literate population comprises mostly the young boys and girls. Most of the aged persons including males as well females are illiterate.<sup>65</sup>

There are many causes for the low literacy percentage of the Hajongs. First, the economic condition of the community is very bad. Most of the Hajongs are farmers and they adopt the traditional methods of cultivation. They are yet to adopt the modern scientific methods of cultivation. Due to this agricultural production is very low and with this they are unable to afford the expenditure for educating their children.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, they are not conscious about the benefits of education. Instead of sending the boys to the schools they send them to the agricultural field.<sup>67</sup> The boys help their parents to maintain the family. On the other hand, the case of the girls is quite different. According to the parents, there is no utility of educating the girls because, after marriage they will leave the house.<sup>68</sup>

Another cause of illiteracy among a section of Hajongs is their poverty. The economic condition of these Hajongs is so worse that it is beyond description. This section of the Hajongs comprise the wage earners. The researcher has met persons belonging to the community in various areas in the district of Goalpara where he has been informed that a large number of Hajongs are daily wage earners. Both the husband and wife come out of their homes in the morning in search of work at their own villages or neighbouring villages. Their daily wages are not adequate for their subsistence. So, in such a position they are unable to educate their children. This position has been noticed at the Hajong villages, viz., Dhamar Reserve, Kadamtola Paschim, Bishnupur, under the district of Goalpara.<sup>69</sup>

#### **Unemployment:**

Like other communities, unemployment is also noticed among the Hajongs also. Though both educated and uneducated unemployed youths are seen among the Hajongs, the problem is acute among the uneducated than the educated youths. It is due

to the fact that the number of educated Hajongs are too limited. So they do not pose a serious problem. Yet the researcher has found some educated youths among the community during his field study. They include right from High School Leaving Certificate Examination passed to graduate. At Rupnagar, a Hajong village, there are seven unemployed youths which include one graduate, 3 higher secondary passed, and 3 H.S.L.C. passed. Out of the seven, one is a female.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, a total of 9 educated unemployed youths have been found at village Kodamtola Paschim under the district of Goalpara. They include 4 H.S.L.C. passed, 3 graduates and 3 Higher Secondary Passed,<sup>71</sup>

The unemployment problem has been found serious among the uneducated youths. It is due to non-availability of cultivable lands.<sup>72</sup> The researcher has visited several Hajong settlements under the district of Goalpara, where it has come to his knowledge that, in spite of being cultivators they do not possess adequate cultivable lands. On the other hands, there are many households having no cultivable lands, only half bighas of land per household for the construction of houses. There are seven bighas of cultivable land per household at Dhamar Reserve, a large village inhabited by 600 Hajongs families.<sup>73</sup> It may be mentioned here is that seven bighas of land is not sufficient for a family. The lands under possession are not proportionate to the increased members of a family. As a result of which some members have to remain unemployed.<sup>74</sup> They are to search other jobs which is also not possible in the district of Goalpara where there are no industries.

It has been noticed that at Rupnagar, a Hajong village, half bigha of land has been allotted to each household for the construction of houses. They have no cultivable land. Naturally this creates an occupational problem. Many Hajongs both males and

females have to remain unemployed. Having no alternative they are compelled to become wage earners.<sup>75</sup>

Similar situation has been noticed at village Bishnupur, a Hajong village under the district of Goalpara. Each household has only half bigha of land for the construction of houses. No family possesses cultivable land, which creates a major unemployment problem.<sup>76</sup>

Sidhabari, a village under Matia Revenue Circle of Goalpara district, is inhabited by the Hajongs. There are 260 households in this village. Each household possesses only 1 bigha of land. The Hajongs of the village do not possess cultivable land. As a result, most of them are unemployed.<sup>77</sup> So men as well as women are compelled to become wage earners for the maintenance of their families. They work as labourers in the nearby villages. A section of the young boys work as labourers in the coal industries in Tura and some young boys have become domestic servants.<sup>78</sup>

#### **Poverty:**

Poverty has become a serious problem in the Hajong society. Ninety per cent (90%) of the Hajong population live in the villages. The economic condition of only ten per cent Hajongs is by and large good. The condition of the remaining ninety per cent is beyond description.<sup>79</sup> A considerable number of the community are wage earners. On the other hand, some of them are compelled to become domestic servants in order to maintain their families.<sup>80</sup>

The economic condition of some of the Hajongs is so worse that they are even unable to bear the expenditure of the marriage of their daughters. As a result of which marriageable daughters are compelled to remain unmarried.<sup>81</sup> It is observed that the standard of living of many Hajongs is very pathetic. The adult family members are

always busy for earning their bread and butter. Under this circumstances they can not imagine about the education of their children. In spite of having strong desire for education they can not afford it due to their poverty. Most of the boys and girls are compelled to leave schools before the completion of High School Leaving Certificate Examination.<sup>82</sup> Because their parents can not bear the expenditures required for imparting education.<sup>83</sup>

The researcher has noticed that the Hajongs living in different areas in the district of Goalpara are economically very backward. It has already been discussed that the Hajongs are primarily cultivators. But most of them possess no cultivable lands. Though some families possess lands but these are not adequate and proportionate to the family members.<sup>84</sup> The researcher has met many Hajongs, both males and females who come out from their homes every morning in search of work. Daily wage is their only source of livelihood. It has also been noticed that some Hajongs collect firewood from the nereby forests and sell in the market. In this way they maintain their families. Due to poverty they can not think anything except their fundamental needs i.e., food and clothing.<sup>85</sup> They can not maintain the minimum standard of living which in turn creates many problems in health. So poverty is one of the vital causes of large scale illiteracy and backwardness among the Hajongs.

#### **Superstition:**

Like other tribal communities, superstition also exists in the Hajong society. This is a social problem found among the Hajongs. It is also a barrier in the way of the development of the community. In this age of science and technology, they have faith in evil spirits and demi-gods.<sup>86</sup> According to the common Hajong people these evil spirit and demi-gods cause various diseases and harms to the people. They propitiate



them to escape diseases. The evil spirits and demi-gods include 'Moila Deo', 'Daini', 'Pretni', 'Kalpisatch', 'Bon Deo', 'Hudum and Haka', 'Phul Deo', 'Nikani Deo', and 'Pubni Deo'.<sup>87</sup>

The ordinary Hajongs believe that 'Molia deo' causes weakness to the children and babies. This deo is worshipped outside the village, generally in an open space or near a jungle. For the purpose goat, duck, fowl etc. are sacrificed.

On the other hand, daini causes delirium to children. This daini is worshipped with tortoise, pig, etc.

Pretni causes continuous crying of the babies. To propitiate this spirit one fowl is left in a jungle.

Kalpisatch causes sudden illness. It is worshipped by sacrificing a he-goat. Bondeo causes stomach trouble. It is worshipped by sacrificing a he-goat.

On the other hand, 'Hudum and Haka' cause general debility and pain in the various parts of the body. The deity is worshipped by sacrificing tortoise, duck, he-goat. Hudum is worshipped by the women during drought for bringing rain. Some times Haka is worshipped to bring down rain.

Phul deo causes excessive vomiting to the babies. To propitiate this deity a garland of flowers is immersed in a stream.

