

## **Chapter-II**

### **The Study Area**

#### **India**

India is the biggest and the multi-religious, multi-cultural country in the world. India is located between  $8^{\circ}.4'$  and  $37^{\circ}.6'$  North latitude and  $68^{\circ}.7'$  and  $97^{\circ}.25'$  East longitude. The country shares its borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan on the west and Bangladesh and Burma on the east and the Northern boundary is made up of China, Nepal and Bhutan on the southern part there are Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. According to census India 2011, the total geographical area is 32,87,263 sq km and total coast of line 7516.5km. The total population of India is 1,21,01, 93,422(2011 census India) and it cover the world population 17.5. The average density of population of the country as per 2011 census comes to 382 persons per sq km. The male population of India is 62, 37, 24,248 and the female population is 58,64,69,174. The sex ratio is 940:1000. The total rural population 741,660,293(72.2% Of total population) and urban population 285,354,954 (27.8%) respectively (source:2001 census of India). The total districts of India are 596 and the total states are 28. The total literacy rate of India is 74.04%. There are 82.14% male and 65.46% female. According to 2011 census in India the male literacy rate is higher than the female literacy rate. In India major religions and their percentage are respectively Hindu-80.5%, Muslim-13.4%, Christian-2.3%, Sikh-1.9%, Other-1.8%, unspecified-0.1%, and the Per-Capita Income-2,800 (source: Census of India 2001). The major festivals are Holi, Diwali, Janmastomi, Durga Puja, Cristmas and Saraswati Puja etc. The chief rivers of India are Brahmaputra, Ganga, Jamuna, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Mahanadi, Narmada, Musi, Sabarmati etc. The major mountains are The Himalays, the Vidhyas, the Aravalli, the Eastern Ghats, the Patkai, and the Sahydri etc. Andaman and Nicobar Island in the Bay of Bengal Lakshadweep is in the Arabian Sea. They are also parts of India.

Indian history and culture is ancient and dynamic culture. The history of Indian culture is crossroad cultures from China to Europe and the most significant Asian connection with the cultures of Africa. The history of India is constant integration with migrating peoples and with the diverse cultures. Indian culture is called multi-culture. Different ethnic groups, caste groups, religious groups perform their culture and all live in the same nation with unity and diversity. When the feeling of nationalism has comes their mind at that time equally stand against the nation. The traditional Indian society is dominated by Caste system and Varna system. Higher caste people are always dominated the lower caste people in the traditional Indian society. But when British came to India at that time, they established various industries such as Tea industry; oil etc. and they also developed the education system in India. British change the socio-cultural scenario of the Indian society.

### **North-East Region**

The North East Region is situated at the Himalayan sub-region of India and it is located in the eastern corner of Indian union. The entire region is connected with the rest of the country through a narrow strip of west Bengal linking Assam. The North eastern region is situated between  $21^{\circ}57'$  to  $29^{\circ}30'$  North Latitude and  $88^{\circ}$  to  $97^{\circ}30'$  Longitude. The region is bounded by Tibet and china in the north and east, Bangladesh in the south, Burma in the south east and Bhutan in the west. The region is separated from Tibet by the Mac Mohan line. The total land of this region is 2,62,184,69 sq.km.

North East India in the context of India occupies a distinctive place due primarily to its geographical, historical, social, cultural, and political features and the homeland of a large number of ethnic groups who came from different directions at different historical times. These groups belong to different racial stocks, speak different languages and have varied socio-cultural traditions. This region has been

occupied by different streams of the Mongoloid people who came from the north and the east at different periods.

The eight states located at the north eastern part of India forms a distinguishable group for its rich ethnic culture and prevalence of Tibeto-Burman language. The eight states are namely-Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Nagaland. The region reflects ecological and cultural contrasts between the hills and the plains; there are also significant elements of continuity.

According to census India 2011, the total population of North-East region is 38,985,604. Among the various states of the region, the population of Assam stood highest at 3,11,69,272. In order of size, the Tripura 36,71,032, Meghalaya 29,64,007, Manipur 27,21,756, Nagaland 19,80,602, Arunachal Pradesh 13,82,611, Mizoram 10,91,014 and Sikkim 6,07,688 respectively.

According to the census 2011, the density of population was highest in Assam i.e. 397 per sq., in Tripura 350 per sq. km., in Meghalaya 132 per Sq. km., in Manipur 122 per sq. km., in Nagaland 119 per sq. km., in Sikkim 85.6 per sq. km., in Mizoram 52 per sq. km., in Arunachal Pradesh 17 per sq. km. respectively.

Among the eight states, the literacy rate in Mizoram was highest. According to census 2011 it was 91.58 percent. In order of literacy rate, 87.75 % in Tripura, 80.11% in Nagaland, 79.85% in Manipur, 76.6% in Sikkim, 75.48% in Meghalaya, 73.18% in Assam and 66.95% in Arunachal Pradesh respectively.

