

# **A STUDY OF THE SOCIO- CULTURAL LIFE OF THE HAJONG TRIBE OF ASSAM**

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Minor Research  
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*A Report of  
Minor Research Project  
under UGC*



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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

India is a secular country with people of different religions, castes and creed residing here together. Despite all the differences in their socio-cultural lives there prevails "Unity in Diversity." The present population of India is more than a billion. This population is supposed to comprise of six main ethnic groups and fifty two major tribes, six major religions and 6,400 castes and sub -castes. This shows that a large population of India comprises of tribal population.

The North- east part of India comprising of the seven sisters- Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura is said to comprise of the largest number of tribes in India. Out of these seven states Assam is one of the states which consists of both tribal and Non-tribal population. There are a number of tribes residing in Assam.

Assam, a frontier state of North East India lies on the north eastern borders of West Bengal. It is bounded by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh on the North, On the East by Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur, on the south by Mizoram and Tripura and south west by Meghalaya and the west by West Bengal and Bangladesh.

Assam is said to be a land of mountains and valleys, hills and rivers. It mainly comprises of two physical division: the plain and the hills. It has three physiographic units: the Brahmaputra valley on the north, the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills and plateaus in the middle and the Barak valley on the south.

Assam now has altogether 27 districts. Each of the districts comprises of a mixture of tribal and non-tribal population. The total population of the state is 2,66,55,528 as per 2001 census.

### **1.1: MEANING OF TRIBES:**

There is no standard definition of the word "tribe" given by any sociologists, anthropologists or ethnologists. But some of them have tried to define the term 'tribe' from their own perspective. Some of its definition will makes its meaning clear to us. According to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary the tribe means "any primitive or barbarous people under a chief".

The Imperial Gazetteer of India defines it as, 'a tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous, though originally it might have been so.'

R.F. Patterson in English Dictionary defines a tribe as "a division or class of people, a family or race."



The illustrated Contemporary Dictionary defines it as, "A group of people, under one chief or ruler, united by common ancestry, language and culture."

In the words of D.N.Mazumdar, "a tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous with no specialization of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance from other tribes or castes but without any stigma attached in the case of caste structure following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, liberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources; above all conscious of a homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration."

Mishra on the other hand define tribe as a group of people:

- a) claiming indigenous to the soil "Adivasi"
- b) inhabiting forest and high regions
- c) having subsistence level economy
- d) having common ancestry
- e) having strong in-group ties
- f) having traditional religious and cultural practices
- g) a feeling of strong identity.

Tribe has been defined by Jacob and Stern as, "a cluster of village communities which share a common territory, language and culture and are economically interwoven is often designated as a tribe."

In the words of Bogrdus, a tribe is, "a tribal group based on the need for protection, on ties of blood relationships and on the strength of a common religion."

The dictionary of Anthropology by E.B. Taylor defines it as, "a tribe is a social group usually with a social area, dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organization."

The above definitions make the meaning of a tribe very clear to us. It will be further clarified if we go through the eight rich common factors available in each tribal community listed by the Commission for Scheduled Tribes in the report of 1952. They are:-

- 1) Tribal live away from the civilized world in the inaccessible part lying in the forest and hills.
- 2) They belong to either one of the three stocks- Negritos, Anstreloids and Mongofrid
- 3) They speak the same tribal dialect
- 4) They perform primitive religion known as "Animism" in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is most important element.
- 5) They follow primitive occupations such as Cleaning, hunting and gathering of forest products.
- 6) They are largely carnivorous or flesh and meat larks.
- 7) They live either naked or semi-naked using tree - barks and leaves for clothing



- 8) They have nomadic habits and love for drink and dance

Though most of the above characteristics are found in some of the tribes, now the tribes staying or rather say who have migrated to the plains do not possess all the above mentioned characteristics like wearing tree barks or remaining naked.

One thing that all people do agree is that tribal people are very simple, innocent, sincere and hospitable by nature. They are also very poor. They are very conscious regarding the preservation of their social and cultural identity. They work very hard physically and possess great self-respect.

India has the second largest population of tribes in the world. As per the 1991 census, ST population constituted about 8.08 percent of the total population of India. There are about 573 tribes in our country. ST has been broadly divided into three geographical zones: a) the southern b) the central and c) the north eastern. The tribal communities of India differ from each other to a great extent in respect to physical features, language and pattern of cultural life.

One of the unique feature of tribal people is that they have been successful in retaining their customs and social norms. They have their own laws of governance. Marriages take place within their own tribe and their leaders guide them in solution of internal matters. Thus, it

is found that, they form a social community of their own which is very much different than their neighbouring communities. These communities as are socially very backward and are disadvantageous group, they have been listed as separate schedule of Government plans for special treatment

## 1.2: DIVISION OF THE TRIBALS

Tribal people are an integral part of the Indian culture, history and civilization. Historians are of opinion that they were the earliest inhabitants of our country.

In India, there are altogether 427 tribal communities residing in the different parts of the country. This figure however varies from census to census. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to present the exact number of tribal communities in India.

The tribal demography can be broadly classified into various zones based on their geographical situation. Noted anthropologists Mazumdar and Madan has demarcated these areas:-

- a) Northern and North Eastern Zone
- b) The Central or Middle Zone.
- c) The Southern Zone.

The northern -eastern region fall in the first area. It also includes the areas of eastern Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, the Tarai area of Uttar Pradesh. The tribals can also be distributed broadly into four linguistic



groups on the basis of languages spoken by them. These are:-

- i) Austra-asiatic family comprising of Siamese Chinese sub family Tai group- Khampti, Phakial etc.
- ii) The Tibeto Chinese family comprising of
  - a) Tibeto – Himalayan Brach, Bhotia of Darjeeling.
  - b) Western sub group of pronominalised Himalayan group –Chamba, Lahuti, Swangli, Kanauri. Etc.
  - c) Non pronominalised Himalayan Group – Rong or Lepcha , Topa, etc.
  - d) Arunachal Branch- Aka or Hrusso, Abor, Miri, Dafla, Mishmi, etc.
  - e) Assam Bermese Branch comprising of Bodo, Kacharis, Dimasa, Garo, etc.
- iii) Dravidian family comprising of Korva, Maler, Khond, Gondi, Yerukala, etc.
- iv) The Indo –European family comprising of Hajong, Bhil, etc.

The tribals have always been an integral part of the Indian population. Their life economy, society, religious beliefs etc have always been affected by their neighbours who are Hindus. Some anthropologists have also tried to classify them on the basis of their level of integration. According to Majumdar they may be classified into the following three categories:-

- a) Primitive tribes free from Hindu influences also known as " real primitives"



- b) Primitive tribes, who have adopted Hindu customs, beliefs and socio-religious practices.
- c) Primitive tribes who are Hinduized but maintain a social distance.

The tribes of India have also been classified on the basis of their economic and cultural manners into the following eight types

- i) Forest hunting type
- ii) Hill cultivation type
- iii) Settled agricultural type
- iv) Simple artisan type
- v) Cattle herded type
- vi) Labour , agricultural and Industrial type
- vii) Folk artist type
- viii) White collar jobs.

Some customs which are specific features of all tribes are matriliney , polygandry and polygyny , youth dormitory, tribal village as a unit etc.

### 1.3: PROBLEMS OF THE TRIBAL

The various tribes of India are on a very crucial stage of transition. Whereas, the population of some tribes has increased, on the other hand, some are on the verge of extinction. The tribal people of the country face certain problems which though unique in nature are also sometimes same as the rural population. Some of such problems faced by the tribals are:-

### **1.3.1: Problem of Spatial Segregation:**

The tribal people usually live separated from the general masses. They live in dense forests, hilly regions, deep valleys and mountains etc. where transportation is not very easy, therefore, they remain cut off from the rest of the community which has greatly hampered their material development.

### **1.3.2: Economic Problems:**

The tribal people face a lot of economic problems. They are very poor and most of them live below poverty line. They mostly depend on agriculture which is most of the time shifting cultivation which is unscientific and uneconomic. The other who live in the plains also do not get much crops due to floods and other natural calamities. This puts them under heavy debts from the money lender. Then most of them are not employed because they are mostly not qualified and they like to earn money as daily workers, make merry in the evening and live a simple life. Lack of banking facilities in the tribal region is another cause of backwardness of the tribal people.

### **1.3.3: Social Problem:**

The tribals also face certain social problems. They are mostly bound by their customs and are mostly illiterate and ignorant about the developments going on in the world. Problems like female infanticide, polyandry,

child marriage, dowry etc. are there in some tribal societies. Absence of sex codes affect the stability of family and society

#### **1.3.4: Cultural Problems:**

The culture of the tribals also is very much different than the rest of the community. But slowly as various organization started getting into them and converting them to their own religions the tribal culture gradually started fading. Most of the tribes have even forgotten their own language. Concepts like dormitories, tribal music, art forms, rituals and ceremonies started fading due to the influence of alien cultures.

#### **1.3.5: Problem of Illiteracy:**

One of the major problems of the tribals is illiteracy. Most of the tribals do not have a script of their own. The children are imparted education in the regional language or English. Language, therefore, is a big hurdle in their way of attaining literacy. Therefore 80% of them are illiterate.

#### **1.3.6: Problem of Health and Sanitation:**

The tribals are still far away from the modern concepts of health and sanitation. They still believe that diseases are caused by supra human powers. They



depend more on the magicians to cure them and use native medicine. This make them victim of diseases as forest fever, typhoid, malaria, small pox, venereal & skin diseases, etc.

Some of the tribals who remain semi naked earlier have been compelled to dress themselves. The clothes are never taken out and cleaned causing several skin diseases. This practice is more true of tribals living in cold regions.

The tribals also live in low huts which do not have proper ventilation. This also makes them prone to diseases. They also do not have safe drinking water. They rarely take bath and soaps and detergents are not known to them.

#### **1.3.7: Problem of Drinking:**

Drinking of country brewed liquors like rice beer is a common practice amongst the tribals. Drinking is a part of every social and religions functions and also a part of daily diet in some tribes. This consumes a major portion of their income and also causes health hazards.

#### **1.3.8: Problems of Leadership:**

Lack of eminent leaders who can guide and lead them in proper direction is another great problem of the tribal people. This has hampered their development.

#### **1.4: STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRIBES**

Article 339 of our Constitution entrust responsibility on the government to carry out periodic review of the levels of socio-economic development attained by the tribal social groups. The government is also responsible for working in direction to revamp and reorganize the tribal development planning process at the state level, to ensure that the development benefits are trickling down to the tribal society perennially.

#### **1.5: PROTECTIVE MEASURES FOR TRIBALS IN INDIA**

The protective measures taken by the government for the Tribal in India facilitate the implementation of directive principles contained in the Article 46 in the fourth part of our constitution. Some of the constitutional provision which safeguards the interest of the tribals is as follows:-

- 1) Fundamental right to Equality – Articles 14, 15 and 16.
- 2) Right against Exploitation in Article 23 & 24.
- 3) Directive Principles of State Policy Article 38, 39, 39 (A), 41, 43, 46, 47, 48 and 48 (A)

- 4) A Minister in charge of Tribal Welfare in State provided in Article 164 (I), Proviso.
- 5) Administration of Scheduled Areas and Tribal Area – Articles 244 & 244(A).
- 6) Grants from the Union to certain States – Article 275.
- 7) Special Provisions- Article 330,332, 335,338,339 and 342.
- 8) Provisions as to the Administration and control of Scheduled Area and Scheduled Tribes –V Schedule by virtue of Article 244 (1) of the Constitution
- 9) Provisions as to the Administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram – VI Schedule by virtue of Articles 224 (2) and 275 (1) of the Constitution.

Apart from these, a special Officer was appointed by the President under Article 338 for investigating all matters relating to the safeguard provided for the SCs and STs by the Constitution.

Under the Sixty Amendment Act, 1990 of the Constitution, the Special Officer was substituted and a National Commission for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes was appointed which became effective from March, 1992.

All these provisions by the Constitution have been made with an intention of assisting the tribals in enjoying their existing right without any obstruction by others. It



also aims at securing the economic , educational and social progress of the STs.

In this regard Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had remarked, " The problem of the tribal areas is to make the people feel that they have perfect freedom to live their own lives and to develop according to their wishes and genius. India, to them should signify not only a protecting force but a liberating one. Any conception that India is ruled or that customs and habits with which they are unfamiliar are going to be imposed on them, will alienate them."

#### 1.6: PROVISION MADE FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE SCHEDULE TRIBES

The rate of educational growth is very slow in the ST Communities. The table below will focus on it

YEAR	SC	ST	GENERAL
1961	10.27	8.54	27.86
1971	14.67	11.30	33.80
1981	21.38	16.35	41.30
1991	37.41	29.60	57.40

*Table :1: Literacy Rate in % in the Indian Population  
(Courtesy-V Shunmuga Sundaram in Education in Scheduled Tribse)*

The National Policy of Education (NPE) of 1986, also felt that equal educational opportunities must be provided to the educationally disadvantaged group, specially the SC and ST. In this regard policy directives for special efforts were provided by the NPE. The following measures have been suggested by the NPE, which will help in removing the disparity between the ST and other groups in educational field:-

- 1) Priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas. The construction of School building will be undertaken in these areas on priority basis under the normal fund for education as well as under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana Tribal Welfare Scheme etc.
- 2) The Socio Cultural milieu of the STs has its distinctive characteristics including in many cases, their own spoken languages. This underlines the need to develop the initial stages, with the arrangement for switching over to the regional language.
- 3) Educated and promising ST youth will be encouraged and trained to take up teaching in the tribal areas.
- 4) Residential schools, including Ashram school will be established on a large scale.
- 5) Incentive schemes will be formulated for the ST, keeping in view their special needs and lifestyle, Scholarship for higher professional courses will be

provided Special remedial courses and other programmes to remove psycho-social impediments will be provided to improve their performance in various courses.

