

HISTORY OF GORKHA GRAZIERS IN LOWER ASSAM

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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HISTORY OF GORKHA GRAZIERS IN LOWER ASSAM

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Submitted

**In partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in History of Mizoram University, Aizawl.**



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in this thesis entitled “**History of Gorkha Graziers in Lower Assam**” is a research work carried out by Tibrata Sharma, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of History & Ethnography, Mizoram University **Reg no. MZU/Ph.D./1163 of 03.10.2018** under my guidance and supervision. In preparing the thesis Tibrata Sharma has complied with all the requirements as laid down in the Ph.D. Regulation of the University. The thesis is the original work of the scholar and has not been submitted for any degree to any other University.

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DECLARATION

I, Ms. Tibrata Sharma, hereby declare that the subject matter of the thesis entitled, **“History of Gorkha Graziers in Lower Assam”** is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University / Institute.

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Glossary

<i>Akshata</i>	Rice.
<i>Basti</i>	Village.
<i>Beparis</i>	Businessmen.
<i>Bathan</i>	A bunch of Cows.
<i>Bharat Chhodo</i>	Quit India.
<i>Chuirā</i>	Flattened rice.
<i>Guwala</i>	Milkmen.
<i>Chhang Ghar</i>	House made of bamboo and straw.
<i>Dhan</i>	Paddy.
<i>Doorba</i>	Grass.
<i>Domai</i>	Tailors.
<i>Ghatak</i>	Matchmaker.
<i>Gamocho</i>	Made of cotton clothes, marked as pride of Assam.
<i>Guwali Ghar, Goaths,</i>	Cowshed.
<i>Jati</i>	Caste.
<i>Khuties</i>	Cowherd.
<i>Kami</i>	Smiths.
<i>Khukhuri</i>	A traditional Sword of Gorkhas.
<i>Lal panda</i>	Priests in Kamakhya temple who wear red costume.
<i>Nepali Panda</i>	Nepali Priest in Kamakhya temple.
<i>Nagorik</i>	Citizenship.
<i>Sarkis</i>	Cobblers.
<i>Visarjan</i>	Immersion of the idol.

Abbreviation

ALRRA	Assam Land Revenue Regulation Act
AAGSU	All Assam Gorkha Student Union
AGS	Assam Gorkha Sanmelan
APCC	Assam Pradesh Congress Committee
ASS	Assam Sahitya Sabha
ALGL	All India Gurkha League
APGL	Assam Provincial Gurkha League
AGP	Assam Gana Parishad
AGA	Assam Graziers Association
AANSU	All Assam Nepali Student Union
BAC	Bodoland Autonomous Council
GNLF	Gorkha National Liberation Front
D-Voters	Doubtful Voters
NRC	National Registered Citizenship
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
OBC	Other Backward Class
PGR	Professional Grazing Reserves
RAP	Restricted Area Permit
SPDUSL	Sitajkhala Prathamik Dugdha Utpadak Samabai Limited
SPDC	Special Protected Class Demand Committee.
TGA	Tezpur Grazier Association
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Asom
VGR	Village Grazing Reserves

Chapter-1

Introduction

One of the most important watershed achievements in the evolution of culture and civilization, perhaps, after the discovery of fire was the domestication of animals. It was indeed a pioneering discovery, from a nomadic set of people who moved across vast expanse of territory in search of food, men settled more or less into an established pattern of life whereby they started to live in permanent enclaves with domesticated animals around them¹. The subtle and variegated ways in which men could command themselves over a vast array of subjects soon saw them tend to animals in a way that offered sustainable lifestyle; the animals that were at first a source of meat soon came to be coveted for their diverse range of applications: from being a source of high protein food to being means of livelihood. Animal herding thus emerged as reorientation to earlier experiences of animal hunting. This reorientation from being a hunter of animals to understanding the various other ways in which it could be useful to human being is an interesting chapter in transformational journey. The evolution from hunting to herding marked a radical shift and heralded a new period in human experience and ever since has been part of our daily exploits².

Archaeological research since the 1950s has furnished large information on the origins of food-producing economies in the Near East, including the domestication of animals and incipient forms of pastoralism. It is now more or less clear that the emergence of a food-producing economy consisted of two forms of economic activities: agriculture and animal husbandry. In fact, these two models of economic activity overlapped each other not just in the Near East but also elsewhere.³ While much of the studies have been carried out on agriculture, the latter is less spoken and still lesser written about. And it is in this context that this research work assumed significance. Animal herding is a traditional form of subsistence farming

¹ Spencher Trotter, "Pasture", in *The Scientific Monthly*, Vol.18, No.4, (October 2018), 395.

² Spencher Trotter, *Pasture*, 396.

³ Kamyar Abdi, "The early Development of Pastoralism in the central Zagros Mountain", in *World pre-history*, vol.17, No.4, (December 2003),15.

practiced among the rural population throughout the world. History tells us that animal herding became the prime and primary source of livelihood when people started to choose profession to live with family and society in the deeper past. Animal farming was also practiced in other societies in different parts of the world. African countries boast of animal herding communities like Bedouins, Berbers, Maasai, Somali, Boran, Turkana who lived in semi-arid region. They raised cattle like camels, goats, sheep, and sold milk, meat, animal skin and wool. In the central valley of Tarija, southern Bolivia, the majority of rural households have developed household strategies in which farming and grazing are combined as important components in which their life is lived. Pastoral populations continue to herd their animals in the arid lands of Africa, the Mideast, Central Asia, Mongolia, highland Tibet and the Andes, and arctic Scandinavia and Siberia⁴ .

In the context of India, animal herding has been one of the oldest and important sources of occupations even since the age of Rig-Veda. Arthsashtra reflects the significance of milk and its products with rite and social importance⁵. Other Vedas, Puranas, epics, myths and folktales often refer to animal herding in the distant past, especially cows. In Agni Purana, we find that Kings were envisaged to preserve the cattle of the country. Cattle rearing has been an integral part of the agriculture and economy since ancient times, but its importance as a source of milk, meat, draught power, and rearing techniques have changed over time. Cattle rearing is mentioned in the great Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharatha as a practiced by all and was an important occupation⁶. Cows were considered valuable during Aryan's time, and they were considered sacred and not to be killed. They were the people's primary property during the early stages of Aryan civilization. When the Aryans first settled, they were agriculturists who recognised the value of cattle in agriculture. Furthermore, bullocks and buffaloes were required as beasts of burden for drawing carts and caravans, cow dung was required for manuring the fields, and milk was

⁴ David Preston, "Post-peasant capitalist Graziers: The 21st century in southern Bolivia" in *Mountain Research and Development*, vol.18, No.2, (May,1998) ,151.

⁵ Shereen Ratnagar, *The other Indians Essays on Pastoralists and pre-historic Tribal People*, (New Delhi, Demy, 2004),19.

⁶ N. Khan & A.K Parashari, "Development of Indian Dairy and Challenges: An Overview", in *Journal of International Academic Research for Multidisciplinary*, vol.4, issue.1, (January,2020),431-437.

required for daily consumption and offering libations, as well as for the preparation of butter, ghee, curd, various types of cakes, and so on⁷. The higher-class members of the Hindu community raised cattle in the country for socio-religious as well as other reasons. Due to a government-imposed restriction on cow slaughter in several Indian states since it is regarded as a sacred animal in Hindu mythology, it is not employed in the meat industry⁸.

It is understandable that the early Aryans were concerned about the safety, "going and returning" of their cattle. They did, in fact, form gotras and gosthis to protect their cattle from wild beasts and robbers. The literal meanings of gotra and gosthis are common cow-stall and common pastureland, respectively⁹. According to Dr. Das, the early days were insecure, so a number of families came to an agreement to build a strong common enclosure to protect their cattle. Families who shared a common cow-stall belonged to the same gotra, as did several gotra who shared a common pasture-land share same ghosthi. Thus, a common interest in cattle provided the foundation for the development of socio-economic life. Aryans waged conflicts with the tribes to conquer their cattle because they viewed it as valuable property. They used to take cattle out to pastures in the morning to graze and bring them in at night because they understood the value of forests and pastures. However, the Rigvedic people can be referred to as a largely pastoral people because of the Rigveda's frequent references to the cow and bull¹⁰. The Rigveda uses the term gavishthi, which means "search for cows," and cows appear to have been the most important form of wealth. When one hears about priestly gifts, one usually thinks of cows. The term *go* (cow) appears 176 times, and *vrsabha* (bull) appears 170 times in rigveda. Both terms indicate the significance of cattle rearing¹¹. Again, in the Sutta Nipāta's of Brahmanadhammika Sutta, we find the

⁷ N. Khan & A.K Parashari, *Development of Indian Dairy and Challenges: An Overview*,432.

⁸N. Khan & A.K. Parashari, "Dynamics of Livestock Husbandry in Western Trans-Ghaghra (Devi Patan Region), Uttar Pradesh: A case Study", in *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences* (2017),314-329.

⁹ R. Ganguli, "Cattle and cattle-Rearing in Ancient India", in *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1931),217-18.

¹⁰ R. Ganguli, *Cattle and cattle-Rearing in Ancient India*,218.

¹¹ R.S. Sharma, *Indias's Ancient Past*, (Oxford University Press,2005),95.

Buddha enumerating the benefits of the cow and strongly opposing cow-killing¹². The Buddhist text Sutta Nipata declares cattle to be the givers of food, beauty, and happiness (*annoda, va tinada, and sukhada*), and thus pleads for their protection while emphasising their importance. In the early Christian centuries, there is inscriptional evidence urging the protection of cows alongside the Brahmanas, especially in forest tracts. It is a tacit recognition of the importance of cattle for agriculture and agrarian expansion. Draught animals such as bulls and bullocks were widely used¹³. Cattle's breeding was widely practised during the Mauryan and post-Mauryan eras; it was a significant source of milk, meat, and draught power, and the herd size was large. According to Kautilya's Arthashastra, veterinarians were employed to administer the appropriate dosage of medication to the animals based on the type of the sickness. It has been asserted that Arthashastra, which dates to the Gupta era, illustrates the significance of milk and its products in terms of ritual and social significance¹⁴. *Ain-e-akbari*, a book written during Akbar's reign, mentions the taxation of cattle and the requirement of farmers to engage in cattle farming, which was a significant occupation alongside agriculture during the mediaeval period. The pastoral communities provided cows and draught cattle to villages in the agricultural zone, as well as dairy products like ghee, for the town market. Several other books, including "Tuzak-i-Baburi" (Memories of Babur), "Humayunnama," and "Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri," among others, that were written during the reign of various emperors of the mediaeval era emphasised the significance of cattle rearing for milk production, draught power, meat, manures, bones, and skin, among other things¹⁵.

The Himalayan region of India in particular has been home to several animal herding communities. It would seem that more than 200 tribes comprising 6 percent of the country's population are engaged in grazing animals or as animal herders, India is a home to the largest livestock population, though, without a

¹² R. Ganguli, 1931,220.

¹³ B. Prasad Sahu, "Patterns of animal use in Ancient India, Source" in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 48 (1987).

¹⁴ Shereen Ratnagar, *The other Indians Essays on Pastoralists and pre-historic Tribal People*,19-20.

¹⁵ D.P Chattopadhyay & I. Habib, *History of Science Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, PHISPC, Centre for Studies in Civilizations (2011), 60.

comprehensive policy on livestock. Some of the important herding communities in India are the Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh, Gujjars of Jammu Kashmir, Jats of Gujrat, Kinnaur of Himachal, Kurubas of Karnataka, Bhutias of Sikkim, Monpas of Arunachal etc.¹⁶

The Northeast India has a rich history of cattle grazing. It is inhabited by set of communities like Kukis, Nagas, Mizo, Adis, Assamese, Karbis, Lepchas, Monpas, Karboloks, Gorkhas, and Galos etc. Livestock such as sheep, buffaloes, cows and goats had been grazing in the forests and meadows of the state. Animals rearing played a big role in these comparatively less developed states as it had limited exposures to the global agricultural trends that transformed nations elsewhere. But animal herding is much more than what is related to the economy. It has been part of the lifestyle and story of the people. Livestock not only contributed to the livelihood of the people, being the main income generation activity, but also assisted in agriculture and helped to meet the increasing demand for protein rich food items such as milk, egg, and meats¹⁷. The Gorkha Graziers of Brahmaputra Valley in Lower Assam received good attention and focus since the colonial times, but today they are one of the marginalised sections in the society. In Assam, the existence of Grazier is witnessed, but they always remained the un-heard and unsung people. Even though they were a part of the collective past, Gorkha Graziers are rarely addressed in the history of Assam and its region. Despite their Presence since the colonial time, their way of living, custom and traditions were considered backward, underdeveloped and their voices and sufferings were often ignored by the authority in negotiating with such people.

¹⁶ Vijay Paul Sharma, Ilse Kohler-Rollefson, & John Morton , '*Pastoralism in India; A scoping study*' in Centre for Management in Agriculture,India,2003,[accessed on 01.08.2018](#).

1.1. Marginalisation

The process of relegating, downgrading, or excluding people from the benefits of society is referred to as marginalization¹⁸. Marginalisation can be characterised as the method of being ignored and sidelined in the community in which a individual is living. Such disregard may be social, political or for any different reason. Being marginalised here alludes to being isolated from the rest of the society, constrained to possess the borders and edges and not to be at the middle of things. Marginalised individuals are not considered to be a portion of the dynamic life of the society¹⁹.

Marginalisation describes the placement of individuals, groups or populations out of doors of ‘mainstream society’, dwelling on the margins of these within side the centre of strength, of cultural dominance and economical and social welfare. It is defined as, “a process by which a group or individual is denied access to important positions and symbols of economic, religious, or political power within any society...a marginal group may actually constitute a numerical majority...and should perhaps be distinguished from a minority group, which may be small in numbers, but has access to political or economic power”²⁰. The marginalised are those who are economically, legally, politically, or socially marginalized, overlooked, or neglected, and so vulnerable to changes in their livelihood. Marginalization is a complex concept with many layers. At times, entire societies are marginalized on a national or global scale, while classes and communities are marginalized from the prevailing social order on a local scale²¹.

As a result, marginalisation is a multifaceted, ever-changing phenomenon tied to social position. It denies people on the margins opportunities and outcomes while benefiting those in the center. Discrimination and social exclusion are merged in marginalization. It is an affront to human dignity and a violation of human rights,

¹⁸ O.P. Dwivedi, R. Khator & J. Nef, “Marginalization and Exclusion” in *Management Development in a Global context*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, (2007),258.

¹⁹ Bob Mullaly, *The New Structural Social work*, (Oxford University press, London, 2007),252.

²⁰ Marshall Gordan, *Dictionary of Sociology*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006),163.

²¹ Carolyn Kagan & Mark Burton, “Working with People who are Marginalised by the Social System: Challenges for Community Psychological Work”, (online at <http://www.compsy.org.uk>).

particularly the right to live as equal citizens²². In India, the outcastes, represented by the antyajias and shudras belonging to the social categories of untouchables and others practising unclean ascribed occupations and extra- mural manual activities of various kinds, are designated as the marginalised in the Indian subcontinent and especially within the broad fold of Hindu social orders. They are stigmatized and considered impure by the higher varnas, such as the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, within the traditional cultural framework of the varna system. They are socially, culturally, politically, economically, and even geographically conditioned to thrive on the margins of society. They have traditionally been associated with ascribed occupations, forcing them to concentrate on low-paying or "unclean" tasks, endure exploitative working conditions, and stay socially and politically insecure. Many of these societal and cultural stigmas also apply to grazier communities, women and religious minorities²³.

1.2. Concept of Marginalisation

The concept "marginalization" refers to a scenario in which an individual or a group has been completely neglected. Since the dawn of human history, people have been marginalized as a community or as a demographic constellation. Robert Park was the first to introduce the concept of marginality, which he characterized as a minor subject in his analysis of the causes and consequences of human movement²⁴. According to the Encyclopedia of Public Health —*to be marginalized is to be placed in the margins and thus excluded from the privilege and power found at the centre*”²⁵.

Later, in particular in Latin America, the concept of marginality or marginalization became popular as a term that 'captured backward ess,' not of immigrants in developing countries, but of people in developing countries who fail or are prevented from participating in the economic, political, and cultural transition to

²² Globalisation and Marginalisation: Discussion Guide to the Jesuit Task Force Report”, Sydney, July 2007, (online at <http://www.sjweb.info>).

²³ Tulika Chakravarty, “Marginalisation and development of women in fishing community: A case study of Jelepara”, a Ph.D. thesis, submitted to the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies Management, (Sikkim university),2016.

²⁴ Hartley Dean, “Marginalisation, Outsiders”, in George Ritzer (ed.) *The Blackwell encyclopadia of sociology*, vol.vi. (Blackwell, publishing, USA,2007):2765.

²⁵ George Ritzer, *The Blackwell encyclopedia of sociology*, (Blackwell Publishing, USA,2007).

modernity. They were stopped because modernity, it is said, makes the subservient status and cultural differences of rural peoples and urban poor who are not sufficiently absorbed into the formal economic, political, and social mainstream aberrant. The term marginalization has been mainly replaced by the phrase exclusion in recent years²⁶.

1.3. Types of Marginalised Group

a) Socially Marginalised Group:

In a society, marginalisation refers to the exclusion of certain groups of people. It appears that society is unconcerned about their plight or survival. Certain segments of the population are excluded or deprived of normal activities as a result of this exclusion. Another aspect of social exclusion from dominant sections of society is social stigma. These deprived sections also face other types of problems, such as a lack of opportunities; the society keeps them away from the mainstream, and they have very few social networks and interactions - and these are primarily the lower castes or ethnic groups in society²⁷. Globally, entire societies can be marginalised, while classes and communities can be marginalised from the dominant social order. Similarly, ethnic groups, families, and individuals can be marginalised within communities. To some extent, marginalisation is a shifting phenomenon linked to social status. For example, an individual or group may have high social status at one point in time, but as social changes occur, they lose this status and become marginalised. Similarly, despite being marginalised from society's mainstream, many civic organisations in South Africa during the apartheid era played crucial roles in the resistance movement. Once apartheid ended, their situation changed. They were incorporated into the government, along with some of the resistance groups' most prominent members. At the local level, on the other hand, those young men who had high status as "freedom fighters" virtually overnight became outcasts because their reliance on using violence to quell other violence had no place in the

²⁶H. Dean, "Marginalization, outsiders" ,2765.

²⁷ Sukhraj Kaur, "Protective provisions for the marginalized sections of a society, a critique of Socio legal impediments", a Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Department of Law, (Panjab University,2019),5.

rhetoric of the new South Africa. These are some illustrations of changes in marginalisation that accompany social and political change²⁸.

b) Economically Marginalised Groups:

The existence of a person in society is diminished by marginalisation. A marginalised individual believes that he is unimportant in society. They have no active participation in the State's economic activities. They lack a voice and continue to exist as worthless members of society. They lack resources and are isolated from the rest of society. All of this will have a negative impact on their existence as humans and members of society²⁹.

c) Politically Marginalised Groups:

Political marginalisation occurs when a group of people are denied the opportunity to participate in the political or democratic processes. They do not have a say in their political process for a variety of reasons. They are not permitted to run as candidates or vote in the election. As a result of their lack of participation, they are denied many of the rights that others in that society enjoy. As a result, they are denied the benefits that come with having political rights³⁰.

1.4. Reasons responsible for marginalisations

The following are some of the reasons for the social isolation or social deprivation of certain groups:

- 1) **Exclusion:** Marginalisation leads to the exclusion of a group of people from the mainstream. They are isolated from the social and political process by the influential section of the society. They are treated as people having no importance in the society. They stand isolated from the society in which they are living.
- ii) **Globalization:** Globalization has also contributed to the miseries of the marginalized sections. Globalization has brought cheers to the well to do sections of the society whereas there is nothing to cheer for the marginalized sections. In their case it has further contributed to new forms of exploitation as in the name of development, these sections are further exploited.

²⁸Carolyn Kagan & Mark H Burton, "Marginalisation" in *Community Psychology*, 2005.

²⁹ Sukhraj Kaur, "Protective provisions for the marginalized sections of a society, a critique of Socio legal impediments,5.

³⁰Kaur, "Protective provisions for the marginalized sections of a society, a critique of Socio legal impediments,6.

iii) **Displacement:** This is another impact of development taking place in developing countries. Development comes at a cost to certain sections of the society. The government for various purposes acquires the land of the people and they get displaced from their land. While this has no bearing as such to the rich people, the poor and downtrodden or the weaker among them are unable to make a new beginning.

Marginalization happens simultaneously at the micro and macro levels. Often, they intersect each other in many ways. The following section will discuss how marginalization occurs at different levels, i.e., individual, group, community, and global.

a. **Individual**

Marginalization at the individual level results in an individual's exclusion from-meaningful participation in society. An individual can face discrimination across different social institutions, such as family, schools, and neighbourhood, at workplaces, or places of worship. Single parents, persons with disability, homosexuals, the elderly, are marginalized individually, as most of them have little association with communities. Another example of individual marginalization is the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from the labour force. Employers view individuals with disabilities as people who potentially jeopardize productivity, increase the rate of absenteeism, and create accidents in the workplace. Employers are often concerned about what they consider the excessive cost of accommodating people with disabilities. The marginalization of individuals with disabilities is prevalent today across the globe despite legislative protection, the Employment Equity Act, academic achievements, and skills and training.

b. **Communities**

Many communities experience marginalization. The example that we will look at in this Section is on aboriginal, Grazier communities in many countries of the world. The marginalization of aborid communities is a product of colonization. As a result of colonialism, aboriginal communities lost their land, were forced into destitute areas, lost their sources of income, and were excluded from the labour market. Additionally, aboriginal communities lost their culture and values through forced

assimilation and lost their rights in society. Today various communities in Europe continue to be marginalized from society due to the development of practices, policies and programs that met the needs of white people and not the needs of the marginalized groups themselves³¹.

1.5. Concept of social exclusion

The concept of social exclusion is complex and multifaceted. Because the term "social exclusion" is so evocative, ambiguous, multidimensional, and expansive, it can be defined in a variety of ways. Despite this, the difficulty in defining exclusion, as well as the fact that it intersects and is understood differently depending on the context³². It is defined in a nutshell as the process by which an individual or household suffers from a lack of resources or a social connection to the larger community or society.

According to Hilary Silver, Livelihood, secure permanent employment, earnings, property, credit, or land, minimal or prevailing consumption levels, education, skills, and cultural capital, the welfare state, citizenship and legal equality, democratic participation, public goods, the nation or dominant race, family and sociability, and humour are some of the scales on which people are excluded and included³³. Barnes' ideas on these indicators are very similar. He looks at seven aspects of social exclusion: financial situation, durable goods ownership, housing quality, neighborhood impression, personal social interactions, and physical and psychological well-being³⁴.

Jehoel- Gijbers and Vrooman set out a conceptual framework for social exclusion, also treating it as a multidimensional phenomenon, which includes four elements, namely, material deprivation and inadequate access to government and semi-

³¹ Kaur, "Protective provisions for the marginalized sections of a society, a critique of Socio legal impediments, 5-6.

³² Roa, Chinna Yagati & Karakoti Sudhakara, "Exclusion and Discrimination Concept perspective and Challenges", (Kanishaka Publishers, New Delhi, 2010), 63.

³³ Silver Hilary, *The process of Social Exclusion: The Dynamics of an Evolving Concept*, Critical Quest, (Brown University, CPRC Working paper 95, 2007), 12.

³⁴ Silver Hilary, *The process of Social Exclusion: The Dynamics of an Evolving Concept*, Critical Quest, 2007, 12.

government provisions (social rights), which together comprise “economic or structural exclusion”, and insufficient social integration and insufficient cultural integration comprising “socio-cultural exclusion”³⁵.

J. Beall, mentioned three major ways to social exclusion. They were- i) neoliberal, ii) re-labeling of poverty, iii) Transformation list. According to the neoliberal perspective, social exclusion is a regrettable but unavoidable side effect of global economic realignment since the establishment of free trade and a single global market has resulted in the worker being excluded from the benefits of trade barriers and social employment. Re- labelling of poverty, the second approach advocates that social exclusion is a smoke screen, representing little more than unhelpful re- labelling of poverty. It is rather a tool used to shift the spotlight away from inequality caused by the mal functioning of the economic system. And the transformation list approach emphasizes the social relationships embedded in formal and informal institutions, as well as the use of the social exclusion framework to analyze international processes and institutional relationships related to social and economic global change, as well as local impacts and responses³⁶.

Pulin Nayak identified several dimensions of social isolation. Exclusion from education, exclusion from housing, exclusion from property ownership, exclusion from democratic participation, exclusion from access to health care, exclusion from public goods, gender-based exclusion, exclusion of the elderly and infirm, exclusion of widows, and exclusion of the physically handicapped are all examples of exclusion³⁷.

David Miliband proposed three different types of social isolation. (a) broad exclusion (b) deep exclusion (c) Those who are deprived on a single or lesser indicator are referred to as wide. Concentration is a term that refers to spatial

³⁵ Gerda Jehoel-Gijsbers & Cok Vrooman, “Explaining Social Exclusion: A Theoretical Model Tested in the Netherlands” (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, Hague, July 2007)

³⁶J. Beall, ‘Globalization and social exclusion in cities: Farming the debates with lessons from Africa and Asia’, in *Environment & Urbanisation* (Sage publication, 2002), 46-47.

³⁷ Pulin Nayak, *Economic Development and Social Exclusion in India*, Critical Quest, (New Delhi, 2012), 6-7.

exclusion, or the concentration of a problem in a certain geographic area. Deep exclusion is a term used to describe people who are impoverished on numerous levels³⁸.

Sukhadeo Thorat defines social exclusion as a process in which certain segments of society deny others equal opportunity, resulting in an individual's inability to engage in the society's basic political, economic, and social functioning. Two defining characteristics of exclusion are particularly relevant here: first, the deprivation caused by exclusion (or denial of equal opportunity) in multiple spheres, demonstrating its multi-dimensionality; and second, the deprivation caused by exclusion (or denial of equal opportunity) in multiple spheres, demonstrating its multi-dimensionality. The second characteristic is that it is embedded in social interactions and societal institutions - the process by which individuals or groups are completely or partially barred from participation in society in which they live³⁹. According to Naila Kabeer, social exclusion revolves around people's or groups' social identities and represents societal value of people based on their identities such as caste, ethnicity, religion, and gender.⁴⁰

According to Arjan de Haan, the concept of social exclusion can aid in comprehending deprivation. The concept of relative deprivation is more closely associated with the concept of social exclusion, and it is frequently noted that rising inequality in various countries has resulted in social exclusion. However, the concept of social exclusion does not only focus on poverty and other material means⁴¹.

³⁸ David Miliband, *Social exclusion: The Next steps Forward*, (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Publication, parliamentary paper,2005)

³⁹ S.K. Thorat, *Caste Social Exclusion and Poverty Concept, Measurement and Empirical Evidence*, Critical Quest, (New Delhi, 2013), 3-4.

⁴⁰ Kabeer Naila, 'Social Exclusion, Poverty and Discrimination: Towards an analytical Framework', *IDS Bulletin*, (University of London, 31(4), 2000),83-97.

⁴¹ Arjan de Haan, 'Social Exclusion: Towards An Holistic Understanding of Deprivation' (Social Development Department, Department for International Development,1999),18.

G. Room has proposed a definition of social exclusion which has influential in the theoretical discourse in Europe. It involves five defining criteria 1. Social exclusion is multidimensional 2. It is concerned with dynamic process 3. It is relation as much as distributional 4. It focuses on the collection resource 5. It directs attention to catastrophically ruptured links to the wider society⁴².

Exclusion in India is rooted in societal interrelations and institutions that exclude, according to Roa in "Social Exclusion in India: Concept and Context." The caste system is at the root of the discrimination. It discriminates against, isolates, and deprives particular groups based on their identities. The caste system determines the social, economic, and political rights of people based on their ethnicity⁴³.

As Sen has identified, there are three types of exclusion: economic, political, and social. Poverty, income discrepancy, pay differentials, and access and control of productive resources are all examples of economic exclusion. Caste hierarchies, ethnicity, religion, class stratification, and other factors all play a role in social exclusion. The study of social exclusion focuses on the lives of people and their inherent human rights of poor, not just their lack of income. It is concerned with the central role of imbalanced social relation and exclusion of certain groups⁴⁴.

Sen's Framework of Exclusion provides a clear understanding of grazier exclusion. With the industrial revolution in Europe, colonial governments in Africa and Asia began to push commercial farming, and the Forest Service was founded to manage the forest. However, these government-directed and undirected policies had an impact on the lives of forest dwellers including graziers.

⁴² Graham Room, *Beyond the threshold: the measurement and analysis of social exclusion*, (policy press,1995)

⁴³ Roa Chinna Yagati, 'Social Exclusion in India: Concepts and Context' in, *Exclusion and Discrimination Concepts, Perspective and Challenges*, (edt.) Yagati Chinna Rao &Sudhakara Karakoti (kaniskha Publishers, Distributors,2010),3.

⁴⁴ Amartya Sen, Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny, in *Social Development Paper No. 1*, (Office of Enviroment and Social Development, Asian Development Bank,2000),22.

1.6. Dimension of social exclusion

Burchardt identified some dimensions of social exclusion in terms of residents' participation in "normal activities." The following are the dimensions:

1. Consumption activity: related to traditional measures of poverty.
2. Saving activity includes pension, saving, home ownership.
3. Production activity: described as "participating in a financially or socially valuable activity," such as paid work, education or training, retirement, and so on.
4. Political involvement is defined as 'participating in a group endeavour to enhance or safeguard' the current or long-term environment.
5. Social activity as engaging in significant social interaction with family, or friend and indentifying with a cultural group or community⁴⁵.

Apart from the aforementioned dimension, (Smith, 2000) has explored the following other dimensions that are equally significant for explaining social exclusion.

⁴⁵Janie percy-Smith "Introduction: The Contours of Social Exclusion in Policy Responses to social exclusion toward inclusion" (open university press, Buckingham, 2000), 148

Dimension of social exclusion

Dimension	Indicators
Economic	Long term unemployment, Casualization and job insecurity, workless households, income poverty.
Social	Breakdown of traditional households, unwanted teenage pregnancies, Homelessness, crime, Disaffected youth.
Political	Disempowerment, Lack of political right, Low registration of voters, Low voters' turnout, Low level of community activity, Alienation/Lack of confidence in political process, social disturbance/disorder.
Neighbourhood	Environmental degradation, Decaying house stock, withdrawl of local services, collapse of support networks.
Individual	Mental and physical ill health, educational under achievement/Low skill, loss of self esteem/confidence
Spatial	Concentration/marginalisation of vulnerable groups
Group	Concentration of above characteristic in particular groups: elderly disabled, ethnic minorities.

Source: Janie smith (2000), introduction: the contour of social Exclusion

1. Economic dimension

Economic factors play a significant role in social exclusion. The phrase "economic factor" is used to describe not only poverty, which is defined as a lack of sufficient money, but also exclusion from the labor market. This, in turn, has a variety of implications that transcend beyond unemployment. This circumstance causes a variety of changes in people's social, political, and economic lives.⁴⁶

2. Social dimension

The Social Exclusion Unit has mostly focused its emphasis on the social dimension of social exclusion thus far. The breakdown of traditional family structures, the growth in the number of unwanted teenage pregnancies, homelessness, criminality, and disillusioned youth are all examples of this component.⁴⁷

3. Political Dimension:

One of the benefits of the concept of social exclusion is that it includes the political dimension as well. That is, it is concerned with the denial of specific human and political rights to certain populations. Personal security, rule of law, freedom of expression, political involvement, and equality of opportunity are among these rights, according to the United Nations Development Programme⁴⁸. The key concern here is the ability of individuals to participate in or influence decisions that affect their lives. Individuals may be denied political rights as a result of their immigrant status, failure to register to vote, and other types of political activity such as non-participation in the community for a variety of reasons. This has an impact on decision-making and the quality of life in the community. Disempowerment is a result of non-participation. Frustration and rage can accompany disengagement from socially acceptable forms of political participation and skepticism of formal avenues of communication⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ Janie percy-Smith (2000),149

⁴⁷ Janie percy-Smith (2000),149

⁴⁸ Ajit Bhalla and Freaderic Lapeyre, Poverty and Exclusion in a Global world, (New York, Palgrave,2004),33.

⁴⁹Janie percy-Smith (2000),149.

4. Neighborhood dimension:

The social and spatial aspects of social exclusion are linked in the neighbourhood dimension. Environmental deterioration, a deteriorating housing stock, the removal of local service increasingly overburdened public services, and the disintegration of local support networks could all be markers of social isolation at the neighborhood level⁵⁰.

5. Individual dimension:

The individual is affected by all of the components of social exclusion outlined thus far. Increased levels of physical and mental illness, scholastic underachievement and failure to learn or update skills, and low self-esteem are all examples of the impact⁵¹.

6. Spatial dimension

Exclusion has a spatial dimension, which is essential since it frequently results in a large number of poor people living in a declining region. As a result, the place may be characterized as disadvantageous regardless of the characteristics of the people who live there, resulting in a more exclusionary approach. Localities may be affected by social exclusion due to the nature of the location rather than the proportion of socially excluded individuals and households within the population⁵².

7. Group dimension:

Some groups are arguably more vulnerable to social exclusion than others, either because they differ in some way from the dominant population or because of their social status. The obvious components of group difference are nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion. There is a risk that differences will lead to prejudice and unequal access to resources in these cases. The complexity of social exclusion is an

⁵⁰ Smith, 2000, 149-50.

⁵¹ Smith, 2000, 150.

⁵² Smith, 2000, 151.

essential feature. As a result, the presence or absence of any of these qualities cannot be used to simply "read off" social isolation. The way they interact and reinforce one another is what speeds up the process of social isolation⁵³.

1.7. Understanding exclusion from Grazier's perspective

The term "exclusion" has conceptual connection with the notion of marginalization, discrimination and deprivation⁵⁴. If we look at course of Grazing, since colonial period to this period of globalization world we can easily understand that Graziers has become subject for marginalization discrimination and deprivation. They are being considered as backward, barbaric, uncivilized and their occupation as irrelevant. From the preceding, we may deduce that various forms of social exclusion are generated by diverse variables embedded in various societal structures. Now we'll look at one of these forms of exclusion that is common and has escaped the notice of researchers over time.

Animal herding is one of the most important sources of income and a way of life for millions of people all over the world. However, a variety of issues such as government regulations, population increase, the emergence of modern nation states, and border crossings obstruct their conventional patterns. Animal herding collapse is due to the following elements in particular. Under colonial authority, Graziers' lives changed considerably. Colonial policies had a wide range of effects on graziers' lives. To begin with, the colonial government desired to convert all grazing fields into cultivated farms in order to increase revenue and meet demand in England. It may be able to generate revenue by extending cultivation. Waste Land Rules were adopted in various sections of the country starting in the mid-nineteenth century, under which uncultivated land was granted to selected individuals. These wastelands served as grazing grounds for pastoralists, resulting in a reduction of pastoralists and a difficulty for them. Second, by the nineteenth century, several Forest Acts had been established in various provinces. No Animal herder were given access to the woodland that had been declared a "reserved forest" as a result of these legislation. The "Protected Forest" category was applied to the

⁵³ J-Smith,2000,152.

⁵⁴ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York: Anchor Book, Random House,1999) ,56-58.

rest of the forest. Graziers were allowed customary grazing rights, but their movement was restricted. Graziers' lives were forever impacted because of these forest deeds. They could no longer penetrate many of the forests that had previously offered significant feed for their livestock. For admittance, they required to pay a fee. The entry and exit times were provided. Finally, British officials were wary about nomadic people. Fourth, in the mid-nineteenth century, the colonial authority implemented grazing taxes in order to increase revenue. Graziers were required to pay taxes on all animals grazing on pastureland.

Thus, it is clear, Animal herding is under trouble around the world due to both man-made and natural limits, as well as internal and external forces. Few efforts have been made to empower Grazier's and allow them to participate in their own development. Cattle herding is the most poorly recorded of all the pastoral regions of the world, with ambiguous ethnic identities and a jumbled description. If we examine the Graziers through the lens of social exclusion, we can easily see that they are marginalized in every aspect of their lives. However, today they feel alienated and excluded⁵⁵.

1.8. Nepali or Gorkha: Origin and identity

It is to be noted that, in this study the terms like 'Gorkha' and 'Nepali' have been used interchangeably. In the Indian context both the term Gorkha and Nepali are interchangeable and are applied to mean one. Both the term 'Gorkha' and Nepali is representing Nepali linguistic community of India in general and Assam in particular. However, different arguments on Gorkha and Nepali exist. In many cases Gorkha word is used synonymously to Nepali. In Nepal the term Gorkha is used and restricted meaning while the term Nepali connotes the people of the country. In other words, Gorkha may be said to indicate the nation or country while Nepali stands for the nationality. To understand the meaning of the term 'Gorkha' more clearly, one has to go the root from where the word was coined⁵⁶. The word Gorkha has emerged from the root 'Go-ra-kh', the abbreviation of Gorakhnath, the

⁵⁵ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York: Anchor Book, Random House, 1999) ,56-58.

⁵⁶K. K Muktan, *The Gorkhas in the Freedom struggle of India*, (Concept publishing Company: New Delhi, 2015), 20.

patron saint of the principality called Gorkha, that was located in the 'Choubisi' region west of Kathmandu⁵⁷. Prithvi Narayan Shah, the king of Gorkha who is credited to have unified present Nepal in the eighteenth century, was from this Gorkha principality. He was known as the Gorkha king and his army which conquered the whole of Nepal was known as Gorkha palton. It was the same Gorkhali force which fought against the British in the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-16, under the leadership of General Amarsingh Thapa and earned the praise of the British. These Gorkhas were recruited in the Indian army by the British since 1815 and ever since then, the Gorkhas are continuing in the Indian army⁵⁸. The contemporary Indian Gorkhas living in different parts of India are mostly the descendants of the Gorkha soldiers who settled down permanently in India after their retirement. This is the reason why the Indian Nepalis like to be called themselves as Gorkhas⁵⁹. Subhas Ghising, the supreme leader of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), believes that the word "Gorkha" should be used instead of "Nepali." According to him, the term "Nepali" denoted a nationality from Nepal. Since then, the debate over whether to refer to Indian Nepalis as Nepalis, Gorkhas, or Gorkhalis has lingered among Indian Nepalis without reaching a wider consensus. Other authors have proposed additional words, such as "Bharpali" (Bhartiya Nepali), "Bhargoli" (Bhartiya Gorkhali), "Nepamul" (Nepali root),⁶⁰ etc. Social scientists such as A.C Sinha, T.B. Subha, and others have referred to this situation as an identity crisis. In this regard, the initiative of Ramkrishna Sharma, Ex-Judge of the Calcutta High Court, Subhas Ghising, Chief of the GNLF, and many others to use Gorkha nomenclature instead of Nepali is understandable and sounds like a viable and acceptable alternative to Nepali. It also appears justified to elevate the name of the illustrious forefathers who served in the Indian army and gave their lives for India's safety and sovereignty by adopting their proud name

⁵⁷ Muktan, *The Gorkhas in the Freedom struggle of India*, 20.

⁵⁸ Muktan, *The Gorkhas in the Freedom struggle of India*, 21.

⁵⁹ Muktan, *The Gorkhas in the Freedom struggle of India*, 22.

⁶⁰ T.B. Subba, "Being a Nepali in Northeast India: Predicaments of a Privileged Nation" in A.C. Sinha & T.B. Subha (ed.), *The Nepalis in NorthEast India: A Community in search of Indian Identity*, (Indus publishing Company, New Delhi, 2003) ,200.

'Gorkha' for identity⁶¹. According to K. Sharma, the British used the Gorkha' or Gurkha' word when recruiting Nepali speakers for the British Indian Army. He also states that the terms Gorkha and Nepali are used interchangeably. Gorkha is an identity, and Nepali is the language they speak. He also claims that Nepali speakers are known as Nepalese in Nepal and Gurkha/Gorkhali/Pahari outside of Nepal. He also claims that Nepalese is primarily used to represent the people of Nepal⁶².