From the above discussion it is evident that superstition and blind faith exist in the Hajong society. Due to the prevalence of this type of superstition, the ordinary Hajongs do not go to doctors for the treatment of patients including babies and adults. They believe that by worshipping various spirits, deities and demi-gods the diseases may be cured. This is very serious and disastrous for the society. In the present age of science, internet, computer, this is beyond imagination. These superstitions still exists

due to the large scale illiteracy among the community. Of course, as a result of the advancement of education and the influence of the neighbouring advanced communities, the superstitions have decreased to a great extent.<sup>88</sup>

### **Political Problems of the Rabhas:**

There are a lot of political problems noticed among the Rabhas. These problems, according to some Rabha personalities, are the vital causes of the backwardness of the community. To them the Rabhas are lagging behind in various aspects than the non-tribal Aryyas.

In a democratic state the people must be conscious, without which they can not enjoy the fruits of democracy. The democratic constitution provides many rights and liberties to the people. The people must be acquainted with these. For this political consciousness is a must. But the Rabha people are politically not conscious.<sup>89</sup> The ordinary Rabha people do not know that they have got special rights and other facilities. Due to their large scale illiteracy they have failed to enjoy and afford their rights.

On the other hand, the ordinary Rabha women are not at all conscious and interested about their political rights specially right to vote. They are not very much interested in casting votes in various elections.<sup>90</sup> Without full participation of the women section in the political activity, no community can achieve progress.

Another major political problem of the Rabhas is their scattered habitations. Rabhas are found in the districts *viz.*, Goalpara, Kamrup, Nalbari, Darrang, Sonitpur, Dhubri, Bongaigaon and Kokrajhar. In all these districts, they are not concentrated in a particular Assembly or Parliamentary constituency. Rather they are scattered in almost all the constituencies. This is due to this fact that they have failed to create a political

environment<sup>91</sup>. And so ultimately they have failed to exert influence on the political and administrative arena in the state. The Rabhas have no strong political hold for which they are unable to afford the rights and facilities provided in the constitution.

In the district of Goalpara also where the Rabha population is highest, they have no strong political hold. Because, here they are found scattered in all the four Assembly constituencies viz., Dudhnoi, (ST), Goalpara East, Goalpara West and Jaleswar. As a result of this, not a single constituency is under the complete control of the Rabhas. Even the Dudhnoi Assembly constituency, having highest Rabha population, has not been retained by the Rabhas in all the elections.<sup>92</sup>

Being unsatisfied with the existing political rights and facilities provided in the constitution, the Rabhas began their "Autonomy Movement" in the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century. The movement was jointly led by "All Rabha Students' Union" and the "Rabha Hasong Demand Committee". As a result of the movement the "Rabha Accord" was signed on 10th March, 1995.<sup>93</sup> The Accord was signed by the Government of Assam and the Rabha leaders representing the "All Rabha Students' Union" and the "Rabha Hasong Demand Committee".<sup>94</sup> According to the provisions of the Accord there shall be an Apex Council known as the "Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council" and the "Rabha Hasong Village Council". The Apex Council shall consist of the satellite areas of village council.<sup>95</sup> Unfortunately the Government of Assam has not yet implemented all the provisions of the Accord.<sup>96</sup>

According to the provisions of the Accord the Apex Council shall have powers on 34 subjects, and the village council shall have executive powers on 29 subjects.<sup>97</sup> But the Government has not yet transferred all the subjects to the Apex Council. Moreover the Government has also failed to release necessary funds to the council.<sup>98</sup>

Apart from this, the Government has failed to hold the election of the Apex council and village council. First Rabha Hasong Interim Council was formed in 1995,<sup>99</sup> but it was dissolved in 1996, and in the same year the second Interim Council was formed.<sup>100</sup> This council was also dissolved in 2001 and subsequently in the same year the present council has been formed. The Rabha people are not pleased with these frequent formation and dissolution of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council. Because these Interim Councils have failed to fulfil the wants and aspirations of the community.

The Rabha people alleged that the Government of Assam has failed to hold the elections of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council even after six years of the signing of the Rabha Accord.<sup>101</sup> The Rabhas want early elections of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council and the Rabha Hasong Village Council.<sup>102</sup> Without the election and constitution of the councils it is not possible to solve the various problems faced by the Rabha community. The Government of Assam should, as early as possible, implement all the provisions of the Rabha Accord.<sup>103</sup>

### **Political Problems of the Hajongs:**

Several political problems are noticed in the Hajong society. Hajongs are one of the backward tribes of Assam. Perhaps this tribe is the most backward of all the tribes. Hajongs are backward in all aspects, be it political, economic or educational. Various causes are noticed for the backwardness of the community. But it is observed that political problems are at the root of their backwardness.

The Hajongs living in different areas of Assam are the political victims of the partition of India.<sup>104</sup> Most of the Hajongs living in Assam migrated to India from erstwhile East Pakistan (Non Bangladesh) during the year of 1950 to 1964 in different phases due to political reasons.<sup>105</sup> They were rehabilitated by the Government of India

in the various areas of Assam. But most of them have been rehabilitated in different areas in the district of Goalpara.<sup>106</sup>

The Hajongs in the district of Goalpara have failed to create a political environment which might fulfil their wants and aspirations. Because their habitations are scattered in various Assembly constituencies viz., Goalpara West, Goalpara East and Dudhnoi (ST).<sup>107</sup> Thus political hold of the Hajongs is almost nil in all the constitutions; because of their numerical strength. Political parties and the candidates give almost no interest in them. Because, the win or defeat of the candidates contesting the elections, be it Assembly or Parliamentary, does not depend on the Hajongs.<sup>108</sup> As a result of which they face difficulties in getting their rights and facilities provided in the constitutions.

On the other hand, due to their scattered habitations in different constitutions, it is not possible for the Hajongs to become the Member of Legislative Assembly.

Moreover, most of the Hajongs are politically not conscious. They are not conscious about their political rights and other facilities. This is because of their large scale illiteracy.

It is relevant to mention here is that the Hajongs are recognized as Hills tribe in the two Autonomous districts of Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills. But at present not a single Hajong is found in either of the districts. Most of the Hajongs live in the plain districts of Assam, specially in the district of Goalpara. The Hajongs living in the plain districts of Assam have been recognized as Hills tribes in plains. In spite of so, they face many difficulties in getting their rights and other facilities.<sup>109</sup>

## References

1. Sangma, M.S., "Ethnic Composition of Garo Hills", an article published in the Souvenir, Seventh Annual Conference of North East India Political Science Association, edited by C.R. Marak, North-Eastern Hill University, Tura Campus, 1997, P-7.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, P-8.
4. Saha, Rehati Mohan, "Rabha Janajati – Artha – Samajik Samashya" an article published in the Mouthpiece of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum) edited by Muga Charan Rangag, published by Prakash Rabha, Dudhnoi, Goalpara (R.H.A.C.), 2001, P-10.
5. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
6. Rabha, Hitesh, "The Rabhas and its Progression: Some Hurdles", an article published in the Souvenir of Silver Jubilee Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, edited by Satyajit Rabha, and published by Gangaraj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup, 1998, P-77.
7. Informants. Biresch Rabha, age 34 years, Hakojuji, Goalpara. Atar Ch. Rabha, age 28 years. Ambuk Deulguri, Goalpara.
8. Rabha Hitesh, "The Rabhas and its Progression: Some Hurdles", an article published in the Souvenir, of Silver Jubilee Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, edited by Satyajit Rabha, and published by Gangraj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup, 1998, P-77.
9. *Ibid.*

10. Bantho. Jogendra Nath, "Rabha Jatir Itibritta", published by Jogendra Nath Bantho, Vill- Naguapara, P.O.- Lakhipur, Garo Hills (Meghalaya) Second Edition, 1974, P-34.
11. Hazarika, Niru, "Profile of Youth Organisations in North East India", published by V.V. Rao Institute of Micro Studies and Research, Guwahati, Assam, First Publication, 1998, P-249.
12. As the tribewise population figures as per 1991 census are still not available, and census operations in Assam did not take place in 1981, so the literacy scenario among the Rabhas has been analysed on the basis of the census report of 1971.
13. Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Asam, Guwahati.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
16. Rabha, Hitesh, "The Rabhas and its Progression: Some Hurdles", an article published in the Souvenir of Silver Jubilee Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, edited by Satyajit Rabha, and published by Gangaraj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup, 1998, P-77.
17. Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, Guwahati.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Rabha language is not spoken by the Pati section of the Rabhas. Pati Rabhas are found living from Dudhnoi areas of Goalpara district upto Rani areas of Kamrup district. They abandoned the Rabha language long before and

speak the Assamese language. Rabha language is spoken by other sections of the Rabhas, viz., Rangdani and Maitori.

20. Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, Guwahati.
21. Informant: Bishnu Das, age 35 years, Mogho, Goalpara.
22. Informant: Jayanta Rabha, age 36 years, Mukri, Goalpara.
23. Informant: Sarbananda Rabha, age 56 years, Muslum, Goalpara.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Informant: Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
26. Bordoloi, B.N., "Womens' Education in the Tribal Areas of Assam – A Few Basic Issues", an article published in the "Bulletin", Volume-I, Number-V, 1987 of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, edited and published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, 1987, P-28.
27. Informants. Gauri Kanta Rabha, age 29 years, Gathiapara, Goalpara, Kishore Kr. Rabha, age 28 years, Dumapara, Goalpara, Beharu Ram Rabha, age 28 years, Amguri, Goalpara.
28. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
29. Rabha Kishore Kr. of village Dumapara under Goalpara district, an Arts graduate remains unemployed till date. Beharu Ram Rabha of village Amguri under Goalpara district is an Arts graduate with major is unemployed. Atar Ch. Rabha of village Deulguri under Goalpara district is an Arts graduate but remains unemployed. Gauri Kanta Rabha of village Gathiapara under the same district is an Arts graduate is unemployed.



Similarly Dipika Rabha of village Chitalmari Bongaon under Goalpara district is an MA in Assamese but till date unemployed.

30. Bhushan, Vidya, D.R. Sachdeva, "An Introduction to Sociology", published by Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, Seventeenth Edition, 1987, P-716.
31. Rabha, Ananta, "Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj aru Krishi Sanskriti", an article published in the 'Purbanchal', Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (RAC), 1997, P-55.
32. Rabha, Sarat Chandra, "Chikitsa Sewa Aru Janajatiya Samaj", an article published in the Souvenir, Silver Jubilee Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum) edited by Satyajit Rabha and published by Gangaraj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup, 1998, P-45.
33. Majumdar, Surjya Kumar. "Dakshin Kamrupar Rabha Sanskritit Abhumuki", published by Pragati Granthapith, Sarapara, Kamrup, First Publication, 1989, P-21.
34. Rabha, Hitesh, "The Rabhas and its Progression: Some Hurdles", an article published in the Souvenir, Silver Jubilee Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum) edited by Satyajit Rabha and published by Gangaraj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup, 1998, P-77.
35. Rabha, Surjya Kanta, "Rabha Jatir Uttaran Aru Sangathanar Bhumika", an article published in the "Rangkarang", Souvenir of 27<sup>th</sup> Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum), edited by

Kailash Rabha and published by the Secretary of Reception Committee, Tamulpur, Nalbari (BAC), 2001, P-56.

36. Singha, M. Gopal, "Socio-Culture and Economic Development of the Rabhas : An Analytical Approach", an article published in the "Twnai" a Magazine of Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, edited by Niranjan Rabha Rungdung and published by Dhruva Narayan Rabha, General Secretary of Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Second Publication, 1998-1999, P-55.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
39. Rabha, Dhaniram, "Arthanaitik Abashtha", an article published in the Souvenir of Thekashu Rabha Jamat edited by Shobha Ram Rabha and Karuna Kanta Rabha, and published by Nirbhay Kr. Rabha, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, 1992, P-23.
40. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Narzi, Bhaben, "Boro-Kacharir Samaj Aru Sanskriti", published by Bina Library, Guwahati, Reprinted, 1995, P-242.
43. *Ibid.*, P-244.
44. Informant. Sunil Rabha, age 44 years, Rabhapara, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
45. Informant. Biresb Rabha, age 34 years, Hakojuji, Goalpara.
46. Bordoloi, Rupasree Bora, "Daini Hatya": Mahila Sabalakaranar Prati Gurutar Bhabuki", an article published in the "Amar Asom" an Assamese daily,

edited by Homen Borgohain and published by P. Lal, Guwahati, dated February, 8, 2003, P-3.

47. Informant. Dipika Rabha, age 26 years, Chitalmari Bangaon, Goalpara.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Rabha, Hitesh, "The Rabhas and its Progression : Some Hurdles", an article published in the Souvenir of Silver Jubilee Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum), edited by Satyajit Rabha and published by Gangaraj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup, 1998, P-77.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Rabha, Bhubin, "Rabha Sakalar Artha-Samajik Dish Aru Jatiya Chetana", an article published in the Souvenir of Silver Jubilee conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum), edited by Satyajit Rabha and published by Gangaraj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup, 1998, p. 27.

52. Batho, Jogendra Nath, "Rabha Jati Itbritta" published by Jogendra nath Bantho, Vill- Naguapara, P.O.- Lakhipur, Garo Hills (Meghalaya) Second Edition, 1974, p. 34.

53. Rabha Dhaniram, "Arthanaitik Abastha", an article published in the Souvenir, Thekaru Rabha Jamat, edited by Shobha Ram Rabha and Karuna Kanta Rabha, published by Nirbhay Kumar Rabha, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, 1992, p. 23.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Informant. Sunil Rabha, age 44 years, Rabhapara, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.

56. Informant. Sarbananda Rabha, age 56 years Muslum, Goalpara.
57. Rabha, Hitesh, "The Rabhas and its Progression: Some Hurdles", an article published in the Souvenir of Silver Jubilee Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum), edited by Satyajit Rabha and published by Gangaraj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup, 1998, p. 77.
58. Informant. Dipika Rabha, age 26 years, Chitalmari, Bangaon, Goalpara.
59. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara,
60. Sarkar, Kanu Ram, "Sampratik Hajong Janajatir Siksha Samashya", an article published in the Souvenir of Fourteenth Conference of Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti edited by Bhadreswar Hajong, Karaigora (Balat) West Khasi Hills, 1985, p. 25.
61. Borgohain, Dipika, "Lakhimpur Zilar Bhaiyam Janagosthi", an article published in the "Amar Asom", an Assamese Daily, edited by Homen Borgohain and published by P. Lal, Guwahati, dated February, 9, 2003, p. 6.
62. Tribewise Census Report of 1991 is not available and there was no Census in 1981 in Assam.
63. Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, Guwahati.
64. Bordoloi, B.N., "Womens' Education in the Tribal Areas of Assam – A Few Basic Issues", an article published in the Bulletin, Volume-I, Number-V, 1987 of the tribal Research Institute, Assam, edited and published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director of Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, 1987, p. 26.
65. Informant. Kamal Krishna Hajong, age 28 years, Rupnagar, Goalpara.