The region is divided into two parts namely – hilly area and Plain area. The North East region of India is a mixture with diverse groups of population belonging to different race and groups with their distinctive society and culture. Some of the ethno-cultural groups on the N.E region are Missing, Karbi, Khasi, Adi, Apatani, Kanyak, Demasa, Ahom, and Kachari etc.

The economy of the region continues to be predominantly agrarian, even though the agriculture base remains weak. A large number of people inhabiting the

hills continue to follow the traditional practice of *jhum* (shifting cultivation). Farmers grow only one crop in a year and farming is basically at a subsistence level. Agricultural surpluses remain meagre and are borne out by the near absence of local rice and paddy sold in the markets. Self-sufficiency in food grains, thus, remains an unattainable goal. Food grains and the basic products like powdered milk, fish, fruits, vegetable, pulses etc. and several industrial goods are imported in large quantities.

The industrial sector in the region has mainly grown around tea, petroleum, natural gas in Assam, and mining, saw mills and steel fabrication units in other parts. However, manufacturing capacities in all the states except Assam to some extent are virtually non-existent.

The north east region is very rich in natural resources and a beautiful amalgamation of different people and cultures. Blessed with biodiversity, huge hydro-energy potential, oil and gas, coal, limestone, forest wealth, fruits and vegetables, flowers, herbs and aromatic plants, rare and rich flora and fauna, NE India has all the potential to transform into a commercial hub and tourist paradise. The area is a vibrant source of energy rich in oil, natural gas, coal, limestone and India's largest perennial water system, the River Brahmaputra and its tributaries, which can be tapped for energy, irrigation and transportation. The fertile soil around the valley of the River Brahmaputra is a veritable storehouse of horticultural products/plantation crops/vegetables/spices and rare forest products.

### **The State of Assam**

Assam is the heart of the land and the Gate way of North East India. Assam is surrounded by Nagaland, Manipur and Myanmar in the East, West Bengal is on the West, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh is on the North and by Mizoram, Tripura, Bangladesh and Meghalaya are on the South. The magical valley of Assam is situated in the heart of the North-Eastern zone of the Indian sub continent. It is

located between 24<sup>0</sup> to 28<sup>0</sup>N Latitude and 90<sup>0</sup>E to 96<sup>0</sup>E Longitude. The total land of Assam is 78,438 sq km (approx) land (source: census of India 2001). According to the census of India 2011, the population of Assam is 31,169,272 comprising 15,954,927 males and 15,214,345 females. Sex ratio 1000:954(Male: Female). The density of population is 397(persons per sq. km) and decadal growth 16.93%. This population is distributed in 4,914,823 household living in 26,312 village and 125 towns. For administrative purpose the state is divided into 27 districts and 142 circles. Total literacy rate of Assam is 73.18%. Male literacy rate 78.81% and the female literacy rate 67.27%.

Assam is divided into three main geographical areas i.e. Brahmaputra Valley, the Suma or Barak Valley and the Hilly regions comprising of North Cachar Hill (present Dima Hasao) and the Karbi Anglong District which separate the two Valleys. The Brahmaputra Valley again be divided into three zones, namely, Upper, Middle and lower. The Brahmaputra valley is named after the river Brahmaputra. The Brahmaputra is one of the largest River of the world. It flows majestically through the heart of the Brahmaputra Valley. The mighty river Brahmaputra and its tributaries have nourished it from the time immemorial. Most of the prominent towns and cities are situated in this valley whose length and breadth are 725km and 80-100 km respectively (Source: Assam Year Book 2011). There are 22 districts in Brahmaputra valley namely-Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Jorhat, Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Sivsagar, Dhemaji, Darrang, Kamrup (Rural), Kamrup (Metro), Sonitpur, Nagaon, Nalbari, Goalpara, Marigaon, Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Chirang, Baksa, Dhubri and Udalguri. The Assamese people mostly live in this valley and majority people are speaks Assamese language. On the other hand, Barak valley is dominated by Barak River and it flows through the valley. This valley has hills and 'Beels' or lacks in plenty. There are three districts in Barak Valley namely - Cachar, Karimgaanj and Hilakandi. Majority of the people in this valley are speaks Bengali language.

Assam has lavishly bestowed all her natural beauties. The state is dense forests and hills, vast alluvial plains, tracts of paddy, Tea and also oil from deep depth of the earth, contain valuable flora and fauna, some of which are rare in the world. Besides these the forest regions in Assam abounded with many kinds of animals like one-horned rhinoceros, elephant, wild buffalo, tiger, leopard, black panther and other rare species. The Kaziranga wild life sanctuary is a point of attraction to the tourist from all over the globe for its one-horned rhinoceros. Some of the rare types of birds are found in the forest of Assam such as pelican, blue coot, green pigeon, different varieties of parrot, hornbill etc.

