

**HISTORY OF PASTORAL COMMUNITIES IN COLONIAL ASSAM: A  
STUDY OF THE GORKHAS IN DARRANG DISTRICT**

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY  
& ETHNOGRAPHY**

**By**

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**2018**

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY  
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I, Tibrata Sharma, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in other Universities or Institutes.

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Statement on Anti-Plagiarism

It is hereby certified that the M.Phil dissertation entitled “**History of Pastoral Communities in Colonial Assam: A study of the Gorkhas in Darrang District**” is the result of Master of Philosophy research programme and have not taken recourse to any form of Plagiarism in any of the chapters of the Dissertation, except for quotations, from published and Unpublished sources which are clearly indicated and acknowledged as such.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “ **History of Pastoral Communities in Colonial Assam: A study of the Gorkhas in Darrang District**” submitted by Miss Tibrata Sharma in fulfillment of Master of Philosophy in history is an original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for other degree. It is recommended that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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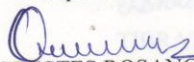
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## **Glossary**

*Asom*, Assam

*Badadasain*, a festival of Gorkhas celebrated during the autumn

*Bandh*, the strike

*Bari*, land

*Bathan*, a bunch of cows

*Bharat chhodo*, quit India

*Bidhan sabha*, the state assembly

*Bohiragoto*, outsider

*Darrang-Rajbongsawali*, the royal genealogy of Darrang

*Dhan*, paddy

*Dokhowna*, a traditional attire of Bodo women

*Goth*, a bunch of cattle

Grazier, cattle rearer

*Khola*, the river

*Khukuri*, a traditional knife of Gorkhas

*Khuti*, cattle farm, specially the milk production site

*Koches*, a tribe presently known as Rajbongshi

*Lal panda*, priest in Kamakhya temple who wears red costume

*Magical drink*,

*Meches*, a tribe presently known as Bodo

*Mul-kirat*, the original kiratas

*Nagorik*, citizen

*Nepali panda*, Nepali priest in Kamakhya temple

*Patta*, a land allotment paper

*Rani*, the queen

*Tihar*, a festival of Gorkhas celebrated *badadasain* during the autumn

*Vita*, a plot of land

## **Abbreviations**

AA	Assam Association
AGA	Assam Graziers' Association
AAGSU	All Assam Gorkha Students Union
AANSU	All Assam Nepali Students Union
AASU	All Assam Students Union
ABSU	All Bodo Students Union
AGP	Assam Gana Parishad
AGS	Assam Gorkha Sanmelan(Association)
AHURA	Association of Human Rights Activists
AIGL (APC)	All India Gorkha League (Assam Provincial Committee)
APCC	Assam Provincial Congress Committee
BTAD	Bodoland Territorial Area District
BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Boroland
NEFA	North East Frontier Agency
NESO	North East Students' Organization
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NRC	National Register of Citizen
OBC	Other Backward Classes
OKDISCD	Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Chance and Development
p.	page

pp.	pages
PTCA	Plain Tribal Council of Assam
RAP	Restricted Area Permit
ST	Schedule Tribe
TADA	Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act
TGA	Tezpur Graziers' Association
ULFA	United Liberation Front

## CHAPTER-1

### INTRODUCTION

People all over the world engaged in various occupations to earn their livelihood and survival. In this regard, the Pastoralism is one of the chief sources of occupation and it is a traditional form of subsistence farming practiced among the rural population throughout the world. Historically, Pastoralism and cattle herding, are the major dependence of livelihood. History also reveals that the Pastoralism became the primary source of livelihood when people started to choose a profession to live with family and society. With this development the rural communities based profession is found to be one of the traditional occupations, the source of livelihood of people in the world. India like many other parts of the world is a host of Pastoral community. Especially the Himalayan region of India has been the home of several pastoral communities.

The ancient history of the Indian subcontinent, particularly of the Himalayan region shows that the human mobility was its vital part. People used to move from one place to another end of this sub-continent in search of food, shelter and better livelihood. The Pastoralism in this regard was a prime one as a larger occupier of the Himalayan belt. But for many years it is not unknown to Assam. In this connection, the pastoral community, particularly the Gorkha pastoralists of Assam have been a topic of discussion. Gorkha pastoralists constituted a community and remain as an integral part of larger society in Assam. Relation of Gorkhas pastoralists with Assam owns a considerable part of the history of the state and the region.