According to Bhaskar Dahal, the former president and current advisor of the All Assam Gorkha Students' Union (AAGSU), the community's first-ever organization, Gorkha and Nepali are the community's ethnic and linguistic identities, respectively. He continues by stating that the term Gorkha refers to the Nepali-speaking community in Assam and other parts of the country. The terms Gorkha and Nepali are frequently used interchangeably, particularly in Assam⁶³. As a result, the terms Gorkha, Nepali, and Nepali speaker are used interchangeably in this work, despite the fact that the terms Gorkha and Gorkha community are dominant.

1.9. Gorkhas to Gorkha Grazier's: A turn in Social Formation

The Himalayan region of the Indian subcontinent, in particular, has a long and colourful history, and this history clearly demonstrates the importance of human migration. In search of food, shelter, and a better way of life, people used to move from one location on this subcontinent to another. In this case, Grazing animal was paramount. India, like many other regions of the world, is home to a sizable Grazier community. Numerous Grazier communities have been found in India, particularly in the Himalayan region. Primitive pastoral peoples must have settled here. As mentioned by Kumar Pradhan in his book *The Gorkha Conquests*, the process and consequences of the unification of Nepal, with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Gopala Vamsavali, a palm-leaf manuscript from the late fifteenth century, lists the names of eight cowherd' or Gopala kings as the first kings. In this regard,

⁶¹ Muktan, *The Gorkhas in the freedom struggle of India*, pp.20-24.

⁶² Interviewed with K. Sharma, On 14.05.2022, Siliguri, West –Bengal.

⁶³ Interviewed with Bhaskar Dahal, On.09.06.2021, Tezpur, Assam

the pastoralist community, particularly the Gorkha pastoralists of Assam, has remained an integral part of larger Assamese society. It is not unknown to Assam because it occupies a larger portion of the Himalayan belt. Excavations of Indian history, particularly in Assam, reveal that Gorkha pastoralists and India enjoyed a cultural, social, and economic bond from antiquity to the present. The connection between Assam and the pastoral Gorkha community is depicted in graphic detail, beginning with mythological tales and continuing through mediaeval history. The history of British colonialism in the area also adds a discernible connection between Assam and the Gorkhas. Pastoralists were converted to graziers through the establishment of grazing settlements by British colonial authority. In this situation, colonial officials characterised the Gorkhas as an industrial, industrious, and brave people. The Gorkha graziers of Assam, formerly known as the Pastoral, continued to play a vital role in the greater Assamese community after India's independence in 1947, with Assam remaining a part of it. In order to defend the interests of the community, Gorkhas who were recognised as Graziers and protected alongside other tribal tribes of the state under the ALRRA, 1886, were designated as "Protected Class" and brought under constitutional protection on December 5, 1947⁶⁴.

Throughout pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial history, Assam's society has experienced a variety of socio-political and economic dynamisms. Such shifting socio-political and economic dynamisms have shaped Assam's current social structure. The Graziers and the Graziers community, particularly the Gorkha Graziers community of the state and region, have always been at the heart of these dynamisms, witnessing various changes and upheavals throughout history.

The Gorkha community in the North-eastern states in general and Assam in particular has been a major group to engage in animal herding; in fact, it can count as the largest group in the Brahmaputra valley. The colonial period has witnessed the greatest human movement and settlement of people resulting in the transfer and

⁶⁴D.B. Chhetry & Bhabani Prasad Sharma, "Protected Classes Vis-À-Vis Nepalese in Tribal Belts and Blocks" in Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies Assam (eds.) *History And Culture of Assamese-Nepali* (Narayani Handique, Historical Institute :Guwahati ,2009), 120-21.

distribution of diverse population group in different parts of the country⁶⁵. After the British occupation of Assam, large number of Gorkhas migrated to this region. Active British encouragement to Gorkha settlements in the northeast was not always confined to ex-soldiers but also included many other Gorkha peasants who would take to animal herding.

It is argued that the Gorkha settlements in Northeast India, since 1820s, has been migratory in nature, either in search of economic opportunities or grazing lands for cattle which is crucial for their primary business of milk production.⁶⁶ In Assam what seems to have attracted Gorkha most were the vast expanse of greenery dense forests and hills, abundance of land and the 'Chars' of mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries, dotted with verdant full of lush green vegetation. In a land-abundant Assam, peasant enjoyed from time immemorial the traditional right to graze their cattle freely on the village commons and neighbouring forests⁶⁷. Recruitment of Gorkha soldiers to British India Army after the treaty of Suguali (1816) between British India and Nepal was also one of the important causes of Gorkha settlements in Northeast India. According to this treaty, Nepal had to transfer some of its bordering areas like Darjeeling, Sikkim, Shimla, Nainital etc. to British India and therefore Nepali speaking residing in these areas automatically became the subjects of British India. Many of these Gorkha soldiers after retirement started to involve in cattle rearing and grazing profession⁶⁸.

In 1898, Chief Commissioner of Assam named Henry Cotton noted that retired Gorkha Sepoys who settled down in Assam, preferred cattle grazing to cultivation⁶⁹. The Gorkha Dairymen in Northeast India mentioned that Assam

⁶⁵Tejimala Gurung, "Human Movement and the colonial state; The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire", in A.C. Sinha & T.B. Subha (ed.), *The Nepalis in NorthEast India: A Community in search of Indian Identity*, (Indus publishing Company: New Delhi, 2003), 172.

⁶⁶Lopita Nath, "Migrants in Flight: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalese in Northeast India", in *Indian Nepalis: Issues and perspective*, (Indus Publication: New Delhi, 2005), 57.

⁶⁷Amalendu Guha, *Planter-Raj To Swaraj*, (People's publishing house: New Delhi, 1988), 91.

⁶⁸ Chavan kr. Sarmah and J. Hazarika, "Age at Marriage and fertility status of the Nepali Women in Assam" in *journal of social sciences, Bodoland university, ISSN*, vol:3, No.2, (November, 2015), 58.

⁶⁹Tejimala Gurung, *Human Movement and the Colonial State: The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire*, p 172.

District Gazetteer, published in 1979 claimed, ‘the Gorkha for the most part, were graziers, who keep large herds of cows and buffaloes. They have penetrated deep into the interior of the district and have established khunties (herders’ temporary sheds). The taxation policy was introduced by British Colonial administrators as grazing tax to be paid on every horned animal⁷⁰. The Grazier’s had to pay taxes for rearing the buffaloes and cows in the Professional Grazing Reserves (PGR). They appointed the Mohsirdar to collect the taxes from the graziers. It is important to note here that the Grazier’s or animal herders were previously known by their nomenclature pastoralists, and it was probably only during the British administration that the name Grazier’s came into being.

The Grazier’s were primarily the cattle rearers who were concerned with rearing cows, buffaloes, goats etc. They concentrated basically in and around the districts of Sonitpur, Darrang, Tinsukia, Biswanath, Udalguri, Baksha and Dhemaji along with a few others. The Gorkha community in these district reared cows and buffaloes in particular. More emphasis was given on buffaloes for their capacity to produce more milk and for their sturdiness. Despite the Presence from the age of colonial rule, their way of living, custom and tradition were considered backward, underdeveloped and their voices and sufferings were often ignored by the authority in negotiating with such people and it lies at the margin of discourse today. They have been relegated to the footnotes of history. People hear little of them and still little has been written about them. It has stayed unnoticed and neglected. After the Independence, the uncanny neglect by government made them deprived of their traditional livelihood. The Government were more interested in modern Industrialization and globalization. Together with this, the historicity of the community and their contribution to the state and region has been victim of perpetual ignorance. Today, many of the graziers have established themselves in rural areas and have taken up dairy farming as their occupation, and in the process thereby affecting significant contributions to the revenue.

⁷⁰Nath, *Migrants in Flight*, p.56.

1.10. Review of Literature

Studies on the Gorkha region and the Gorkha Grazier's community have gained popularity all over the world. Some of the significant books, articles, and primary data on the Gorkha Grazier community have been reviewed among the literature that is currently available.

A. Guha (1977) in his book, *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, discusses how British capitalists brought about change in the socioeconomic and cultural spheres after colonial rule annexing Assam. The author also emphasised how profit and exploitation were the primary concerns of colonial rule in Assam. The early discoveries and exploration of natural resources, as well as the development of railways, were all part of the capitalist exploitation of Assam's resources. The Assam Colonial Government did not leave any stone unturned in maximising revenue collection in the province, whether it was through wasteland settlement, opium, or grazing fees. He also addressed the issue of East Bengalis migrating to Assam. However, labour movement in the province of Assam - both plantation and non-plantation - and information about grazing issues served as a foundation for reconstructing Assam's grazing history.

Arupjyoti Saikia (2011) in his book, *Forest and Ecological History of Assam, 1826-2000*, describes the transformation of Assam's forests and ecology from the early nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. It locates present-day ecological conflicts in the colonial era when contest over forests, land, and resource began to take a new shape. It discusses plantations, grazing animals, forest protection and regeneration, and livelihood practises.

Allen, B.C, E.A. Gait, &H.F. Howard (2012) in '*Gazetteer of Bengal and Northeast India*', highlight a provincial gazetteer of Bengal and old Assam, as they were known administratively at the time. It covers the entire Northeast India and vividly depicts the history of Assam from the ancient period such as the Bhaskar Barman period to the patrician of India, as well as the history of the Dooars region and west and east Bengal (Present Bangladesh).

Bishnu Upadhaya (2017) in his article, *Cattle Culture of Gorkhas and Dairy Development of Assam* stated that, commercial dairy farming in Assam began during the British period, and this system was introduced by Gorkhas primarily after signing the Treaty of Segowlee in 1816. The author also discusses Goths and the Gorkha cattle farming system, as well as its contribution to Assam's economic development.

D.D. Malli (1985) in his book, *Revenue Administration in Assam*, the author attempts to provide a thorough overview of the system of revenue administration during the Ahom period with a primary focus on the revenue administration in Assam. In addition, this book examined colonial-era land revenue settlement, demand for and collection of revenue, and settlement of unused land.

Deben Sapkota (2009) in his article, *Nepali Settlement and Cattle-Rearing in India's Northeast* stated that. The Gorkha started keeping animals on riverbanks and at river islands. As a result, many of these islands have Nepali names. Even though the names of most of these locations have been wiped off by the powerful Brahmaputra, their descendants still remember them. In the Brahmaputra valley, the majority of the Nepali settlers, according to him, kept their Khutis in the Kaziranga reserve.

D.B. Chhetry (2009) discussed in detail in his article, '*Grazing Reserves and Nepali Graziers in Assam*,' that the Old District Darrang has been home to the greatest number of Nepali herdsmen since the mid-nineteenth century. He claims that a significant portion of Nepalese in the Brahmaputra valley, in particular, were professional graziers, and there is no denying that the Nepalese were the single largest group of professional graziers in the Brahmaputra valley until events overtook them and encroachment and de-reservation compelled hundreds of them to seek alternative modes of life.

E.A Gait (1905) in his book '*History of Assam*' explains the rise of Ahom kingdoms in Assam with its origin and development, highlighting Koch kingdoms in Assam, the Burma's war, the history of tea industry, the Ahom system of government, the consolidation of British rule, and Prehistoric and traditional rulers.

Gorky Chakraborty (2012) in his article, *Roots and Ramification of a colonial construct; The Wasteland in Assam* deals with the roots of the colonial construct of wasteland and its post-colonial ramifications in Northeast India. This paper also highlights about the Human settlement in char area, during the colonial period.

Kumar Pradhan (2009) in his book, *The Gorkha conquests: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal*, with particular reference to eastern Nepal represents his findings on the historical origins of cultural diversity in the region, and on the way in which the Gorkha political lineage came to rear itself out of this, to create a new political pattern in conflict and compromise with British Indian imperialism, with far-reaching consequences of homogenisation for eastern Nepal. It also talks about political anthropology and political culture in historical perspective, with particular reference to Nepal as a part of south Asia.

K. Sharma (2012) in his book, *The Nepalīs of Northeastern Fronteir of India* discuss about the background and scope to the arrival of British in Assam during the Anglo-Burmese war from 1824 to 1826. It also highlights about the settlement of Gorkhas in Arunachal Pradesh. It also talks about their cultural rights which have been blurred due to their religious conversion to other religion and marriage with the local tribal women and being merged with the tribal way of life.

K.R. Sharma and T.C. Das (2011) in their book, *Marginalisation of Gorkhas in India, A community in quest of Indian Identity* had mentioned that in every turn of their life, they had been marginalised by the mainstream communities instead of their dedication to the nation building process of the country. This book also focuses of Gorkha tea plantation workers of Darjeeling to establish the fact that how the Gorkhas as a whole have been marginalised in the country.

K. Sharma (2013), in his book, *Gorkhas in the wilderness, A study in Northeast India* mainly talks about Changlang and Lohit Frontier region of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. This book highlights that Gorkhas are treated as good as immigrants, outsiders, foreigners etc. in Northeast India. Their contribution to the nation building has hardly been recognised by the mainstream communities

of the country and more particularly the people of Northeast region of the country and Assam.

K.K. Muktan (2015), in his book, *The Gorkhas in the freedom struggle of India* gives us a vivid account of the war as to how the redoubtable Gorkhas, in alliances with the Japanese, fought against the British army in Arkain hills and laid down their precious lives for the sake of India's liberation from the colonial rule. This also speaks about India's freedom movement and the role played the Indian Gorkhas living in various parts of India, such as Darjeeling, Dehradun, Calcutta, Benares, and the Northeastern states in the freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Khemraj Nepal & Hemanta Kumar Sharma (2009) in *Socio-political problems of the Nepalese in Assam: past, present and future* highlights about the extensive settlement of the Nepalis in Assam within the beginning of the 19th century, especially when the British brought along with them the Gorkha Soldeirs and they were followed by the cattle-breaders, artisans, labourers and many others. They in large number came to this region and got engaged in industries, factories as well as constructions of roads.

K. Vasant Saberwal (1999) in his book, *Pastoral politics-Shepherds, bureaucrats and conservation in the western Himalaya* says that Pastoralists have continued to be treated as a problem for administrators in terms of collecting taxes or controlling the population, according to him, pastoralists are viewed as outcast, backward, and poorer sectors of society in government records, publications, and documents.

L.Nath (2003) in her Ph.D. thesis, *The Nepalis in Assam Ethnicity and Cross Border Movement in the North-East*, focuses on the relationship between Indo-Nepal and Assam-Nepal from prehistoric times to the Assam Movement and Bodo Movement in Assam. This work also reveals how the opportunities created by colonial rule served as a pull factor, attracting a large number of Gorkha people to leave their homeland and enlist in the army and police. Poverty and a lack of employment in their home country drove the Nepalis to migrate to Assam. Her

work also discusses how the Assam Movement (1979-84) exacerbated the identity crisis of Nepalis who had lived in Assam for over a century.

Lopita Nath (2006) in her article '*Migration, Insecurity and Identity: The Nepali Dairymen in India's Northeast*', had mentioned about the Nepali graziers and how the British pushed them to colonise new lands for farming or cow grazing. According to her, the first people to pay grazing fees were Nepalis, and as their numbers increased, they started to generate significant income for the British exchequer. Dairy farming eventually took over as the region's main source of income for Nepalis.

Lopita Nath (2009) in '*The Nepalese of Assam: Ideal Instance of Assimilation with the Mainstream*' discuss about the process of assimilation of the Nepalis in Assam as a continuing process which has had long history of receiving migrants. The Nepalis who came to this part of the land since long back and also in the early rush of the colonial conquest assimilated into the host society and contributed much to the social, economic and political development of the state. Their affinity with other ethno-linguistic communities of the valleys and hills and their occupational versatility also made them easily acceptable to these communities. This led to admixture of cultures, which in turn led to the evolution of a distinct Asamiya Nepali identity.

M. Hussain, (1993) *Assam Movement, Class Ideology and Identity*, in his book focuses on the various aspects and issues of the Assam Movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s, but the author also attempted to analyse immigration and Assamese nationalism from a historical perspective, tracing the roots of the problem of immigration back to the colonial period.

Monimla Devi (2007), in her article, *Economic History of Nepali migration and settlement in Assam* discuss about the growth of the Growth of Gorkha Community in Assam is intensely rooted in the history of the region and marked growth in the 20th century, actively encouraged by the British who sought an increase revenue collection through the settlement of the region. It also talks about the Treaty of Seguli, 1815, through which a bunch of Gorkha soldiers entered into

Northeast India. It also discusses about the push factors for Gorkha migration to India. Besides this it also reflects about their occupations, which were cattle rearing and cultivation.

Purushottam Bhandari (1996) in his book *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese* attempts to focus on the anti-colonial uprising led by Gorkhas in Assam. It primarily discusses the causes and methods of the uprising against the colonial regime and in support of Indian nationalism.

R.M. Blench (2000) in his book, *Extensive Pastoral livestock system; Issues and options for the future* stated that Indian pastoralism is by far the least documented, with muddled descriptions of pastoral systems and muddled nomenclature for pastoral ethnic groups. He added that pastoralists, who are endogamous social groups with a focus on animal husbandry, are included in the caste system in India.

Rajib Handique (2009) in his article *Colonial Wasteland Grants and their Impact on the Ecology and Society of Assam* highlighted about the wasteland in colonial Assam. Additionally, it was mentioned that the majority of tea plantations were built on lands that were either purchased from the British Government of India or acquired by removing natural forests.

R. Ganguli (1931) in his article *cattle and cattle –rearing in Ancient India*, discuss the importance of cattle, cattle rearing in Ancient India. This article speaks that Domestication of animal formed the principal property of the state. It also stated that pastoralism has been one of India's oldest and most significant sources of vocations since the Rig-Vedic period. Arthasashtra emphasises the role of milk and its products in ceremonial and social contexts.

Rathna Thakuri (2012) in his book, *Assam ma Nepalibhasi: Ek drisyawlokan*, delves into the background of the Gorkhas, who speak Nepali and are well-known in Assam. The Book claims that Gorkhas were a key component of Kamrupa's "Kirata" zenith and saw the process of Hinduization firsthand. A portion of the Upholders of Hinduization persisted in the valley, while a sizable portion moved west and merged with the Koshi bank society in what is now eastern Nepal. The former Kirata kindom's northern part, with identities of Khas, Gurung, Magar,

Sunuar, Limboo, Rai, etc., remained in the valley. It is believed that the Limboos were the first branch of the "Kirata" family, which was documented as "mul kirat".

Sajal Nag (2007) *Fei-isation of the Nepalis of Northeast India*, article revealed that under colonial patronage, Nepalis were brought and encouraged to settle in Assam. According to him, Nepalis were seeking the grant of waste lands on favourable terms, and they were reportedly given financial assistance for their journey to upper Assam. Many Nepali graziers who run their dairy businesses in Kaziranga areas were asked to leave and their houses were demolished. Chabilal Upadhyaya, a prominent businessman in dairy farming, popularised the issues among Assam's middleclass, and was the first President of the APCC. He also mentioned how the growing number of East Bengalis, as well as encroachment on grazing reserves, compelled Nepalis to band together under a banner. The Tezpur Graziers Association was formed in 1933 at Singri under the leadership of Chabilal Upadhyaya. He contended that, despite the fact that Nepalis had made significant contributions to the protection of Assamese national interests, it was difficult to find their space in the written history of Assam.

Sarah Hilaly (2016) in her article, *Imagining Colonial Assam, The figuring of wasteland* in its making talks that the wasteland settlements of Assam in the early 19th c led to the creation of an agro-industrial complex where the natural resources and the human resources were confined to specified spaces. It has also focused that large number Nepali graziers migrated into Assam and settled in Wasteland.

Sandhya Goswami (2001) in her article *Ethnic conflict in Assam*, discusses ethnicity and ethnic conflicts that have severely affected the newly emerged nation state. In Indian context ethnicity not only remains to be the important part of the reality but it also happens to be the source of series problems specially the *state of Assam*.

Tejimala Gurung (2007) in her article '*Human Movement and the colonial state*', *The Nepalese of Northeast India under the British rule* emphasized that in land-abundant Assam, peasants have long had a traditional right to graze freely in village commons and nearby forests. The grazing right eventually came under

attack under British control in an effort to increase government revenue. She also added that, the majority of those employed in the profession of raising and grazing cattle were Nepalis.

Tek Narayan Upadhaya and Roma Adhikari, (2009) in *Contribution of Nepalis of Northeast India to the Development of Nepali Literature* aims to delve into the history of the Gorkha in Assam during colonial authority. According to the article, the British East India Company enlisted Gorkhas soldiers to fight for them during the Anglo-Burmese War. The brave resistance of the Gorkhas uprooted the Burmese colony in Assam, cementing the Yandaboo Treaty in 1826, and Assam eventually entered under the Colonial Valley of British India.

T.B Subba, A.C Sinha, D.R Nepal (2009) in their book *Indian Nepalis Issues and Perspective* explains the history of Gorkhas in India and the Northeast region in particular. It talks about Treaty of Segowlee, recruitment of Gorkhas in India and its settlement of northeast region and cattle culture of Gorkhas in Northeast region.

Tejimala Gurung (2003) in her article, *The colonial state and settlement of Nepali Graziers in Manipur (1891-1947)* describe that Nepali settlement in Manipur begins during the colonial era. She also highlighted that important destination of the migrants Nepali during the British period was to Manipur, a protected princely state under British suzerainty since 1891 till 1947.

Vijay Paul Sharma, John Morton and Kohler-Rollefson (2003) in their article *pastoralism in India* noted that pastoralism makes a substantial contribution to the economy of developing nations, in both terms of producing income and employment opportunities as well as supplying nutrients to the poor. However, as an economic system, it is constantly threatened by inappropriate Government policies. According to them, there is little research on and inadequate documentation of Indian pastoralism. Similar to other regions of the world, it has a unique structure and social structure. Western India's pastoralist communities, including the Rebari/Raika, the Bharwad, and several Himalayan groups like the Gaddis, Gujjars, and Kinauras, have been described in just a small percentage of them.

Veena Bhasin (1988) in his book *Himalayan Ecology, Transhumance and social organization of Gaddis in Himachal Pradesh* claimed that Himalayan pastoralism is based on transhumance practises and involves cyclical movements from lowlands to highlands to take advantage of seasonal pastures at various elevations in the Himalayas. When the snow melts in the higher alpine regions during the summer, Himalayan pastoralists move up to graze their animals. After the monsoon, they descend to the low altitude pastures for the winter months. Some Himalayan pastoralists are agro pastoralists, cultivating land in addition to raising animals, despite the fact that pastoral activities provide the majority of their household income.

The government of Assam *Revenue Report of 1903 File No.28: Assessement of Nepali khutis to Land Revenue* reported that the Nepalis are Nomadic in their habits and move their camp frequently. The graziers occupy the land just as much as any cultivator and make much larger profits. *The Revenue report of 1920 file-no.1/85/1920; Reservation of grazing ground in village Thana odulguri* stated that the field is necessary for grazing their cattle of the villagers. The land covered by the field was also government waste land .so it may therefore be declared as reserve grazing ground. *The government of Assam Revenue Report of 1923 files no-1 of 1923; Reservation of land for the rohinikatti village grazing ground* reported that the pastoralists had proposed before the British government for a reservation of land for grazing grounds. The land covered by the field was all government waste land. Therefore, the Government declared as reserved grazing ground.

The Revenue report of 1934 file –no. iv/1934; Settlement of land with Nepalese in Darrang district stated that among the professional grazing reserves, ojagaon in Bokoni Mauza was the only professional grazing reserves. The grazing communities included few Nepalese family and Assamese raiyats. *The Forest report of 1913* also highlights about the rules of grazing cattle or buffalo in reserved forests, and anyone found guilty for not paying taxes in time, they are liable to pay double tax. *The Forest report of 1956 files-no. For/276/56* stated that the as all the grazing reserves and *basti* lands go under water, colonial government allowed the graziers who are flood affected peoples, to graze their cattle free of any grazing

tax for 3months i.e. September to November. *The Forest report of 1959 files –no. For/WL/115/59; Wildlife sanctuary –grazing of cattle in Orang* stated that the mangoldoi villagers were all agriculturalists, the colonial government obliged the villagers to graze their cattle in Orang Forest. So long they were allowed to tend their cattle in the reserve forests of orang with a kind of token for entrance in which has caused great difficulty to agriculturalist.

From the scattered available literature related to Gorkha Grazier community it can be understood that Gorkha Grazier's have witnessed several socio-political, cultural and economic changes and upheaval throughout colonial regime and in post-colonial space too. Particularly in Assam the Gorkha Grazier's found to appear at critical juncture in sharply divided social and political forces falling in crossfire in various contestations. In existing literatures, the problem visible is, this small and minority Grazier community often remain outside the circle of state programmes and policies. The lack or the insufficient availability of literature on Grazier signifies the call for immediate academic involvement with the pertaining issue. The crisis of literature on this issue shows that same was rarely brought to academia. Hence, this study will try to reduce such crisis and gap. This study, in light of Gorkha Grazier's of lower Assam attempts to understand the conditions and problems, positions and possible roles of Grazier in nation building as well as social formation during colonial and postcolonial set up.

1.11. Statement of the Problem

Due to its strategic location at the foot of the Eastern Himalayas, the region's north and east are migratory routes where numerous ethnic groups have historically established themselves. The Nepali, speaking group is one of the several tribes and ethnicities that have come to Northeast India from ancient times. They are found in all eight North Eastern states, with the highest concentrations in Assam and Sikkim. The greatest human migration and settlement took place during the colonial era, which led to the spread of varied population groups throughout the nation. A significant group of animal herders in the state of Assam has historically been the Gorkhas. One of the community's main livelihood initiatives over the years has

been animal herding. These people were herders before migrating to Assam and other North-Eastern states, and they eventually came with their herds and settled in various areas of the region. The Graziers depended on community and government-owned grazing pasture to produce their needs because they do not own land. The Graziers' property was gradually being turned into national parks (for example, Kaziranga National Park in Assam, which was originally a place where they reared cattle), as well as being subject to natural disasters like floods, which caused problems for the graziers. The Graziers were denied their traditional and customary rights to these grazing sites because they were not fully aware of the situation. The forcible displacement of Grazier communities from their lands and restrictions on their movement were made possible by the political marginalisation of these populations. Political marginalisation of Grazier communities paved the way for forced eviction from their lands and movement restrictions. The lower district of Assam, in particular, used to be important in animal herding. The colonial administrator formulated policies under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act (ALRRA) 1886, indicating its significance. However, the age-old means of subsistence were gradually neglected, resulting in negative consequences for the grazier community's socio-economic sphere. Because the colonial government did not pay enough attention to animal herding, grazing communities gradually lost their means of subsistence, which is what the study seeks to investigate. Additionally, this study aims to evaluate the regional history of Graziers and governmental initiatives to address the herder way of life. The purpose of this study is to evaluate government policies regarding herder way of life as well as the history of Graziers in the area. In addition, the study looks into how groups of graziers who were socially cut off from their conventional sources of support selected other alternative forms of subsistence.

1.12. Objectives

The objectives of the proposed study are:

1. To understand the concept of marginalisation and social Exclusion.
2. To analyse the operational idea of exclusion from Grazier's perspective.
3. To trace the history of Gorkha Graziers in Lower Assam
4. To examine the economic and political conditions of Gorkha Graziers in Lower Assam during colonial times.
5. To analyse the socio-cultural, economic, and political status and condition of the Gorkha Graziers of Lower Assam in contemporary times

1.13. Research Methodology

Area of Study: The study has primarily focused on the regions of Lower Assam, especially in Sonitpur, Biswanath and Udalguri district. The Grazier's of lower Assam are said to have been the most impacted by "development generated activities" since the colonial era, which is why this area has been picked in particular. Therefore, the study would cover from colonial to contemporary times.

Methodology: The Study that has adopted in this research work are empirical as well as analytical. In the process of the historical enquiry of the research both primary & Secondary data have been used. The research work is based on using both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include archival sources, namely the Assam state Archives in Guwahati, West Bengal State Archives in Kolkata and Mizoram State Archive respectively. The Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies, Guwahati, Assam Secretariat Files, have also supplied the major primary sources. The research has also based on conducting open-ended interviews with the former graziers, local herders, and village panchayats, and also the primary data has been collected from political parties, social workers, and pressure groups, leaders and intellectuals from the communities as well as respondents from the common mass. Interview has been conducted with the respondents in vernacular language,

i.e., Nepali, Assamese, Bengali, and Hindi in accordance with the language of preference of the respondents.

Various secondary sources like books, Journal, magazine, online publication, etc are dealt with the study. Besides these sources were also collected from various libraries, i.e, Gauhati University, Mizoram University, Sikkim University and District Library Tezpur.

1.14. Chapterization

The entire work has been divided into Five Chapters.

Chapter I, succinctly describe the framework of the study. It has made an attempt to explore how animal herding has evolved as a profession across the world in general and India in particular. An effort has also been made to describe their origin/Identity and their turn of socio-formation from Gorkha to Gorkha Graziers. This Chapter also deals with the concept of marginalisation and social exclusion. It tries to analyse exclusion from Grazier's perspective. It also lays with review of Literature, objectives, and methodology of the research study.

Chapter II, Historical background of Gorkhas in Assam: Evolution and Existence, deals with the historical background of the Gorkha community and connect the history of Gorkhas in Northeast India in general and Assam in particular and as well as their permanent settlement in the region. It also highlights about the pattern of Gorkha migration in Northeast India and in Assam during colonial era. It also highlights about the large number of wasteland available in the province.

Chapter III lays with the Economic and political conditions of Gorkha Graziers in colonial Assam. It highlights the colonial intervention and their encouragement to Gorkha Grazeirs to run the grazing business in the province, and introduced the concept of maximisation of revenue, from grazing tax. It also discusses about the various diseases and mortality rate of cattle in Assam. It also highlights the large inflow of the East –Bengalis into Assam, under the scheme of 'Grow more Food' during Sadullah ministry reign, which raised discontentment among the Gorkhas in the province. The chapter also deals with the political scenario, their role in the

freedom struggle of India and also find out the gray area which caused undergoing exclusion to Grazier community during colonial period.

Chapter IV outlines with the Socio-cultural, Economy, and political status of Gorkha Graziers in contemporary Lower Assam, especially in Sonitpur, Biswanath and Udalguri district. It tries to draw and situates the Gorkha Graziers in contemporary times, with the help of field survey, and perceptions of the respondents. This chapter also discuss the Government policies on cattles rearing in Assam.

Chapter V, conclusion outlines the findings and concluding summary of this work.

Chapter-2

Historical background of Gorkha in Assam: Evolution and Existence

Inevitably, there has never been a permanent point in human history. The history of some community was neglected and marginalised. In this regard, the Gorkha Grazier community of Assam is among those communities. Historically such community has shared historical ties with Bhutan, Tibet, Nepal, and the entirety of India's north-eastern valley from legendary accounts to contemporary events. This chapter highlights about the historical overview of Gorkhas, and their settlement during the pre-colonial and colonial state and their settlement in the wasteland of the region. The Gorkha who came to and settled down permanently in Assam and northeast can be broadly categorised as under:

- a) Those who in the distant past came in large numbers as pilgrims to parshuram kundha and kamakhya and did not return to the place of their origin.
- b) Soldiers, Grazier's, cultivators, ex-servicemen, mining workers and others who came to the region in the early nineteenth century by various means and lived here permanently.

2.1 Gorkhas in the early History of region

Migrations are as old as recorded history or even more in Northeast India. Throughout history, waves of ethnically and culturally varied individuals have come into India, settle and assimilated. In case of Gorkha's, The Gorkha have their own history of arrival in India as well as that of their settlement in Northeast Assam, where they settled sparsely and intermittently, of many origins have gradually formed an attractive history of being gradually articulated with these roots. From the time of the Vedas, Ramayana, and Mahabharata, and till the 12th century, the present-day state of Assam was known as Kamrup. Pragjyotishpur was its capital. Kamrup included present-day Assam, Meghalaya, northeast Bengal,

Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, and Mizoram⁷¹. It is believed that the ancestors of Indian Nepalis had made permanent settlement in this region. According to the Mahabharata, Bhagadutta became the king of Kamrup. He was the descendant of Narakasur. He was called the king of mountains and hills. According to the Mahabharatas, Kiratas were settled in the eastern part of modern Nepal. They were also known as parvateshwar. Parvateshwar signified all the hilly states of Northeast India. In the ancient times, all these states were the territories of the Bhagadatta's kingdom.

The ancient and the historical evidence prove the fact that the Nepalis had settled in the northeast region of India since the time of Mahabharata⁷². The Gorkha presence in the northeast region has a long history, and they have played an important part in its unification, development, and rehabilitation. The ancient pragjyotish state is said to have spread from Sunkosi in the east to Kushma (Koshi) in the west. Similarly, the ancient kingdom of Kamrup stretches all the way up to Nepal's eastern border⁷³. According to the inscription preserved in Nepal's Pasupatinath temple. Assam relation with Nepal rooted as it was in its matrimonial alliances⁷⁴ and ethnic tribes⁷⁵. Discussing the origin of Gorkhas in Assam, the relationship of Assam and Gorkhas through cochbihar of present west –Bengal was restored since early 6th century A.D. The daughter of King Harshadeva, Princess Rajyamati, was married to King Jayadeva II of Nepal. Much later in the sixteenth

⁷¹Tek Narayan Upadhaya & Roma Adhikari, "Contribution of the Nepalis of Northeast India to the Development of Nepali Literature" in A.C. Sinha & T.B. Subba(ed.): *The Nepalis in Northeast India* (Indus publishing company :2007), 149.

⁷² Tek Narayan Upadhaya & Roma Adhikari, *Contribution of the Nepalis of Northeast India to the Development of Nepali Literature*, 149.

⁷³ B.D. Dungal, *The History of the Nepali communities in Northeast India*, (Sakhari Samiksha: Shillong 1984), 29.

⁷⁴ Assam and Nepal had maintained matrimonial alliance in the 8th and the 6th centuries, when the Koch king Biswa Singha married Ratna Devi of Kathmandu followed by Nildhvay and Naranarayan. As a Consequence, a member of Nepali, Brahmin priests then pandas to the Kamakhya temple chhetri warriors, farmers, arbian and headsmen were brought to Assam from Nepal.

⁷⁵ Suniti kumar Chatterjee writes that the Limbu, Tamang, Lepcha, Magar, Gurung, and Sherpa belong to the kirata group, and they live in the eastern part of Nepal. In Assam, the Boros, Kaohanis, Rabhas and the Missing also belong to the Kirata group and recognised as the Schedule Tribes of the Assam plains.

century, the Koch king Vishwa singha married Ratna kanti Devi, a daughter of the Malla king of Kantipur, (Kathmandu). Narnarayan, son of Bishwa singh brought many Gorkhas as Sepoys, carpenters, pundits, Purohits, stone workers etc, in Coochbehar of present West-Bengal.

Apart from that, two Kamrupa kings, Nildhwaj and Narnarayan married from Nepal. This indicates that the Gorkhas had been living in Assam since 153 A.D. The Sankardev (the great Vaisnavite Guru of Assam) who is claimed to be a Gorkha by ethnicity stated that all Gwalas (milk suppliers) of Northeast India were Gorkhas⁷⁶. The Coochbehar kingdom was related to Assam and this may be the obvious reason why the Gorkhas came to Assam from Coochbehar of present West-Bengal. In this context, Dr. D. R. Regmi in his book entitled 'Modern Nepal', vol.1 (1975) stated that further, we have suggested that several ruling families were mixed up in blood with royal dynasties (Coochbehar) which originated from the Mongoloid Kiratas or semi-Aryans Khasas. Such royal families might be those who ruled the eastern Terai (Darjeeling district) and Koch-Bihar of West-Bengal. The Doinwars or Danuwars of Mohatari who ethnically allied to the Koches or modern Koch-Bihar are in particular seen in context with different ruling houses in the Chaubisi group⁷⁷ (of Nepal).

Dr. Kumar Pradhan, in the Gorkha conquest (1991) mentions that the southeastern part of Nepal had been the abode of the Kiratas (Rai and Limbu) although all the Matwalis of the Gorkha community now claimed themselves to be the descendants of Kiratas of Nepal and India prior to 6th century. Before the Aryans arrived there, the Kiratas and Khas groups used to be living in the area. It was through the Kiratis and Khas of eastern Nepal, we got the gods and goddess like Siva, Parvati, Ganga, Yakshya etc⁷⁸. It is claimed that Koch, Mech (Bodo), Naga and Nepali Tharu of Nepal (Nepal) Terai area, Rai and Limbu are the descendants of this Kiratas. The Mahabharata war which has taken place between Kauravas and Pandavas was also consisting of the Himalayan Kiratas. It is found that Mahabharata war took place, at

⁷⁶ Khemraj Sharma, *Gorkhas in the wilderness: A study in Northeast India*, (New Delhi: 2013), 103.

⁷⁷ Khemraj Sharma, *Gorkhas in the wilderness: A study in Northeast India*, 103.

⁷⁸ K. Sharma, *Gorkhas in the wilderness: A study in Northeast India*, 104.

pragjyotishpur which was the dominion of Kiratas. This has been elaborately discussed in 'Kirantiajurnia'-the sacred book on Kiratas of Assam. In puranas, it is stated that Kiratas used to live between eastern Nepal to mighty Brahmaputra. This was possible for Gorkha Kiratas as they were easily accommodated and integrated with other castes and tribes of North-eastern India⁷⁹. In this context, Kanaklal Baruah in his article entitled 'My Reminiscences' on, The Studies in the Early History of Assam, has stated that "evidently in those days, the process of assimilating new migrants into the indigenous society had been quite quick. This process has been going on in Assam since time immemorial. It is this process that the Assamese Hindu society has been built up that explains complete fusion of the Gadiya, utkal, Dravidi, Kamrupi, Maithili, Kanajia, Marwari and Gorkha Brahmins in the Assamese Brahmin society of the present day"⁸⁰. It is claimed that Brahmins and Kashyaps might have come from upper Bihar, Mithila, and Kanyakubja which were once an integral part of Nepal. It indicates that the Gorkhas were in those days in the areas. The kings of kamrupa had special regards to the Brahmins and kshatriyas of Mithila, Kanyakubja and upper Bihar. They imported Brahmin priests, Chhetri, soldiers, farmers, ranchers, and artists from Nepal to their realm and gave them rent-free land⁸¹. Dr. Hutton in Early History of Assam'' has eloquently stated that Brahmins and Kayasthas of Assam are all imported from North Bihar but the Assamese kolita Brahmins are indigenous to Assam. The Mithila in early human civilization was part and parcel of Nepal. This has been the historical clue that indicates the Gorkhas were very much present there in India. During the medieaval period, Assam and Nepal maintained a friendly relationship. Ratikanta Upadhyaya, one of Shankardeva's (great saint from Assam) Nepali disciples, was designated the satradhikhar (in charge) of the Nepali satra in Teok, according to Maheshwar Neog, ex-president of Assam Sahtiya Sabha⁸².

⁷⁹ K. Sharma, *Gorkhas in the wilderness: A study in Northeast India*, 104.

⁸⁰ Kanaklal Baruah, *My Reminiscences' on, The Studies in the Early History of Assam* (Guwahati: 1973), 29.

⁸¹ B.D. Dungal, *The History of the Nepali communities in Northeast India*, 1984, 30.

⁸² Hemraj kafle, *Brahmaputrako Cheucheu: A saga of Nepali Migrants, Identity crisis*, (Guwahati:2007), 82.