The people of Assam can be divided into different categories on the basis of different criteria such as race, religion, language. Assam is the meeting place of different races of mankind Austric, Mongolian, Dravidian and Aryan, who from the east and the west at different periods of its history. Long before the coming of the Aryans to India, millennium before Christ, this ancient land of Assam was inhabited by a people whom the scholars call "Austriacs" or "Austriac -Asiatics" as they migrated from the Austronesian and other islands of the Pacific Ocean to Asiatic mainland. The tribes of the Mongoloid stock probably entered Assam long after the coming of the Austriacs.

All the tribes of Assam are the Mongoloid origin. In addition to the tribes some other Mongoloid population are met with in this region which are not recognized as tribes. The other non- tribal section of the people of Assam is affiliated to the Caucasoid tribe (Das,2010). The admixture of distinctive and diversified cultures of different races and tribes who settled in this part of the country built the great Assamese race. So, there had always been divergence of language, custom and culture among the population of Assam. All of them are contributed to share towards the growth and development of Assamese society and they began to socio-cultural fusion among them. The Assamese culture is assimilating culture of divers groups of people.

The earliest literature of ancient India, The Mahabharata mentions Assam as the land of Mlechchas and Asuras, that is, a non-Aryan country. At that times Assam was known as 'Pragjyotishpura' or 'the city of eastern astronomy' and 'Kamrupa' as evidenced from the great epics – the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, other Indian scriptures, Purans and poetical works. Ancient 'Pragjyotishpura' or 'Kamrupa' came into contact with Aryan civilization and culture at a very early age as historically this border land had been the most easterly acquisition of the early Aryan invaders. In the later part of the twelfth century A.D., the Muhammadans embarked on the conquest of the northern India. However, this eastern most land was hardly affected by the Muslim invaders. In the thirteenth century, the Muhammadans invaded Kamrupa three times but each time they were beaten back by the Ahoms Who entered Assam through the eastern gate across the Patkai range and ruled this state for about six hundred years. The Ahom are only Mongoloid race people, who recorded their own activities in the chronicles, popularly known as 'Buranjis', meaning store house of unknown things. Linguistically, they belong to Chinese-Saiamese branch, spoke Tai language. The Ahom established their kingdom in Brahmaputra valley and rule continued more than 600 years. In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ahom political power was weakened due to their some internal conflict. At the mean time Burmese ran over the political authority in Assam thus invoking British intervention to subdue the Burmese.

The origin of the name Assam is connected with the Ahoms. Some of the Assamese chronicles mention that the name *Asom* is derived from the term *Asama* meaning "unequaled". This term was first applied by some local tribes in token of their admiration of the way in which, the first ahom king Sukapha conquered and then conciliated them (Boruah, S.L. 2007).

In 1826, the treaty of Yandabo between the Burmese and the English was restored to peace conflict. As a result of the treaty, Assam came under the British rule. The British then set out to organize the administration, transport and

communication network in Assam. They constructed of railways, introduced of tea plantation, discovered coal and oil etc. British changed the whole scenario of Assam within a very short period. But the people of Assam united to revolt against the British which continued till the nation got independence. The freedom fighters of Assam, like Maniram Dewan, Kushal Konwar, Piyali Phukan, Konaklata, Bogheshwari Phukanani, Gamodhar Konwar and many other played a major part in the freedom fight in Assam. In 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 India got independence and Assam consisted as a state of Independent India.

Hinduism is the dominant religion in Assam. Other religious group like Islam, Christian, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist people are also there. The tribal people of Assam are largely animistic and their animistic beliefs have got infused with non-tribal religious rites and superstitions. In Assam mainly three popular forms of Hinduism is prevalent namely, Saivism, Saktisim and Vaishnavism. According to census India 2001, the religious communities' peoples of Assam are Hindus 64.9%, Muslims 30.9%, Christians 3.7%, Sikhs 0.1%, Buddhists 0.2%, Jains 0.1% and others 0.1%.

Assam is a bilingual state with Assamese as a court language in the Brahmaputra Valley and Bengali as the court language in Barak or Suma Valley. Like Assamese and Bengoli, other language such as Hindi, English, Oriya, Bihari, Arabic, Parsi etc. are also speaks among the different linguistic groups. Among them many of the tribes in Assam are belong to Tibet-Burman linguistic family and still speak their own respective language of that language family. Others have forgotten their own dialect and accepted Assamese as their mother tong. Ahom are the example of that group of family. They entered Assam in the early part of 13<sup>th</sup> century, were speakers of Thai language, a branch of Siamese-Chinese linguistic family (Das, 2010). But gradually they abounded their original Thai language and accepted the Assamese language. There are some other small populations like



Khamyang, Tai-Phake, Turung etc. and Ahom priest family like Deodhai, Mohon and Bailung still preserved their own language.

