CHAPTER - II
PROFILE OF SARANIA KACHARI COMMUNITY

2.0 Introduction:

The word ‘Sarania’ is an adjective, ‘Kachari’ is the noun, a Sarania is one who takes *saran* (means “to take shelter”), and Kacharies who takes *saran*, they are Sarania Kachari. People forgot under whom the ancestors had taken *saran*. But it is a fact that some took *saran* under Hindu dharma before Shankardeva’s birth. Other people orally know the history of taking *saran* under Hindu dharma. Some say that their ancestors took *saran* under Harideva’s pantheon influenced by Sankardev’s Vaishnava dharma.

In this study, the history has written with the help of oral history of taking *saran* under Brahmanya dharma and with the help of written literature based on Assam history. The study has to depend on the oral literature e.g. hymns, folk songs, performances, description about their past for finding of the history. Sarania Kachari people also listened to the process of becoming Sarania from their ancestors and they did not experience themselves. The researcher interviewed and discussed with the writer, public, and political leaders for collecting the data and information. From the field, the researcher comes to know that the Brahmans purified them by asking to follow some rituals of being purified, which was called *Jatot Tula* (uplifted in the caste) for the purpose of making agricultural labour in the paddy field or for working in the backyard of the house. They have to maintain some rules such as, giving up homemade wine, pork, prohibited food, living neat and clean so that they can use them as labour. This upliftment procedure can be analyzed that accept them as labour without purifying
may pollute their caste, as they did not accept food from lower caste or tribe. This thinking of pollution can be withdrawn by taking or giving *saran* with the modified behavior of living. The upper caste Hindu always maintained social distance with lower caste Hindu and tribal people. They did not want to live by mixing with them. And tribal people are understood as contacting with the purifying agent like a Brahman. From that time they are purified if they follow the scheduled rules.

By continuing the upliftment process, they are following the Vedic rules related to Hindu marriages and death rites, but in case of eating, some are still maintaining their age-old food and it is proportional from place to place. Brahmans did not take cooked food in their house but accepted raw food. The most important issue of assimilation of tribal people into caste is the attitude considering their food, religious systems and their life styles. They wanted to break the thread of their traditional life style.

For knowing the history of Sarania Kachari, the researcher relied on reminiscences, recollections, memories, opinions, historical books about Assam and Sankardev. In absence of written records and evidences, the reconstruction has to depend much on the oral tradition which is available at present. The aim of this chapter is to systematize the history of Sarania Kachari living in Nalbari and Baksa district. With the limited historical found about Sarania Kachari, the researcher has tried to conceptualize the cultural and sociological situation. From few ancient inscriptions and from the account of a Chinese traveler some scattered fact may be obtained. The fragmentary historical incidents have also been reconstructed on the basis of the study of colonial ethnographers and researchers and on the early nationalist historians from the references in the Mahabharata, in the Puranas, collected for this study from
different sources which include written manuscripts, published books and narrative traditions prevalent in the society. This chapter deals with the historical description of the community.

2.1 History of the Sarania Kachari Community:

To know about the history, it is important to know the meaning of the term Sarania Kachari.

2.1.1 Meaning of the term Sarania:

*Sarana* means the resorting of Krishna as the sole refundable deity. But it required a Guru to initiate the state of *Sarana*. Thus it is stated that Madhava considered Sankardeva as the religious preceptor and took refuge in the fear-dispelling feet of Krishna. And that one Gaya Thakura of Dangarikuci took Madhavadeva as the preceptor and took refuge in the fear removing feet of Krishna. (Neog: 1965: 346)

The word *Sarana* means “to take shelter” under a higher authority. The authority can be a Brahman or a king or God. In Vaishnavism, disciples take shelter under Lord Hari, Hari means Lord Vishnu. It is believed that after taking Sarana soul of a person become pure. They are upgraded to a higher social status like Brahmin. At that time, Brahmins advise the people that the lifestyles such as eating habits and drinking liquor of tribal were not a good one. For finding the higher status they have to give up this lifestyle And as the influence of Shankardeva’s movement, after Sankardeva’s death, Satras (monastery) were divided into four sections termed as- Brahma samhati, Nika Samhati, Purusha Samhati and Kal Samhati. It is said that Sarania Kachari of undivided Kamrupa district took *Sarana* under the Brahma Samhati which was conducted by Damodordeva and Harideva. From the field study, it was found that
Harideva and Damodardeva taught *Goshai (religious priest)* and *Goshai* delivered their learning to their devotees. And *Goshai* gave *Saran* to Kachari people. Damodordeva and Harideva was Brahman and Harideva was from lower Assam. (Cantlie: 1984: 169-170). We can say Sarania Kachari people become *Sarania* by two processes---

i. By taking *Sarana* (shelter) under Brahmin.

ii. By taking *Sarana* (shelter) under Sankardeva’s Vaishnav dharma.

Sri Manta Sankardeva introduced *Sarana* system in the 15th century during Neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam. *Sarana* is a sacramental process. It is believed that by following this process one can get spiritual upliftment.

For taking *Sarana* a devotee must have complete dedication towards Lord Vishnu. After taking *Sarana*, the devote has other works also except giving service. Then God takes the responsibility of worshipper. That person can take *Sarana* who is pious from the heart. Gods and sages are also not capable of such piousness sometime. In this respect, the vocal point of *Sadhan Marg* (worshipping method) is how one human attains such pure soul. (Mahanta: 1987: 255) The person who will take *Sarana* should think about one. The meaning of *Sarana* will be meaningless if that person cannot concentrate on one. For establishing the concentration in God, that person should have believed in God. The Guru (the religious preceptor) is the person who delivers knowledge to that person who will take *Sarana* (Ibid: 255-256). It is believed that without taking *Sarana* devotion will not be emerged completely in one’s mind. So, taking *Sarana* is the main purpose of devotion. *Sarana* means being surrendered to ones from the body, mind, and mouth if one person has faith in Krishna, this is called *Sarana*. The belief and selfhood that we have towards one’s body if one can feel that
type of beliefs and selfhood towards Krishna this would be *Shrestha* (greatest) *Sarana*. (Ibid: 260)

### 2.1.2 Impact of Sankardeva and Harideva on tribes:

The primary elements of neo-Vaishnavism were God, Guru (the religious preceptor), the fraternity of *Bhaktas* (devotees) and *Naam* (hymn). Of the different behaviours of the Bhakti, Srimanta Sankardeva preferred Dasya or enslavement to God. Eka-Saran Nam dharma is also known as Mahapurushya Dharma, after the name of the founder Mahapurusa Sankardeva. (Barmahalia: 2012: 17).

The vaishnavite movement under Harideva Sattra was the significant event in that period in those areas. This movement was a success in converting the people from the different tribes and races under a brahmana by taking him as a guru. The liberal reform process of vaishnavite movement made the caste system liberal and elevated the socially backward classes and tribes to the Hindu society after making them more pure and refined with devotional process and rules of conduct. The *Saran* process includes steps to purify one’s body and mind. By following *Saran* a large number of tribal people converted to Hindu.