At the time of Naranarayan's regime, Kamrupa had boundary up to the river kosi of Nepal. Thus, many Gorkhas had been there at Kamrupa. Huien Tsang of china while visiting Kamrupa of Assam stated that the then Kamrupa of Bhaskar Varma of Assam was consisting of upper Bengal, East Bihar, parts of Bhutan and Nepal. Bhaskar Barman was the descendant of Nepali Malla king. It is believed that the Gorkhas worship lord Goraknath. This may be the reason why they are called Gorkhas. There is a Gorakhpur temple in Gorakhpur town of Uttar Pradesh. Aside from the aforementioned characteristics; there are other aspects that have linked the two countries. The birth of Sita, in Janakpur Nepal, and Nepal's Lumbini and later acquired enlightenment in India's Bodhgaya. Charumati, the daughter of King Ashoka, married Nepalese Kshatriya prince Dewapal. The Ashoka pillar in Lumbini also bears witness to this historical connection⁸³. People from Nepal and India used to cross the current border in the past. Pilgrimage, trade, marriage alliances, travelling saints and warriors, and other activities have all moved across the continent from the Indian Ocean to the Himalayas and back. According to Indian history, there was a great deal of people mobility between the Gangetic plains and the Himalayan region during the time of Lord Budha and Emperor Ashoka. This cycle continued for centuries until the British arrived in India and created their empire⁸⁴.

Kamrupa and Nepal shared a deep cultural bond. In ancient times, Nepali Brahmin Pandas (temple priests) known as Lal Mohar Pandas served in the Kamakhya temple. According to the puranas, king Narkasur of Nepal, built Kamakhya temple. The king brought many Brahmins from Nepal. This may be the obvious reason why the Gorkha visit Kamakhya temple in a large scale. There are still many Gorkha pundits in the Kamakhya temple. In the name of Kamakhya Devi, Gorkha Tagadhari women observed *Swasthani Ko Brata* (Fast) throughout the month of Janaury every year. The Kamakhya temple attracted the Gorkhas to come to Assam and settle down there. Similar in the case of Vasistha temple of

⁸³Teknarayan, Upadhaya, "Identity in Nepali historical Novels from Northeast India", in *Indian Nepalis: Issues and perspective* ,(Indus Publication: NewDelhi,2005), 199

⁸⁴A.C. Sinha, "Proluge" in A.C. Sinha & T.B. Subba (ed.): *The Nepalis in Northeast India* (Indus publishing company :2007), 14.

Guwahati, the *Bhattarai Bhauns* (Upper caste priest) of the Gorkha community are associated to be the descendants of Rishi Vasistha (Purohit of lord Rama). Similarly, parsuram Kund (Hindu sacred place in the river Lohit) of the region is very popular among the Gorkhas. In the words of historian S.L.Baruah, The most notable Sanskrit works are Abdhuta Sara, a book dealing with propitiatory rites for determining mischief likely to be caused by the occurrence of strange events, the Apaduddhara Mantra, a Trantik work, the Astabargidasa, an astrological work, the Graha Vija Jnana, an astronomical work, Grahana Arya, a treaty on eclipses, the Graha puja vidhi, all work on planetary worship and the Hastamuktavali, treatise on the art of dancing. As a result, it implies a tight relationship between the neighbouring kingdom of Kamrup and Nepal⁸⁵.

It is claimed that the pundits of kundil Gotra among other Brahmans were very famous there at the Vishnu temple of Rukmini of Bismaknagar (Roing Arunachal Pradesh). These Brahmans pundits had been claimed to belong to kundil Gotra. They are all described to the Himalayan pundits. By Himalayan pundits it is rationally presumed to be the Gorkha pundits as then no other caste could dwell on Hindu priesthood job. Therefore, it can be safely said that Kundil riverbanks were the actual habitation of earlier Gorkhas. It was only after the conflict in the present Chulikata Mismis and lord Krishna, the Gorkhas left the Rukmininagar (Arunachal Pradesh) and shift to sadiya of Assam and settled down their permanently. The name chulikata Mismis were called after the lord Krishna had cut his hairs when he was badly defeated near the river Kundil. The Lord Krishna took away Rukimini from the riverbanks of undil. It is also known from the field- work at Bismaknagar (capital of king Bismak)-the father of Rukmini that Krishna had brought lot of Gorkha Gwalas (milk supplier)-graziers who had been left there itself at the time of departure of Lord Krishna from bismaknagar with Rukmimi. Presently it is believed by Kundil Gorkha Brahmans that they are the descendents of those left out *Gwalas* of Lord Krishna. This is fully proven by the fact that Lord Krishna was

⁸⁵Purushotam L. Bhandari, "Evolution and Growth of the Nepali community in Northeast India" in A.C. Sinha &T.B. Subba(ed.): *The Nepalis in Northeast India* (Indus publishing company New Delhi :2007),107-8.

fond of cows and always used to enjoy playing with the Gwalas (cowboy). All these indicated that the Gorkhas were in Assam from the days of Lord Krishna.

From an ethnological point of view, the Gorkhas, often known as Nepalis, can be classified into three distinct ethnic stocks ethnologically. The kiratis, who are said to be the land's first inhabitants, are divided into a variety of primarily endogamous tribes such as Rai, Magar, Limbu, Lepcha, Tamang, and others who speak their own languages and are either Hindus, Buddhists, or animists and live in Nepal's Northeastern and eastern regions. They are typically hillmen who enjoy being in the woods and are ethnologically related to India's Northeastern tribal region. Secondly, the Newars, an urban trading and commercial stock found primarily in Kathmandu Valley and Eastern Nepal is separated into several castes. The Newars, who have their own script, language, arts, crafts, and architecture, are multilingual, like the Kiratas, because they speak Nepali in addition to their native Newari. They have made a significant contribution to Nepali culture and are one of the three pillars of current Nepali rule. This community can be found in the Kathmandu Valley, Eastern Nepal, Sikkim, Tibet, Darjeeling, and Northeastern India. Thirdly, the Tagadharis, the Nepali counterpart of the Indian Hindus, with their concept of purity and pollution. Though they are found in all parts of Nepal, they are settled mainly in the western and central regions and the Kathmandu valley.⁸⁶

2.2. Pattern of Gorkha Migration in Northeast India

Migration patterns in South Asia are distinct to the region and cross-national borders. The existing social theory of migration has been the argument advanced by neoclassical political economists, which is based on the push and pull theory⁸⁷. According to Ranabir Samadar, the push factors—which include issues like overpopulation, unemployment, a lack of land, low wages, and natural disasters—as well as the pull factors—which draw people due to job opportunities, high wages, and resources for their personal enrichment—do not operate in south Asia

⁸⁶A.C. Sinha, “The Indian Northeast frontier and the Nepali immigrants” in A.C. Sinha & T.B. Subba(ed.): *The Nepalis in Northeast India* (Indus publishing Company, New Delhi :2007), 36.

⁸⁷ Ranabir Samadar, *The Marginal Nation: Tranborder Migration from Bangladesh to west Bengal* (NewDelhi,1999), 39.

with the same neo-classical order⁸⁸. The Gorkha migration, a typical South Asian pattern, draws a little from both the Social Theory and its modifications. In the 18th century, Nepal's political and economic status was such that it encouraged people to leave the country.⁸⁹

2.2.1. Push factors

Behind this large scale of immigration, a significant number of Nepalese were constantly pressured to seek their livelihood outside of Nepal, which is what led to this large-scale immigration of the civil population from Nepal. It is believed that the Rana monarchs⁹⁰ was the first; the traditional Nepalese Government was well known for its oppression and tyranny. A form of serfdom was prevalent during this time⁹¹.

Secondly, there was an increasing fragmentation of land holdings. The Hindu Dharamshastra, on which the fundamental laws of land were based, assigned varied punishments to convicts for the same offences depending on their social rank within the caste system. This clause has harsh treatment for tribes and untouchables. For instance, even unintentional disrespect of a Brahmin may result in punishment, and the accidental killing of a cow could result in a criminal suspect receiving a harsh punishment⁹².

Thirdly, life in the highlands was extremely difficult because there was very little agricultural land in the forested and snow-bound mountain region. Rice, the ruling class's staple food, was grown in valleys and on riverbanks but it was usurped by the establishment in the form of taxation. Rural people could survive on marginal crops, roots, fruits, and wild products with their primitive tools and techniques.

⁸⁸ Ranabir Samadar, *The Marginal Nation: Trnborder Migration from Bangladesh to West –Bengal*, 39.

⁸⁹ M.C. Regmi, *A study in Nepali Economic History; 1768-1846*, (Delhi: 1971), 26.

⁹⁰ Rana rule is a chhetri dynasty that imposed totalitarianism in the kingdom of Nepal from 1846-1951

⁹¹ K.K. Muktan, *The Gorkhas in the freedom struggle of India*, (Concept publishing Company: New Delhi, 2015), 16.

⁹² A.C. Sinha, *Prolouge*, 2007, 16.

Besides this, other factors included: rising population and unemployment, indebtedness, and widespread poverty and hunger⁹³.

Together with these push factors from Nepal there were also certain pull factors which propelled the Nepalese migration into India and especially in Assam.

2.2.2. Pull Factors

First, during the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814-15, the British faced fiercer resistance from the Nepalese. They discovered their adversary to be not only brave warriors, but also effective in wild, difficult, and mountainous terrain. Soon after the Anglo-Nepalese war, a series of events occurred that aided migration to India and resulted in the entire Northeast India coming under British control⁹⁴.

Second, in the 1860s, the British developed a policy of forest reservation and management, converting a large portion of the jungle into reserve forest. These forests necessitated commercial timber extraction on a regular basis. In addition, the state established cinchona, rubber, pepper, coffee, and other herbal plantations. Commercial timber extraction required strong muscle power as 'arakasias' (sawyers) or 'tangaitis' (axemen), who cleared the forests from Bhutan to the Arakan Hills. In the absence of local labour, the forest department established a series of "forest villages" as a source of captive labour, requiring them to work for the forest department for a minimum number of days per year. Needless to say, the Nepalese took advantage of it, settling in forest villages and engaged in cattle rearing, dairy business and agriculture⁹⁵.

Thirdly, the British could build speedier modes of transportation in Bengal and Assam, including roads, railways, and even waterways. The Nepalese felt encouraged to travel to far-off regions for the paid labour such as army, military, police, or even as a member of the coolie corps because they were from Nepal's roadless interior. In order to readily draw the hill men from Nepal for the recruitment, a number of recruitment depots were eventually built at Dehradun,

⁹³ Sinha, *Prologue*, 13.

⁹⁴ Sinha, *prologue*, 14.

⁹⁵ Muktan, *The Gorkhas in the freedom struggle of India*, 17.

Gorakhpur, Laheriaserai (Darbhanga), Ghoom (Darjeeling), and others. Additionally, the availability of medical facilities, army boards, and pension disbursement centres attracted many Nepalese to apply for work in British establishments⁹⁶.

Since the dawn of time, the Gorkhas have held a strong cultural belief in the importance of allowing men to move freely between nations and connect their homes and places of employment. It is said in Nepali proverb that '*chora ko jat ki Ran Ma ki Ban Ma*' refers to the notion that a son of a Gorkha household must either die in battle or in the jungle in order to survive by slaying wild animals or foes. It is abundantly obvious that the Gorkhas community was in the habit of globalizing their community people since time immemorial in the Himalayas. As a result of this community's globalisation, they had to deal with the process of marginalisation everywhere⁹⁷. The Gorkha migration to the eastern Himalayas, which included Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Bhutan, occurred in 1625 A.D. When the Chowgel dynasty arrived in Sikkim, a few Newars (goldsmiths) were invited to mint *Chaptay paisa* (mint coins). Along with the introduction of settled cultivation, the then Chowgel kings of Sikkim-Darjeeling invited a large number of Gorkhas, particularly Bahun, Chhetri, Mangar, Gurung, Kami, Damai, Sarki, Rai, Limbu, Thami, Tamang, and others to Sikkim-Darjeeling. The local Sikkimese Lepchas and Bhutias were not used to such sustainable terrace cultivation. According to the revenue history of Nepal and the western Indian Himalayas, only the Gorkhas were pioneers of terrace cultivation in the Himalayas. This is still found in Northeast India today⁹⁸. The history of the Gorkha migration to the undivided Assam is discovered to be the history of the five hundred years that the Ahom monarchs ruled the current Assam, which includes the current North-East India. The Ahom kings were drawn to the Gorkhas' terrace farming, *Gai-Goth* (Cow Shed), and

⁹⁶ A.C. Sinha. *The Elite in Sikkim: A sociological study*, (New Delhi: 1997).

⁹⁷K.R. Sharma & T.C. Das, *Marginalisation of Gorkhas in India: A community in quest of Indian Identity* (Delhi:2011),9.

⁹⁸ K.R. Sharma & T.C. Das, *Marginalisation of Gorkhas in India: A community in quest of Indian Identity* ,4.

animal husbandry since it used to bring a good source of revenue for the Ahom kings' government. This was the main reason why the Gorkhas preferred not to work on tea plantations after the British planters began growing tea there⁹⁹. By the time tea cultivation began in Assam, the Gorkhas had already been well received and recognised by the local government for their established farming in the region. The same strategy was later followed successfully by the other government of Northeast states in the settlement of the Gorkhas. The Gorkhas raise almost all of the lands with terraces in the hill areas for settled cultivation. As a result, they have made the land cultivable by fertilising it with cow dung and other natural fertilisers. This is the main reason why, even today, Gorkhas in rural Northeast India practise dairy farming as their main source of income in addition to agriculture¹⁰⁰. One of the most important aspects of the Gorkha presence is the basis of their own economic base as Grazier's, dairy farmers, and with a well-established trade in milk supply. Today, a large portion of them reside on the fringes of cities, providing milk to those who live there. They hold a monopoly on dairy farming in the state since they have become economically entrenched. As a producer and supplier of milk, they dominate the state. There are other communities involved in dairy farming, but none know his cattle better than a Nepali¹⁰¹.

A chain network set up by the early migrants was a major factor in Nepali migration into Assam. Settlements of migrant Nepalis appeared in Shillong and other Northeastern regions. The colonial authorities promoted the migration of Gorkhas and their families as well. Once more, the presence of a sizable Gorkha contingent in the Regiment and the frontier police pushed them to relocate from Siliguri to the Lakhimpur district (Assam). The Gorkha people, who are ubiquitous in Assam's hills, valleys, towns, and villages, have significantly contributed to the labour force in this area by working as carpenters, potters, marginal farmers, skilled

⁹⁹ K.R. Sharma & T.C. Das, *Marginalisation of Gorkhas in India: A community in quest of Indian Identity*, 5

¹⁰⁰ K.R. Sharma & T.C. Das, *Marginalisation of Gorkhas in India: A community in quest of Indian Identity*, 9

¹⁰¹ Sharama & Das, 10.

and unskilled employees, and in oil refineries as well as in tea plantations and coal mines¹⁰². In the year 1897, 1898 and 1899, the Nepali labourers employed in the tea gardens throughout the province and in the oil refineries at Margherita and coal mines in upper Assam¹⁰³.

Table 1.1. Showing Nepali labourers employed

Year	Total
1897	179
1898	231
1899	188
1901	272
1902	102
1903	184

Source: Cited by Lopita Nath (Report on Labour immigration into Assam, 1898, 1899 and Resolution on Labour Immigration into Assam, 1902-03, 1903-04, Shillong).

It was only after the 1950 Indo-Nepal Free Trade Agreement that the Nepalese people were given the same freedoms as Indians in Nepal to do business, own property, settle down, find jobs, and live without limitation as they did in India. They have practically monopolised the local milk trade, making them crucial to the region's economy. Socially they were successfully assimilated into the region's plural society on a social level¹⁰⁴.

2.3. Colonial state and Gorkhas in Assam/ Northeast region

The entrance of the Aryans and Muslims in India is known as the 'advent' of the Aryans and the 'advent' of the Muslims, respectively, in Indian history. Similarly,

¹⁰² Lopita Nath, "Labour Migration in an earlier phase of Global Restructuring: The Nepali Dairy Farmers in Assam" in *NEIHA*, (2002), 161

¹⁰³ Lopita Nath, *Labour Migration in an earlier phase of Global Restructuring: The Nepali Dairy Farmers in Assam*, 162.

¹⁰⁴ Lopita Nath, *Labour Migration in an earlier phase of Global Restructuring: The Nepali Dairy Farmers in Assam*, 162.

the arrival of the Tai-Ahoms in Assam is referred to as the Tai-Ahoms' arrival. Following this historical precedent, it could be more acceptable to refer to Nepali/Gorkha movement as the advent of Gorkha, because the vast majority of them did not migrate, but were absorbed into India together with the regions they now inhabit¹⁰⁵.

Colonial rule, with its primary goal of profit generation through exploitation, encouraged such human inflows, in the 19th century which were necessitated by Assam's prevailing socioeconomic circumstances. The biggest human movement and settlement occurred during the colonial period in various parts of the globe. The Gorkha, also known as the Assam light Infantry¹⁰⁶ were originally deployed in the Sylhet campaigns after the Treaty of Sagauli (1815–16). Discrimination from high ranks in the army at home during the Rana regime also encouraged many Magar and Gurung men to enter long-term military service outside of the country. These soldiers were mostly from the low-caste Magars and Gurungs from the central hills, who were in a very low economic position. Other ethnic groups included the Chhetris, Rais, Lumbus, Tamangs, Thakuris, Sunwar, and others from the East. Only a small number of Brahmins and Newars were recruited during World War II. Despite government opposition, many young people fled the country due to difficult economic conditions to settle near the Nepal border¹⁰⁷ where they could easily enlist in the army. As a result of this migration, Nepali settlements were established in Kangra, Naintal, Dharamsala, Dehradun, Darjeeling, and even Northeast India.

Following the Segoulee Treaty (1814-1816), Gorkhas began to settle permanently in the north-eastern region.¹⁰⁸ The Nepalese (Gorkha) Sepoys serving in the East India Company's Assam Light Infantry fought against the Burmese who invaded Assam

¹⁰⁵ Jamadagni Upadhyaya, *The Advent of the Nepalese in Assam* (Guwahati: 2009),11

¹⁰⁶ A.C Sinha, "The Indian Northeast Frontier and the Nepalese Immigrants" in *Himalayan Environment and culture* (Shimla, IAS:1990), 226-7.

¹⁰⁷To facilitate recruitment, the British established centers at Gorakhpur and Ghoom on the Indian side of the Nepal border.

¹⁰⁸ P. Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese,1800-1950*, (Jagiroad: Guwahati),1996.

during the colonial period and were instrumental in removing the Burmese yoke from the state. The Nepalis, Gurkhalis, and Gorkhas are Nepali-speaking people who have become one of the most populous ethnicities in northeast India¹⁰⁹. The Gorkhas played a vital part in the unification, consolidation, and restoration of what is now known as India's northeast region on the country's eastern frontier. Bampfylde Fuller, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam said that:

“It was fortunate for the Government of the province that on these emergent occasions it could rely upon a garrison of regular troops that include the Gorkha Regiments”¹¹⁰.

The history of Gorkha in Assam can be traced back to the Anglo-Gorkha war (1814-1816), when the British were much impressed by the Gorkhas' courage. The Gorkha conquered the heart of the British by their skill and spirit of fighting. John Ship, an eyewitness to the war, exclaimed:

“I never saw more steadiness or bravery exhibited in my life. Run they would not, and death, they seem to have no fear, though their comrades were falling thick around them, for we were so near...”¹¹¹.

In the war that lasted for one and a half year, the Gorkha army under the command of Gen.Amar Singh Thapa fought with so much of courage and skill and determination that their performance evoked admiration of their enemy. Sir Charles Matcalfe was reported to have ruefully said:

“We have met with an enemy who shows decidedly greater bravery and greater steadiness than our troops possess; and it is impossible to say what may be the end of such reverse of order of things, European and Native have

¹⁰⁹Gurung, *Human Movement and the colonial state; The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire*, 173.

¹¹⁰K.K. Muktan, “Gorkhas contribution to External and Internal Security of India”, in A.C. Sinha &T.B. Subha (ed.), *The Nepalis in NorthEast India: A Community in search of Indian Identity*, (Indus publishing Company: New Delhi, 2003), 124.

¹¹¹ Francis Taker, *The story of Gorkhas*, (London: 1957), 236.

been repulsed by inferior number with sticks and stones. In others our troops have been beaten by the enemy, sword(khukuri) in hand and driven miles like a flock of sheep...In this war, dreadful to say, we have had number on our side, and skill and bravery on the side of our enemy.’’¹¹²

That is why, following the war and the Segowlee Treaty (1815-1816), the English established an army and battalions made up primarily of Gorkhas, which were eventually renamed the Gorkha Regiments¹¹³. Large portions of the Terai region's land as well as areas like the Garhwal, Kumano, Dehradun, Bhagsu, Nainital, and Darjeeling were handed to British India along with the local population. A sizable portion of Nepalis have settled in India, while they have spread out around the globe. There are significant populations of Nepalis in places like Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Patna, Deharadun, Kasi, and Assam. The British successfully negotiated with the Jaintia king of modern-day Meghalaya between 1824 and 1833 in order to establish themselves in Cherrapunji, close to Bangladesh. The Gorkhas, who had recruited in the Sylhet Light Infantry, are believed to have played a crucial role in the downfall of the Jaintia and Khasi ruler¹¹⁴. These corps and battalions were eventually deployed extensively in Assam during the outbreak of the war with Myanmar (Burma), as well as later for land expedition and annexation in the northeastern region. After retirement, these Gorkha cadets were given lands and jobs in these Border States, and the sons of some of these cadets were also appointed to vacant posts. A significant number of such ex-servicemen did not return to their home country and instead settled in Assam batch after batch after retirement for many years¹¹⁵. L.S.S.O, Malley, the editor of the Bengal District Gazetteers, recorded that the:

“Nepalis are a capable, Cheerful and alert people, and are essentially a virile race. Though quick tempered and keen to resent an injustice, they are remarkably willing, and loyal, if treated with consideration...

¹¹² Francis Toker, *The story of Gorkhas*, 236.

¹¹³ P. Bhandari. *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese*, 1800-1950, p.173.

¹¹⁴ Teknarayan Upadhaya, *Identity in Nepali historical Novels from Northeast India*, 199.

¹¹⁵ Sinha, *The Indian Northeast frontier and the Nepali immigrants*, 43.

Though small in stature, these Nepalis have big hearts.... Naturally vigorous, excitable and aggressive, they are very law abiding”¹¹⁶.

The above quote was also testified in an intelligence report on the official account of the Abor Expedition of 1911-12:

“The greater part of the striking force consisted of Gorkhas. The latter is to great extent a savage himself and remarkably well able to look after himself in the jungle, if he is encouraged to use his own initiative, and this instinct coupled with the fact that he has been trained to think makes him quite able to cope with almost any jungle man”¹¹⁷.

According to various historical accounts, permanent migration across the borders of Sikkim, Bengal, Assam, Darjeeling, Bhutan, and Burma increased after the 1850s. These people provided the majority of the labour force for tea estates in that region, and they made significant contributions to the tea industry in Bengal and Assam. Former slaves and debtors make up the vast majority of these migrants. Nepalese migrants in India in the nineteenth century were heavily involved in the development of the coal mining industry, as well as land reclamation and resettlement in some parts of India, in addition to their work on tea estates¹¹⁸.

Thus, we can say that the Gorkhas in the Indian Army and the Para-military forces had the pioneering contribution in bringing about the divine dispensation.

¹¹⁶ L.S.S.O, Malley, Bengal District Gazetter Darjeeling, (NewDelhi,1985),41.

¹¹⁷ Sinha, *The Indian Northeast Frontier and the Nepali Immigrants*, 44.

¹¹⁸ Jagannath Adhikari, *The Beginning of Agrarian Change: A Case study in Central Nepal* (Kathmandu: TM Publication, 1996), 78-79.

Table 1.2. District wise distribution of the Nepalis in Assam in 1901¹¹⁹:

District	Population
Darrang	4430
Kamrup	1559
Nagaon	1118
Goalpara	1169
Sibsagar	1656
Khasi&Jayantia hills	1694
Garo hills	753

Source: Statistics handbook of Assam:1995, Govt.of Assam

Table 1.3. Showing Nepali population in Assam as per census Reports¹²⁰:

Year	Population
1901	21347
1911	47654
1921	70344
1931	88306
1951	101388
1961	215213
1971	349116
1991	432519

Source:Statistical Handbook of Assam :2000, Govt.of Assam

According to T. Gurung, "by the 1930s, the migration of Nepalis to the northeast had established a pattern." The number of Nepali-speaking people in the hill districts had risen to 3,000 in the Naga Hills, 2,000 in the Lushai Hills, and 3000 in Manipur

¹¹⁹Statistics handbook of Assam:1995, Govt.of Assam, cited in Assam and her population by Jamadagni upadhaya & Sadananda Dahal

¹²⁰Statistical Handbook of Assam: 2000, Govt.of Assam, cited in Assam and her population by Jamdagni Upadhaya & Sadananda Dahal.

by that time. The Khasi and Jaintias hills had by far the greatest number¹²¹. In 1946 an intelligence officer wrote to the government:

.... 'There has been a great infiltration of nepalis eastwards from Nepal is very true and very noticeable. It is impossible for anybody who lived in Assam for the last sixteen years, not to have noticed the remarkable number of Nepalis that are seen all over the province, particularly in the Assam Valley, the hill districts and the frontier tracts¹²²'.

The British endeavoured to strengthen Assam's productive powers beginning with the conquest of lower Assam, and then they expanded and cemented their control over the entire province. The Pre-British economy was largely a subsistence economy, thus the British aimed to increase revenue by putting additional wastelands into production. Aside from that, it promoted trade and the growth of cash crops. These were colonial-era conditions for human migration in Assam. In order for people to migrate from outside the area, the British either provided the conditions or supported that migration¹²³.

2.4. Wasteland

There is no single unified definition of wasteland. The term wasteland refers to those untilled land, unsettled that included the forest, the highland, with extensive grass and grassland. For a layman, wasteland is a piece of land that lies uncultivated, uninhabited and left behind after use or the land that no longer serves any purpose¹²⁴. According to Dudley Stamp, wasteland is the land that has been abandoned, and for which no further use has been found. Singh defines that wasteland is actually the land that remains between the grown land and the

¹²¹Gurung, *Human Movement and the colonial state; The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire* 180.

¹²²Report No.61/24 April 1946 of the central Intelligence Office, Government of Assam, Cited in Tejimola Gurung.p.181.

¹²³ Gurung, *Human Movement and the colonial State*, 2007, 182.

¹²⁴S.C. Sharma, R. B. Chaturvedi & O.P. Mishra, *utilisation of wastelands for sustainable Development in India*, (Concept publishing Company, New Delhi: 1990) 42

forest¹²⁵. In the context of the Himalayan villages, he clarifies every small piece of land which comes in this category served a different purpose for the villagers and for each of these villagers they have a separate name and context of the wasteland¹²⁶. Usually, villagers used the wasteland for pasture facilities, getting wood for fuel and to meet other domestic needs.

With the Permanent Settlement of 1793, the concept of "waste" in Indian law and land revenue policies in Bengal was introduced into the vocabulary of the legal codes (Gidwani 1992: 39). The Permanent Settlement, which came into force to correct abuses of the farming system under Warren Hastings, bestowed property rights on a class of gentleman farmers. Its fundamental ideas were largely derived from Locke and Bentham's treatises and were founded on the idea that having secure private property rights over land was the best incentive for labour that created value. This, in turn, would increase political stability and land revenue, which would result in the creation of wealth. According to William Hunter, wastes were central to the Permanent Settlement in Bengal¹²⁷.

Waste land are of two types- 1) village wasteland 2) forest wasteland.

Prior to colonial intervention, village communities owned and controlled wastelands and forests as common property resources¹²⁸. Earlier, villagers used this wasteland for grazing and growing fuel wood and other forest products. During the pre-British period, this land was never used to generate revenue and was never surveyed or burdened with any restrictions that restricted traditional rights¹²⁹. The large fields of waste land drew the attention of British capitalists, who sought to make the best use of them. Initially, little attention was paid to the expansion of ordinary cultivation, but due to the vast areas that remained unclean, the government decided to open

¹²⁵Chetan Singh, *Nature premise, Ecology, and peasant life in the western Himalaya*, (oxford university press 1998), 92.

¹²⁶ Chetan Singh, *Nature premise, Ecology, and peasant life in the western Himalaya*, 92

¹²⁷Sarah Hilay, "Imagining the colonial Assam: The Figuring of Wastelands in its making" in *Economic and political weekly*, vol,11, No.3. (January:2016), 55.

¹²⁸ Singh, *Nature Premise, Ecology, and peasant Life in the western Himalayas*,.82.

¹²⁹ Ajay Singh Rawat, *Indian Forestry, A perspective*, (New Delhi, Indus Publishing company:1993),171.

these lands to ordinary cultivation through the colonisation process. Thus, wasteland included forests and highland, having extensive high reed and grass and grassland¹³⁰.

2.5. Wastelands in colonial Assam

It has been mentioned that the vast areas of waste land attracted the attention of the British capitalists who tried to make best use of them. Initially not much attention was given to the growth of ordinary cultivation, but subsequently, in view of the large areas remaining uncleared, the Government decided to open up these lands for ordinary cultivation through a process of colonisation¹³¹.

In context of Assam, the enormous wastelands of Assam, a potential source of revenue, had always preoccupied the minds of the colonial authorities. Wasteland in many areas of Assam, during the pre-British intervention was taken as a people's activity, since from time immemorial the traditional right to graze their cattle freely on the village commons and neighbouring forests¹³². In the second decade of the nineteenth century of Burmese invasion, there were large tracts of degradable land in the province of Assam. When the province of Assam came under the British control, following the treaty of yandaboo, Feb 24, 1826, Assam still had large tract of greenery areas. Owing to the rugged terrain, vast greenery forests, threatening approach of the tribal people and their several languages. The colonial government resulted in the establishment of administrative machinery in that province only towards the end of the nineteenth century¹³³. The migrants were urged to enter and establish themselves in the province. In an industry-less country, Assam had no other option but to increase its land revenue¹³⁴. During the early colonial traveller, they mentioned that widespread of wasteland which they saw in province of Assam included forests. According to John M. Coash,

¹³⁰ A.J.M, Mills, *Report on the province of Assam*, Guwahati,1984, p.56.

¹³¹ H.K. Barpujari, *Political History of Assam*, vol,1,1826-1919, (Guwahati:1989),52.

¹³² Amalendu Guha, *Planters Raj to Swaraj: Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947*. (Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2006), 244.

¹³³ B. Ribbentrop, *Forestry in British India*, p.104.

¹³⁴ Guha, *Planters Raj to Swaraj: Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947*, 245.

“The extensive valley, through some centuries ago rightly cultivated by an industrious and enterprising people is now throughout six –eight or seven –eight of it extend covered with jungle”¹³⁵.

The abundant lands of waste lying in Assam province had bright economic prospects. Therefore, the Government made every effort to settle the Graziers to live and settle permanently¹³⁶. The wasteland settlement had brought great change to Assam province. The British policymakers have been actively pursuing definite policies from the very beginning to achieve success. In September 1827 David Scott proposed a scheme to grant land for waste. The condition attached was for the grantor to put 1/4th of the allotment into tillage by the expiry of the third year; 1/4th by 6th year and 1/4th of the ninth year. In the late 9th year, the grantor should pay the regular fee for holding the land in perpetuity on 3/4th of the entire allotment. Grazing animals and beginning of the tea cultivation marked a new era in the management of wastelands in Assam¹³⁷. As early as 1827, captain Mathews projected that in Lower Assam of the 1,659,694 puras¹³⁸, 529,735 puras were cultivated, with the rest being wastelands¹³⁹. Under the Ahom monarchy, the high officials were remunerated by grants of wastelands or khats at nominal rates of revenue¹⁴⁰. David Scott outlined the conditions for encouraging settlement on wastelands. The idea of colonising the wasteland since the early period of colonial intervention in Assam centred on the project of commercialisation of agriculture. T.C. Robertson who succeeded David Scott, formalised the wasteland rules conceived by Scott. The discourse on the colonisation of vast tracts of land in the slopes of Assam was based on the construction of the spatial contours of ‘unused

¹³⁵John.M. Cosh, *Topography of Assam*, (Delhi: 1975), 13.

¹³⁶ Gorky Chakraborty, *Roots and Ramifications of a Colonial Construct: The wasteland in Assam*, (Institute of Development studies, Kolkata:2012),2-5.

¹³⁷ N.K. Barooh, *David Scott in Northeast India*, (NewDelhi:1970), 120-21.

¹³⁸ One pura is equivalent to 2-33 acres of land.

¹³⁹ Gorky chakraborty, *Roots and Ramifications of a Colonial Construct: The wasteland in Assam*, 4.

¹⁴⁰ Theoretically, all land belonged to the king, whether cultivated or waste. He assigned land both to the nobility and the freemen or individual paiks in lieu of their services to the state. Lands grants were made for religious purposes along with assigning servitors.

land' which formed the corpus of the state resources. Jenkins collected data gathered from district officers such data served as a window to visualising the landscape and economic potential of Assam¹⁴¹.

In the district of Goalpara, it was determined that the wastelands were suited for indigo cultivation. However, the government's directives have limited its ability to be grown. Nevertheless, mustard cultivation was allowed. In Kamrup, the inundated wastelands were viewed as unsuitable for extensive commercial farming. To the contrary, the divisions of Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, and Lakhimpur had the large areas of waste land that were well suited for the cultivation of sugarcane and provided several superior advantages¹⁴².

In 1836, The Government of Bengal approved Jenkins' scheme and Assam received the first set of wasteland rules. The wasteland was broadly divided into three categories in these schemes: (I) forestlands, ii) reed and grass wastes, and iii) grasslands among cultivated land. The first category was granted rent-free status for a period of twenty years. For ten years, the second category of high reed and grass wastes (nal and Khagra) to be granted. The third category of grassland to be granted rent-free status for the next five years¹⁴³.

2.6. Graziers and Wasteland in colonial period

During the pre-colonial era, peasants in Assam were allowed to graze their livestock freely in the village commons and wastelands¹⁴⁴. Assam had a lot of wastelands and an undulating topography. W.W. Hunter, in particular in the Brahmaputra valley, highlighted that Lower Assam had large tracts of wasteland, in Darrang district, but much of it is covered with thick grass, jungles, and reeds of woods, making it very expensive to clear¹⁴⁵. Here, the British pushed the Nepalis to settle new areas and cultivate or graze livestock. Such Graziers wererelocated to the Darrang district

¹⁴¹ H.K. Barpujari, *Assam in the days of the company 1826-53*, (Guwahati:1963)

¹⁴² H.K. Barpujari, *Assam in the days of the company 1826-53*, (Guwahati:1963)

¹⁴³ Barpujari, *Assam in the days of the company 1826-53*

¹⁴⁴ Gurung,2003,173.

¹⁴⁵ W.W Hunter, *A statistical Account of Assam*, Vol.1. (Guwahati; spectrum publication,1998).257.

because most of the land close to the Brahmaputra was reserved for Grazier's¹⁴⁶. The char land along the Brahmaputra was nearly depleted, and they gradually conquered all available wastelands. C.S. Mulan stated that large areas of wasteland were accessible in the subdivisions of Darrang, Kamrup, Nagaon, and Tezpur. Due to an increase in the rates of grazing tax, many Gorkha Graziers entered Assam from Jalpaiguri (present west-Bengal) and settled in the wasteland area¹⁴⁷. According to the Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1886,

"The government has been making serious efforts to encourage Grazier's into Assam in order to settle the wastelands of Assam with people and to increase the revenue collection of the province"¹⁴⁸.

In the overall colonial scheme, the British colonial government pushed the migrating Gorkhas to settle in Assam's vast wastelands as part of a larger colonial plan to increase revenue¹⁴⁹. In Assam, Majority of Nepali in rural areas is identified as a dairy farmer or *dudhwala*¹⁵⁰. Even the local gazetteer notes that most Gorkhas are Grazier's who maintain sizable herds of cows and buffaloes. They had penetrated deep into the interior of the district and had established Khunties. Some had taken to cultivation also. There are also in some region of Assam, that the Gorkha established themselves in char regions. The Gorkha Grazier's utilised the lush grass growth in the Chars. Thus Cattle raising and grazing were predominantly a profession practised by the Gorkhas. As a result, the vast wasteland of Assam quickly attracted Nepali graziers. Following that, the Nepalis began to take up land

¹⁴⁶ Lopita Nath, "Conflict-Afflicted Nepalis of Assam: The Reality" in A.C. Sinha & T.B. Subha (ed.), *The Nepalis in NorthEast India: A Community in search of Indian Identity*, (Indus publishing Company, New Delhi, 2003), 211.

¹⁴⁷ Sajal Nag, *Roots of ethnic conflict: Nationality question in the Northeast India*, (Manohar publication: 1990), 90.

¹⁴⁸ Monimala Devi, "Economic History of Nepali Migration and settlement in Assam", in *Economic and political weekly*, vol. xiii, no. 29, 307.

¹⁴⁹ Tejimala Gurung, "Human Movement and colonial state: A study of the Nepalis in Northeast India under the British Empire" in *NEIHA*, (2001), 411.

¹⁵⁰ Dudhwala means Milk men.

for cultivation. All of these were interconnected processes that were facilitated by the colonial situation and condition¹⁵¹.

2.7. Socio-economic impact of settlement on wasteland in Brahmaputra valley.

The presence of wastelands in Assam the importation of labourers from other parts of the empire the advent of merchants from outside who controlled the trade and commerce relating to the plantation all contributed to the setting up of a colonial societal framework, where the benefits accruing to the province or to the indigenous populace were very meagre. Under the circumstances, the wastelands of Assam became the playing field for capital organization, labourers, merchants etc- all drawn from outside¹⁵².

The colonial administrator wanted to change the stagnant agricultural situation in Assam by encouraging farm labourers from various densely populated districts of East Bengal to migrate, settle and cultivate in the sparsely populated areas of Land abundant Assam. It was only during the partition of Bengal in 1905, that the process of large –scale migration of population started into the wasteland of Assam¹⁵³. The settlement of waste land had far-reaching social, political, and economic consequences for society. The large-scale immigration into Assam caused changes in the province's demography. Prior to colonial intervention in the province of Assam, the colonial administrator determined that the revenue paid by the local people was insufficient to meet the demands of the government because there were a fewer people in the region due to the province's smaller population. To meet those demands, they encouraged labourers and peasants to settle in Assam¹⁵⁴. This marked the beginning of a demographic watershed in the region's history. The main goal of the British government was to open up the wasteland for graziers and

¹⁵¹ Nath, *Labour Migration in an earlier phase of Global Restructuring: The Nepali Dairy Farmers in Assam*, 166.

¹⁵² Rajib Handique, "Colonial wasteland Grants and their impact on the ecology and society of Assam", in *proceeding of the Indian History Congress*, vol-70, (Indian History congress:2009-), 378.

¹⁵³ Rajib Handique, *Colonial wasteland Grants and their impact on the ecology and society of Assam*, 378.

¹⁵⁴ Shahiuz Zaman Ahmed, *Factors leading to the migration from east Bengal to Assam 1872-1971*, (IHC,2005),1008.

the cultivation of a variety of crops, of which tea appeared to be the most suitable. Economically, the colonial government attracted European capitalists to the region to invest in the tea industry as a result of waste land settlement policies in the Brahmaputra Valley¹⁵⁵. Dairy farming and the tea industry has been a very important source of income for the government, and the government has made significant profits from them. Apart from large-scale immigrations into the districts, Assam was generally underpopulated. From 1891 to 1901, the Nowgong district was devastated by the 'kala Azar' fever, which killed over one-quarter of its indigenous population, and as a result, there was a high demand for ex-tea garden labourers to cultivate the derelict lands. As a result, in the middle of the nineteenth century, some Assamese gentlemen petitioned the government to bring people from outside the province to settle here permanently¹⁵⁶. In 1874, nearly a hundred Assamese people signed a petition to Lord Northbrook urging the government to bring people into the province from outside to increase its population and thus improve the state's economy."Anandaram Dhekai phukan, an early Assamese middle-class luminary, stated that:

“In order to provide for famine and similar other misfortunes, as well as to improve the country's agriculture, the government could bring out from Europe and upper India a sufficient number of men well versed in the art of agriculture, to teach the people the better management of their farms, and to instruct them to cultivate every variety of valuable products and every necessary means connected with agriculture”¹⁵⁷.