66. Sarkar, Kanu Ram, "Sampratik Hajong Janajati Siksha Samashya", an article published in the Souvenir of Fourteenth Conference of Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti, Karaigora (Balat), West Khasi Hills, 1985, p. 20.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
69. Informants. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara. Haranath Hajong, age 45 years, Kadamtola Paschim, Goalpara, Charitra Hajong, age 30 years, Bishnupur, Goalpara.
70. Informant. Kamal Krishna Hajong, age 28 years, Rupnagar, Goalpara.
71. Informant. Haranath Hajong, age 45 years, Kadamtola Paschim, Goalpara.
72. Informant. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*
75. Informant. Kamal Krishna Hajong, age 28 years, Rupnagar, Goalpara.
76. Informant. Charitra Hajong, age 30 years, Bishnupur, Goalpara.
77. Informant. Kandarpa Kumar Hajong, age 22 years, Sidhabari Camp, Goalpara.
78. *Ibid.*
79. Lambu, "Hajong Urdhah Ne Adhah", an article published in the 'Chetana', Annual Mouthpiece of Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti, edited by Lakhindar Hajong and published by Rathindra Nath Hajong, Tura, Meghalaya, 1994, pp. 35-36
80. *Ibid.*, 36.
81. *Ibid.*, 39.

82. Informant. Kandarpa Kumar Hajong, age 22 years, Sidhabari Camp, Goalpara.
83. *Ibid.*
84. Informant. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
85. *Ibid.*
86. Hajong. Biren, "The Hajongs and Their Struggle", published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, pp. 46-47.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.
88. *Ibid.* p. 47.
89. Rabha. Utpal Chandra, "Rabha Chhatra Santhai Kar Pratinidhitta Kariba", an article published in the 'Twnai', Magazine of Goalpara District Rabha Student's Union, edited by Nirranjan Rabha Rungdung and published by Dhruba Narayan Rabha, General Secretary of Goalpara District Rabha Student's Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Second Publication, 1998-99, p. 22.
90. Informant. Malina Rabha, age 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
91. Rabha, Mani, "Rabha Sakalar Samajik Aru Rajnaitik Chetana", an article published in the Souvenir, 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bibak Rabha Kraurang Runchum), edited by Jibeswar Koch and published by Ratan Kr. Koch, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Kachugaon, Kokrajhar (BAC), 1994, p. 22
92. *Ibid.*
93. Source: "Memorandum of Settlement" (Rabha Accord) Guwahati, 1995.
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Ibid.*

96. Informant. Dhaneswar Rabha, age 75 years, Kothakuthi, Goalpara. He is an ex-Executive Member of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council.
97. Source: "Memorandum of Settlement" (Rabha Accord) Guwahati, 1995.
98. Rabha. Bhubin, "Rabha Sakalar Artha-Samajik Dish Aru Jatiya Chetana", an article published in the Souvenir of Silver Jubilee conference of All Rabha Sahitya Sabha (Bibak Rabha Kruanang Runchum), edited by Satyajit Rabha and published by Gangaraj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup, 1998, p. 28.
99. Rabha Dhaneswar, "Rabha Hasong Prasongat Kishu Sowaran", an article published in the "Purbanchal", Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, edited by Dasarath Rabha, and published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (RAC), 1997, p. 27.
100. Rabha. Sulochan, "Rabha Hasong Dabir Eti Samiksha", an article published in the 'Twnai', Magazine of Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, edited by Niranjana Rabha Rungdung and published by Dhruva Narayan Rabha, General Secretary of Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Second Publication, 1998-99, p. 7.
101. Informant. Dhaneswar Rabha, age 75 years, Kothakuthi, Goalpara. He is an ex-Executive Member of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council.
102. *Ibid.*
103. *Ibid.*
104. Hajong. Biren, "The Hajongs and Their Struggle", published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, First Edition, 2002, p. 8.
105. *Ibid.*

106. Informant. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
107. Informants. Haranath Hajong, age 45 years, Kadamtola Paschim, Goalpara,  
Nidhan Chandra Hajong, age 62 years, Rupnagar, Golalpara.
108. Informant. Kanu Ram Hajong, age 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
109. *Ibid.*



## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSION**

The Rabhas and the Hajongs are two tribal communities of Assam. Both the tribes live in the plains districts of Assam. But their main habitations are found in the various areas in the district of Goalpara. The Rabhas have been living in the district from the remotest past. On the other hand the Hajongs, presently living in the district, migrated to India from the erstwhile East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) during the post-independence period. They were later rehabilitated by the Government in various areas in the district.

Being tribal communities both the Rabhas and the Hajongs have distinct social life of their own.

The social life of the Rabhas is enriched with traditional customs and beliefs. Because of a disciplined, strict and conservative community, the Rabhas perform their various socio-religious rites and rituals in accordance with their customary laws. There are a number of social organizations of the Rabhas exist in the district of Goalpara which have been established to get cemented the different sections of the community and preserve their distinct identity.

As a result of the spread of education among the Rabhas and their close association with the other neighbouring Hindu communities for centuries the Rabhas have got remarkable changes in their social life. Specially, the Pati Rabhas have been tremendously influenced by the Hindu communities. The Pati Rabhas have abandoned their language in favour of Assamese. Not only so they have also abandoned their

traditional dresses and use Assamese dresses. Of course, they use their traditional dresses during the performance of their various socio-religious rites. A section of the Pati Rabhas performs their various socio-religious rites, such as birth rites, marriage rites, death rites, etc. in accordance with the Hindu Vedic methods. Not only the Pati Rabhas, but the Maitori section of the Rabhas of Goalpara district has got considerable changes in their social life. A section of the Maitori Rabhas has also abandoned their traditional dresses in favour of Assamese dresses. Besides worshipping their traditional Gods and Goddesses, a section of the Pati and Maitori Rabhas has begun to worship various gods and goddesses which actually belong to the Hindus. Religious conversion is another important change noticed among the Rabhas. A section of the Pati and Maitori Rabhas has accepted 'Sankarite Vaisnavism'. Moreover, a section of the Pati, Maitori and Rangdani Rabhas of Goalpara district has accepted, 'Chaitanya Pantha' (A religious sect founded by Sri Chaitanya) and 'Satsangha'. Besides, a section of the Rangdani Rabhas has accepted Christianity in recent times.

Though the Pati Rabhas have abandoned the Rabha language, the other sections of the Rabhas viz., Rangdani, Maitori, Koch etc. still retain the Rabha language. Moreover, they still use their traditional dresses not only during the performance of their socio-religious rites, but also in day-to-day life.

On the other hand, the Hajongs have also a distinct social life of their own. Their social life is also enriched with customs and beliefs. The Hajongs consider themselves to be Hindus. As a tribal community the Hajongs perform their various socio-religious rites and rituals in accordance with their traditional rules. Besides worshipping their traditional gods, goddesses, they also worship some Hindu gods and

goddesses. So the religious belief of the Hajongs is a combination of their traditional religious faith and Hindu religious belief.

Considerable changes have taken place in the social life of the Hajongs. The Hajongs of Goalpara district have almost abandoned the use of the services of their traditional priest 'Adhikari' and use the services of the Hindu Brahmin priest for the performance of various socio-religious rites, such as marriage. Changes have also taken place in so far as the traditional dresses of the Hajongs are concerned. Though the aged and old men and women use their traditional dresses both at home and outside, the educated persons including boys and girls use 'Long Pant', 'Mekhela Chadar', 'Saree' and 'Churidar' whenever they go out of home. Of course, they use their traditional dresses at home. On the other hand, the Hajongs still use their traditional dresses during the performance of their various socio-religious rites and rituals. All the changes that have taken place among the Hajongs are the result of their long association with the neighbouring advanced Hindu people.