Sankardeva included the names of different tribes in one hymn in Bhagavat Purana that –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kirata Kachari</th>
<th>Khasi Garo Miri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yavan kanka govala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asama muluka</td>
<td>Rajaka Turuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuvacha Mlechcha Candal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ano jata nara</td>
<td>Krsna savakara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sangata pavitra haya (Devgoswami: 1996: 206)
The meaning of the hymn is “The Kirata, the Kachari, the Khasi, the Garo, the
Miri, the Yavanas, Kankans, Turukas, Kuvachas, Mlechas, Chandals and other sinner
people living in the land of Assam can be pure and sacred and achieve divinity by
worshipping Lord Krishna and can live in heaven.” Wish to acquire the holiness,
sacredness of feelings make them devotee of the Lord. Srimanata Sankaradeva
accepted many persons as his disciples who belonged to the tribe. He accepted the
disciple of Govinda ata who belonged to the Garo tribe, Paramananda belonged to Miri
tribe, Narhari Ata belonged to Ahom community, and Narottoma belonged to the Naga
community, Jayaram a Bhutiya person and Candasai, a Muslim person as his disciple
(Devgoswami: 1996: 206-207). In early Assam, the tribes of Assam were limited to act
in society to some extent. They were prohibited to take part on any auspicious occasion.
The Caste Hindu Assamese people considered tribe as untouchable to assimilate with
them. Due to Vaishnavism among non-Aryan people and after going through the Saran
system, these non Aryan people started to think themselves as Assamese, but it was not
happen in practice in lower Assam or in un-divided Kamrupa district. They are
considered as Sarania Kachari, or they are known as Sanya Kachari in Nalbari and
Baksa district in the Assamese dialect which is used in Nalbari, Barpeta and Baksa
district. Their Hindu neighbour does not accept them as Assamese. This is the social
tragedy. However, the Vaishnavite movement tried to erase all the inequalities and
differences of the caste system and opened the equal opportunity to all people living in
Assam.

Harideva established some religious and cultural institution called satras in
un-divided Kamrup District. The satras established by Harideva followed Brahma
Samhati. There are branches of satras in Nalbari, Baksa, and Barpeta district. It is
difficult to say when and how the large numbers of Bodo Kacharies were converted to Neo-Vaisnavism. The exact situation, dates and times cannot be executed, but it is true that generation after generation they had been showing allegiance and loyalty to the satras and devotion and respect to the Sattradhikars as the other devotees in the Vaishnavite society. It is clear that after the demise of Sankardeva and his disciples, the satradhikars of the different satras converted the Bodos in large number.

2.1.3 Ways of taking Sarana:

There are many ways of taking Sarana:

i. By the penetration of Harideva and Damodordeva

ii. By Shankardeva’s ascendants.

iii. By Madhavdeva and his companion

iv. By Gopal Ata

Harideva and Damodardeva took separation from Shankardeva’s Vaishnav Dharma and they demanded that they were disciples of Chaitanyadeva of Banga and Vasudeva of Odisha. (Deka: 2002: 24). The satras of Auniaati, Dakshinpat, Gorhmur, and Kuruabahi are under Brahma Sanhati. Brahmans direct these satras.

In a bulletin of Sri Sri Rajat Jayanti Utsav 2010 Harideva Dham, Haripur Satra, Pathsala which name is “Homargha” we found the information about Namati Satra. The satra of Namati is a Branch of Barpeta satra. This satra was established during the sixteenth century. (2010: 20). From then, they are following satra activities in this village. They perform deul (festival of colour); in deul all people of that village took an active part. Hemchandra Goshawmi is directing this satra. From this satra, he is invited to give saran which is a ritual after marriage. The ancestors of him were invited by
various tribal people for converting them to Hindu. The process of being Sarania by conversion is closed.

In the first chapter of this study, it is mentioned that in Yoginitantra, about the religion of Kamrupa is written like these: The religion of Kamrup was Kirat. There is no rule for sanyas (relinquishing family life) or no long fast in Kamrup. No need to give up Non-Veg and no rule for Brahmacharya. It was not a crime to keep physical relation during the periodical time of women. Women chew betel nut; therefore, their teeth were not white. (Deka: 2011: 142). Duck, pigeons, tortoise, swine all were eatable here. Forsaking these things created difficulty. Possibly many people did not like these religious rules, but could not give up due to fear of religion.

According to Ganesh Sharma (a retired schoolmaster, 67, a former residence of Dhamdhama, now in Gopal Bazaar, Nalbari), “the forefather of these Sarania Kachari people of Dhamdhama area was Boro Kachari. They took saran under a Goshai for being socially uplifted.” These Sarania people cannot speak Boro language; they accepted Assamese language as their mother tongue. The Rabhas, the Deuries also, who took saran in the past cannot speak Rabha or Deuri language.

From the field, it can be said that Sarania Kacharis who are living in Nalbari and Baksa district they took saran under Brahmins and most of them are from Harideva’s pantheon. For finding the history of Sarania Kachai community, the researcher depicts the situation of Royal families who followed Hinduism and Vaishnavism as well.

Contributions of non-Aryan kings of the ancient Kamrupa towards Vaishnavism are remarkable. Since the fifth century A.D. or a little earlier of it, Vaishnavism
prevailed in the ancient Assam. It is mentioned in the dynastic history of the royal families of ancient Assam called Kamrupa, like Bhuti Barman, Bhaskar Barman, Ratnapal, Harsha Pal, Dharma Pal etc. Thus, the non-Aryan kings of the ancient Kamrupa patronized Vaishnavism and the kings donated lands to Brahmins.

In the first part of the 17th century, Kachari kings started to take Hindu names. King Yasnarayan changed his name to Arimardan or Satrudaman after conquering Jayantia King. After that Yasnarayan won the battle with Ahom and he kept his capital name Kirtipur instead of Maibong and himself took another name as Pratapnarayan. After that Namarayan, Bhimdarpa Narayan, Bhimbal Narayan, Indrabllabh Narayan or Indra Darpanarayan and Birdarpanarayan ruled in Maibong. Birdarpanarayan was a Lord Vishnu devotee. In his ruling time in 1671, a picture of Dashavatar Shrikrishna was depicted. After this, King Tamradhawaj lost the battle in the hand of Ahom. King Shurdarpanarayan, Sandhikari, Harichandra Narayan, Krishnachandra Narayan were the king. (Sharma: 2012: 33)