Gunaviram Barua, a noted public intellectual of Assam in the late nineteenth century and an associate of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, also stated that:

“Those immigration into Assam to utilise its waste land. He listed three key factors that would serve as incentives for immigrants, including affordable yet fertile land, lucrative wages for skilled labourers and craftsmen

¹⁵⁵ Guha, *Planters Raj to Swaraj: Electoral Politics in Assam*, 244.

¹⁵⁶ *Reports of the Assam Labour Enquiry committee, (shillong:1906)*, 75.

¹⁵⁷ Mills, *Report on the province of Assam*, 102.

in light of the region's labour shortage, and and the prevailing condition of easy matrimony”¹⁵⁸.

However, there were some factors that hampered the free flow of immigrants into Assam until the early twentieth century. The major impediments identified by the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Henry Cotton, and other British officials such as Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick were the obstacles of climate and language, as well as the risk to health and initial morality in clearing these waste lands¹⁵⁹. The large population group from East Bengal brought in vast tracts of waste and fallow lands under cultivation in Assam, particularly in the Brahmaputra valley. During this time, the char areas of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries were converted from natural habitats into areas of human habitation¹⁶⁰. Between 1920–21 and 1929–30, it is estimated that migrants from Mymensingh established a total of 737,367 acres of land in the Brahmaputra valley. During the years 1930–1931 to 1939–1940, this rose to 5,967,000, and from 1940–1941 to 1947–1948, an additional 6,213,000 acres of wasteland were populated beside them. In the overall agricultural settlers from East Bengal accounted for almost to half a million acres of the 1.1 million acres of wasteland that were populated with all the migrants in Assam. In reality, as a result of their settlement and the growing of tea, Assam's wasteland decreased from 9.93 million acres to 6.83 million acres between 1947 and 1948¹⁶¹.

Between 1905 and 1911, Assam and Bengal merged to form a single state¹⁶². During the tenure of Mr. Filler, the Chief Commissioner, some East Bengal districts, such as Chhattagram, Dacca, Mymenshingh, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Maldah, and Jalpaiguri, were annexed to the state of Assam, and the state was renamed 'East Bengal and Assam in 1905¹⁶³. As a result, both geographically and historically,

¹⁵⁸ Mills, *Report on the province of Assam*, 102

¹⁵⁹ *Revenue Reports of 1898*, Nos. 128 –138, and see *Colonization of Waste lands in Assam*,10.

¹⁶⁰Gorki Chakravorty, *Assam's Hinterland, Society and Economy in the Char areas*, (Akansha Publication House, New Delhi: 2009), 39.

¹⁶¹ Gorky chakrabarty, *Assam's Hinterland, Society and Economy in the Char areas*,39.

¹⁶²Ismail Hussain, *Asamar Jatiya Jiban Aaru Asamiya Mussalman*, (Anamika Granthalaya, Nalbari:1997),17.

¹⁶³Ismail Hussain, *Asamar Jatiya Jiban Aaru Asamiya Mussalman*,18.

Assam came under the same administrative authority. There was no restriction in terms of existing rule at the time to settle anywhere within the undivided state of Assam and East Bengal. Furthermore, people were required to relocate from one location to another due to work obligations. Furthermore, a large number of disgruntled East Bengalese marched towards the former Assam region in search of habitable and farming lands¹⁶⁴.

The process of importing farm settlers from Eastern Bengal began in 1905 with the division of Bengal and the merger of Assam with Eastern Bengal. Approximately 70,000 immigrants from the districts of Dacca, Mymensingh, Pabna, and Rangpur were reported as having entered the province between 1905 and 1915. With the completion of the Golakganj-Gauhati line of the Eastern Bengal Railway in 1911, contact between Assam and Bengal was established¹⁶⁵. Following this, there was a sharp rise in the number of agriculturalists moving from the Eastern Bengal areas to Assam. The colonial authorities made massive investments in developing the railway network within and outside the province of Assam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between 1901 and 1911, Rs 28 million was spent on an additional 166 miles of track in Assam proper, followed by Rs 33.1 million on 85 miles of track in Goalpara and another 100 miles in other parts of the province¹⁶⁶.

The development of the roads received equal attention to that of the railways. Captain Jenkins understood that expanding the links was crucial to the province's prosperity. He sought to designate a specific portion of funds for road maintenance and development. Not only would the wastelands be made accessible, in his opinion, but individuals would also have the tools necessary to clear them in their possession. In order to prevent famines and satisfy the rising demand for jute around the world, both road and railway lines had to be built in areas that produced wheat and paddy in the 1880s. Infrastructure developments such as waterways in

¹⁶⁴ Shahiuz Zaman Ahmed, *Factors leading to the migration from East Bengal to Assam 1872-1971*, 1008.

¹⁶⁵ Sarah Hilaly, *Imagining the colonial Assam: The Figuring of Wastelands in its making*, 57.

¹⁶⁶ Amalendu Guha, *Medieval and Early Colonial Assam, Society, Polity, Economy*, (Published for Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta: 1991), 198-99.

the 1860s and railways in the 1880s facilitated the expansion of existing capitalistic ventures in the tea industry as well as new ventures in the coal and petroleum sectors in Assam. Assam began to develop trunk railways connecting to the nearest port in the 1890s. This reopened the debate over wasteland settlement¹⁶⁷.

Therefore, except for the dairy farming and cultivation of tea no other special cultivation flourished in the waste lands of Assam and this was mainly because of the commercial interests of the Government. It is said that after the establishment of tea in the wasteland province of the Assam, it affected the life of the Grazier community. Earlier these parts of the wasteland were rich pasture ground where they clear the jungle, bushes and settled in the region, where cattle can move freely from one place to another but after the colonial intervention they were deprived from those rights and they established tea plantation, communication system, social institution in the region thus with the introduction of the tea industry, the grazing ground were occupied by the British Government which affected their daily lives of livelihood.

¹⁶⁷ Sarah Hilay, *Imagining the colonial Assam: The Figuring of Wastelands in its making*, 57.

CHAPTER-3

Economic and political conditions of Gorkha Graziers in colonial Assam

The colonial period saw the greatest human mobility and settlement, resulting in the transfer and dispersion of varied demographic groupings around the globe. Economic commercialization and industrialization under the aegis of the colonial state also contributed to the natural migratory movement of people¹⁶⁸. Historically, the ecosystem in Assam's is diverse. Villagers particularly, peasants practice a mixed livelihood obtaining the sources from agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and other tertiary occupations. There had been livestock grazing in the state's woodlands and meadows, including sheep, buffalo, cows, and goats. Animal husbandry takes a bigger significance in the state as a multifaceted activity. In Assam, livestock is not only a major source of revenue for the populace, but it also supports agriculture and satisfies the rising need for foods high in protein, such as milk, eggs, and meat.

The Graziers are referred to in Assam by several names, including *Guwala*¹⁶⁹, *Gothwala*¹⁷⁰, *Khuttiwala*¹⁷¹, *Gaigothawla*¹⁷², *Vhaisegoathwala*¹⁷³. In essence, they were all farmers who were dairy farmers or cattle herders in the state. This chapter discusses the economic and political policies of graziers during the colonial era and how they were impacted by the mismanagement of colonial rule and how it affected their livelihood. It also discusses their involvement in the Indian Independence Movement, their role in the organisation of the colonial and post-colonial epochs, and how they remain a marginalised group in society.

¹⁶⁸ Amalendu Guha, *Planters Raj to Swaraj: Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947*, 2006, 245.

¹⁶⁹ *Guwala* means milkmen.

¹⁷⁰ Animal herding

¹⁷¹ cowshed

¹⁷² Cowherding/rearing

¹⁷³ Buffalo herding.

3.1. Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 and Grazier Community

As discussed in the previous chapter, the majority of Gorkhas work in dairy farming. The history demonstrates how Gorkha pastoralists moved around the Himalayan region, including Assam. Although Gorkha Grazier's has a longer history in the region, it received administrative attention during the days of colonial administration. British colonial administrators saw it as a profitable sector to collect taxes in Assam. Through policy, British colonial masters transformed and institutionalised Pastoralism into graziers and grazing permits. In accordance with the state government's commitment in the 1945 Resolution on Land Settlement, the Assam Land and Revenue Regulations, 1866, were amended in 1947 by adding a new Chapter, namely Chapter X. This chapter is concerned with the welfare and protection of certain backward classes in terms of land settlement and other related issues. The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act of 1886 was extended to cover all of colonial Assam with the inclusion of the Gorkhas (ALRRA). Gorkhas were classified as Grazier's and cultivators under this Act due to their pastoral way of life. Forest area was granted to the Grazier's and cultivators for use in farming and cattle husbandry. Gradually, this became their full-time occupation, and they became known as professional graziers and cultivators.¹⁷⁴ Now they were primarily cultivators and cattle rearers, which included growing crops and rearing animals for their own use as well as trade and commerce.

3.2. Gorkha Grazier's in Hills district/Northeast

There is no denying the fact that the Gorkha constitute the single largest group of Grazier's in the Brahmaputra valley. Although in the hill districts too the Nepali cattle-breeders do still play a pivotal role. The Hills district include:

- 1)Naga Hills
- 2)Manipur hills
- 3)Khashi and jaintia hills

¹⁷⁴ D.B. Chhetry & Bhabani Prasad Sharma, *Protected Classes Vis-À-Vis Nepalese in Tribal Belts and Blocks*, 2009, 121.

4)Garo hills

5)Lushai hills

In Khasi and Jaintia hills there was a certain amount of cattle from kamrup. The Gurkha goalas (Cattle herder), who have their *bathans*(cowshed) mainly between Burpani and Nargapah buy their cows usually from or near Gauhati and sometimes use Maurangia bulls. For the cart traffic between Gauhati and shillong, Bihari and Marungia bullocks are frequently used. There were two dairies in shillong where dairy products were manufactured. In the Garo hills, there were a number of Nepali *bathans* between Barpani and Nongpah which supply ghee. The khasis usually kept their cattle for manure. In the Garo hills, the number of Nepali Grazier's increased from 753 in 1901 to 1875 in 1911. In 1913 the number of buffaloes which were grazed by them was over 10,000¹⁷⁵.

In Lushai hills, the Gorkha are usually the only people who keep cattle. The Gorkha came in Mizoram around 1891 as members of the British Army. After retirement they settled in the state rearing cattle for milk production. They sometimes import cattle from cacahar district. The Gorkha keep dairy cattle and sell milk and export ghee. Presently, nearly 90% of milk production of the state is contributed by those Nepalis who are exclusively engaged on the job and who entered the state much later. These herdsmen produce milk through cattle-rearing in the land of local Mizos¹⁷⁶.

It is said that almost 95% of milk production in the state of Nagaland is dominated by Nepalis. Milk production is mostly centred around Dimapur, Kohima, Mokokchong, and the phuthero subdivision of wokha district. Initially, milk production commenced with the local breed of cow, Thotho. In Naga hills, the cattle are a sturdy little breed. There is no dearth of grazing ground for cattle as

¹⁷⁵Nilananda Chatterjee, *The conditions of cattle in India; being an enquiry into the causes of the present deteriorations of cattle with suggestion for their remedy* (All India Association, calcuta:1926),91

¹⁷⁶Nilananda Chatterjee, *The conditions of cattle in India; being an enquiry into the causes of the present deteriorations of cattle with suggestion for their remedy*,1926,91.

there were very little information mentioned about the grazing animal in Naga Hills. There were no bullocks in the Naga villages and these animals are simply kept for food and for the manure they yield, great heaps of which are generally to be seen in the courtyard of a Naga house. Cattles like, Mithuns, cow, buffalos are kept by the kach Nagas. Among the early herdsmen, Purna Bahadur Pradhan of Aradhura of Kohima was prominent. Thus, it said that cattle rearing and dairying was an exclusive profession of Gorkhas, but their progenies are no longer in their family business. This might be due to the gradual shrinking of fodder area, encroachment, insurgency and degradation by wild animals¹⁷⁷.

In Manipur, cattle farming was extensively carried out by the Nepalis. Many Gorkha soldiers after retirement took to cattle farming which was a profitable and economically viable profession. Initially, British rulers encouraged cattle rearing by providing professional grazing grounds in certain places. Gorkha *Goths* were established at the foothills of Kangchup, Bishnupur, Irang, and other places. In 1919 the Kanglatombi-Kangpokpi, Gorkha Reserve was carved out by the government with an area of 140sq. miles to condense cowsheds and Gurkha settlers in a place. In Kangpokpi reserve more than 200 goths were located. In Irang valley there were 165 Goths in this valley. The Nepalis were reported to have settled in Mantripukuri before 1815, pangai before 1880, Toribari before 1910. There are enough records that prove that Nepali herdsmen and retired army personnel were allowed to rear cattle in the reserved grazing ground, Mao-Maram subdivision, vicinity of Imphal and other free lands¹⁷⁸.

Many Nepali Grazier's shifted to Pasighat and Tezu areas of the state after the devastating earthquake in Assam on August 15, 1950 from Burachapori in search of greener and extended pastureland for buffalo¹⁷⁹. In 1962 many Nepali graziers shifted their buffaloes to northern part of kabbu *chapor*i of the Brahmaputra which

¹⁷⁷Chatterjee Nilananda Chatterjee, *The conditions of cattle in India; being an enquiry into the causes of the present deteriorations of cattle with suggestion for their remedy*,92

¹⁷⁸ D.Sapkota, Nepali settlement and cattle rearing in India's Northeast, in *Indian Nepalis: Issues and perspective*, (Indus Publication: NewDelhi,2005),216.

¹⁷⁹ As per statement of D.B. Chhetry, of Chandmari, Tezpur, Dist. Sonitpur Assam.

forms part of Arunachal Pradesh from Burachapori and other parts of Assam, with 500 to 800 heads of animals. They used to sell milk, curd, ghee, and butter in Dhaula (Assam) ferrying across by boat. Today, the cattle rearing and milk production in the state of Arunachal Pradesh is centered around Tezu, Itanagar, and pasighat. In Tezu the milk production is carried out with local breeds of cattle adopting free-ranging system (Pastoral grazing) while in itanagar and pasighat areas the same is done through stall-feeding high yielding cattle¹⁸⁰.

3.3. Colonial economic policy and Gorkha as a dairy farmer in Assam

The pervasive presence of Nepali dairy men in the hills, open grassland, and in the plains outside of metropolitan areas is a key aspect of the economy of the region's north-eastern part. Along with working in mines, refineries, and plantations, Gorkha started establishing their own economic base as pastoralists and dairy farmers¹⁸¹. The availability of vast wastelands that double as excellent grazing reserves, as well as the undulating topography, made it simple for Nepali herders to migrate eastward¹⁸². In the North-eastern states in general and Assam in particular, Gorkha community had been a major group to engage in animal herding; it can count as the largest group in the Brahmaputra valley. With the advent of colonial powers in the region, cattle rearing transformed into modern form of professionalism. The existence of Gorkha herders and marginal farmers had been documented in British administrative and forest reports since the last part of the nineteenth century.¹⁸³ The British encouraged Gorkha to occupy additional territories for grazing animal¹⁸⁴. It was primarily the Gorkha who were involved in cattle rearing and grazing as a profession. The open-door policy espoused by the company for the recruitment of Nepali cadets apart, what seems to have attracted the most of the Gorkha were the vast expanse of greenery, dense jungles and hills,

¹⁸⁰ D.Sapkota, *Nepali settlement and cattle rearing in India's Northeast*, 2005, 217.

¹⁸¹ Sinha, *The Indian northeast frontier, and the Nepalese Immigrant*, 1999, 229.

¹⁸² Sinha, *The Indian northeast frontier, and the Nepalese Immigrants*, 1999, 230.

¹⁸³ Gurung, *Human Movement and the colonial state*, 177.

¹⁸⁴ Nath, *Labour Migration in an earlier phase of Global Restructuring: The Nepali Dairy Farmers in Assam*, p.130

abundance of land and above all, the mighty Brahmaputra, and its tributaries, dotted with verdant ‘chars’ (river-islands), full of lush green vegetation. This was, indeed, an ideal scenario for cattle- breeding¹⁸⁵.In the Brahmaputra valley the Gorkha initially settled in the Chapori area of Burachapori areas of sonitpur district. There is no documentary evidence as to when the graziers started raising cattle/buffaloes in the river islands of the Brahmaputra. It is stated that the Nepali settlers of the Brahmaputra valley started this profession since 1860.Also in 1920 when the graziers were forced to move out from Kaziranga, they must have occupied the fertile, verdant river islands. The Graziers might have simultaneously started raising buffaloes and cattle in the river islands and on the banks of Brahmaputra.Since the islands were of temporary nature, which would get submerged during the rainy season, the animal husbandry practices adopted by them were of shifting type. In summer due to floods the grazier had a difficult time in maintaining their herds. However, in the winter raising of animals were comfortable due to availability of grassland. Starting from Dhubri district up to the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh, the Nepali settlers raised cattle and buffaloes in numerous islandsand on the riverbanks. Following are a few such names of the islands/riverbanks.

Name of the place	Riverbank/ Islands	Location
Burachapori	IL	Tezpur
Jahajghat Tapu	IL	Tezpur
Bogibil	RB	North Lakhimpur
Sadiya	RB	North Lakhimpur
Silghat Tapu	IL	Nowgong
Kohra	RB	Kaziranga
Kumaliya	IL	Biswanath

¹⁸⁵ D.b chhetry, “Grazing Resreves and Nepali Graziers in Assam” in *Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies Assam (eds.) History and Culture of Assamese Nepali* (Narayani Handique, Historical Institute: Guwahati ,2009), 127.

As far as dairy farming in Assam has great historical importance Some of the important sites of the grazing sites for Grazier's of Nepali origin who held sway in the late nineteenth and twentieth century¹⁸⁶ are:

3.4. Burachapori-A home to Nepali Professional Graziers

Burachapori, the second-largest river island in Assam after Majuli, located to the south of Tezpur town in Sonitpur district and North to Solong and Langia basti of Nagaon district of present Kaziranga area of Assam, was a significant and, in a sense, highly desired destination for Nepali herders¹⁸⁷. During the nineteenth century, Assam, particularly the Brahmaputra Valley, was seen as a region with enormous areas of forest land and rich cultivable fields, with a large number of Gorkha Grazier's settling in the Burachapori area. The Gorkha Grazier's had been able to reclaim a large amount of waste and fallow lands, including riverine grazing lands, as a result of their migration, and had now cemented their economic and cultural position in the riverine tracts, particularly in the Lower and Central Brahmaputra valley districts of the state¹⁸⁸. The geographical limits of the British India changed frequently until the end of the British Raj. The settlement of British India changed throughout time. People from far away areas were urged to settle in the char area, without considering the socio-cultural consequences of settling those demographic groups from distinct socio-cultural milieus¹⁸⁹.

Historically, it was only during the colonial period that these natural habitats of river flood plains were gradually changed into sites of human habitation. The char

¹⁸⁶Deben Sapkota, "Animal Husbandry practices adopted by the Nepalese in Assam", in Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies Assam (eds.) *History and Culture of Assamese Nepali* (Narayani Handique, Historical Institute: Guwahati, 2009), 140.

¹⁸⁷Durga Prasad Ghimrei, *Mero Dristiko Seropherma Burhachapari* (publisher, Mrs. Vidya Ghimrei, Tezpur, Assam: 1983), 14.

¹⁸⁸A.K. Bhagawati, "The Char Areas of Brahmaputra valley, Assam: Challenges for sustainable Development" in I. Hussain, H. Rahman, Dr. B. B. Panda, Dr. M. Ali, and N. C. Bhoi (eds.): *Socio-Economic Life of Char People, Assam*, 2005, (Barpeta, Assam: 2005), 2-5.

¹⁸⁹ Chakravorty, *Roots and Ramification of a colonial construct: The Wasteland in Assam*, 2012, 22.

regions of the Brahmaputra valley and its tributaries were changed from natural habitats to human settlement during this time¹⁹⁰. Since the last part of the nineteenth century, Nepali herders and marginal farmers were present in the Burachapori area of the Brahmaputra valley, as evidenced by British records. It was mostly the Gorkhas who were concerned in rearing cows and buffaloes and grazing as a profession¹⁹¹. The Grazier's started grazing animal near the riverbank and in river islands. Hence many such islands bore Nepali names. Though most of these places have disappeared in the mighty river Brahmaputra, the names are etched in the minds of their progeny.

Here it is important to discuss that, Burachapori is thought to have been the first place where Nepali Grazier's settled and started their profession of cow and buffalo rearing around 1870¹⁹². According to the Village headmen of Burachapori, around 1840, a fellow grazier named Dharmendra Timsina owned approximately 200 buffaloes in the Burachapori district of Assam, and in 1860, Rudra Bhadr Sirpali owned over a hundred cows in the same area. Hastabir Karki, another notable Grazier, had a *khuti*(*cowshed*) with as many as a thousand heads of buffaloes at the same location in 1900. In 1881, the Burachapori of Tezpur was designated as a professional grazing reserve, making dairying easier for Nepali Grazier's. The Nepali community's grazing region stretched from Baraimala to Bhavani Devi Than in the present-day Tezpur of Assam. It has been also stated that the Gorkha Grazier's settlers reared buffaloes at Tengakhuti, Panchmile area on the bank of the Mara Bharali River of the Tezpur and they extended their grazing area up to where the present central jail and court are located¹⁹³.

As per records at the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Sonitpur, the Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) was established on October 31, 1916, via

¹⁹⁰ Chakravorty, *Roots and Ramification of a colonial construct: The Wasteland in Assam*, 2012, 22-23.

¹⁹¹Gurung, *Human Movement and the colonial state: The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire*, 2003, 173.

¹⁹² Durga Prasad Ghimrei, *Mero Dristiko Seropherma Burachapari*, 1983,25

¹⁹³ Ghimrei, *Mero Dristiko Seropherma Burachapari*, 25-26.

Government notice No.3129R¹⁹⁴. It is said that around two hundred Nepali Grazier's families lived in the Burachapori area between 1880 and 1885. They raised cows and buffaloes in order to produce big amounts of milk and ghee. Since the islands were of temporary in nature, which would get submerged during the rainy season, the animal husbandary practices were of shifting type. In summer, due to floods the Grazier's had a difficult time in maintaining their herds. However, in the winter raising of animals was comfortable due to availability of grassland. The cattle were mostly grown in a free-range environment, with the majority of their time spent in the neighbouring jungles of Burachapori's Reserve. One specially made bell was hung in the neck of a prominent buffalo/cow. The entire night they kept the cattles busy grazing in the jungle. Even in the dense forests, the herdsman could locate his herd by listening to the jingling sound of the bell. The bell popularly known as *Goalparia bell*, perhaps owes its origin to Goalpara of present Assam. Those that did not rejoin the herd and remained in the bush for several days gradually developed feral characteristics. Many of the wild buffaloes now found in the Kazaringa and Manas sanctuaries of Assam are offspring of Nepali pastoralists¹⁹⁵.

3.5. Barpeta

As in sonitpur, Nepali cattle-breeders were aplenty also in the erstwhile Barpeta sub-division (now district) of the old Kamrup district since before professional Grazing Reserves were constituted here. In fact, there used to be huge open grazing space extending at one end right from the railway track passing through the present Barpeta Road Town then known as Athiabari in the south, up to the Bhutan border to the north at the other end. Similarly huge quantity of uncultivated and unoccupied land lay inviting from Mandia onwards extending upto the Baghbor foothill, to the far west of Barpeta town. As the settlement of land with the farmers in the province progressed, it was inevitable that the grazing area available to the north of Athiabari in particular should contract. As a result, the Grazier's moved further to the north, crossed the river Beki and there they ended their search for

¹⁹⁴ Ghimrei, *Mero Dristiko Seropherma Burachapari*, 26.

¹⁹⁵ Sapkota, *Animal Husbandry Practices Adopted by the Nepalese in Assam*, 2009, 140-143.

unrestricted pastures¹⁹⁶. Subsequently, the Government constituted here a Grazing Reserves and named it Barpeta, on 02.11.1920, the PGR was carved out with 13,892 bighas from two non-cadastral villages, Barpeta and Khudnabari. Of the two, Barpeta N.C. had the highest share with 10,497 bighas. Like Burachapori, Barpeta PGR also attracted considerable number of prospective Nepali-cattle breeders. It is also said that Sorbhog and Athiabari are the two important market for Milk production and products about eighty to eighty-five graziers owned both cows and buffaloes and lived with their families. Some of the families were there since the constitution of the PGR. The most prominent Grazier's mahajan of the time was Gothu Karki, he had a herd of about 1,500 buffaloes in 1930 and his daily output of milk was 8 mounds or so. Some of the other prominent Grazier's were Bhagirath Parsai, Janak Lal Luitel, Sher Bahadur Chhetry, Mitralal Jiashi, Narad Parajuli, Padmalal sanyasi, Dig bhadur, Amar Bhadur chhetry, Ram Prasad upadhaya, Mitralal gautam, Keshab Prasad Gautam etc. All Nepali Grazier's of Barpeta, who owned buffaloes used to shift their *khutis*(*cowshed*) to Govindapur by September end. Govindapur PGR in the present district of Barpeta was created with 20,872 bighas on 23.9.1922 out of two NC areas namely, Konora and Mandia. In Barpeta PGR too encroachment played havoc with the graziers. Evictions were carried out, but the grazing reserve was never free from encroachment. Demand for dereservation and settlement of land with erosion-affected and landless people was on the rise. The dereservation process started in 1962 when the government ordered for taking out 6,000 bighas from the PGR vide order no.RSG 150/55/76/107 dated 22.2.1962 for settlement with landless people. Today there is no PGR left at Govindapur and Barpeta region¹⁹⁷.

3.6. Laothowa PGR

To the south of the present Mukalmuwa Bazar in Nalbari district and across the Brahmaputra, there was Laothowa (Bhagnamari) PGR where 165 Nepali Grazier's families lived with their herds. Each owned 100 to 150 cattle and they were known to have lived there since about 1930. Prominent among them were Khadga Bahadur

¹⁹⁶ D.b cheetry, "Grazing Resreves and Nepali Graziers in Assam,2009, 128.

¹⁹⁷ D.B. Chhetry, *Grazing Resreves and Nepali Graziers in Assam*, 128-29.

Timsina, Karna Bahadur Timsina, Karan Bahadur Thapa, Ran Bhadur paudyal, Bhabajit Paudyal, Lal Bhadur Subha, Mon Bahadur Subha etc. As elsewhere, here also large-scale encroachment ultimately led to dereservation and consequent exit of the Nepalis and their herds¹⁹⁸.

3.7. Sadiya

Sadiya has been a milk-producing pocket since British era. It is said that Nepali settlers had been rearing buffalo and cattle here even before 1940. Due to growing buffalo population, the then Deputy Commissioner of Sadiya issued an order for shifting of herds from Sadiya to a new place called Digaru. Among the Prominent Grazier's was Balbhadra Bhattarai, who had about two hundred heads of buffaloes. In the British era every Grazier's was given permission for formulation of 2 bighas of land in his favour¹⁹⁹.

Sisne *basti*²⁰⁰ a grazing land on riverbank of the Brahmaputra, was occupied by one Kritiman Bhattarai in 1940. He had around one hundred heads of buffaloes. In 1940-45 at saikhowa ghat, another riverbank, Narbahadur thapa, Kul bahadur Chetri and pahalman khandka had around one hundred and fifty-eight buffalo respectively. Among the Grazier's, Ravilal Nirola was prominent with two hundred heads of buffaloes at saikhowa ghat. It is said that in Sadiya had been a milk-producing pocket. However, World War II brought about an upward swing in the price of milk, which was Rs.2, similarly ghee Rs.1.25. The separated milk had no takers and often it was disposed of in the river or fed to animals²⁰¹.

3.8. Guwahati

A large number of Gorkha military personnel who settled in the urban areas of Assam took to the traditional profession of cattle rearing. Among them are those at

¹⁹⁸ Chhetry, *Grazing Reserves and Nepali Graziers in Assam*, 129.

¹⁹⁹ Preamsingh Subedi, "Asomko pashupalak Ra Dugdha Vyabasayko Aitihasaik Vrittanta" in *Nepali Sahitya*, (Kala Niketan, Guwahati, Assam:1998), 14.

²⁰⁰ Basti means village.

²⁰¹ Prem Singh Subedi, *Asomko pashupalak Ra Dugdha Vyabasayko Aitihasaik Vrittanta*, 1998, 14.

Guwahati and its vicinity. It is to be noted here that of the more than 4,000 such dairy households, majority belonged to the Nepali and the Bihari Communities. The record of Introduction of high yielding cattle in Guwahati is very difficult to trace out. The owners of the cowsheds seen now-a-days on the hillocks on either side of the National Highway in Guwahati and its vicinity are said to have brought the animals from shillong after the second world war. When the military population in Assam increased, the demand for milk to feed them also shot up. Initially for milk was collected from various locations like Bhagnamari, Kuruwa, Kiriyaakata, Toribari, Thakurkuchi, Badbil, Pabitora, and Kamrup district²⁰².

The concept of milk trading eventually evolved which meant collection of milk from these centres and supply to the army personnel. Thus, the term paikari (wholesale trader) was coined. Among the prominent traders were Ramlal Upadhaya, Babu Kaji, Ganga Ram, Hari Dutta, Ran Bahadur chetry, Prem singh subedi etc. Some of the important milk productions in greater Guwahati were Salbari, Birkuchi, Taltola, Bonda, Amagaon, Khanapara, Maligaon etc²⁰³.

3.9. Morigaon

In the year 1929 nine Nepali Grazier's families shifted to Amelighat from Guwahati under the stewardship of Chabilal Sharma. Gradually Amelighat, located 8 K.m. away from Jagiroad in Morigaon district, took shape of a village. Later in 1930, Bahadur Bohora, Lilaram Sharma and Ram Bahadur Thapa, in 1940s and several other families settled under the leadership of Rangalal Bajgain. During those days pastoral farming was practised, and milk production was abundant. However, Marketing of milk and milk products was a problem and middlemen largely enjoyed the profit. To break free from the shackle of middlemen and to look after the welfare of Grazier's Sitajakhala Prathamik Dugdha Utpadak Samabai Samiti Limited was founded in 1958 under the chairmanship of Nandalal Upadhaya with 17 shareholders²⁰⁴. Initially, local cows were the mainstay of milk production of the

²⁰² Prem Singh Subedi, *Asomko pashupalak Ra Dugdha Vyabasyko Aitihasaik Vrittanta*, 1998, 15.

²⁰³ Chetry, *Grazing Resreves and Nepali Grazier's in Assam*, 129.

²⁰⁴ Nandalal Upadhaya, *Swet Biplabat Sitaajakhala Dugdha Utpadan Samitir Bhumika* (Guwahati:2001)

society. In 1976 the key village scheme was started by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Government of Assam introducing the concept of artificial insemination to upgrade the local cows for the first time. The Grazier's after obtaining bank loans embarked upon the task of raising high yielding hybrid cows, adopting AI techniques²⁰⁵. This gave a boost to milk production in Amelighat and Jagiroad areas. And with the aid from the 'Assam Milk Development Project', Sitajakhala Prathamik Dugdha Utpadak Samabai Samiti Limited (SPDUSL) stepped out from jagiroad and extended its market up to Guwahati at one end and Nagaon at the other. Though the quantity of milk produced at the beginning was only one hundred and twenty litres or so per day, production gradually picked up and swelled up to around 8000 litres/day. The SPDUSL provides livelihood support to 1,500 families through cooperative movement. Slowly, the society lost its importance. Today, there are few Graziers' left in Morigaon district²⁰⁶.

As far as animal husbandry and dairy farming are concerned. Some of the important Grazier's and the total number of cattle are mentioned below:

²⁰⁵ AI has become one of the most essential approaches for improving the genetics of agricultural animal ever devised. It's most commonly used for dairy cattle breeding, and it's made high-quality bulls available to everyone.

²⁰⁶ Nandalal Upadhaya, *Swet Biplabat Sitaajakhala Dugdha Utpadan Samitir Bhumika* (Guwahati:2001)

Name of graziers	Year of starting grazing	No. of cow	No. of buffalo	Location
Rudra bahadur	1860	150	100	Erabari (present Mental hospital area of Tezpur)
Atibal pande	1890	350	150	Pandepal
Dharmananda Timsina	1840	200	-	Erabari (Tezpur)
Balbhadra Karki	1900	80	100	Pandepal
Srim an Katuwal	1920	100	200	Sitalmari
Nar bahadur Basnet	1930	200	150	Sitalmari
Ganapati Khanal	1940	150	100	Jamugurihat

The principal dairy products of the district are milk, curd and *ghee*. *Ghee* is produced on a large scale in the Barpeta and Ranghia thanas chiefly from buffalo milk and exported as well. The 1905-06, administrative report records that a large influx of Gorkha settled in Darrang, Lakhimpur, Barpeta sub-division of the district of Kamrup. The Chief Secretary of the Government of Assam reported to the foreign secretary of the Government of Assam on May 13, 1930, and stated that: The majority of the numerous Nepali grazings in Assam are Jaisi and upadhyay Brahmins or chettris of non-martial castes²⁰⁷. Two main groups of dairy farmers can be found in Assam: those who produce milk and those who own land and cattle. The upper caste Jaisis and upadhayas who belonged to the first category have substantial farms. They raise the animals and produce milk, but they did not deliver it home to house. Chetris, some Magars, Gurungs, Thapas, and other people, who are solely milk suppliers, fall under the second category. After making connections

²⁰⁷Nath, *Labour Migration in an earlier phase of Global Restructuring: The Nepali Dairy Farmers in Assam*, 130.

with the potential customers, they purchase the milk from the producers and deliver it door to door. The majority of their customers are private homes, candy shops, restaurants, and hotels²⁰⁸. In the article 'Cattle Culture of Gorkhas and Dairy Development of Assam,' Upadhaya (2017) stated that the major and culturally inherited occupation of the Gorkhas in Assam is cattle husbandry. Cattle farming are known to be the primary and culturally inherited business of the Gorkhas in Assam. As a result, it is clear that this community made significant contributions to the development of the state's dairy sector²⁰⁹.

3.10. Village Grazing Reserve and Professional Grazing Reserves

With the steady extension of cultivation and settlement of large chunks of land for special cultivation, the old scenario of land-abundant Assam was bound to undergo a sea change. There was a tremendous growth of the tea industry during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The acreage, actually under tea in the province, increased from a little over 56 thousand acres in 1872 to 338 thousand acres in 1901²¹⁰. In this circumstance, grazing of cattle and their unrestricted movement could not have been allowed to continue for a long. Due to the expansion of the tea plantation in the state of Assam, the idea of reserving land for grazing was first proposed. Local colonial government officials noted that there was not much of a need for grazing grounds reservations across the board in the resource-rich region of Assam. However, there were some areas in each district and subdivision where tea growing had completely taken over the land, making it impossible for residents to get fodder for their cattle within an acceptable driving distance. As a result, the need to allocate certain specified areas with well-defined boundaries to be used solely for pastureland seems to have been keenly felt by the British administration with the formation of Village grazing Ground and Professional Grazing Ground²¹¹. There had also been some complaints from

²⁰⁸Nath, *Labour Migration in an earlier phase of Global Restructuring: The Nepali Dairy Farmers in Assam*, 131.

²⁰⁹B. Prasad Upadhaya, "Cattle Culture of Gorkhas and Dairy Development of Assam" in *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, vol.22: No. 3, (March: 2017), 27.

²¹⁰ Guha, *Planters Raj to Swaraj: Electoral Politics in Assam*, 246.

²¹¹ Chetry, *Grazing Reserves and Nepali Graziers in Assam*, 131.

residents of various Assamese regions that the tea planters were given the land that had previously been utilised as grazing grounds and had either fenced it off to keep cattle out or sent animals that were grazing in the tea gardens. They didn't have enough grazing land because of the growth of the tea gardens. Mr. Monahan, Director, Department of Land Record and Agriculture, Assam, stated that these complaints were genuine and stated that:

“I've noticed similar incidents throughout Sibsagar's several regions, including Cachar. The expansions of conventional cultivation pose a threat to all the land that is best suited for the village cattle's pasturage due to its location and general suitability”²¹².

In the year 1896, there was substantial consideration given to the issue of formulating draught regulations for the distribution of village grazing land. A draught set of rules for the allotment of grazing land in Assam was prepared in 1896 and submitted to the Government of India for review. According to the Government of India's clearance letter:

"Free use of restricted grazing lands is given to all inhabitants of the villages without limits. Because of this, professional cattle traders and breeders may be able to gain from activities that are primarily designed to help farmers and those who meet their needs”²¹³.

A PGR (Professional Grazing Reserves), in Assam was a special features of the state and is not to be found in most of the states in India²¹⁴. It is interesting to know that when the rules regulating grazing reserves, were first framed, VGG (Village Grazing Grounds) were also brought under their purview. The term village grazing ground means an area reserved as such by a Deputy Commissioner under the Assam Land Revenue Regulation, 1866. The rules governing the constitution and use of a VGR, were framed exclusively under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation²¹⁵. A professional grazier is not entitled to use VGR except in quite

²¹² Assam State Archive, File –Revenue,1-22, Dec 1896.

²¹³ Assam State Archive, File –Revenue,1-22, Dec 1896.

²¹⁴ Report of the Assam Legislative Assembly, Govt. Of Assam, Guwahati, 1960-61.

²¹⁵ Report of the Assam Legislative Assembly, Govt. Of Assam, Guwahati, 1960-61.

exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Deputy Commissioner²¹⁶. It was not simple to establish Professional Grazing Ground. The locals practised shifting agriculture in the areas that were suitable for such reserves, and as a result of the need to ensure a regular rotation of fallow and cultivated land, the communities were dispersed widely throughout the nation. Even though the area was sparsely populated, "it was impossible to discover any blocks which could be reserved without locals being forced to be evicted from their holdings and forced to remove their houses²¹⁷.

As in the case of the VGR, the Deputy Commissioner, subject to the approval of the state Government, may constitute a PGR. Such reserves areas are to be entered in a register in the office of the Deputy Commissioner or sub-divisional officer. The Deputy Commissioner is required under the rules to fix the maximum number of the cattles for grazing in a PGR and he may forbid the issue of permits in excess of such number. Further the Deputy commissioner or the Sub-divisional officer is authorised to fix the sites of the *goaths*(Cowshed) and when done so, they cannot be shifted to a new site without the permission of the Deputy Commissioner or the Sub-divisional officer. The grazing superintendent or any other officer specially empowered by the Deputy Commissioner is responsible for assessing fees payable and issuing permits for grazing, assisted by the Mohsirder or Mouzader²¹⁸. Thus, when the proposal for the regularisation of professional grazing reserves was first put forward, it was proposed that reserves be formed in which cultivation would be prohibited. Following an investigation, it was discovered that it was impossible to set aside enough land to accommodate all of the professional graziers' herds. As a result, it was decided to establish grazing areas where both professional grazing and cultivation would be permitted²¹⁹. But it appears to have had its effect, on 24th August 1943, when the sadullah ministry adopted a new resolution on Land Settlement, which according to some opened the floodgates of the Professional

²¹⁶ Report of the Assam Legislative Assembly, Govt. Of Assam, Guwahati, 1960-61.

²¹⁷ Assam State Archive, Guwhahti, File- Revenue A, 124-139, March 1915.

²¹⁸ Chetry, *Grazing Resreves and Nepali Graziers in Assam*, 131.

²¹⁹ Assam State Archive, Guwahati, Letter No. 2255R., dated the 3rd of July 1916 File No. Revenue A, 1-38, July 1916.

