CHAPTER: 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
CHAPTER: 2
Theoretical Framework

Contents

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Education, Empowerment and Women empowerment
   ▶ Concept of Education
   ▶ Empowerment as a Concept
   ▶ Women Empowerment: A Concept

2.2 Educational, Social, Economic and Political Empowerment of Women
   ▶ Educational Empowerment of Women
   ▶ Social Empowerment of Women
   ▶ Economic Empowerment of Women
   ▶ Political Empowerment of Women

2.3 Education and Empowerment of Women

2.4 ‘Tribe’ and ‘Scheduled Tribe’ of India and Assam

2.5 Bodo and Rabha as Scheduled Tribe of Assam
   2.5.1. The Bodos as Scheduled Tribe
          ▶ Racial Background of Bodos
          ▶ Habitation and Population Distribution
          ▶ Dwelling and Livelihood Pattern
          ▶ Language
          ▶ Religion and Festivals
          ▶ Bodo Women and Education
   2.5.2. The Rabhas as Scheduled Tribe
          ▶ Racial Background of Rabhas
          ▶ Habitation and Population Distribution
          ▶ Dwelling and Livelihood Pattern
          ▶ Language
          ▶ Religion and Festivals
          ▶ Rabha Women and Education

2.6 District Profile

2.7 Conclusion
CHAPTER: 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical framework is related to theoretical or conceptual studies, definitions and existing theory or theories that are useful for particular study. The researcher’s selected subject or topic’s related to theoretical or conceptual explanation is the theoretical framework of the concerned study. Here, the study is on the topic “Education and Empowerment of Scheduled Tribe Women in Baksa District of Assam”. So, the conceptual framework under elucidation in the study are education, empowerment and women’s empowerment and the educational, social, political and economic empowerment of women; the Tribes, the Scheduled Tribes, Bodo and Rabha as Scheduled Tribes and furthermore the Bodo and Rabha women and their education and Bodo and Rabha in the Baksa District etc. are the concern of the related study as its sole target is to study on Bodo and Rabha women related to the region and their education and empowerment.

2.1 Education, Empowerment and Women Empowerment

Concept of Education

Education is the life building and human development process. It initiated from the commencement of human civilization on the earth. With the advancement of human civilization and struggle to survive on the earth the outlook of education is also changing. So, from the beginning to until now the meaning of education and its outlook is denoted in different way by different thinkers, philosophers, educationist, scientists etc., which is still in a process of evolution with the demand of time and changing social values.

In the narrow and formal sense, education means the schooling knowledge, i.e. the acquisition of literacy or 3 R’s (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic). In this sense, education begins when child enters in to the school and ends when one passes out of the school or college. The amount of education received is measured by the marks received by the student in the examination under fixed plan, curriculum, fixed time
table, fixed rules and regulation. In this sense, education is nothing but purposeful activity deliberately planned for optimum development of an individual’s potentialities.¹

On the other hand, in wider sense education means all the experiences that an individual acquires in the process of development from infancy to maturity. Moreover, it is experienced as broad as life itself starts with birth and ends with death, i.e. from ‘cradle to grave’ or from ‘womb to tomb’. All the experiences acquired throughout life through various agencies, e.g. home, school, classroom, playground, religion, workshop etc. and the social, cultural, political, geographical influences exerted on individual is education. Thus, the purpose of education in wider sense is teaching people all the characteristics to enable them to live and act like normal and civilized human beings in the society.

In the present study, by education the researcher wants to mean about formal education and by educated the researcher wants to mean those who are literate and completed certain class, degree and diploma from the particular educational institution.

**Empowerment as a Concept**

The concept of empowerment is very fashionable and burning issue of world dilemma. Earlier political scientists wanted to mean it power and by power they meant only political power or usually the power politically assigned to an institution by the constitution or administrative rules.² But now the concept of empowerment has become very broad. The term means to make one powerful or to enable one to gain power. It is the process which enables one to gain power, authority and influence over others, institution or society.³ The changing demand and globalization let it to look in a broader way and defined variously including its core the social, political and economic development among weaker section of people. In India empowerment has common uses in two ways: empowerment of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Women.⁴

The thinkers thus defined the term empowerment from various points of view, as political empowerment, economic empowerment, social empowerment etc. from its components. But let us have a generalize meaning of the term empowerment. In a
very simple sense, the term empowerment means to make one powerful so that one can help oneself. It denotes the increasing power on spiritual, social, political and economic fields on the part of an individual and community. It helps people to gain control over all dimensions of their lives and decisions and control over not only own lives but the community and society as well. It is the redistribution of power relationship among all people of all sections especially considering the weaker sections of the society.

The noun empowerment is derived from the verb empower which means to give somebody the power or authority to do something. Thus empowerment broadly refers to mean to make one powerful and give authority to choice and action to shape one’s life. It is the control over resources and decision.

The Country Report of Government of India, Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerless to one of power.

Kabeer (2001) opined that empowerment as the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in context to where this ability was previously denied to them.

Cheston and Kuhn (2002:12) defined, the term empowerment is used to refer to self reliance and self respect in order to enable each person reach his/ her God given potential.

Anju Pal opined that, Empowerment is a continuous process for realizing the ideas of equality, human liberation and freedom for all.

Thus, empowerment is related to power and its realization on the part of one to make choices and feel freedom to shape one’s life. It is a multi-dimensional social process which enables one to control over own life, feel liberty and make choices and which is relevant to community or society.

Women Empowerment: A concept

The equal power distribution or empowerment of women is considered to be the main strategy to eradicate gender inequality in the society. But, women’s equal share with men and being important part of the society is always considered subordinate in the society. So women empowerment is the discourse of world and got international
attention and devoted the year 1975, as International Year for women, the International Women’s Conference at Nairobi in 1985 led to the opening of the concept of empowerment of women as a tool for redistribution of social power and control of resources in favor of underprivileged like women and in India the year 2001 is declared as ‘Women’s Empowerment Year’ to bring greater focus on programs of women.

The literal meaning to empower women means to give power to women. By ‘power’ it denotes the women’s inner strength and confidence to face life, the right to determine own choices, the ability to influence and change the society and share in decision making of nation building. Empowerment on the part of women is the redistribution of power that challenges the patriarchal ideology and male dominance. It is the process of enabling women to control of material and information resources. Empowerment is an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life (UNDP, 1994).

The term women empowerment is thus defined differently by different scholars. Joanne Helen Green (2005) has defined Empowerment at its core the social, political and economic development of women to create equality and challenge patriarchy. Women’s empowerment seeks to bring about societal change that will create conditions and structures that foster and maintain gender equality in all facets of life.

Huyer and Sikoska describes empowerment on the micro-, meso- and macro-levels, which encompasses the personal, interpersonal and societal aspects of women’s empowerment, as:

\[ ...a\ process\ that\ leads\ women\ to\ perceive\ themselves\ as\ capable\ of\ understanding\ decisions\ and\ making\ choices\ about\ their\ lives,\ which\ in\ turn\ requires\ sufficient\ levels\ of\ self\ confidence\ assertiveness.\ Empowerment,\ therefore\ necessarily\ embodies\ challenging\ patriarchy\ at\ all\ levels\ of\ expression;\ social\ structures\ and\ relationships,\ moral\ and\ cultural\ values\ and\ norms,\ and\ institutions\ and\ power (Huyer\ and\ Sikoska,\ 2003.p.3).^{6} \]

UN Population Information Network defines women empowerment as women empowerment has five components: women’s sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources;
their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the
home, and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more
just, social and economic order, nationally and internationally.\(^7\)

According to Anupama Sing (2008), **Women empowerment is the process in
which women individually and collectively become active, knowledgeable and goal
oriented actors who take or support initiatives to overcoming gender inequalities.
Hence, women’s empowerment refers to a strategy to achieve gender equality as well
as the inherent capacity building processes.**

The Report of International Seminar held at UIE, Hemburg, 27 January – 2
February in 1993 stated, as articulation of some paper, empowerment has four
components: cognitive, psychological, economic and political. Nilly P. Stromquist
viewed on four components as; the cognitive empowerment would include the
“Women are understanding of their conditions of subordination and the causes of
such conditions at both micro and macro levels of society. It involves acquiring new
knowledge to create a different understanding of gender relations as well as
destroying old beliefs that structure powerful gender ideologies.” The psychological
component, on the other hand, would include the “development of feelings that women
can act upon to improve their condition. This means formation of the belief that they
can succeed in change efforts”. The economic component “requires that women be
able to engage in productive activity that will allow them some degree of autonomy,
no matter how small and hard to obtain at the beginning”. The political component
would encompass the “ability to organize and mobilize for change, consequently an
empowerment process must involve not only individual awareness but collective
awareness and collective action. The notion of collective action is fundamental to the
aim of attaining social transformation”\(^8\).