2.1.4 Probable historical condition of taking saran:

The fact of mentioning about taking Hindu names of Kachari king is that Kachari kings were influenced by the Hindu dharma and they adopted Hindu religion. When king changes his religion then it affects his subjects also and king’s subjects took Hindu dharma by following their king (Deka: 2002:11). At that time, these people were not known as Sarania. From this situation of religion in royal families, it can be said that the feeling of being uplifted by taking Hindu religion is very old. It is obvious to have influence of royal family upon the general people.
The process of Hinduization has taken place in this area from the time unknown. This process was continued by the kings of Kamrupa like Pushyavarman then by the Dimasa Kacharis, Chutiyas and the Koch Kings also established Hindu connection. Though they accepted and patronized the Hinduism the large portion of the mass remained outside the pale of Hinduism. The study of the Daranga Raja Vanshabali reveals that the Koch kings were the Hinduised kings of the Kachari tribes. Surya Khari Daivajana narrated the state formation by Biswa Shingha and his twelve sons in “Darranga Raj Vansvali”. Koch king Narnarayan patronized the neo-Vaishnavism and he accepted neo-Vaishnavism. By following the king, subject of the king also follows neo-Vaishnavism. These non-Aryan people gave up their old habits. Though king Naranarayan followed the neo-Vaishnavism, the influence of Saivism was still there. During the time of the battle with Ahom king, Mahadeva appeared in king Narnarayan’s dream and Mahadeva said in his dream that if the king worshipped Bathou (Shiva) by organizing Kherai puja according to Bodo Kachari tradition of Kherai dance then he would win the battle.

It was mentioned that

প্রথম বিশাল দেখা দিলা সদাসিদ।

বোলে আপনার ভীতি এবিলিহি কি।

কহাইবিন্দ মতে এতো কবিও নাচন।

তোর জয় হৈব কৈলো যবুু বচন

(Lord Shiva appeared on his first night

Why gave up own rituals

Advanced to conduct a kherai performance

And you would win.)
From this paragraphs, it is known that Lord Shiva asked Malladeva (Naranarayan), the eldest son of Biswa Shingha that why Malladeva had given up Kachari religion. He advised him to offer a performance according to Kachari practice. And then Shiva disappeared. According to the advice of Lord Shiva, Narnarayan worshipped the Lord by practicing Kachari customs on the bank of the river Xonkoch.

In the Darranga Raja-Vansavali, Harya Mandal the father of the Koch King Biswa Singha and twelve other Mech Chiefs are described as devotees of Shiva. Lord Shiva assumed Hariya Mandal and had relation with Hira and Visu (Viswa Singha) was born to Hira by Shiva. While discussing Koch people in the Brahmaputra valley it is said that the Koch king Hariyamandal married two sisters Hira and Jira. Visu, the son of Hira was a clever and courageous person (Quoted in M. Neog: 1995: 80).

It is mentioned in the book “The Assamese” that the Brahmans discovered Bisu as a Kshatriyas who had thrown away their sacred threads when fleeing before the wrath of Parasuram and Visu declared himself as the son of Lord Siva who had made sexual intercourse with Hira wife of Hariyamandal and mother of Bisu, assuming the
form of Hariya. Bisu named himself Biswa Singh and his brother Sisu took the name of Siba Singh. They abandoned their old tribal position and named themselves Rajbanshis. (Cantlie: 1984: 230)

Biswa Singha now became a great patron to the Hinduism. He worshipped Shiva and Durga, and gave gifts to the disciples of Vishnu and also to the priests and astrologers. He revived the worshipping of Kamakhya, rebuilt her temple on the Nilachal hill near Gauhati, and imported numerous Brahmans from Kanauj, Benaras and other centers of learning.(Gait: 2008:50)

Thus, the Koch King started to be known as descendent of Shiva. From the “Darranga Raj Vansawali”, we also get an account of the worship of Shiva according to Hindu sculpture as well as with tribal rites. Viswa Sinha’s son Nara Narayan encouraged the tribal customs and creeds of the Bodos as well as patronized the tantric and vaishnavite forms of Hinduism. Though Narnarayan patronized neo-Vaishnavism, he did not disturb Bodo-Kacharis system of worship. He built a street called Gohai Komal Aali (lane) in the name of his brother Gohai Komal to divide the area between Bathou (deity of Kachari tribe) worshipper and people who followed neo-Vaishnavism. According to “Darrang Raj Bansabali”, the inheritors of the Koch dynasty were as follows (the name taken by the king after Hinduization with their original name is also given.)—

Dambahu Mech-(son) Hariya Mandal- (wife) Jira and Hira

Hariya Mandal and Hira (son): Visu (Viswa Sinha) and Sisu

Bisu (Biswa Sinha): Malla Dev (Nara Narayan), Chillarai (Sukladhwaj), Gohain Kamal (Kamal Narayan)
Kameswar Brahma wrote this deviation in his book as follows, "Keeping the Gohai Kamal Aali (a road) in the middle, all the Kacharis of the North of Gohai Kamal Aali will worship in their own system; while in the southern part, the inhabitants will worship according to Brahmana (Hindu priest) and in such a way the Dharma will prevail in the land.” (Brahma: 1992: 165)

As the Suryakhari said powerful Shiva Shingha divided his region amongst his twelve sons who were skilled in their sector and patronized Shaivism or Hinduism. The book depicts the fact of following both Kachari customs and Hinduism. In the page number 74 and 75 of “Darranga Rajbangshabali” (Sharma: 1973), it is mentioned that Chutiya king and Ahom king has taken saran under Malladeva (Narnaarayan). The researcher is trying to depict the history by analyzing all these literature. Saran is the very old process, it may be under Hinduism or any king or under Vaishnava Dharma or under any high power that people recognized superior to them. So, in simple words, Sarania Kacharis were Kachari who took saran under some supreme power or religion.

Kameswar Brahma in his book “A study of socio-religious beliefs, practices, and ceremonies of the Bodos” explained about the situation of taking shelter into Vaishnavism by the Kachari kings. During the popular period of Saktism and Tantricism in North-east India the revolution of Vaishnavism also started. The Kachari king Krishna Chandra took Vaishnavism under a Vaishnava Brahmin at a ceremony. The Brahmins advice to take a rebirth of the king by entering into a cow made of copper and then come out from the mouth. The king Krishna Chandra followed this technique after that he was supposed to take re-birth from a cow made of copper. (Brahma: 1992: 162)

In Edward Gait’s “A History of Assam” (2013) it is mentioned that in 1790 the Raja Krishnachandra and brother Govinda Chandra entered into a body of cow which
was made of copper and when they came out from the body, Brahmans convinced them they took birth twice and by this way they became kshatriya the descendants of Bhim, a hero of the epic Mahabharata. (2008: 309)

Bhaben Narji writes in “Boro-Kacharir Samaj aru Sanskriti” that though these communities share a common ancestor, body shape, cultural origin, they do not want to introduce themselves as Bodo Kacharis. Some Boro-Kachari people come to be known as Sarania by obeying one Goswami (surname of a Hindu high cast) as Guru (teacher) by learning hymns. The person who has taken saran becomes pure from that day. They speak in Assamese by giving up own language. They changed their food habit after taking saran, but later they became as before. Boro-Kachari and Dimasa of Kachari write the title Barman after taking saran. (Narji: 1985: 17)

Some writers and researcher have found that in early period Sarania people were Bodo.