Grazing Reserves. Ostensibly intended to grow more flood, the main thrust of the resolution was to provide more lands in the districts of Kamrup and Darrang to immigrants by deservng Professional Grazing Reserves. The immigrants had already occupied the grazings to a large extent, there was no surplus land available for settlement anymore. The Land Reforms commission, 1981 reported that while in 1958 the area under Professional Grazing Reserves and Village Grazing Reserves was 5,53,600 acres. According to the statistical Handbook of Assam, 1978, in the year 1975-76, total area covered by both categories of reserves stood at 4,51,890 acres. The commission, therefore, concluded that during the 17years (1958-75), the area under PGR and VGR was reduced by as much as 1,01,710 acres which worked out to around 19% of the area as it existed in 1958²²⁰.

3.11. Cattle disease and mortality rate

Since from the time immemorial, people in Assam had allowed their livestock to graze in protected woods. However, as the population grows, so does the number of cattle, but pastureland decreases. The high rate of cattle mortality resulted in significant losses for both the dairy industry and the farmers. Every year, the Brahmaputra flood swept away a large number of cattle belonging to settlers and graziers, causing a huge loss. Every year, cattle diseases predominated from April to September, when cattle were mostly needed for agricultural purposes. Furthermore, it was thought that Chamars²²¹ poisoned healthy cattle in order to obtain their skins, which is thought to be the cause of death. In the latter half of 1886-1887, the Muhammadan *beparis*²²² from Dacca involved in the skin trade in Tezpur experienced a surge in business²²³.

The most common form of cattle disease are foot and mouth disease, rinderpest a disease called kachua, the principal symptoms of which are flatulence and diarrhoea, cholera, Matikhoa. In 1913-14 ,4107 cattle are reported to have died in

²²⁰Guha, *Planters Raj to Swaraj: Electoral Politics in Assam*, 344.

²²¹ It is a caste, whose traditional caste occupation is leatherworking.

²²² Beparis means businessman.

²²³Assam State Archive, Mr. Campbell, the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup's note- *Land Revenue Administration of the Assam Valley District, 1886-87*, 14.

the various district of the Brahmaputra valley from various diseases. Foot and mouth disease was the cause of 1096 deaths, cholera of 1175, anthrax of 315, haemorrhagic septicaemia of 980 and rinderpest of 541 deaths. The most difficult season for the cattle in Assam is the rainy season and in which a large number of cattle suffers from diseases²²⁴.

Mortality among the cattle: 1882-83 to 1884-85

Table 1.4. Showing Number of Cattle deaths

District	1882-83	1883-1884	1884-85
Goalpara	26,528	14,237	18,289
Kamrup	7,862	16,256	28,620
Darrang	12,871	20,772	13,286
Nowgao	28,154	38,698	25,395
Sibsagar	994	2,410	881
Lakhimpur	7,062	1,112	4,650
Total	83,471	93,494	91,091

Source-Land Revenue Report of Assam of the respective years

3.12. Economic conditions and Gorkha Graziers

The British colonial masters came to Assam with high hopes and ambitions, but they were unable to achieve their goals at first since Assam was sparsely populated yet abundantly wealthy in natural resources. Following the British takeover of Assam, the British brought a significant number of soldiers and Graziers to settle in the area. Civil wars and Burmese invasions caused widespread devastation and depopulation, leaving “huge tracts” of waste land throughout the region. During this period many populations were encouraged by the colonial Government to come to the province and establish themselves. People were given favourable leasing terms on land. The British government has not squandered any opportunity to

²²⁴Assam State Archive, Report on Administration of province of Assam from, 1876-77.

increase money²²⁵.As a result, this led to the taxation of grazing, which had been free in Assam since its inception. The Wasteland Rules were enacted by the Company on March 6, 1838, in order to lure people and increase the region's earnings. According to the Rules, one-fourth of a land grant was to be revenue-free for the rest of its life. The remainder of the grant was also to be tax-free for a period of five to twenty years, based on the type of waste land involved²²⁶. In this aspect, traditional modes of life, such as grazing, cultivation, and so on, were subject to policy and institutionalisation. The Forest lands have been incorporated into policy and taxation mechanisms. Graziers, the majority of whom were Gorkhas, were to be hired on a permanent basis as graziers and cultivators. Grazing fields were assigned to Graziers for cattle rearing and grazing. Such graziers were known as Gopalak in the local language. Despite having a significant history in the area, Graziers only started to receive official attention during colonial rule. British colonial authorities in Assam viewed the region as a rich one for tax collection. The colonial rulers changed and institutionalised pastoralism by enacting laws that created Graziers and grazing licences. The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act of 1886 included all of colonial Assam, including the Gorkhas.The. Gorkhas were categorised as graziers and farmers under this Act due to their pastoral way of life. For their use in farming and rearing cattle, graziers and cultivators received forest acreage. Grazing rights were steadily encroached upon by the British in order to generate greater revenue for the government.It was predominantly Nepalis who were interested in cattle breeding, grazing as a career, and were the first to pay grazing fees, which began to bring in significant cash to the British exchequer as the number of Nepalis expanded.²²⁷ As a result, it became a permanent occupation for Gorkhas, and they became known as professional graziers and cultivators.

²²⁵ Guha, *Planters Raj to Swaraj: Electoral Politics in Assam*, 91.

²²⁶ Guha, *Planters Raj to Swaraj: Electoral Politics in Assam*, 91.

²²⁷ Nath. *Migrants in Flight: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalese in Northeast India*,2005,57.

In 1886, G. Mann, the Assam Conservator of Forests, advocated levying grazing fees to limit grazing in the forest²²⁸. However, his plan was rejected at the time. The commissioner of the Assam valley Districts reported in 1886 that certain local Assamese and Gorkha Grazier's in several sub-divisions of Assam made excellent profits by selling dairy products. As a result, in 1886, a commissioner recommended charging Nepali herders a, 4 annas per buffalo tax²²⁹. In 1888, the forest department also discovered that a huge number of cattle were being transported from Bengal to the Goalpara region to graze freely in the forests. The graziers brought the cattle for their personal benefit, as stated in the report. Grazing fees were later imposed on such cattle as well²³⁰.

3.13. Grazing Tax of Graziers

The British administration had taken a firm root and the administrative, which started with handful officials, grew larger with the passage of the time. The Graziers in the British era had to pay taxes for rearing buffaloes and cows in the PGR²³¹(Professional Grazing Reserves). The buffaloes that were three years of age or more, or whose horn were longer than the ears, or whose horns were longer than one foot were taxed. Cow age more than 3 years were also taxed. Sometimes debilitated or older animals were exempted from the taxes. Mohsirdar appointed by the government made the assessment of taxes. In 1888, the yearly grazing tax for buffaloes was 8anna per head. In 1907, tax was raised to Rs.1 Per buffalo. In 1915, the grazing fee was increased to Rs.3 per buffalo and 6 Anna per cow. In the hill district it was Rs.4 to Rs. 6 per buffalo in 1917.However the milch buffaloes in the vicinity of towns were taxed at a concessional rate of Rs.1 per head until 1912 and Rs.2 thereafter²³².There was a steady rise in the grazing fees because of large number of Gorkha Grazier's and other Grazier's along with the cattle²³³. The total

²²⁸ Assam State Archive, Report of the forest administration in the province of Assam for the 1886-87.

²²⁹ Assam State Archive, File No.1950 R, of 1886.

²³⁰ Assam State Archive, Letter No.46A. dated 21st May 1888, File No.375 R of 1888.

²³¹ Report of the Assam Land reforms Commission, Government of Assam, (Guwahati:1981), 4.

²³² Sapkota, *Animal husbandry practices adopted by the Nepalese in Assam*, 142.

²³³ Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, people,91.

number of buffaloes and cattle in the Brahmaputra valley between 1895 to 1960-61 is shown below:

1.11. Table Showing Taxpaying Buffalo

Year	No.
1895	15,640
1900	18,735
1905	24,346
1910	40,000
1915	42,000
1920	86,325
1960-61	44,492

Source: Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies, Assam, p.142.

Since most of the graziers were Gorkha, the constant increase in the buffalo population and higher revenue collection through tax, no doubt, were clear indication of Gorkha population. In 1917-18, six hundred and twenty-two cattle owners of local domiciles were treated as professional Grazier's. The total revenue of Rs.277 thousand collected in 1919-20 as grazing fees. The overwhelming bulk of these cattle belonged to 6,319, all were professional Grazier's. The steady influx of Nepali Grazier's into the Brahmaputra valley led to increase cattle population and Milk production²³⁴. The increase in grazing fees was widely condemned in the Assam Valley. People from all walks of life came forward to protest the increased tax and to submit memorials²³⁵. Padam Lal Brahman and other Assamese leaders petitioned the Chief Commissioner of Assam on May 31, 1915, protesting the Forest Department's sudden increase in grazing taxes and requesting a return to the old rates. They argued that:

“The grazing business was not particularly profitable, allowing them to earn no more than the bare living wages of ordinary unskilled labourers. As

²³⁴ Guha: *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, 91.

²³⁵ Assam State Archive, Revenue Report of 1914, File- 1-11, December 1914,

a result, they requested the Forest officer to investigate the matter and prepare a report on the entire subject of grazing in this valley. They also requested that the new rates be reduced from Rs. 8 to Rs. 2 per head of buffaloes and from Re. 1 to annas 6 per head of cows.”²³⁶

As a result, the newly increased grazing tax did not please anyone. British officials were also opposed to raising grazing fees. E.A. Earle was sceptical that the graziers would be able to pay the increased taxes. Because the tax increase (from Re. 1 to Rs. 8) was clearly unpopular, not only among buffalo-keepers, but also among educated sections of the population²³⁷. The increasing tax directly affected the entire valley of the graziers and milk supplier.

3.14. Grazing Tax rules of 1907

On 6th May 1907, Eastern Bengal and Assam Government published revised rules to regulate the grazing of cattle or buffaloes in reserved forests. The rules of grazing are:

- 1) The grazing or pasturing of cattle used for personal domestic or agriculture is allowed free of payment.
- 2) Professional Grazier's may does not graze cattle in the unclassified state forests without the order sanctions of the Deputy commissioner under the provisions of a grazing permit, granted by the the Divisional Forest officer.
- 3) New Khuties or Bathans may not be established nor any existing Khutis or bathans be moved from one locality to another without the permission of the Divisional Forest Officer. In cases where the owners fail to take proper care of their cattle, the 'khutis or bathans' may be moved under the orders of the Divisional Forest officer.
- 4) All persons from whom grazing dues are leviable shall apply for grazing permits and pay their dues to the nearest forest officer before the 1st of January of each year. For all cattle found in excess of the number entered in the permit or for which a

²³⁶ Assam State Archive, Revenue Report of 1915, File- 38-57.

²³⁷ Assam State Archive, Revenue Report of 1915, File- 38-57.

permit has not been taken out and the dues paid by the above date, the owners will be liable to pay double fee in addition to any other penalty²³⁸.

3.15. Grazing Tax of 1926 in the Reserved Forest

Grazing in the Reserved forests is allowed only on permit issued by the Forest Department. Rules to regulate the grazing of cattle or buffaloes in unclassified state forests²³⁹ in the Assam valley Division are. The rules governing the issue of grazing permit are.

1. Grazing fees on all cattle and Buffaloes grazing in the unclassified forests or in village grazing grounds shall be payable at the rates with the following exemption:
 - a) No fees shall be charged for cattle or buffaloes under two years old.
 - b) Cultivators who are not interested in dairy or cattle or buffalo-breeding or cattle or buffalo trading business.
 - c) residents other than cultivators, who keep cattle for their private milk supply and do not trade in dairy produce or cattle or buffaloes.
2. Village Grazing ground shall be reserved primarily for the cattle of those villages for which they were constituted.
3. He shall not shift his cattle or buffaloes from one bathans or khuti to another or to a khuti or bathan on a new site without the permission of sub-divisional officer.
4. Any person wishing to graze cattle or buffaloes in unclassified state forests or village grazing grounds shall apply before the 1st of June of every year to the mauzdar for a permit and shall declare the number and kind of his cattle or buffaloes and the place or places where he desires to graze them. He shall pay to the mauzdar or officer issuing the permit two-third of the grazing fee at the time of issue.

²³⁸ Mizoram State Archive, Forest Department, Circular No.9,1913.

²³⁹The term unclassified state Forests means any land at the disposal of Government and not included in a reserved or a village forest or in a village grazing ground.

5. Any person who fails to apply in time for permits for the full number of cattle or buffaloes in his charge which are liable to pay dues, may be required to pay up to double the amount of fee due on the cattle or buffaloes omitted from his application.
6. If after the issue of a permit and before the close of the year a permit holder becomes possessed of more cattle or buffaloes liable to tax than are included in the permit, he shall apply to the mauzdar or mohsirdar or other authorised officer within fifteen days for an additional permit²⁴⁰.

Rates of fees payable by the owner, which owns or has in its possession any cattle or buffaloes in unclasses state forests are:

Kind of animals	District	Rates leviable
Buffaloes	Darrang, Sibsagar, Nowgong, Kamrup, and Goalpara	Three rupees per head per annum
Cows	Darrang, Sibsagar, Nowgong, Kamrup and Goalpara	Six annas per head per annum
Buffaloes	Garohills	Six rupees per head per annum
Cow	Garohills	Twelve annas per head per annum
Buffaloes	Sylhet and Cachar	One rupee per head per annum
Cow	Sylhet and Cachar	Four annas per head per annum

Source: Forest Department of 1950, Mizoram State Archive.

²⁴⁰ Mizoram State Archive, Forest report, 1950. F.123

Thus, in a land-rich Assam, where peasants have had the traditional right to graze their cattle freely on village commons and neighbouring woods from time immemorial, the colonial British administration imposed a grazing fee²⁴¹. Since dairy farming had become such a common economic activity of the Gorkhali, it becomes a part of the everyday life and mode of the general people to earn their livelihood in colonial Assam.²⁴²

3.16. Colonial Policy of Wildlife Park and Sanctuaries

In 1865, the British Indian Government approved the first national forest law. Through this law British Government, empowered to regulate the issue of forests and pastures²⁴³. In the nineteenth century, various provinces passed Forest Acts. No Grazier's were given access to the forest in those declared forests as a result of various grazing land being declared as "reserved forest." Some forests were also designated as "protected forests." Although Graziers, were permitted "customary grazing rights" in "protected forests," but their movement were strictly regulated. For entering these forests, they were charged a permit price, and the time of entry and exit in the forest was very specific. They were frequently barred from entering several forests that they had previously used for vital feed for their livestock. Such forest deeds throughout colonial times affected and changed the Grazier community's lifestyle. With the expansion of government parks and sanctuary policies around the world, the mode of grazing animal occupation is frequently found to be impacted. Grazier's have been denied access to their historic grazing yard in numerous cases. Many pasture lands used by graziers have been designated as nature preserves in the name of environmental conservation. As a result of these policies, cattle grazing in such regions is strictly prohibited. It brought about a slew of problems for Graziers.

²⁴¹Nath, *Migrants in Flight: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalese in Northeast India*,59.

²⁴² Nath, *Migrants in Flight: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalese in Northeast India*, 59.

²⁴³Stebbing, H.G. Champion & F.C, Osmaston, *The forest of India and the Neighboring countries*, vol.1., (London:1922), 267.

With the growth in parks and sanctuary, policy of Governments across the world, the mode of an occupation of Grazing animal is often found to be affected. There have been numerous cases, where Grazier's have been denied access to their historic grazing yard. In the name of protection of nature many pasturelands used by the Graziers had been declared Nature protect areas, in the case of environmental conservation. Cattle grazing in such areas had been completely prohibited as a result of such policies. It caused a slew of issues for pastoralists. Several instances from India might be utilised in this regard. The guardians of migrating buffalo in Gujar had significant challenges when Rajaji National Park was established in Uttar Pradesh. The government's same tactic made Raika camel pastoralists' traditional way of life impossible. A few instances from India can be utilised in this regard. The guardians of migrating buffalo in Gujar had significant challenges when the Rajaji National Park in Uttar Pradesh was created. The government's same approach made Raika camel pastoralists²⁴⁴ traditional way of life impossible, since the region was designated as Kumbhalgarh Reserve, they had less access to their typical grazing pasture in the Aravalli range²⁴⁵.

The case of Assam is not free from this predicament; in fact, Grazier's were affected in Assam since the days of colonial administration. The nasty declaration of the pastureland as Kaziranga Park with improper management by colonial administration caused tight spots to the graziers those who were using the said land for their cattle. The proposal to declare Kaziranga, a reserved forest was initiated during 1903-1904 which caused a large number of evictions of graziers from their grazing area. It is also stated that the current Kaziranga Reserve was once home to a significant number of Nepali Graziers. In fact, most of the early Nepali settlers in the Kaziranga area had their own *khuti* (*cowshed*). Though, it did not last long. The herdsmen had little worry. In the history of the grazing community, the years 1903-1904 marked a watershed moment. During the years 1903-1905, a proposal to make Kaziranga a protected forest was made, and on 3 January 1908, it was declared a

²⁴⁴Raikas are groups of graziers who live in the deserts of Rajasthan, they herded cattle like camels, sheep and goat. In search of good pastureland for their cattle, they move long distance.

²⁴⁵ Simanta chhetri, *Social Exclusion: Case of Pastoralists in Sikkim*, M. Phil Dissertation, Sikkim University, (Gangtok:2015), 26-27.

reserved forest²⁴⁶. Despite the presence of a large number of domestic buffaloes owned by Nepali graziers who paid grazing fees, the chief commissioner ultimately opted to create restricted forests. Then the Graziers were forced to leave the Kaziranga reserve within twenty-four hours in 1920. The colonial administrator ordered forest rangers to set fire to the Grazier's homes and *khutis*(*cowshed*). There was a commotion among the residents. They were jolted to their core. Grazier's who had lived in the area for more than 50 years were forced to leave. After all, they were not encroachers, but grazing permit holders who had been there for decades. The house of hundreds of grazier's families was burnt down away by forest rangers. This situation effectively evicted them from their land and livelihood and also made the graziers to look for alternative settlement²⁴⁷. Chabilal Upadhyaya, who had already established himself as a Nepali leader in the Brahmaputra valley, took up the cause of the stressed and powerless Grazier's. In a rare show of solidarity with their struggle, the Assam Association, in a special conference held in Jorhat in April 1921, with Chabilal Upadhyaya in the chair, condemned the expulsion of Nepali graziers in Kaziranga and police brutality committed against them. Then finally an area measuring 56,564 acres was declared a reserved forest on January 3, 1908. Later more areas were added in 1913 and 1917. Being forcibly evicted from their land and livelihood, the Grazier's looked for alternative settlement.

Despite the fact that the effort did not give immediate relief, it did for the first time raise political awareness among Nepali Grazier's in the valley. The Kaziranga incidents taught the Nepali Grazier's a valuable lesson, prompting them to form the Tezpur Grazier's Association in 1933 at Singri of present Dekhijuli of Sonitpur.

Similarly, the follow up of a similar policy by the government in post-colonial space too affected pastoralists in Assam. The Government ended the Professional Grazing Reserve Status of Burachapari on 10.09.1975 when it was declared a forest reserve with 4406.25 hectares of land. But unlike in Kaziranga, Grazier's were not disturbed. They were allowed to continue where they were and carry on their trade

as before subject to the observance of certain conditions and payment of grazing tax to the forests Department which was RS.6.00 per buffalo and Rs.3 per cow per annum.

But the Burachapari Grazier's could not remain reassured for long. In 1988 the Government decided to include Burachapari within the Laokhowa wildlife sanctuary. The Grazier's protested as no alternative arrangement for their rehabilitation was made. Litigation ensued and whole matter is now sub-judice. Presently, there is something like one hundred Nepali graziers' families with a sprinkle of Assamese, Bihari, and Muhammad herdsmen with their uncertain future²⁴⁸. Similarly, the government of Assam and India declared Orang National Park in the then Darrang Districts in 1956 without preparing any rehabilitation and related policy pastoralists or graziers of corresponding areas. This way such forest acts during the colonial days affected and changed the lifestyle of the pastoral community.

Graziers recently encountered a similar issue. The Assam government provided Patanjali Corporate House with a large plot of land on which to construct its new plant. Grazier's made use of the forest grazing land. The abrupt barrier and grazing prohibition in the specified plot complicated matters for the region's pastoralists.

3.17. Encroachment and Dereservation

Encroachment followed by dereservation was the most potent factors responsible for a systematic depletion of grazing reserves in the state. Encroachment of grazing lands in Assam is an old story dating back to much before 1947. Landless cultivators from the erstwhile East Bengal began to cross over to Assam in large numbers since early nineteenth century. They first filled up the vacant spaces in the riverine area, but the PGRs in the vicinity could not remain unaffected for long. Assam had historically served as a crossroads for a variety of demographic streams²⁴⁹. This immigration tendency peaked during the colonial era, which was

²⁴⁸Sapcota, *Animal Husbandry Practices Adopted by the Nepalese in Assam*, 140-155.

²⁴⁹Anindita Dasgupta, *Char red for a lifetime-internal Displacement in Assam plain in India*, vol.3, 2001, 1.

driven by historical necessity but irreversibly changed Assam's demographic pattern. Approximately between one million to one and a half million settlers from East Bengal were settled in Assam until the independence of India. Encroachment of grazing pastures in Assam is a long-standing issue that predates 1947. Since the nineteenth century, landless cultivators from the former East Bengal have been migrating to Assam in considerable numbers. They began by filling unoccupied spots in riverine area which had an impact on Gorkha Grazier's lives²⁵⁰.

Professional grazing reserves were established in 1917 to confine professional Grazier's to specific areas and to protect the cultivators from nomadic Grazier's. The scenario had radically changed with the advent of a dense surge of immigration from Eastern Bengal into the region. The professional Grazier's needed to be protected against cultivators. The people from East Bengal encroached on the areas where Nepali Grazier's had been grazing their cattle in the province for at least 50 years. The char area, pasture areas, and forest reserves were all occupied by the immigrants. By implementing the Line system with colonisation programme, an attempt was made to manage the entry of immigrants and direct it to compact areas in order to avoid indiscriminate encroachment all over the province. "Immigrants from East Bengal, in particular, are the most land hungry people", according to the Line System Committee Report²⁵¹. They had come here in search of land and money due to poverty and necessity. So, if they can obtain hold of any land in any way, they would rather die than give it away. In 1928, the Nagaon sub-division was the first to be colonised, followed by the Barpeta and Mangaldai sub-divisions. A small family was allotted 20 bighas of land on payment of a premium under the colonisation plan, while a family with less than 10 bighas of land was considered landless. As a result of this golden opportunity, Assam had seen a massive influx of immigrants²⁵².

²⁵⁰ Chetry, *Grazing Resreves and Nepali Graziers in Assam*, 132.

²⁵¹ Amalendu Guha, "East Bengali immigrants and Bhasani in Assam politics: 1928-47", in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (published by Indian History congress:1974), 348-349.

²⁵² Amalendu Guha, *East Bengali immigrants and Bhasani in Assam politics: 1928-47*, 349.

In the Assam Valley, these immigrants mostly targeted four districts: Nagaon, Darrang, Kamrup, and Goalpara²⁵³. The plan to colonise waste land was met with opposition from various sections of Assam's population. The colonisation method had the most negative impact on the grazing ground. In the name of colonisation, vast swaths of land had become available. The Graziers objected and complained to the local authorities about the encroachment and the land record staff submitted the names of the encroachers. Although eviction orders were issued, the execution was postponed indefinitely. Encroachment has steadily risen since then. Despite Grazier protests and local officer reports, the government took no action and gave no guidance to local revenue officials about the protection of Graziers' rights and the regulated restriction of the spread of immigrants on waste land outside of the colonisation regions²⁵⁴.

The Bengal Legislative Council passed a motion on July 16, 1943, urging the Indian government to eliminate all existing limitations placed by the Assam government on land-hungry emigrant cultivators from Bengal²⁵⁵. By a resolution dated November 5, 1939, the Congress coalition government declared that all encroachers from Professional Grazing Reserves (PGRs) and Village Ground Reserves (VGRs) would be expelled. The Saadulla Ministry, however, which came to power in 1943, did not agree with the bordoloi Government. The Sir Sadulla Ministry adopted a new decision on Land Settlement on August 24, 1943, which some said to open the reservation of Professional Grazing Reserves²⁵⁶.

On the other hand, all through that time there was a shortage of food and other necessary goods during World War II, Saadullah, in opposition to Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India agitation, financially supported the British. To address the problem, the Ministry of Saadullah published a new land settlement resolution that

²⁵³ Amalendu Guha, *East Bengali immigrants and Bhasani in Assam politics: 1928-47*, 348-49.

²⁵⁴ Amalendu Guha, *East Bengali immigrants and Bhasani in Assam politics: 1928-47*, 350.

²⁵⁵ Amalendu Guha, *East Bengali immigrants and Bhasani in Assam politics: 1928-47*, 350.

²⁵⁶ Sajal Nag, *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality question in Northeast India*, (New Delhi: 1990),

included the term "produce more food," which was thought to have meant "grow more Muslims"²⁵⁷. By this scheme Saadullah government opened up all land to the immigrants from Mymensing which threatened the Gorkha community too. Needless to say, the dubious role played by the local revenue officials during this period set in an environment of confusion among the graziers. Unable to withstand the onslaught of the encroachers, the graziers ultimately disposed of their animals and putting their trials and tribulation firmly behind, shifted to safer destinations such as Udalguri, Rowta, Orang, Habigaon, Majbat, etc. As a result, there were several conflicts between immigrants and graziers. The Hindu Sabha slammed the Saadullah Government's programme as an underhanded attempt to establish Pakistan in Assam. On August 25, 1944, the Assam Jatiya Mahasabha successfully organised the "Assam Land Policy Protest Day" in protest of the government's land policy²⁵⁸. As a result, the inflow of Bengali-speaking migrants caused concern among some segments of the local people over the loss of economic resources and cultural identity. Though many Muslims had lived in Assam as early as the thirteenth century, influx of migrants drastically altered the state's religious and linguistic composition.

The congress coalition government by their resolution of November 5, 1939, declared that all encroachers from PGRs and VGRs would be evicted. However, the sadullah Ministry, which succeeded, did not agree and it introduced by a resolution on June 21, 1940. In Mangaldoi sub-division most of the PGRs were found under encroachment. The Estimates committee noted with concern that the reserves were re-encroached even after encroachment had been once cleared and that there were innumerable instances where eviction orders were stayed, and encroachers rewarded with settlement of land²⁵⁹. The encroachment of Professional Grazings Reserve and Village Grazing Grounds was therefore a serious problem and measures had to be evolved to protect them if these reserves should be kept. In

²⁵⁷ Sajal Nag, *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality question in Northeast India*, 98.

²⁵⁸ A.C Bhuyan. & D. Sibopada, *Poltical History of Assam*, Vol. III, (Guwahati, publication board Assam: 2008),269.

²⁵⁹ Report of Assam Legislative Assembly, 1960-61.

1960-61, under the chairmanship of Siddhinath sarma, reported that during 1960 alone, there were as many as 14,023 cases of encroachment in PGRs and VGRs as detailed below²⁶⁰.

District	No. of encroachment cases
Cachar	420
Kamrup	4,014
Goalpara	1,965
Lakhimpur	1,862
Sibsagar	2,942
Nowgong	1,399
Darrang	1,421

Total=14,02

3.18. Political conditions of Gorkha Grazier's in colonial Assam

The massive eviction in and around Kaziranga fuelled the Grazier's to politically organised themselves. As a result of this, the Tezpur Graziers Association was formed in 1933 at Singri, with a fellow grazier's leader, Chabilal Upadhay as its president. The first ever meet by the Nepali Grazier's was called in Biswanath Ghat in January 1921 to discuss about the welfare and fortifications of the Grazier's Association. This meeting is also known as Graziers Meet²⁶¹ (1921). This in due course of time led to the formation of the Tezpur Grazier Association. It was later renamed as the Assam Grazier's Associations. The Tezpur Graziers Association worked for the safety and the growth of the Nepali community. It was the one of the pioneering organisations of the Grazier's in Assam²⁶².

It is to be noted that with regard to the assertion and politics of Nepalis in Assam, Sajal Nag says that Chabilal Upadhaya, being the first President of the Assam

²⁶⁰ Report of Assam Legislative Assembly, 1960-61.

²⁶¹ Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese*, (1800-1950), 1966, 88.

²⁶² Taranti Upadhaya, "Socio-cultural organisations of the Assamese Nepali" in Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies Assam (eds.), *History and culture of Assamese Nepali*, (Guwahati; Narayani Handique Historical Institute, 2009), 399.

Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), He says that as a result of Upadhyaya's endeavour, the Tezpur Graziers' Association came into existence in 1933. The primary objectives of the Association included (i) safety and preservation of graziers in Assam, (ii) restraining of immigrants (iii) role of domiciled Nepalis in the freedom struggle of India (iv) maintenance of public integration among the Assamese and Nepali communities²⁶³.

In 1936, the second conference of the Association was held at Singri. Besides the Kaziranga episodes they faced another major violent challenge by immigrants from Mymensing. The year 1939-42, was a turning point for the two Grazier's communities i.e., Nepali and Bengali Muslim who turned violent. Under the leadership of the Prasad Singh Subba the Association took up the fight against the Mymensing immigrants. During the period, the Gorkha Graziers faced other problems in a place like Behali, and Gameri (present Bishwanath District) where a number of domiciled Nepalese were deleted from the voters list. Though the Association took initiative to protest the move and get the names included. The exclusion of names from the voters list implied possible eviction and deportation²⁶⁴. The dubious role played by the local revenue officials during this period set in an environment of confusion among the Graziers²⁶⁵.

3.19. Role of Gorkha Grazier's during the Indian Freedom movement

The freedom struggle is accounted to have started from the "Sepoy Mutiny" or "the first war of Independence" (1857) and ended with the attainment of freedom (1947) from the British rule. The glorious history of the involvement of the Gorkha in this freedom movement started with Gandhiji's first visit to state in 1921 when the Assam Association established in 1903 merged with the Indian National Congress party that had emerged in 1885. It was under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi

²⁶³Sajal Nag, "Fe-isation of the Nepalis of Northeast India" in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba, (eds.) *The Nepalis in Northeast India: A community in search of Identity*, (Indus Publishing Company: New Delhi, 2003), 184-196.

²⁶⁴ Sajal Nag, *Fe-isation of the Nepalis of Northeast India*, 187.

²⁶⁵ A.C Bhuyan & De Sibopada, *Political History of Assam*, 269.

that the Indian people were politically organised to overthrow the British colonial rule. The Gorkhas of Assam too were influenced by the movement and came forward to extend their support to get India free from the clutches of imperialism. In various phases of the national freedom movement struggle their whole-hearted participation and their courage to face adverse consequences thereof were praiseworthy.

Chhabilal Upadhyaya, a Gorkha Grazier's, from Sonitpur district of Assam played a prominent role in this struggle. His contribution towards the freedom struggle was recognised and he was offered the chairmanship in the historic meeting of the Assam Association in 1921 at Jorhat. This session led to the conversion of the 'Assam Association' into 'Assam provincial congress committee'. In this context, Amalendu Guha wrote: 'The Assam Association which had changed its name and had virtually turned into a congress platform in its Tezpur session, had a special and its last meeting at Jorhat with Chhabilal Upadhyaya in the chair in April, 1921²⁶⁶. Realising his ability to impress others by patriotic ideals, the British police officers tried to keep him away from the congress and made lucrative offers like Government job and financial assistance. But a born patriotic, Upadhyaya refused all those offers and kept his commitment for the freedom movement. He was imprisoned in the Tezpur jail for 6 months on the pretext of forming Swayam Sevak Dal in Tezpur Town hall under his presidentship. His younger brother Hari Prasad Upadhyaya was also arrested and imprisoned in Tezpur jail for a period of 3 months²⁶⁷. Perhaps being impressed by his patriotic ideals, Hem Boruah, former president of the Assam Sahitya Sabha had recognised, 'Chhabilal Upadhyaya as a living symbol of Assamese Nationalism'²⁶⁸.

During the Non-cooperation Movement also, he along with Ramlal Upadhyaya, Hari Prasad Upadhyaya, Brishaspati Upadhyaya etc had shown a glaring example by throwing all the valuable foreign goods into fire²⁶⁹. Another important freedom fighter of Gorkha, who whole heartedly participated in the Non-cooperation

²⁶⁶ Guha, *East Bengali immigrants and Bhasani in Assam politics: 1928-47*, 350.

²⁶⁷ Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese, (1800-1950)*, 16.

²⁶⁸ Lakshwar Hazarika, "Asamiya Jatiya Chetanar Jagrata Pratik-Chhabilal Upadhyaya" in *Nagarik*, Assamese weekly, (Guwahati:1979).

²⁶⁹ Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese, (1800-1950)*, 17.

movement was Deucharan upadhayaya. He was imprisoned in the Gauhati jail and was later shifted to the Jorhat jail. He died in 1922 at the Jorhat jail by resorting to fast unto death against the British rule in India²⁷⁰. Dalbir Singh Lohar of Dibrugarh, was another prominent leader who actively participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. He participated in the procession with the congress flag in hand, during Gandhiji's visit to Dibrugarh in 1921. He was imprisoned for 2 years in jail for actively participating in the freedom struggle against the Britishers.

The Quit India movement was a mass movement in accordance with a call given in the quit India resolution adopted by the All-India congress committee during its Session held in Bombay under the leadership of Gandhi on 7th and 8th August 1942. On 9th August, the congress socialist party, the Hindustan Red Army and 38 other organisations were declared unlawful by the British Government. The prominent leaders of Assam, Gopinath Bordoloi and Siddhinath Sarma who had gone to attend the All-India Congress committee session were arrested. During the Quit India Movement, the Gorkha of Assam who were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment and kept in different jails of Assam were Chhabilal Upadhaya, Bhakta Bhadur Pradhan, Dalbir Singh Lohar, Hari Prasad Upadhaya, Kashi Nath Luitel, Narayan Upadhaya, Kumud Chandra Sarma, Narapati Upadhaya, Homnath Guragain, Kushal Singh Chhetri, Mon Bahadur Chhetri²⁷¹ etc. More than three hundred Nepali volunteers were recruited in Shantisena and Mrityu Bahini from different places of the Brahmaputra valley. The Shantisena was formed in 1930 in Bombay. Aman Basnet, a resident of Teliagaon in Sonitpur district of Assam received training of Shantisena in Tezpur in 1935. A shantisena training camp was opened in the remote and backward areas of Teliagaon in 1936. Aman Basnet was the commander of this camp for more than 7 years. About 50 to 60 Gorkha leaders were trained in this camp. The prominent person among those of these trainees were Kamalapati Dahal, Prajapati Rijal, Keshar Bahadur Basnet, Man Bahadur Karki, Khemraj Dahal etc. Owing to the impact of this training camp, a congress Sub-Committee was formed in the Sonitpur area. Prajapati Rijal was nominated as the president and Khemraj

²⁷⁰ Bishnulal upadhaya, "Swatantra Senani Swahid Deucharan upadhaya" in Hamro *dhwani*, (Guwahat: 1999), 14-16.

²⁷¹ Bishnulal Upadhaya, *Asame Nepaliharu* (Behali, sonitpur:1985), 16-17.

Dahal as the treasurer of this committee. The British authority sentenced two prominent Gorkha -Congress volunteers namely Kashinath Luitel, and Hemnath Guragain to jail and kept them in Tezpur jail for a few days before the mass movement of 20th September 1942. These two freedom fighters came in contact with Chhabilal upadhaya in jail. A procession was taken out from Teligaon to Dekhijuli Thana on 20th September 1942, The Gorkha who actively participated in this procession were Parajapati Rijal, Aman Basnet, Kamalpati Dahal, Kishore Bhadr Basnet, Krishna Maya Dahal, Ganga Prasad Upadhaya etc. On their way to Dekhijuli Thana, they sang a patriotic song of Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla²⁷². It was as follow:

Bishwa Bijayee Navajowan

Bishwa Bijayee Navajowan

Shaktisalini Bharatar,

Olai Aha, olai Aha,

Santan Tumi Biplabar.

It means, all the young youth and son of the country, come out and fight for your motherland. Another procession was taken out from Puthimari of Sonitpur district to Dekhijuli Thana under the leadership of Govinda Pokhrel. Prominent participants were Bhim Koriala, Ram Nath Nirola, Pushapalal Upadhaya, they all came from Burachapori on boat to actively participate on the procession. Several other congress workers including women participated in the procession with Swaraj flags in their hands. A throng of more than 50 Nepali Sevalal Volunteers came out with Khukuris. About 2000 men and women including volunteers of Sevalal marched in a procession towards the Dekhijuli Thana with a Slogans of “Bande Mataram” and “Bharat Mata ki jay”. There was a lathi charge by the police in which many of them got injured and killed. Two Nepali volunteer Dambaru Bhandari, and Prabhakar Adhikari were severely injured in lathi charge. Female participants were Tileshwar Mahanta, Gujeshwar Devi, Kanaklata, padmawati etc.

²⁷²P. Bhandari, “Role of the Assamese- Nepalis in the Freedom Movement of India: A Few Glimpses” in Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies Assam (eds.),”*History and culture of Assamese Nepali*, (Guwahati; Narayani Handique Historical Institute,2009), 18.

In this mission Kanaklata Baruah and Mukunda kakatey had sacrifice their lives in front of Gohpur thana in police firing. Among the Gorkha freedom fighter, who received fighter's pension from the Government of Assam were Bhimlal Sharma, Man Bhadur Chhetri and Brihaspati Sharma.

Thus, it is clear from above that, the Gorkha were committed to organise themselves politically to overthrow the Britishers like other communities in Assam²⁷³.

3.20. Political orientation under the All-India Gurkha League

The All-India Gurkha League was formed at Darjeeling of west –Bengal on May 15, 1943, under the leadership of Dambarsingh Gurung which exerted great influence upon the Nepali of Assam to get them politically oriented. The AIGL extended its helping hand in solving the Grazier's problem in Assam. It needs to be mentioned that the Gorkha of Assam had been badly affected by the evictions carried out by the Government throughout Assam in 1904 and it took its serious turn during the Kaziranga eviction in 1920. Since then the Gorkha of this part of the region were feeling the need of a political platform to resolve the Graziers problem and also establish their right of existence. The AIGL was extending its unreserved support to the freedom movement and propagating the message that the Independence of the country from foreign rule only would serve the interest of the Gorkhas of India vis-a-via Assam. The entire Gorkha community of Assam was convinced by their assertion. The AIGL also vigorously opposed Jinnah's two nation theory and joined hands with the local people in opposing the demand for Pakistan and declared that if necessary thirty lakhs khukuri would be used to defend the unity of the motherland²⁷⁴.

The entire Gorkha elite of Assam also realised that in order to assert their rights they should have a political organization of their own. Thus, encouraged by the AIGL, they started to organize themselves at the regional level culminating in the formation of Assam Provincial Gurkha League (APGL), a branch of the AIGL in

²⁷³P. Bhandari, *Role of the Assamese- Nepalis in the Freedom Movement of India: A Few Glimpses*, 19.

²⁷⁴ A.C. Bhuyan, *political History of Assam*, 317-18.

1944 at Shillong²⁷⁵. This had its immense implications in the field of political consciousness of the Assamese Nepali. They oppose the decision to include Assam with Bengal under the Grouping scheme as per recommendation of the cabinet mission in 1946. The Gorkhas of Assam vehemently criticised the British policy to put Assam into Group –c and the position became evident when the Assam Provincial Gorkha League unanimously passed a resolution in its first conference on 1st January 1947 held at Guwahati as follow. This session of Assam provincial Gorkha League is of considered opinion that Grouping of Assam with Bengal for the purpose of framing the provincial constitution is most unjust to Assam and if Assam goes into section c as provided for by the cabinet Mission's recommendation, the whole future of Assam will be fraught with the greatest dangers so much that the very entity of Assam will be at stake. Hence, it is resolved that the Assam Provincial Gorkha League representing the Gorkhas in Assam who are the children of the soil while supporting the Assam Assembly's mandate to the constituent Assembly members from Assam not to go into section 'C' pledges itself to fight to the last to preserve the integrity of Assam and the right of her children to frame their own constitution²⁷⁶.