Thus, empowerment of women means to make women able individual in every
aspect of life so that they can challenge the problems that may come before their life
and challenge the deep rooted patriarchal ideology to change the attitude of people.
So, according to the International Women’s Conference at Nairobi in 1985, the
parameters of empowerment are multifaceted and multi-dimensional for the real
upliftment of the down-trodden and weaker section like women. They include-
1. To enhance self-esteem and self-confidence in women.
2. To enable women to gain equal access to control and over resources.
3. To faster decision-making and action through collective process.
4. To provide information, knowledge and skill for economic independence.
5. Transforming the institutions such as family education, religion, media etc. and structures such as legal, political, economic and social etc. Through which ideology and practice of subordination is reinforced and reproduced.  

2.2 Educational, Social, Economic and Political Empowerment of Women

The components of women empowerment are diverse. Various forms of components of women empowerment are defined by thinkers, like, cognitive, social, educational, political, economic, psychology and decision making etc. Here now the related components with the study are going to explain in brief, i.e. the educational, social, economic and political components of women empowerment.

**Educational Empowerment of Women**

Educational empowerment is very important part of social empowerment. It denotes women’s educational attainment and achievement in desired level so that women can get equal literacy rate with male or can fulfill the target of 100% literacy. But the existing gap between male and female literacy rate in India illustrates the degrading picture of educational empowerment of women. Women are lacking behind in every decadal census of literacy. Thus, by educational empowerment of women, we can mean the equal participation of women in education, improvement of literacy rate and equal participation and achievement in higher and technical education with men etc. And such educational empowerment of women can only assist in social, political and economic improvement of women which are very imperative part of life to bring decision making capacity unto them.

**Social Empowerment of Women**

The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001 determined some areas for the social empowerment of women like, education, health, nutrition, drinking Water and sanitation, housing and shelter, environment, science and technology,
women in difficult circumstances, violence against women, right of girl child, mass media etc. But, the differences are still persisting on these areas between the male and female. Women are no doubt educationally backward, suffering from malnutrition, drinking water and sanitation etc. lack of science and technologies development and in the midst of extreme violence against them. So, women’s acquisitions of power to challenge such social evils are ardent requirement for them. Thus, socially empowered women can challenge all these threaten of society which may hamper them in their social security, i.e. in educational, physical and psychological well being and above all help to challenge the patriarchal supremacy in the society. Therefore, the equal status and position of women, equal participation in social dealings and above all equal progress of women denotes the social empowerment of women.

**Economic Empowerment of Women**

According to the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001, the economic empowerment of women includes the areas like, poverty eradication, micro-credit, women and economy, globalization, women and agriculture, women and industry and support services. The majority of women are still below the poverty line and suffering from extreme poverty and it demands equalization of economic power on the part of women with men. Moreover, the micro credit mechanisms can enhance women’s access to credit for consumption and production. The globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women’s equality and demanded to equip with scientific approach in agriculture sector, training to women, comprehensive support to work in industrial sector and support services for working women etc. so that they can enhance economic productivity and equally can contribute to economic development of the country. Thus economic empowerment of women means the equal participation of women in economic activities with all necessary equipment, eradication of poverty and fulfillment of their requirements without depending on others, control on economic resources and power to take decision on self earning.

**Political Empowerment of Women**

Political empowerment of women denotes the participation and decision making of women in political field. It refers equitable representation of women with men in
politics not only in voting but also in power sharing, decision-making and policy formulation etc. But in spite of being half of the total population in India, their voice and participation in decision making are unseen and representation in the House of the People is still remained below the 10%. The present scene of unequal power distribution between male and female demands equal participation of women in politics which is integral part of democratic process of govt. and necessary for building a gender equal society for nation’s development. In this direction the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment bill with 1/3rd reservation seats for women in Gram Panchayats and Municipalities has given opportunities to women to take part in assuming leadership and decision making process at grass root level politics.

2.3 Education and Empowerment of Women

Education is considered to be cornerstone of development. It is the process to bring competency for all round development and improvement of the life. It is stated that education is the holistic process for cognitive, psychological, economic and political empowerment (Stromquist, 1993). Moreover it is also opined that, Education is one most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skill and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process (ICPD Programme of Action, paragraph 4.2). So, education can play a vital role for all round development of one which ultimately can bring empowerment of women. It brings competency, participation and decision making in social, political and economic field which are the part of life. Education helps women to take decisions in various field of life, like child reproduction, education of the child, better care towards child and helps to treat equally towards male and female child. Moreover, Education can facilitate women in earning, saving, enjoying various schemes and helps to know their rights to property, right to get equal remuneration etc. which help to acquire it and let to fulfill own and other’s requirements. It also helps in political participation and representation for healthy nation building. But, a gap between the male and female in literacy rate is predominating in the decadal census report of the country since the beginning of census and continuously representing the women’s backwardness in educational field than male. This condition of women is keeping women behind in other fields, like- cognitive, psychological, social, political and economic empowerment of women as education is the vital instrument to assist on these components of empowerment. In developed countries the equal literacy rate between
male and female and more literacy rate than male let to enjoy equal power and freedom and help to acquire competency in other fields of life.

But in the developing country like India women are still subordinated and the literacy rate is showing the fast gap between male and female which was the vital tool for women’s empowerment. To show the gap between male and female literacy rate in India and Assam the literacy rate in total, male and female is given below.

**Table 1: Literacy Rate and Male and Female Gap in India and Assam from 1951 to 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Assam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>27.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>34.45</td>
<td>45.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>43.57</td>
<td>56.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>64.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>64.83</td>
<td>75.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>70.04</td>
<td>82.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Source: Office of Register General, Census of India 2011.

As per the table1, the literacy rate of India and Assam reveals that the gap between the male and female literacy rate is the common phenomena of every decadal census. But, this gap is seemed to be gradually lessening in decadal censuses except some year. In India and Assam this gap reached to 16.68% and 11.54% in 2011 census respectively. This gap of literacy rate and every decadal census rate indicates that Assam is showing comparatively less gap than all India literacy rate gap between male and female literacy percentage which is good mark for Assam. But, it is time now to remove all these gaps of literacy between male and female where we are targeting to
achieve 100% literacy and targeted male and female equalitarian society for a developed county.

