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Chapter 3
FIELD OF THE STUDY

The three villages of Jorhat district; namely, Chari Gaon, Randhanijan Gaon and Balijan Gaon constitute the field of the study. Jorhat district is centrally located in Assam and North-East India. This chapter gives a general description of North-East India, Assam and Jorhat district and depicts the three villages in terms of their historical, regional, demographic and development aspects and general lay-out.

NORTH-EAST INDIA

North-East India is a mosaic of different races and cultures. It is situated between 22°19′ and 28°16′ N latitude and 89°42′ and 97°12′ E longitude. The Northeastern region comprising Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim forms a part of the East Himalayas, extending from Sikkim eastwards and embracing the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal. It has international borders common with Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Myanmar. Its area is 2,55,168 sq.km., significantly known for rich diversity, heavy precipitation and high seismicity as well as for abundance of natural resources and climate for production of plantation crops, spices, fruits and vegetables, flowers and herbs. Most of the states of this region are mostly inhabited by a number of native tribes, having distinct cultures, traditions and life styles and making the region one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in India. As per Census 2011 the population of the region is 45,587,982. Assam (31,169,272) is the largest populated state in the region, followed by Tripura (3,671,032), Meghalaya (2,964,007), Manipur (2,721,756), Nagaland (1,980,602), Arunachal Pradesh (1,382,611), Mizoram (1,091,014) and Sikkim (607,688). The density of population in Assam (397) is higher than the national average (382) but the rest of the states have lower density than the national average. It is 350 in Tripura, 132 in Meghalaya, 122 in Manipur, 119 in Nagaland, 86 in Sikkim, 52 in Mizoram and only 17 in Arunachal Pradesh. Population is highly concentrated in the plains of Brahmaputra Valley, Barak Valley, and plains of Tripura. Other states of the region have relatively very low density of population.

ASSAM

Assam is particularly famous for its natural beauty. The landscape includes tea gardens, the river Brahmaputra and Barak, and many historical monuments and temples. Swami Vivekananda once said that next only to Kashmir, Assam is the most beautiful place in India. A state with an abundance of forest, Assam also has five national parks, around half a dozen other wildlife sanctuaries, and is home to two thirds of population of unique one-horned rhinos. When it comes to wildlife, Assam too has successfully conserved the one-horned Indian rhinoceroses from near-extinction, along with the tiger and numerous species of birds, and it provides one of the last wild habitats for the Asian elephant. It is becoming an increasingly popular destination for wildlife tourism: Kaziranga and Manas are both World Heritage Sites. Another aspect that separates Assam from the rest of Indian states is the rich composite culture of the state, Assamese constitute the majority of the state's population but the state has over two dozen other big and small tribal groups with many of them having their own languages, writing systems, dance forms and traditions. Geographically, Assam is located south of the eastern Himalayas. Assam comprises the Brahmaputra and Barak river valleys along with the Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao district with an area of 30,285 square miles (78,440km). Assam is surrounded by all six states but Tripura and Sikkim in the region. These states are connected to the rest of India via a narrow strip in West Bengal called the Siliguri Corridor or "Chicken's Neck". Assam also shares international borders with Bhutan and Bangladesh. As per Census 2011, total population of Assam is 31,169,272. The total population of the state has increased from 26,638,407 to 31,169,272 in the last ten years with a growth rate of 16.93 per cent. Of the 27 districts of Assam, eight districts have registered a rise in the decadal population growth rate. Interestingly, religious minority-dominated districts like Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Morigaon, Nagaon, Hailakandi etc. recorded growth rates ranging from 20 per cent to 24 per cent during the last decade. On the other hand, eastern Assam districts like Sivasagar, Jorhat etc. registered a growth rate around 9 per cent as these districts do not share any international border. Higher population concentration was recorded in the districts of Kamrup, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Barpeta, Dhubri, Darang and Cachar. Assam's population was estimated at 28.67 million in 2006 and at 30.57 million by 2011, 34.18 million by 2021 and 35.60 million by 2026.

According to Census 2011, literacy rate in the state is 73.18%: male literacy rate-78.81% and female literacy rate-67.27%. in 2001, Census recorded literacy rate in Assam at 63.3% with male literacy at 71.3% an female at 54.6%. Urbanisation rate is 12.9%. growth of population in Assam has experienced a very high trajectory since the mid-decades of the 20th century. Population grew steadily from 3.29 million in 1901 to 6.70 million in 1941, while it has increased unprecedentedly to 14.63 million in 1971 and 22.41 million in 1991 to reach the present level. The growth in the western and southern districts has been extremely high mostly attributable to rapid influx of population from the then East Pakistan and now Bangladesh. An estimated 400,000 people have been displaced in the recent ethnic violence between indigenous Bodos and Bengali Muslims. Assam has many ethnic groups and the people of India Project has studied 115 of these, out of which 79 (69%) identify themselves regionally, 22 (19%) locally, and 3 trans-nationally. The earliest settlers were Austroasiatic, followed by Tibeto-Burman, Indo-Aryan speakers, and Tai-Kadai speakers. Forty five languages are spoken by different communities, including three major language-families: Austroasiatic, Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European (www. Euquipedia.com, downloaded on 12/01/2013)