History of India, in a larger extent reveals that it had shared cultural, social and economic relation with Gorkha Pastoral community in the past to the present time. Starting from the mythological narratives to medieval history the connection of Assam with Gorkha pastoral community draws vivid pictures. The British colonial history of the region also adds an observable relation of Assam with the Gorkhas. The colonial administration established grazing settlement transforming pastoralists into graziers. As such, colonial administrators categorized Gorkhas as an industrial, laborious and valorous community. The Colonial government opened up the valley to the Gorkha pastoralists with their new brand name i.e graziers. After the independence of India in 1947 and Assam being an integral part of it, the Gorkha graziers of Assam, the erstwhile Pastoral community remained part of the larger society in Assam. The Gorkhas tribal communities of the state under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act (ALRRA), 1886 were now renamed as “Protected Class” and brought

into the constitutional purview to protect the interest of community on December 5, 1947. Since then the so called “protected class” and were recognized as Graziers and protected along with other section of the community of Assam.

The society in Assam has witnessed various socio-political and economic dynamism throughout the pre-colonial period to post-colonial time. The changing socio-political and economic dynamism have shaped the present structure of the society in Assam. The Pastoralism and the pastoral community, particularly the Pastoral Gorkha community of the state and the region has always been in the centre of dynamism witnessing the various changes and upheavals throughout the period of history. Therefore this study tries to explore the social, economic and political conditions of the pastoral community, particularly of the Gorkha pastoralists of Assam during the colonial period. Attempts are also made to understand their present positions and conditions in the pre-colonial period.

It is to be noted that in this study the terms like ‘Gorkha’ and ‘Nepali’ have been used interchangeably. Both the terms are used by the community interchangeably in Assam. Madhab Chhetry, the present vice-president of the All Assam Gorkha Students’ Union says that they used the term ‘Nepali’ for linguistic and ‘Gorkha’ for ethnic identity.<sup>1</sup> Bhaskar Dahal, the ex. president of the organization of the All Assam Gorkha Students Union strongly defends that the word ‘Gorkha’ subsumes the identity of the community in the state.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1. THE GORKHAS PASTORAL COMMUNITY IN ASSAM

The advent of the Gorkhas in India have their own history and evidence and settlement in Assam was sporadically sparse however in the later period, it has created an attractive history of the study of their origin. It is to be noted that the present Assam used to be known as Kamrup from the time of the Vedas, Ramayana, and Mahabharata. Its capital was Pragjyotishpur. The present Assam, Meghalaya, northeast Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram Were parts of Kamrup. It is believed that the ancestors of Indian Nepalis had made a permanent settlement in this region. Traditionally Assam also had a territory comprising a large part of the present Nepal and Bhutan. Yogini Tantra describes Kamrupa from the mountain Kancana in Nepal up to the confluence of the

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<sup>1</sup> Interviewed with Mahab chhetry, on 6.07.2017, Kokrajhar.

<sup>2</sup> Interviewed with Bhaskar Dahal, on 9.07.2017, Tezpur.

Brahmaputra from Karatoya, to Dikkarasini the northern limit to the mouth Kanya, in the west the Karatoya, in the east of Diksu.<sup>3</sup>

History of the early Gorkhas in India is evidence from the Hindu epics like the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas. In the last part of the Mahabharata war, it is reported that Shalya, the King of Madra and the Senapati (commander-in-chief) of Kowrawas, belonged to Kha's clan. In the age of the Ramayana, Lord Rama was married to Sita who was born in Janakpur (Nepal) and was the daughter of King Janaka. In Vishnu Purana it is mentioned that one of the queens of the King named Khashyapa was from Kha's community, i.e., the King married a Kha's princess. Even in the Lumbini inscriptions during the reign of King Ashoka, mention is also made of the Kha's community.<sup>4</sup> It is believed that a mixture of Aryan, Mongoloid, Dravidian, Austric and Sethian groups formed the Nepali community. Nepali is a major branch of Kha's community.<sup>5</sup> Originally, it is stated that some of the Nepali community belonged to the Kiratas such as Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Magar, etc. In the linguistic survey of India, Grierson wrote that the Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloids with yellow complexion came to be known among Vedic Aryan as Kiratas.<sup>6</sup>