2.4 ‘Tribe’ and ‘Scheduled Tribe’ of India and Assam

Tribes are the indigenous people considered to be the most backward communities. Generally they are the children of nature whose life style is conditioned by ecosystem. They are backward, most degraded group with old age habitation, at the lower position with poor economic condition, marginalized and deprived section. They are the collection of families, who live in remote areas with one name, culture, tradition, language within same territory and follow certain tradition regarding marriage, profession and occupation etc. There is no generally accepted definition of the term tribe as so far has been discussion among anthropologist. Various views are there to define and to identify the ‘Tribe’. According to Wikipedia the free Encyclopedia, “A tribe is viewed, historically or developmentally, as a social group existing before the development of, or outside of, states.”\textsuperscript{12} According to Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary, Tribe is “a group of people of the same race, and with the same customs, language, religion, etc. living in a particular area and often led by a chief.” Weiner (1978) claimed for identifying a tribal from a non-tribal that, “everyone in Chotanapur can recognize a tribal. A distinct racial type, known by physical anthropologists as belonging to the Proto- Australoid stock, they are somewhat darker than other Indians and have features that are sometimes Mongoloid in appearance. They live in their own villages, many of which are wholly homogenous... perhaps the most distinctive features of tribal life is the very attitude towards life itself. In contrast with their Hindu neighbors, the tribal’s are a carefree people, hedonistic in their simple pleasures.”\textsuperscript{13} N.K.Vaid (2004) opined, “Tribal’s are the people, who in anthropological literature, are characterized generally by majority of the following features: isolated ethnic groups, low density of population, primitive economy, primitive technology, primitive social organization, primitive religion and lack of script of their language.”\textsuperscript{14} In this regard the most acceptable definition of tribes in the Indian context is propounded by D.N. Majumdar (1958). According to him, “a tribe is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations”.\textsuperscript{15}
In India, certain communities are suffering from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness due to age-old practice of untouched ability, primitive agricultural practices, lack of infrastructure facilities and geographical isolation. The constitutional framers realized the fact of the need of special consideration for them to accelerate their socio-economic, political and cultural development. So certain communities were declared as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe as provision of Article-366 (25) contained in Clause no I of Article 341 and 342 of the constitutional order respectively. The Indian Constitution refers the tribal people as the Scheduled Tribe. The Article 366 (25) defines the Scheduled Tribes as ‘the tribes or the tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this constitution.’ As the clause I of Article 342 the president may specify by public notification which were duly specified by the president of India through the Constitution Order 1950. As per notified schedule under Article 342 of the constitution of India there are over 500 individual tribal groups in different states and Union territories of the country. The essential characteristics were first laid down by Lokur Committee (1965) for community to be identified as scheduled tribe. These characteristics are:

a) Primitive traits,
b) Distinctive culture, shyness of contact with public at large,
c) Geographical isolation and
d) Backwardness- social and economic.

The Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in its reports (1952) has listed eight features of the tribal groups in India:

a) They live always away from the civilized world and are found in the inaccessible parts lying in the forest and hills.
b) They generally belong to three stocks such as Negritos, Australoids and Mangoloids.
c) They speak the same tribal dialect.
d) They prefer primitive occupations such as gleaning, hunting and gathering of forest produce.
e) They are mostly carnivorous.
f) They live and prefer to be naked and semi-naked.
g) They have nomadic habit and are fond of drinking and dancing.

h) They prefer primitive religion known as “Animist” in which they worship ghost and spirits as the most important elements.\(^ {18}\)

About the scheduled tribes different thinkers, writers and sources have defined differently. Previously these scheduled tribes have been identified as ‘Aborigines’, ‘Aboriginals’, ‘Primitives’, ‘Adivasis’, ‘Vana Jatis’ etc.

As per the census of 2001 the total tribal population of the country is 8.43 crore, constituting 8.20% of the total population. The growth rate of tribal population is 24.45% during 1991-2001. The main concentration of tribal population in India is mainly in Central India and in the North-Eastern States. However, they have presence in all states and union territories but the largest number being in the state of Orissa, i.e. 62.\(^ {19}\)

To know about the Demographical changes of scheduled tribes in various decadal censuses it is given in the following table 2 below from 1951 to 2011.

**Table 2: Population and Decadal Growth Rate of STs from 1951-2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Population (in millions)</th>
<th>Decadal Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>STs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>361.1</td>
<td>19.1 (5.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>439.2</td>
<td>30.1 (6.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>548.1</td>
<td>38.0 (6.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>683.4</td>
<td>51.6 (7.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>846.3</td>
<td>67.8 (8.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1028.6</td>
<td>84.3 (8.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1210.5</td>
<td>104.2 (8.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to the table 2, the decadal growth rate of Scheduled Tribe population is comparatively higher than the country’s decadal growth rate in every census and this growth rate decreased in 2001 and continued in 2011 census also.
In Assam twenty three communities are notified as Scheduled Tribes. The collective terms used locally to describe most of these people as ‘Upajati’ or ‘Janjati’ which is literally meant "clans or tribes or groups".

As per the 2001 census, 33, 08, 570 persons are Scheduled Tribes (STs), constituting 12.4 per cent of the total population of the state. Among the STs in the state the major populated Scheduled Tribe community is Bodo followed by Miri. To have an idea of population distribution of major ST communities of the state Assam is given in the table below.

**Table 3: Population of Major STs in Assam, 2001Census**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of the Scheduled Tribe</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Proportion to the Total ST Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All Scheduled Tribes</td>
<td>33,08,570</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Boro</td>
<td>13,52,771</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Miri</td>
<td>5,87,310</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mikir</td>
<td>3,53,513</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rabha</td>
<td>2,77,517</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kachari</td>
<td>2,35,881</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lalung</td>
<td>1,70,622</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dimasa</td>
<td>1,10,976</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Deori</td>
<td>41,161</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source- Office of the Register General, India

In the table some major Scheduled Tribe communities are only given. Among the STs, Bodo represents nearly half (40.90%) percent of the total ST population of the State and after that Miri (17.80%), Mikir (10.90%) and rest are with less percentage. Among these STs Deori is with the lowest (1.20%) percent. The rest of the STs who were not listed in above table are with very small in their population size.

Moreover the distribution of STs in various Districts of Assam is varied. The following is the list of population distribution of STs in various Districts of Assam as per 2001 census.
Table 4: Distribution of Scheduled Tribe Population in the Districts of Assam, 2001 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Scheduled Tribes</th>
<th>% of S.T. Population to the Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>26655528</td>
<td>3308570</td>
<td>1678117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhubri</td>
<td>1637344</td>
<td>32523</td>
<td>16278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokrajhar</td>
<td>905764</td>
<td>304985</td>
<td>154143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongaigaon</td>
<td>904835</td>
<td>110696</td>
<td>55344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>822035</td>
<td>131800</td>
<td>66109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barpeta</td>
<td>1647201</td>
<td>123266</td>
<td>61586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalbari</td>
<td>1148824</td>
<td>202577</td>
<td>102256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>2522324</td>
<td>250393</td>
<td>126989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>1504320</td>
<td>249861</td>
<td>125976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonitpur</td>
<td>1681513</td>
<td>195083</td>
<td>99697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>889010</td>
<td>208864</td>
<td>106271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhemaji</td>
<td>571944</td>
<td>270496</td>
<td>138135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morigaon</td>
<td>776256</td>
<td>120730</td>
<td>60797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaon</td>
<td>2314629</td>
<td>89394</td>
<td>45283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golaghat</td>
<td>946279</td>
<td>93920</td>
<td>48189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorhat</td>
<td>999221</td>
<td>123134</td>
<td>62465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>1051736</td>
<td>41533</td>
<td>21063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
<td>1185072</td>
<td>88337</td>
<td>44667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinisukia</td>
<td>1150062</td>
<td>67234</td>
<td>34688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbi-Anglong</td>
<td>813311</td>
<td>452963</td>
<td>230929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C. Hills</td>
<td>188079</td>
<td>128428</td>
<td>65969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karimganj</td>
<td>1007976</td>
<td>2901</td>
<td>1546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailakandi</td>
<td>542872</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>1444921</td>
<td>18631</td>
<td>9302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table 4 reveals that N.C. Hills is with the highest concentration of Scheduled Tribe population followed by Karbi Anglong (55.69%), Dhemaji (47.29%), Kokrajhar (33.67%) and rest are with less number of population. The Hailakandi district is with the lowest ST population, i.e. 0.15%.
The newly created districts like Baksa, Udalguri, Chirang and Kokrajhar under Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) in 6th Schedule on 10th February, 2003 are being undivided parts of other districts like Nalbari, Kamrup, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Sonitpur etc. So, the ST population and percentage of total ST population under the BTAD as per given by Office of the Joint Director of Economics & Statistics, Kokrajhar is given below in the table 5.