- 6) Anganwadis, non formal and adult education centers will be opened on priority basis in areas predominantly inhabited by the STs.
- 7) The curriculum at all stage of education will be designed to create awareness of the rich cultural identity of the tribal people as also of their enormous creative talent.

### **1.7: DEVELOPMENT SCHEME OF MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS**

#### **1.7.1: Special Central Assistance and Grants Under Article 275(i) of the Constitution**

The Ministry provides special central assistance to the states and union territories to supplement their effort in the areas of tribal development through tribal sub-plan. This assistance is basically given to generate schemes related to family oriented income in various sectors like agriculture, horticulture, minor irrigation, soil conservation, animal husbandry, forests, education co-operatives, fisheries, village and small scale industries. The minimum needs programmes are also included in this scheme.



The states and UTs are also given grants, as per the first provision of the article 257( i) for meeting the costs of the projects meant for the development of the tribes and also raising level of administration of the Scheduled Area so that it comes to par with the other states . Residential Schools are also set up with a part of the funds to provide quality education to the tribal students.

#### **1.7.2: Scheme of Development of Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)**

The Ministry has identified 75 tribal communities of 17 states and 1 union territory of Andaman and Nicobar as Primitive Tribal Group or PTG. This identification or categorisation has been made on the basis of pre -agricultural level of technology, low level of literacy, declining or stagnant populations. Taking into consideration the vulnerability of these groups, in the year 1998-99 a Cental Sector Scheme was introduced for their all round development. The scheme covers housing, infrastructure development, health education, land distribution and development, development of agriculture, cattle etc., social security and insurance etc. A comprehensive long term "Conservation -Cum - Development (CCD) Plan" had been formulated during the year 2007-08 for the Eleventh plan period based on

surveys conducted by the respective state governments and union territories. These plans help to provide a co-operation amongst the efforts of the State Governments and NGOs.

#### **1.7.3: Tribal Research Institutes**

The ministry has set up Tribal Research Institutes (RTI) in fourteen states namely Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura. The functions of these institutes is to provide the state governments with planning inputs, conduct research and evaluation, studies, collect data, codify customary law and conduct training, seminars and workshops. Some of the institutes also have museums where tribal artifacts are exhibited.

#### **1.7.4: Hostels for ST boys and Girls**

The scheme of providing hostels for ST girls was started during the Third Five Year Plan. The aim of this scheme was to provide residential facilities to the tribal girls who wanted to pursue education. The scheme provides 50% central assistance of the cost of construction to the states and hundred percent to the Union Territories. During 1999-2000 the states and UTs received funds for construction of 29 such hostels and during 2000-01 for 11 hostels. Similarly, the scheme for construction of ST boys hostels was started in 1989-90.



During 2000-01 funds were released for construction of 15 boys hostels.

#### **1.7.5: Setting of Ashram Schools**

In 1990-91 a centrally sponsored scheme was started to provide central assistance to the States and UTs for construction of Ashram Schools. During 1999-2000 funds were released for construction of 36 such schools.

#### **1.7.6: Vocational Training Centres in Tribal Areas:**

This scheme has been implemented with an aim to upgrade the skills of the tribal youth in various traditional and modern vocations depending on their educational qualification, present economic trends and the market potential so that they can gain some employment or become self employed. The scheme provides grants to the State Government, Union Territories and NGOs for carrying out the work in the tribal areas. It has fixed financial norms. It provides no grant for construction work.

The NGOs have to submit their proposal to the state government who then sends it for recommendation to the "State Committee for Supporting Voluntary Efforts" which is chaired by either Principal Secretary or Secretary. It is mandatory for the proposal to be recommended by the committee as well the Tribal Welfare or Development



Department of the State or UT which is valid for only the financial year in which it is made.

**1.7.7: Strengthening of Education among Scheduled Tribe Girls in Low Literacy District:**

The Ministry provides this scheme with an aim of bridging the gap in the literacy level of the male and female population. Through this scheme it facilitates 100% enrolment of tribal girls in some selected Districts or Blocks, specially in areas affected by naxalite activities and inhabited by Primitive Tribal Groups. It also aims at reducing drop out rate at the elementary level by creating interest for education amongst the girls because it believes that improvement of literacy rate amongst the tribal girls is very much necessary to enable them to participate effectively in their socio-economic development.

12 states and 1 UT has been selected and covered under the scheme, where the ST population is 25% or more and the literacy rate of ST girls is below 35% according to 2001 census. Apart from these any other tribal block in a district possessing the same features is also covered under this scheme.

Under this scheme hostels attached to school running under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan are maintained. If an areas does not have such facilities, the scheme provides for establishment of a complete educational complex residential school. It also provides facilities for

tuitions, incentives and periodical awards to encourage the ST girls. It also establishes the Department of District Education support Agency for monitoring the performance of NGOs, ensuring 100% enrolment, reducing drop outs, arrangement of preventive health etc. The process of submitting proposal is the same as that of setting vocational centre.

#### **1.7.8: Coaching for STs;**

Under this scheme the Ministry arranges free coaching to ST students for various competitive examinations and professional courses. The scheme covers Rs. 1000/- per ST student every month and Rs.2000/- for the boarding and lodging of the outstation students during the period of coaching.

#### **1.7.9: Grant -in Aid to voluntary Organizations Working for Welfare of Schedule Tribes**

This scheme has been framed with an objective of enhancing the reach of Governmental Welfare schemes and provide services in tribal areas in the field of education, health, sanitation, agro-horticultural productivity, social security net through the efforts of voluntary organisation and NGOs. It also aims at building an environment for socio economic development and livelihood generation.

A number of projects are covered under this scheme as -residential and non-residential schools, 10 or more



bedded hospitals, mobile dispensaries, computer training centres etc. The ministry provides 90% grant and the rest is borne by the NGOs from their own resources. In the scheduled areas, however the government bears the total cost. The process of submitting a proposal is same as the earlier schemes.

#### **1.7.10: Scholarships:**

The Ministry provides various scholarships for the Scheduled Tribe Students. They are :

- a) Post Matric Scholarship for Scheduled tribe Students
- b) Upgradation of Merit of ST Students
- c) Girls and boys hostel for ST
- d) Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme
- e) Scheme of Top Class Education for ST students
- f) Establishment of Ashram School in Tribal Sub-plan Area
- g) National Overseas Scholarship Scheme.

#### **1.8: STEPS TAKEN BY OTHER ORGANISATION**

Various organizations and government departments have also taken certain steps for improvement of the literacy rate among the STs. Some of them are as follows:-



### **1.8.1: Department of Education :**

The Department of Education has also offered many programmes for the educational upliftment of the ST people. They are:-

#### **i) Primary Education:**

Article 45 of our constitution provides free and compulsory to all children till the age of 14 years. The Department of Education in order to ensure this has taken steps to universalize primary education and establish schools at a distance of 1Km per 200 inhabitants.

#### **ii) District Primary Education ( DPE):**

DPE has also taken some steps for the upliftment of the ST population as follows:-

- a) New School in tribal inhabitation.
- b) Supplementary instructional material in tribal language.
- c) Tribal sensitization of teachers and educational administration.
- d) Appointment of tribal teachers.
- e) Thrust on training of teachers in tribal languages.
- f) Establishment of Ashram schools.
- g) Bilingual primers (tribal language and Hindi).
- h) Tribal area specific text book.

### iii) Secondary Education:

Free education upto secondary level is provided in most of the Indian states whereas in many of them it extended upto +2 stage also.

### iv) University and Higher Education:

ST candidates are provided relaxation upto 10% incut off marks for Junior Research Fellowship. All ST candidates who qualify for this are awarded scholarship.

### 1.8.2: Ministry of Welfare:

The Minister of Welfare, Government of India has also taken several steps to improve the literacy rate of the ST people. Some of them are:

- i) Pre -metric Scholarship for the children of those with unclean occupations.
- ii) National overseas scholarship for ST students to pursue higher studies abroad.
- iii) Boys and Girls hostels for ST students.

### 1.9: TRIBES IN ASSAM

About their origin Prof. Tabu Ram Taid writes in "Assam Land and People" as "the mongoloid race is said

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to have had an original hearth in eastern Eurasia from where they kept migrating to different parts of Asia , some branches moving southward to the Tibetan plateau and onwards to the Himalayan regions, other branches taking an eastern route . Migration -wise, the Scheduled tribes of Assam may be divided into two broad groups: the tribes of the north, who entered Assam from Tibet and other places to the north of Assam, following the courses of the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries, the tribes of the east, who entered the north -east of India , including Assam from Myanmar.

As many as twenty five ethnic groups of the Mongoloid stock have been given the status of Scheduled Tribes in Assam. The Schedule Tribes (Plains), inhabiting both the Bhramaputra Valley and the Barak Valley are the Barmans, Bodos or Bodo Kacharis, Deoris, Hojais, Sonowal Kacharis, Tiwas or Lalungs, Meches, Missings or Miris, Rabhas, Dimasas or Dimasa Kacharis, Hajongs , Singphos, Khamptis and Garos or Achiks. The Schedule Tribes ( Hills) inhabiting Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills are the Chakmas, Dimasa, Garos, Hajongs, Hmars, Khasis, Jaintias, Shantongs, Pnars, Wars, Bhois, Lynggams, Kukis with 37 sub groups, Karbis, Nagas, Pawis, Lakhers, Maans, Mizos , Synthengs and Tiwis. The Misings Bodos, garos, Dimasa, Rabhas, sonowals, Deoris, Meches, Tiwas, Barmans, Hojais, and Hajongs entered Assam from the Northern land, the rest of the tribes entering the region from Myanmar in the East.



Tribes in Assam can be divided on the basis of their place of residence. Tribes in the autonomous districts are –Chakma, Dimasa ( Kachari) , Garo, Hajong, Hmar, Khasi, Jaintia, Any Kuki tribes, Lakher, Maan Any Mizo tribes, Mikir , Any Naga tribes, Pawi, Synthang

In the state of Assam excluding the autonomous districts- Barmans in Cachar, Bodo, Borokachari, deori , Hajong, Kachari Sonowal, Lalung, Mech, Miri, Rabha

As per the census of India of 2001, the total population of Scheduled Tribes constitutes 12.42 % the entire population of Assam and 3.92 % of the country. The highest population of STs resides in the North Cachar Hills of the State (68.28%) and then comes Karbi Anglong (55.69%) Amongst them the major tribes are the Bodos comprising 40.9% of the total tribal population, Misings (17.8%) , then comes the Karbis with 10.7% , Rabhas , Sonowals, Tiwas, Dimasas and Deoris ( 1.2% )

#### **1.10: THE HAJONG TRIBE OF ASSAM**

Out of the many tribes of North East, Hajong is an indigenous tribes residing in Assam and Meghalaya. In lower Assam majority of them are found in the south east portion of Brahmaputra valley. There are also some Hajongs residing in small numbers in the various plains districts of Assam. A small number of them also live in Arunachal Pradesh since 1964.

The Hajongs were recognized as Scheduled tribes (Hills) in Garo Hills Autonomous District, as per the Scheduled Tribes Order 1950 of the constitution. Later on as per the North Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971, they were recognized as Scheduled tribes (Hills) in the whole of Meghalaya, Autonomous Districts of Assam and other Hill states of North Eastern regions. The other living in plains districts of Assam were declared as a "Hill tribes in Plain" This was done so that they could enjoy the economic , educational and employment benefits provided against quotas reserved for Scheduled tribes (Hills) by the Government of Assam.

At present since 2003, the Hajongs living in Plain districts of Assam are recognized as ST (Plains) as per the Scheduled caste and scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act 202 of the Indian Constitution (Annexure II).

The Hajongs are believed to belong to the great Bodo family of the Indo -Mongoloid tribes in respect to language to ethnology. The other tribes included in this family are Boro -Kochari, Rabha, Garo , Lalung , Dimasa , Sonowal , Koch etc.

Basically the Hajongs were divided into six endogamous group:

- a) Harangparia
- b) Bhajniparia
- c) Manikparia
- d) Teporparia,
- e) Satdolparia

f) Manjiparia.

However these divisions are no more found amongst the Hajongs. Presently they have five division as-:

- a) Daskahania
- b) Koraibaria
- c) Susongi
- d) Barohajari and
- e) Mechparia.

The Hajongs though Hindu have exogamous groups or clan system among them which is known as "Nikni". At present we find eighteen such clans amongst the Hajongs. They are:-

- i) Aksigao
- ii) Kendegao
- iii) Kasigao
- iv) Katagao
- v) Bogegao
- vi) Balihata
- vii) Taragao
- viii) Simulgao
- ix) Difragao
- x) Katlegao
- xi) Malegao
- xii) Dingjor
- xiii) Parakati
- xiv) Porachunga
- xv) Churabari



- xvi) Soramoi
- xvii) Goalgao
- xviii) Garaudo

#### 1.11: LOCATION OF HAJONGS IN THE VARIOUS DISTRICTS OF ASSAM

The Hajongs are found in a large number in the Goalpara district of Assam. There is also a small number of them residing in the various other districts. Below is the given a list of their place of residence in the various district of Assam.