JORHAT DISTRICT

Jorhat District, situated in upper Assam ,is one of the twenty seven districts of Assam with the area of 2851 sq k.m where 2772 sq k.m is rural area and 78.55 sq k.m is urban area.It is 308km from state capital Dispur in Guwahati. It is bound by Lakhimpur district in the North, by Nagaland in the South, by Sibsagar district in the East and by Golaghat and Karbi Anglong districts in the West. Jorhat, as the name signifies, was just a couple (*Jor)* of marts (*Hat*) namely, '*Machar Hat'* and *'Chowki Hat'* which existed on the two banks of the river Bhogdoi during the 18th century. Earlier, Jorhat was a sub-division of the undivided Sibsagar district. In 1983 it was declared as a full-fledged district. The present Jorhat district comprises three sub-divisions namely; Jorhat, Majuli and Titabor. The district is divided into 6 revenue circles and 8 development blocks. The district has 866 villages and two towns: namely, Jorhat and Mariani circle towns. Jorhat town provides main market and people from villages come to the town for various purposes like administrative works, business and education.

Jorhat was the last capital of the Ahom Kingdom of Assam. In 1794 the Ahom king Gaurinath Singha sifted the capital from Sibsagar to Jorhat. It has several archeological sites including the burial mounds of the Ahom kings. During the Ahom period a numbers of road were constructed and many tanks were excavated. The discovery of the tea plant in Assam in 1823 made the British interested in Assam. In 1838 the deposed king Swargadeo Puranda Singha placed Assam under the company's rule. The British rule, though not free from rebellions and revolutions, contributed to re-emergence of this district. From the very decade of the British rule, revolutionaries like Gomdahar Konwar, Jeuram Medhi and Piyali Phukan emerged against British. Moniram Dewan and Piyali Barua were hanged in public view at Jorhat in 1858 for their alleged involvement in the Sepoy Mutiny. Jorhat also made significant contribution to the freedom movement. Prominent freedom fighters like Kuladhar Chaliha, Krishnanath Sarma, Debeswar Sarma, Suren Bharali, Harinarayan Barua, Sarbeswar Bordoloi and others took active part in the movement, particularly after the visit of Mahatma Gandhi in 1921. Many of the freedom fighters, including Gopinath Bordoloi were loged in Jorhat jail. It was also in Jorhat jail the Swahid Kushal Konwar was hanged on the 14th June, 1943.

Jorhat is known as the cultural capital of Assam having the highest literacy rate in Assam. Jorhat has produced a host of writers, poets and scholars like Prof. Krishna Kanta Handique, Chandrakanta Barua, Gonesh Gogoi, Amulya Barua, Ananda Chandra Barua, Mitradev Mahanta, Nilomoni Phukan, Kumud Chandra Barua and many others. The Assam Agricultural University (1948) and the Regional Research Laboratory (1959), now known as NEIST, the Tocklai Research Association (TRA), the oldest and largest tea research station of its kind in the world are located here. Besides, the world's largest river island, Majuli, is also known for its unique Satria culture and Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary. In recent times, with the growth of trade and commerce, the importance of this route has greatly increased. The district has also its own resources. The district has 135 tea gardens. Predominant field crop is rice, with per capita food grain production of 205 kg per annum. There are found various minor oil fields of ONGC and OIL India Ltd. in various part of the district.

According to Census 2011, Jorhat had population of 1,091,295, of which male and female were 557,944 (51.12%) and 533,351 (48.88%) respectively (www.census2011.co.in/census/district/154-jorhat.html downloaded on15.03.2012;

www.indiamapia.com/jorhat.html downloaded on 15.03.2012). The district has a population density of 383 inhabitants per sq. km.; population growth rate over the decade 2001-2011 was 9.21 percent. The district has Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe populations of 7.61 percent and 12.09 percent respectively in the total population. The population comprises predominantly Hindus and Muslims. People from different religions and languages are also found in the district. Majority of the people speak Assamese. However, there are the people speaking Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali and other languages and dialects. It is the place of different indigenous people like Ahom, Chutia, Koch, Mising and Deuri. Now, the district has become a major centre of educational and cultural activities in the middle Assam. Average literacy rate of Jorhat in 2011 was 83.42% compared to 76.34% of 2001. Three villages are located in a range of 10 k.ms. from the town.

CHARI GAON

According to the elder villagers in 1794 A.D. the Ahom King Gaurinath Singha shifted the capital from Sibsagar (erstwhile Rangpur) to Jorhat and ruled the country from Jorhat which became the main centre of activities of the Ahom kings. When the Ahom kings established their capital at Jorhat then Charigaon was a densely forested area. The Ahom king intended to establish one village in that forest area and, accordingly, four artisan clans (or 'Khels') were asked to settle in the forest area. These four artisan clans were Kamar (blacksmith), Kumar (Potter), Kohar (bell metal worker) and Katani (weaver). These four artisan clans constituted the village Chari Gaon during the Ahom regime at Jorhat. Because of these four artisan clans the name of the village is called Charigaon (*Chari* means four), the village of fours. Except the Kumar clan, the other three clans are found in the village, even today.