**Table 5: District-wise Scheduled Tribe in BTAD, Assam; 2001 Census**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Scheduled Tribe (S.T.)</th>
<th>P.C. of S.T. Population to the Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokrajhar</td>
<td>8,42,805</td>
<td>265431</td>
<td>133681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chirang</td>
<td>4,11,058</td>
<td>149838</td>
<td>75432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baksas</td>
<td>849352</td>
<td>323645</td>
<td>162567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udalguri</td>
<td>752621</td>
<td>245233</td>
<td>123477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the table 5, the percentage of Scheduled tribe population out of total population is shown in the four Districts of the BTAD. Among them in the study area, i.e. in Baksa District the total percentage is 38.10% of the total population, which indicates the highest concentration of Scheduled tribe population among the four districts of BTAD and Kokrajhar District is with lowest concentration of the ST population as per the record among the four districts of BTAD.

### 2.5 Bodo and Rabha as Scheduled Tribe

Bodo and Rabha are the Scheduled Tribe of India as per the order of the Government of India ‘The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order 1950 (C.O.22)’, notified on 06-09-1950. This order was applicable in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and West Bengal. The Bodo and Rabha people are the mainly inhabitant tribes of Assam and only small amount are in various parts of India. As the community they
have their own identity and distinct culture. Both communities brief sketch is stated below.

2.5.1. **The Bodos as Scheduled Tribe**

In pre-independence period the British administrators referred the Bodos as the tribe of India and after independence they have been identified as scheduled Tribe under the Constitution (Scheduled Tribe) Orders 1950 and as the Scheduled Tribe of Assam they are the Scheduled Tribe as per the list notified belongs to Boro, Borokachari in the Scheduled Caste and Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976.

**Racial Background of Bodos**

The particular community’s culture, traditions, customs and festivals are the mirror of that community. The Bodo community is the most distinct and significant ethnic group in the Brahmaputra Valley of North East India, having their own identity including their cultural heritage, traditions, customs and festivals to represent themselves as a distinct and culturally rich community.

About the origin of Boro or Bodos the thinkers or researchers have their best possible efforts and conclusion, but Rev. Sidney Endle stated that, “The origin of the Kachari race is still very largely a matter of conjecture and inference, in the absence of anything entitled to be regarded as authentic history.”

Again Endle opined that the Boros approximate very closely to the Mongolian type and this would seem to point to Tibet and China the original home of the race. He further used for the first time the terminology ‘Kachari’ in his ethnographic account on the Bodos. According to him “...in feature and general appearance they approximate very closely to the Mongolian type; and this would seem to point to Tibet and China as the original home of the race.”

According to Anil Boro, Racially they belong to the Mongoloid stock of Indo Mongoloids or Indo Tibetans. Sunity Kumar Chatterjee calls them ‘Indo Mongoloid’ in his ‘Kirata-Jana-Kirti’ and stated that, “The Bodos who spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley and North Bengal as well as East Bengal, forming a solid block in North Eastern India, were the most important Indo-Mongoloid people in eastern India, and they form one of the main bases of the present day population of these tracts.”
The generic name Bodo was first applied by Hodgson. The exact sound is better represented by spelling in Bada or Bara. Bodo or Bara is the name by which the Mech or Mes and the Kacharis call themselves.\textsuperscript{23}

Thus, Bodos are the most significant group of the Indo-Mongoloid people and represent themselves as the distinct community.

\textit{Habitation and Population Distribution}

The Bodos, who are the most significant group of the Indo-Mongoloid people settled in the North and North eastern India and spread over entire Brahmaputra Valley and extended west North-east Bengal, Koch-Behar and some small Bodo pocket areas of outside India, i.e. in Burma, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sikkim and Bhutan.\textsuperscript{24} But, the state Assam is the main abode of Boros and scattered in almost all the districts of the valley. It is unknown since when the Bodo people were dweller of this state and where history failed to state. It seems that before the pre-historic period the Bodo people were dweller of this land.

The total 13, 52, 771 Bodo people are there in Assam which is the 40.90\% proportion to the total ST population in Assam (As per 2001 Census, office of the Register General, India). Following is the distribution of Bodo people in various districts of Assam.

\textbf{Table 6: Distribution of Bodo People in Various District of Assam, 2001 Census}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Bodo Person</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% to the Bodo Population to the Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>13, 52, 771</td>
<td>68270</td>
<td>670061</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhubri</td>
<td>22208</td>
<td>11091</td>
<td>11117</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokrajhar</td>
<td>287268</td>
<td>145185</td>
<td>142083</td>
<td>21.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongaigaon</td>
<td>102610</td>
<td>51310</td>
<td>51300</td>
<td>7.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>36948</td>
<td>18395</td>
<td>18553</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barpeta</td>
<td>117120</td>
<td>58462</td>
<td>58568</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalbari</td>
<td>176576</td>
<td>89007</td>
<td>87569</td>
<td>13.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>140023</td>
<td>70528</td>
<td>69495</td>
<td>10.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>207878</td>
<td>104698</td>
<td>103180</td>
<td>15.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonitpur</td>
<td>140293</td>
<td>71779</td>
<td>68514</td>
<td>10.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Distribution of Bodo People in Various District of Assam, 2001 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Bodo Person</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% to the Bodo Population to the Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>8194</td>
<td>4208</td>
<td>3986</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhemaji</td>
<td>42991</td>
<td>2207</td>
<td>20974</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morigaon</td>
<td>12149</td>
<td>6095</td>
<td>6054</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaon</td>
<td>18636</td>
<td>9488</td>
<td>9148</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golaghat</td>
<td>26106</td>
<td>13393</td>
<td>12713</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorhat</td>
<td>4787</td>
<td>2384</td>
<td>2403</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>3136</td>
<td>1629</td>
<td>1507</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
<td>3529</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>1749</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinisukia</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>1044</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbi-Anglong*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C. Hills</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karimganj</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailakandi</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.00007±0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note- * Karbi-Anglong and N.C. Hills’ data is not given.

Source: Office of the Register General, India, 2001 Census.

In above table 6, it is observed that in all the districts of Assam more or less the Bodo people are scattered but they are highly concentrated in the Kokrajhar District followed by Darrang (15.37%), earlier undivided Nalbari (13.05%), Sonitpur (10.37%), etc. and Hailakandi is identified as the lowest dwelling place of the community with total 10 number of population with almost 0%.

**Dwelling and Livelihood Pattern**

Generally the dwelling place of the Boro people is remote villages in the midst of natural beauty far away from town or crowded place. As their main livelihood pattern is cultivation, so they always favor to live nearby of the field for cultivation and favor plain area. In the Boro villages still Bodo people live in the house prepared by Bamboo, wood, thatch and mud mixed with cow dung. They keep courtyard and build houses in surrounding of its four sides. The ‘Nomano’ (Main house), ‘Wngkham sangra no’ (kitchen) and ‘Bakhri’ (granary) are the part and parcel of their houses. As per the requirement other houses like, ‘Mwswu Goli’(cow shed) ‘Oma Gondra’, ‘Dao Gondra’, i.e. huts to keep cattle are also common houses among the Bodos. The house
is surrounded by flowers, trees and fencing. In the writing of Rev. Sidney Endle, ‘The houses are of the usual type, one storied only, the walls being of ekra reed or of split bamboo, and the roof of thatch fastened by cane. Each hut commonly contains two rooms, one for eating and other for sleeping.’ He further stated that ‘One prominent feature in the typical Kachari village cannot fail to strike the attention of any casual visitor at first sight. Each house with its granary and other outbuildings is surrounded by a ditch and fence; the latter usually made of ekra reeds jungle grass or split bamboo.’ But along with modernization at present a small amount of Bodo people are moved to urban areas and rich people changed their style of houses and use to build with brick and cement.