##### A Goalpara District:

- i) Dhamar, ii) Medhipara, iii) Bhai -boini, iv) Khagilamari, v) Manas, vi) Lakhipur, vii) Ranarampur, viii) Suwarkona, ix) Matya Santipur, x) Kadamtala xi) Sidhabari, xii) Sesapani xiii) Takimari, xiv) Dubapara ( Sri Surjya), xv) Harimura, xvi) Rakkhakhini, xvii) Dhaigaon, xviii) Karipara, xix) Khardang, xx) Jiragaon, xxi) Makribari (Paikan) xxii) Bishnupur ( Dhupdhara) xxiii) Rupnagar, xxxiv) Patpara, xxv) Damra xvi) Bhalukdubi xxxvii) Bapujinagar, xxxviii) Jurigaon.

##### B) Dhubri District (South Salmara Mankachar Mahakuma)

- i) Puthimari, ii) Pankata iii) Bormati, iv) Puskarinipara, v) Kalapara vi) Banalis vii) Aydoba vii) Dubajani ix) Naribhita x) Dhopabil xi) Dipkaipara xii)

Dalbabipara xiii) Dhapguri xiv) Kuralbhanga xv) Salibhui ,  
xvi) Bandarpanikhowa xvii) Tanggaon xviii) Tiksali xix)  
Jeuyali xx) Dhanuwa xxi) Seuraguri.

**C) Bangaigaon District:**

i) Batabari, ii) Jakhadi, iii) Bishnupur iv) Saktula v)  
Patiladoh.

**D) Kamrup District:**

i) Bamunigaon, ii) Boko, iii) Bonda, iv) Narangi, v)  
Noonmati.

**E) Nalbari District:**

i) Angrakata, ii) Kumarikata, iii) Kauli iv) Balahati, v)  
Hatiduba, vi) Kudalpara , vii) Haulikuti, viii) Jamugunri ix)  
Nepalkhuti, x) Parkijuli, ix) Pub Gaibari, xii) Kosubari, xiii)  
Balabari, xiv) Tamulpur Dakshin Suba.

**F) Darrang District:**

i) Udalguri Jangelgaon, ii) Silburi Hajong basti, iii)  
Dakshin Suburi iv) Dhansiri Hajong goan, v) Pauripata,  
iv) Maukura vii) Kajiamati , viii) Nepalbasti

**G) Sonitput District:**

i) Shyamnagar Balijuri, ii) Tengabasti, iii)  
Sonthaibari.

**H) Nowgoan District:**

i) Derapathar No.2, ii) 4no Derapathar iii) Tengripar,  
iv) Hojai Hajong Basti v) Islamnagar, vi) Debsthan, vii)  
Alonggiri.

**I) Lakhimpur District:**

i) Naukari, ii) Katrisapori, iii) Rupahigaon iv) Borkoni  
, iv) Kadam

**J) Dhemaji District:**

i) Jayrampore, ii) Simenmukh, iii) Nalbari, iv)  
Kashinath ,v) Harinathpur, iv) Tulsipur vii) Santipur vii)  
Karaibari, ix) Arne Panbari x) Takimari, xi) Kopou  
saponi, xii) Ejarbari, xiii) Lekabali, xiv) Malbhoggaon.

**K) Tinsukia District:**

i) Kuhujarbrbari, ii) Jagun, iii) Lekhapani, iv)  
Bordumasa, v) Kaliajan.

**L) Karbi Anglong District:**

i) Longjap, ii) Danka, iii) Kheroni, iv) Rajagaon , v)  
Tamreng, iv) Howrahghat vii) Bokajan vii) Hamren.

**1.12 : RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Tribal people constitute a large section of the total population of Assam. There are several tribes residing at different places. These people are spread in



small numbers all over the state. The Hajongs are also one such scheduled tribes residing scattered in the different districts of Assam as shown above. They have a distinct culture of their own which is different than the other tribes. This tribe is not very popular or well known as the Kachari, Bodos, Rabhas Garos etc. The cause may be that they don't have a large population.

It is found by the investigator that several studies were made about the life and culture of the various tribes of Assam. But interestingly it was found that no such formal study was made on the life and culture of the Hajongs. Therefore, the investigator thought it proper to take up a study under the title:

**"A STUDY OF THE SOCIO- CULTURAL LIFE  
OF THE HAJONG TRIBE OF ASSAM"**

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## **CHAPTER II**

# **METHODOLOGY**

## **CHAPTER -2**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter a detailed presentation has been made about tribes as a whole, the meaning of tribes, their division, existing of various tribes in the North- East. Particular reference was made about the Hajong tribe of Assam. In the present chapter, the methodology has been presented under the titles namely – Need of the Study, Statement of the problem, definition of the terms, Objectives of the study , Sample, Tools, Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation of the Data and Scheme of Chapterisation.

#### **2.2 NEED OF THE STUDY**

Hajong tribe has been residing since 44 years in Assam. The population of this tribe being very small, it has never been the center of attraction of many anthropologists. The governments also have not done much for their upliftment. They are still very backward - educationally and economically. No formal research has been done on their lives. Therefore the investigator felt that some research must be made to know about this tribe.

#### **2.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

The main aim of the present investigation is to study about the socio-cultural life of the Hajong tribe of Assam. This tribe though



recognized by the Government of India as a Scheduled tribe (Plains) very less has been done for their upliftment. No NGO's or Voluntary Organizations also have ever tried to implement any schemes for the educational, social and economic development of this tribe. So this study was taken under the title: **"A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE OF THE HAJONG TRIBE OF ASSAM"**

## 2.4 DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

### SOCIO

The word 'Socio' comes from 'Social' According to English Dictionary social means 'Pertaining to Society'

According to Oxford English Mini Dictionary social means of "society" or "needing the company of others"

According to the Illustrated Contemporary Dictionary 'Social' means 'pertaining to society or its organization. According to Oxford Dictionary 'social' means relating to society".

Here the word 'socio' is used in relation to 'social'. It is used to mean the way of living, customs and rituals practiced, economic condition, educational status etc. of the Hajong tribe.

### CULTURAL

According to Oxford Dictionary the word 'culture' means 'state' of manners, taste and intellectual development at a time or place"

According to the Illustrated Contemporary Dictionary, the word 'culture' means "pertaining to or developing culture".

In this study the word culture has been used to study about the festivals, religious ceremonies, social practices, etc of the Hajong tribe.

## **2.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To study about the life and culture of the Hajong tribe.
2. To study whether they have taken up education and whether that has any influence on their life styles.
3. To study the work done by the government for their upliftment.
4. To study if any other organization is working for their upliftment.
5. To study about the problems faced by them in adjustment to changing modern society.
6. To suggest some measures for their upliftment.

## **2.6 SAMPLE**

The sample for the study comprised of the Hajong population of two districts in Assam-Goalpara and Kamrup. In Goalpara District it was conducted in Dhamar Village which has the largest population of this tribe. It comprises of 500 families with a population of about 7000 people.

In Kamrup district it was carried out in the Bonda area which consists of more than 50 families with a population of 300-400 approximately.

The investigator also met some eminent people of the tribe, who are working for its upliftment and development.

## **2.7 TOOLS**

The selection of tools for a particular study depends upon various considerations such as the objective of the study, the amount of time available at the disposal of the investigator, availability of suitable tools and the personal competency of the investigator to administer them.

In this study a Questionnaire was prepared for the general people.

## **2.8 DATA COLLECTION**

The investigator personally went and met their people and explained the purpose of her visit. She also went and stayed in Dhamar Village for 8 days to study about their lives in details. She also met some of their eminent people.

A few case studies were also made.

## **2.9 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

Keeping in view, the objectives of the study, the data collected were classified and tabulated. Simple statistics were used to analyse the data.



The total data was analysed as –

- a) Response of the tribal people.
- b) A few case studies.

## 2.10 SCHEME OF THE CHAPTERS

CHAPTER I	: Introduction
CHAPTER II	: Methodology
CHAPTER III	: Analysis and Interpretations of data
CHAPTER IV	: Case Studies
CHAPTER V	: Summary, Findings and Conclusion

The Bibliography is then provided. In the Appendices too of the study, photographs taken and CDs of dances and fishing procedure are attached.

**CHAPTER III**  
**ANALYSIS AND**  
**INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

## CHAPTER 3

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

In the previous chapter the methodology of the entire study was presented. The present chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected during the study. All together 50 (fifty) questions were prepared for collection of data.

#### 3.1 ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

From the analysis of Q.No.1. It was found that the Hajong residing at Dhamar Village Goalpara district have been residing there since 1964.

The ones residing at Bonda area of Kamrup district, have been residing there since 1965.

##### **Q.No. 2. From where had your forefathers migrated?**

The answer to this question was that their forefathers had migrated from Bangladesh in the year 1964

##### **Q. No. 3 What is your mother tongue?**

Their mother tongue is Hajong language. The language is a mixture of Bengali, Assamese and Hindi language.

##### **Q. No 4 Is it used as language of communication?**

Yes, they use the Hajong language as a medium of communication. Though the children study in Assamese medium schools, still they use their mother tongue as the medium of communication.



**Q No. 5 What system of society do you follow matriarchal or patriarchal?**

They follow a patriarchal system of society. The male member is the head of the family.

**Q.No.6 Do you have your own folk songs?**

They do have their own folk songs which are sung on various festivals and religious ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, etc.

**Q.No.7 Are they preserved in written form?**

They are not preserved in written form as they do not have a script of their own. They now have started Assamese script for writing their language.

**Q.No.8 Are they still prevalent?**

Some of them are still prevalent. Many of them are of course on the way of extinction because they are not preserved and the younger generation now is not interested in preserving them.

**Q.No.9 What is the religion practiced by your society?**

They are all Hindus. They practice Hinduism.

**Q.No.10 Whom do you worship?**

They worship Kali, Durga, Lord Krishna, Vaastu, Kamakhya Devi, Siva, etc.

**Q.No.11 What are the rituals associated with your religion?**

Most of the rituals are performed according to the Vedas. But Vaastu Puja and Kamakhya Puja are performed traditionally.

**Q.No.12. What is your traditional dress?**

They have their own dress. The females wear a dress known as "Ranga Patin". This resembles the mekhela or rather say Dokhona of the Bodos. It is worn from the waist to the ankle. The upper part of the body is covered with a scarf called "Agrun"

The men wear a cloth known as Ningti which is a bit bigger than Gamosa.

The ornaments used by them are "Kata Baju"- an armlet made of silver. "Baghh Kharu"- Heavy silver anklets worn by women. "Harsara" – silver necklace which is very much alike the "hansli" worn by the Bihari women. "Gunjari" an anklet which produces a tinkling sound. "Khasabera"- another type of anklet. The Gunjari is worn first, then Khasabera and then the Bagh Kharu.

The earring worn by the women are known as "Karamphul" or "Kanphul". The noserings worn by them are known as "Nath" or "Nalsa". In hands they were "Shakhas" the same as worn by the Bengalis.

During the field survey the investigator did not get to see all the ornaments because they do not have them any more. It was found that they had many of them when they migrated from Bangladesh. But they had to sell them due to poverty. The investigator got only Gunjari, Baagh and Katabaju.



**Q. No 13. Do the people still wear the traditional dress?**

The females wear the traditional dress only. Though some of them occasionally wear Saree. Some of the male folk wear the traditional dress but most of them wear trousers and shirt.

**Q.No.14. What are your food items generally accepted by the mass people?**

Leba Sak (an item prepared with rice powder), Bukni Bhat (Sweet rice) and domestic wine prepared traditionally are accepted by the mass people. Their staple food is rice taken with pulses and vegetables. They also eat fish and goat meat. The youngsters now take chicken and pork.

**Q. No 15. What are the main social ceremonies celebrated in your society?**

The main social ceremonies celebrated by them are "Vaastu Puja" in which they worship earthen idols of horses, elephant, Lakshmi Thakur and Bara deo. This puja is preformed during the month of Magha. The worship takes place at "Bastu Than". An altar is prepared in a miniature hut for Bastu deities. If the village is a big one then about 20 families get together and perform the ritual amongst themselves. Of course one common ceremony take place at "Bastu than" located at a prime place. Pigeons are sacrificed during this ceremony.

Another social ceremony is "Char Khela". It is celebrated during the Kali Puja or Diwali period. Its "Yatra Din" or inaugural day is Vijay Dashmi . But after that it is



stopped and starts from the day of Kali Puja. It lasts from 7-9 days depending on the area. It is similar to Assamese "Husuri". Earlier only the young boys went from



**Vaastu Than Made By Families in Their Locality**

house to house sing lewa tang songs and bless the households. But now the girls also go. Only difference with Husuri is that the songs are completely love song and not devotional like that of Husuri.



**Ruins of a Local 'Vaastu Than**

**Q. No 16. Do the youngsters take part in them?**

The youngsters take part in all the social ceremonies with great enthusiasm.

**Q. No 17. What is the food items prepared for any kind of celebration?**

The food items prepared for any kind of celebration are domestic wine, Bukni Bhat and Leba Sak etc.

**Q.No 18 Are the people vegetarian or non vegetarian?**

The Hajong are non-vegetarians. But one group known as "Baishnavas" are vegetarian.

**Q. No 19 Is there a change in language amongst people residing in different areas.**

There are changes prevalent in the language of communication amongst people residing in different areas. Based on their area of residence the language has been divided five types as-

- a) Das kahaniya spoken in Das Kahaniya paragana (Goalpara, etc.)
- b) Karaibariya – spoken in Karaibari paragana (Meghalaya, etc)
- c) Susangi spoken in Susang paragana.
- d) Barahajari Spoken in Barahajari or Kalu Malu para.
- e) Mechpariya spoken in Mespara (Lakhimpur – Tikrikilla ) paragana.

**Q.No.20 Do the youngsters follow the rules and regulations of the community?**

The youngsters do follow the rules and regulations of the community.



**Q.No 21** Do you have caste distinction in the society? If yes – how many castes do you have? Do marriages take place amongst people of different castes?