As the Rabhas and the Hajongs form an important segment of population in the district of Goalpara, both the communities have importance in so far as the political life of the district is concerned. Of course, the political role played by the Rabhas is more important than the Hajongs.

Virtually, without the Rabhas the political life of Goalpara district is impossible. Because, the Rabhas are dominant in the district. The Rabhas have succeeded to capture the reserved (ST) seat of the Assembly constituencies in the district. In most of the Assembly Elections since independence the Rabhas have retained the lone reserved

(ST) Assembly constituency in the district, which undoubtedly witness the strong political hold of the community in the district.

In spite of the strong political hold, the Rabhas of Goalpara district are not satisfied with the existing political rights and facilities provided in the constitution. To them the existing political rights are not sufficient for the development of the community. So the Rabhas began their 'Autonomy Movement' during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of the movement "Rabha Accord" was signed between the Government of Assam and the Rabha Hasong Demand Committee and the All Rabha Students' Union representing the Rabhas. In accordance with the provisions of the "Accord", the "Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council" was formed in 1995. The "Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council" has been working for the development of the Rabhas since its formation.

On the other hand the political role of the Hajongs in the district of Goalpara is not so effective as the Rabhas. As the Hajong habitations are scattered in three Legislative Assembly Constituencies, they can not draw the attention of the political parties and the leaders. So they have vary little impact on the political life of the district.

Both the Rabhas and the Hajongs are backward communities in the district of Goalpara. But the Hajongs are more backward than the Rabhas. Both the communities are backward in various respects. Specially, they are educationally and economically most backward in comparison with the other neighbouring communities. The Hajongs are educationally and economically more backward than the Rabhas. There are some problems which have become barriers in the way of their development. For the all-

round development of the Rabhas and the Hajongs steps should be taken for the solutions of the problems.

The Rabhas are facing many socio-political problems which are responsible for their backwardness even after the fifty years of India's independence. The social problems include, illiteracy, unemployment, superstitious, preparation of wine, daini (witch), and population problem. So far as the political problems are concerned, the Rabhas are politically not conscious. They are not aware of their rights and liberties provided in the constitution.

Like the Rabhas, the Hajongs are also facing many socio-political problems. The social problems of the Hajongs are large scale illiteracy, unemployment, population problem, economic problem and superstition. On the other hand, the Hajongs are politically not conscious. It is due to the lack of their awareness that they can not enjoy the political rights and liberties enshrined in the constitution.

Large scale illiteracy is one of the major problems faced by the Rabhas. The literacy rate is very low among the Rabhas specially those living in the rural and remote areas. On the other hand, literacy rate of the females is lower than the males. As most of the Rabhas live in the rural areas, the average literacy scenario is not satisfactory. The illiteracy is the root cause of many other problems among the Rabhas. The illiterate Rabha parents are not aware of the benefits of education. They are not interested to send their children to schools. Though a section of the Rabhas sends their male children to schools, a section of them has no interest to send their female children to schools. They do not give importance on the education of their daughters. On the other hand, due to illiteracy the ordinary Rabhas are not conscious about their rights, liberties and

other facilities provided in the constitution. So immediate and necessary measures should be taken to increase the number of literates among the Rabhas. The Government should take steps for the solution of this problem. In this connection it may be suggested that the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) can take effective programmes in this respect. Besides, the various organizations representing the Rabhas, viz., All Rabha Students' Union, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, All Rabha Women Council, All Rabha National Council can take necessary steps for the purpose. Apart from these, the various non-government organizations (NGO) may also adopt measures for the solution of the illiteracy problem among the Rabhas.

Like other communities the Rabhas are also facing the unemployment problem. Both educated and uneducated unemployed youths are found among the Rabhas.

Instead of running after the government jobs the educated youths should engage themselves in other activities, such as business, farms, horticulture etc. Government and the various Public Sector Banks provide many facilities including loans. Moreover, as scheduled tribe the Rabhas have many other facilities. Both the Rabha boys and girls may avail of these opportunities and thereby establish themselves. The Rabhas living in the rural and remote areas are economically most backward. As most of the Rabhas live in the rural areas, so for the economic development of the Rabhas, utmost importance must be given on the Rabhas living in the rural areas. They can avail the various facilities and schemes of the government meant for the Scheduled Tribes. The path must be shown by the educated sections of the community. Preparation of rice beer is another cause of their economic problem. Rice beer has created not only economic problem but also health problem. In this connection it may be mentioned that

major portion of paddy is used for the preparation of beer. The economic condition of many Rabhas has become worse due to the preparation of beer. Besides, taking of beer causes harms to the health. Proper education imparting to the Rabhas only can extinct the use of wine from the Rabha society. They should be taught about the demerits of beer.

Population problem is one of the major social problems of the Rabhas. The Rabhas inhabiting in the rural areas and those who are illiterate do not follow the family planning programme. There should be mass movement among the Rabhas about the consequences of population problem. This should be done by the educated section of the Rabha community and the various non-government organizations.

Above all superstition is another major social problem found in the Rabha society. Superstition is so deep rooted among the illiterate Rabhas of rural areas that they have no faith on the Medical Officers of Government Hospitals. In stead of going to the hospitals they go to the conventional physicians for the treatment of their patients. The result is well known. On the other hand, in the present age of science and technology the Rabhas still follow the traditional methods of cultivation. They do not adopt the modern scientific methods of cultivation. They do not like to use the modern implements and various fertilizers in the cultivable land. So extinction of all kinds of superstition is possible only through the spread of education.

Besides the measures mentioned above some political measures are also to be adopted. As a result of the "Rabha Accord" signed in 1995, the "Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council" has been formed. The Government of Assam has not yet held the election of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council. The election of the

Autonomous Council should be immediately held. And the Government should take immediate step for the transfer of powers and functions to the Rabhas Hasong Autonomous Council as provided in the “Memorandum of Settlement” (Rabha Accord).

There are many problems which are responsible for the backwardness of the Hajongs. As most of the Hajongs in the district of Goalpara are living in the rural areas, most of them are illiterate. The illiteracy has created many other problems among the Hajongs. Being a tribal community the Hajongs have become the victims of superstition of various forms. Population problem is also there among the Hajongs. The illiterate Hajongs are not aware of their rights enshrined in the constitutions. Only through literacy and proper education the aforesaid problems among the Hajongs can be solved. The educated youths can avail the various schemes provided by the Government. On the other hand, the illiterate persons can engage themselves in the Government sponsored schemes, such as, “Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana”. The organizations like “Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti” and “Hajong Snaskritik Sangha” may take some measures for the welfare and betterment of the Hajongs.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Primary Sources:*

#### *1. Census Reports /Gazetteers:*

- Allen, B.C. (1984): "Census of Assam, 1901", Volume-I, Report, Manas Publications, Delhi.
- Allen, B.C. (1984): "Census of Assam, 1901", Volume-II, Tables, Manas Publications, Delhi.
- Barooah, D.P. (ed.) (1979): "Gazetteers of India", Assam State, Assam District Gazetteers, Goalpara District, Government of Assam, Gauhati.
- Baruah, A., S.B. Roychoudhury (ed.) (1999): *Assam State Gazetteer*, Vol.-I, Government of Assam, Gauhati.
- Choudhury, N.K.: "Census of India 1981", Series-3, Assam District Census Hand Book, Part-XIII-A Village and Town Directory, Goalpara District.
- Choudhury, N.K.: "Census of India, 1971", Series-3, Assam, Part-IX-C, District Census Hand Book, Goalpara District, Government of Assam.
- Dey, K.S. (1977): "Census of India, 1971" Series-3, Assam, Part-I-A (General Report).
- Dutta, N.C. (1978): "Gazetteer of India", Assam State, Darrang District, published by the Editor-in-Chief, Government of Assam, District Gazetteers, Gauhati.
- Hazarika, B.B., S.B. Raychoudhury (ed.) (1990): "Gazetteers of India", Assam State, Assam District Gazetteers, Kamrup District, Government of Assam, Gauhati.