The agriculture is the main occupation of Bodo people. Still over 90% of Bodo people’s main occupation is cultivation and rest are only live with white collar job. In their cultivation they mainly practice Ahu and Sali paddy and at present some more crops of modern development are also cultivated. Along with paddy they also cultivate pulses, mastered oil, vegetable etc. In early period Bodo people used indigenous technique for cultivation, in preserving of seeds, water supply and use of manure etc. which is still prevailing among the Bodos. In the words of Rev. Sedny Endle, ‘... the people are especially skilful in the construction of irrigation canals and earthwork embankments for diverting water from river-beds into their rice-fields: and their efforts in this direction are very largely aided by their closely clannish organization. Whenever the rainfall threatens to be below the average, the village headman with his associated elders fixes on the spot whence water is to be brought from the nearest river to the rice-fields. At this spot very rude and primitive shelters of jungle grass etc. are put up: and here all the manhood strength of the village, each man armed with hoe, dao, etc. are compelled to take up their abode until the necessary work has been fully carried out. In this way it will be obvious that the Kacharies have a highly efficient and very inexpensive “Public Work Department” of their own; and vigorous efforts of self-help of this character would seem to be worthy of high commendation and hearty support.’ It is true that not only in irrigation canal work but in other works also Bodo people work together from the immemorial period with the process like ‘Sauri’ or ‘Sauri Janai’ i.e. helping other family jointly and ‘Phala Janai’ i.e. working in rotation from one family to another among the
working group of people. With such joint venture they worked and still working together in interior villages.

**Language**

The Bodo people speak ‘Boro’ or ‘Bodo’ language. The Boro or Bodo language belongs to Sino-Tibetan language family. From Linguistics side the Bodos include a large group people who are the speakers of the Tibeto Burman speeches of the North and East Bengal, Assam and Burma. They are the Boros or Bodos of the Brahmaputra Valley, Meches of lower Assam and West Bengal, Rabhas, Garos, Dimasas and Kacharies of Cachar District, Tipras, Lalung, Sonowals, Hajangs, Mishings, Deuris and Chutias etc. Grierson in his ‘Linguistic Survey of India’ describes the Boro or the Boro-Kacharis as a member of the Boro (Bodo) sub-section under the Assam Burma Group of the Tibeto-Burman Branch of Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech family. Devanagari script is now being used for the Boro language with effect from April, 1975. The Bodo language has since been declared as an associate official language by an ordinance issued on 28th December 1984. Moreover, this language was incorporated in Eight Schedule by the constitution of India as official language in 100th constitutional Amendment Bill approved by 338-0 votes in the Lok Sabha on December 22, 2003.

**Religion and festivals**

*Bathauism or Bathau Dharam,* i.e. *Bathau* religion is the main religion of Bodo people where they pray ‘Sibrai or Bathau Bwrai’ as the main God. Here Bathau is connotation of ‘Ba’ means five and ‘thau’ means philosophy. Thus, Bathau embodies the five religious philosophies or ideologies and ‘Siju’ plant (Euphorbia Splendens) represent the Bathau which they plant in their *Bathau Sali* or prayer altar. But along with the passage of time due to influence of Hindu religion Bodo people converted to Hinduism like, Sankari, Brahma and other religions and even dye Bathau religion unto Hinduism and original Bathau lost its own religious identity. Thenceforth, a large group of Bodo people are follower of *Bathau* Religion and at present modified it as per the changing social demand. Some of them accepted the Hindu Ideology through *‘Brahma Dharma’* a new religion for Bodos given by Gurudeva Kalicharan Brahma when emergency was there to protect the race from losing its own identity. Because, that time many Bodo people had converted to Hinduism and lost their own racial
identity. During the time of British rule and at present some Bodos converted to Christianity. Moreover, some of them converted to other religions to get changes in their old religious rituals and practices.

The festivals of the Bodos are closely related to their seasonal cultivation. ‘Rangjali Baisagw’ or ‘Baisagw’, ‘Magw’ or ‘Domashi’ and ‘Katigacha’ are the three main seasonal festivals of them. Among them Baisagw and Magw are their main festivals. ‘Rangjali Baisagw’ or ‘Baisagw’ is celebrated from the last day of Chaitra the Assamese month and it continues for seven days of Baisakh month, i.e. till the month of mid April. This festival starts with the worship of cow, i.e. the last day of Chaitra is known as the day of cow. On this day Cows are taken to bathe in the river with some rituals and songs then keep open for the day and in the evening time they are worshipped and tied with new rope which is believed to be offered with new cloth to cows. Then the first day of Baisakh month is known as the day of men on which day the younger one bows down to their elders or parents and moreover they worship their supreme deity ‘Bathou’ and Brahma followers give ‘Yagya Ahuti’. Then from the next day of the festival the merriment or enjoyment like community singing, dancing etc. continues. On the last day eating and rice-beer drinking etc. take place from the collection of community dancing and singing. ‘Magw’ or ‘Domashi’ is the harvest festival which is celebrated during the last day of Push month and first day of month Magh of Assamese, i.e. in mid January. In this festival people enjoy different types of food items like Phitha, Enthab, Laru etc., i.e. food items of Bodos. Katigasa is another seasonal festival which Bodos celebrate on the last day of month Ashin of Assamese, i.e. in mid September. They observe the festival very simply, by burning ‘Gasa’ or the earthen lamp at the paddy field, at the Bathau Sali or alter, at the cowshed and at the granary in the evening of the day.

Moreover, they have some religious festivals like Kherai Puja and Garja Puja. Among them Kherai Puja is the greatest one which is celebrated as the symbol of hope and desire. There are various kinds of Kherai puja like Darchan Kherai, Umrao Kherai, Phalo Kherai and Noaoni Kherai (family Kherai). Garga Puja is performed to purify themselves and village after any seasonal festival like ‘Baisagw’ etc. as they belief that after these seasonal festivals the village may become impure due to eating, marry-making drinking with each other. Garja Puja also has eighteen kinds like Lakhi Garja, Asu Garja, Sew Garja etc.
Bodo Women and Education

Jawaharlal Nehruji said, “You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of women.” Thus, the condition of Bodo women no doubt can represent the condition of Bodo society specifically and condition of the country in large. In fact, the Bodo society is the patriarchal society. Though, the customary law of the Bodos in the distribution of land for both male and female states the society as equalitarian society without having any difference of high and low position between male and female; then also the condition of the society where father is the head of the family and in the absence of him the eldest son’s responsibility as the head of the family represents the society as the patriarchal. In fact, under the patriarchal society also unlike other patriarchal societies and equal with other tribal women, Bodo women enjoy more freedom and power to move, equally participate in social and religious ceremonies and do budget and marketing etc. In reference to this Rev. Sidney Endle opined that, “Among the Kacharis women do not perhaps occupy quite the same influential position as seems to be enjoyed by their sisters in the Khasi Hills, where something like a matriarchate apparently holds the field of social and domestic life. Still, with this interesting race the position of the wife and mother is far from being a degraded one. The Kachari husband and householder has neither sympathy with, nor tolerance for, that degrading and demoralizing creed “which says that woman is but dust, a soul-less toy for tyrant’s lust.” On the contrary, he usually treats his wife with distinct respect, and regards her as an equal and a companion to an extent which can hardly be said to be the rule among many of the Indian peoples. Kachari women, both in early life and as matrons, enjoy a large measure of freedom, a freedom which is very rarely abused for evil purposes.”