There is no caste. They all belong to only one clan i.e. Hajongs. Marriages take place amongst their own community. They do not prefer inter-community marriages.

**Q.No.24** Is the birth of a girl child celebrated in your society?

There is no celebrations made either on the birth of a girl or a boy.

**Q.No.25** Do the younger generation follow their tradition and culture?

Yes, the younger generation follows the traditions and culture. They are very much attached to their own culture.

**Q.No.26** What is the status of women in your society? Are they given the same position as man?

The women are not given the same status as men as in the patriarchal society. The boys inherit the property of their father. If a girl remains unmarried, she does not inherit her paternal property, and if she is given also it is a very small portion (Details are provided in the next chapter)

**Q.No.27** What are the traditional customary laws prevalent in your society?

One of the laws is that they cannot marry outside the tribe. And if they do the brides cannot touch anything during any religious ceremony either at home or outside.



**Q.No.28 Are they still prevalent or changed? If changed, why?**

They are still prevalent though of course the boys and girls have started marrying girls and boys from communities and tribes apart from Hajong. The host family of the investigator had a Bengalee daughter -in- law.

The laws are though the same, at some place some change is found because people have started mixing with other communities.

**Q.No.29 What is your main source of occupation?**

The chief occupation of the Hajong is agriculture. Some of them also work as daily wage labourers.

There are a few who are in business or government service. But their numbers is so less that it can be counted on fingers.

**Q.No.30 Do you have banking habit?**

People do have banking habit but it is the male only who visit the banks. The females do not visit banks as almost all of them are uneducated.

**Q.No.31 Do you have any bank in your locality?**

In Dhamar Village of Goalpara district, there was no branch. People had to go to Lakhipur town from the village which is about 15 Kms away.

There are of course branches of State Bank of India and United Commercial Bank in the Bonda area of Kamrup district.

**Q.No.32 Does your tribe give importance to education?**

The tribe does understand the importance of education but it was found that there is a high rate of drop out due to poverty. The boys and girls do not study beyond standard VIII or IX. They start doing some work to earn their livelihood and girls get married by the age of 14-15 years.

Above this in Dhamar village, there was no educational institution beyond class X. So they stop education because it is not possible for them to bear the expense of going to Lakhipur.

In Bonda also there are colleges around, but they cannot study due to financial constraint.

**Q.No.33 Is there any school and college in your locality?**

In Dhamar there were 3 primary schools (2 government and 1 private), 1 M.E. School and 1 High school and no college, 3 Anganwadis.

In Bonda, there were altogether 2 school – 1 government and 1 private. There is of course a venture college in this area.

**Q.No.34 What is the medium of instruction in the educational institution of your locality?**

In Dhamar it is Assamese. In Bonda are a it was Assamese, English and Hindi.

**Q. No.35 Do you have a library in your locality?**

No, there were no libraries in their locality.



**Q.No.36 What are the modes of entertainment for your people?**

In Bonda area they had television sets, radios and played sports.

In Dhamar village, the people did not have television in every house. Only one or two house had it. The reason for this is that there is no electricity in a part of the village and it becomes difficult to operate a television with battery. They of course have radios and the boys were engaged in playing cards and other games.

**Q.No.37 Do you have a TV set/ Radio/ telephone/ Cooking gas connection at your home?**

The responses of the part has been included in the previous question. Regarding cooking gas in Bonda area they do have gas connection in almost all the homes.

In Dhamar, they still follow the traditional method of cooking on firewood

All of them do have mobile connection at both the place. Every home has a mobile connection. In such a remote area like Dhamar also, the investigator was surprised to find every mobile connection worked there, whether of Reliance, BSNL, Airtel or Aircel.

**Q.No.38 Do any of your family member own a vehicle?**

None of them in Dhamar area own a four wheeler. In Bonda , ofcourse two families did have car. In Dhamar only two houses had motorbikes. And very few of them had bicycles.



**Q.No 39. What is the source of water in your area?**

In Bonda , they have stream and tube wells

In Dhamar they have only tube wells, and some families have wells of their own.

**Q.No. 40 Do you have proper transport facilities?**

In Bonda area, they do have transport facilities. City buses ply at regular intervals, trackers and rickshaws, auto rickshaws are available.

In Dhamar of course, they have to depend on private buses at fixed time. So they mostly move on foot to nearby place. And may be because of lack of connectivity with the nearby town areas they still remain so backward.

**Q.No. 41 Are there proper health and medical facilities available in your area?**

In Dhamar they had only one medical centre the condition of which is very pathetic. There is no doctor available. There is only one nurse, who opens the dispensary only once a week. People rush to nearby Baida health centre whenever they have any health problem. No NGOs or other voluntary organizations have ever conducted any medical check up camp, eye check up camp, blood donation camp etc.

In Bonda area, there is small dispensary run by a local company named "Assam Asbestos Limited" It is open for public on Sunday, free of cost. It has two beds for hospitalization. There is no government health centre.

**Q.No.42 What type of houses do you have ? Kutcha or Pucca?**

At Dhamar 95% people had kutcha houses. They stay in huts made of bamboo strips and roofing of straw. The house are very low. When asked they said that the houses were made low so that it is not blown away or damaged by winds.

The remaining 5% did have pucca houses.

In Bonda also most of the house are kutcha except some.

**Q.No. 43 Are you a member of any political party?**

None of them belonged to any particular political party They cast their votes mostly for congress candidates because that has been done by their forefathers .A few youngsters of course vote for Asom Gana Parishad and Bharatiya Janata Party.

**Q.No. 44 Can you name the political parties that are active in your locality?**

At both place three political parties were active:

- a) Indian National Congress
- b) Bharatiya Janata Party
- c) Asom Gana Parishad.

**Q.No. 45 It seems some of your people have converted to Christianity, why?**

In Dhamar and Bonda or say in Assam, the Hajongs have not converted to Christianity In Dhamar, the Christians had built raised platforms for flood victims but they could not convert people and so they didn't do any further work.



Of course, most of the Hajong people residing in Garo hills have converted to Christianity.

**Q.No 46 What steps had Government taken for the upliftment of your people?**

The government had not taken any step for their upliftment. When the investigator went to meet the people personally they all complained that no help has been given by the government. The investigator then made them understand that she was not a government representative.

In Dhamar, there are no Self Help Groups also. When asked they said that there is no one to run. They were also not aware of the welfare schemes, loan facilities provided by the government.

They don't even know to market their handloom products, they even cannot afford to make these products for their personal use due to poverty.

In Bonda area, there is a Self Help Group run by an undergraduate male.

**Q.No 47 Are there any non-governmental organization working for the upliftment of your people?**

There were no NGO's or voluntary organizations working for their upliftment.

In Bonda recently a voluntary organization named Chinmaya Mission have started work for the personality development of the youths.



**Q.No 48** Are there any changes coming in your society due to the changes taking place all over?

Yes, changes have come in their language, customs etc.

**Q.No 49** Are your youths attracted to the western culture? Is there any changes in their dress code, language etc?

Yes , their youths are attracted towards western culture .

There has been changes in their dress code. Boys wear trousers, jeans and shirts. Very few wear their traditional dress.

The girls also wear frocks skirts and salwar kurtas.

The children as study in Assamese medium schools can speak the Assamese language But while in conversation with their own people, they use their own language whether it is the youngsters or the elders.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**CASE STUDY**

## CHAPTER 4

### CASE STUDIES

#### 4.1: MR KANU HAJONG

Mr Kanu Hajong was born on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1962. His father late Kamini Mohan Hajong was a primary school teacher. Kanu Hajong had his early schooling in L.P. School of Dhamar Reserve Village of Lakhipur Block of the Goalpara district of Assam. He passed his Higher School from Baida Nehru Vidyapith High School in 1978. His father expired three month after his passing HSLC. Due to financial crisis he had to leave his studies.

In 1979 he joined as a M.E. School teacher in Garodobar Vidyamani High School in East Garo Hills of Meghalaya. He again joined Mankachar College and passed his P.U Arts in 1982. In 1988 he passed his B.A from Goalpara College as a private candidate. In 1994 he tried to appear for M.A in Assamese from Gauhati University but could not pass. He joined as an Assistant Teacher in Dhamar M.E. School in 1986.

He was associated with writing right from his school days. He got actively associated with the North East India Hajong Unnayan Samiti in 1986. This Samiti is based in Tura city of Meghalaya and it works for the cultural upliftment of the Hajongs from various sides. In 1985 he was elected the



Secretary of Uttar Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti and made attempts to work for Hajong language and culture.

In 1995 a state level social organization was founded under the name "Assam Hajong Jatiya Parishad". Kanu Ram Hajong was the founder Secretary of this organization. He was elected the Vice President in 2005. Now he is the working as President after the death of its founder president. Apart from this organization he is also associated with Goalpara District Tribal Sangha, Hajong Sanskritik Sangha, Hajong Bhasha Biskash Parishad, etc.

In 1989 he participated as a Hajong folk dancer from Assam in the "All Indian Tribal Cultural Festival" held at Palghat of Kerela. Since 1987 he has been directing and taking care of "Dhamar Anchalik Hajong Sanskritik Sangh" which is associated with the preservation and upliftment of Hajong dance and music.

Kanu Ram Hajong has authored many articles on Hajong community, its culture and folk literature. These articles have been published in various newspapers, magazines and books of Assam.

#### **4.2: MR PARITOSH HAJONG**

Mr Paritosh Hajong was the fourth son of the host family, with whom the investigator stayed. He was born in Dhamar village in 1976. He passed his matriculation from Dhamar High School and then took his degree from Lakhipur

College. He joined as headmaster of Dhamar High School which is still a private school.

He then opened a small pharmacy in the Dhamar Bazaar by training himself under a doctor. This year i.e. 2008 he has got a job in Assam Police Battalion. He is the Secretary of Dhamar Bazaar Committee and a member of Goalpara Zila Hajong Jatiya Parishad.

#### **4.3: MR. SWADES HAJONG**

Mr. Swadesh Kumar Hajong was born in 1961 in Halohati village of East Pakistan. His father was Mr. Surendra Hajong and mother Bakulbala Hajong. Though not much educated he is a great artist. He is a carpenter by profession. But the quality that makes his unique is that he is a Bisharad in music and violin, he makes all the musical instruments and also plays them all with great perfection.

From a very small age he joined the jatra-party of his brother-in-law, in which he played various instruments. From the age of 10 years he started making 'Dotara' and that was the starting of his career as a carpenter.

He also started singing in various functions, though he was not trained at that time. In 1985 he was brought to Guwahati by Mr. Ratan Rai Hajong, who met him in a conference in Balat of Jaintia Hills. He then took to singing in "Yuvabani" from 1986, a programme of "Akashvani".



After that he started learning classical music in "Sur Sadhana Sangeet Vidyalaya" in Birkuchi under Kabita Sharma. In 1997 he attained Bisharad degree from Bhatkhande Sangeet Vidyapeeth, Lucknow. He also learned Violin under Ranu Sharma of Assam Music College. He



(Instruments Made By Swades Hajong)



attained his Bisharad in Violin in 1993. He was of course, working as a carpenter then also. He at the same time did not stop practice and played various musical instruments



with various folk artists. He can play harmonium, tabla, dhol, dotara, violin, mandolins, flute, parkason, sarangi, tanpura, dombura etc



**(Swades Hajong Playing Violin)**

He has expertise in singing Hajong folk songs, Goalparaiya and Kamrupiya Lokageet, Assamese and Bengali Modern songs.

He stayed in Guwahati for about 20 years. He had to return to his native village in 2005 due to some eye problem. He has two sons and two daughters.

Utter poverty has forced him to work as a carpenter there. But he still likes to teach the children music in various functions of the locality.

He was the first Hajong to attain these degrees in the field of music and also the first artist to perform in radio and Doordarshan, Guwahati. He aims or rather has a great

desire to pass on his talent to some one but regrets that he has got no one to carry it forward.

#### **4.4: Mr Dwijendra Nath Hajong**

Mr Dwijendra Nath Hajong was born in 1950 in Pushkaranipara of Dhubri district. He had his early education in J.M High School of Mankachar from where he passed out his matriculation. He then completed his graduation from B.N. College, Dhubri. He is presently working in National Sample Survey Organisation. He is associated with All Assam Hajong Unnayan Samity. He is the proud father of one daughter, who is practicing as a Gynaecologist in Shillong. She had passed out from Guwahati Medical College.

#### **4.5: Srish Kumar Hajong**

Mr Srish Kumar Hajong was born in 1973 in Matia village of Goalpara. He did not even complete his HSLC. He shifted to Bonda in 1987 and has been residing there since then. He possesses a degree in Instrumental (Mandoline). He obtained this degree from Ekyatan Sangeet mahabidyalaya of Guwahati. He also plays Banjo with various artists, the chief one of them is Loknath Goswami. He is also a regular artist of All India Radio , Guwahati.

#### **4.6: Mr. Bidya Sagar Hajong**

Mr Bidyasagar Hajong was born in 1974 at Bonda , Kamrup. He passed out his HSLC from Bonda High School in 1990. He then passed out HSSLC from Guwahati College in 1992. He is



presently working with a newspaper agency. He is socially very active and has contributed a lot for the development of his own community.

He is the General Secretary of Hajong Sanskritik Sangathan and Assam Hajong Jatiya Parishad. He is also the President of Bonda Anchalik M.E.School, Assistant General Secretary of Bonda colony Bazaar committee and was also the Cultural Secretary of 24<sup>th</sup> Bonda Anchalik Bihu Sanmilan.