The economy of Assam is mainly agrarian character. The system of agriculture is basically traditional form. Principle food crop of Assam is rice. It is grown both in the plains and hills. Some other crops of Assam are Sugar-cane, Tea, Banana, Jut etc. In the recent year's advantage of trade and commerce, industry, and various govt. development policy help to develop the agricultural system of Assam.

Assam is the land of fair and festivals. *Bihu* is the famous and popular festivals in Assam which is largely based on agriculture. The people of Assam celebrate three kinds of Bihu in a year, namely - the *Bohag Bihu or Rongali Bihu*, *Kati Bihu or Kangali Bihu* and *Maagh Bihu or Bhugali Bihu*. *Bohag Bihu* augurs the wise for a good harvest because this is the time when farmer start sowing. This Bihu is celebrated with the advent of Assamese New Year and start on the day of *Chait or Chaitra* (middle of April). *Bahag Bihu* is the most pleasuring and that's why, it is called *Rangali Bihu* and the charm of this *Bihu* is the Unique and graceful *Bihu* dance. *Kati Bihu* observed to mark the cutting and binding grains. This *Bihu* is celebrating during the Assamese month of *Kati* (middle of October). This Bihu is called *Kongali Bihu* because during this period scarcity of crops. *Magh Bihu* observed to marks the session of harvesting of gains. This Bihu begins on the last day of Assamese month *Poh* (middle of January), after the harvest is collected. It is also called as *Bhogali Bihu*. Except Bihu, other socio religious festivals are also observed in Assam like- *Sivarati*, *Ambubachi mela*, *Eid*, *Holi*, *Durga Puja*, *Laksmi Puja*, *Kali Puja*, *Biswakarma Puja*, *Janmastomi*, *Sankar Janmutsab* etc. There are other traditional festivals celebrate in different place of different ethno-cultural groups. Those are *Me-Dam-Me-Fi*, *Ali Aai Ligang*, *Garja*, *Porag*, *Hacha-kekan*, *Chirst-Mass*, *Karam Puja*, *Tusu Puja* etc. The traditional *Gamocha* (a towal woven in cloth) and the unique *Bihu* dance reflect the richness of Assamese culture.

Culturally, Assam has been regarded as a melting pot in North East region. The various migrant groups of people entered Assam from the neighboring countries including China, Myanmar and South-east Asia and most of the migrants were Mongoloids groups. From the West, Aryan influence also entered Assam. At that time Assam was the seat of hardcore Tantrik practices. But, the advent of 16th century, The Vaishnavite saint Srimanta Sankaradeva (1449-1568) brought in radical transformation in Assamese society. His *Bhakti* (devotional) movement changed Assamese society socially and culturally and this movement based on the liberal doctrine of *Vaishnava bhakti* or devotion. In that time the new trend was rooted in the societal degradation and cultural distortion that plagued many parts of India. Before Sankaradeva, social, religious and political life in Assam was in a shambles resulting in a society full of chaos and disorder. During that time (15<sup>th</sup> century) Assam presented a motley picture of diverse shades and grades of culture. The majority of the people in Assam belonged to non-Aryan tribes having distinct manners, customs and religious beliefs. Those people who professed Hinduism loosely adhered to *Vaishnavism* or *Saivism*. *Sāktism* bordering on extreme *Tāntricism* was also widely prevalent. The followers of these cults were all found indulging in evil practices like animal and sometimes even human sacrifices, magical rites, spells and the like. It was based on the philosophy of palate and sensual pleasures. The economically backward classes and the socially downtrodden became the victims of such ghastly practices. The Neo-Vaishnav Movement under the leadership of great Srimanta Sankaradeva and his disciples have provided another dimension to Assamese culture. A renewed Hinduisation in local forms took place, which was initially greatly supported by the Koch and later by the Ahom Kingdoms. The resultant social institutions such as *Namghar* and *Sattra* (the Vaishnav Monasteries) have become part of Assamese way life. The movement contributed greatly towards language, literature and performing and fine arts. It is also noticed that many a times, Vaishnav Movement attempted to introduce alien cultural

attributes and modify the way of life of common people. *Brajavali* a language specially created by introducing words from other Indian languages had failed as a language but left its traces on the Assamese language. Moreover, new alien rules were also introduced changing people's food habits and other aspects of cultural life. This had a greater impact on alienation of many local ethno-cultural and political groups in the later periods.