The relationship between Gorkhas of Assam can be traced back to ancient times, as per the inscription preserve in the Pashupatinath temple of Nepal. Princess Rajyamati (daughter of King Harshadeva) was married to the King of Nepal named Jayadeva II. The cordial relationship between Assam and Nepal also continued during the medieval period.<sup>7</sup> It has been mentioned by Maheshwar Neog, ex-president of Assam Sahitya Sabha that Ratikanta Upadhyaya, one of Shankardeva's (great saint from Assam) disciples of Nepali origin was made the satradhikhar (in charge) of the Nepali Satra (it is a Vaishnavite monastery, which was established by Sankardev) in Teok.<sup>8</sup> (It is a small town situated in the Jorhat district)

The colonial period has witnessed the greatest human movement and settlement of the people resulting in the transfer and distribution of diverse population groups in different parts of the

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<sup>3</sup>Tek Narayan & Roma Adhikari, 'Contribution of the Nepalis of Northeast India to the Development of Nepali Literature', in, in A.C Sinha &T.B. Subha(ed.),*The Nepalis in NorthEast India:A Community in search of Indian Identity* ,New Delhi, Indus publishing Company,2003,pp.147-148.

<sup>4</sup> Purusottam Bhandari, 'Evolution and Growth of the Nepali Community in Northeast India', in A.C Sinha &T.B. Subha(ed.),*The Nepalis in NorthEast India:A Community in search of Indian Identity* ,New Delhi, Indus publishing Company,2003,p.106.

<sup>5</sup>Purusottam Bhandari, p.106.

<sup>6</sup> Bhandari , P.105.

<sup>7</sup> Hemraj Kafle, *Brahmaputrako cheucheu: A saga of Nepali Migrants, Identity crisis, Bodhi*(1),2007,p.82.

<sup>8</sup> Hemraj kafle, p. 82.

world. The Nepali speaking people who are variously denoted as Nepalis, Gurkhalis or Gorkhas constitute one of the important population groups in northeast India.<sup>9</sup> The permanent settlement of Nepalese in the North-eastern region began after the treaty of Segoulee (1814-1816). During the colonial period, the Nepalese (Gorkha) Sepoys working in the Assam Light infantry of the East India Company fought against the Burmese who invaded Assam and played a great role in overthrowing the Burmese yoke from Assam.<sup>10</sup> After the signing of the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, Assam eventually went to the hands of the East India Company. As an outcome of the first Anglo-Burmese war, Assam was incorporated as a protectorate of the British. A Dasgupta stated:

“The treaty opened Assam to capitalist exploitation making the period from 1826 to 1873 a period of transition for Assam’s pre-capitalist economy into a colonial phase. Assam was transformed into a land of opportunities with unlimited income and investment chances, converting Assam into a prime destination for people from outside.” He further stated that all the factors of production for the expanding modern economy, except land, were brought in from outside the province; capital and enterprise from the metropolis and labour from the other provinces. Migrants as soldiers, labourers, agriculturists, graziers, petty traders and also English educated job-aspirants were actively encouraged by the colonialists to take advantage of the new opportunities and enterprises that imperialism opened up on the Eastern Frontier of India Company. In due course of time, the Gorkha population of Assam was assimilated with the local Assamese people and has become a part of greater Assamese society.”<sup>11</sup>

According to the census of India 2011, the total population of Assam was 3, 11, 69, 272.<sup>12</sup> Higher population concentration was recorded in the district of Kamrup, Sonitpur, Darrang, Nagaon, Barpeta, Dhuburi, and Cachar.<sup>13</sup> The migration into Assam from outside played an important role to the growing population in Assam. This is the worldwide phenomenon that the history of the people of the world is the history of migration and it is a continuous process.

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<sup>9</sup>Tejimala 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 ,pp.172-173.

<sup>10</sup> P.Bhandhari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese, 1800-1950*, Guwahati, Jagiroad,1996, p.17.

<sup>11</sup> A Dasgupta, 'Othering of the not-so-other:A study of the Nepalis in Assam' , 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,p.230.

<sup>12</sup> www census 2011.co.in>states,accessed on 09.03.2016.

<sup>13</sup> R.S.Arha &Latika Singh , *Glimpses of Assam*, ABD Publishers,Jaipur,2008, p.48.