#### **4.7: Mr. Ratan Kumar Ray Hajong**

Mr Ratan Hajong was born in 1958 in Assam. His qualification is HSSLC passed but he is a self -taught painter who has participated in many painting exhibition. At present he is working as a foreman in The Assam Tribune. He has held four one man exhibitions at different place of Assam and Meghalaya in 1982, 1988 and 1990. He has participated in more than 25 exhibitions of painting held at different places of Assam and India as well. He has attended 4 workshops on painting out of them the recent one being " National Level of Exhibition of Art" organised by Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S University, Baroda in Gujarat in 2008.

He has several publications to his credit. The list of his publications and other works is as presented belows.

#### **Publication:**

- a) "Doh -Samyar Mujhamukhi" Self -composed Assamese Poem, Dec.1994



- b) " Tendrala Phul" Self Composed Hajong Modern Song,  
March 1997
- c) Hajongs Samaj aru Sanaskriti Dristipat, 2003

#### **Editor**

- a) " Monbikash" Children Magazine ,edited three edition,  
1985,1986,1987
- b) Chihna" An Art Journal , 1998/99, Gauhati Artists Guild ,

#### **Assistant Editor**

- a) " Chihna" An Art Journal , 1995, Gauhati Artists Guild

#### **General Secretary**

- a) All Assam Hills Tribal Council, 1995,1996,1997

#### **President**

- a) Hajong Cultural Organisation, Bonda, Guwahati-26
- b) Hajong Silpi Sahityik Samiti , Guwahati , (Assam ) Since  
1992.

#### **Participation:**

##### **In Doordarshan Kendra , Guwahati**

- i) " Hajong Folk Dance " ( Jakhamara) Telecast on 04-09-02
- ii) " Hajong Folk Dance " ( Geetalu) 13-02-90, Lawatana
- iii) " Self Composed Poetry" 01-02-90
- iv) " Dohar" Documentary 1996, " Amashama", " Chorkhela"  
1997

##### **All India Radio**

- i) Ajir Sahitya, Talk Self Composed Poem 1979 to 87 in "  
Aamasama" feature , All India Radio ,30 January,1996

### Assam Sahitya Sobha

- a) Janagosthia Sahityik Samaroh, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> decemabar, 1992, Guwahati
- b) Kabitar Din 99, Guwahati
- c) Assam Shaitaya Sobha's Kabi Samaroh 82, Guwahati
- d) Assam Shaitaya Sobha's Kabi Samaroh 85, Bilasipara, Goalpara
- e) Assam Shaitaya Sobha's Kabi Samaroh , Guwahati
- f) Bahubhashik Kabi Samroh, 2002, Guwahti and others.

### Article

1. " Hajong Samaj ati Samikshya" Payobhara dec, 1982
2. " Hajong Sampradaya Lokik Geet" Assam Bani , April 1992
3. " Hajong Sakalor Lawatana Nritya" Sadiniya Prahari , Aug 29, 1985
4. Hajong Sakalor Rishi Gahen, Sadiniya Pahari Sept. 18, 1986
5. " Sramar Utshava Nritya Geet", Jyotidoot , 1986
6. " Hajong Sakalor Chorkhela Gahen"
7. " Hajong Nritya Geetar Boisista" Silpir Prithibi , April 1988
8. " Hajong Samaj" Assam Bini, 29 July , 1990
9. " Hajong Sakalor Chhorkhela Utshava" Assam Bani, 1990
10. "Hajong Sakalor Chhorkhela Utshava" Dainik Assam, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1996
11. Jatiya Mukti Andolan Aru Hajong Bidroha , Protyay, "Basanta Sankha April -Sept, 1999) and other News Paper and Magazine.

**Publication:**

- 1) "Hajong Sokolor Badya" published in " Vishwakosh" -9<sup>th</sup> Volume.
- 2) "Hajong Samaj- Eti Dristipat" published in "Bohagi"
- 3) "Hajong Samaj : Ex Paricharya" and " Hajong Ki Vivah Pratha" published in " Adivasi Log" ( Hindi)
- 4) "Hajong Sokolor Katigasa" publishe in " Kati Bihur Ruprekha"
- 5) "Hajong Sokolor Loukik Geet Maat" published in " Janjati Samaj Sanskriti"
- 6) "Hajong Sokolor Majot MaghbiHu Pusna" published in "Asomor Magh Bihu"

**4.8: Mr. Nilmadhab Hajong**

Mr Nilmadhab Hajong was born in 1964 at Dhamar village of Goalpara , Assam. He completed his primary education from Dhamar L.P. School and then passed Matric in 1982 from Lakhipur H.S. School. In 1984 he passed HSSLC from Lakhipur H.S. school and B.A. in 1988 from Lakhipur College.

He is working as Junior Account Assistant in Indian Railways.

He is the Vice President of Bonda Hajong Sanskriti and member of Assam Hajong Jatia Parishad.



**CHAPTER V**  
**SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND**  
**CONCLUSION**

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, FINDING AND CONCLUSION

In the introduction Chapter 1 it has been elaborately discussed about the meaning of tribes, their divisions, their characteristic features and also about the origin of the Hajong tribe. A lot of other features of the Hajong tribe were studied during the field visit. The major findings of the study are presented below under different heading.

Common territory is one of the characteristics of a tribe. They as a group occupy a definite area of the country. For the development of the community sentiment amongst them, it is very much necessary that they live in a common geographic area. The Hajongs also being a tribe have their common territory.

#### 5.1: ORIGIN OF THE HAJONGS:

The Hajongs are an indigenous tribe of Assam and Meghalaya. Major portion of this tribe is settled in the south-west portion of the Brahmaputra valley in Lower Assam and the Western and Southern part of Meghalaya. They are also spread in small numbers all over Assam residing in the different plain districts of Assam. A small number of them have also been residing in Arunachal Pradesh since 1964.

Linguistically and ethnologically, it is said that the Hajongs belong to the Bodo family of the Indo- Mangoloid

tribes who once upon a time were spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley, North Bengal upto Bihar, Bangladesh and Tripura thus forming a solid block in North Eastern India.

It is opined by some historians that the tribes of Indo Mongolid origin came to the North east during the New Stone Age. It is believed that all the tribes however, did not enter at the same time from the same route. They had come here in different hordes through different routes from the North West and North East. It is believed that the Hajongs entered this part long back through the north western part of Assam. During the process of migration they settled in some parts of Koch Behar and border of Bhutan. They resided there for a few centuries. There is still a place called Hajong. Later on, they shifted to the south bank of the Brahmaputra in the old Goalpara district. After settling here, they spread out in different parts of lower Assam, west and southern Meghalaya and some also to the north part of Mymensing. They set up their homeland in this region. According to R.K. Hazarika, who in his book, "*Mongol Kochari Gupt Itishas*" the Hajongs were earlier known as *Badu Hajon* and their territorial land was known as *Badu Tai* or *Baro Hajoi*, which was situated in the west of old Goalpara district on the south bank and the foothill areas of western Garo hills. It further extended towards Mymensing to the South. The boundary of Hajong land extended to the north till Suwarkona in Goalpara district, on the east is



Jamkona (Sylhet , on the south is Jongkona ( Mymensing) and to the west is Morkona ( near Mankachar of Dhubri). This tribe remained concentrated in this vast area till the end of the nineteenth century. Later on, however they scattered beyond this region due to certain socio-political, historical and economic reasons. Their permanent settlements of course remained in this area only extending from Mechpara, Barohajari, Koraibari of South West Assam and West Meghalaya to Daskahami, Serpur Susong, Durgapur, Bangsikunda and Laur Parganas of North Mymensing and Sylhet district. In the words of M.Martin, "Hajongs are the original inhabitants of the adjoining territory of Koraibari and whose chief was its proprietor. It was found in history that the Hajong, the Koch and the Garo chiefs ruled over various areas of south west Assam, Meghalaya and Bangladesh border region almost independently and were maintaining their separate existence till the fourteenth century"

The Hajongs were originally divided into six endogamous groups (i) Harangparia, (ii) Bhajniparia, (iii) Manikparia (iv) Teporparia (v) Satdolparia and Manjiparia. These divisions no more exist and now there are five main divisions of the Hajongs named after their place of habitation. They are i)Daskahania ii) Koraibaria iii) Susongi iv) Barohajari and v) Mechparia. Of course, there is no strict demarcation among them as such due to mixture of all sections of Hajongs amongst each other.

There are of course some other claims also regarding the origin of these people. Authors like Rev. Endle was of the opinion that the Hajongs are an offshoot of the Bodo race. Some Hajongs also claim that they are the descendents of Surya (Sun) and hence they are Kshatriyas.

There is also an opinion that they earlier resided in the Hajo area. Historically it is claimed that in 1255 AD when Kamata Kingdom was attacked by Malik Yuzbek, some Mongoloid tribes became powerful under 12 Koch chiefs, the strongest among whom was Hajo or Hajgoya. He later ruled over Kamata Kingdom and his capital city was known as "Hajo". Later on, a section of them adopted Islam and the rest belonging to the clan of Hajo called themselves Hajongsis. They were later called Hajongs.

Another opinion is that during Mann invasions, there people fled from Hajo to Barohazari and other areas of Garo Hills. Then they moved of southern part of Garo hills and Goalpara districts of Assam. A group of them moved towards south and went to the northern side of Mymensingh district of now Bangladesh. It is said that it was the Hajongs who had settled here by clearing and cutting the jungles before more than two centuries.

Therefore, we see that originally they were inhabitants of Assam and those who are now in Dhamar and Bonda had all come from the Mymensing district to Goalpara in 1964.



## 5.2: ORIGIN OF THE NAME 'HAJONG':

It is seen that each tribe have got its own name. It is known to other tribes by this distinctive name. In the same way this tribe is known as "Hajong" amongst their neighbouring tribes. Regarding the name "Hajong" also there are different beliefs. Some believe that as the Hajongs are supposed to be the off shoot of Bodo people, the word Hajong may have come from a Bodo word "Haju" which means "High hill" or from a Rabha word "Hachu" which also means the same. It may also have its derivation from a Kachari word Hajai.

There is another opinion that as these people had migrated from Hajo, they are known as Hajongs. As they settled in the Garo hills and ploughed the fields, the Garo people started calling them Hajongs. In Garo language "Haa" or a'a means land or soil and "jong" means insect. Therefore, the word means insects ploughing land.

But according to Manoranjan Roy Hajong as the Hajongs came to Garo hills, the Garos started calling them "Ajong" which means outsider or Non Garo or "Hajongs" which means "Earth worm" with a feeling of amusement. Thus, the name of the tribe.

Again, it is also believed that Hajbongsi was wrongly pronounced as "Hajbong" which then became Hajwang and finally "Hajong" got their distinct identity and separate entity.



### 5.3: HAJONGS POPULATION

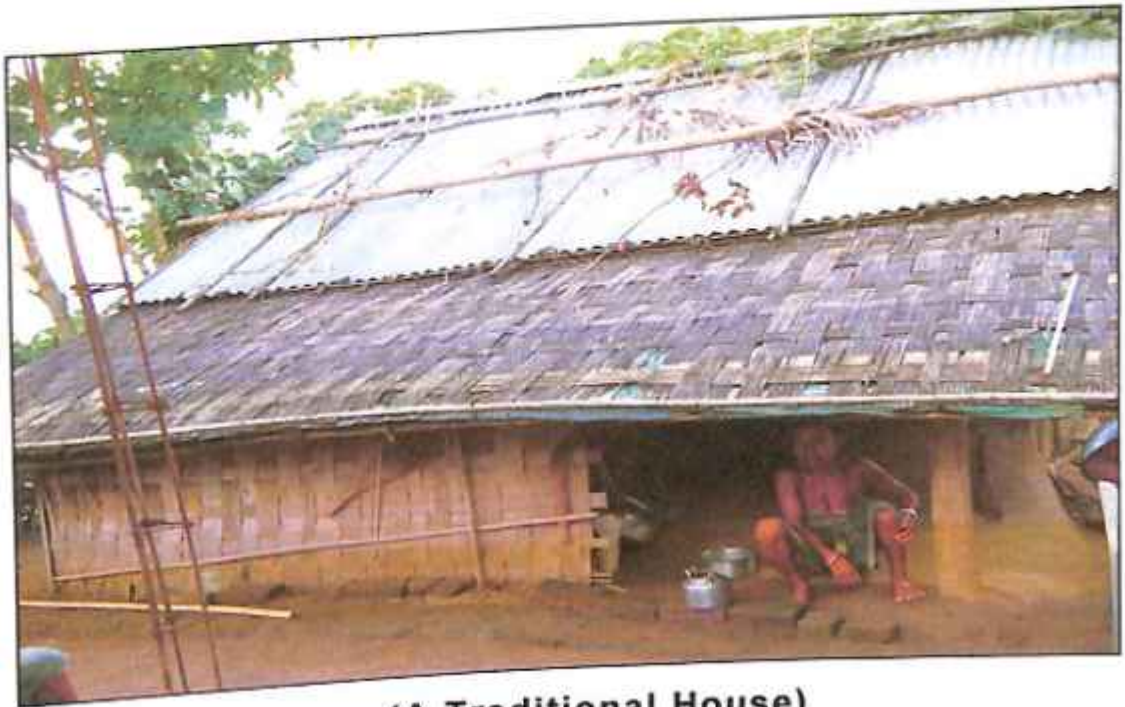
The approximate population of the Hajongs tribe is 80,000 spread all over Assam. It is about 5000 in Dhamar village and about 2-3 thousand in the Bonda area.

As mentioned in the first chapter they are found in the Goalpara, Dhubri, Bangaigaon, Kamrup, Nowgong, Lakhimpur Dhemaji, Tinsukia and Karbi Anglog districts of Assam.

A good number of them are also found in the East, West Khasi & West Garo Hills of Meghalaya and some part of Arunachal Pradesh. There are of course, still a great number of them residing in Bangladesh.