After Independence, with the democratization of the political process the Gorkha elite also realised that in order to assert their various rights they should actively participate in the political process of the state. However, the APGL wanted to keep itself aloof from active party politics declaring it as a socio-cultural organisation. Hence, instead of contesting in the Assam Legislative Assembly election in 1952, the APGL appealed to the Assam provincial Congress Committee to nominate a number of Gorkha candidate and earmarked certain constituencies for the purpose. Accordingly, the APGL adopted unanimously a resolution in its executive meeting held at Singri of present Sonitpur district on 26th July 1951, demanding twelve electoral constituencies to be reserved by the APCC for the Nepalis of

²⁷⁵ Nahar Bhai & Kripal Singh, *History of All India Gurkha League:1943-49*, (Nirmal publisher, New Delhi:1987) , 3.

²⁷⁶Rudraman Thapa, "Nepalis in the Assamese Nation- Building process: A socio-political study" in *proceeding of the Northeast India Political Science Association*, 4th conference, (Shillong:1995),77-78.

Assam²⁷⁷. However, the APCC nominated only one candidate, i.e. Dalbir Singh Lohar of Dibrugarh as a party candidate from the Gorkha community to contest from Saikhowa constituency in the general assembly election of 1952 and he won the seat. Thus, in this way the process of political bargaining continued in the subsequent elections.

3.21. Role of Assam Gorkha Sammelan

This organisation is the metamorphic form of the Assam Pradeshik Gurkha League, a provincial branch of the AIGL. In the 10th session of the AIGL held at Mateli in west-Bengal in 1955, the representative of Darjeeling raised a proposal to convert the AIGL into a political party. They felt that such attempt would help them to derive political benefits for their community. So, they felt the need to convert the AIGL into a political party, because the candidates backed by the AIGL won four seats in the general election of 1952 from Darjeeling district. But the representative of the APGL did not support politics in Assam on communal lines. Therefore, ultimately the APGL decided to sever its ties with the AIGL in September 1955 in its Dimapur session and declared it as purely a socio-cultural organisation²⁷⁸.

The 12th session of the APGL was held at Garhpal in Sonitpur district in April, 1966. The Nepali elites realised the necessity of attuning their organisation to the changing time and so they rechristened it as the Assam Gorkha Sammelan. Of course, the Assam Gorkha sammelan also being itself an apolitical organisation continued to ask the APCC to nominate some Nepali leaders as party candidate for contesting election from various constituencies. On the eve of the 1967 election, the AGS successfully persuaded the APCC to select Dalbir Singh Lohar, Bishnual Upadhaya, Chandra Bahadur Chhetry and Khemraj Adhikari as its candidates. In the later period also the AGS continued such political bargaining with the APCC to nominate its leader as party candidates in the parliamentary and Assam legislative Assembly elections from constituencies where the Gorkhas had a substantial

²⁷⁷Jagannath Upadhaya, "Political Organisations of the Nepalese in Assam", in Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies Assam (eds.), *History and culture of Assamese Nepali*, (Guwahati; Narayani Handique Historical Institute, 2009), 67-70.

²⁷⁸Lil Bahadur Chhetri, "Gorkha League ra Sammelan: Pharker Herda", in *the souvenir of Assam Gorkha Sammelan*, (Gogamukh:1995), 80.

number of voters. Thus, the AGS, the most articulate organisation of the Gorkhas, played a vital role in organising the Gorkhas of Assam with its own political strategy. The Congress usually nominates the leaders of the AGS as its candidates in the elections after assessing the leader's credibility to organise the people socially, economically and even politically²⁷⁹.

3.22. Post Political organisation.

In the general election of April 1966, it appeared that a substantial section of the Nepali extended its support to a regional political party, i.e., Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). Perhaps they increasingly perceived that it is not the national parties like the congress but the regional parties like the AGP who might be sympathetic towards their grievances. As such, on the eve of the elections Asom Nepali Jatiya Chetana Manch was formed on 13 December, 1995 in Guwahati²⁸⁰. More importantly, a section of the Gorkhas of Assam went to the extent of forming the Asom Nepali Parishad as one of the wings of the AGP under the Leadership of Tarapati Upadhaya and Churamani Sarmah as the president and secretary respectively²⁸¹.

In another development, the All-Assam Nepali Students union (AANSU) in its 24th foundation day at Missamari, near Helem in Sonitpur district in the year 1999 formed a political organisation, named, Special Protected Class Demand Committee (SPDC) with a view to getting protection of the constitutional rights for the Nepali of Assam. In its political convention, the AANSU viewed that this political organisation would create political consciousness among the Indian Nepalis in the parliament²⁸². The AANSU and the SPDC alleged that instead of solving the fundamental problems of the Gorkhas, both the Hiteswar Saikia government (congress) and the AGP Government had created some problems. As such, the SPDC decided to contest the 16 Assam Legislative Assembly seats and nominate their own candidates and making alliances. The party selected 16 constituencies with Gorkha dominated areas: Tamulpur, Paneri, Majbat, Barsola, Gohpur, Dekhijuli, Chatia, Digboi, Behali, Tingkhong, Sarupathar, Margherita,

²⁷⁹ Lil Bahadur Chhetri, *Gorkha League ra Sammelan: Pharker Herda*, 81.

²⁸⁰ Reported in The Assam Tribune, Guwahati, 3 April 1996.

²⁸¹ Reported in the Amar Asom, Assamese daily, Guwahati, Newspaper, 1997, 8 June.

²⁸² Reported in the Amar Asom, 5, January 2000.

Biswanath, Kaliabor and Dispur. But ultimately, the SPDC could nominate its candidates only in three constituencies-Margherita, Dhekiajuli, and Chatia and extended its support to a few independent candidates in other constituencies particularly in the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC)region. Unfortunately, all the three candidates lost the election in their respective constituencies²⁸³.

From the above discussion it is evident that the process of forming political organisation of the Assamese –Gorkha started since the beginning of the National freedom Movement. They at first realized that the socio-cultural and economic development of their community was possible only when the country become free from the clutches of the British colonialism. They preferred to remain with the national party capable of forming government either at centre or in the state. Therefore, they converted the Assam Provincial Gurkha League into the Assam Gorkha Sammelan, a socio-cultural organisation with an aim to accommodate all the Gorkhas.

3.23. Political economy in Postcolonial Space

Gorkha Grazier's in Assam are a crucial but understudied subject in scholarly literature, which highlights the difficulties. The academic literature reveals that the colonial authority protected Gorkhas as "Graziers and cultivators" under the Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886. After India's independence, the Act was amended to include a new chapter in the form of Chapter X. Gorkhas' status as "Graziers and cultivators" enshrined in the original form of the Act was redesigned and reshaped as "Protected Class" on December 5, 1947, with this amendment. The amended status of "Protected Class" ensured that Gorkhas, like tribal communities, would be protected²⁸⁴. But this remains in practice only up to 1969. On 27th June 1969, this right was exempted for them. The order is quoted as follows: "The Governor of Assam is pleased to declare that Nepalese who were notified as

²⁸³ Reported in the *Aaji*, Assamese Newspaper daily, 22 March,2001.

²⁸⁴D. B. Chhetry & Bhawani Prasad Sharma, *Protected Classes vis-à-vis Nepalese in Tribal belts and Blocks*, 121

protected class are hereby and henceforth excluded from the list of protected classes”.²⁸⁵

The presence of the Nepalis well- integrated into the Asamiya community and the continuing immigration began to evoke feelings of doubt in the Asamiya mind, caused by the fear of losing their own identity in their own homeland²⁸⁶. Though this community in no way constituted a threat to the aspirations of the Assamese middle class in the Brahmaputra valley. In spite of there having been unconditionally accepted for several decades as insider within the greater Assamese society and culture²⁸⁷. This community of Nepali origin, considerably assimilated into local culture and they sent their children to Asamiya medium school, often even speak Asamiya among themselves at home, and were participants in a day-to-day Asamiya way of life became victims as a foreigner²⁸⁸.

In the late 1970s, the total population of Assam increased to 82%, for twenty years period from 1951-1971 led to an unprecedented anti-outsider upsurge- the Assam movement, from 1979-1983. In 1978, the regional parties with their supporters raise the issue of the ‘outsider’ in Assam and the threat to the Asamiya identity²⁸⁹. When the national policies were resisted by some Assamese nationalists’ leaders and organizations, the Gorkhas of the state were labeled as ‘outsiders’, ‘foreigners’ as well as ‘anti-nationals’ in the state.

²⁸⁵P.L. Bhandari, “Evolution and Growth of the Nepali community in Northeast India” in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba, (eds.) *The Nepalis in Northeast India: A community in search of Identity*, (Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi: 2003), 121.

²⁸⁶H.k. Barpujari, *North-East India-problems, policies, and prospects*, (Spectrum publication: Guwahati), 43.

²⁸⁷Sanjib Baruah, *India Against itself: Assam and the politics of Nationality*, (Newyork:1999), 14.

²⁸⁸Anindita Dasgupta, “Othering of the Not-so-other’: A study of the Nepalis in Assam’ in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba, (eds.) *The Nepalis in Northeast India: A community in search of Identity*, (Indus Publishing Company: New Delhi), 208-9

²⁸⁹ Lopita Nath, “Conflict-Afflicted Nepalis of Assam: The Reality” in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba, (eds.) *The Nepalis in Northeast India: A community in search of Identity*, (Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi:2003), 214.

In the historic Assam movement of (1979-1985), the vague issue of the outsider was soon transformed into a more concrete, rational issue of foreigners. The leadership of the movement found a justification for the issue in an observation made by the Chief Election Commissioner of India, S.L.Shakdhar, in 1978, in which he pointed out that ‘ the threat to the Asamiya nationality in the wake of the continuous illegal migration from the neighbouring countries to Assam’.In this statement , the Gorkha , Nepali speakers in Assam, had been labeled as ‘foreigners’ or ‘outsiders’ by the leaders in agitation(s) in state²⁹⁰. A large number of Gorkhas were enlisted as "Doubtful voters" in the Assam voter list, while several Gorkha settlements were evicted in the name of 'illegal encroachers.' Gorkha youths, on the other hand, were encouraged to join the 'anti-foreigners' agitation led by Assam movement leaders. A large number of Gorkha youth participated in the 'anti-foreigners' agitation, in which twelve youth from the community were killed when security personnel opened fire on agitators. Even the Assam government did not have a clear position on the status of Gorkhas in the state, When the Gorkhas of the state were constantly suspected of being "foreigners" or "outsiders," and the eviction of some Gorkha populated areas continued unabated, the state government ensured the socio-economic development of the Gorkhas in the state by granting them the status of "Other Backward Class" (OBC) in 1993.²⁹¹

The leadership of the Assam Movement began to target not only the Nepali immigrants but also immigrants from Bangladesh. It was said that a ‘monstrous problem’ had been created by the infiltration of illegal foreigners from Bangladesh and Nepal finding their way into the electoral rolls²⁹².There was also other issues like refugees and foreign nationals, it was suggested that those who came after 1951 were ‘foreigners’ in Assam. The target was the refugees from Bangladesh, but the Nepalis were also included²⁹³.

²⁹⁰ Anindita Dasgupta, *othering of the Not-so-other: A study of the Nepalis in Assam*, 210.

²⁹¹ Under 12011/68/93-BCC (C) dt10/09/1993 and12011/21/95-BCC dt15/05/1995.

²⁹² Monirul Hussain, *The Assam Movement-class, ideology, and Identity*, (Manak publication, Delhi: 1993), 260.

²⁹³ Monirul Hussain, *The Assam Movement-class, ideology, and Identity*, 261.

The leadership of the movement very deliberately ignored the Provisions of the Indo-Nepal Friendship Treaty of 1950²⁹⁴. It was the 1950 Treaty of peace and friendship between Rana regime of Nepal and the government of India which had guaranteed the open border between the two countries and offered reciprocal rights to the citizen of both. When the Assam Movement ended after six long years of agitation in 1985, with the Assam Accord, it was agreed on the basis of an amendment of the Indian Citizenship Act that:

1. All foreigners migrating to Assam in the period 1966-71 would be granted Indian citizenship but would be disenfranchised for 10 years.
2. All Foreigners migrating to Assam, legally or illegally, before 25 March, 1971 were to be accepted as Indian citizenship for all purposes.
3. Any foreigner entering Assam after 25 March 1971 without valid papers would be detected and deported forthwith.

In this regard the president of Asom Sahitya Sabha, eminent Asamiya intellectual Hem Baruah at the Dhubri session in 1972 gave the speech:

“At the present time, many different linguistic groups have settled down in our state...In the Past the great Asamiya nation had been built by an amalgamation of people of various languages and religion... I am not asking anyone to give up their own mother tongue. But must we have clashes over language and culture? Why can we not embrace all and create a new society? This is the call of the new times. Can we continue to survive if we deny the call of our times²⁹⁵?...”

²⁹⁴ The Government of India and the Government of Nepal, recognizing the ancient ties, and mutually signed the Indo-Nepal peace treaty of 1950 and agree to acknowledge and respect the complete sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of each other. The treaty ensured equal rights and privileges in terms of residence, property, employment, movement and the non-requirement of a visa or passport for entry into the country.

²⁹⁵ Dasgupta, *othering of the Not-so-other: A study of the Nepalis in Assam*, 211

According to Chiranjib Halder, the Gorkhas have been a vulnerable target of assertions of various ethnic groups fighting over scarcely available resources, often resulting in the loss of home, hearth, and livelihood in the Northeast²⁹⁶. According to Lopita Nath, 'the Gorkha community in Assam is plagued by the twin issues of "foreigners" and "displacement." While labelling Nepalis as foreigners, the Asomiya press was unaware of the long-term implications and effects on the community'. Thus, the community suffers from underdevelopment, deprivation, insecurity, and a lack of adequate facilities.²⁹⁷.

Understanding the problem of Gorkhas in Assam, Anindita Dasgupta writes that 'the Gorkhas is a marginalized community. She says that Nepali speaking community no way constituted a threat to socio-economic and political aspirations in the state, nor is there any interest to victimize this community'²⁹⁸. Similarly, Sajal Nag says that the Gorkhas is part and parcel of the history and society of the state. But in drawing the history of 'our' and 'other', Gorkhas of Assam are often seen as 'rejected people' and 'historyless people'.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶Chiranjib Halder, *The Nepali influx in North-East*, (IPCS:2007).

²⁹⁷ Nath, *Conflict-Afflicted Nepalis of Assam: The Reality*,215.

²⁹⁸ Dasgupta, *othering of the Not-so-other: A study of the Nepalis in Assam*, 212.

²⁹⁹ Sajal Nag, "Fei –i sation of the Nepalis of Northeast India", in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba, (eds.) *The Nepalis in Northeast India: A community in search of Identity*, (Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi:2003),184-196.

Chapter-4

Gorkha Grazier's of Lower Assam in contemporary period

Lower Assam also known as western Assam is a region situated in western Brahmaputra valley encompassing undivided kamrup and Goalpara regions. Soon after the formal creation of the British District in 1833, Lower Assam denoted one of the five initial District in 1833. During the period of 1833, it denoted one of the five initial districts that were created west of the Dhansiri river (i.e. Goalpara, Barpeta, Darrang, Nagaoo, Biswanath). In the second half of the nineteenth century, the region became part of Lower Assam Divisions, along with Darrang, Nagaon, Khasi, and jaintia hills³⁰⁰.

Since during the ancient times, Assam has been a melting pot of various cultural linguistic tribes and races. In 1835, Captain Jenkins was the commissioner of Assam, several detailed reports were compiled by officers in civil charges of the districts directly under the company's control relating to resources, populations, revenue, trade and commerce, social usages, and habits of the people, and their relations with the border tribes. The districts or divisions directly under the company's rule were Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong comprising Lower or western Assam, along with six paraganas³⁰¹. Here it discusses, about the socio-economic, political, and cultural conditions of Gorkha majority in Lower Assam area of contemporary period. According to 2011 census, western Assam has total population of 11,253,550.

Today, the area which presently Lower Assam of Brahmaputra valley comprising the districts of Darrang, Sonitpur, Biswanath, Goalpara, Nalbari, Dhubri, Barpeta, Udalguri, Chirang, Baksa, Bongaigao, kamrup, Kamrup metropolitan, Kokrajahar, South-Salmara-Mankachar, and Tamulpur. Attempt has been made to examine the

³⁰⁰Upendranath Goswami, *A study on Kamrupi: A Dialect of Assamese* (Department of Historical Antiquarian studies, Assam:1970), 3.

³⁰¹K.N. Dutt, "Assam in 1885" in *proceedings of Indian Historical congress*, vol.14, (published by Indian Historical congress :1951), 268.

Gorkha Graziers of the Lower Brahmaputra valley of those districts. This chapter has highlighted to only those districts where the Gorkha Graziers has majority. Among those are, Sonitpur, Biswanath Charali and Udalguri. It is stated that the Sonitpur district of Assam, constituted the largest Gorkha, Nepali speaking population in Assam, followed by Udalguri, Biswanath, Barpeta, Chirang, Baksa. The survey indicates that the major communities in those district are-Gorkha, Assamese, Bengali, Muslims, Biharis, Bodo etc. The interviewer was selected randomly and an effort was made to include people from all classes, professions and age groups (18 onward), i.e, teachers, businessmen, Graziers, some elderly people, and women. The interveiwers were very co-operative, they open all answers to the Questions. To get proper information, the questions were open-ended and various issues relating to their cultural assimilation, and poltical aspiration. The field study has allowed us a glimpse into the lifestyle of Gorkhas in selected part of Lower Assam District in general. In such situations, oral sources have been used and it had proved very effective in the present study of the community.

4.1. Socio-cultural conditions of Grazier's in Lower Assam in contemporary period.

As the primary unit of society, individuals' lives are influenced by their immediate physical and social surroundings. The many stages of society, which are the result of ongoing change and evolution, have an impact on how people live and how they perceive the world. Society is comprised of individuals, families, and other groups of people. Even though people are born free, it is always difficult for them to remain free from the bonds of society. As social structures must constantly change, changes can have both beneficial and harmful effects. The Graziers community, which includes the majority of Gorkhas in Assam, has also been affected by changing social conditions. From the perspective of their ethnic ancestry, the Gorkha in general and the Assamese Nepalese in particular can be separated into two groups, the Indo-Nepalese and the Tibeto-Nepalese. Most of the Indo-Nepalese are from general castes such the Chhetri, Bahun, Thakuri, Rana, and Sarki, whereas the Tibeto-Nepalese are from ethnic groupings like the Bhote, Serpa, Rai, Dolpo, Tamang, Limbu, and Lepcha. The group that falls under the label of "Indo-

Nepalese" shares a common language, Nepali, as well as a shared culture, that of practicing Hinduism. Each of the ethnic groups that fall under the umbrella term "Tibeto-Nepalese" has its own mother tongue, and each has a distinct cultural legacy. The Gurung, the Magar, the Tamang, the Newars, and others are some of the prominent ethnic groups in Assam.³⁰² According to A.R. Radcliffe Brown, an ethnic group is defined as:

‘a culture group that is not an isolated and independent group or community but forms a part of a larger society system where it competes with similar other groups for a share of the fruits of political and economic activities." In democratic societies, the concept of ethnic group is highly valued’³⁰³.

Gorkha people are divided into castes and sub-groups referred as *jati*³⁰⁴, which are arranged in a hierarchical order. The priestly group, the Brahmins (Upadhyas), hold the highest position in Society. The Chhetris are traditionally the warrior class, while the *sarkis* (cobblers), *kami* (smiths), and *Domai* (tailors) are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. For the purpose of defending the interests of the community, the Gorkhas in Assam have been actively involved informing numerous socio-cultural organisations for a very long time.

4.2. Housing standard

The Grazier’s built their homes in accordance with their socio-cultural and economic requirements. The grazing community of the lower district is mostly found in village areas. They lived in simple houses constructed of bamboo pillars and grass roof known locally as *siru*, with mud walls. Instead of plastering the floor

³⁰²Pitambar Gurung, “Different Ethnic Groups of the Assamese- Nepal” in Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies Assam (eds.), *History and culture of Assamese Nepali*, (Narayani Handique Historical Institute, Guwahati: 2009), 365-366.

³⁰³Toni Hagen, *Nepal, The Kingdom in the Himalayas* (IBH publishing, NewDelhi:1971),365.

³⁰⁴ Jati means Caste or Sub-Caste.

with materialistic equipment, they used cow dung manure and a thatch roof³⁰⁵. This style of house is said to be warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Even in other places, two-story wooden houses known locally as *Tahrei- ghar*³⁰⁶ can be found.



The above figure, 2.1 shows the housing standard of the Gorkha Grazier’s community. (i) and (ii) shows the double–Storyed tungi house, plated with mud and bamboo. (iii) and (iv) shows the small mud house, built according to their conditions.

The double-storyed tungi house is a common feature of Nepali or Gorkha Grazier community. Since dairy farming and cattle rearing are common in Nepal, a large haystack in front of the house is often used to identify a Nepali household. The

³⁰⁵ Lopita Nath, “The Nepalese of Assam: Ideal Instance of Assimilation with the mainstream” in Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies Assam (eds.), *History and culture of Assamese Nepali*, (Narayani Handique Historical Institute, Guwahati :2009), 375.

³⁰⁶ It means two –Storyed house.

*chang*³⁰⁷ house is used for animal shelters such as cow, goat, and buffalo. With a few exceptions, this system has nearly vanished over time. They now prefer the more convenient Assam type, thatched roofed house and, where finances allow, asbestos roof, Pakka houses, and so on. Their houses in the village are furnished simply and lack modern luxuries. People also built a half brick house for an animal shelter.



(v) and (vi) shows the pakka house built with brick and stones.



This figure (vii) and(viii) shows the double storeyed house made of bamboo and straw.

³⁰⁷ Chang house means made of bamboo and straw.

4.3. Family and Marriages

The family is the most significant primary social group. Family organizes a specific social group with roles and interaction patterns that follow on one hand the dominant norms of society and on the other reflect the unique experiences, beliefs, and values shared only by members of a specific family. People used to live in joint families where they shared property, a common house, a common kitchen, and worshipped the same idols or deities. The father is the family's head, and he commands respect from all members. Even today, some Nepalis live in joint families. However, nuclear families are now common in society. The primary law of inheritance is male equigeniture, but unmarried daughters receive an equal part of the property. After the father passes away, the eldest son is in charge of caring for and keeping the household's possessions.

In early days, child marriage was practiced by the Gorkhas, the Nepali speakers in the society. They strictly enforce the rules of caste endogamy and clan exogamy. Society was endogamous. They cannot marry within five generations, both on the mother and father's sides. Marriages are arranged by the *Ghatak* (matchmaker), and some are by mutual consent. Love marriages were not permitted. They are not permitted to marry outside of their own communities or castes. (For example, an Upadhayay cannot marry a low caste, such as a *kami*, *Domais*, or other low caste.). The *bahun*³⁰⁸ are considered essential for marriage ceremonies, and they begin and end the ceremony with rituals and laws. The Dowry system was practiced previously, but it was not mandatory. However, adult marriage is now the norm. Girls marry between the ages of 18 and 25, while boys marry between the ages of 20 and 25. Despite being primarily endogamous, matrimonial relations between Nepali and Assamese have developed over time. Love marriage is also gradually gaining acceptance in society, and now many of them ties-knot with other communities. Educated young people prefer to choose their spouse in their own way³⁰⁹.

³⁰⁸ Bahun means priest classes.

³⁰⁹ Gita Upadhaya, "Asamiya Sahitya –Sanskritiloi Nepali Sakalar Avadan" in *Shreemoyee*, (Guwahati:1976),26.

4.4. Ethno-Culture and Religious Practices

Every community has an inherent desire to preserve, protect, and develop its language, culture, and tradition. The desire of Indian Nepalis to do so is thus not an exception. They wish to preserve their identity by preserving their culture and language. Simultaneously, Nepali in India seek to distinguish themselves from Nepal's territorial identity while preserving their linguistic and cultural heritage³¹⁰.

According to Mannuel Castells:

‘People’s identities are more dependent on their cultural heritage and their ability to preserve it than on the geographical space they occupy. So, even if people are derived from a geographical space, the collective memory of their history, myth, and achievement allows them to feel the meaning of their existence’.³¹¹

In context of Assam, the Gorkha Graziers in Assam are generally Hindu by faith, and are divided into many castes and Sub castes. They worshipped idols and deities. They also established number of temples in various places, i.e., temples of Vishnu, Shiva, Lakshminarayan, Durga, Gayatrimandir, Sri Krishna Pranami and Buddha *mandirs*³¹² etc., with no dissension in the society. In addition to the construction of new temples, their generous contribution in the field of preservation and reconstruction of ancient monuments cannot be ignored. For instances, we may cite the name of Kalyanithan, Gangmauthan, Gopeshwar temple etc, in Sonitpur district where, Nepali people are found to be involved directly in the development of these institutions. Evidence show that while the original land of Kalyanithan was eroded by the mighty Brahmaputra in 1952-53, the than was shifted to its present location on the north bank of the Diparapukhuri with the help and co-operation of

³¹⁰ Gita Upadhaya, “Celebration of Bhanujayanti in Assam and its significance” in Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies Assam (eds.), *History and culture of Assamese Nepali*, (Narayani Handique Historical Institute, Guwahati: 2009), 413-418.

³¹¹Castells Manuel, *communal Heavens: Identity and Meaning in the network society, The power of Identity*, (Blackwell publisher:1997),1-3.

Some leading Gorkha people of the locality³¹³. Similarly in the management of Gopeshwar temple³¹⁴ of Singri too Nepali people of the locality are rendering selfless service since the beginning of the nineteenth century³¹⁵.

4.5. Festivals of Gorkha Graziers community

Most of the religious rites, rituals and festivals observed by the Gorkha community following their traditional calendar in accordance with different rituals and *tithis*, which are part and parcel of the Nepali culture. *Baisakh sankranti*³¹⁶, *Akashya tritiya*³¹⁷, *Chandi purnima*³¹⁸, *Gaidun puja*³¹⁹, *Bhumiraj*³²⁰, *Asadhe*

³¹³ Khemraj, Nepal, *Kalyani Thanko Aitihāsik Pristhabhumi: Smrithi Grantha*, (Asom Gorkha Sanmmelon, Gogamukh:1995), 50-1.

³¹⁴ Gopeshwar temple of Sonitpur district was built during Gupta era.

³¹⁵ Khemraj Nepal, "Religious Institutions-Temples, constructed by the Nepalis of Assam" in Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies Assam (eds.) *History and Culture of Assamese Nepali*, (Narayani Handique, Historical Institute, Guwahati: 2009), 389.

³¹⁶ It is a tradition in the Nepali society to welcome the new year with the beginning of the month of Baisakh. On the first day of the month, it is customary to bath only after applying mustard oil all over the body and chewing and swallowing Neem leaves, which is believed to be a great medicine, for good health throughout the year.

³¹⁷ The Shukla Tertiya of Baisakh (April-May) is called the Akshyaya Tertiya. According to the Indian Mythology, the great Parasuram was born on this tithi. It is said that the virtue earned through religious deeds and offering made on this day brings sure rewards and retains its value forever. This day is regarded as auspicious for starting some rewarding works.

³¹⁸ The Shukla Purnima of Baisakh (April-May) is observed as Chandi Purnima or Buddha Purnima. This is the day on which Buddha was born. It is a holy occasion for the section of Assamese Nepali who follow the Buddhist faith.

³¹⁹ On the Shukla Purnima of *Jyestha* (May-June), people who own cattle-farms or buffalo-farms offer puja to their clan – dieties accompanied by their clansmen. According to popular belief Gaidun is the deity in charge of protection of the cattle,

³²⁰ It is believed that Prithvi's (Mother Earth's) mensuration period lasts for four days, it usually falls on the month of June-July). The Assamese – Nepali refrain themselves from digging earth, ploughing, and taking up any auspicious work or Journey on these days. In the mainstream Hindu society these days are known as Ambubachi or Amati.

*Pandhra*³²¹, *Dasain*³²², *Gai tihar*³²³ and so on. Amongst the most important festivals of the Gorkha Graziers community are *Vijay Dasami* and *Gai tihar*.

Vijay Dasami and *Dasain*-The *shukla Dashami* of *Ashvin*, is known as *vijaya Dashami*. It is a very significant day for the Gorkha community. Mythology tells us that it was this very *tithi* on which Lord Rama came back victoriously by slaying Ravana, the king of Lanka and accordingly it is known as *Vijaya Dashami*.

On this day, after *Durga Visarjana* (immersion of the idol of *Durga* after worship) the Gorkha families worship their respective clan- deities according to the ways of their clans. Then comes the important function of *tiko* (tilaka i.e., putting a mark of rice mixed with curd on the forehead). Putting the *tiko* is always accompanied by taking *jamara* and *Doorba* (grass) on the head. At first a *tiko* is put on the main pillar or just above the threshold of the house. After that the elders put on the foreheads of their son, daughter, daughter in law, relatives their grandchildren and bless them. This function of *Tiko* continues till the *Kojagari* (*Lakshmi purnima*) and people visit the houses of their elders to receive their blessings in the form of *tiko*. Thus, this ritual serves as an occasion facilitating meeting of relatives, as those at distant places can also long to visit one another's house during this six-day period. The verses of blessings are uttered at the time of *tiko*.

The festival of *dasain* is also an occasion of enjoying the tastes of rich and delicious food too. The menu includes curd, *chiura* (flattened rice) and banana among other dishes. Moreover, non-vegetarian food like *pakku* (big mutton pieces) is customary in the homes, having such food –habits. Thus, this festival bears great significance with its grandeur and gaiety. It ends at the *Ashin Shukla purnima* with the last *tiko*. As per popular belief, by keeping a deep lamp of ghee alight for the whole night and worshipping *Lakshmi* and *kuber*, the goddess and the deity of wealth respectively, which helps one to become more prosperous.

³²¹ It is a significant festival related to cultivation observed by the Nepalis.

³²² It is a very important festivals of Nepalis, which s called *Vijaya Dashami*.

³²³ It is a festival in which every Nepali, People worshipped cow on this day.

4.5.1. Tihar

The five days starting from the Krishna *Trayodashi* up to the *shukla Dvitiya* of Kartik are called *yama panchaka*. These are the days during which *Tihar* festival is celebrated.

4.5.2. Kag Tihar



The first day is known as kak or Kag (crow) tihar. On this day prayer is offered to crow, which is believed to be the messenger of *Yama* (God of death). Pure food and garland of marigold are offered to it.

4.5.3. Kukur Tihar



It is the second day of the *yama panchaka*. People feed dogs respectfully with pure food and garland with variety of marigold while chanting mantras. The Gorkha Grazier community believes that the dog should be worshipped on this day since it guards the households, is also a reliable escort on a journey and to escape from the sufferings of hell.

4.5.4. Gaitihar or Gai Tihare Aunsi



One of the most important festivals of Gorkha Grazier's is *Gai Tihar* or *Gai Tihar Aunsi* which is celebrated by every Gorkha community across the world. The term *Gai Tihar* itself refers to cow festival. People worship cows and heifers on this day with flowers, *aksata* (husked rice mixed with curd or water), sandal- wood paste, washed cows' legs with holy water and put garland of marigold flower around the cow necks. *Tiko* is put on their forehead and mustard oil is applied to their horns and hooves. After that they are fed with sweets, salts, and other food items. The

Hindus on this day celebrate as the festivals of light. People believe that the holy visit of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, to their homes takes place on this night. They decorate their houses with flowers and garlands and erect gates with plantains in the main entrance of houses to greet goddess Lakshmi. In the evening they illuminate their paddy fields, cowshed, houses and barren house, with mustard oil which are kept on sheaths of plantains.

At night a *khadkudo* (a broad- brimmed copper or brass cauldron with ring-shaped handles attached to both of its sides) is filled with paddy, some silver coins, Gems, Jewelleries, etc) usually with marigold flower on top of it and after that goddess Lakshmi is then worshipped. By the time rituals is over, a chorus of female voice will be heard singing in the yard. These folk songs are called *Bhaili* songs and the group of women who sings the songs are called *Bhailinis*. The groups come one after another to every house throughout the night. After the host offers them paddy, rice and some sweets presenting on a *nanglo* (a kind of round winnowing fan made of bamboo) with *diyas* and Some flowers, after that the group of bhailinis bless the household and proceed to next house.

4.5.5. Hali Tihar

It is the fourth day of *yama panchaka*. People worship the bull, oxen, and male calves in the same ways as the cows were worshipped on the previous day. The bullocks were worshipped because they help the farmers to till their land and also draw loaded carts. Besides this another important thing to note is even the bulls are needed for breeding of cattle and that is why people make an emblem of the Gobardhan Hill with cowdung on the main post of their cowshed and worship it with sesame, sandal- wood paste, *akshata*, (Rice) flowers, curd, milk etc. wishing to increase in the number of head of cattle.

The young men among the Gorkha community forms a group with a favourite companion and perform *Deusi* (a folk dance with folk song) door to door on the day of *Hali Tihar*. The leader of the *Deuse* group is called the *Bhatyaune* (prime movers). He narrates the story from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata or any other mythological story. He does it in musical rhythms with the sentence he sings, the

companions say *Deva shri Ram* or *Deu shri Ram* or *Deu Sire*, in chorus. As soon as the brief narration is over, offerings to the *Deuse* group are made, which in return offers blessings in musical verse. They celebrate the occasion by singing and dancing, going from door to door.



4.5.6. Bhai tihar or Bhai Tika

Another important and holy festival of Gorkha Grazier community is *Bhai Tihar*. Gorkha sisters observe these festivals with solemnity wishing their brother's security from the cruel clutches of *yama* (God of death). They begin the rituals by applying oil and combing the hairs of their brothers. Then the sisters put *tiko*, a mark with a kind of paste made from powdered rice on the forehead of her brother in a linear vertical shape which is then decorated with spots using seven colored powders (Keshari(orange), green, blue, red, yellow, pink, and white). A towel is wrapped around the brother's head (in many cases now-a- days other types of clothes or other valuable materials are also gifted and garlands of marigold or any other flower are put on his head and neck. Before the *Tiko*, the sisters offer prayers, at first to *kalash* (*copper vase*) and Ganesh(deity) and then to *yama* and *Yamuna* (sister of *yama*) after which they make a *pradaksina* (circuling round) of their brothers. A walnut or a beetle nut is offered in prayers and at the end of which it is

smashed and thrown away. After the *Tiko*, the brothers are offered delicious food-items. The brothers too put around *tiko* on their sister's forehead and used Seven colors decorating it. It is said that this festival tightens the bond of affection between the brother and sister. People having no brother or sisters of their own observe this festival too by adopting a brother or sister from near or distant relations.

Besides, these there are some other ceremonies performed by the Nepali in Assam in addition to their traditional ceremonies. The villagers celebrated Bhanu jayanti on July 13 each year, inviting the neighbouring villagers as well as the primary guest. Acharya Bhanu Bhakta is recognised as the founding poet of the Nepali community and is credited for translating the Ramayana into Nepali from Sanskrit. Besides, the Nepalis of Assam actively participated in the local festivals called Bihu. The Nepali boys and girls are excellent Bihu dancers.³²⁴ These show a high level of assimilation into the Assamese fold.

A *gamocha* (cotton clothes, it is marked as pride of Assam) is also given as a mark of honour in Assam. Assamese Nepalis have already combined both tokens of these cultural practises and begun offering a *Dhaka topi* and a *gamocha* to honour a guest during cultural celebrations, which has now become a tradition. Such attempts at intercultural reciprocation and assimilation can also be seen in food, clothing, songs, music, and so on. After settling in an Assamese village, the pastoralists adopted the host society's traditions and culture, as well as their way of life; however, these pastoralists were assimilated into the host society to become a part of the distinct Asamiya identity.³²⁵

In the Nepali traditions as a symbol of respect and honor a *Dhaka topi* is offered to a man and a *chowbandi cholo* (a Nepali traditional blouse) to a woman.³²⁶ There

³²⁴ Lopita Nath, *The Nepalese of Assam: Ideal Instance of Assimilation with the Mainstream*, 375.

³²⁵ Gita Upadhaya, *Celebration of Bhanujayanti in Assam, and its significance*, 417.

³²⁶ Juddhabir Rana, "Traditional Nepali Dresses, Fabrics, ornaments, Musical Instruments, utensils, Farming Articles, Appliances Etc" in Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies Assam (eds.)

are also some organisations in Assam i.e Assam Gorkha sanmelan, Nepali Sahatiya parishad Assam etc, the dignitaries are felicitated with both the Nepali Topi and the Asamiya gamocha. All these are the examples of a very high degree of cultural and social assimilation³²⁷.

4.6. Dress and ornaments

Every nation, community, tribe, or groups of people have their own identity, and every community have their own Dress and Ornaments. In this regards the Grazier community of Lower Assam still gives importance to their traditional dress and Ornaments. *Topi*³²⁸, *petebhoto*³²⁹, *Daura*³³⁰, *Askot*³³¹, *Suruwal*³³², *Gado*³³³, *Gunyu*³³⁴, *Chaubandi Cholo*³³⁵, *Majetro*³³⁶, *Ghalek*³³⁷, *Pachyoura*³³⁸ traditional dress of Gorkha Community. Besides these, Nepali ornaments have their own importance.

History and Culture of Assamese-Nepali, (Narayani Handique, Historical Institute, Guwahati:2009), 463-465.

³²⁷ Nath, *The Nepalese of Assam: Ideal Instance of Assimilation with the Mainstream*, 376.

³²⁸ A peculiar covering on the top, the Cap or hat.

³²⁹ This is a primitive form of shirt, called Bhoto, used by men. This dress clearly demonstrates the identity of the Nepali community.

³³⁰ Its like shirt, but its length is about 2-3'' above the knee.

³³¹ Askot means a form of coat has a great place of great importance among the Nepali Costumes. Daura and suruwal without Askot seems to be incomplete.

³³² The Nepali Suruwal, a kind of trouser tight on thigh and tapering at the lower part.

³³³ Gado is a dress worn by both the male and female. This is a four-edged cloth. Two edges of the Gado are combined and put on one shoulder, while the combination of the other two edges is put on the other shoulder.

³³⁴ This is a female dress. It is a modern form of Saree.

³³⁵ Chaubandi Cholo is a female dress, a blouse. Its is like that of Daura or Bhoto with the only difference that it does not have the long rounding at the bottom. Its length is limited to the waist only.

³³⁶ Majyatro is used to cover the head by wrapping round.

³³⁷ This is a dress of single fold. It covers the chest entirely. It is worn over the Choli. This dress is also worn by the Khasis of Meghalaya.

³³⁸ This is one type of finely woven wearing cloth, like a shawl.

Most of them are bigger in size and more artistic. *Shirphul*³³⁹, *Shirbandi*³⁴⁰, *Phuli/Nakphuli*³⁴¹, *Bulanki*³⁴², *pote*³⁴³, *Dhungri*³⁴⁴, *Kundal*³⁴⁵, *Chura*³⁴⁶ etc.

4.7. Traditional food

The art of cooking has evolved as human beings have become progressively civilized. In the ancient times man used to eat raw food. With the discovery of fire, man was evolved³⁴⁷. Among the various communities, living in Assam, Gorkha grazier community has a rich variety of food items. According to the interviewer, they prepared different milk products food items, curries, pickles etc. Rice is the staple food of all the Gorkha grazier community in Assam, which they locally called *Bhat*³⁴⁸. Food items like: *chamre*³⁴⁹, *Ghundruk*³⁵⁰, *Sinki*³⁵¹, *kheer*³⁵², *puwa*³⁵³, *Manabhog*³⁵⁴, *Babar*³⁵⁵ etc all those are special items of the community. *Sel*

³³⁹ This is the ornaments worn on the topmost part of the head.