Assam has rich tradition of performing arts. Ankia Naat (*Onkeeya Naat*) is a traditional Vaishnav dance-drama (*Bhouna*) form popular since 15th century AD. It makes use of large masks of gods, goddesses, demons and animals and in between the plays a *Sutradhar* (*Xutrodhar*) keeps on telling the story. The Bihu dance and *Hucory* performed during the *Bohag Bihu*, *Kushan nritra* of Rajbongshi's, *Bargurumba* and *Bordoicikhla* dance of Bodos, *Mishing Bihu*, *Banjar Kekan* performed during *Chomangkan* by Karbis are some of the major folk dances. *Satriya* (*Sotriya*) dance related to Vaishnav tradition is a classical form of dance. Moreover, there are several other age-old dance-forms such as Barpeta's *Bhortal Nritya*, *Deodhoni Nritya*, *Ojapali*, *Beula Dance*, *Ka Shad Inglong Kardom*, *Nimso Kerung*, etc. The tradition of modern moving theatres is typical of Assam with immense popularity of many large theatre groups such as Kohinoor, Akhibard, Srimanta Sankardev, Abahan, Bhagyadevi, Hengul, Rajmahal, Itihas etc. At the same time musical tradition is also rich. Folk songs and music related to Bihu and other festivals dates back to time-immemorial. Borgeet, the popular Vaishnav songs are written and composed in 15th century. Assam has large numbers of traditional musical instruments including several types of drums like- *Dhol*, *Khol*, *Doba*, *Mridong*, *Tabla*, *Bor Taal*, *Khuti Tal*, *Dotara* and *Tokari*, *Khamok*, *Viponchi flutes*, cymbals and pipes etc.

In Assam, Symbolism in cultural practice is a very important part of Assamese way of life. Various elements are being used to represent beliefs, feelings, pride, identity, etc. *Tamulpan*, *Xorai* and *Gamosa* are three important symbolic

elements in Assamese culture. *Tamulpan* (the areca nut and betel leaves) or *guapan* (gua from *kwa*) are considered along with the Gamosa (a typical woven cotton or silk cloth with embroidery) as the offers of devotion, respect and friendship. The Tamulpan-tradition is an ancient one and is being followed since time-immemorial with roots in the aboriginal Austro-Asiatic culture. Xorai is a traditionally manufactured bell-metal article of great respect and is used as a container-medium while performing respectful offers. Moreover, symbolically many ethno-cultural groups use specific clothes to portray respect and pride.

Assam is also rich in tradition of crafts. The major crafts are Cane and bamboo craft, bell metal and brass craft, silk and cotton weaving, toy and mask making, pottery and terracotta work, wood craft, jewellery making, musical instruments making etc. Assam was also traditionally famous for Cottage industry, specially for spinning and weaving. *Pat* or pure silk production is essentially confined to Assam. Assam also produced *Muga*, the gold silk and the main producer of *ERI* or *ENDI*.

The state of Assam is famous with number of historical monuments and structures which reflect the glorious history of Assam. Most of these monuments were built during the Ahom era. Some of the important monuments of Assam are Rangghor, Talatal-Ghar, Jai doul, Siva doul, Vishnu doul, Kareng Ghar, Joysagar Pukhuri (tank), Gaurisagar Pukhuri (tank), Rudrasagar Pukhuri, Agnigar, Kamakhya Temple, Doul Govinda Temple, and *Sattras* etc. *Sattras* or Vaishnavite monasteries were also nerve centers of drawing and painting in ancient Assam.

### **The District**

Jorhat is the socially and culturally rich district of Assam and it was the last capital of Ahom kingdom. Gourinath singha was sifted the capital from Sivsagar to Jorhat in the year 1794. Jorhat is a part of Upper Assam and only town in the North East region to connect with India. It is located between 26<sup>0</sup>5'N- 27<sup>0</sup>5'N latitudes and

93<sup>0</sup>E- 94<sup>0</sup>5'E longitudes in the central part of the Brahmaputra valley. The district is bounded by Lakhimpur district on north, Nagaland state on the south, Sivasagar on the east and Golaghat, Nagaon and Karbi Along on the west. On the North of the district, the river Brahmaputra forms the largest riverine island of the world.

According to the census 2011 total population of Jorhat district was 1,091,295 while 557,944 male and 533,351 female. The density of population of the district is 383per.sq. km. Population growth over the decade 9.21 percent. The sex ratio is 956 while child sex (0-6) is 963 per every 1000 boys. The literacy rate of is 83.42% as almost the state literacy rate 73.18%. Literacy rate both male and female is 88.38 percent and 78.22 percent respectively. In district SC and ST population is 7.61% and 12.09% respectively of the total population (census report 2001). The district is spreading over

2851sq.km. cover by rural 278sq km and urban 69.64sq km. The mean annual rainfall of the district is 2029 mm.