### 5.4: HAJONG HOUSES:

Hajongs like to reside in a cluster of houses. Their houses are made of wood, bamboo, reed and thatch. The houses are constructed very low in height with a varandah. The houses are so low that one has to enter by bowing down his or her head. When the investigator asked the reason, it was found that this done to protect the houses from being blown away by strong winds. The people being mainly farmers have big agricultural lands and therefore there is no way of obstructing the winds.



**(A Traditional House)**

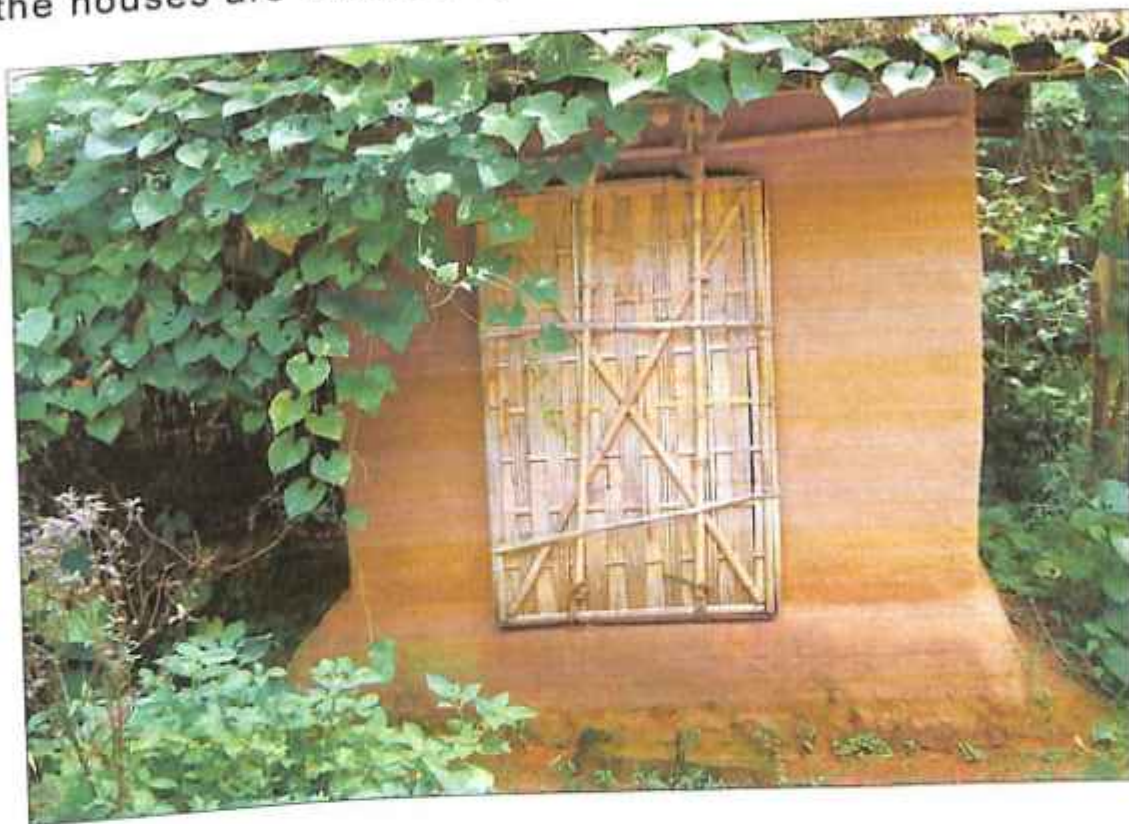
The floors of the houses are mostly earthen floors. The windows are also made by cutting a portion of the wall



**(Dieties in the Thakur Ghor)**



and then a cover is also made by weaving bamboos. Most of the houses are covered by a mixture of mud and cow-dung.

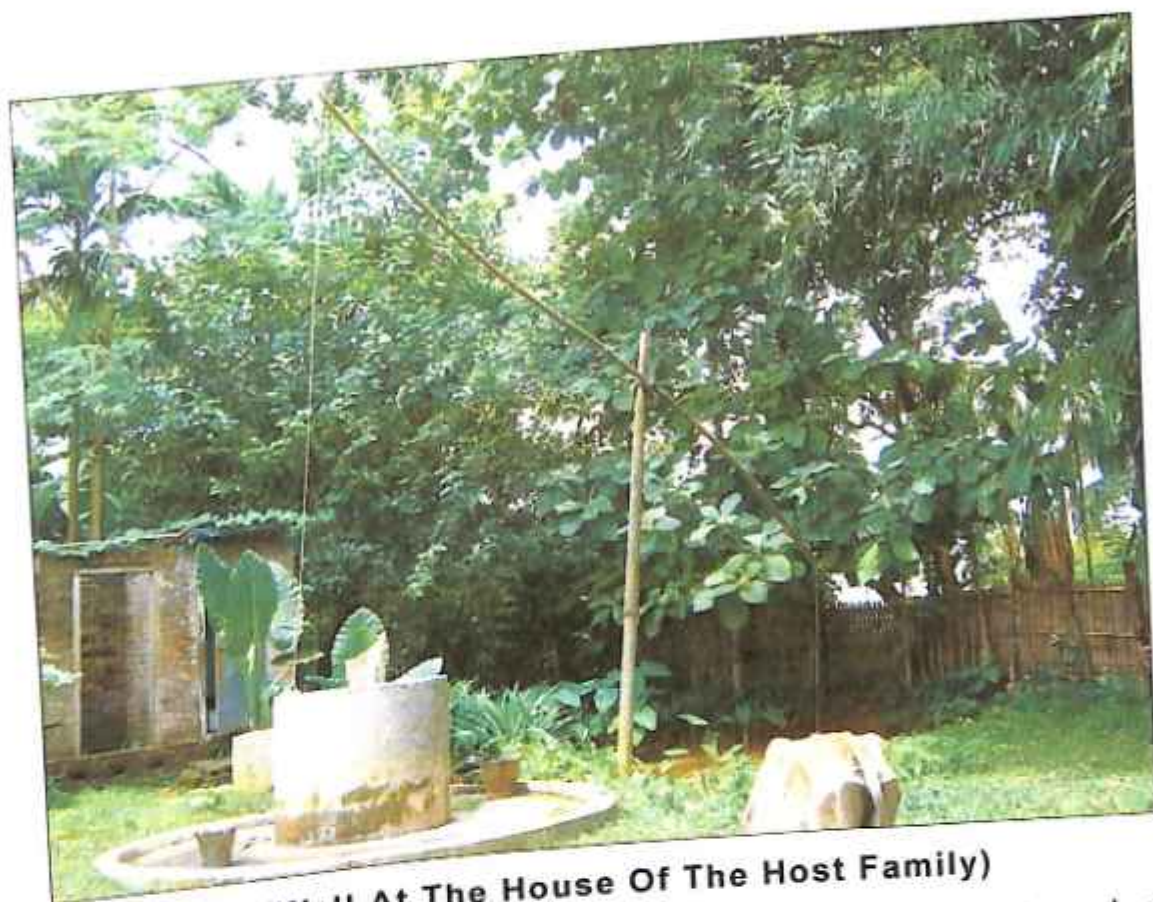


**(Thakur Ghor)**

Generally a Hajong house comprises of a Bhat ghor (Store house cum dining room), Akhli Ghor ( Kitchen) , Chang ghor ( Grenary house) Dheki ghor (husking house ) Guli ghor ( Cow or cattle shed) . There is also a Thakur Ghor

In Dhamar village, except a few most of the houses did not have sanitary toilets. They had hand pumps and wells for water. The system of drawing water from the wells is also unique. The putty is made with the help of two bamboos (shown in photo) and it is very easy to pull out water.





(Well At The House Of The Host Family)

The household with whom the investigator stayed did have a sanitary lavatory but there was no urinal or bathroom. They took bath by the side of the hand pumps.

Some families now do have houses made of brick walls but the number is very less.

#### **5.5: OCCUPATION AND LIVELIHOOD:**

It is a common feature amongst the tribals that they earn their livelihood either by working as labourers. They also work as labourers in their own agricultural land and also for someone else's land. As their literacy rate is very low, a very few of them are in other services. Instances are there of some tribes who completely depend on collecting forest

products for their livelihood. Their important occupations include agriculture, hunting, fishing and may be some small scale industry. The Hajongs are no exception to this trend.

The Hajongs are primarily all farmers. Almost every family has their own plot of agricultural land. Very few of them take up other profession. In Dhamar village, they do not get crops during the rainy season due to heavy floods. Now since a few years they have started Chinese cultivation which can be done during the winter season. The yield is also very good and the quality of crop also very good.

Apart from this, they are also daily wage earners, carpenters (i) anganwadi workers, Asha (i) There are very few government servants who are engaged as teachers in the primary schools and the single middle school.

In the Bonda area, of course most of them are daily wage earners and a few farmers. They are not engaged in business.

#### **5.6: FOOD HABITS**

The main source of livelihood being paddy cultivation, the staple food of the Hajongs is rice. They are both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. They also make different types of snacks with rice. Chira (Perched rice), Muri (Fried Rice), Khoi (Puffed rice) are made by rice. Muri is taken almost every day as breakfast with banana and milk or tea to guests. Binni or Bora rice is made on festival occasions.



They eat all types of meat- chicken, mutton, deer, tortoise and now of course pork is very favourite amongst the youngsters. Though the elderly people do not prefer it.

Hajongs are also very fond of fish. They also like to have dry fish. Leba shak and chomsa leba prepared from rice powder along with the softest, inner portion of a plaintain tree and tender bamboo shoots and kochupata khar are some of their typical items. The investigator also was served an item prepared of Kochu-roots.

#### **5.7: LANGUAGE:**

Every tribe have their own language which is very much distinct. It not only has got no similarity with the language of the non-tribals but also with the other tribal languages. Some tribal people of course speak a corrupt form of language which may be a mixture of the languages spoken by the near by civilized people. Most of the tribal languages however do not have a script of their own. Same is the case found amongst the Hajongs. The Hajongs have their own dialect of speaking which is known as "Hajongs" language. This language is still spoken amongst the people of the tribe. The language seems to contain several Bengali and Hindi words. The Hajongs of Assam use the Assamese script to write their language. This may be because their children have been educated in Assamese medium schools. During the study it was found that the youngsters could communicate in Assamese with the investigator but the



elders spoke their own Hajongs language which was of course understood by her.

Eariler, no attempts were made to write any thing in the language due to non existence of any script. But now the neo-literates and educated class have started writing articles, poems and books in the Hajong language using the Assamese script.

They have also constituted a Hajong Language Publication Committee and Hajong Sahitya Sabha for this purpose. Efforts are also made by people to publish their work privately. One of the cloth merchant of the Dhamar Bazaar had presented the investigator with a book of poems written by him.

The Hajongs dialect has some similarity with the Kamrup dialect and the language spoken in the South -West Part of Goalpara district of Assam and North-East Bengal. It is also known as "Jharua" dialect. As mentioned earlier there are some Hindi words also like they call the son-in law "Damaad", then they use words like "Khayega", "Jayega". Etc. This may be because it is belived that once they were spread upto the borders of Bihar. Some of the Hajong words which are similar to Assamese or Bengali are given below.

Hajong	Assamese	Bengali	English
Moy/Mui	Moi	Ami	I
Megh	Borokhun	Bristi/megh	Rain
Din	Akash	Akash	Sky

Maia	Ai	Maa	Mother
Toi/Tui	Tumi	Tumi	You
Buini	Bhani	Bon	Sister
Moy	Moi Jawn	Ami Jaai	I am going
Jayega	Apuni	Apni	You
Aapne	Koina	Bou	Bride
Kuinou			

### 5.8: SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND KINSHIP:

A tribe is usually a collection of families or groups of families. The member of a tribe is related to each other by blood and marriage. Therefore, they can be said to be a group of relatives. They are said to be an organization of kith and kin. Kinship bond is very strong amongst them. The Hajongs also follow this.

The Hajongs have a patriarchal society. The kinship system followed is also patrilineal which is known as "Daidibhagi". The senior male member acts as the head of a family. The sons inherit the property after the death of their father. They do have the Gotra (paternal relation) system. Marriages cannot take place within the same gotra. This system started in them when they adopted Hinduism. Before that they followed matrilineal clan system which was known as "Niknis". Marriages were prohibited amongst the same nikns. This system of course no more prevails now.

There is no caste system amongst the Hajongs. But socially they are divided into Adhikari, Shakta, and Vaishnava. The Adhikari perform worships and marriage etc.



thus occupying a rank equivalent to a priest. The Vaishnavas are a group practicing austerity and they do not drink and eat meat or fish. Majority of the Hajongs are Shaktas who practice offering of sacrifices with anima and birds during worship.

Simplicity is a characteristic feature of tribals. The Hajongs are also very simple, faithful and hospitable by nature. This was personally experienced by the investigator herself. They are very pleased to entertain any guest. It was as if she was a guest of the whole village and people greeted and came to meet her when they came to know that she was doing some work on their lives.

The room in which the investigator stayed was also never locked even though she sometimes was out till 1 am or more. No theft took place though all her valuables and money were in the room.

On subsequent visits also the investigators felt the warmth in them. They have become like a family for her. Any information wanted is immediately supplied over phone also.

They also have a system of adopting children. The adopted child has complete right to inherit the property of the parents who have adopted them. The adopted child may be a daughter or a son

#### **5.9: DRESS AND ORNAMENTS:**

The Hajongs have their own traditional dress. The women wear a hand woven "Ranga Pathin", blouse and an "Orna" (Chadar). Usually they don't wear a blouse or orna



when at home or just moving out in the village. The Pathin is a one piece cloth which covers them from above the breast till below the knee.