- Mullan, C.S. (1992): "Census of India, 1931", Volume-III, Assam, Part-II, Tables, Manohar Publications, New Delhi.
- Pakyntein, E.H. (1964): "Census of India, 1961", Volume-III, Assam, Part-V-A, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, Manager of Publications, Delhi.
- Pakyntein, E.H. (1965): "Census of India, 1961", Assam District Census Hand Book, Goalpara, Government of Assam.
- Saikia, A.K. (1976): "Census of India, 1971", Series- 3, Assam, Part-II-C (I) Social and Cultural Tables, Controller of Publications, Delhi.
- Senapati, T. ( ): "Census of India, 1991", Series-4, Assam, Part-XII-A & B, District Census Hand Book, Goalpara District.
- Vaghaiwalla, R.B. (1953) "Census of India, 1951", Volume- XII, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, Part-II-A, Printed at the Assam Government Press, Shillong.
- Vaghaiwalla, R.B. (1953): "Census of India, 1951", Volume-XII, Part-I-B, Subsidiary Tables (Assam, Manipur, Tripura) Municipal Printing Press, Bombay.
- Vijayanunni, M. (1999): "Census of India, 1991", Assam State, District Profile, 1991, Controller of Publications, Delhi.

***Secondary Sources:***

***1. Books:***

- Bordoloi, B.N. (1986): *Alienation of Tribal Land and Indebtedness*, Tribal Research Institute Assam, Guwahati.

- Bordoloi, B.N. (1988): *Application of Science and Technology for Tribal Development*, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati.
- Bhuyan, S.K. (ed.) (1984): *Kachari Buranji*, Government of Assam in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies.
- Bordoloi, B.N. (1990): *Constraints of Tribal Development in North East India*, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati.
- Bordoloi, B.N. (1991): *Tribes of Assam*, Part-III, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati.
- Bordoloi, B.N., G.C. Sharmah Thakur, M.C. Saikia (1987): *Tribes of Assam*, Part-I, Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati.
- Bordoloi, B.N., G.C. Sharmah Thakur, (1988): *Tribes of Assam*, Part-II, Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati.
- Bantho, J.N. (1974): *Rabha Jatir Itibritta*, vill- Naguapara, P.O.- Lakhipur, Garo Hills (Meghalaya).
- Bora, Sarbeswar (ed.) (1997): *Bishnuprasad Rava Rachana Sambhar*, Part-II, published by Sarbeswar Bora, Haibargaon, Nagaon, on behalf of Rava Rachanawali Prakashan Sangha, Tezpur.
- Baruah, S.L (1995): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshinran Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
- Bhushan Vidya, D.R. Sachdeva (1987): *An Introduction to Sociology*, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad.
- Barua, K.L. (1988): *Early History of Kamrupa*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Gauhati.

- Barua, B.K. (1986): *A Cultural History of Assam, (Early period) volume-I*, Bina Library, Gauhati.
- Barua, Hem (1991): *The Red River and the Blue Hill*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Panbazar : Guwahati.
- Bhattacharya, P.C. (ed.) (1991): *Asamar Janajati*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Guwahati.
- Barua, Birinchi Kumar. (1992): *Asamiya Bhasha Aru Samskriti*. Journal Emporium, Nalbari.
- Barman, Sivanath (1995): *Asamar Janajati Samashya: Aitihāsik Utsa Sandhan*, Progressive Book House, Guwahati.
- Chatterji, Suniti Kumar (1974): *KIRATA-JANA-KRTI*, The Asiatic Society.
- Choudhury, B.N. (1969): *Some Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of the Garos*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Gauhati.
- Das. B. (1992): *Hajong Loko Sanskriti*, published by Pijush Kanti Basak, Ratnapeeth Prakashan, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
- Das, S.T.( ): *Tribal life of North-Eastern India, (Habitat, Economy, Customs, Tradition)* Gian Publishing House, Delhi.
- Datta, P.S. (1993): *Autonomy Movements in Assam*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi.
- Datta Ray, B. (1989): *Tribal Identity and Tension in North-East India*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi.
- Deka, K.S. (1993): *Asamar Gosthidwanda Aru Samajik Bibartanar Dhara*, Dispur Print House, Guwahati.
- Endle, S. (1997): *The Kacharis, (Bodo)* Low Price Publications. Delhi.

- Fuchs, Stephen (1992): *The Aboriginal Tribes of India*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi.
- Grierson, G.A. (ed.) (1967): "Linguistic Survey of India", Vol.-III, Tibeto-Burman Family", Part- II, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna.
- Grierson, G.A. (ed.) (1968): "Linguistic Survey of India", Vol.-V, Indo-Aryan Family, Eastern Group, Part- I, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna.
- Gassah, L.S (ed.) (1984): *Garó Hills Land And The People*, Omsons Publications, Gauhati: New Delhi.
- Ghosh, G.K. (1992): *Tribals and their Culture*, (Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram) Volume-I, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Hunter, W.W. (1990): *A Statistical Account of Assam*, Vol.- I, Low Price Publications, Delhi.
- Hunter, W.W. (1990): *A Statistical Account of Assam*, Vol.- II, Low Price Publications, Delhi.
- Hajong, Biren. (2002): *The Hajongs & Their Struggle*, published by Sushmita Hajong, Hawakhana, Tura (Meghalaya).
- Hajong, L. (1990): *Hajong Bibah Padhati*, published by Niswari Hajong, Barkona, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya.
- Hakacham, Upen Rabha (1997): *Rabha Bhasa Aru Sahitya*, published by Manjula Rabha Hakachazak, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
- Hazarika, Niru (1998): *Profile of Youth Organisations in North-East India*, V.V. Rao Institute of Micro Studies and Research, Guwahati.

- Horam, M. (1990): *North-East India – A Profile*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi.
- Kalita, D. (1991): *Traditional Performances of South Kamrup*, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Karotemprel, Sebastien, (1984): *The Tribes of North East India*, Ferman KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, Shillong.
- Kishore, J., P.C. Ray (ed.) (2001): *The Pioneering Social Reformers of India*, Wisdom Publication, New Delhi.
- Kuppuswamy, B. (1996): *Social Change in India*, Konark Publications Ltd., Delhi.
- Mandelbaum, David G. (1984): *Society in India*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay.
- Majumdar, S.K. (1989): *Dakshin Kamrupar Rava Sanskritit Abhumuki*, Pragati Granthapith, Sarapara, Kamrup.
- Misra, N.K. (ed.): *Goalpara Jilar Janajatiya Samaj Aru Sanskriti*, Dhupdhara (Goalpara).
- Narzi, B. (1985): *Boro-Kacharir Samaj Aru Samskriti*, Bina Library, Guwahati.
- Paul, M.C. (1989): *Dimensions of Tribal Movements in India*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi.
- Playfair, Major, A. (1998): *The Garos*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati: Delhi.
- Patgiri B. (ed) (1990): *Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samajar Bidhivyastha*, published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara.
- Rao, V. V.: *A Century of Tribal Politics*, in North-East India, 1874-1974, S Chand and Company Ltd., New Delhi.
- Rowney, Haratio Bickerstaffe (1993): *The Wild Tribes of India*, Low Price Publications, Delhi.