Bodo’s conversion to Hinduism was showed by taking Hindu name and taking titles like Deka, Das, Choudhury etc. and now they change it to Sarania Kachari title. Among the Sarania Kachari, there are Sakta, Saiva, and followers of neo-Vaishnavism. After losing their original identity they are not even recognized by other Assamese community. The subjects of Krishnachandra, Gobindachandra took Sarania religion largely followed by their royal families. (Basumatary Asha “Sanskritisation of Bodo tribes in Assam from 16th to 18th century” Chapter – 2, shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/.../08_chapter%202.pdf,)

It can be concluded that when a king takes saran under a Vaishnava Goshai and his beloved subjects also take saran by following their king. They wanted to follow the religion of their king and wanted to be Hindu by changing their name and subtitles but the truth is that other community did not accept them as Assamese they are called as
Sarania Kachari or Sanya Kachari by others. At that time there was nothing like Assamese community, this is starting of formation of Assamese community. Sarania Kachari is still maintaining their tribal characteristics. Besides Sakta and Saiva religion Sarania Kachari has taken Vaishnav dharma. The main finding is that the rulers of Chutiya kingdom, Kachari, Koch, Khen, Ahom all these kingdom took conversion to Hinduism. Regarding Koch community, the deputy commissioner of Kamrup district reported in Appendix A of the report of 1881 census stated that, “when a Kachari takes ‘saran’, i.e. discards certain of his old habits and adopts Hindu usages, he becomes a ‘Sarania’ and after a few generations his descendants, especially well to do in at least parts of Kamrup become Koch (Cantlie: 1984: 241). Originally, Assamese castes are heterogeneous and open for infiltration from below involving a large tribal population. The Sarania status is the predecessors of Koch. These Sarania people remain as Sarania.

2.1.5 Stages of Sarania:

The caste process in Assam is not static; it is flexible. The concept of the closed group of a caste cannot be always applicable. Audrey Cantlie in the book ‘The Assamese’ describes that the conversion of tribal people to Hinduism is effected by taking initiation from the Gosain whereupon the initiate is recognized as within the Hindu fold and therefore as a member of Hindu caste. But in reality initiation is recognized as a process of conversion to Hinduism where the person after taking ‘saran’ is recognized as a Sarania by the other Hindu people and they are always treated in a discriminated way (Cantlie: 1984: 252). Audrey Cantlie also describes that in most places the first stage of conversion is Sarania. Some are also termed as Madahi which implies that the convert still retains his old drinking and eating habit. Above the Madahi, Heremia or Saru Koch who began to submit to abstain from drinking
intoxicating liquor and to maintain the restriction in drinking and eating habits (Cantlie: 1984: 242).

When the tribal people were frequently lectured upon the purity of the Hinduism, they were interested in it and to acquire salvation and a position in the Hindu society by giving up their old habits of eating pork and other forbidden food and drinking habits of strong liquor and they conform to Hindu usages. Following the interest of the tribal for becoming Hindu, the Gosain shows the path of taking *saran* and remaining free in their eating habits (this is the status of the Sarania Koch) or of becoming perfect Hindus (Saru Koch). If they decide on complete conversion to Hinduism, they undergo prayascitta (atonement) at a cost of Rs. 5 to 20 according to circumstances and receive *saran* (shelter), *bhajan* (the devotional hymn) from the Gosain. They need to change all their previous utensils of cooking and eating and their dwelling house. Then they are admitted to Hindu society as Saru Koch and provided they continue to live with total abstinence from the forbidden food and liquor, they become Koch. (Cantlie: 1984: 242)

The strength of some of the Koch class, 1891 is shown in the book “The Assamese” by Audrey Cantlie (Cantlie: 1984: 243) as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bar (Big)</td>
<td>71,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saru (Small)</td>
<td>27,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heremia</td>
<td>3,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saraniya (Initiated)</td>
<td>26,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madahi (Liquor Drinking)</td>
<td>18,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>148,078</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the book ‘The Assamese’, we found the concept of the Chinese pilgrimage Hiuen Tsiang about the ruler of Assam that the chief ruler of Assam in A.D. 640 was a Hindu who claimed to be a Kshatriya and there is historical evidence of the conversion of dynasty into Hinduism. But, the process of Hinduisation in the past was apparently slow and several tribes were not under the purview of Hinduism. Edward Gait in this regard stated as follows:

‘The reason seems to be that in early days the number of Hindu settlers and adventures were small and they confined their attention to the king and his chief nobles, from whom alone they had anything to gain. They would convert them, admit the nobles to Kshatriya rank and invent for the king a noble descent, using as will be seen, the same materials over and over again, and then enjoy as their reward lucrative posts at court and lands granted to them by their proselytes. They would not interfere with the tribal religious rites, as to do so would call forth the active animosity of the native priests, nor would they trouble about the beliefs of the common people, who would continue to hold to their old religious notions. If the dynasty lasted long enough, the influence of Hindu ideas would gradually filter down to them and they would follow the example of their betters, as has now actually happened in the case of the Ahoms. But before this could come to pass, the dynasty would ordinarily be overthrown; the downfallen survivors of the old aristocracy would become merged in some Hindu caste, such as the Kalita, and Hinduism would sink into insignificance until, in course of time, its priests should succeed in inducing the new rulers to accept their ministration’ (Gait 1906:9). (Cantlie: 1984: 233)

According to M.N. Srinivas in his book “Social Change in Modern India”, the sacramental process of being Hindu from a lower caste or tribal or other group changes
its customs, rituals, ideologies, and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently twice-born caste. Generally, such changes are followed by acclaiming to a higher position in the caste by the local community. The claim is usually made power a period of time, in fact, a generation or two before the arrival is conceded. Occasionally, a caste claims a position which its neighbours are not willing to allow. In case of Sarania Kachari, after giving up prohibited food and lifestyle for upgrading they have to come across many caste hierarchies. After crossing the stage of Sarania, they become Soru Koch, Pani Koch, and Koch. It takes generations to get one stage to another.

It is said that the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus of Assam have spectacular similarity with the religious beliefs and practices of the indigenous non-Hindu people, mainly the Indo-Mongoloid Bodo-Kacharis, who have been dominating the north-eastern region since the pre-historic period. This, of course, has been the common pattern of emergent Hinduism. (Brahma: 1992: 158-159)

2.1.6 Present status of Sarania Kachari:

In simple word, they are Kachari who has taken saran.