The Bodo women are equally responsible in building and maintaining own home. They equally participate in agricultural work which is their main cultivation. Except ploughing and sowing they take part in uprooting and transplanting seedlings, reaping, trashing and winnowing the corn and carrying the food to male member in the field etc. They are hard working and bear more work load than men. In spite of the agriculture work, they maintain other household works like, cooking, child caring, caring of cattle, sweeping and household cleaning, fetching water and bringing fire wood etc.
In economy of the family they are equally contributor with men. From unknown period the Bodo women are weaver of Endiji’s or eri cloth throughout the colonial period by profession with silk worm rearing and producing ‘Phitob’ or cocoon. From the ‘Phitob’ they produced thread and weaved Endiji and by selling which they could add to family income. In this concern Endle has written in his monograph, “It is said that a Kachari women, if not greatly or frequently interrupted in her work, can weave about half a yard each day; and, as this eri cloth, woven in log strips about two yards wide, can always command a ready sale at about Rs. 2/- per yard, it will be at once evident that a good worker can in this way, without neglecting other urgent domestic duties, easily make a substantial addition to the family income.” Moreover, Bodo women contribute to their economy through farming, selling of poultry, duck, pig and goat etc. In the present trend, some of Bodo women use to sell rice-beer which is neglected by the society. Moreover, they also do other business like selling of ‘Dokhana’ Ganwa, Jwnga, Aonai etc. which are the Bodo dresses and buying and selling of vegetables etc.

In political field, though some Bodo women are active worker now, but a small number of them are only worker in actual field. Historically some of Bodo women’s participation in freedom movement can get in the writing of noted Bodo Historian Bidyasagar Narzary on the forgotten Heros of freedom struggle, i.e. in a book entitled ‘Forgotten Heroes’ (Bodo Freedom Fighters). In this book some galaxy Bodo men and women’s name were there who had not got due place in the history of national freedom movement of India. During the collective movement for freedom of India many Bodo women were also imprisoned and became victim of atrocities. Among them a few are Ramani Bala Khaklary, Gobhi Kachari, Lila Kachari, Bimala Baro, Janki Kachari, Sunsini Boro, Swmsri Kachari etc. and some of them were honored by the Govt. of Assam on the occasion of celebration of Quit India Movement on 9th August, 1993 and that was a great justice to the Bodo women freedom fighters.

To say about the education of women, previously a few number of Bodo women got the light of education. Due to the degrading condition of Bodo society, simple village life and poor economic condition of the family did not permit to get education at all. Moreover, they were not realized the importance of education. When the condition of society was developed in some way then also women education was not given much importance as their responsibility was limited to household maintenance,
taking care of the family and to go in the field for agriculture work. But later on, when society was reformed by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma then the importance of women education was given its attention. Under his leadership along with some prominent personalities of the society took resolution regarding Bodo women and education in the first Bodo Mahasanmilani held in 1913 at Bhauraguri under Gosaigaon police station in the then Goalpara District. The resolutions are-

1. *It was resolved that action plans for Bodo women should be taken up,*

2. *It was resolved that actions be initiated for the establishment of primary and middle schools in the Bodo dominated areas. Even the Bodo girl should seek education in these schools.*

Again in second Bodo Mahasanmilani held at Rangia of Kamrup in 1925 a resolution was taken to give education to boys and girls as, “*It was resolved that both boys and girls must be provided educations equally, only then can the Bodo society progress.*” 33

In free India, the equality of educational opportunity is the constitutional right and men and women are given equal importance for education to get minimum free and compulsory primary education under article 45 of the Directive principles of state policy. Moreover the government has given special provisions for the education of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Communities. Above all, though government efforts fail to make education for all, but the consensus of the Bodo general masses and parents about the urgent need of education, especially of women education improved the condition of literacy rate of Bodo women to some extent, though rate of literacy is not satisfactory in comparison of other developed communities. The literacy rate of the community is 61.30%, comprising male 71.40% and female 51.10% as per 2001 census (Office of the Register General, India). This literacy percentage of women indicates 20.30% gap from the male literacy rate which shows women are lagging behind than men which is the entire fact of all censuses. In case of Bodo women also we need to bring improvement in this inequality of literacy rate between male and female so that we can achieve the target of 100% literacy among us.

But in practice it does not seem that the status of Bodo women in the society is very high. The participation of women in economic activities and in political field is beyond the satisfactory and the literacy rate is not conducive to challenge the existing
demand from the community as well as from the women to empower themselves. They are still with excessive unpaid and unrecognized work load with whole day’s household work schedule.

2.5.2. The Rabhas as Scheduled Tribe

Rabha is one of the plains Scheduled Tribe of India and Assam. In independent India they have been identified as scheduled Tribe under the Constitution (Scheduled Tribe) Orders 1950 and as the Scheduled Tribe of Assam, Rabha is the Scheduled Tribe as per the list notified in the Scheduled Caste and Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976.

Racial Background of Rabhas

Rabha is the Scheduled Tribe community with own tradition and culture, language and religion to represent themselves as a unique and distinct community. They are governed by democratic social systems with own culture, traditional rites and rituals, way of living, beliefs and customs etc. They may be described as one of the aborigines or earliest inhabitants of Assam, West Bengal and Meghalaya.

It is stated that Rabha belongs to the Indo-Mongoloid ethnic group known as Bodo. But due to the lack of historical document it is difficult to trace the origin of Rabha, then also a Rabha legend concerning their origin which is in support of their common belief that their original home and habitat was somewhere in the Tibet-region throws light on examination of their language and culture and furnishes abundant proof of their intimate connection with the tribes of the Himalayas. It is also stated that formerly Rabha called themselves ‘Rābhā’ and not Rabha. Even now, in interior places, they call themselves Raba.  

About the origin of the community the scholars have diversified opinions and explanations. B.H. Hodgson observed that the Rabhas constituted a major segment of the Bodo linguistic group further testify their affinities with other constituents of the Bodo group like Garo, Kachari, Mech, Hajong, Koch etc. who belongs to the Mongoloid stock. E. Dalton also argues that the Rabhas and the Hajongs are the branches of Kachari race and connected with the Garo.

Though diversified opinion is there among the thinkers on origin of Rabha community but it can be concluded that, Rabha people are a distinct aboriginal community of Assam with their own distinct language and culture belong to the Indo-
Mongoloid family with some livelihood similarities of tribals like Garo, Hajong, Kachari, Mech, Koch communities etc. E.A. Gait identified them as a distinct tribe and said that they are also known as ‘Tatlas’ and ‘Datiyal Kacharis’. In this concern Rev. S. Endle stated that the Rabha of Darrang used to call themselves sometimes as Totlas, which may perhaps be a nickname.

About the division of Rabha community different thinkers have given different views. Rev. S. Endle divided the Rabha into seven ‘sub-tribes’ such as Rangdaniya, Maitariya, Pati, Koch, Bitliya, Dahuriya and Sangha. Gait however had shown five sub-groups such as Rangdani, Pati, Maitory, Dahuri and Kochari. Rajen Rabha (2002) divided the Rabhas into eight groups, such as Pōti (Pati), Rēngdānī (Rangdani), Māitāri (Maitari), Kocchā (Koch), Dāhūri (Dahari), Bītāliā (Bitalia), Tōtlā (Tola) and Hānā (Hana). Dr. B.M. Das believed that the Rangdani, Pati and Maitory used to enjoy superior status compared to other sub-groups like Totla, Dahuri, Bitla, Shangha, Hana etc. According to him the Pati section, the most advance section of tribe had adopted Hindu customs for all intents and purpose.