- Raha, M.K. (ed.) (1989): *Tribal India*, Problem Development Prospect, Volume-I,  
Gian Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Raha, M.K. (ed.) (1989): *Tribal India*, Problem Development Prospect. Volume-II,  
Gian Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Rabha, D. (1998): *Rabha Janajati Chamu Itihas*, Assam Institute of Research for  
Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati.
- Rabha, Malina Devi (1999): *Asomiya Aru Rabha Samaj-Sanskritir Swarup*, M.F.L.  
Publications, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
- Rabha, Mani, (1994): *Rabha Samajar Samajik Ain Aru Dandabidhi*, published by  
Manash Jyoti Sarma on behalf of 'Pines' Shillong.
- Rabha, Karuna Kanta (1993): *Rabhar Kimbadanti*, 'Rabha Sahitya Chakra',  
Thekasu Rabha Jamat, Dudhnoi.
- Rabha, Sobha Ram (1991): *Rabha Adhyayan*, Part-I, Rabha Adhyayan Chakra;  
Dudhnoi, Goalpara.
- Rabha, Biren (1996): *Maroi Geet Aru Rabha Samaj*.
- Rabha, Rajen (2002): *Rabha Janajati*, Bina Library, Panbazar, Guwahati.
- Rabha Biren (1998): *Rabha Janajati Chamu Abhash*, Rabha Prakashan,  
Chwkuniapara, Singra, Kamrup.
- Rabha, Charu Mohan (2000): *Rabha Sanskritir Chamu Parichay*, published by  
Phulmati Rabha, Chhatabati, Jurigaon, Goalpara.
- Rabha, L. R., P. C. Rabha, C.M. Rabha (1982-83): *Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha  
Samajar Bidhi-Vyavastha*, published by the General Secretary,  
Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, Baida, Goalpara.

- Rabha, B (ed.) (1996) *Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Vyavastha*, published by Rabha Samajar Bidhi-Vyavastha Pranayan Committee, Salpara, Goalpara.
- Raha, M. K., Ghose, A.K. (ed.) (1998): *North East India: The Human Interface*, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Raha, M.K. (1989): *Matriliny to Patriliney*, (A Study of the Rabha Society), Gian Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Rao, V. V., N. Hazarika, (1991): *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India*, Volume-I (Assam) (1874-1980) S. Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi.
- Sen, S. (1999): *Tribes and Castes of Assam*, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Sengupta, Sarthak (ed.) (1994): *Tribes of North-East India*, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Srinivas, M.N. (1986): *Caste in Modern India and other Essays*, Media Promoters & Publications Pvt. Ltd., Bombay.
- Sarma, Ajit Kumar (ed.) (1987): *Benudhar Sharma Rachanawali*, Vol.-II, Buranjir Safura, published by Ajit Kumar Sarma on behalf of Benudhar Sharma Smarak Nyas, Guwahati.
- Sarma, Nabin Chandra. (1995): *Asamiya Loka-Sanskritir Abhash*, Bani Prakash Private Limited, Guwahati.
- Sarkar, Harimohan. (1989): *Rabha Samaj Aru Sanskritir Abhas*, published by Binapani Rabha, Chitalmari, Bongaon (Goalpara).
- Tara, Biswanath Rabha (2001): *Rabha Loka Biswas*, published by Daibaky Rabha, Bamundanga, Maladpara, Goalpara.



Verma, S.L. (1989): *Research Methodology in Political Science*, (Theory and Analysis) Rawat Publications, Jaipur.

Verma, R.C.: *Indian Tribes, Through the Ages*, Director of Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi.

Waddell, L.A. (2000): *The Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley*, Logos Press, New Delhi.

..... *Statistical Hand Book*, Assam, 1993, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati.

..... *Statistical Hand Book*, Assam, 2001, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati.

## **2. Bulletins:**

Bordoloi, B.N. (ed.) (1983): "Bulletin", Volume-I, Number-I, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam Guwahati.

Bordoloi, B.N. (ed.) (1987): "Bulletin", Volume-I, Number-V, Tribal Research Institute, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati.

Bordoloi, B.N. (ed.) (1989): "Bulletin", Volume-I Number-V, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, published by B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati.

Bordoloi, B.N. (ed.) (1990): "Bulletin", Volume-I, Number-VII, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, published by

B.N. Bordoloi, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati.

Bordoloi, B.N. (ed.) (1992): "Bulletin", Volume-I, Number-VIII, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, published by the Directorate of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Jawahar Nagar, Guwahati.

Hazarika, B.K. (ed.) (1994): "Bulletin", Volume-I, Number-IX, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, published by B.K. Hazarika, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Jawahar Nagar, Guwahati.

Hazarika, N.A. (ed.) (2002): "Bulletin", Volume-I, Number- XIV, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, published by N A. Hazarika, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Jawahar Nagar, Guwahati.

Zaman, R. (ed.) (1996): "Bulletin", Volume-I, Number-XI, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, published by R. Zaman, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Jawahar Nagar, Guwahati.

Zaman, R. (ed.) (1999): "Bulletin", Volume-I, Number-XII, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, published by R. Zaman, Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Jawahar Nagar, Guwahati.

### *3. Magazines, Souvenirs & Mouthpieces*

- Dia, Ram Singha (ed.) (1999) "Souvenir", 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of All Rabha Students' Union, Loharghat, Kamrup.
- Hajong, L. (ed.) (1983) "Chetana", Mouthpiece of Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti, published by Rathindra Nath Hajong on behalf of Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samiti,
- Hajong, Lakhindav, ed. (1984): "Chetana", Annual Mouthpiece of Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samitee, published by Rathindra Nath Hajong on behalf of Meghalaya Hajong Kalyan Samitee.
- Hajong, K (ed.) (1992) "Dohar", A Magazine of Hajong Language and Socio-Cultural Affairs, published by Dohar Prakashan Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
- Hajong, K.R. (ed.) (1987) "Smritigrantha", Golden Jubilee of North-East India Hajongs Welfare Association, published by Secretary Abani Hajong on behalf of Golden Jubilee Celebration Sub-Committee, Kashinath Nalbarigaon, Lakhimpur, Assam.
- Hajong, B. (ed.) (1985) "Smritigrantha", 14<sup>th</sup> Conference, North East India Hajong Welfare Association, Koraigora, West Khasi Hills, Meghalaya.
- Hajong, L.K. (ed.) (1984) "Joshna", Amatir Upahar, A Quarters Magazine of Hajong Language and Culture.
- Marak. C.R. (ed.) (1997) "Souvenir", Seventh Annual Conference of North-East India Political Science Association, North-Eastern Hill University, Tura Campus, Tura, Meghalaya.