Sarbeswar Rajguru in his book “Medieval Assamese Society (1228-1826)” stated about Sarania people as follows-

The Satra institutions were in charge of initiating people and teaching the codes and the rules of conduct. The vaishnavite movement penetrated into the remote hill tribes also and credit for this must be attributed to a sect known as Kala Samhati. But unlike the Koches, the Chutias and the Ahoms, these hill tribes cannot be regarded as completely Hinduised. The hill tribes like the Kacharis, the Mikirs, the Garos, the Miries etc, who were converted into Hinduism, are called Saranias that is, they may be classed as semi Hinduised. W. Hunter in his statistical account of Assam, wants to equate the Koches and the Chutias with the Sarania (semi hinduis ed) Kacharies, Mikirs, Sabhas etc; but we think it will be quite unjustified to place Koches and Saranias in the same footing. (Brahma: 1992: 106)
Sarania Kachari is not constitutionally recognized scheduled tribe. For Sarania Kachari, racial identity is very controversial or it is not possible to have one conclusion. This community is formed by the people who are the descendants of Rabha, Boro and other tribes who were not satisfied with their culture. They accept neighbouring Hindu culture. This is a synthesis of Aryan and non-Aryan culture.

Even in modern days, Saivism has stronghold among the Bodo-Kacharis and it can be seen amongst Sarania people also. They worship Bah Gohai (Bamboo God) as a symbol of fertility which is a local version of Lord Shiva. Mongolian tribe is the mother of Kirata people and one of the main sources of North Eastern tribes. Though Sarania Kachari people did not evolve directly from any one of the group, this group is the result of Hinduization from some of these groups.

This community is trying to restore their original identity for getting the opportunities like other tribal communities of Assam. The exact numerical statement is not possible because this group is not in the census as Sarania Kachari. By themselves, they estimate that they are around 7 lacks.

2.2 Social Structure:

The Sarania Kachari society is patriarchal. The head of the family or household is the father or the male head. The Sarania Kachari clans are neither exogamous nor endogamous. They can marry within the clan, but outside the same lineage. The Sarania Kachari family is small comprising of the husband, the wife, and the unmarried children. The Sarania Kacharis prefer to live in the nuclear family usually; a nuclear family is split up when its size expanded. The right of ownership of property passes to the eldest son who takes care of his widowed mother, younger brothers, and sisters.
Under the guidance and rule of the eldest son, the family may be kept united for some years, but eventually, it breaks up as the other sons marry and when the family thus extends, then the ancestral property is divided into equal share and distributed. The widow also receives a share of her husband’s property. There are followers of Vaishnava, Sakta and Vedic Hindu. The Sarania Kachari is primarily a rural community and depends on natural resources. The villagers mainly depend on agriculture for their subsistence, there has not been much improvement in this technique and the people continue with outdated forms of cultivation in the small holdings without any irrigation facilities. In such condition, their economy is poor. Catching fishes from the lake, gathering firewood from the jungle and living happily with old customs and traditions on their little agricultural produce is their way of living. The Sarania Kachari observed two ways of lifestyles. The rural Sarania Kachari community maintains the unprogressive character of the means of production and livelihood. The urban Sarania Kachari community demonstrates the modern progressive attitude. They are no longer content with modest living and wish to achieve something more to demonstrate before the world that the Sarania Kachari are the people who have their own cultural heritage.

Many are involved in art and craft. Gold and silver jewelry are popular among the women of Saraina. Different tools of iron and steel were made by local blacksmiths. Almost every household has a handloom. Girls are trained to become an expert weaver. The people make various articles of bamboo and cane. The items are shortlisted bellow-

household elements- *bichoni* (hand fan), *duli, pachi, dala, kula, dhara* (household tools); fish trapping implements: *khaloi, jakoi, polo*; weaving tools. Besides this, they have a practice of making the fishing net for catching fish from the water.
2.3 Food Habits and beverages:

Rice is the staple food of the Sarania Kacharis. During *Bihu*, they make various types of cakes from bora rice with the help of coconut, sesame etc like Assamese caste Hindu people. They prepared rice bear from bora rice. During festivals, feasts, weddings and in death ceremonies, rice beer is essential. The Sarania Kachari community rear buffaloes, pigs, goats, ducks, and cow for milk and meat.

The Sarania Kachari Community is a very important ethnic group of Assam. They follow Hindu religion. Due to Sanskritisation, this Community has lost some of their traditions. Assamese Hindu is constantly influencing the social and cultural life of Sarania Kachari Community due to the process of acculturation and assimilation. But from observation, it is seen that this community has been maintaining most of their traditional distinctiveness in respect of their living style. The proposed study is an attempt to understand the traditional food preservation system of Sarania Kachari Community and its healthy aspects.

Here the researcher is trying to give an explanation of traditional food recipes of Sarania Kachari Community reflecting healthy aspects and preservation systems. Fish and meat are essential article of food for the people of this Community. They used to have meat and fish by three processes; those are drying, roasting and cooking.

These methods are very interesting and healthy. For preservation, they heat the fish on fire or under the sun. Preferably, they dry up on fire, because on fire mosquito or other dirty things cannot attack the food items, it is protective. With the change of time, the traditional methods have also changed. The data collected for the clear understanding of the study is based on both primary and secondary sources.
The process making “Khar” (alkali) is very easy. Usually, they make it from various parts of the banana tree. First of all, various parts of the banana tree have to be dried and then get into the fire. The remaining ash is with water for some hour. After some time the water has to be separated from the ash. They prefer pork than any other meat.

*Jakot diya:*

It is a process of drying pork by keeping it above the *juhal* (the traditional fireplace for cooking). A big size of *goroi* fish by cutting into pieces uses to keep near the fireplace with the help of a bamboo stick. It is a traditional system of grill food.

*Kholat diya:*

After clearing the enteric portion of fish, it is heated on a *Khola* (a round iron pot). The taste of dry fish will increase if it is cooked with blue Taro, black Taro, *bakhor tita* (a kind of spice), Chickpea or Papaya flower. Dry fish with papaya flower is a favourite dish for them. They grind dry fish with black Taro and preserve it in a bamboo tube for three days. They make some small bales from these mixers and keep these for dry on a *bahor chaloni* (bamboo tray) under sunlight. After that, it is cooked with chili, onion, and soda and ginger leaf. Each culture preserved their local foods using some basic methods of food preservation.

Drying is a method of food preservation that works for removing water from the food. Sun drying is easy and a great way to preserve food in a healthy way. Good foods to sundry include fish, reddish and white gourd melon. They are cut into slices. Roasting is one of the easiest way to cook the big piece of fish or pork. They roast some insects called *karepok*, *jola pok* on an iron pot without or with oil. People catch
these insects in the paddy field. It is a medicine for fever. These insects are a great source of energy. They prefer less oil and less salt.

They cooked bora (name of a paddy) rice differently. For cooking bora rice, they use two pots. One is small and another one is big. The big one is full of water and the small one that is full of bora rice is kept above the big one. This is traditional steam rice. They make different types of dishes from rice flour. Most of the Sarania Kachari people are related to agriculture. These traditional recipes are continuing from generation to generation among Sarania Kachari Community.