Location

The village is situated 10 km north-east of the Jorhat town. It comes under the North- West Jorhat Development Block (Dhekargarah) and the No. 31 Madhaya Charigaon Gaon Panchayat in the Jorhat district. On the east of the village is Baghmoria, a village dominated by a General caste (Kalita), on the west are two villages Rangajan and Gojpuria dominated by a General caste (Kalita), on the north are other two villages- Maout Gaon dominated by an OBC (Ahom) and Danhikhor dominated by Muslims and on the south are three villages Kolakhowa, Bamungaon

and Kotohaboria, all dominated by a General caste (Kalita). There are two units in the village, i.e., Unit I and Unit II. Unit I consists of five Chucks; namely, Saikia Chuck, Dutta Chuck, Bordoloi Chuck, Khargharia Chuck and one part of Kathaniakuri. The Unit No. II consists of five Chucks; namely, Mina Chuck, one part of Lahetia Chuck, one part of Dahikhur Muslim Gaon, one part of Tukuria Chuck and one part of Na-Bora Chuck.

People

There are four castes in the village; viz, Brahmins, Kalitas, Koch and Chutias. Majority of the villagers belong to Kalita caste, a General Caste. Majority of the villagers are the Hindus. A small fraction belongs to the Muslim community. The Hindu villagers used to go the village Naamghar (a community prayer hall where the Vaishnavite Hindus of Assam recite the name of God). In Assamese language, *Naam* means **prayer** and *Ghar* means **house**, hence it is called Naamghar. A Naamghar is not only a place of worship, but is also a centre for learning, an institution for imparting education, a community hall where the villagers gather to discuss their social problems, a training centre of arts and crafts and, above all, a centre of unity of the society. There are four Naamghars in Charigaon. The Muslim villagers used to go Mahjjid.

Economy

Generally the village economy characterizes the traditional way of cultivation in Assam. But in Charigaon, the agriculture based economy has now turned into the economy that is based on service sector. Most of the villagers have got government employment by dint of their qualifications and many others also have got opportunity to engage themselves in different industries and companies in towns and cities. Now-a days, with the emergence of means of communication and transportation, the villagers have entered in secondary sector occupations. As the link roads in and around Charigaon have been made *pacca,* the communication and transportation system has improved to a large extent. Most of the villagers have now started transport business. Some of the villagers also buy products at wholesale price from towns and sell them at retail prices in the village. The villagers grow seasonal crops for their family consumption only and not for business purpose. The villagers are inclined establish of cottage industries like bee keeping, small scale industry,

blacksmith cottage industry, handlooms etc. There is a Honey Processing Plant industry in Charigaon. Mr. Lila Charan Dutta is the owner of this industry. About 50 labourers are engaged in this industry. Most of the villagers are engaged in the activities like bee keeping and making of bee-keeping boxes for sale. Most of the women are engaged in small scale industries like handlooms, handicrafts, etc. Cattle and poultry like cows, goats, ducks and hens always provide a source of income for the housewives.

Living Style

The villagers have the modern type of houses made of materials such as tin for roof, cement for flooring and bricks for walls brought from neighbouring town Jorhat. The houses consist of several rooms like drawing room, guest room, common room, bedroom and kitchen along with proper ventilation. Almost all of the households have proper sanitation conditions with bathrooms. As the villagers have become wealthy they are able to build their houses with brick walls whereas, earlier they had thatched houses of mud walls. On the other hand, near the Jorhat town the villagers have adopted the urban living standards and have reconstructed their houses. The modern household gadgets have reached to the village from the market like television for recreation, mobile phone, news papers, refrigerator, washing machines, electronic water purifiers etc.

Education

The educational institutions are situated within a reachable distance for the majority of households. Therefore, the educational level of the villagers is high. There are two primary schools in the village; namely, No. 6 Chari Gaon Primary School and No. 9 Charaimuria Primary School. The former school was established in 1855 and the latter school was established in 1887. There is a girls high school situated in the heart of the village- Charigaon Govt. Aided Girls High School, established in 1953. There is another school in the east of the village; namely, Pragati Middle English School. It was established in 1976. There is a boys high school, Bahona Govt. Aided Boys High School,in Bahona village to the north of Charigaon, established in 1946. Near the high school a private school Bahona Balya Bhawan was established in 1984. There is a college, Bahona College, near Charigaon, established in 1966. The villagers send their children to the above mentioned schools and college.

Some of the villagers also send their children to the schools and colleges in the Jorhat town. Most of the villagers can speak different languages like Hindi, English and Bengali, besides their mother tongue. They can also read and write these languages. Such learning capacity has been acquainted through education and exposure to the towns and cities in different parts of the country.

Political Atmosphere

There is a sound political background of Charigaon. Most of the people of the village took part in the Indian national freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi. The most prominent freedom fighters from Charigaon, Late Lakheswar Barua, came into limelight by proclaiming himself as President in Independent Charigaon Mouja and it is one of the most significant historical events for the district. In the post-Independence period the national political parties as well as regional parties have created a political atmosphere in the village. Most of the people of the village are directly or indirectly involved in politics. The entire Charigaon and Bahona region have played determining role both in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections. So, various political leaders always try to attract the people of the village towards their own party by giving membership of their party. Among the villages of Jorhat District, Charigaon has its position as a leading village of educated people. It has been enriched by people who are not only educated but politically conscious. They elect their candidates consciously, which reflects their political curiosity along with their acquaintance with the contemporary political scenario in the nation. Therefore, political leaders are seen in touch with the people of Charigaon, every now and then. Under the introduction of three-tier Panchayati Raj System in Assam (1994), Charigaon comes under No. 31 Madhya Charigaon Goan Panchayat.