(A Hajong Girl Wearing Traditional 'Ranga Patin')



(A Hajong Boy in Traditional Dress)





**(Hajong Women Weaving On the Loom)**

The Pathin is known as Ranga Pathin because it has maximum red colour with a combination of other bright



**(Traditional Hajong Loom)**

colours with strips and a red border. This is woven by the women on a "Bana" (traditional loom) by using a special thread known as "Thiland thread".



(Bana)

The widows wear white Patin. At home they may wear a colloured one but when they go out to attend a function or marriages they have to wear white pathin.

The men wear a short hand wovengamocha or a dhoti. Earlier they wore a kurta over a dhoti sometimes and some also used a white turban. Now of course though the male have started wearing trousers and shirt, the elders still prefer to wear dhoti or gamocha with a shirt.

In marriage the groom wears a dhoti and Panjabi and also takes a chadar. The bride wears a saree, blouse and ghotan kapoor (which is a veil cloth like wore by a Bengali bride).



The Hajong women wear ornaments on their hands, legs, neck, nose and ears. In legs they wear about three types of ornaments. First they wear "GUNJRI" which has tinkling bells attached to it. Then above it they wear "Khasabera" and then "Bakharu" which is similar to Gamkharu of the Assamese people.

In the hands they wear "Shakha" at the wrist and "Baju" above the elbow. In neck they wear Hasli or "Galahecha" and "Chandrahar". In ears they wear "Karamphool" and "Nakphool" or "Nath" in the nose. The bride wears all these ornaments.



(Hajong Ornaments)

While the survey the investigator could not find all the ornaments. Only one lady had it that too as her daughter danced. They reported that when they migrated from

Bangladesh they had many ornaments, but had to sell them due to poverty. The eldest lady of the host family also said that she had all the ornaments and that too in a good number but now she had none. The villagers tried their best to search for one chadrahār or galahecha just for a photograph but could not find one even in the neighbouring areas.

#### **5.10: MUSIC AND DANCE FORMS , FAIRS AND FESTIVALS:**

The Hajongs have their own music, dance and even games. Different folksongs are sung on different occasions. In marriages or "Maroi Puja" they sing Gitlu song. These songs are lyrical verses of the story of Chanda Saudagar, Lakhindar and Behula . It was found while interacting with the Gitlu singers that now these songs are on way to extinction because the youngsters are not interested in learning them and therefore, they have not been preserved or transmitted to the next generation.

Kirtan or devotional songs are sung on the occasions of a marriage ,death ceremony and shradha ceremony. Kirtans are also of different types such as Nam Kirtan, Rusigaan or Baromasi , Gopini song, Padma puran gaan and Kaitka gahen . It is usually the elderly people who take part in Kirtans. They have a tea break in between when tea and muri is served.



The folk dance of Hajongs are Lewatana, Jakhamara gaon. The Jakhamara dance is related to agriculture . When the water is full in the rivers and paddy fields Then the



**Hajong Boys Fishing in Traditional Method**

and "Khaloi" . They move to the middle of the water and keep on coming towards the edge fishing with the Jakhai and singing the Jakhamara gaan.



**Hajong Girls with Jakhai**



Another dance of the Hajongs is the "Lewa Tana Bihu". It is performed during the month of Baisakh during the season of Rangali Bihu. The meaning of the word is as - "Lewa" means "creeper" and "Tana" means "pulling". Therefore literally "Lewatana" means "Pulling of creeper". This dance is performed by young boys and girls, who wear their traditional dresses, ornaments and sing love songs in Hajong language. Here the boys and girls form a line and one passes in between the lines dancing to the tunes of the song.

Kati Bihu is also observed by the Hajongs known as "Katigasha". They worship Goddess Lakshmi and light earthen lamps in eveing in the paddy field on this day.

Magh Bihu is also celebrated but it is called "Pushna" community feast is arranged with the newly harvested rice. The Hajongs perform Padmavati Puja, which is compulsarily done at every home in the month of Shravan. Devotional songs are sung by the Geetalu.

Though the Hajongs residing at different places observe the same festivals, sing the same songs, perform the same dances yet there is a difference amongst the tunes of different districts. For example there is a difference between the tunes of Darrang, Goalpara and Kamrup districts. There is a difference in the tunes played on flute.

The Hajongs also observe the "Sor Khela or Sor Maha Parva". It starts one week before the starting of the Kati month.

However, there has been an influence of bollywood songs on the youngsters. Hajong modern songs are sung by them. The investigator even found that a VCD was made based on the Hajong Songs.

#### **5.11: MUSICAL INSTRUMENT**

There are a number of musical instruments of the Hajong people. These are very similar to Bengali rural instruments. Two types of drums – "Khul" and "Dhuluk" are used by them. The Dhuluk made of a piece of hollowed wood with hides on both ends is used for the singing of folk songs and dance performed during the social festivals. The Khul made of earth with hides on both sides is used for singing of devotional songs.

Musical instruments having strings are also used by them. They use Rasamandali, which is made of ground crust and has only one string. They also use Dotara, which is made of wood and the hollowed part at the end is covered with a skin.

They also use Bansi ( Flute) and Gubua ( Gagana) . Both these instruments are made of bamboo. They also use three type of cymbals or tals known as Ramtal, Katral and Dhapa Kartal.

#### **5.12: MARRIAGE:**

Inter community marriage is not preferred by the Hajongs. If they marry outside the tribe the couple is not



accepted. They are allowed to mix with the tribe only after giving a feast which is called " Jatiutha Khawa". The union is known as " Daipora" . But these brides are not allowed to touch anything during any marriage or religious ceremony or any rites or rituals.

The Hajongs widows are allowed to remarry if they want to. Such marriage is known as " Sanga"



**(Hajong Bride and Groom)**

Initially there was no dowry system. Of course, the father of the bride could give anything in cash or kind if he felt like. Now, of course some of the grooms do demand 8000/- to 10,000/- rupees as dowry. Sometimes if the bride is poor and boy wants to marry her, he just goes and bring the girl to his place. All the rituals then take place at the groom's house. The marriage attended by the investigator was one of this type.

Hajong marriages are performed for two day. The first day the groom goes to the bride's place with his friends and relatives. The marriage is held there at night and is known as "Bhor Bia". The next day, the newly marriage couple stay in a new house or room which is known as "Jora or Khopra Ghar". The guests are invited for both the days the next day the community feast takes place which is known as "Basi Bia".



(Hajong marriage)

Food served is both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Curd, Chira and Khoi are also served to the guests. The investigator herself got the opportunity to attend a Hajong marriage. It was quite surprising to see that young girls serve food in the marriages wearing their traditional dress. They are called "Kaamdhora". The eldest member of the family moves with an utensil containing "dhuna" amongst



the guests having food and asks them if the food is good or not. As already mentioned the Hajongs cannot tolerate their boys or girls marrying from other communities. Now days of course this is allowed to some extent but they do not accept inter religious marriages at all. The investigator got an opportunity to witness such a case where a Hajongs girls had eloped with a neighbouring muslim boy. They were traced down after a month, The girl was brought back and then a meeting was called of the elderly and prominent people of the tribe.



Hajong Girls Serving Food  
in Marriage As "Kaamdhora"

Ladies came and tried to convince the girl not to go back to the boy. When she did not agree, one of the elderly person even threatened to kill her by pouring kerosene and putting her to flames. It was then decided that the girl be sent to Women's Rescue Home at Guwahati. Immediately

people voluntarily donated as contribution towards the travelling expenses and she was sent to Guwahati. Before that she was given a bath and made to wear their traditional "Patin". The clothes of the muslim family were burnt down. This shows how conservative they are.

### 5.13: STATUS OF WOMEN:

The women are considered as equal to men, though they follow a patriarchal system. The rites and rituals associated with the birth of a girl child are the same as that of a boy. They have no practice of female infanticide or dowry death.

The girls are sent to school but they do not continue studies after class VII or VIII . They stay at home and are married off at the age of 14-15 years of age.



**Hajong Women Pounding Rice**

There are of course cases of women subjugated to torture by their husband. Any problem arising out of such



situation is solved by the village elders. The couple may separate on their own will but no compensation or legal.



**(Women Carrying a Child On Back)**

binding are involved. Children born out of such marriages stay with the mother



**(Hajong Women Selling Vegetable In the Market)**

The Hajong women are very hard working. They do all the household work. They even work in the paddy

field, Women go to the jungles to collect fire wood as there is no facility of Gas connections.



**Coming From Jungle After Collecting Firewood**

However, all the economic decisions are taken by the male members. There is no representation of female members in the Village Panchayat. Very few women work outside the house and do government jobs. This is not because they are not allowed to do so but because they are not qualified enough for these jobs.

#### **5.14: EDUCATIONANL STATUS:**

Illiteracy is a characteristic feature of most of the tribals. They are not very conscious about the importance of pursuing education. The same is the case with the Hajongs. They are educationally very backward. Not to speak of a remote area like Goalpara even the ones residing in the Bonda area, which is on the outskirts of Guwahati they were



not educated. There is only one graduate in Bonda area. It is not that they don't have school or college there or nearby. But the chief cause is lack of awareness and poverty.

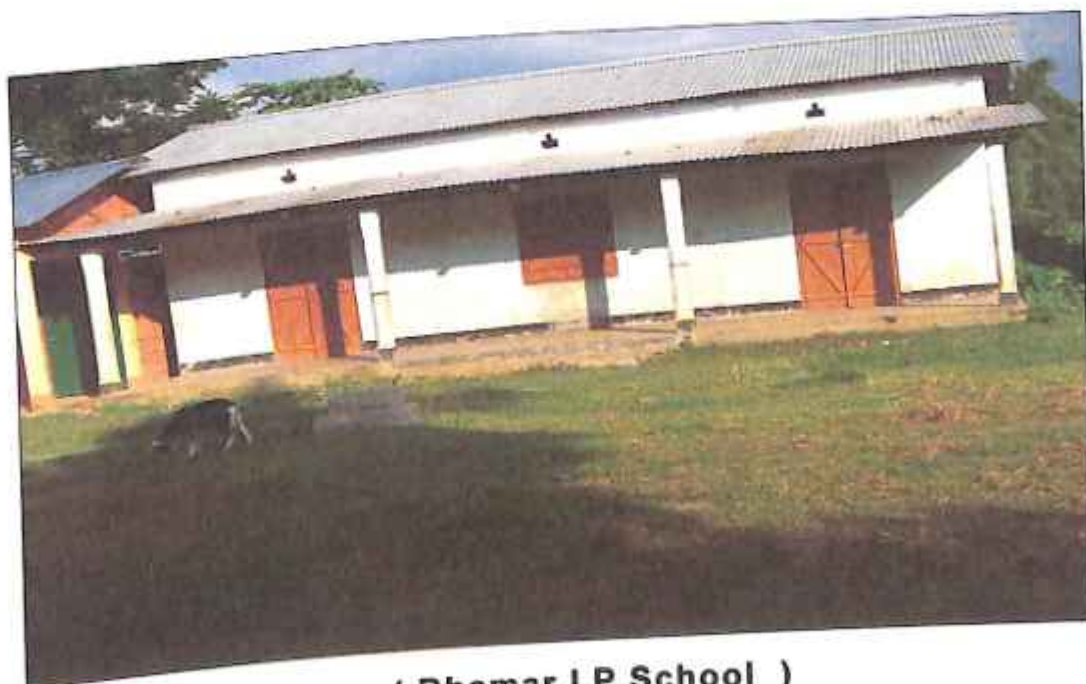
**তথ্য ফলক**

(ক) বিদ্যালয়ৰ নাম: ধামৰ এম.ই. স্কুল।  
 (খ) গাওঁৰ নাম: ধামৰ।  
 (গ) মিলকা খণ্ড: লক্ষীপুৰ।  
 (ঘ) জিলা: গোৱালপাৰা, অসম।  
 (ঙ) বিদ্যালয়ৰ দৰা-ছোৱালীৰ উধ্য: মুঠ দৰা-ছোৱালীৰ নৈমিত্তিক উপস্থিতি।

	১ম শ্ৰেণী দৰা-ছোৱালী	২য় শ্ৰেণী দৰা-ছোৱালী	৩য় শ্ৰেণী দৰা-ছোৱালী
মুঠ শিকুৰ সংখ্যা			
আজিৰ উপস্থিতি			
অনুপস্থিতি			

শিক্ষকৰ নাম: \_\_\_\_\_ আজিৰ উপস্থিতি: \_\_\_\_\_  
 মুঠ শিক্ষক: \_\_\_\_\_ মুঠ ছাত্ৰ-ছাত্ৰী: \_\_\_\_\_  
 শিক্ষকৰ উপস্থিতি: \_\_\_\_\_ প্ৰধান শিক্ষক: \_\_\_\_\_  
 তাৰিখ:

(Dhamar ME School)



( Dhamar LP School )

In the whole of Dhamar village with a population of about 7000 people consisting of more than 500 families, the data of educated people is as shown below:

<u>Qualification</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
HSLC	32	18
HSSLC	20	9
Graduate	12	1
Post-graduate	1	-

Teachers in different School are:

<u>School</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Teacher</u>
LP	4	1 each
ME	1	5
High	1	6

The cause of educational backwardness here are cited below as found out during the field survey:

- i) The people here mainly depend on agriculture. There are very few who are in government jobs. Excepts for the teachers only about 5-7 persons were employed in the government sector. Some of them are also daily wage earners, carpenter, etc.
- ii) Economically these people are very poor. They do not get the crops during the rainy season due to flood. They have a crops in the winter and that is their only earning. They were very rich when residing in Bangladesh. But had



to leave all their land there when had to migrate to India. The womenfolk even sold all their ornaments due to poverty caused by floods.

iii) Lack of leaders in the community is another cause. There is no one who can come and guide these people. As there is lack of qualified people so there is also dearth of local teachers.

iv) The parents are mostly illiterate. As a tradition in every tribe, these people also do not prefer to marry girls or boys from other communities. Hence, it is again one illiterate married to other.

v) There are no business people in this community. So they are not exposed to the outer world and hence not aware of the importance of education.

vi) Early marriage of girls is another hindrance in their education.

vii) Above all these there is no provision to continue studies after matriculation. They have to go to Lakhipur which is quite far off. They being poor, it even becomes difficult for them to pay their bus fares.

viii) There is no electricity in one part of the village. So there are no television sets and have no exposure to the outer world.

ix) Government apathy and lack of awareness on the part of the people regarding government schemes may be another cause of low rate of literacy. The condition of the schools is very pathetic and they do not have classes during flood

### **5.15: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND OBSERVATION OF THE INVESTIGATOR DURING HER STAY AT DHAMAR VILLAGE:**

Dhamar is a big village comprising of about 500 families with a total population of more than 7000 people . This entire population is divided into about 20 suburies . In each suburi there are 25-50 families. They are called "Geti" samaj. These suburis bear a separate name of their own.