They cultivate vegetables in their kitchen garden and paddy field. They collect some vegetables from surroundings. Some easily available vegetables in every Sarania households are pumpkin, gourd, white gourd, melon etc. Every household used to have a Bari (a grove). Women of Sarania Kachari community practice group fishing. The domesticated animals of Sarania Kachari community are pigs, hens, ducks, cows, and buffalos. Some families of Sarania Kachari community produce rice beer, which is very healthy. In recent times, the production of rice beer is reduced. It is banned in few places.

**Sindal fish:**

Dry fishes are pounded with taro and preserve it in a bamboo tube for future. This is called *sindal*. Sarania Kachari people cook *sindal* fish with black lentil and taro. Drying herb is a way of preservation. Pounded drying herb is placed under the earth. In case of “*poita bhat*”, boiled rice is kept in water for one night.

The “*pithas*” (cakes) are the breakfast delicacy in Assam. Not only Sarania Kachari Community other tribes of Assam also used to have “*pithas*” (cakes). *Pithas*
are mainly made of rice flour. One of the rice grain, which is favourable for making pithas, is bora rice. Bora rice is found only in North-East India which is very sticky while cook. Steamed rice cake is prepared by soaking raw rice in water, draining raw rice and grinding it while damp. Then the rice flour is steamed on the mouth of a tekeli (earthen jar). In case of chunga pitha, the bamboo stem full of Bora rice is heated in the fire to cook rice. It adds a lovely flavor of bamboo to the rice that is called chunga pitha. Sometimes, they used pounded rice too. The other ingredients are coconut, sesame or jaggery.

Duck meat with black lentil is famous for its taste. The common spices used in the preparation of the cuisine of Sarania Kachari Community are ginger, garlic, coriander, curry leaf, onion, turmeric etc.

2.4 Colourful culture and Present position of the language of Sarania Kachari:

The colourful indigenous folk culture of different communities living here comprises Assamese folklore. The richness of Sarania Kachari community can be seen in folklore. The native language of Sarania Kachari community is Assamese, but the tone they used is different from standard Assamese language. They use their local tone. They have folktale, folk song, and riddle. A race or a culture is not static. With the passage of time, different communities born from one community. No race, no community is static to their culture, language and tradition. The traditional lifestyle of this community can be understood by listening to these songs. The dialect used by this community is an oral form of standard Assamese language. The Assamese language has taken a new form in their life. From the structural side of the language, this dialect
of this community is an offshoot of Assamese language. And not listen same as Assamese well from the side of the shape, words, language. Usually, they prefer two letters of Assamese consonant “◌/bn” (anuswara) and “◌/bn” (bisorga). They practice these to consonants after the Assamese root of the verb and the actual verb. The gracefulness and simplicity of Assamese language have reduced in their tongue. The dialect used by this community is an oral form of standard Assamese language. The Assamese language has taken a new form in their life.

Assamese is the language of the priests who were bringing these rude tribes within the fold of Hinduism and partly it is the language of a higher civilization. (Gait: 2008: 1-2)

Sarania Kachari community is speaking Assamese as mother tongue and their valuable contribution by writing books and composing songs in this language has increased the status of Assamese language. The Sarania Kachai people of Nalbari, Baksa, Kokrhajhar, Bongaigaon, Kamrup, Darrang have been speaking in this dialect. This language is different from Assamese language phonologically and morphologically.

2.5 Identity Movement of Sarania Kachari Community:

As the area inhibited by Sarania people are inhibited by Deuri, Boro, and other community, so it is controversial to say that beliefs, customs, festivals observe by Sarania are belong to Sarania only. Other community does not agree in this respect. Sarania Kachari community is arguing for Scheduled Tribe status with the six other communities of Assam. Some time ethnic feeling is created for having contemporary benefits. Sarania History can be found in oral and written historical documents during
the ruling period of different kings. The leaders of the Sarania Kachari community believe that national integration and national development would be possible if the small communities will develop. People of this community are promoting and strengthening the community through showing respect to their local values.

2.6 Bodo community, Assamese identity and Sarania Kacharis of Assam:

For understanding the condition of Sarania Kachari, first, we should understand the scenario of the Bodo people. Bodo people are getting Scheduled Tribe status from the time of independence of India. After Bodo people, other community of Assam also demanded Scheduled Tribe status. Being minority in near future in own land is the challenge to Assamese community now days. For having Scheduled Tribe status there are some criteria defined by Indian constitution. The criteria for Scheduled Tribe have given in chapter four of this study. The Bodo people are related to Indo Mongoloid group and their mother tongue is Bodo, which is a Tibeto-Burman language.

According to Sydney Endle in his book “The Kacharies” stated that The people generally known to us as “Kacharis” differ in some material ways from their Hindu and Musulman neighbours alike in things material and moral. (Endle: 1975: 1) Once, Bodos were the ruler of North-eastern part of India, they had a prosperous and rich cultural identity. In the past, their language was advanced with a strong grammatical basis. In case of language, so many words are borrowed from Bodo language to Assamese language and Assamese language to Bodo language.

In the book “A Socio-Religious Beliefs, Practices, and Ceremonies of the Bodos”, Kameswar Brahma writes about Bodo people that the Bodos are a race of the
Mongolian people who are described to be the inhabitants of a country north of the Himalayas and West of China.

This land is known as Bod, means homeland. The inhabitants of Bod country are known as the Bodo-Fisha or Bodocha or Bodosa. Bodo means land and Ficha or Cha means children, so Bodo-Fisha means children of Bod country. “Bodoland”, the land of Bodo is a group of four districts such as Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang, Udalguri in which Bodo is the majority community in population wise and Bodoland is governed by Bodoland Territorial Council. Kokrajhar is the capital of Bodoland.

The present state of Bodo people: Now politicians of Bodoland has demanded a new state for Bodo people by cutting some area of Kokrajhar, Dhuburi, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darang and Sonitpur districts of Assam. The government of India permitted to form Bodoland Territorial Council for the development of Bodo community, which is the indigenous group of Assam and a largest tribal group of Assam. Since 1987, this group started to revive their ethnic identity. Saranias were mentioned separately in the book “The Kacharies” of Sidney Endle. Therefore, the nomenclature Sarania is not the present day’s conflict’s result and needs further discussion.