Festivals

In Charigaon there are two religious groups; namely, i.e., Hinhu and Muslim. The Hindu villagers of Charigaon celebrate traditional festivals like Bihu, Sankar Utsav, birthday of Sri Krishna, the birth and death anniversaries of Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhabdeva, Viswakarma Puja, Saraswati puja, Holi, Diwali, Durga Puja etc. The Muslim villagers celebrate Id and also Bihu specially Magh Bihu.

Dress

The women of Charigaon worn the traditional dress of Assam called *Mekhela-Chadar.* The Mekhela is worn around the waist and is pleated into three folds whereas the Chadar is wrapped over the upper part of the body. The village menfolk worn the traditional dress of Assam called *Suria or Dhoti* which is tied round their waist. But now a days, most of the village menfolk, specially the young, the business men and service holders wear modern shirts, T-Shirts, jeans and cotton pants. The young girls wear modern dresses like salwar suits, saree, skirt, jeans and top etc. Among children modern dress like frock, pant, trouser, shoe, jacket, sweater, chapal, skirt and coat are common.

Marriage

Generally the bride and groom should be from the same caste. But, now-a days, inter-community marriage is also taking place in the village. The choice of finding grooms and brides is mainly influenced by some considerations like kinship, socio-economic status of the family and distance between the places. Generally the villagers organize wedding ceremony in a traditional way by inviting guest from their relatives. They organize it in their own house with the co-operation of villagers. But, now-a days, modernizing attitude has changed their view in regards of organizing wedding ceremony. Some of the villagers organized ceremonies at Bibah Bahor in Jorhat town. It is seen that rich families of the village organize ceremony in Bibah Bahor for status maintenance or even status enhancement in the village.

Food

Generally the people in the villages take vegetables in their dinner or lunch. They prefer most the traditional food items. As rice or *Bhat* is the staple food crop of Assam, the villagers used to take it for both dinner and lunch. Fish specially with a mild sour curry is a favourite dish of the villagers. The villagers used to take some palatable items like *Muri, Aakhoi, Chira, Sandah* etc. for their breakfast. Different kinds of *Pitha*, a kind of rice cake, laro etc. make an integral item of the villagers' food during the Bihu and other major occasions. But, now a days, it is changing on the pattern of urban food habits. Generally, in marriage ceremonies and official

parties, villagers take food with urban people. They observe the food items generally consumed by the urban people and gradually they follow it.

Social Organizations

There is an association, Charigaon Jana Kalyan Sangha in the village, established in 1940. The members of the association are adults and a few mature persons. The main activities of the association are organizing Bihu function, Jyoti Divas, Rabha Divas, workshop on Bihu dance, different competitions among school children's and women in the village like quiz, debating, recitation etc. Charigaon Jana Kalyan Sangha has one library catering to the needs of different age groups. There are three women associations in the village. One is Chandrakola Mahila Society, established in 1994. The second one is No. 31 Dirangporia Mahila Samittee, established in 2000. The third one is Charigaon Surjyadoi Sangha, established in 1980. There is a big auditorium, Charigaon Kola Mandir, in the heart of the village. Different cultural functions are held there. There is a Children's Assocition, Charigaon Jyoti Moina Parijat, in the village, established in 1951. The main objective of this association is to train the children in the aspects of drama, singing, dancing and above all, to make them a perfect citizen in future life. The villagers celebrate traditional festivals like Bihu (Bohag Bihu, Kati Bihu and Magh Bihu), the birth and death anniversaries of Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhabdeva(Monks of Vaishnavism), birthday of Shri Krishan, Naam, Bhaona, Rashlila(Story of lord Krishna), Viswakarma Puja, Saraswati Puja etc cooperatively with these social organizations.

Developmental Scenario

A metalled road from Jorhat town to the historical Nematighat passes through the village. And the distance from Chairgaon to the Nemati Ghat which is an important river ghat for crossing the river Brahmaputra on the way to North Lakhimpur, is 6 kms. A regular bus plying between Jorhat and Nemati Ghat touches Charigaon. There is a bus stop in Bahona at a distance of a half km. from Charigaon. The various transport facilities are available due to good condition of roads. Auto rickshaw, tempos, wingers, magic are available as modes of transportation.

In Charigaon there are the facilities of water supply, electricity, telecommunication connectivity, etc. In the village, the sources of drinking water are used from both supply water and spring water. Most of the villagers have individual deep tube well in their house as the source of drinking water. But through government scheme the villagers got deep tube well facilities in the village in each Chuck (corner).

There is a Public Health Centre (PHC), Na-Bora Chuck Mini PHC, in the eastern part of the village, established in 1986. There are 8 state government employees and 4 employees under NRHM. Of these, two doctors in the PHC, one is under the state government and another one is under MRHM. In the nearby village, Bahona, there is a Sub-Health Centre, Bahona Sub-Health Centre, established in 1984. Near this, there is Sub-Health Centre for Cattle, Bahona Cattle Sub-Centre, established in 1960.