People's migration was usually experienced due to economic and better employment opportunities. The North Eastern part of India has been witnessing the migration of different groups of people from inside and outside India since ancient times, and the process is still continuing. The medieval period shows the migration of the Ahoms and the colonial period show the migration of different communities into Assam viz., the Gorkha, the tribal's working in the tea gardens, Bengalis, Muslims, Marwaris etc from different states of India. <sup>14</sup>

A group of social scientists has attributed the Gorkhas settlement in Northeast India since the 1820s with a migratory nature, either in search of economic opportunities or grazing lands for cattle which is crucial for their primary business of Milk production. <sup>15</sup> One important point to be noted here is the recruitment of Gorkha soldiers to British Indian Army after the treaty of Suguali (1816); between British India and Nepal was one of the important causes of Nepalese settlement 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 Nepalese residing in these areas automatically became the subjects of British India.<sup>16</sup> According to A.C Sinha, "the initial Nepali settlement in Assam began as early as 1824 when Jaichand Thakur, a retired Subedar from the English Gorkha Platoon of Sylhet, settled down at shillong." Sinha further stated that the majority of Nepalis moved to Assam as their life in the hills of Nepal was very difficult for the people.<sup>17</sup>

It is found that the Gorkhas entered the Northeastern State of India in different circumstances. They entered into matrimonial alliance with the local women and had children and they settled down permanently. Apart from retired soldiers, Gorkhas were allotted land to set up the village to grow 'Dhan' (paddy). In Assam what seems to have attracted Nepalis most were the green vast expanse of dense forests, hills, wastelands and the 'chars' and its tributaries of mighty Brahmaputra indeed, an ideal scenario for cattle –breeding.<sup>18</sup> Further, during the 1830s the discovery of 'Magical drink' (mean tea), the British colonial administrators encouraged

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<sup>14</sup> S.L.Baruah ,*A Comprehensive History Of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal publishers,New Delhi,2005,p.5.

<sup>15</sup> Lopita Nath, 'Migrants in Flight : Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalese in Northeast India' ,in *Indian Nepalis:Issues and perspective* ,Indus Publication, NewDelhi, 2005,p.57.

<sup>16</sup> 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.2,2015,p.58.

<sup>17</sup> A.C.Sinha,The Indian Northeast Frontier and the Nepali Immigrants, 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,p.42.

<sup>18</sup> Lopita Nath, *Migrants in Flight :Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalese in Northeast India* ,p.56.

Gorkhas to settle in Assam.<sup>19</sup> Many Gorkha soldiers after retirement started to involve in cattle rearing and grazing as a profession. A strong attraction for Nepali to Northeast India was the ‘availability of grazing land and the growing business of milk supply in the growing urban economies.’<sup>20</sup> Lopita Nath Stated :

“The Nepali Dairymen in India Northeast mentioned that Assam District Gazetteer, published in 1979 claimed, ‘the Nepalese 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* (sic) [herders’ temporary sheds]. Some have taken to cultivation also.’<sup>21</sup>

The ethnic hill tribes namely the Gurungs, Bhutiyas and Magars, are known to have practiced transhumant Pastoralism, and in the early 1940s kept a considerable number of cattle, buffaloes, goats, and sheep.<sup>22</sup> Till about the mid 1950s, almost every household had a herd of animals, each consisting of 10 – 20 cows and 10 – 15 buffaloes, and they were managed jointly by two or three families. The main objective of keeping cattle was to generate income in both cash and kind; cows and buffaloes for milk and manure, and sheep for the wool needed in making blankets and other woolen clothes.<sup>23</sup> In the Brahmaputra valley, the Gorkhas initially settled in the grazing reserves i.e., in the *chapari* areas. The steady increase in the number of cattle and grazing fees indicated the emergence of Nepali graziers as an important economic group in the society.<sup>24</sup> It may be stated that in 1933 the Tezpur Graziers Association was formed by the Gorkhas at Singiri, with Chabilal Upadhaya as its president, with the avowed objective, among others, to protect and preserve the grazing lands in Assam.<sup>25</sup> This indicated to some extent that grazing had become a major occupation and source of livelihood for the Gorkhas.<sup>26</sup> The cultivation and cattle rearing are the major professions of the community in

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<sup>19</sup> Kaushik Ghosh , ‘A Market for Aboriginality: Primitivism and race Classification in the Indentured Labour Market of Colonial India’, in Gautam Bhadra, Gyan prakash and Sussie Tharu(ed.),*Subaltern Studies* ,New Delhi, Oxford university press, p.8.

<sup>20</sup> S.Baruah, *India against itself: Assam and the politics of Nationality* ,2001,New Delhi,OUP,P.231.

<sup>21</sup> Lopita Nath, Migrant in flight: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalese in Northeast India’ p.57.

<sup>22</sup> J.Adhikari, *The beginnings of Agrarian Change: A Case study in central Nepal*, Kathmandu, TM Publication, 1996, p.188.