- Machahari, N.C. (ed.) (1986) "Souvenir", Silver Jubilee Tikrikilla Govt. Aided High School, published by N.V. Ahmed, Secretary, Silver Jubilee Celebration Committee Tikrikilla, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya.
- Koch, A (ed.) (1981): "Rachhan", Quarterly Magazine of Koch Language and Culture, published by Indra Koch on behalf of Rachhan Parichalana Samiti, Garo Hills, Meghalaya.
- Khakhalary, J.S., A. Das (ed.) (1991): "Aglati", Souvenir of 57<sup>th</sup> Session of Asom Sahitya Sabha, published by Ajit Kr. Das, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Dudhnoi, Goalpara.
- Koch, J (ed.) (1998): "Mouthpiece", Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum (All Rabha Sahitya Sabha), published by Shabya Shachu Rabha, General Secretary, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha,
- Koch, J. (ed.) (1994) "Mogchho", Souvenir of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum (All Rabha Sahitya Sabha), published by Ratan Kumar Koch, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Kachugaon, Dt. Kokrajhar.
- Pam, G. (ed.) (1987) "Smritigrantha", (Souvenir) of the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Dudhnoi Paschimanchal Rsabha Sanmilan, Chhota Matia, Goalpara.
- Rabha, K.K. (2002): "Smaranika", Jananeta Late Sarat Ch. Rabha Adya Sraddha aru Smriticharan Parichalana Samiti.
- Rongag, M (ed.) (2001): "Mouthpiece", of Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum (All Rabha Sahitya Sabha), published by Prakash Rabha, General Secretary, All Rabha Sahitya Sabha, Dudhnoi, Goalpara (R.H.A.C)

- Rabha, K. (ed.) (1998-2000): "Jichhung", Mouthpiece of Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum, Nalbari District Rabha Sahitya Sabha, Barama; Nalbari (Assam).
- Rabha, S (ed.) (1996) "Souvenir", Eighth Biennial Conference of All Rabha Students' Union, published by Bhakat Ch. Chira, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Dudhnoi, Goalpara (RAC).
- Rabha, G (ed.) (1994-95) "Twnai", Magazine of Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, published by Bhakat Ch. Chira, General Secretary of the Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara.
- Rabha, S. (ed.) (1995) "Smritigrantha" (Souvenir) of the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Mechpara Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, published by the Silver Jubilee Celebration Samiti, Bardamal, Dt. Goalpara, Assam.
- Rabha, B.K. (ed.) (2000) "Hasongi Khurang", Mouthpiece of the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, published by Sita Ram Rabha, General Secretary, Mechpara Madhyanchal Rabha Samaj, Baida, Goalpara.
- Rabha, S. (ed.) (1998) "Souvenir" of Silver Jubilee Conference of Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum (All Rabha Sahitya Sabha), published by Gangaraj Rabha, General Secretary, Reception Committee, Boko, Kamrup.
- Rabha, D (ed) (1997) "Purbanchal", Mouthpiece of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (RAC) Assam.

- Rabha, R.N. (ed.) (1998-99) "Twnai", a Magazine of Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, published by Dhruba Narayan Rabha, General Secretary, Goalpara District Rabha Students' Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara
- Rabha, Rungdung, Binoy, (ed.) (1994) "Hasongsiri", Souvenir of First Annual Conference of Rabha Hasong Demand Committee, Baida, Goalpara.
- Rabha, H (ed.) (2002) "Enajari", Souvenir, 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference of Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, published by the Reception Committee, Daranggin, Goalpara, Assam.
- Rabha, D. (ed.) (1995) "Souvenir", Dadan Mela Silver Jubilee, published by Bhabendra Ch. Rabha, General Secretary, Dadan Than Committee, Baida, Goalpara.
- Rabha, B. (ed.) (2002) "Purbanchal", Mouthpiece, Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, published by Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj, Rangjuli, Goalpara (R.H.A.C.), Assam.
- Rabha, H. (ed.) (1999) "Singi Hurang", Mouthpiece of All Rabha Students' Union, published by Mati Ram Rabha, General Secretary, All Rabha Students' Union, Dudhnoi, Goalpara (R.A.C.) Assam.
- Rabha, K. (ed.) (2001) "Rangkarang", Souvenir 27<sup>th</sup> Conference of Bebak Rabha Kraurang Runchum (All Rabha Sahitya Sabha), published by General Secretary, Reception Committee, Tamulpur, Nalbari (BAC) Assam.
- Rabha, L.C. (ed.) (2002) "Smritigrantha", Souvenir of the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Boko-Bangaon Anchalik Rabha Jatiya Parishad, published by

Madhav Rabha and Anil Kumar Rabha, President and General Secretary respectively of the Reception Committee, Khenapara, Boko, Kamrup.

*4. News Papers:*

Baruah, P.G. (ed.) "The Assam Tribune", published by Mahim Patowary, Guwahati,  
Dated July, 3, 1997.

Baruah, P.G. (ed.) "The Assam Tribune", published by Mahim Patowary, Guwahati,  
Dated February, 25, 2002.

Bhuyan, A. (ed.) "Asomiya Khabar", published by Mayur Talukdar, Guwahati,  
Dated December, 5, 2001.

Bargohain, H. (ed.) "Amar Asom", published by P. Lal, Guwahati, Dated February,  
8, 2003.

Hazarika, K.N. (ed.) "Dainik Asom", published by Mohan Tamuly, Guwahati, Dated  
July, 21, 1985.

## APPENDIX-I

### LIST OF INFORMANTS

1. Amulya Hajong – 55 years, Bishnupur, Goalpara.
2. Anandi Bala Rabha – 71 years, Dudhnoi, Goalpara.
3. Atar Ch. Rabha – 28 years, Ambuk Deulguri, Goalpara.
4. Beharu Ram Rabha – 28 years, Amguri, Goalpara.
5. Biren Hajong – 72 years, Tura, Meghalaya.
6. Biresh Rabha – 34 years, Hakojuji, Goalpara.
7. Bishnu Das – 35 years, Mogho, Goalpara.
8. Charitra Hajong – 30 years, Bishnupur, Goalpara.
9. Dhaneswar Das – 72 years, Mogho, Goalpara.
10. Dhaneswar Rabha – 75 years, Kothakuthi, Goalpara.
11. Dipika Rabha – 26 years, Chitalmari Bangaon, Goalpara.
12. Gauri Kanta Rabha – 29 years, Gathiapara, Goalpara.
13. Haranath Hajong – 45 years, Kadamtola Paschim, Goalpara.
14. Jayanta Rabha – 36 years, Mukri, Goalpara.
15. Kamal Krishna Hajong – 28 years, Rupnagar, Goalpara.
16. Kandarpa Kr. Hajong – 22 years, Sidhabari Camp, Goalpara.
17. Kanu Ram Hajong – 40 years, Dhamar Reserve, Goalpara.
18. Kishor Kr. Rabha – 28 years, Dumapara, Goalpara.
19. Malina Rabha – 42 years, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
20. Mihir Rabha – 75 years, Pipalibari, Goalpara.



21. Nidhan Ch. Hajong – 62 years, Rupnagar, Goalpara.
22. Pati Ram Rabha – 63 years, Mukri, Goalpara.
23. Sarbananda Rabha – 56 years, Muslum, Goalpara.
24. Sunil Rabha – 44 years, Rabhpara, Dhupdhara, Goalpara.
25. Tishilal Rabha – 50 years, Debitola,, Dhubri

## APPENDIX-II



**Rabha Marriage**



**The Rabhas performing Farkanti Dance**



**The Rabha women performing Bohurangi Dance**



**Implements/utensils necessary for the preparation of beer**



**Hajong Marriage.**



**The Hajongs performing Lewatana Dance**