Due to the rapid growth of industrialization and in the process of liberalization, privatization and globalization the whole system of Indian village is going to change. Various changes are now possible because of the developments in the modern media of communication. In Charigaon, different media and channels modes of transport, T.V. sets, newspapers and magazines, mobile etc. are found.

RANDHANIJAN GAON

According to the village elders, the IXth Mayamara Satradhikar Sri Sri Astabhujdeva was benevolent, generous, extraordinary scholar and a farsighted man. During his time a number of Mayamona disciples spread from Sadiya to Manah. With a view to making the name of Mayamara Satra everlasting, Astabhujdeva decided to keep an eternal symbol at historical Malow Pather (on the North and West corner present Jorhat district). He slected a suitable place at Malow Pathar which was 24 *Hat* (one *Hat* is the length from the elbow to the finger tip) deep. Then eight lakh disciples from Sadiya to Manah gathered at historical Malow Pathar. On the advice of the great Mayamara Guru every disciple cut one *Sapara Mati* (piece of earth) with knife used for cutting betel nut and chanting the name of God carried on his head and put into the 24 hat deep pit. This work was started in 1768 A.D., during the autumn season. Within six months 8 lakh disciples constructed a *Bheti* (a plinth, a raised bed of earth) which became 60 hats in height over the ground. Cross wise it was 10 *Nols*

(12 feet) in width and 30 *Nols* (360 feet) in length. This platform or bed of earth has become famous as *Mayamara Borbheti* (*Bor* means **big**. *Bheti* means **plinth**) in course of time. During the time of construction of the *Borbheti*, the disciples also constructed a bheti in the extreme south of the Borbheti for cooking and eating, which is known as *Mojia Bheti* (in Assamese language *Mojia* means **the place where people eat**). There was a stream near the *Mojiabheti* and the disciples used the water from that stream to cook and so the stream was known as *Randhanijan* (in the Assamese language *Randhani* means **one who cooks** and *jan* means **stream**). In the due course of time this stream has been buried under the sand brought by the river Bhogdoi, but according to the name of this stream the village that grew up on its banks came to be known as Randhanijan.

Location

The village of Randhanijan is situated, 12 kms, in the west of the Jorhat town in the district of Jorhat. It comes under the North-West Jorhat Development Block (Dhekargarah) and the No. 45 Pachim Harucharai Gaon Panchayat. On the north of the village are Rongagora village dominated by Scheduled Caste (Koibarta) and Malowpam village dominated by Scheduled Caste (Koibarta), on the south is Tingtingia village dominated by General caste (Kalita), on the east there is Borbheti village dominated by OBC (Koch) and Mojiabheti dominated by Scheduled Caste (Koibarta) and on the west there is Rowmarikhuti village dominated by Scheduled Caste (Koibarta). There are two units in the village. Unit – I is called Randhanihan General Caste and Unit II consists of Janaguri, Phakuwadaul, Benganaati and Mishing Gaon.

People

There are found three castes in the village; namely, Koibarta, Kalita and Chutias. There is also found a small fraction of the Mising people- a Scheduled Tribe. Majority of the villagers belong to the Koibarta- a Scheduled Caste. All the villagers belong to Hindu religion. The villagers used to go to the village Naamghar. There are two Namghars in the village. The villagers celebrate some festivals like Sankar Utsav, birthday of Sri Krishna, the birth and death anniversaries of Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhabdeva etc. in the village Namghar cooperatively.

Economy

Agriculture is the main economy of the villagers of Randhanijan. But some of the villagers have not cultivable land. So, they take land on sharecropping from their neighboring villagers. Animal husbandry also provides a source of income in the households of the village. There is a government dairy farm, Malow Co-operative Dairy Farm Ltd, established in 1955. The area of this farm is 400 bighas. At present, the total number of buffaloes is 20 in the farm. Its President is Mr. Sagar Nath and Mr. Kartic Dutta is its Secretary. The villagers used to sale their milk production to the farm. Most of the villagers have the business of fishery. Some of the villagers used to buy fish in wholesale price and sell it in the Jorhat town. As catching of fish is the caste based occupation of the villagers of Randhanijan, more or less almost all of the villagers have interest in the occupation. Mr. Bhoben Bharali is the successful fisherman of the village of Randhanijan. He has a big fishery in the extreme north of the village. The area covered by the fishery is 5 bighas . Near this fishery there is also another fishery of his which covers 1 katha of land. Most of the villagers do not have sound economic status. Some villagers are labourers, rickshaw pullers and auto rickshaw pullers. A small portion of the villagers have got opportunity to engage themselves in different government and private jobs in Jorhat town. Some of the villagers have now started transport business with auto as share taxi from the main road to the Hoalmara. Some of the villagers buy products at wholesale price from towns and sell them at retail price in the village like grocery shop, vegetable shop, pan shop, tailoring shop etc. and in this way they earn their livelihood.

Living Style

Most of the villagers have the traditional type of Assam type house with bamboo and mud walls with tin roof. Generally the houses consist of two-three rooms attached with kitchen. Most of the households have *kachcha* sanitation and bathroom. As the villagers have low economic status they are still following the traditional life styles for home decoration, water filter, vegetables storing, washing clothes etc. Some of the villagers have bought the modern household gadgets from the Jorhat town like television, mobile phone, gas stove, charge lights, news papers etc.