³⁴⁰ This is also worn on the head. One part of this ornament is worn from ear to the part of the head.

³⁴¹ This ornament is worn by piercing hole on the left nostril. The Nepali women wear it on the left nostril only.

³⁴² It is a ring like ornaments worn by piercing the frenum of the nose.

³⁴³ Pote is small glass grain bead for braiding a bunch of necklaces that has great importance because it is the ornament that groom offers to the bride in the marriage ceremony. Every married Nepali woman wears the necklace of pote. It is of various colour. Usually Green, Red, and yellow is used in marriage ceremony.

³⁴⁴ This ornament is worn on ears. It is round.

³⁴⁵ It is particularly worn by men in the ear.

³⁴⁶ These are the bracelets of gold or silver worn on wrists by Girls and women.

³⁴⁷ Bijaya Sharma, "Fold cooking of the Assamese –Nepali" in Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies Assam(eds.) *History and Culture of Assamese Nepali*, (Narayani Handique, Historical Institute, Guwahati: 2009), 481.

³⁴⁸ *Bhat* means rice.

³⁴⁹ Like fried rice.

³⁵⁰ This is one of the trademark Nepali culinary variations. This variety is made of spinach This spinach is chopped upto small pieces and put into air-tight jars and after 15-20 days it is taken out from the jar and dried in the sun.

³⁵¹ It is made of raddish.

³⁵² This is made up of milk, rice, and sugar.

³⁵³ It is made of powdered rice.

*roti*³⁵⁶ and *til ko achar* (sesame pickle) is one of the most items of the community. This food item is specially prepared during festivals or during marriage ceremonies. Besides these *Kasar*, which is a ball type confection of rice. It is basically prepared in wedding and sacred thread conferring ceremony.

4.8. Traditional Music instrument

*Madal*³⁵⁷, *Sarangi*³⁵⁸, *Ektare*³⁵⁹, *Neku*³⁶⁰, *Shankha*³⁶¹, *Naumati Baja*³⁶², *Panchai Baja*³⁶³, *Bansuri*³⁶⁴, etc are some of the traditional musical instruments of the community. These instruments are used in the ceremony of wedding and *tihar*.

4.9. Traditional farming appliances

It is said that even today in some villages of Lower Assam District, they use appliances in farming and cultivation. Some of the important appliances are discussed below:

Halo: It is a traditional farming appliance used specifically in villages during cultivation of crops on soil. It is known as a plough made of wood or bamboo.

³⁵⁴ This is yet another favourite dish of the Assamese Nepali. It is made of the flour of wheat, sugar, and milk. This *Manabhog* is sometimes served as Prasad also.

³⁵⁵ This is a kind of bread thin and round.

³⁵⁶ This is a special cake made up of rice, ghee, Sugar, and milk. The size of the *Shel-roti* is much bigger. This cake is specially made during the occasion of any Gorkha festival.

³⁵⁷ *Madal* is a musical instrument. This is played by beating one end with the hand and the other end with wooden stick.

³⁵⁸ This is a string-based musical instrument. Like violin, it is also played by rasping.

³⁵⁹ This instrument is prepared by fixing a long wooden or bamboo shaft on a hollow utensil or on dry shell of a pumpkin.

³⁶⁰ This is also a blowing instrument made of a buffalo's horn.

³⁶¹ This instrument is the shell of a sea creature. According to the Hindu mythology, *Shankha* is a weapon as well as the musical instruments of God Vishnu.

³⁶² *Naumati Baja* is a combination of nine musical instruments. *Naumati Baja* is solely practised by the *Damai* or *Dorjee* (tailor by caste).

³⁶³ *Panchai Baja* is a combination of five instruments. It is played on the auspicious of *Dashain* and other national festivals.

³⁶⁴ This is a Nepali Flute.

Tapu: It is a wooden hammer with a long handle which is used for breaking lumps of earth in the field.

Dhungro-It is a very important bamboo utensil. *Jaand*(liquor) locally prepared from rice is kept inside it and hot water is mixed with it before it is sucked with the help of a pipe.

Doko- *Doko* is a basket woven from the blades of split bamboo keeping eyeholes of finger size. It is used for carrying manure, maize, vegetables, and firewood.

Mandro-It is used for drying food-grains. Even today these appliances are used by the villagers.

Khukuri-It is the traditional weapon of the Gorkha. It has the distinction of being used as weapons in world wars. Its description is not possible in a few lines. This forms a complete chapter in the history of the Gorkha. *Khukhuri* is compulsorily issued to the Gorkha regiments, Assam rifles etc by the Indian Government. This weapon is available at every door of the Gorkha people.

Kodalo-*Kodala* is a small tool used as a spade. It is particularly used for spading and weeding in the garden.

Khanti-It is an iron tool with a flat and sharp end used for digging out the earth.

Mal-Damlo- It is a very long rope. It is only used during the thrashing of rice paddy by the oxen.

Some of the other traditional appliances made of leaves and still used in the Villages. They are.

Tapari- *Tapari* is a bowl or dish woven from the leaves of *shal*, *Bharala*, *Katus*, *Holang* and *Manlato*. It is also in vogue in the villages. Like a dish, it is also folded at the edges in four different places and thus the brim is raised.

Duna-It is made by weaving only two leaves. It is handy as well as clean for distributing vegetables, curd etc.

Khocho-It is made of a single leaf and is used to drive away evil spirits.

4.10. Economic conditions of Gorkha Graziers in Lower Assam

People engage in various occupation to earn their livelihood. The practice of herding was a primary economic activity in the Gorkha community society. Since dairy farming had become such a common economic activity of the Gorkhali, it becomes a part of the everyday life and mode of the general people to earn their livelihood in the Lower District of Assam. People started cattle rearing as their occupation which has helped to foster the economy of the Gorkhas and at the same time a friendly relationship with the other community is also being established. Apart from this their occupation has also helped them to meet their own demands and earned a good market for dairy products. The main grazing areas in Lower District of Assam are-*Burachapori, Khonamukh, Charmile, Borsola, puthimari, Rowta, orang, Dimakuchi, Suklai, Chirang, Deusire, Runikhata, Patabari, Santipur, Batabari, Fullkumari, Kanamakra, Rangijhora, Amteka, Koilamoila, Amguri and Goruvasa* etc. It is believed that during colonial times, Upadhayaya Bahun, Sarma Bahun, and Chhetri Bhaun were heavily involved in dairy farming and had a large number of buffaloes and cows in their *khuties* (cow herd), assisting the state in meeting increased income demands in Lower District of Assam. Traditionally in these areas Gorkhas are mainly engaged in dairy farming. It is popularly known the *Goth* system in Nepali, literally meaning cattle shed. *Goth* is a cattle farm specially herding the cattle farm like cow, buffalo, goat, sheep etc.



The above figure 2.3. shows the Goth/cow shed, which is called *Guwali Ghar* in Nepali language where the cattle are kept. It shows when the cattle are kept in cowshed after grazing.



The above figure 2.4 shows, riverside area / char area, where the cattle owner sent the cow/buffalo for grazing in the riverside area /char area. It is also seemed in the fig. that the owner bringing back their cattle to the respective place.

A section of the respondents said that the *Goths* are part of a tradition or old occupation of Gorkha community, where the cattle are grazed far away from the main residential areas, it is a profession where the owner or propitiator of cattle makes residents in far remote places such as forests and keep one or two cattleman to look after cattle and also look after the proper milking and products of milk for sale or business. They also stated that their “income depended on the size of *Goths*”. Those who have large number of cows, buffalos earned more and those who have less earned less. It depends on number of cattle they farmed, the higher numbers of cattle the higher the income and vice –versa, the interviewers also believed ‘whatever they have in terms of cattle it is enough to maintain the family if lived in a simple life. At present, the retail price of milk is Rs.53 per L. They asserted that they were working as graziers since pre independence period. They mentioned that their forefathers had started the grazing and also mentioned that grazing is a kind of tradition or occupation of the Gorkha community’. Besides this,

even women have important role in looking after the cattle, it is because the women started looking after them, male go for a work. They also asserted that beside grazing other occupation are cultivation, farming and smaller business and daily labour wages while the educated look for government jobs like teacher, defence service, and private school teacher'. As far as the protection of Graziers in Assam is concerned the Government, has not taken any policies for the protection of Graziers because of which the number of Goths have decreased.



The figure 2.5. shows Graziers cultivation, that besides cattle rearing, the Gorkha Graziers also cultivates crops i.e vegetables, mustard and Paddy, which is called *Dhan* in local languages.

4.11. Problems and challenges faced during pandemic.

The Corona virus had infected nearly 2.3 million people worldwide. As of April 14, 2020, over 1.9 million corona virus infections had been reported, and over 119,483 people had died worldwide. Various countries declared social isolation and lockdowns across the country. The global economy was greatly impacted as a result

of this. There has been widespread job loss in a variety of industries. The covid 19 pandemic has taken a heavy toll on agriculture, allied activities, dairy farming, and other industries³⁶⁵.

In the covid period, the Grazier's in Assam as in other part faced lots of difficulty which impacted the livelihood of several dairy farmers. The United States, India, China and Brazil are the world's largest milk producer and exporters. According to Food and Agriculture organisation of united Nations 2020, India is the world's largest milk producer with 22% of global production, followed by the United States of America, China, Pakistan, and Brazil³⁶⁶. In Assam, the Gorkha Graziers presently constitutes the largest milk producers and suppliers in the state. During the lockdown period in the year 2020, the Gorkha Dairy farmers faced problems in distribution and selling of milk. As the Lock down period was extended, difficulties arose among the graziers. It severely impacted dairy farmers, Individual, milk cooperatives as well as across Assam. In Assam, the Gorkha dairymen presently constitute the largest milk producer and supplier in the state supplying to 80% of the region's population³⁶⁷.

As said by Interveiwers that 'during the corona pandemic times, they faced lot of difficulties in procuring and selling milk and it have impacted milk cooperatives farm and individual producers severely across Assam. Organised cooperative and individual dairy farmers have laid off employees to cut the cost due to drastic fall in sales and at times threw away milk on roads and rivers as they could not sell it due to lack of transportation and closure of the markets. According to the respondents of Sonitpur district, they said that every day they produce 20-25 litres of milk a day, but where to take it? So, they have no option but to throw it away.

³⁶⁵ Times of India, 15th April,2020.

³⁶⁶ Times of India, 15th April,2020.

³⁶⁷ T. Gurung, "Nepali Grazier migration and Daily Farming in Northeast India" in *Society and Economy in Northeast India*, Vol:3, (Regency Publication, New Delhi:2018), 159-165.



Sitajakhala Milk cooperative society which is one of the oldest and largest dairy cooperatives of Assam located in Morigaon district, which is able to process and market an average of 7,000 L of milk daily out of produced raw materials has affected the operations of the cooperative in multiple ways. The Price of milk has been reduced to Rs. 50 a litre from Rs. 54 for disposal of its daily production. As milk distribution has become a major problem in lockdown, as the respondent said that they make paneer, Ghee from the milk and sell it to nearby villages. According to the sources, in the district of Sonitpur, Biswanath and Udalguri many graziers threw away 5,000 litres of milk in the river. Usually, the graziers milk the cow at 6A.M and feed them early morning, during the pandemic it was very difficult for them and to look after the cattle. As Dairy farming is the main source of income and almost 80% of the villagers are dependent on grazing as occupation³⁶⁸. Recently, the Assam Government had passed the cattle bill Act.

4.12. Assam Cattle Bill Act/Government policy on cattle rearing

The Directive principle of state policy under the constitution provides that the state shall endeavour to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines, take steps to improve breed and prohibit the slaughter of cows, calves and other milch and draught cattle. More than 20 states have passed laws

³⁶⁸ Statement given by Bipab Chhetri, Tezpur, Assam. on 20th April.

restricting the slaughter of cattle such as cow, buffalo to various degrees. For instance, Chhattisgarh, completely prohibit the slaughter of cattle. Among the North-eastern States such as Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, do not have any such laws regulating cattle slaughter. While Assam Government on the last year of July 12, 2021, passed the bill in the Assam Legislative Assembly. It seeks to replace the Assam cattle preservation Act, 1950. The act provides for the preservation of cattle by restricting their slaughter. The proposed, the Assam cattle preservation bill 2021 seeks to amend certain provisions of the Assam cattle preservation act, 2021 with a view to remove certain existing restrictions with the aim of facilitating utilization of cattle for animal husbandry and agricultural purposes³⁶⁹. Some of the important key features of the bill are:

- 1) Restriction on slaughter of cattle-under the bill, cattle refer to bulls, bullock, cow, buffaloes. The bill prohibits the slaughters of cow, buffaloes of all ages.
- 2) Restriction on sale of beef and its products: The bill allows the sale and purchase of beef or beef products only at permitted places. No such permissions will be granted (i) in areas mainly inhabited by Hindus, Sikh, Jain, or other non-beef eating communities, ii) within a radius of five kilometres of religious institutions belonging to the Hindu religion, or, iii) any other notified area or institution.
- 3) Restriction on inter-state and intra-state transport of cattle: The bill restricts the transport of cattle: i) Within Assam, ii) From another state to Assam iii) from Assam to any place outside Assam, where slaughter of cattle is not regulated by law' and iv) from one state to another country through Assam. In all these cases, a permit is required, which may be granted only if the transport is for bonafide agricultural or animal husbandry purposes.
- 4) Penalties: The Bill provides for an imprisonment term between three to eight years, and a fine between three to five lakh rupees. All offences under this bill will be cognisable and non- bailable.

³⁶⁹ Indian Express, 13th August 2021.

- 5) Exemptions: The Bill will not apply to slaughter of cattle (i) if the cattle are operated upon for any experimental or research purpose, (ii) if it is required in the interest of public health or the cattle is found to be carrying an incurable or infectious or dangerous disease³⁷⁰.

4.13. Political condition of Gorkha Grazier's Community

Since the beginning of the British rule, the Gorkhas who had been living in Assam began to face problem and even today they face some socio-political problems along with their racial and ethnic complexities. An attempt has been made to highlights the political problems. According to one respondent, since 1947, the Nepali cultivator graziers were regarded as a protected class in the tribal blocks and belts of Assam. The state Government declared the Nepali cultivation-graziers as backward and they were entitled to protection. But the Government of Assam without any valid reason deleted the Nepali cultivation-Graziers from the list of the protected classes in the Tribal Blocks and Belts in 1969. Interveiwier also placed their experience that 'the registration of educated and semi-educated young boys and girls of the Gorkha community in the Employment Exchanges of Assam too came to a halt and even if some of the names remained in the registers, in case of appointments they were totally ignored. Similarly, they also stated that even for Passport verification they were asked to present 1951 and 1971 voter list by the administrator, despite they were the citizens of Assam. Likewise, large scale allegations were there regarding deletion of names of bonafide Nepali people from the rolls of Assam. The Nepali Speaker in Assam have been struggling to prove their legitimate identity as Indian nationals after being dragged into unnecessary troubles on being labelled as foreign nationals or infiltrators. Several thousand Gorkhas in Assam were left out of NRC. While many members of the community were marked as Doubtful-voters³⁷¹(D-Voters) by the Election commission for lack of citizenship credential. At least 22,000 Gorkhas are marked D-Voters in Assam.

³⁷⁰ Indian Express, 13th August 2021.

³⁷¹ Doubtful –voters or D. Voters is a category in which a person's citizenship is doubtful and must prove the same through legal process in the foreigner's tribunal.

Few were given ex parte decisions and declared foreigners, some were jailed in detention camps³⁷². As a result, the community has experienced frequent, unwanted harassment, Members of the community are required to show proof of local residency and Indian citizenship. Interveiwier also stated that since the Assam movement, the community has been subjected to a slew of harassments, with some organisations constantly branding them as "foreigners" in public spaces and government machinery frequently harassing them by requiring them to prove their residency. Some locals were required to visit offices frequently because officials were unwilling to accept many authentic documents produced by them. The Gorkha families who kept these documents were able to prove their ancestry, but this could not be expected of all families. Many had no idea that despite their ancestors' contributions, they would have to prove their Nationality. Manju Devi, the granddaughter of freedom fighters Chabilal Upadhaya, along with her two children has been excluded from the NRC on account of her Doubtful-Status. Another prominent Nepali name, which did not feature in the NRC, is Sahitya Akademi award recipient and writer Durga Khatiwada. Later his name was included in the final draft of the NRC³⁷³. According to Some Interveiwier, once the trend was initiated by Assam movement leaders, it remained a critical card in political bargaining throughout the Bodoland movement. Interveiwiers who considered the constructive responses from the state side believe that the government has provided sometimes necessary concerns to the community to which they belong. Those who responded positively explain that the government included them in the central list of OBC (Other Backwards Caste) in 1993, recognising their socioeconomic backwardness and assisting them in seeking better avenues for socioeconomic empowerment. They stated that the government of Assam and the government of India regarded Nepali, the language of the Gorkha community, as a language under the eighth schedule of the nation's constitution that could maintain their language under administrative response.

³⁷² News18, August 05,2021, Guwahati, Assam

³⁷³ News18, August 05,2021, Guwahati, Assam

The following are the responses given by the respondents in the field survey conducted.

1. Do you belong to Grazier community, and how grazing is related to your life?

70% of the respondents said yes. They said that dairy Farming and animal husbandry are their traditional occupation since time immemorial and everyday common economic activity of their life.

2. Where do you graze cattle?

Respondents said they graze their cattle in village field or near Riverbanks, and sometimes whenever it rains, they graze near the household area.

3. Since when you are working as graziers?

Respondents said that they were working as graziers since pre independence period. They mentioned that their forefathers had started the grazing and also mentioned that grazing is a kind of tradition or occupation of the Gorkha community.

4. What is your daily source of income?

Respondents mentioned that their income depended on the size of *Goths*. Those who have large number of cows, buffalos earned more and those who have less earned less. It depends on number of cattle they farmed, the higher numbers of cattle the higher the income and vice –versa. The respondents were of the opinion that whatever they have in terms of cattle it is enough to maintain the family if lived in a simple life.

5. Do you think Grazing animal is important for society?

Respondent said yes, Grazing animal is important for society because cattle play an irreplaceable role in maintaining topsoil, promoting biodiversity, good nutrition and providing natural fertilizer and so much more. They also added that but due to Government negligence towards the grazing society, they feel low.

6. What do you know about the *Goth* system?

Respondent said that the *Goths* are part of a tradition or old occupation of Gorkha community, where the cattle are grazed far away from the main residential areas, it is a profession where the owner or propitiator of cattle makes residents in far remote places such as forests and keep one or two cattleman to look after cattle and also look after the proper milking and products of milk for sale or business.

7. Are you able to manage your expenditure through grazing?

Respondents said that they are completely dependent on it. But they can only earn enough to maintain the family.

8. What other occupation do you engaged, besides grazing for your livelihood?

Respondents said that beside grazing, other occupation are seasonal vegetable cultivation, farming and small business and daily labour wages. while the educated look for government jobs like teacher, defense service, and private school teacher etc.

9. Besides Gorkha, are there any other communities engaged in grazing animal?

Respondent said that, besides Gorkha, Behari, Muslim, Bodo and few Assamese are the other communities, engaged in grazing animal.

10. Types of cattle you rear and where do you sell your products?

Respondent said that they reared both Cow and Buffalo. They added *Desi* cow and buffalo are good source of daily income for them. They sell milk to the local Milkman and also to hotels for making dairy products sweet.

11. Do, the cattle have any kind of Diseases? What measure do you take to resolve it?

They said it depends on the season. Respondents said that the cattle mostly suffer from skin disease, Mouth infection, Digestion and etc. They added that they take home treatment for curing such diseases and if it is serious issue then they call to veterinary doctor of nearby locality.

12. What kind of problems do Grazier's face?

Interviewer said, certainly they face different kinds of problems. During the rainy season the communication system is totally shut in the Goths only one or two person stays in a house which makes them feel lonely, there is the also the risk that they might be attacked by wild animals and other militant groups such as NDFB and ULFA and several times militant groups kidnapped of people from the *Goth* in different region.

13. From whom do you face /conflict /challenges /discrimination?

When asked this question the respondents were not very comfortable answering it, they just said they have petty issues at times amongst themselves because of the

competition they have in regard to selling milk. However, on the basis of the study and observation they have a bitter relationship with the Bengali Muslim/ Bodos. On the surface level it seems to be alright but when one probes deeper into the relationship between the Gorkhas and the Bengali/ Muslim and Bodos it is characterized by hostility.

14. Have you ever received any kind of help/support from the Government agencies/ NGO for the augment of Grazier profession? What policies have been made for the protection of graziers in Assam?

As far as the protection of Grazier's in Assam is concerned the Government has not given any help/ support to these grazing community. They said that every year they placed their grievances before Panchayat/block and to organisation, but they declined their grievances. And for this issue number of Goths have decreased, they added.

15. Do you have any organisation or union for the protection of the Graziers?

Respondent said earlier during the chabilal Upadhaya (Freedom fighter) time, there was a association which was called Tezpur Graziers Association (1933), which later came to be known as Assam Grazier Association). They added that this Association was for the protection of the Grazing community, but now there is no one to look after the Association. They added, Today, it is due to Government negligence this Association is closed.

16. Do you know about the ALRRA (Assam Land Revenue Regulation Act)?
Ninety percent respondents didn't know about ALRRA because most of them are mainly uneducated, and 10 percent had little idea about the Act.

17. Do you assimilate with the Assamese culture or still profess your own?

Having been asked this question they answered that, though we live in an Assamese society, following their culture, rituals and accepting their medium of instruction in School /colleges and assimilating with the Asamiya culture, we still follow our tradition, culture, our rituals/festivals, food habits and so on.

18. Is there any exclusion and segregate pattern on the society?

Respondents said partially they are excluded in the society. They highlighted few points: 1) they are marginalised in the society because of their profession. They are called Dudhwala/gothwala in the society. They said though they are proud of their profession and 80% of Milk in a State is run by Gorkha Grazier community. They also need some benefits/help from the Government. They also added that number of family members are tagged as D-Voters, despite of their forefather contribution in the Indian Army/Freedom Movement etc.

19. Recommendation to change the Grazier's situation / condition in Assam?

The government should allow the wasted and unwanted areas for grazing purposes said by the respondents. The communication system should be well established, and Governments should ensure the security of the Graziers.

Chapter-5

Conclusion

From above discussion, it may be noted that grazing animal has been regarded as an evolutionary stage in human history. Mostly rural community-based profession is one among the world's traditional occupations, providing people with a source of livelihood from time immemorial. As in other parts of the world, India, particularly its Himalayan region, has been home to a number of grazier communities. Historically, animal husbandry has been a major source of income. Human mobility played a crucial role in the Indian subcontinent since it was a greater area of stretched land without the current type of political obstacles created by imaginary border lines between geopolitical units known as sovereign nations. Social groups were relocating from one location to another in pursuit of better food, housing, and economic opportunities. In regard to Gorkha Graziers community of Assam, the Gorkha Graziers of Lower Assam, received good attention and focus since the colonial times, but today they are one of the marginalised sections in the society. In Assam, the existence of Gorkha Graziers are witnessed, but they always remained the un-heard and unsung people. Even though they were a part of the collective past, Gorkha Graziers are rarely addressed in the history of Assam and its region. Despite the Presence from the age of colonial rule, their way of living, custom and tradition were considered backward, underdeveloped and their voices and sufferings were often ignored by the authority in negotiating with such people and it lies at the margin of discourse today.

At this point, the Gorkha Grazer community of Assam, in particular has been a topic of discussion. Gorkha Graziers in Assam form a community; this community has emerged as an integral part of Assam's societal world. The Gorkha-Assam relationship had an illustrious history. From mythology to modern history, the narratives depict a vivid picture of the relationship between two Gorkha and India. Such migrant groups settled in the area at some point in its history in different

phases and has made significant contributions to transforming Assam into a diverse and multi-cultural society.

Written records and history and origin of Gorkhas in India can be traced from early nineteenth century when, immediately after the treaty of segauli in 1815, the British started recruitment of Gorkha sepoy for Indian army. According to E.A Gait, the Gorkha soldiers penetrated Assam as early as 1817, nine years prior to formal annexations of Assam, to drive out the Burmese³⁷⁴. Many of these Gorkha Sepoys when retired from service preferred to remain in India as the British Government provided them with employment in other civil offices as choukidars, Charprashis, peons etc³⁷⁵. The British encouraged Gorkha population to grow up in India with the view that the children of these Indian Gorkha could be recruited in Indian Army. With this purpose, the Government established Gorkha Regimental Homes at several army headquarters in 1864 to provide accommodation to the families of the Gorkha soldiers and granted travel expenses to the Gorkha soldiers married in Nepal to bring their families to live in India³⁷⁶. Captain John Bryan Neufvile, the Commanding officer and political Agent for upper Assam had always preferred Gorkhas. He said they were “proverbially brave, active and capable of enduring fatigue both in hills and jungles and free from the prejudice which the Hindus of the regular troops were invariably accustomed”. Lands were settled to the ex-service men in the vicinity of the Regimental Homes, where schools and hospitals were established for the Gorkha families. Captain Francis Jenkins, in his report of 1832 “recommended that instead of pensions the ex-soldiers of the local corps should be given grant of land”³⁷⁷. With the passage of time, many other Paramilitary forces like State Constabulary, Assam Rifles, Central Reserve police force, Border Security force etc., were raised in various parts of India in which large number of Gorkhas were recruited. Together with the Gorkha recruits, the Gorkhas

³⁷⁴ M. Hussain, *The Assam Movement*, (Nanak publication, Delhi:1997), 255.

³⁷⁵ M. Hussain, *The Assam Movement*, (Nanak publication, Delhi:1997), 260.

³⁷⁶ K.K. Muktan, *The Legendary Gorkhas*, (Spectrum publishers, Guwahati:2002),15.

³⁷⁷ K.K. Muktan, *The Legendary Gorkhas*, (spectrum publishers, Guwahati:2002),15.

were engaged in other rural occupation like agriculture, animal husbandry, and manual labour and petty jobs. Behind this large-scale immigration from Nepal, there were certain strong push and pull factors which constantly pressurised a large number of Nepalese to settle their livelihood outside Nepal. The British colonial power for their colonial interest released the common people of Nepal from the oppression of the landlords and aristocracy but trapped them in a new kind of exploitation. It is colonial exploitation. Landlessness of the majority of common people, heavy taxation, oppression of money lenders and local officials, slavery, social exclusion of the non favoured castes and other factors devastated the commoners of Nepal³⁷⁸.

A large number of Nepalis began to migrate to the area, initially on a temporary basis, but eventually permanent migration occurred, and settlements were established. A large number of Nepalis migrated to and settled in Darjeeling, West Bengal's Duars, neighbouring state Bhutan, Sikkim, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and other Northeastern states. Initially, it was observed that primarily hill ethnic groups from Nepal migrated to India, but high-caste Nepalis began to migrate gradually. Previously, Nepalis typically settled in areas of India where the climate was similar to that of their home country. However, due to economic reasons, they relocated to some other regions of India³⁷⁹. Thus, the only reason the British government promoted immigration was to advance their colonial interests. The government was aware that grazing fees were becoming an increasingly important source of income for the colonial state. The constant rise in cattle numbers and grazing fees showed that Nepali Graziers were becoming a significant economic force in the community. Nepali Graziers were given grazing rights and received additional income from grazing fees.

The Gorkhas, along with the rest of colonial Assam, were brought under the jurisdiction of the ALRRA in 1886. Due to their pastoral way of life, Gorkhas were classified under this Act as Graziers and Cultivators. To cultivate and raise cattle,

³⁷⁸ Muktan, *The Legendary Gorkhas*, 15.

³⁷⁹ T.B. Subba, *Nepal and the Indian Nepalis* in 'State of Nepal' (Himal Books, Kathmandu: 2007), 126.

the Graziers and cultivators were given access to forest area. As a pastoral group, the Gorkhas were drawn to live permanently in the large tracts of greenery, dense woods, hills, and abundance of wastelands. This led to the development of the Grazier community. The earnest involvement of this community of Graziers could produce high-yielding results in the expansion of cattle and its associated goods³⁸⁰. The tax brackets were created by colonial policy makers to take money from Graziers since they considered it to be a lucrative vocation. The colonial administrator steadily encroached on the grazing rights to generate more cash. With that, the Gorkha graziers, who raise cattle and graze as a vocation, were the first group in Assam society to pay grazing fees. The Gorkha professional Graziers' expertise not only boosted colonial revenue exchequer, but also expanded economic contribution to other communities, in the same shared social world, all of which maintained a cordial relationship. It contributed to the fertility of the land and benefited the villages and other groups by supplying dairy products. By demonstrating their expertise in their line of work, Gorkha Graziers inspired other villages to pursue a like economic path. They did not limit them to just raising livestock. To suit their own needs, Gorkha Graziers began cultivating crops including maize, paddy, vegetables, etc. They gained a good market and contributed to economic prosperity³⁸¹.

Since the last part of the nineteenth century, Nepali herders and marginal farmers have been present in the Burachapori area of the Brahmaputra valley, as evidenced by British records. It was mostly the Gorkhas who were concerned in rearing cows and buffaloes and grazing as a profession³⁸². Burachapori is thought to have been the first place where Gorkha Graziers settled and started their profession of cow and buffalo rearing around 1870. It has been also stated that the Gorkha Graziers settlers reared buffaloes at Tengakhuti, Panchmile area on the bank of the Mara

³⁸⁰ Report of the Assam Land Reforms Commission, 1981, Government of Assam, 9.

³⁸¹ L.P, Upadhaya, "Contribution of the Assamese Nepali in agricultural Development" in *Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies Assam (eds.) History and Culture of Assamese Nepali* (Narayani Handique, Historical Institute, Guwahati, 2009), 156.

³⁸² Tejimala Gurung, *Movement and the colonial state: The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire* 2003, 172.

Bharali River of Tezpur and they extended their grazing area upto where the present central jail and court are located³⁸³.

In the year 1892-93, Gorkha Graziers paid grazing tax on 13,025 buffaloes and 1162 cows, totalling, Rs.6772. Soon after a tax on grazing and livestock was imposed, educated members of the community became aware of the rulers' attitude towards the people. When the Gorkhas began to take an anti-colonial stance by joining the Indian national movement, the colonial administration plotted to evict graziers from the settled region. The colonial administration began destroying Gorkha settlements in Kaziraga and other areas of the Brahmaputra valley. In 1920, foresters burned down the homes of Kaziranga Graziers in response to their failure to comply with a notice to vacate the forest within 24 hours. The emerging youth from the community's realisation of colonial rule led to anti-colonial feelings and began to raise their voices with the anti-colonial agitation in the valley, particularly with the Assam Association, which had already initiated the anti-colonial moment in the valley. In April 1921, the Assam Association, which had changed its name and essentially become a Congress platform in its Tezpur Session, held its special and final meetings in Jorhat, with Chabilal Upadhyaya in the Chair. As a result of Chabilal's initiatives, the Tezpur Graziers' Association was formed in 1933 with the goals of (1)preserving and safeguarding grazing lands in Assam; (ii) stopping cultivation in professional grazing reserves; (iii) restricting immigrants; (iv) safeguarding Assam's forests for the survival of the Nepali speaking community in Assam; (v) active participation of domiciled Nepalis in Assam in India's freedom, (vi) Maintaining social integration between Assamese and Nepalese communities³⁸⁴.

The Grazier's Association was active in the national movement in Assam, opposing all colonial policies. Besides, the protection of the graziers, the persistent encroachment of grazing areas by Bengalis Muslim immigrants from Mymensing

³⁸³Nag, "Fei-isation of the Nepalis of northeast India", in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba, (eds.) *The Nepalis in Northeast India: A community in search of Identity*, (Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi:2003),188.

³⁸⁴Nag, *Fei-isation of the Nepalis of northeast India*, 189.

posed a severe challenge to the Association. The colonial state compelled the East Bengali to migrate in order to generate the revenue. Large number of immigrations from east Bengal occupied on the Burachapori areas of the Brahmaputra valley which affected the livelihood of the Gorkha Graziers. Between 1939-42, the conflict between the two groups Bengali Muslim and Nepali speaking turned violent. At the same time, the names of many Gorkha voters were erased from the voter list, which presented another new issue for the Nepali Graziers populations. The Organization, led by Prasad Singh Subba, protested the move and demanded that the names be reinstated in light of the political situation in Assam during the 1940s, in order to avoid any possible eviction and expulsion that the deletion of names implied³⁸⁵. The Organization also decided to submit several memorandums opposing the Muslim League Ministry in Assam, led by Sir Sadullah, "Grow More Food" scheme, which actually meant "Grow More Muslims"³⁸⁶. By this scheme Saadullah government opened up all land to the immigrants from Mymensingh which threatened the Gorkha community too. Needless to say, the dubious role played by the local revenue officials during this period set in an environment of confusion among the graziers. Unable to withstand the onslaught of the encroachers, the graziers ultimately disposed of their animals and putting their trials and tribulation firmly behind, shifted to safer destinations such as Udalguri, Rowta, Orang, Habigaon, Majbat, etc. As a result, there were several conflicts between immigrants and graziers. The Hindu Sabha slammed the Saadullah Government's programme as an underhanded attempt to establish Pakistan in Assam. On August 25, 1944, the Assam Jatiya Mahasabha successfully organised the "Assam Land Policy Protest Day" in protest of the government's land policy³⁸⁷. As a result, the inflow of Bengali-speaking migrants caused concern among some segments of the local people over the loss of economic resources and cultural identity³⁸⁸.

³⁸⁵ Nath, *The Nepalese of Assam: Ideal Instance of Assimilation with the Mainstream*, 378.

³⁸⁶ Nag, *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality question in Northeast India*, 1990, 97.

³⁸⁷ Bhuyan. & Sibopada, *Political History of Assam*, 269.

³⁸⁸ Abdullah Khandakar, *Social Exclusion of Inhabitants of Chars: A study of Dhubri District in Assam*, (M. Phil dissertation, Submitted under the partial fulfilment of Sikkim University:2016), 22-23.

When the 1941 census revealed, the Gorkhas were protesting the "Grow more food" strategy and supporting Assamese as their mother tongue, the Saahdullah ministry of the state took major action to expel Gorkha settlements from the state. In response to the forced invasion and displacement of immigrants, primarily from Bengal's Mymensingh district, the indigenous tribal populations of the state, including the Gorkhas, sensed a grave threat to their very existence. In February 1944, Gopinath Borodoloi, the state's congressman from the Congress party, and Dambar Singh Gurung, the AIGL's (All India Gurkha League) then president, visited the afflicted districts and spoke with each other about the problem. In November 1944, the state's governor specifically addressed the issue in the Assam assembly and recommended that the government take action to halt cultivation in professional grazing reserves while giving encroachers notice to stop using the land for their own purposes and the use of Gorkhas and other tribal communities. However, the governor's recommendations were not put into action by the government³⁸⁹.

Several agitations for Assamese culture and identity occurred in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Active agitation began in the 1960s and 1970s with the language issue, and later expanded to include a variety of issues during the Assam movement (1979-85). Throughout the movement, Assamese nationalist leaders questioned the Indian government's policy because they saw it as a threat to Assamese nationalism. During such agitations, Gorkhas in Assam were not avoided. They were tagged as 'Foreigners' or 'outsiders' in the state. . Even before the Assam movement (1979-1985), the Gorkhas were portrayed as a threat. The Assam government removed the community from the list of "protected class" categories in a notification issued on June 27, 1969³⁹⁰. During the Assam Movement, anti-Gorkha sentiment was evident in the state. After the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) was put into place in Assam on July 30, 1976, under the "Foreigners Act, of 1946," it became necessary for every

³⁸⁹ Nag, *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality question in Northeast India*, 97.

³⁹⁰ Khemraj Nepal & Hemanta Kumar Sharma, "Socio-political problems of the Nepalese in Assam: Past, present and Future" in Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies Assam (eds.), *History and culture of Assamese Nepali*, (Narayani Handique Historical Institute, Guwahati: 2009),441.

Gorkha of the state to present documentation of Indian citizenship upon returning from a trip outside of the nation. There are checkpoints at Srirampur, Boxirhat, and other Assam entry points as well as in other open spaces like bus stops and train stations. It is discovered that Gorkha-populated villages were marked for eviction, and that registered lands of the community members were kept under suspicion. It had a detrimental effect on the dairymen and graziers, who had been the Gorkha community's traditional occupations since the state's colonial era.

The study found that the Gorkha Graziers of Assam have been in the positions and situations described above. The uncanny neglect by government made them deprived of their traditional livelihood. The Government were more interested of modern Industrialization and globalization of the country. Together with this, the historicity of the community and their contribution to the state and region has been victim of perpetual ignorance. Sajal Nag says that the Gorkhas are part and parcel of the history and society of the state. But in drawing the history of 'our' and 'other', Gorkhas of Assam are often seen as "rejected people" and "historyless people". Because of their low population density, they are rarely the focus of governmental, civil society, humanitarian, and scholarly attention. Such community positions and situations have become a growing source of concern among educated community youths. There have been organised movements for the community's socioeconomic and political security. In this circumstance, the community of Gorkha Graziers is attempting to integrate into Assam's greater society. Community people are now pursuing different vocations as a source of income in addition to agriculture and cattle raising. The community's farmers produce paddy, jute, vegetables, and milk, as well as other agricultural products. A portion of the population in the state works as wage labourers to support themselves daily in various mining and quarrying operations or building sites. Members of the community work as teachers, police officers, soldiers, paramilitary personnel, peons, drivers, etc. for the government. In addition to this, a tiny portion of the population operates small businesses such shops, vegetable stands, tea stalls, etc. This community is recognised for upholding and preserving its sociocultural institutions and customs.

Despite this, it can occasionally be seen how the group has assimilated into Assam's larger civilization and the wider region. The degree of assimilation is apparent, starting with the manner in which various holidays are observed, eating customs, and relationships with regard to marriage, among other things. Apart from the numerous festivals they hold for their local communities, the Gorkhas of Assam also hold a number of celebrations that are unique compared to those of their counterparts in other areas of the nation and the world. Politicians, demographers, and Gorkhas from Assam frequently observe their active participation in local socio-cultural traditions, including Bihu and other tribal festivals. This community has been discovered to keep and preserve its traditions and socio-cultural institutions. Involvement in other regional socio-cultural activities and active participation in tribal festivals like Bihu and others can be seen among Assamese Gorkhas. The history of Assam and the surrounding area hardly ever places or mentions Gorkha graziers, despite the fact that they were an integral part of the region's common past.

Appendix 1

Origin of the word Assam

Many attempts have been made to trace the origin of the word Assam. Muhammadan historian wrote Asham, and in the early dates of British rule it was spelt with only one s. According to some the word is derived from Asama, in the sense of “uneven”, as distinguished from Samanta, or the level plains of East Bengal. This however seems unlikely. The term nowhere occurs prior to the Ahom occupation, and in the Bansabali of the Koch kings, it is applied to the Ahoms rather than to the century which they occurred. The traditions of the Ahoms themselves is that the present name is derived from Asama, in the sense of “unequaled” or “peerless”. They say that this was the term applied to them, at the time of sukaphas invasion of Assam, by the local tribes, in token of their admiration of the way in which the Ahom king first conquered and then conciliated them.

Source: A History of Assam by Edward Gait (2007)

Appendix-II

Place names with the word 'Khuti'

The Gorkhas in Assam are famous as cattle-breeders or milk men. For raising cattle or buffaloes they use to dwell in forestlands, river islands of the Brahmaputra or in some pasturelands. Such a place is called 'Khuti' both in Nepali and Assamese though in genuine Nepali it is 'goth'. There are so many places in Assam with the word 'Khuti' such as Kumar Khuti, Gaikhuti, Suklai Khuti, Nepali khuti, Sadhu Khuti, Garakhiya Khuti, Siyali Khuti, Bhaghe Khuti, Bhaune Khuti, Bakhra khuti, Roumari Khuti etc.