<sup>23</sup> Lopita Nath, *Migrant in flight: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalese in Northeast India*’. p.58.

<sup>24</sup> Tejimala Gurung, *Human Movement and the colonial State; The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire*, p.179.

<sup>25</sup> Sajal Nag, Fe-isation of the Nepalis of Northeast India” in Sinha, A. C. and Subba, T. B. (eds.) in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba, (eds.) *The Nepalis in Northeast India: A community in search of Identity*, New Delhi Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2003, reprinted in 2007, p .184.

<sup>26</sup> Sajal Nag, p.184.

the region, including the production of paddy, jute, vegetables and selling milk. For the production of milk, every household of the community has either cowshed in the courtyard or 'bathan' (cattle farm, specially meant for dairy locally known as *Goth* or *khuttiwala* in forests areas near to village).

## 1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Assam the state of northeastern India, being strategically located at the base of the Eastern Himalayas, lies on the various migratory groups, who at sometimes or the other in the region's history made their home. Pastoralism has been one of the important sources of India since the deeper past age of the history. Pastoral societies are characterized by the domestication of the animals.

Pastoralists face deprivation and exclusion from their traditional and customary rights to these grazing areas by the colonial government and the policy makers. The political marginalization of pastoral communities paved the way for forcible eviction from their lands or restriction of their movement. Particularly, the Darrang district of Assam used to have a crucial role in Pastoralism prior to the advent of the colonialist. The district as important of giant Kamrupa-Pragjyotishpura kingdom on the lap of mighty Himalaya shares deep-rooted history of Pastoralism on the foothills of Himalaya.

With the arrival of Ahom rulers, the district on the based valley of giant Brahmaputra, the Pastoralism had been promoted for the better economic health of Ahom state and the common masses. Even the colonial policymakers had given importance to agriculture and Pastoralism and, had formulated policies for the same cause in 1886 under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act (ALRRA) 1886. But with the freedom of the country, the age-old means of livelihood has been slowly overlooked. This has caused negative repercussions on the socio-economic sphere of the pastoral community. And, with the government's undeclared disinterest on pastoralists' way of life, the pastoral communities lost their means to livelihood and this is what the study seeks to investigate. This study seeks to assess the history of Pastoralism in the region, governmental policies towards addressing the pastoral way of livelihood and the impact of insurgency on Pastoralism. The study also tries to assess that how the erstwhile pastoral communities have chosen other alternative means of livelihood after being socially excluded from the historic-ancestral means of livelihood.

### 1.3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

R.M. Blench (2000) in his book, *Extensive Pastoral livestock system; Issues and options for the future* stated that Indian Pastoralism is the worst documented by far, with confused descriptions of pastoral systems and confusing terminology for pastoral ethnic groups. He further pointed out that in India pastoralists are integrated into the caste system, representing endogamous social groups with a professional specialization in animal husbandry.

Veena Bhasin (1988) in his book *Himalayan Ecology, Transhumance and social organization of Gaddis in Himachal Pradesh* provides us with the information of the Himalayan Pastoralism. He asserted that the Himalayan Pastoralism is based on the transhumant practices and involves cyclical movements from lowlands to highlands to take advantage of seasonally available pastures at the different elevation in the Himalayas. During the summer, when the snow melts in the higher alpine regions, Himalayan pastoralists move up to these areas to graze their animals. After monsoon, they down to occupy the low altitude pastures for the winter months. Some pastoralists in the Himalayan are agro-pastoralists and besides rearing animals they also cultivated land, although the major portion of their household income is drawn from pastoral activities.

Vijay Paul Sharma, John Morton and Kohler-Rollefson(2003) in their article *Pastoralism in India* indicated that Pastoralism makes a significant contribution to the economy of developing countries, both in term of providing employment and income opportunities and in supplying nutrition to the poor, however as an economic system it is constantly threatened by inappropriate Government policies. They say that Indian Pastoralism is under –research and poorly documented. It differs in structure and social organization from other parts of the world. Only a small proportion of pastoral groups have been described in western India, such as the Rebari/Raika, and Bharwad as well as some of the Himalayan regions like Gaddis, Gujjars, and Kin auras.

K.Vasant Saberwal(1999) in his book, *pastoral politics-Shepherds, bureaucrats and conservation in the western Himalaya* says that pastoralists continued to be treated as a problem for the administrators in terms of collecting taxes or controlling the population. He says that in Government records, publications and documents, pastoralists are regarded as marginalizes, backward and poor populations.