Education

There are two primary schools in the village of Randhanijan. One is Janaguri Primary school, established in 1954. Another one is Fakuadoul Primary School, established in 1977. There is a primary School Rawmari Primary School in the neighboring village, established in 1971. There is one Middle English School Kaliyari Middle English School, established in 1962 and a High School Randhanijan High School, established in 1972 situated side by side in the heart of the village. In the nearby village Hoalmara (4 km from Randhanijan) there is a Middle English School and a high school situated side by side. The name of the Middle English School is Sorbudoi Middle English School, established in 1981. The high school is Sorbudoi High School, established in 1985. In Hoalmara, there are two Colleges; namely, Sorbudoi Junior College and Sorbudoi College, both established in 1985. The children of the villagers go to the above mentioned schools and colleges for education. The villagers who have minimum education up to high school know English and Hindi. But they cannot write properly. Some of the villagers can speak Hindi learned through media like T.V., Radio and by conversation with the communities like Marowaris and Biharis in Jorhat town. The illiterate masses of Randhanijan Gaon have less communication with outer world and so they do not have knowledge of languages other than their mother tongue.

Political Activity

Randhanijan Gaon comes under No. 45 Pachim Harucharai Gaon Panchayat. There are 5 males and 5 females among the Panchayat leaders in the No. 45 Pachim Harucharai Gaon Panchayat. Of the 11 Panchayat leaders 10 are unit members and one is President of the Panchayat. Mrs. Purnima Dutta is the village Head (Gaonbura) of Randhanijan. She has occupied the position since 2006. Some of the people of the village are directly involved in politics. Most of the villagers are politically not active. Due to lake of education, poor economic condition and awareness about political system the villagers do not actively participate in politics. During the time of Panchayat elections all the political leaders have visited the village. On the last Panchayat election (2012) various political parties: namely, Indian Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party and Assam Gana Parishad put up their candidates in the elections for the Panchayat. Villagers of the Randhanijan Gaon have accepted the

members of political parties as local political leaders who have occupied positions in the network of political parties. Some of the villagers have their membership in different political parties and their active members are considered as local leaders. Their duty is to fulfil the people's need. These local leaders become active amidst the villagers during elections to attract votes for their parties.

Festivals

The villagers of Randhanijan celebrates traditional festivals like Bihu, Sankar Utsav, birthday of Sri Krishna, the birth and death anniversaries of Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhabdeva, Viswakarma Puja, Saraswati puja, Holi, Diwali, Durga Puja etc. One unique festival is celebrated in Barbheti, the near by village, called *Na-logua Utsav*. It is celebrated in the month of January after completing the harvesting. All the disciples from the region take the first rice after harvesting called *Na-Khuwa* with due respect to their Guru Sri Sri Astabhujdeva in the Naamghar. A huge gathering is created in the festival from different parts of the region and also from the Jorhat town. All the villagers participate in the festival with joy.

Dress

The women of Randhanijan Gaon also wear the traditional dress of Assam called *Mekhela-Chadar,* generally produced by themselves on their handlooms. The aged menfolk wear the traditional dress of Assam called *Suria or Dhoti*. The young and businessmen, service holders wear modern shirts, T-Shirts, jeans and cotton pants. The young girls wear modern dress like salwar suits, saree, skirt, jeans and top etc. Among children modern dress like frock, pant, trouser, shoe, sweater, chapal, skirt are commonly used.

Marriage

Generally the bride and groom should be from the same caste. But, now-a days, inter-community marriage is also taking place in the village. The finding grooms and brides mainly depend on their own choice. Most of the people in Randhanijan have got married from one corner to another of the same village. Generally the villagers organize wedding ceremony in a traditional way by inviting guest from their relatives and neighbours. They organize it in their own house with the co-operation of the villagers.

Food

The villagers mostly prefer the traditional food items. They use to take rice for both dinner and lunch. Fish curry is more favourite dish of the villagers than meat. Different kinds of *Pitha*, a kind of rice cake, laro etc. makes an integral item of the villagers during the Bihu and other major occasions. But, now a day, little bit it is changing on the pattern of urban food habits. Because of the impact of globalization, the young generation of the village also likes to eat noodles, chow-chow, suji, potato chips, bhujia etc. than the traditional Assamese foods like *Muri, Aakhoi, Chira, Sandah* etc.

Social Organizations

There is an association, Navajagaran Yuva Sangha, in of Randhanijan, established in 2001. The members of this association are youths of the village. There is an auditorium Sanmilita Yuva Manch, constructed in 1981. Different cultural and social functions of the village are held in this auditorium. There is one children's association, Seougparia Moina Parijat, established in 1999. The villagers celebrate traditional festivals like Bihu, Sankar Utsav, birthday of Sri Krishna, Viswakarma Puja, Saraswati Puja, etc.

Developmental Scenario

There is a health sub-centre, Randhanijan Sub-Health Centre, in Randhanijan, established in 1983. There is one ANM and one helper lady in the sub-centre. This sub-centre serves 7 neighbouring villages. In Hoalmara, at a distance of 4 kms from Randhanijan Gaon, there is a Public Health Centre (PHC), Hoalmara PHC, established in 1975.

In Randhanijan Gaon, there are the facilities of water supply, electricity, telecommunication connectivity, etc. In the village, the sources of drinking water are both pond and deep tube well. Through government scheme the villagers have got deep tube well facility in the village in each Chuck (corner).