Habitation and Population Distribution

Since the time immemorial the different groups of the Rabha people used to dwell in different plain and Hill places according to their occupation and life style. Mainly the abode of the Rabha community is in West Bengal and Assam. Besides these they are also spread in Meghalaya, Bangladesh, Nepal, Manipur etc. The Rabha of West Bengal mainly live in Jalpaiguri District and Cooch Behar District and less are in other parts. In Assam they live mostly in Goalpara and Kamrup district and less are in various parts of Assam like Kakrajhar, Darrang, Baxsa etc.

The areas inhabited by different groups of Rabha community are mentioned below:

Rangdani: In Assam the Rangdani group of Rabha is mainly concentrated in Goalpara District which is under the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council at present and some of them are in north-eastern part of the Garo-Hills District of Meghalaya.

Maitari: The Maitari group of Rabha is also concentrated in Goalpara and Meghalaya but maximum of them live various places of Meghalaya.
Kocha-Rabha: The Koch-Rabha is concentrated in Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Dhubri and Bongaigaon Districts of Assam and in the West Garo Hills of Meghalaya and in West Bengal.

Pati Rabha: Pati group is the majority among the Rabhas’. They are concentrated mainly in Kamrup and Eastern part of Goalpara district. Some of them are also live in Nalbari, Baksa and East and West Garo-Hills districts of Meghalaya.

Hana Rabha: The Hana Rabha is very few in number and they live in Boko circle area of Kamrup.

Bitalia Rabha: The Bitalia Rabha people live in some villages of Goalpara district.

Dahari Rabha: The Dahari Rabha is concentrated in Goalpara, Bongaigaon Districts of Assam and East Garo Hills of Meghalaya.

Totla: Totla Rabha generally lives in Baksa, Nalbari, Udalguri, Darang and Sonitpur District of Assam.

Moreover, the Rabha people are scattered more or less in various districts of Assam. The total population of the community is 2, 77, 517 of which Male is 1, 40, 614 and Female is 1, 36, 903 according to 2001 census. But they are mostly concentrated in undivided Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang District. The following is the data of population of the community in various districts of Assam as per 2001 census.

Table 7: Distribution of Rabha Community in Various District of Assam, 2001 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Rabha Person</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% to the Total Rabha Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>277517</td>
<td>140614</td>
<td>136903</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokrajhar</td>
<td>13012</td>
<td>6530</td>
<td>6482</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhubri</td>
<td>10133</td>
<td>5078</td>
<td>5055</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>93912</td>
<td>47217</td>
<td>46695</td>
<td>33.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongaigaon</td>
<td>6700</td>
<td>3333</td>
<td>3367</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barpeta</td>
<td>4144</td>
<td>2128</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>88191</td>
<td>45177</td>
<td>43014</td>
<td>31.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cont. to next page
Table 7: Distribution of Rabha Community in Various District of Assam, 2001 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Bodo Person</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% to the Total Rabha Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nalbari</td>
<td>17563</td>
<td>8908</td>
<td>8655</td>
<td>6.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>32331</td>
<td>16358</td>
<td>15973</td>
<td>11.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morigaon</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaon</td>
<td>2363</td>
<td>1196</td>
<td>1167</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonitpur</td>
<td>4256</td>
<td>2130</td>
<td>2126</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhemaji</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinsukia</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorhat</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golaghat</td>
<td>1307</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karbi-Anglong*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C. Hills*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karimganj</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.000036≤0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailakandi</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note- *The data of Karbi-Anglong and N.C. Hills is not given.

Source: Office of the Register General, India, 2001 Census.

As per the table 7, though the Rabha people are concentrated in various districts of Assam, but majority of them are concentrated in Goalpara District with 33.84% and lowest number of population is in Karimganj with total one population, i.e. almost 0%. But, the data of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills is not found in the record.

**Dwelling and Livelihood Pattern**

Usually the dwellings of a Rabha household consist of four houses- one main house, one guest house, one outer house for the adult family members and a fourth one for using as a cook-shed. In addition to these, cow-shed, a granary and poultry house where possible are also separately constructed.40

In arranging of houses there is a proverb believed by almost all groups of the Rabha, i.e. ‘Uttare Kuā, dakhine duā, pube hās, pachime bāo’. Meaning is that, in
the northern side of the household compound, a well to be dug for drinking water while the southern side has to be open air. Similarly, a pond is to be dug in the eastern side where ducks can swim and bamboos are to be planted in the western side for protection from storm, cyclone etc.\textsuperscript{41}

The housing of different Rabha groups is different according to their pattern of living. As for example, in traditional Rabha villages, the Maitory Rabhas inhabiting in Trikikilla and Phulbari areas of Garo Hills in Meghalaya and Jairamkuchi and greater Daduri- Makri areas of Goalpara district in Assam live in cluster of Houses called ‘Songdam’. The traditional typical pattern of Maitory Rabha house was made of bamboo, wood and thatched roof. Their houses are elongated size approximately of 50 feet in length of single house.\textsuperscript{42} In some Rangdani villages only one living house stretching often from 13 to 15 meters in length is constructed which however is divided into three compartments known as ‘Noksrab’, ‘Tograb’ and ‘Rosinok’ in order east to west. The first compartment is used as the bed room of the head of the family, second compartment as the bed room for other family members including guests and the last one is used as the cook-shed.\textsuperscript{43}

Generally, the Rabha community has the houses like ‘Nok-chungkai’, i.e. sleeping room for the old man and woman, particularly father and mother, ‘Nok-khap’, i.e. sleeping room for unmarried boys and girls, ‘Noshra-nok’, i.e. kitchen consisting two rooms one is dinning and another one is for cook, ‘Bhandar-nok’, i.e. granary where they store paddy after harvesting from the field, ‘Goli-nok’, i.e. the cow shed to keep cow and bull and some more houses as suited to their life style. But, with the demand of social change the pattern of Rabha houses has also changed to a large extent.

The Rabhas are the agriculturist community. As their main food is rice so they cultivate mainly paddy, Ahu and Sali along with some amount of pulses, mastered seed, jute and vegetables. So, their main livelihood pattern is agriculture. But, due to lack of modern development of cultivation and continuing with traditional method of cultivation cause problems in their cultivation. Previously those who reside on the bordering areas of Meghalaya did ‘Hamjar’, i.e. Jhum or shifting cultivation to a certain extent. At present besides agriculture a subsistent proportion of Rabhas are engaged in fishing, forestry, mining and quarrying. Moreover handloom and
handicraft are other major earning and employment generating activities of different Rabha groups.

**The Language**

The Rabha people speak Rabha language as their mother tongue. This language belongs to the great family of Indo-Chinese speech called Tibeto-Burman. Among the Rabhas Rangdani, Maitari and Kocha groups have retained their mother tongue till now, while other groups like Pati, Totla, Hana etc. have lost their own language and have shifted to Assomiya or Assamese which has resulted in the formation of a mixed dialect and ethnic dialect within the Assomiya speech community.

**Religion and Festivals**

As the indigenous tribal groups Rabhas still follow their ancestors’ religious tradition, culture and rituals. Among the groups the Rangdani, Moitri and Kocha are still maintaining their inherent religious believes in comparison to other groups. According to Scholars the Rabhas followed animist religious tradition. Mr. Friend-Pereira in his Ethnographic Notes on the Rabhas (Census Report of 1911) has termed the Rabhas as animists in their religious outlook. But due to influence of Hinduism most of them have converted to Hinduism and lost their own religious tradition. Moreover, some of them have adopted Christianity. But the present trend of Rabha religion shows the combination of Hinduism and animism. They believe ‘Rishi’ as the supreme creator of the world and who believed to reside in the Heaven. He is the supreme among all God and Goddesses and is remembered and worshiped first of all. So, their primary God is ‘Rishideo’ or ‘Charpak’. Rishi Deo is the transformation of ‘Shiva’. Moreover other God and Goddesses are also worshiped like ‘kali’ as ‘Hasang’, ‘Kamakhya’ as ‘Kachaikhati’, ‘Laksmi’ as ‘Grambuda’ and Tikka etc.