In the early part of the Ahom rule, Jorhat was an inhospitable place, infested with wild animals. It was then within the dense forest that extended from the Naga Hills to the Brahmaputra. Ahom king Pratap Singha (1611-1649) wished to turn this area into an ideal township to be named Hastinapur, by capturing 1000 elephant at a place about 8 km to the east to the present town. For this purpose, Pratap Singha constructed a *gor* (massive earthen embankment) with a deep canal to stockade elephant from the jungle. This *gor* is now called *Hattigorh*. After that during the reign of Ahom King Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha (1751-1769) Jorhat seemed to have received serious attention of the Ahom kings for the first time. Rajeswar Singha married a Manipuri princess Kuranga Nayani, who brought a large retinue of Manipuri people with her. The king settled these people on a *Khat* land gives as a royal gift at a place called Sarusarai (present Jorhat town). This place is known as Mogolu Khat, from the word mogolu for Manipuri. During the time of Moamoria revolt Ahom Prince Minister, Punanada Buragohain had to bear the brunt this revolt

established many Koths or forts to encounter the Moamories. He built two such forts on the two bank of the stream Dessoi (Bhogodoi) and established a camp on the western bank of the Dessoi, called it Dessoi Bahor, from which he directed fight against the rebels. On his advice Swargadeo Gaurinath Singha (1780-1795) shifted the Ahoms capital from Rangpur to Dessoi Bahor in 1794. The stream Dessoi was dug and made to flow by the new capital. Two markets called Ckokihat and Masorhat grew up near the two forts. From these two (jor) markets (hat) the new capital came to be called Jorhat. (Baruah, T.C, 1997).

Therefore, the name 'Jorhat' or 'Jorehaut' was come from two *hats* (market) Masorhat and Chokihat which existed on the two different banks of the river Bhogdoi during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century; from these two hats the name Jorhat was emerged. Jorhat today has grown into a thriving cosmopolitan town with a strong sense of character and identity.

After shifting the capital, Ahom King was built a protective *gor* (embankment) round the capital, the eastern portion of which later became a road and this road is now called *Gar Ali*. It can be observed that when Ahom shifted capital to Jorhat, at that time Moamoria revolt gained in the Ahom state. Therefore, in this tumultuous time they could not be made permanent construction in the new capital. However, the king and the nobleman bult some roads and dug a number of tanks around the capital such as, *Rajmao Pukhuri*, *Buragohain Pukhuri*, *Bolia Gohain Pukhuri*, *Kotoki Pukhuri*, *Choladhora Pukhuri*, *Mitha Pukhuri*, *Buri Gosani Dewal*, Lord Shiva Temple at *Hatigarh*, *Rajmoidum* (burial mounds, one of Swargadeo Purandar Singha and other of Swargadeo Kamaleswar Singh) etc.

Through the Civil Sub-division under Sibsagar district at Jorhat was formed in the year 1869. This place was declared as administration head quarter of the undivided Sibsagar district in 1911 which comprised of the present Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat and parts of Karbi-Anglong district. Jorhat sub division has declared as a full fledged district in 1983. The present Jorhat district consists of three sub-

divisions in the namely – Jorhat Sub-division, Majuli Sub-division and Titabor Sub-division. The district has 8 Development Blocks, namely, (a) Jorhat Development Block (b) East Jorhat Development Block (c) Central Jorhat Development Block (d) North-West Jorhat Development Block (e) Kaliapani Development Block (f) Titabor Development Block (g) Majuli Development Block and (h) Ujani Majuli Development Block. There are 6 revenue circles in the district namely, (a) Jorhat East Revenue Circle (b) Jorhat West Revenue Circle (c) Teok Revenue Circle (d) Titabor Revenue Circle (e) Mariani Revenue Circle (f) Majuli Revenue Circle (Statistical handbook of Assam, 2011). According to 2011 Census, there are 848 villages and 11 towns in the district. The district has 110 Gaon Panchayats, 10 police stations and 6 constituencies of Assam Legislative Assembly.

Jorhat is widely regarded as the cultural capital of Assam, with Majuli the largest river island, being the seat of the Vaishnavite cultural capital of economically one of the prosperous district of Assam, agriculture and tea being its forte commercially. Jorhat and Mariani towns are important trade centers catering to the hill district of Nagaland and part of upper Assam. It is the best laid out town in Upper Assam with broad roads, cutting each other at right angles. The variety of heterogeneity of the town population, specially business community – comprising of Punjabis, Biharis, Marwaris, Bengalis and even odd South Indian is something commendable.

The river Brahmaputra forms the largest riverine Island of the world; Majuli which is situated on the North of the district. It is spreading over 924.6 sq. Km. with a population of about 1.50 lakh. Majuli is the principal place of pilgrimage of Vaishnavites since the ages of the Ahom rules. Majuli is world famous on *Sattras* and *Sattriye* culture which was initiated by Sankardeva (1449-1568). In every *Sattras* the *Sattradhikars* preaching and teaching the Vaishnavism religion. Each *Sattras* has unknown wealth of Vaishnava Scriptures and extensive revenue free lands being cultivated by the “Bhakats” of the *Sattras*.