A metalled road, Sengeli Ati road, is passing through the village from No. 37 National Highway. The various transport facilities are available due to the historical place of Borbheti and for the good condition of roads. A regular gram taxi plies

between the Jorhat town and Hoalmara and touches Randhanijan. Shared Tempo, auto rickshaws are also available from Borbheti Gate, i.e., No. 37 National Highway.

BALIJAN GAON

The villagers believe that once upon a time, there was a stream, passing through the village, which was full of sand and thereby the village has come to be known as Balijan. The Assamese word *Bali* means sand and *Jan* means stream. Thus, Balijan means **stream of sand**. The village is 12 k.m., south of the Jorhat town of Jorhat. It comes under the Jorhat Development Block (Baghchung) and the No. 64 East Thengal Gaon Panchayat in the Jorhat district. The village lies between the two metalled roads; namely, Na-Ali and Gar-Ali leading from the Jorhat town to the Titabor town. On the north of the village is Na-Chungi village dominated by Scheduled Tribe (Thengal Kachari), on the south there is Bojalbari village and on the east there is Bongal village both dominated by Scheduled Tribe (Thengal Kachari) and on the west is Gajpuria village dominated by OBC (Chutia). There are two units in the village, i.e., Unit A and Unit B. Unit A consists of Malor Chuck (corner), Podu Chuck, Nawboisa Chuck, Medhi Chuck and Khutikati Chuck. The Unit B consists of Jalmai Chuck, Lawbor Chuck, No. 1 Jurula Chuck, No. 2 Jurula Chuck and Saikia Chuck. Mrs. Rubi Kachari Saikia and Mr. Dinesh Kachari are the unit members of the Gaon Panchayat from the two units of the village respectively.

People

Majority of the villagers belongs to a Scheduled Tribe, i.e., Thengal Kachari. Some villagers also belong to other castes like Kalita, Koch and Chutias. Most of the villagers are Hindus. A small fraction belongs to the Muslim community. The Hindu villagers used to go the village Naamghar. There are four Namghars in the village. The villagers celebrates some festivals like Sankar Utsav, birthday of Sri Krishna, the birth and death anniversaries of Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhabdeva etc. in the village Namghar cooperatively. The Muslim villagers go to the Mahjid in the neighbouring village, Jalukanibari. They also celebrate Id and Magh Bihu.

Economy

As the villagers mainly depend on agriculture they are largely engaged in agriculture to fulfill their basic needs. Now-a-days, most of the literate villagers are

involved in searching a better job in the urban centre. However, many of them are engaged in agricultural activities, through a modern way. Most of the land owners are themselves cultivating the land. Some of the people are also engaged in government jobs, private jobs and own businesses. Cattle and poultries like cows, goats, ducks, hens provides are a main source of income in the households of Balijan. Some of the villagers are having small tea gardens. Mr. Bipul Kachari has a tea garden covering 2 bighas of land. Mr. Prafulla Kachari has a tea garden covering 2 $^{1}/_{2}$ kathas of land. Most of the women of Balijan Gaon are engaged in small scale industries, i.e., handlooms, handicrafts, etc.

Living Style

The villagers have the modern type of houses, made of materials such as tin for roof, cement for flooring and bricks for walls brought from neighbouring town Jorhat. The houses consist of several rooms like drawing room, guest room, common room, bedroom and kitchen along with proper ventilation. Almost all the households have proper sanitation conditions with bathrooms. As the villagers have become wealthy they are able to build their houses with brick walls whereas, earlier they had thatched houses of mud walls. On the other hand, near the Jorhat town the villagers have adopted the urban living standards and have reconstructed their houses. The modern household gadgets have reached in the village from the market like television for recreation, mobile phone, news papers, refrigerator, washing machines, electronic water purifiers etc.

Education

In the village there is a primary school, Balijan primary school, established in 1962. The school is situated in the heart of the village. Besides, there are also two private schools Gyanjyoti Jatia Vidyalaya and Jalukanibari Jatia Vidyalaya, both established in 2009. There is a girls high school, Jalukanibari Girls High School, established in 1987. There is a higher secondary school, situated in Jalukanibari, in its west. The school is Jalukanibari Higher Secondary School, established in 1960. There is a college in Borsoikota, Nabin Bordoloi College, one and half km. from Balijan, established in 1986. Now, the villagers have understood the value and importance of education especially for jobs. Therefore, the parents have started

sending their children for higher education in the neighbouring towns and to different parts of the country.

Political Activity

Under the introduction of three-tier Panchayati Raj System in Assam (1994), Balijan Gaon comes under No. 64 East Thangal Gaon Panchayat. The villagers are politically aware to a great extent. With the emergence of Panchayati Raj System they have got chance for active participation in it. According to the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act 1992, 33% seats in the Panchayats are reserved for women. There are 6 males and 5 females among the Panchayat leaders in the No. 64 East Thengal Gaon Panchayat. Mr. Ratneswar Kachari is the village Head (Gaonbura) of Balijan. He occupied the position since 1995.

Festivals

In Balijan Gaon there are two religious groups, i.e., Hinhu and Muslim. The Hindu villagers of Balijan Gaon celebrate traditional festivals like Bihu, Sankar Utsav, birthday of Sri Krishna, the birth and death anniversaries of Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhabdeva, Viswakarma Puja, Saraswati puja, Holi, Diwali, Durga Puja etc. The Muslim villagers perform Id and also Bihu specially Magh Bihu.