Like other tribals of North-East India Rabhas are also the admirers of festivals. Besides family related festivals they have other festivals like, i) Seasonal Festivals, ii) Festivals related to Magico-Religious Rites and iii) Regional or Restricted Festivals. The seasonal festivals like, Baykho, Khoksi and Grawmbuda are comparable with Assamese Bahag Bihu, Katigasa and Bhogali bihu. Among the Rabhas ‘Baykho’ is the main festival. Though at present Maitari and Rangdani only follow the festival but in early days all groups of Rabha followed it. Baikho is the Goddess of crops. Here
Means deity and Kho means great, that is the Principal deity. ‘She’ is worshiped with great celebration once in a year during the month of April or May and lasts for three or seven days with some sacrifices like big pig and fowls to please the Goddess so that they can get a plentiful crop at the time of harvest, abundant rains, good health, prosperity and no earthquake.

**Rabha Women and Education**

Women are the very important part of the society. They are equally responsible for social formation and progress. To say about Rabha women, according to Rajen Rabha (2002), Rabha women enjoy a strong position in the society. They manage their husband from behind the scene and control household affairs, decide the size of the budget and control the funds. Rabha women can freely participate in social ceremonies and religious festivals with the men. According to Upen Rabha Hakacham (2010), ‘Rabhakhakalar adim samaj bebabsta khashi ba garokhaklar dare matriprdhan (matrilineal) ba matrisutriya (matrilineal) achil. It means the earlier society of Rabha was matriarchal or matrilineal like Khasi and Garo. The social system like taking of mother’s title or ‘Gotra’ by children, giving of ‘Ga-Dhan’ for Koina or bride’s money to parent, the importance of uncle’s daughter for marriage etc. indicates the early matriarchal society of Rabhas. But at present it seems to transfer from matriarchal to patriarchal social system. The transfer of property to sons, the dwelling of wife in husband’s house after marriage, father as the chief of family etc. are the indicative of the patriarchal social system.

Above all, it seems that the status of Rabha women of all groups are secure and in high position. They have self decision in marriage, in selection of boy for marriage, can participate equally in every religious or other social ceremony, freedom to move, work to do budgeting marketing etc. like other tribal women. They are expert in household activities and take part equally with men even in agriculture work except ploughing and sowing. The Rabha women did traditionally all agricultural activities like uprooting and transplanting seedlings, reaping the corn and sometime thrashing the corn with male members. They also collected fire wood for family. Among the Rangdani, Maitari and Koch groups the collection of fire wood was considered a task that a girl must perform and in connection to it they have one belief that, if an
unmarried girl is unable to store up fire-wood for her family use for a whole year, it will be difficult to hold her marriage ceremony.\(^{46}\)

The Rabha society was considered to be matriarchal, so women education got preference among them. Among the Koch Rabha the women were kept in ‘\textit{Mishal Noksa}’ after 8/9 years of age under the strict rule and regulation and disciplinary. In this Noksa women got all the necessary knowledge and training for family life. They also got religious education, education of character, social responsibility, sex education and education of medicine etc. After all, women were prepared to be ready for family life with all round development, i.e. physical, social, mental etc.\(^{47}\)

At present, the educational status of Rabha women (57.0\%) is comparatively better than country’s women literacy rate (53.67\%) and state’s literacy rate (54.61\%) in general as per 2001 census. After Independent a radical educational change took place among the Rabhas. As a result Rabha women have also got education in formal educational institutions. In Assam they took education mainly in Assamese language and English. Now the literacy rate of Rabha people (66.70\%) is better than county’s (64.83\%), state’s (63.25\%) and total ST’s (62.50\%) literacy rate. The total literacy rate of Rabha people is 66.70\%, with male 76.20\% and female 57.0\%. But, it indicates 19.20\% gap of female literacy rate from male literacy which is necessary to improve if we want to get complete literacy among us. Moreover, this literacy rate is better than Bodo community with whom a comparison is going to make on education and various issues of women empowerment in the present study.

\section*{2.6 District Profile}

In Assam out of 27 districts, Baksa is one of them. This district is newly created under the Bodoland Territorial Area District. This district was notified when BTAD was formed on 10\textsuperscript{th} Feb, 2003 under the 6\textsuperscript{th} Schedule and began to work from 1\textsuperscript{st} June 2004. The district was formed curving out of the some parts of Barpeta, Nalbari and Kamrup Districts. The area of the district is 2400 sq.km. The Headquarter of the district is Mashalpur. The geographical surrounding of the district is Bhutan to the North, Udalguri district in the East, Barpeta, Nalbari and Kamrup districts in the South and Chirang district in the West. The district has three sub-divisions, i.e. Tamulpur, Mashalpur and Salbari and three \textit{Bidhan Sabha} constituencies, i.e. Tamulpur, Barama and Sapaguri. Each sub-division has some Developmental Blocks and total 8 developmental blocks are there according to the Ministry of Rural
Accordingly, under Tamulpur sub-division it has three blocks, i.e. Tamulpur, Goreswer and Nagrijulee. The Mashalpur sub-division has three Developmental Blocks, i.e. Barama, Baksa and Dhamdhama and the Salbari sub-division has two developmental Blocks, i.e. Jalal and Gobardhana. It also has 13 revenue circles, i.e. Baksa, Barama, Tamulpur, Goreswar, Bagana para, Ghograpar, Barnagar, Bajali, Jalal, Patharighat, Rangia, Sarupeta and Tihu.

According to the 2011 Census the total population of Baksa district is 9,53,773 and ranked 458 in India (out of 640). The sex ratio of the District is 967 per 1000 male. The literacy rate of the district is 70.53% as per 2011 census and male 78.55%, female 62.23%. (Provisional Population Census, 2011)

Baksa District is the abode of multi language and multi cultural people. The various castes and communities people reside in the district. But the major tribes reside in the district are Bodo, Rabha, Sorania Kachari and Madahi. Among these STs Bodo and Rabha are the highest concentration in the District.

Table 8: Number of S.T. Population in Baksa District, 2011 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Scheduled Tribe (ST)</th>
<th>P.C. of ST Population to the Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baksa</td>
<td>3,31,007</td>
<td>1,65,634</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 2011

The table shows that the total population of scheduled tribes is 34.71% of the total population in the district. This percentage of ST population in the district is decreased in comparison to 2001 census.

The total population of Bodo and Rabha community of the District is failed to give here due to lack of available data from reliable sources and as it is the newly created district and community wise data of 2011 census is not yet got.

2.7 Conclusion

In the theoretical framework the study explained the concepts related to the study ‘Education and Empowerment of the Scheduled Tribe Women in Baksa District of
Assam’. The points that came under the conceptual explanation were education, empowerment and women empowerment, educational, social, economic and political components of empowerment, Scheduled Tribe, Bodo and Rabha as Scheduled Tribe community, education of Bodo and Rabha women and District profile of the selected district. In the study thus the possible effort was done to depict the picture of the related study so that it would help to get necessary concept of the proposed study. In some cases due to lack of appropriate data the study failed to give the necessary information of the related study, such as the recent Scheduled Tribe communities of the Baksa District and population and literacy especially of two proposed communities of the district etc. But with the available resources it tried to make the things clear and helpful for the proposed study.

References:-


11. Ibid. p. 166-168.


17. Ibid. p. 5.


21. Ibid.


24. Ibid. p. iv &v


26. Ibid.


28. Ibid. i.


32. Ibid. p. 21-22.


40.  Ibid. p. 122.


42.  Singha, M. G. and Rabha, M. D. (2012). ‘Chingi Hurang: A mouth piece of All Rabha Students’ Union. RHAC, Assam: Jiban Ch. Rabha, General Secretary, ARSU. p.112.