Jorhat is considered to be a good place for modern education. The Jorhat Govt. High School is the oldest school established in 1883 with special facilities for Science teaching. The Jagannath Barooah College is the oldest College in the district. It was set up in 1930 and said to be first college in upper Assam. Jorhat is also the seat of learning with a first and only Agricultural University in the whole N.E. Region. The Assam Agricultural University was established in 1948, in addition to the Engineering College, Regional Research Laboratory (RRL) in 1959, Normal School, Prince of Wales College of Polytechnic (1926), Tocklai Tea Research Centre (1911) along with other prestigious establishment like Air Force Base, Industrial Training Institution, Institute of Post Graduate Studies, Sericulture Training college, North-East Institute of Science and Technology (NEIST), Jorhat Medical College (2010), Dr. J.K. Saikia Homeopathic Medical College, ONGC and Oil etc.

The Dakiakuwa *Bor-Naamghor* is one of the important places of the district. It is one of the famous *Bor-Naamghar* (place of worship) in Assam, established by saint-reformer Madhabdeva in 1461. It is located at Dhekiakhowa village of Jorhat 3.5 km away from National Highway 37. From the time of saint-reformer Sri Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, this *Naamghar* has been continuing as an important centre for Vaishnav Religion. Lachit Borphukan *Maidam* is also as the historical and important place of Jorhat district. He was the greatest ever Ahom General who defeated the mighty Mughals at Saraighat in 1672. It is located at Gohain gaon of Meleng-Hulungapar. Other way, Thengal Bhawan is built in 1880 by Raibahadur Shiva Prasad Barooah (In 1929, he published a weekly Assamese newspaper). The Raja *Moidum* (vault) which lies on the south bank of Tocklai River on the northern side of Jorhat town is burial place of King Purandar Singha who expired on 1 October 1894.

In the year 1915, Jorhat Sahitya Shabha was formed in Jorhat followed by Axom Sahitya Sabha (Ôxôm Xahityô Xôbha or "Assam Literary Society") on 27



December 1917 Axom Sahitya Sabha was formed in Sivasagar. The Chandra Kanta Handique Bhavan' was donated by late Radha Kanta Handique. It is the Headquarters of the Axom Sahitya Sabha in Jorhat. The district is able to produce many creative writers, historians, journalists, etc. Among them; Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya was the first Assamese people to win India's highest literature award, the Gyanpith Award. It is the home of internationally reputed ideologists and educationalists like Krishna Kanta Handique, founder Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University.

The district has a number of small and cottage industries in the field of bamboo and cane work, furniture making, jewelery and others. National Highway 37 connected Jorhat with the rest of the country and N.F. Railway connected via Mariani Junction and Jorhat Town.

Though the British rule, was not free from rebellions and revolutions, it contributed to the re emergence of historical town Jorhat. From the very fast decade of the British rule, the great revolutionists who emerged were Gomdhar Konwar, Moniram Dewan, Kushal Konwar, Piyali Baruah, Bahadur Gaonburah many others and they organized revolution against the British rule. In 1839, the British system of administration came into vogue an established police station. During the great "Sepoy Mutiny" in 1857, Moniram Dewan and Piyali Baruah was sabotaged planned a revolution. But, they not succeeded and these leaders were hanged in public at this very place in 1858. In the freedom movement Jorhat also made significant contribution. Prominent freedom fighters like Kuladhar Chalia, Suren Barua, Debeswar Sarma and others took active part in the movement, particularly after the visited of Mahatma Gandhi in 1921 (Baruah, T.C, 1997).

Jorhat is well connected with the all major cities of North East India. The national Highway 37 connects Jorhat with all major cities of Assam. There is regular bus service from Jorhat to major cities of Assam. The railway service also connected Jorhat to Guwahati. The Rowriah is one of the Airport of Jorhat district. The airport

is located within the city and make traveling to the place by air. There is a direct flight from Jorhat to Calcutta, Guwahati, and Mumbai etc. Jorhat airport is fully functional and have many flights to different parts of the country.

### **The Study village**

The study was located in Mogroi village of Jorhat district of Assam. The village is situated under 17 No. East Nakachari Gaon Panchayat of East Jorhat Development Block under Mariani Constituency in the Eastern side on the border of Assam and Nagaland. It is under Mariani Police Station of Titabar Sub-division and 4km distance from *Dhodar Ali* and approximately 38 km distance from district headquarter. The village is surrounded by Nagaland in the East, Sotai Naginijan Gar-Bosti Poth (road) in the West, Sottai Tea estate in the North and Naginijan Tea Estate on the South. The neighbouring village Phukan Habi Gaon, both Assamese and *Bongali* is there. Another neighbouring village Tiruhills, A Naga village located in the eastern part of the village and the people of these villages go to town through this village Mogroi. The Mogroi River is flows through the village.

According to some old people of the village, during the reign of Ahom king Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha many Manipuri people were coming with Manipuri princess Kuronganayani. The people who came with princess Kuronganayani settled down on the bank of the river Dessoi by Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha. According to Rajpotra the Mogroi village also included in the Dessoi valley and people said that some of the Manipuri peoples living in this villages. The Ahoms called the Manipuri people Mogolu. Later on People believe that the word Mogroi or Mogoloi is derived from the word Mogolu.