Dress

The women of Balijan Gaon also wear the traditional dress of Assam called *Mekhela-Chadar,* generally produce by themselves in their handloom. And the aged menfolk wear the traditional dress of Assam called *Suria or Dhoti*. The young, businessmen and service holders wear modern shirts, T-Shirts, jeans and cotton pants. The young girls wear modern dress like salwar suits, saree, skirt, jeans and top etc. Among children modern dress like frock, pant, trouser, shoe, sweater, chapal, skirt are commonly used.

Marriage

Generally the bride and groom should be from the same caste. But, now-a days, inter-community marriage is also taking place in the village. The finding grooms and brides is mainly influenced by some considerations like kinship, socio-economic status of the family and distance between the places. Generally the villagers

organize wedding ceremony in a traditional way by inviting guest from their relatives. They organize it in their own house with the co-operation of villagers.

Food

The villagers mostly prefer traditional food items. They take rice for both dinner and lunch. Meat curry is favourite dish of the villagers than fish. Different kinds of *Pitha*, a kind of rice cake, laro etc. make an integral item of food of the villagers during the Bihu and other major occasions. But, now a day, little bit it is changing on the pattern of urban food habits. Because of the impact of globalization, the young generation of the village also like to eat noodles, chow-chow, suji, potato chips, bhujia etc. than the traditional Assamese foods like *Muri, Aakhoi, Chira, Sandah* etc.

Social Organizations

In the village there is a youth association, Navojagoran Yova Sangha, established in 1995. This sangha has one library in the village. There is another youth association, Surajmukhi Yova Sangha, established in 1994. There are two associations of children. One is Lakhimi Moina Parijat, established in 1994. The other one is an association for all round development of children, Bridge of Hope, established in 2007. There is a women's association also, Janajati Mahila Samiti, established in 1987. Balijan has also the All Assam Drummer Artists Society, established in 1978. Mr. Bhuban Hazarika is a Radio Artist of Dibrugarh Radio Centre since 1982. Earlier, he was a school teacher. He is artist of Loka Sangeet (the Assamese Kamrupia Loka Sangeet).The villagers celebrate traditional festivals like Bihu, Sankar Utsav, Viswakarma puja, Saraswti Puja etc. They also perform the Sankari culture (Developed by Sri Sankardeva, Monk of Vaishnavism) like Sankari Drama (Bhowana), Rash Lila (Story of Lord Krishna), Sankari Song (Borgeet), Satriya Dance, etc. There are three Temples (Namghars) in the village; namely Saikia Chuch Namghar, Jurula Chuck Namghar and Medhi Chuch Namghar.

Developmental Scenario

There is a state dispensary, in the west of the village, in a neighbouring village of Balijan, Jalukanibari. The name of this dispensary is Jalukanibari State Dispensary. It was established in 1959. This dispensary plays a significant role for health service

in the area. There are 3 doctors in this dispensary. One is state government employee and he is permanent and the other two are under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) programme. The total number of nurses is three in this dispensary. One is ANM and other two are GNMs. One pharmacist and one Accredited Social Health Activities (ASHA) facilitator are there in this dispensary. Under this dispensary there are 7 ASHA workers.

Infrastructuraly, Balijan is a developed village which is having a good facility of electricity, telecommunication connectivity, water supply, roads, etc. Two metalled roads from Jorhat town to Titabor town, i.e, Na-Ali and Gar-Ali touches Balijan. The village lies between these two roads. So, there is good communication of transportation to the village. Regular bus services are available on both the roads. Besides, transport services of other vehicles such as auto rickshaws, tempos, etc are also available.

There is a manor house in Balijan which was buit by Late Raibahadur Siba Prasad Barooah in 1929. He was a scion of the Khongiga Barooahs of Thengal, the eldest son born to Bisturam Barooah. He is regarded as pioneer of tea plantation in the second half of the 19th century. Siba Prasad was a man of multifacet activities journalist, planter, politician, litterateur, humanist and philanthropist. When journalism was in its infancy even in the countries of its origin, Siba Prasad brought out the first Assamese Daily newspaper "Dainik Batori" from this village on 12th August 1935. The manor house was largely damaged in the earthquake of 1943. It was repaired in 1965 and then again renovated in 1999. The house was formally opened to visitors on 16th April 2000 as a part of Birth Centenary Celebration of Late Kamal Kumari Barooah, the wife of Siba Prasad Barooah. Harvard educated Mr. Hamedra Prasad Barooah, the son of Sib Prasad Barooah expanded the tea plantation into an industrial empire unmatched by any other Assamese entrepreneur. At present, he is settled in Kolkata.

In sum, the three villages are different in terms of its location, socio-economic status of its people, living of standard, political and also cultural atmosphere. It is seen that the three villages are having different level of development in different developmental aspects. The village Charigaon is comparatively high in every aspects of development than the other two villages. Most of the people of Charigaon are

educated and economically sound. On the other hand the socio-economic status of the villagers of Randhanijan is not so well. The villagers of Balijan are having a medium standard of living. Agriculture is the main occupation for most of the villagers in Balijan.