The word Saraniya is mentioned in the book The Kacharies, (Endle: 1975) it is as follows-
### Northern Group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approximate numbers</th>
<th>Chief habitat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bard (Kachari)</td>
<td>272,500</td>
<td>Western Darrang, Kachari Duars, and in North Kamrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabha (Totla)</td>
<td>31,370</td>
<td>Goalpara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mech (Mes)</td>
<td>93,900</td>
<td>Goalpara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhima</td>
<td></td>
<td>North-East Bengal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koch</td>
<td>10,300</td>
<td>On Northern Frontier from Jolpaiguri to North West Darrang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solanimiyas</td>
<td>15-18 families</td>
<td>Mangaldai Sub-division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahaliyas</td>
<td></td>
<td>Western Darrang. All slightly Hinduised Kacharies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phulguriyas,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saraniyas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Southern Group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approximate numbers</th>
<th>Chief habitat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Di-ma-sa “big –water-folk”</td>
<td>15,931</td>
<td>North Cachar hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hojais</td>
<td>2,750</td>
<td>North Cachar hills and Nowgong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalungs</td>
<td>40,160</td>
<td>South West Nowgong and adjoining districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garos</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>On Garo hills and foot of same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hajonggs</td>
<td>8,766</td>
<td>On Plains adjoining Southern Slope of the Garo Hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Tipperas</td>
<td>105,850</td>
<td>Hill Tippera &amp; c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Endle: 1975: 5)
Bodo people are getting Scheduled Tribe status from the time of independence of India. Other communities of Assam also demand Scheduled Tribe status. Being minority in near future in own land is the challenge to Assamese community nowadays. There are some criteria defined by Indian constitution for having Scheduled Tribe status.

2.6.2 Start of Bodo Movement:

However, the oldest inhabitants of Assam Bodo community started to think that their language, culture, and identity could be saved only by separation. Therefore, in 1987, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) along with the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (Bodo Literary Committee) declared the Bodoland movement demanding a separate State for the Bodos. This is the same reason for demanding separate identity status for Saranias that is the feeling of negligence from the side of Assam government.

Principle Factors Responsible for Bodo Movement given by Madhurima Goswami in her article “The Bodos: Culture and Society” are-

• Means of Livelihood

• The Privileged Society

• Immigration

• Hinduisation (Goswami: 2012: 100)

2.6.3 The condition of Bodo land after forming BTC:

There are thousands of Bodos and non-Bodo people still in an unpleasant situation and in very poor conditions. Although a dozen of roads have been repaired in
last few years, hundreds of bridges and other infrastructures remain in somewhat neglected condition. The national highway is in the process of expansion.

- Non-Bodo people do not support the demand of separate Bodoland. In 2014, Naba Kumar Sarania (Hira Sarania), a Sarania person and an Independent contestant backed by the Sanimilita Janagosthiya Aikyamancha (SJA) won constituency election and became the member of the constituency as first non-Bodo. Bodo people protested against his membership by saying that he has no right to be a tribe as he is a Sarania.

- The Non-Bodo organizations of Bodoland are Sanmilita Janagosthiya Oikkyamancha (Tribal united stage), Obodo Suraksha Samiti (Non-Bodo protection Committee), All Bodo Muslim Students' Union and All Assam Minority Students' Union apart from many other smaller groups.

  According to Sanmilita Jangosthiya Sangram Samity (Tribal United Stage) of Bodoland, they felt that the formation of BTC has turned the non-Bodo people into second-class citizens, and Bodos can oppress them. Therefore, United Tribal Committee has afraid about the future of the non-Bodo people. Their fears got worse when the NDFB, BLT, etc. demanded that Bodoland should be liberated. The militants raised the slogan “Liberated Bodoland is for the Bodos only”.

2.7 Picture of Sarania Kachari Community:

  Sarania Kachari community does not want separate Bodoland. They were getting Scheduled Tribe status under the name of Bodo community, which is stopped. They are demanding separate Scheduled Tribe status. If all the ethnic communities are
well protected within the boundary of Assam then this disorganized situation of Assam can be solved.

2.8 Complexity and Assamese identity:

When a marginalized community cannot express its existence through the state channels then they start to prove their existence by harming unity, which they are maintaining with others. For affirming their existence, they discuss with the states and organize a frame to make their existence visible. Sometimes they prefer the path of violence. Ignoring the feelings of dominance who demands to be indigenous population of Assam, the tribes are carefully articulating their uniqueness amongst all. They are celebrating their festivals and their distinctiveness elaborately and separately. They are celebrating their cultural linguistics distinctiveness. An Assamese eminent personality Kanaksen Deka stated that the Kalitas, Brahmans who are demanding as Assamese are not indigenous to Assam. (Dutta: 2012: 192-193) The Bodo Kacharies, Karbi, Mishing, Dimacha who were ruling over their land called Pragjyotishpura they are indigenous. The word “Assam” introduced later when the Ahom came to this land and ruled for more than 600 years. With the times the Brahmans, Kalita came into the power, when Ahom rule was over and British dominated this land then the Assamese middle class was formed to cultivating against the British. In which Bodo, Rabha, Marwary, Mishing, Garo, Kalita, Brahman all were united against the British. At that period they did not have the separate concept, there was nothing “we” or “them” concept. They were Assamese or not and maybe Assamese was an overwhelming concept and other was British. When British went from Assam, the Assamese people came into power. In 1979, during Assam movement all were united but after that Boro people as well as other tribes started deprived and all ethnic groups start their identity movements. They
start furnishing themselves that they are the people of Assam, but not Assamese. Tiwas, Matak, Rabha, Moran, Ahom and minority groups start building separateness for protecting themselves from assimilation within the larger cultural and linguistic group. The fear of being lost as a part of larger identity always forces them to make their own identity strong. When a large identity posits themselves a powerful and sovereign in every aspect then a small identity become marginalized and isolated then some conscious people arise to discuss their seriousness of culture as being distinctive.

The writer writes about the Assamese nationality in the book “Folklore as Discourse” that the Hindu of the Brahmaputra valley has a great impact on the process of Assamese nationality formation. The idioms, customs, and practices of Hinduism were dominant in the emerging non-tribal Assamese formation without giving significant importance to the tribal cultural traits of Assamese culture. The Sanskritization in case of tribal people of Assam is a give and take process due to the large assimilation scale. This process undoubtedly contributed to the vibrant Assamese non-tribal discourse as dominant subject of the region. When the marginalized community feels the interest of dominant culture to abolish their evolution of culture, then the oral tradition of the marginalized community has become the strongest article in maintaining their historical evolution.