On the other hand, there is also another belief of the people of the village that in this area the Mongolio People were living. The Traditional symbol of the Mongolio people was *Mogor* which was made very beautifully by soil. As the

people of the area could prepare *Mogor* so, the area of the village was called Mogroi.

According to some old people of the village, the village people are migrated people from different parts of the Assam and majority people were migrate from Upper Assam. Some of the people of Ahom community of upper Assam was migrating to this village at the time of Maana attract. Tea garden labour or locally known as *Bongali* people were also migrate to this village during the British period from different parts of India like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orrisa etc. At present those Tea garden labour are worked at agricultural labour.

The total population of the village is 1307 where male population is 727 against the 580 female populations (Source: Asha worker). Among the total population the Ahom population of the village is 653 where 385 males and 268 female (Source: Field work, March-September 2011). The total area of the village is 2986 bighas of land. The village people are mainly two communities Ahom and Tea garden worker. The most of the people of this village is Ahom and the main occupation of the villagers is agriculture.

The climate condition of the village is moderate. During the summer season, there is heavy rainfall which is always helpful to the agriculturist. Again, when there is no rain it becomes hot and temperature is extremely high. The rainy season is start from April to September. Then the winter season appears and continues up to March. This winter season also favours the agriculturist for production of the various kinds of vegetables. In this way, agriculture of the villagers generally depends on nature.

The settlement pattern of the village is one line system unlike the lane system in the town. Houses are located on the both sides of the PWD road and village road. Most of the villagers prefer to Assam type model house. Many houses are generally constructed following E-size and L-size model having various rooms, so that large

accommodation can be enjoyed. The neighboring houses are closely related to each other as they are separated from the same family.

In the village there is one *Zovak Sangha* (Youth club). It is known as Mogroi Juvak Sangha and Puthibharal (library), established in the year of 1988. The aim of this *Zuvak Sangha* is to unity among the village people and socio- cultural development of the villagers. The Young people of the village are the member of this Sangha and they met 4-5 days in every week at there. The Sangha organized annual conference in every two year in the village. They are basically organized cultural programme; dance competition, Quiz competition etc. to develop the spiritual and moral values among the village people. *Srimanta Joyti Maina Parijat* is a child organization of the village. This organization helps to mental and physical development of the children in the village. There are two *Namghar* (community Prayer hall) in the village. In the Namghar has exercised the religious faith and practice. Some of the socio-religious programme i.e. Bhona, Jamastami, Nam-Kritan etc. are organized by the village people in *Namghar*. There are three L.P schools, one M.E. School and one high school situated in the village. These are Mogroi L.P School, Fonidhor Boruah L.P School, Tiruhills L.P School, Donikona M.E. School and high school. Educationally the village people are educated, but the level of education is low. Village Defense Party (VDP) of the village has maintained the problematic situation among the village people.

There is a one primary health centre in the village, which is known as “Donikona Sub-Centre” established in 1981. This is only the health centre of this village. But, at present the medical facility of this village is not so good. For any complications they have to go to Nakachari PHC or Jorhat Town for Futher treatment.

The economy of the villagers is based on agriculture. The villagers are cultivating various types of crops and the crops are sold in the local market. The family structure of villagers is both joint and nuclear type. The villagers are good

relation with Naga people and they live like as brother and sister. The village people are Hindu religious particularly Vaishnavism. The people of this village are deeply influence in Sankar Sangha and majority of the villagers are Sankar Sangha people. The government has implemented various rural development schemes for the villagers such as schemes Pradhan Mantri Gram Sarok Yujna, SHG, NREGA, Sarvasiksha etc.

Communication system in the village is not so good. The main road of the village is known as “Sahid Nabin Gogoi Road” which is linked the village with Dhodar Ali. The road is half metal and half Kacha. Many people in this village transport their own cars, Bikes, Bicycle, Maxic, Bus etc. There is a one Sub-Post office the village namely Mogroi Post Office. This Post Office helps the villagers to limited saving account and sends the Letter and Parcels. The Peon regularly delivered Letters and Parcels at home to the Villagers. There is no Bank in the village. A *Bazar* (market) is also situated near the village known as *Naginijan Bazar*. The market is weekly but there are a number of permanent shops in the market along with PCO, DTP centre etc. The villagers are selling their huge amount of agricultural products in this Bazar. Another weekly Two Bazar is located at a distance of 4 km and 7 km respectively. Majority of the people in the village are in service of the Military Department.

The village has one water supply established by Public Health Department in the year 1998. But at present the water supply is not workable. Now, the villagers have taken water from the tube wells and ponds. The electricity facility in the village is available.

The present study to analyses the Socio-Cultural change in the Ahom society in the context of Mogroi Village of Jorhat district in Assam.