Appendix- III

Places names with the word Nepali or

Gorkha

These words are found added usually to some Villages in Assam of Sonitpur and Udalguri district. For example, Korainu Nepali Gaon, Kuhiyarbari Nepali Gaon, Phulaguri Nepali Gaon, Sonai Nepali Gaon, Singri Nepali Gaon, Nepali pati, Nepali para, Hathkhola, Gorkha Chowk, etc.

Appendix-IV

Places names with the word Chhapadi/Chapori

Chhapadi is the correct Nepali form of the word 'Chapari' in Assamese. There are many Chaparis in Assam which are called chhapadi. They are. Burachhapadi, Aine Chhapadi, Gahrpari Chhapadi, Daka Chhapdi, Chatai Chhapadi, Koriani Chhapadi, Nakkati Chhapadi etc.

Appendix-V

Graziers Meet (1921) and Assam Graziers Association (1933)

This were the age –old socio- economic organisations of the Assamese- Nepali. The Graziers first organised a meeting which was held at Biswanath Ghat in January 1921 to discuss about their grievances and safety. This 'Graziers Meet' is regarded as the first ever organised meet of the Nepali Graziers in Assam. These eventualities led to the formation of the Tezpur Grazier's Association which in later period was rechristened as Assam Graziers Association (1933) in the meeting held at Singri in Sonitpur district of Assam under the chairmanship of Chhabilal Upadhyay. This is the oldest organisation of the Nepalis of Assam of the kind concerned with livelihood and security.

Appendix-VI

Grazier's Co-operative Dairt Ltd.1955:

The first registered Graziers Co-operative Dairy was formed on 7 february 1955 at Tezpur at the initiative of the Nepali Graziers and with the help of prominent person like Mahadev sarma and Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati. Its First president Secretary and Manager were Nandalal Upadhaya, Bhabani Prasad Upadhaya and Nar Bahadur Subedi respectively.

Appendix-VII

Treaty of Segowlee: 1815

Treaty of segowlee, as popularly known, was done, and signed by the Rajguru (royal priests) Gajaraj Misra on 28 November,1815 and by the East India Company's side on 2 December 1815 at segoulee. It was ratified by the King of Nepal on 3 March 1816 and was accepted by both sides after slight alteration on 8thDecember, 1816.

The treaty was as follows:

Article 1st

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honourable East India Company and the Rajah of Nipal.

Article 2nd

The rajah of Nipal renounces all claim to the lands which were the subjects of discussion between the two states before the war and acknowledges the right of the Honourable Company to the sovereignty of those lands.

Article 3rd

The rajah of Nipal hereby cedes to the Honourable the East India Company in perpetuity all the under mentioned territories, viz –

First: - The whole of the lowlands between the Rivers Kali and Rapti

Secondly: - The whole of the lowlands (with the exceptions of Bootwul Khass) lying between the Rapti and Gunduck

Thirdly: - The whole of the lowlands between the Gunduck and Coosah, in which the authority of the British Government has been introduced or is in actual course of introduction.

Fourthly: - All the lowlands between the Rivers Mitchee and the Teestah.

Fifthly: - All the territories within the hills eastward of the River Mitchee including the fort and lands of Nagree and the Pass of Nagarcote leading from Morung into the hills, together with the territory lying between that Pass and Nagree. The aforesaid territory lying shall be evacuated by the Gurkha troops within forty days from this date.

Article 4th

With a view to indemnify the Chiefs and Barahdars of the state of Nipal, whose interests will suffer by the alienation of the lands cede by the foregoing Article, the British Government agrees to settle pensions to the aggregate amount of two lakhs of rupees per annum on such Chiefs as may be selected by the Rajah of Nipal, and in the proportions which the Rajah may fix. As soon as the selection is made, Sunnuds shall be grated under the seal and signature of the Governor General for the pensions respectively.

Article 5th

The Rajah of Nipal renounces for himself, his heirs, and successors, all claim to or connexion with the countries lying to the west of the river Kali and engages to have any concern with those countries or the inhabitants thereof.

Article 6th

The Rajah of Nipal engages never to molest or disturb the Rajah of Sikkim in the possession of his territories; but agrees, if any differences shall arise between the State of Nipal and the Rajah of Sikkim, or the subjects of either, that such differences shall be referred to that arbitration of the British Government by whose award the Rajah of Nipal engages to abide.

Article 7th

The Rajah of Nipal hereby engages never to take or retain in his service any British subject, nor the subject of any European and American State, without the consent of the British Government.

Article 8th

To secure and improve the relations of amity and peace hereby established between the two States, it is agreed that accredited Ministers from each shall reside at the Courts of the other.

Article 9

This treaty, consisting of nine Articles, shall be ratified by the Rajah of Nipal within fifteen days from this date, and the ratification shall be delivered to Lieut-Colonel Bradshaw, who engages to obtain and deliver to the Rajah the ratification of the Governor-General within twenty days, or sooner, if practicable.

Appendix VIII**Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the
Government of India and the Government of Nepal**

Signed at Kathmandu, on 31 july 1950

The Government of India and the Government of Nepal, recognising the ancient ties which have happily existed between the two countries; Desiring still further to strengthen and develop these ties and to perpetuate peace between the two countries; Have resolved therefore to enter a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with each other, and have, for this purpose, appointed as their plenipotentiaries the following persons, namely,

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA: His Excellency SHRI CHANDRESHWAR PRASAD NARAIN SINGH, Ambassador of India in Nepal.

THE GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL: MOHUN SHAMSHER JANG BAHADUR RANA, Maharaja, Prime Minister, and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Nepal, who having examined each other's credentials and found them good and in due form have agreed as follows.

Article 1

There shall be everlasting peace and friendship between the Government of India and the Government of Nepal. The two Governments agree mutually to acknowledge and respect the complete sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of each other,

Article 2

The two Governments hereby undertake to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring State likely to cause any breach in the friendly relations subsisting between the two Governments.

Article 3

To establish and maintain the relations referred to in Article I the two Governments agree to continue diplomatic relations with each other by means of representatives with such staff as is necessary for the due performance of their functions. The representatives and such of their staff as may be agreed upon shall enjoy such diplomatic privileges and immunities as are customarily granted by international

law on a reciprocal basis: Provided that in no case shall these be less than those granted to persons of a similar status of any other State having diplomatic relations with either Government.

Article 4

The two Governments agree to appoint Consuls-General, Consuls, Vice- Consuls, and other consular agents, who shall reside in towns, ports and other places in each other's territory as may be agreed to.

Consuls-General, Consuls, Vice-Consuls and consular agents shall be provided with exequaturs or other valid authorization of their appointment, liable to be withdrawn by the country which issued it, if considered necessary. The reasons for the withdrawal shall be indicated wherever possible.

The persons mentioned above shall enjoy on a reciprocal basis all the rights, privileges, exemptions, and immunities that are accorded to persons of corresponding status of any other State.

Article 5

The Government of Nepal shall be free to import from or through the territory of India, arms, ammunition or warlike material and equipment necessary for the security of Nepal. The procedure for giving effect to this arrangement shall be worked out by the two Governments acting in consultation.

Article 6

Each Government undertakes, in token of the neighbourly friendship between India and Nepal, to give to the nationals of the other, in its territory, national treatment regarding participation in industrial and economic development of such territory and to the grant of concessions and contracts, relating to such development.

Article 7

The Governments of India and Nepal agree to grant, on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other the same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privileges of a similar nature.

Article 8

So far as matters dealt with herein are concerned, this Treaty cancels all previous Treaties, agreements, and engagements entered on behalf of India between the British Government and the Government of Nepal.

Article 9

This Treaty shall come into force from the date of signature by both Governments.

Article 10

This Treaty shall remain in force until it is terminated by either party by giving one year's notice.

(Signed)

ChandreshwarPrasadNarain Singh

(For the Govt. Of India)

Mohan Shamsheer Jang Bahadur Rana

(For the Government of Nepal).

Source: History and culture of Assamese – Nepali
Published by: Dept of Historical and Antiquarian
Studies, Assam

why?.....

- 15) What do you know about Goth system?
- 16) What other work do you engaged besides grazing, for your livelihood?
- 17) Are you able to manage your expenditure through the grazing for your livelihood?
- 18) Have you seen Gorkha Graziers in your locality? Yes NO Cannot say.
- 19) Beside Gorkha, are there any other communities engaged in grazing animals?
YES/NO
- 20) How many Gorkha Grazier families have you noticed in your locality?
i)1 ii)2 iii)3 iv) >3
- 21) what is your opinion on present conditions of Gorkha graziers in your locality?
i) progressive ii) regressive iii) fully declined iv) other
- 22) If yes, how do you associate i) Directly ii) indirectly iii) No idea
- 23) Expected Future for Gorkha Graziers you foresee in your locality and Assam in general?
i)improve, ii) will not improve iii) will remain same iv) other.....
- 24) What are your views to change the grazier's situation/condition in Assam?

Cattle

- 25) Type of cattle you rear... Cow Buffalo
- 26) Where do you keep the Cattles? Individual Walled Space Common Shed
- 27) Where do you sell your product. Local Milkman Whole sell Buyer
Marketing Company
- 28) Do the cattle have any kind of disease? YES/NO
- 29) What Measure do you take to resolve it? Vaccination Veterinary Consultation for Treatment

Government and Organisation

- 30) Have you ever received any kind of help support from the Government agencies/ NGO for the augment of Grazier profession?

i) Yes (name of the organisation)

ii) No

iii) cannot say

31) Have you ever placed your grievances before Government? YES/ NO

Where? Panchayat Block District State Centre Others

32) Do you have any organization or union for the protection of the Graziers?

YES/ NO

Name of the Organisation...

Year Of Establishment or Year of Your Engagement.....

Its objectives?

33) Do you know about ALRRA? (Assam Land Revenue Regulations Act)

Environment

34) Do you think that Grazing cattle is responsible for forest degradation?

YES/ NO

Society

35) Have you witnessed demographic changes in your locality with the pursuance of Graziers profession? YES/ NO

Changes Noticed....

36) Did they assimilated with the Assamese culture or still they profess their own.?

37) From whom do you face challenges/conflict?

38) Is there any social exclusion and segregate pattern on the graziers in the society?

39) How do you cope with the problem that you face?

40) Future prospective of grazing system of the individual in the growing modern world?

List of the Respondent name, with their deatails.

Appendix I:

Name of the Respondent	Rohit Karki
Address	Burachapori, Tezpur, Assam
Age	58
Gender	Male
Occupation	Grazier, Agriculturist
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix II:

Name of the Respondent	Bhakta Katwal
Address	Burachapori, Tezpur, Assam
Age	60
Gender	Male
Occupation	Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix III:

Name of the Respondent	Chudamoni Karki
Address	Burachapori, Tezpur, Assam
Age	50
Gender	Male
Occupation	Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix IV:

Name of the Respondent	Chhabilal Sharma
Address	Burachapori, Assam
Age	67
Gender	Male
Occupation	Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix V:

Name of the Respondent	Tanka Chhetry
Address	Singri, Tezpur, Assam
Age	55
Gender	Male
Occupation	Teacher, Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix VI:

Name of the Respondent	Birjalal Sharma
Address	4th mile, Tezpur, Assam
Age	70
Gender	Male
Occupation	Retired. Principal of H.S, School, B. Charali, Assam.
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix VII:

Name of the respondent	Sarat ch. Sarmah
Address	4th mile, Tezpur, Assam
Age	56
Gender	Male
Occupation	Govt.Service holder (IB).
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix VIII:

Name of the respondent	Bikash Kattel
Address	4th mile, Tezpur, Assam
Age	52
Gender	Male
Occupation	Vet.Doctor
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix IX:

Name of the Respondent	Raj Kumar Kattel
Address	4thmile, Tezpur, Assam
Age	50
Gender	Male
Occupation	Govt. Teacher
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix X:

Name of the respondents	Narmada Sharma
Address	4th mile, Tezpur, Assam
Age	85
Gender	Female
Occupation	Social worker
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XI:

Name of the respondent	Biplab Das
Address	4th mile, Tezpur, Assam
Age	48
Gender	Male
Occupation	Milk Seller
Religion	Hindu
Community	Bengali

Appendix XII:

Name of the respondent	Sanjib Ghosh
Address	4th mile, Tezpur, Assam
Age	51
Gender	Male
Occupation	Milk Seller
Religion	Hindu
Community	Bengali

Appendix XIII:

Name of the respondent	Narendra Ghosh
Address	Panchmile, Tezpur
Age	57
Gender	Male
Occupation	Milk Seller
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XIV:

Name of the respondent	Lekhak Sharma
Address	Amalapam, Tezpur
Age	65
Gender	Male
Occupation	Milk Seller
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XV:

Name of the respondent	Govinda Bharari
Address	4th mile, Tezpur
Age	65
Gender	Male
Occupation	Milk Seller
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XVI:

Name of the respondent	Lok Bahadur, Adhikari
Address	Thelamara, Tezpur, Assam
Age	53
Gender	Male
Occupation	Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XVII:

Name of the respondent	Mohan Chhetry
Address	Thelamara, Tezpur, Assam
Age	56
Gender	Male
Occupation	Teacher
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XVIII:

Name of the respondent	Ganeshyam Acharya
Address	Biswanath Charali, Assam
Age	62
Gender	Male
Occupation	Retd. Govt. School teacher, Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XIX:

Name of the respondent	Gopal Chhetri
Address	Panibharal, Biswanath Charali, Assam
Age	59
Gender	Male
Occupation	Teacher, Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XX:

Name of the respondent	Nirmal poudral
Address	Panibharal, Biswanath Charali, Assam
Age	75
Gender	Male
Occupation	Retd. Teacher, Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XXI:

Name of the respondent	Laschu Chhetry
Address	Fotika Basti, Bisawnath Charali
Age	72
Gender	Male
Occupation	Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XXII:

Name of the respondent	Tilak Chhetry
Address	Panibharal, Biswanath Charali, Assam
Age	79
Gender	Male
Occupation	Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XXIII:

Name of the respondent	Hemanta Chhetry
Address	Panibaharal, Biswanath Charali, Assam
Age	51
Gender	Male
Occupation	Graziers, Dairy Farming
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XXIV:

Name of the respondent	Basanta Chhetry
Address	Fotika Basti, Biswanath Charali, Assam
Age	57
Gender	Male
Occupation	Teacher, Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XXV:

Name of the respondent	Kalpana Sharma
Address	Suklai, Udalguri, Assam
Age	56
Gender	Female
Occupation	Vice- president of AAGS, Teacher
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XXVI:

Name of the respondent	Loknath Sharma
Address	Suklai, Udalguri, Assam
Age	70
Gender	Male
Occupation	Retd.Teacher, Graziers
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XXVII:

Name of the respondent	Jeevan Poudyal
Address	Suklai, Udalguri, Assam
Age	50
Gender	Male
Occupation	Teacher, Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XXVIII:

Name of the respondent	Tilak Nirola
Address	Suklai, Udalguri, Assam
Age	65
Gender	Male
Occupation	Retd. Teacher, Grazier
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XXIX:

Name of the respondent	Dr. Khemraj Sharma
Address	Siliguri, West-Bengal
Age	67
Gender	Male
Occupation	Author, Writer
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

Appendix XXX:

Name of thr respondent	Bharat Rai
Address	Siliguri, West-Bengal
Age	70
Gender	Male
Occupation	Retd. Prof. Kolasib College, Aizawl, Mizoram
Religion	Hindu
Community	Nepali

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- 27) Statement given by Bipab chhetri, Tezpur, Assam. on 20th April.
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- **Mapping the History of Gorkhas in Pre-Independence Northeast India: A special Reference of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), Assam in the Journal of Social Sciences, Bodoland University, ISSN: 2320-0952, 2015.**
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ABSTRACT

HISTORY OF GORKHA GRAZIERS IN LOWER ASSAM

**AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY

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HISTORY OF GORKHA GRAZIERS IN LOWER ASSAM

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**In partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in History of Mizoram University, Aizawl.**

1. Introduction

One of the most important watershed achievements in the evolution of culture and civilization, perhaps, after the discovery of fire was the domestication of animals. It was indeed a pioneering discovery, from a nomadic set of people who moved across vast expanse of territory in search of food, men settled more or less into an established pattern of life whereby they started to live in permanent enclaves with domesticated animals around them. The subtle and variegated ways in which men could command themselves over a vast array of subjects soon saw them tend to animals in a way that offered sustainable lifestyle; the animals that were at first a source of meat soon came to be coveted for their diverse range of applications: from being a source of high protein food to being means of livelihood. Animal herding thus emerged as reorientation to earlier experiences of animal hunting. This reorientation from being a hunter of animals to understanding the various other ways in which it could be useful to human being is an interesting chapter in transformational journey. The evolution from hunting to herding marked a radical shift and heralded a new period in human experience and ever since has been part of our daily exploits.

Archaeological research since the 1950s has furnished large information on the origins of food-producing economies in the Near East, including the domestication of animals and incipient forms of pastoralism. It is now more or less clear that the emergence of a food-producing economy consisted of two forms of economic activities: agriculture and animal husbandry. In fact, these two models of economic activity overlapped each other not just in the Near East but also elsewhere. While much of the studies have been carried out on agriculture, the latter is less spoken and still lesser written about. And it is in this context that this research work assumed significance.

India is predominantly an agricultural and particularly a milk consuming country. Agriculture has been an important sector that has driven the economy of the country. Indian agriculture sector accounts for 18 per cent of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provides employment to a very large number of workforces, the number of which exceeds half the population of the nation. And in this agricultural enterprise, animals like cows and buffalos have a major role to play, since the infrastructure of the country is not yet modernised, more especially in the rural areas. In fact, it has been animals mentioned above

on whose back agriculture of the country rode its way to its current variety. Together with agriculture, animal herding has been a major source of livelihood. The two sectors are in fact closely connected with one another. The latter has provided strength to the former.

Animal herding is a traditional form of subsistence farming practiced among the rural population throughout the world. History tells us that animal herding became the prime and primary source of livelihood when people started to choose profession to live with family and society in the deeper past. In India, animal herding has been one of the oldest and important sources of occupations even since the age of Rig-Veda. Arthsashtra reflects the importance of milk and its products with ritual and social importance. Other Vedas, Puranas, epics, myths and folktales often refer to animal herding in the distant past, especially cows. Animal farming was also practiced in other societies in different parts of the world. African countries boast of animal herding communities like Bedouins, Berbers, Maasai, Somali, Boran, Turkana who lived in semi-arid region. They raised cattle like camels, goats, sheep, and sold milk, meat, animal skin and wool. In the central valley of Tarija, southern Bolivia, the majority of rural households have developed household strategies in which farming and grazing are combined as important components in which their life is lived. Pastoral populations continue to herd their animals in the arid lands of Africa, the Mideast, Central Asia, Mongolia, highland Tibet and the Andes, and arctic Scandinavia and Siberia.

India, like many other part of the world, is a host of animal herders. The Himalayan region of India in particular has been home to several animal herding communities. It would seem that more than 200 tribes comprising 6 percent of the country's population are engaged in grazing animals or as animal herders, India is a home to the largest livestock population, though, without a comprehensive policy on livestock. Some of the important herding communities in India are the Ghaddis of Himachal Pradesh, Gujjars of Jammu Kashmir, Jaths of Gujrat, Kinnauras of Himachal, Kurubas of Karnataka, Bhutias of Sikkim, Monpas of Arunachal etc.

Northeast India has a rich history of cattle grazing. It is inhabited by set of communities like Kukis, Nagas, Mizo, Adis, Assamese, Karbis, Lepchas, Monpas, Karboloks, Gorkhas, and Galos etc. Livestock such as sheep, buffaloes, cows and goats had been grazing in the forests and meadows of the state. Animals rearing played a big role in these comparatively less developed states as it had limited exposures to the global agricultural trends that transformed nations elsewhere. But animal herding is much more than

what is related to the economy. It has been part of the life style and story of the people. Livestock not only contributed to the livelihood of the people, being the main income generation activity, but also assisted in agriculture and helped to meet the increasing demand for protein rich food items such as milk, egg and meats.

In Context of Assam, The Gorkha community in the North-eastern states in general and Assam in particular has been a major group to engage in animal herding; in fact, it can count as the largest group in the Brahmaputra valley. After the British occupation of Assam, large number of Gorkhas migrated to this region. Active British encouragement to Gorkha settlements in the northeast was not always confined to ex-soldiers but also included many other Gorkha peasants who would take to animal herding.

This study had explored the historical background of Gorkha Grazier community and how it receives larger attention during the colonial days in the state. This work highlights their inhabitants in the region area, and how they remained marginalised section in the society. However still very little is known about the socio-cultural and political- economy of this community. It has also explored about the social, economic, political and cultural conditions of Grazier community, particularly of Gorkha Graziers of Assam. Attempts was also made to understand their Contemporary and present position and condition of the Grazier Community. This study also assessed in the region, governmental policies towards addressing pastoral way of livelihood.

II. Statement of the Problem

Due to its strategic location at the foot of the Eastern Himalayas, the region's north and east are migratory routes where numerous ethnic groups have historically established themselves. The Nepali, speaking group is one of the several tribes and ethnicities that have come to North East India from ancient times. They are found in all eight North Eastern states, with the highest concentrations in Assam and Sikkim. The greatest human migration and settlement took place during the colonial era, which led to the spread of varied population groups throughout the nation. A significant group of animal herders in the state of Assam has historically been the Gorkhas. One of the community's main livelihood initiatives over the years has been animal herding. These people were herders before migrating to Assam and other North-Eastern states, and they eventually came with their herds and settled in various areas of the area. And they had only ever engaged in jobs that were related to animal herding,

like farming and keeping a diary. The Graziers depend on community and government-owned grazing pasture to produce their produce because they do not own land. The graziers' property was gradually being turned into national parks (for example, Kaziranga National Park, Orang National Park in Assam, which was originally a place where they reared cattle), as well as being subject to natural disasters like floods, which caused problems for the graziers. The graziers were denied their traditional and customary rights to these grazing sites because they were not fully aware of the situation. The forcible displacement of grazier communities from their lands and restrictions on their movement were made possible by the political marginalisation of these populations. Political marginalisation of grazier communities paved the way for forced eviction from their lands and movement restrictions. The lower district of Assam, in particular, used to be important in animal herding. The colonial administrator formulated policies under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act (ALRRA) 1886, indicating its significance. However, the age-old means of subsistence were gradually neglected, resulting in negative consequences for the grazier community's socioeconomic sphere. Because the colonial government did not pay enough attention to animal herding, grazing communities gradually lost their means of subsistence, which is what the study seeks to investigate. Additionally, this study aims to evaluate the regional history of graziers and governmental initiatives to address the herder way of life. The purpose of this study is to evaluate government policies regarding herder way of life as well as the history of graziers in the area. In addition, the study looks into how groups of graziers who were socially cut off from their conventional sources of support selected other alternative forms of subsistence

III. Objectives

The objectives of the proposed study are:

1. To understand the concept of marginalisation and social Exclusion.
2. To analyse the operational idea of exclusion from Grazier's perspective.
3. To trace the history of Gorkha Graziers in Lower Assam
4. To examine the economic and political conditions of Gorkha Graziers in Lower Assam during colonial times.
5. To analyse the socio-cultural, economic and political status and condition of the Gorkha Graziers of Lower Assam in contemporary times

IV. Research Methodology

AREA OF STUDY: The study has primarily focus on the regions of Lower Assam, especially in Sonitpur, Biswanath and Udalguri district. The Graziers of lower Assam are said to have been the most impacted by "development generated activities" since the colonial era, which is why this area has been picked in particular. Therefore, the study has cover from colonial to contemporary times.

METHODOLOGY: The Study that has adopted in this research work are empirical as well as analytical. In the process of the historical enquiry of the research both primary & Secondary data have been used. The research work is based on using both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources have been including archival sources, namely the Assam state Archives in Guwahati, West Bengal State Archives in Kolkata and Mizoram State Archive respectively. The Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies, Guwahati, The Assam Secretariat Files, have also supplied the major primary sources. The research had also based on conducting open-ended interviews with the former graziers, local herders, and village panchayats, and also the primary data had been be collected from political parties, social workers, and pressure groups such as, All Assam Gorkha Students Union (AAGSU), Assam Gorkha Sanmilan (AGS), Nepali Sahitya Sabha (NSS), Gorkha Sanskriti Parisangha (GSP), leaders and intellectuals from the communities as well as respondents from the common mass. Interview had been conducted with the respondents in vernacular language, i.e. Nepali, Assamese, Bengali, and Hindi in accordance with the language of preference of the respondents.

Various secondary sources like books, Journal, magazine, online publication, etc are dealt with the study. Besides this the sources were also collected from various libraries, i.e., Gauhati university, Mizoram University, Sikkim university and District Library Tezpur.

V. Structure of the Study

The entire work has been divided into Five Chapters.

Chapter I, succinctly describe the framework of the study. It has made an attempt to explore how animal herding has evolved as a profession across the world in general and India in particular. An effort has also been made to describe their origin/Identity and their turn of socio-formation from Gorkha to Gorkha Graziers. It also lays with the scope, limitation, review of Literature, objectives, and methodology of the research study.

Chapter II, Historical background of Gorkhas in Assam: Evolution and Existence, deals with the historical background of the Gorkha community and connect the history of Gorkhas in Northeast India in general and Assam in particular and as well as their permanent settlement in the region. It also highlights about the pattern of Gorkha migration in Northeast India and in Assam during colonial era. It also highlight about the large number of wasteland available in the province.

Chapter III lays with the Economic and political conditions of Gorkha Graziers in colonial Assam. It highlights the colonial intervention and their encouragement to Gorkha Grazeirs to run the grazing business in the province, and introduced the concept of maximisation of revenue, from grazing tax. It also discuss about the various diseases and mortality rate of cattle in Assam. It also highlights the large inflow of the East –Bengalis into Assam, under the Scheme of ‘Grow more Food’ during Sadullah ministry reign, which raised discontentment among the Gorkhas in the province. The chapter also deals with the political scenario, their role in the freedom struggle of India and also find out the gray area which caused undergoing exclusion to Grazier community during colonial period.

Chapter IV outlines with the Socio-cultural, Economy, and political status of Gorkha Graziers in contemporary Lower Assam, especially in Sonitpur, Biswanath and Udalguri district. It deals to draw the possible findings of Gorkha Graziers in contemporary times, with the help of field survey, and perceptions of the respondents. This chapter also discuss the government policies on cattle rearing in Assam.

Chapter V, Conclusion outlines the findings and concluding summary of this work.

VI. Findings

It is to be noted that, grazing animal has been regarded as an evolutionary stage in human history. Mostly rural community-based profession is one among the world's traditional occupations, providing people with a source of livelihood from time immemorial. As in other parts of the world, India, particularly its Himalayan region, has been home to a number of grazier communities. Historically, animal husbandry has been a major source of income. Human mobility played a crucial role in the Indian subcontinent since it was a greater area of stretched land without the current type of political obstacles created by imaginary border lines between geopolitical units known as sovereign nations. Social groups were relocating from one location to another in pursuit of better food, housing, and economic opportunities. In regards of Gorkha Graziers community of Assam, the Gorkha Graziers of Lower Assam, received good attention and focus since the colonial times, but today they are one of the marginalised section in the society. In Assam, the existence of Gorkha Graziers are

witnessed, but they always remained the un-heard and unsung people. Even though they were a part of the collective past, Gorkha Graziers are rarely addressed in the history of Assam and its region. Despite the Presence from the age of colonial rule, their way of living, custom and tradition were considered backward, underdeveloped and their voices and sufferings were often ignored by the authority in negotiating with such people and it lies at the margin of discourse today.

At this point, the Gorkha Grazier community of Assam, in particular has been a topic of discussion. Gorkha Graziers in Assam form a community; this community has emerged as an integral part of Assam's societal world. The Gorkha-Assam relationship had an illustrious history. From mythology to modern history, the narratives depict a vivid picture of the relationship between two Gorkha and India. Such migrant groups settled in the area at some point in its history in different phases and has made significant contributions to transforming Assam into a diverse and multi-cultural society.

Written records and history and origin of Gorkhas in India can be traced from early nineteenth century when, immediately after the treaty of Segauli in 1815, the British started recruitment of Gorkha sepoy for Indian army. According to E.A Gait, the Gorkha soldiers penetrated Assam as early as 1817, nine years prior to formal annexations of Assam, to drive out the Burmese. Many of these Gorkha Sepoys when retired from service preferred to remain in India as the British Government provided them with employment in other civil offices as choukidars, Charprashis, peons etc. The British encouraged Gorkha population to grow up in India with the view that the children of these Indian Gorkha could be recruited in Indian Army. With this purpose, the Government established Gorkha Regimental Homes at several army headquarters in 1864 to provide accommodation to the families of the Gorkha soldiers and granted travel expenses to the Gorkha soldiers married in Nepal to bring their families to live in India. Captain John Bryan Neufville, the Commanding officer and political Agent for upper Assam had always preferred Gorkhas. He said they were “proverbially brave, active and capable of enduring fatigue both in hills and jungles and free from the prejudice which the Hindus of the regular troops were invariably accustomed”. Lands were settled to the ex-service men in the vicinity of the Regimental Homes, where schools and hospitals were established for the Gorkha families. Captain Francis Jenkins, in his report of 1832 “recommended that instead of pensions the ex-soldiers of the local corps should be given grant of land”. With the passage of time, many other Para-military forces like State Constabulary, Assam Rifles, Central Reserve police force, Border Security force etc., were

raised in various parts of India in which large number of Gorkhas were recruited. Together with the Gorkha recruits, the Gorkhas were engaged in other rural occupation like agriculture, animal husbandry, and manual labour and petty jobs. Behind this large scale immigration from Nepal, there were certain strong push and pull factors which constantly pressurised a large number of Nepalese to settle their livelihood outside the Nepal. The British colonial power for their colonial interest released the common people of Nepal from the oppression of the landlords and aristocracy but trapped them in a new kind of exploitation. It is colonial exploitation. Landlessness of the majority of common people, heavy taxation, oppression of money lenders and local officials, slavery, social exclusion of the non favoured castes and other factors devastated the commoners of Nepal.

A large number of Nepalis began to migrate to the area, initially on a temporary basis, but eventually permanent migration occurred, and settlements were established. A large number of Nepalis migrated to and settled in Darjeeling, West Bengal's Duars, neighbouring state Bhutan, Sikkim, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and other Northeastern states. Initially, it was observed that primarily hill ethnic groups from Nepal migrated to India, but high-caste Nepalis began to migrate gradually. Previously, Nepalis typically settled in areas of India where the climate was similar to that of their home country. However, due to economic reasons, they relocated to some other regions of India. Thus, the only reason the British government promoted immigration was to advance their colonial interests. The government was aware that grazing fees were becoming an increasingly important source of income for the colonial state. The constant rise in cattle numbers and grazing fees showed that Nepali Graziers were becoming a significant economic force in the community. Nepali graziers were given grazing rights and received additional income from grazing fees.

The Gorkhas, along with the rest of colonial Assam, were brought under the jurisdiction of the ALRRA in 1886. Due to their pastoral way of life, Gorkhas were classified under this Act as Graziers and Cultivators. To cultivate and raise cattle, the graziers and cultivators were given access to forest area. As a pastoral group, the Gorkhas were drawn to live permanently in the large tracts of greenery, dense woods, hills, and abundance of wastelands. This led to the development of the Grazier community. The earnest involvement of this community of graziers could produce high-yielding results in the expansion of cattle and its associated goods. The tax brackets were created by colonial policy makers to take money from graziers since they considered it to be a lucrative vocation. The colonial administrator steadily encroached on the grazing rights to generate more cash. With that, the Gorkha Graziers, who raise cattle and graze as a vocation, were the first group in Assam society to pay grazing fees.

The Gorkha professional graziers' expertise not only boosted colonial revenue exchequer, but also expanded economic contribution to other communities, in the same shared social world, all of which maintained a cordial relationship. It contributed to the fertility of the land and benefited the villages and other groups by supplying dairy products. By demonstrating their expertise in their line of work, Gorkha Graziers inspired other villages to pursue a like economic path. They did not limit them to just raising livestock. To suit their own needs, Gorkha Graziers began cultivating crops including maize, paddy, vegetables, etc. They gained a good market and contributed to economic prosperity.

Since the last part of the nineteenth century, Nepali herders and marginal farmers have been present in the Burachapori area of the Brahmaputra valley, as evidenced by British records. It was mostly the Gorkhas who were concerned in rearing cows and buffaloes and grazing as a profession. Burachapori is thought to have been the first place where Gorkha graziers settled and started their profession of cow and buffalo rearing around 1870. It has been also stated that the Gorkha Graziers settlers reared buffaloes at Tengakhuti, Panchmile area the bank of the Mara Bharali River of the Tezpur and they extended their grazing area upto where the present central jail and court are located.

In the year 1892-93, Gorkha graziers paid grazing tax on 13,025 buffaloes and 1162 cows, totalling, Rs.6772. Soon after a tax on grazing and livestock was imposed, educated members of the community became aware of the rulers' attitude toward the people. When the Gorkhas began to take an anti-colonial stance by joining the Indian national movement, the colonial administration plotted to evict graziers from the settled region. The colonial administration began destroying Gorkha settlements in Kaziraga and other areas of the Brahmaputra valley. In 1920, foresters burned down the homes of Kaziranga graziers in response to their failure to comply with a notice to vacate the forest within 24 hours. The emerging youth from the community's realisation of colonial rule led to anti-colonial feelings and began to raise their voices with the anti-colonial agitation in the valley, particularly with the Assam Association, which had already initiated the anti-colonial moment in the valley. In April 1921, the Assam Association, which had changed its name and essentially become a Congress platform in its Tezpur Session, held its special and final meeting in Jorhat, with Chabilal Upadhyaya in the Chair. As a result of Chabilal's initiatives, the Tezpur Graziers' Association was formed in 1933 with the goals of (1)preserving and safeguarding grazing land lands in Assam; (ii) stopping cultivation in professional grazing reserves; (iii) restricting immigrants; (iv) safeguarding Assam's forests for the survival of the Nepali speaking

community in Assam; (v) active participation of domiciled Nepalis in Assam in India's freedom, (vi) Maintaining social integration between Assamese and Nepalese communities.

The Graziers Association was active in the national movement in Assam, opposing all colonial policies. Besides, the protection of the graziers, the persistent encroachment of grazing areas by Bengali Muslim immigrants from Mymensing posed a severe challenge to the Association. The colonial state compelled the East Bengali to migrate in order to generate the revenue. Large number of immigration from east Bengal occupied on the Burachapori areas of the Brahmaputra valley which affected the livelihood of the Gorkha Graziers. Between 1939-42, the conflict between the two groups Bengali Muslim and Nepali speaking turned violent. At the same time, the names of many Gorkha voters were erased from the voter list, which presented another new issue for the Nepali graziers' populations. The Organization, led by Prasad Singh Subba, protested the move and demanded that the names be reinstated in light of the political situation in Assam during the 1940s, in order to avoid any possible eviction and expulsion that the deletion of names implied. The Organization also decided to submit several memorandums opposing the Muslim League Ministry in Assam, led by Sir Sadullah , "Grow More Food" scheme, which actually meant "Grow More Muslims". By this scheme Saadullah government opened up all land to the immigrants from Mymensing which threatened the Gorkha community too. Needless to say, the dubious role played by the local revenue officials during this period set in an environment of confusion among the graziers. Unable to withstand the onslaught of the encroachers, the graziers ultimately disposed of their animals and putting their trials and tribulation firmly behind, shifted to safer destinations such as Udalguri, Rowta, Orang, Habigaon, Majbat, etc. As a result, there were several conflicts between immigrants and graziers. The Hindu Sabha slammed the Saadullah Government's programme as an underhanded attempt to establish Pakistan in Assam. On August 25, 1944, the Assam Jatiya Mahasabha successfully organised the "Assam Land Policy Protest Day" in protest of the government's land policy. As a result, the inflow of Bengali-speaking migrants caused concern among some segments of the local people over the loss of economic resources and cultural identity.

When the 1941 census revealed, the Gorkhas were protesting the "Grow more food" strategy and supporting Assamese as their mother tongue, the Saahdullah ministry of the state took major action to expel Gorkha settlements from the state. In response to the forced invasion and displacement of immigrants, primarily from Bengal's Mymensingh district, the indigenous tribal populations of the state, including the Gorkhas, sensed a grave threat to

their very existence. In February 1944, Gopinath Borodoloi, the state's congressman from the Congress party, and Dambar Singh Gurung, the AIGL's (All India Gurkha League) then president, visited the afflicted districts and spoke with each other about the problem. In November 1944, the state's governor specifically addressed the issue in the Assam assembly and recommended that the government take action to halt cultivation in professional grazing reserves while giving encroachers notice to stop using the land for their own purposes and the use of Gorkhas and other tribal communities. However, the governor's recommendations were not put into action by the government.

Several agitations for Assamese culture and identity occurred in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Active agitation began in the 1960s and 1970s with the language issue, and later expanded to include a variety of issues during the Assam movement (1979-85). Throughout the movement, Assamese nationalist leaders questioned the Indian government's policy because they saw it as a threat to Assamese nationalism. During such agitations, Gorkhas in Assam were not avoided. They were tagged as 'Foreigners' or 'outsiders' in the state. . Even before the Assam movement (1979-1985), the Gorkhas were portrayed as a threat. The Assam government removed the community from the list of "protected class" categories in a notification issued on June 27, 1969. During the Assam Movement, anti-Gorkha sentiment was evident in the state. After the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) was put into place in Assam on July 30, 1976, under the "Foreigners Act, of 1946," it became necessary for every Gorkha of the state to present documentation of Indian citizenship upon returning from a trip outside of the nation. It is discovered that Gorkha-populated villages were marked for eviction, and that registered lands of the community members were kept under suspicion. It had a detrimental effect on the Dairymen and Graziers, who had been the Gorkha community's traditional occupations since the state's colonial era.

The study found that the Gorkha Graziers of Assam have been in the positions and situations described above. The uncanny neglect by government made them deprived of their traditional livelihood. The Government were more interested of modern Industrialization and globalization of the country. Together with this, the historicity of the community and their contribution to the state and region has been victim of perpetual ignorance. Sajal Nag says that the Gorkhas are part and parcel of the history and society of the state. But in drawing the history of 'our' and 'other', Gorkhas of Assam are often seen as "rejected people" and "historyless people" .Because of their low population density, they are rarely the focus of governmental, civil society, humanitarian, and scholarly attention. Such community positions

and situations have become a growing source of concern among educated community youths. There have been organised movements for the community's socioeconomic and political security. In this circumstance, the community of Gorkha graziers is attempting to integrate into Assam's greater society. Community people are now pursuing different vocations as a source of income in addition to agriculture and cattle raising. The community's farmers produce paddy, jute, vegetables, and milk, as well as other agricultural products. A portion of the population in the state works as wage labourers to support themselves on a daily basis in various mining and quarrying operations or building sites. Members of the community work as teachers, police officers, soldiers, paramilitary personnel, peons, drivers, etc. for the government. In addition to this, a tiny portion of the population operates small businesses such shops, vegetable stands, tea stalls, etc. This community is recognised for upholding and preserving its socio-cultural institutions and customs.

Despite this, it can occasionally be seen how the group has assimilated into Assam's larger civilization and the wider region. The degree of assimilation is apparent, starting with the manner in which various holidays are observed, eating customs, and relationships with regard to marriage, among other things. Apart from the numerous festivals they hold for their local communities, the Gorkha Graziers of Assam also hold a number of celebrations that are unique compared to those of their counterparts in other areas of the nation and the world. Politicians, demographers, and Gorkha Graziers from Assam frequently observe their active participation in local socio-cultural traditions, including Bihu and other tribal festivals. This community has been discovered to keep and preserve its traditions and socio-cultural institutions. Involvement in other regional socio-cultural activities and active participation in tribal festivals like Bihu and others can be seen among Assamese Gorkhas. The history of Assam and the surrounding area hardly ever places or mentions Gorkha Graziers, despite the fact that they were an integral part of the region's common past.