The people are very simple and innocent. Modernity is very far off from the general masses . They are very poor and illiterate in large scale. As already mentioned there are very few educated people. In the whole of the village there were only 4-5 two wheelers. No one of course possessed any four wheeler . There were no NGO's working. Some families have constructed their houses under "Indira Awaas Yojana" The condition of the road is improving under "Pradhanmantri Sarak Yojana" The investigator however moved on foot from one place



**(Investigator with the Host Family)**



to another. She also for the first time moved on the carrier of a bicycle with one of the sons of the host family as there was no other means of communication and the condition of the roads was very bad.



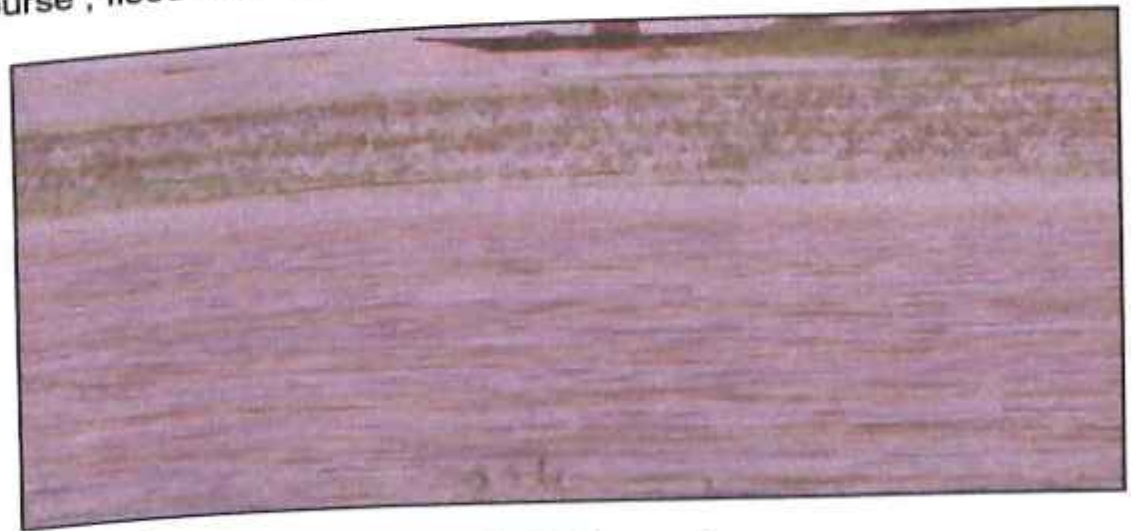
**(Investigator with the Host Family)**

The family with whom she stayed had five sons- all working. The old man told her that he possessed 100 acre (20 bighas of Assam land = 1 acre) of land in Bangladesh but was granted only 3 bighas by



**(House where Investigator Stayed)**

government in this village in 1964, when they came here after being harassed in East Pakistan . They were very decent people and are also very neat and clean. The entire village people were very friendly . The youngsters can speak Assamese but it was great fun talking to the elders and womenfolk who spoke their Hajong language. The investigator could sometimes understand and sometimes not. First , when she visited the homes for collection of data, the womenfolk thought that she had come from some government agency and complained that they got nothing from the government . After she explained that purpose of her visit they were very co-operative. Earlier they had floods every year which made them even more poorer. Since 3years they don't have floods in the residential area after a dam was constructed over the Brahmaputra river over Goalpara . There is of course , flood in the agricultural fields.



(Flood at Dhamar)



There is a daily market. It is held in the evening for the convenience of the people. On Tuesday and Saturday they have weekly markets.

The investigator visited the LP, ME, High School and Anganwadi. All of them were in wretched condition. The sign boards were all put inside due to flood. The Panchayat office was in a very wretched condition.

The water supply scheme under Public Health Engineering was in ruins. The water pipes were put all over Dhamar but no water could be brought out. A chowkidar is still there who gets salary every months.

There is only one primary health centre where there is no doctor. There is only one nurse who visits the centre once a week. The son of her host family, a graduate learnt some basic medical tips from a doctor and runs a pharmacy in the market place. He gives injections and saline. He also gives medicine. He was also working as headmaster of the venture High School. On school days he opened the pharmacy from 7-10am In the evening it was open from 4-7.30 pm. But this has been closed down now as he has joined Assam Battalion and have been posted to another place.

There was no electricity in the area where she resided. She was however lucky that the host family had a sanitary lavatory. She however took bath by the side of the tubewell.

The investigator was really moved by the pathetic condition of the village people. The youngsters also are not engaged in any kind of

work. Most of them sit idle for the whole day and play cards. They are influenced by bollywood music and are not at all interested in preserving their music, dance or their culture. There is also no effort on their part to preserve their language. As there is no awareness regarding the importance of education most of them do not ever pass matriculation. The drop out rate is very high. The girls also wear salwar kameez, skirt blouse. They were Patin occasionally. Married women however still wear Patin but when they go some where out of the village, they prefer to wear sarees.

The investigator also got the opportunity to attend a Hajong marriage. The girl being from a poor family, the boy went with a few of his friends and brought her to his house. The next day the marriage ceremony, rites and rituals were performed at the groom's house. The villages were also invited to a reception held on that day in the evening.

The invitation to the women is given by the women by giving a guwa (betle nut and pan leaf). The gents are invited by the gents through letters.

The guests were served non-vegetarian food. The investigator was given to eat "akhoi" (puffed rice) and "curd". Then she was served vegetarian food. They were overwhelmed when she took food with the other village people sitting on the floor for them it was a great honour like thing. This shows their simplicity. The mother of the groom was moving amongst the guests carrying a utensil carrying incensed "dhuna" asking them how the food was. When asked why she was carrying that it was said that this was also a way of keeping the



mosquitoes off. Later the bride and groom sought her blessing by touching her feet. The girls served food in their traditional colourful "Patin"

The thing which impressed the investigator the most was that they did not differentiate between the birth of a girl or boy child. There was also no practice of female infanticide. Over all, the experience of her stay was very nice. She felt as if she knew them for ages.

#### **5.16: SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCHES:**

After conducting the research and analysing the data , the investigator felt that there is a lot of scope for other researchers in this field . Thus a few suggestions have made for further researches

- 1) Study can be taken on the educational status of the Hajongs.
- 2) Study can be taken on the status of Hajong women.
- 3) Study can be taken in the Garo Hills as know why they have converted to Christianity
- 4) Study can be taken in the other districts of Assam and find out the changes if any in their culture
- 5) Study can be taken to find out if any communities of women exist amongst them.

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## APPENDICES



## QUESTIONNAIRE

**Name :**

**Age :**

**Sex :**

**Married/ Unmarried :**

**No. of Children :**

**Qualification :**

**Place of Residence :**

1. From how many years have you been in this area?
2. From where had your forefathers migrated?
3. What is your mother tongue?
4. Is it used as language of communication

If no, what language do you use?

5. What system of society do you follow  
matriarchal or patriarch
6. Do you have your own folk songs?



7. Are they preserved in written form?
8. Are they still prevalent?
9. What is the religion practiced by your society?
10. Whom do you worship?
11. What are the main rituals associated with your religion?
12. Are there any social customs that have to be followed by you?

13. What is your traditional dress?

14. Do the people still wear the traditional dress?

15. What are your food items generally accepted by the mass people?

16. What are the main social ceremonies celebrated in your society?

17. Do the youngsters take part in them?

18. What is the food items prepared for any kind of celebration?

19. Are the people vegetarian or non vegetarian?



20. Is there a change in language amongst people residing in different areas.

21. Do the youngsters follow the rules and regulations of the community?

22. Do you have caste distinction in the society? If yes – how many castes do you have? Do marriages take place amongst people of different castes?

23. Do Marriages take place amongst people of different caste?

24. Is the birth of a girl child celebrated in your society?

25. Do the younger generation follow their tradition and culture?

26. What is the status of women in your society? Are they given the same position as man?

27. What are the traditional customary laws prevalent in your society?

28. Are they still prevalent or changed? If changed, why?

29. What is your main source of occupation?

30. What are the various source of income in your family?

31. Do you have banking habit?

32. Do you have any bank in your locality?

33. Does your tribe give importance to education?

34. Is there any school and college in your locality?

35. What is the medium of instruction in the educational institution of your locality?



36. Do you have a library in your locality?
37. What are the modes of entertainment for your people?
38. Do you have a TV set/ Radio/ telephone/  
Cooking gas connection at your home?
39. Do any of your family member own a vehicle?
40. What is the source of water in your area?
41. Do you have proper transport facilities?

42. Are there proper health and medical facilities available in your area?

43. What type of houses do you have ? Kutcha or Pucca?

44. Are you a member of any political party?

45. Can you name the political parties that are active in your locality?

46. It seems some of your people have converted to Christianity, why?

47. What steps had Government taken for the upliftment of your people?

48. Are there any non-governmental organization working for the upliftment of your people?
49. Are there any changes coming in your society due to the changes taking place all over?
50. Are your youths attracted to the western culture? Is there any changes in their dress code, language etc?



True Copy  
GOVT OF ASSAM

DEPARTMENT OF WELFARE OF PLAIN TRIBES AND BACKWARD CLASSES

Dated:- Dispur, the 1 st April, 2003

.NO . TAD/BC/87/93/46,

From : Shri N.Barooah, ACS,  
Deputy Secy. To the Govt. of Assam  
WPT & BC Department

To,

1. All Secy. To the Govt. Of Assam.
2. All Heads of Department
3. All Deputy Commissioners
4. All Sub-Divisional Officers.
5. All Sub-Divisional Welfare Officers.

Sub: The Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 2002 list of S.C and S.T.

Sir,

I am directed to enclose herewith the list of S.C. and S.T. of Assam prepared as per 'The Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe Order (Amendment) Act, 2002

The revised list of S.C. and S.T will come into force with immediate effect.

All caste certificates to the S.C and S.T people should be issued on the basis of revised list.

Yours faithfully

Sd/- N.Barooah  
Deputy Secy. To the Govt. of Assam  
WPT & BC Department

Revised list of Scheduled caste and scheduled tribes prepared as per The Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 2002

LIST OF S.C .S

- 1) Bansfor 2) Bhuimali Mali 3) Brittial, Banic, Bania. 4) Dhupi, Dhub 5) Dugal, Dholi, 6) Hira 7) Jalkeot 8) Jhalo, Malo, Jhalo-Molo 9) Kaibortha, Jalia 10) Lalbogi, 11) Mahara, 12) Methar, Bhang, Muchi, Rishi, 13) Namasudra, 14) Patni, 15) Sutradhar.

### LISTS OF S.T.s

#### In the Autonomous Districts

- 1)Chakma, 2) Dimasa,Kachari 3) Garo, 4) Hajong, 5) Hmar, 6) Khasi, Jaintia, Shenteng, Paner, War, Bhoi, Lyngam,  
 7) Any Kuki Tribes including  
 i) Biate, Bieta, ii) Changsan, iii) Changloi, iv) Doungel, v) Gamalhou , vi) Gangte, vii) Hannung viii) Haokip, Haupt, ix) Guite x) Haolai xi) Hengma, xii) Hongsungh, xiii) Hrangkhwal, Rangkjol xiv) Jonglo, xv) khawchung, xvi) khawathlang, Khothalong, xvii) Kholhau, xviii) Kholma xix) Kipgen, xx) Kuki, xxi) Longthang, xxii) Lhangain, xxiii) Lhoujen, xxiv) Lhouvum, xxv) Lumpheng, xxvi) Misao, xxvii) Mangjel, xxviii) Rieng, xxix) Sairhom, xxx) Selnam , xxxi) Singson , xxxii) Sitihon, xxxiii) Sutke xxxiv) Thado xxxv) Thomgagon , xxxvi) Ulbah, xxxvii) Vaiphei  
 8) Lakher, 9) Man ( tai speaking) , Any Miozo ( Lushai) Tribes, 11) Karbi, 12. Any Naga Tribes, 13) Pawi, 14) Syntheng , 15) Lalung.

#### In the State of Assam excluding the Autonomous District: -

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1) Barmans           | 8) Mirin (Miching) |
| 2) Boro, Borokachari | 9) Rabha           |
| 3) Deori             | 10) Dimasa         |
| 4) Hojai             | 11) Hajong         |
| 5) Kachari , Sonowal | 12) Singpho        |
| 6) Lalung            | 13) Khampati       |
| 7) Mech              | 14) Garo           |

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