The Bodos known as Meches in Bengal and in the lower ranges of the Himalayas falls within the territory of Nepal. In upper Assam, they are known as Sonowals and Thengal Kachari, in Western Assam they are known as Bodos or Bodo – Kacharis. They are known as Dimasas and Barmans in Southern Assam, in North Cachar, and in Cachar. A section of tribal people are bilingual, they can speak Assamese as well as their own.
2.9 Acculturation and Assimilation:

The population of Assam includes diverse racial, linguistics and religious elements. These various racial, linguistic characters entered into the region at different points of time. The various kingdoms were formed, extended, declined, and lived in the state with colourfull character of different races and kingdoms. In this scenario, the process of assimilation seemed to occur and it provided a framework for a plural cultural society to emerge in the state. In reality, this provided a basis on which the contemporary discourses on politico-social identity began to be propagated. (Gopalkrishnan: 2000: 226) The historical materials of early settlers of Assam are not clear till the early part of the 13th century A.D. The history of the people is traced from the epics like Mahabharata, and the Puranas, rock inscriptions, archeological remainings and accounts of early travelers like Huien Tsang. According to these sources during the first century A.D. the present state was a part of the Pragjyotispura and people lived here were known as Kiratas. (Gopalkrishnan: 2000: 226)

The major tribes are the Boros, Kacharis (Sonowal, Dimasas). According to 1991 census, the total population of Scheduled Tribe in Assam was 2,574,441 persons (of which 1,777, 308 were males.) (Gopalkrishnan: 2000: 239-240). The different tribes are very rich with their own social institutions. The institutions are different from tribes to tribes. Due to the mixing with Mongolian character, the Hindu Vedic system is rigid than the other parts of India. The area of Assam revealed a secular character of society including of several cultural, linguistic, ethnic and economic level, each level displaying its separate existence in different parts of the state. (Ibid: 256)
For understanding the context of Sarania Kachari community, it is necessary to go through the present scenario of Assam which possesses a hazardous culture. Assam includes two types of Schedule tribes with two separate plans like tribal sub-plan for the plain tribes of 21 plain districts and a plan for the two hilly districts. There are 23 major schedule tribe subclasses of which 9 in the plain districts and 14 in the two hilly districts. There are some more ethnic groups with distinct culture and ethnic character demanding scheduled tribe status. The principal communities who are demanding ethnic status are Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak, Koch Rajbangshi, Tea Garden groups. The interesting feature of the plain tribes are though maximum tribes have their own language, they speak Assamese language and attracted to Hindu religion and follows Hindu culture as neighbouring Assamese people does. The history of the Assam shows how great tradition was seizing little tradition of tribal people and history of assimilation process.

The Moran, Matak, Koches, Tai Ahom all started to follow Assamese culture by giving up their own. When the British covered Assam as according to the Yandaboo treaty on 24th February 1826, the inflow of people from other states continuously started influencing the social and economic life of the indigenous people.

In a practical way, any obstruction from local non-tribal people against this immigration did not work out, but the tribal communities like Kachari, Singphou, Khamti were started demanding their rights for the administration as native people. The unchecked inflow of immigrant people threatened the form of the population of Assam. Here, the tribal communities started feeling the danger of losing their cultural traits. (Barua: 2002: 150) After independence the plain tribe of Assam especially the Sonowal Kachari, Lalungs of Nagaon, Barman of Cachar districts, the Bodo Kacharis of Kamrup
district, Goalpara, Darrang could not refuse to accept the Assimilation and acculturation. (Barua: 2002: 150) The Sonowal and Lalung were highly influenced by Hindu way of life and get assimilated into Assamese culture. The Assamese titles Bora, Saikia, Hajarika are common in them. The four types of marriage of Sonowal Kachari *Noa dhoa, bor biya, homdiya, gandharva bibah* and churchuria indicates the assimilative tendency. (Barua: 2002: 151) The Lalungs a plain tribe of Nagaon and Morigaon is an acculturated ethnic group. Vaishnavism has appealed to the mind of Tiwa, upgraded them to the status of Saru Koch by giving up their old habits of having pork and rice beer. In practical, the plain Tiwas are very similar to Assamese people in respect of material culture. They have Naamghor in their society. Though they have their own folk beliefs and practices, they have affection towards Assamese culture. (Barua: 2002: 152)

The Rabha, Pati Rabha of Boko and south Goalpara areas are Hinduised and they call themselves Vaishnavas. Some portion was converted to Christianity. In spite of borrowing non-tribal cultural traits, the Pati Rabha did not forget their own. The Mishings of upper Assam are mostly acculturated, but they are preserving their traditional cultural traits. Due to continuous contact with non-tribal people, the material culture has undergone a change. Their house pattern, dress pattern have similarity with non-tribal. Mishing women are expert weavers, their popular designs are accepted by Assamese people. They are maintaining their culture. One of the tribe Deuri is also affected by Assamese non-tribe Hindu. Some of their section has lost their own language, but some are maintaining their own language. The hill tribes like the Karbi, Dimasa, Rengma, Naga etc are maintaining their culture with more or less effect by assimilation process. Now, most of the communities are engaged in reviving their own
cultural traits and language what was affected by assimilation process and their affection towards Hindu culture. This tribal revivalism come out as a result of the abstention of tribal people in Government, abstention in policy making, abstention in important decisions and negligence of tribal area, economic backwardness, suffering from inferiority complex, political manipulation and others are the salient features. (Barua: 2002: 154). The Ahom, a totally assimilated community who ruled over Assam more than six hundred years, Koch Rajbanshis a hinduised group, Chutiyas whose large section of population are hinduised, tea or ex-tea garden communities who were brought to Assam for tea plantation purposes by tea companies from Bihar, Orissa, Chotnagpur, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat and Bengal etc. This tea garden community had accepted Assamese culture in large extent. Besides these semi hinduised people some sections like Sarania, Chaodang, and Bakaliais are completely hinduised who are trying to reviving their mixing culture in order to have political, economic opportunities by means of scheduled tribe certificates. (Barua: 2002: 155)

Boro Kachari, Dimasha, Sonowal Kachari celebrates Assamese fairs and festivals with their own traditional touch. The miscellaneous population of Assam includes more than 68 languages. These multiethnic and multilingual characteristics were acting positively till the sixties of this century. But the demand for autonomy by some of the scheduled tribe and demand for scheduled tribe status by non-scheduled ethnic communities shake the situation, which led to an uprising of many small nationalities. The wide influence of Assamese culture in case of tribal material culture and the impact of tribal material culture in Assamese culture are inevitable. The change is noticeable in case of Boro Kachari, Rabhas, Deori and Mishing but with all these changes, they are maintaining their own habits too. Assam is a state where the arrival of
people from various races is common. Through acculturation, integration and assimilation the tribal communities of Assam such as the Karbis, the Dimasa Kacharis, the Zemi Nagas and the Kukis in the hills, and the Bodo-Kacharis, the Mishing, the Rabhas, the Tiwas, the Deuris in the plains, Assamese Hindu society, Muslims, they become one society in such a manner that they have lost some of their cultural elements, but they newly add some elements from their neighbours. The process of Sanskritization and tribalization both have own character in Assamese nationality formation. The influence of Aryan people was dominant at that time and tribal people believed in their purity of blood and soul as they maintain some prohibition in respect of food and lifestyle.

Though these groups are searching for their own separate identity, these diversified identities are threatening Assamese national identity. Ethnic communities of Assam do not want any link with the Assamese identity, for that matter, internal disturbances have occurred. Sarania people want to signify themselves as sub-group of Kachari tribe.
Reference:

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