P.Nick Kardulias (2007) in his book, *The Ecology of Pastoralism says that Animal husbandry* has been one of the main subsistence patterns for many cultures around the world since the Neolithic period. In the study of pastoralists, anthropologists, and archaeologists pay specific attention to the ecological factors that govern pastoral activities, unlike analysis performed by economists or specialists in development. The studies in this book demonstrate the careful way pastoral peoples past and present have organized their relationship with certain animals to maximize.

Michael Bollig, Michael Schnegg and Hans Peter Wotzka (2013) in his book, *Pastoralism in Africa; Past, Present, and Future* says that in many African societies cattle are not only of great economic importance but also play an important role in the social and ritual domains. They are prestige items and companions for life, often occupying central positions in rituals and mythology. The use of animals as a medium for complex symbolism is a widespread phenomenon probably above all since natural species are chosen not because they are 'good to eat' but because they are good.

D.B. Chhetry (2009) in his article, '*Grazing Reserves and Nepali Graziers in Assam*' discussed in details that the Old District Darrang has been home to the largest number of Nepali herdsmen since the middle of the nineteenth century. He says that a significant section amongst the Nepalese in the Brahmaputra valley, in particular, comprised of professional graziers and there is no denying the facts that the Nepalese constituted the single largest group of professional graziers in the Brahmaputra valley till events overtook them and encroachment and de-reservation impelled hundred of them to seek alternative modes of life.

Deben Sapkota(2009) in his article, '*Animal husbandry practices adopted by the Nepalese in Assam*' says that the Gorkha started animal husbandry on the river bank 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. He says that the most of the Nepali settlers in the Brahmaputra valley had their Khutis in Kaziranga reserve.

Tejimala Gurung(2007) in her article '*Human Movement and the colonial state, The Nepalese of Northeast India under the British rule*' discussed that in Land-abundant Assam, peasant enjoyed from time immemorial the tradition right to graze freely in the village commons and neighboring forests. Under the British rule, the grazing right was gradually encroached upon to bring forth additional revenue to the government. It was primarily the Nepalis who were involved in cattle rearing and grazing as a profession.

Lopita Nath (2006) in his article '*Migration, Insecurity and Identity: The Nepali Dairymen in India's Northeast*' had mentioned about the Nepali graziers and how they were encouraged by the British to colonize new lands for cultivations or grazing cattle. He says that the Nepali were the first to pay grazing fees which, as the number of Nepali grew began to bring in substantial revenue to the British exchequer. Subsequently, dairy farming became a primary occupation for Nepalis in the region.

Hem Raj Kafle (2007) in his article '*Brahmaputraka Chheucheu , A saga of Nepali Migrants, Identity Crisis*' says that the majority of Gorkhas live either in the farms or in the cattle sheds. They are hardworking and determined to withstand crises underlying their usual work. Many of them avoid living in the cities and live their way of living by cattle rearing. This implies that they continue the traditional ways of living with cattle as their occupation.

*The government of Assam Revenue Report of 1903 file No.28: Assessment 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 wasteland .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 wasteland. Therefore the Government declared 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 1956 files-no. For/276/56* stated that the as all the grazing reserves and Basti lands go under water, the 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.

#### 1.4. AREA OF THE STUDY

The study was mainly focused in Darrang district of Assam. This area was chosen because the pastoral community in the district is frequently reported to be the most affected area during the colonial period and also due to natural calamities.

#### 1.5. OBJECTIVES

- i. To highlights the concept of Pastoralism and to trace its history.
- ii. To examine the existing problems of Pastoralism in Darrang district since the colonial period.
- iii. To analyze the socio-culture, economic and political condition of the pastoralists in Darrang district.

#### 1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. How can the concept Pastoralism be explained and its history be traced?
- ii. What was the status of the Pastoral community in Darrang district?
- iii. What was the socio-cultural, economic and political condition of the pastoralists in Darrang district?

#### 1.7. METHODOLOGY

The research was based on qualitative and analyzing and interpret both primary and secondary sources that were collected through rigorous field study and existing literature. Primary sources include archival sources namely the Assam state Archives in Guwahati. The research was based on conducting open-ended interviews with the former pastoralists, local herders, and village Panchayat. Secondary source were included books, journals, and articles, published and unpublished work. The secondary data has been obtained from existing national and international writings on Pastoralism.

## 1.8. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This work has been divided into five chapters.

### CHAPTER - I

The first chapter discusses the overall framework of the study. It covers the historical aspects and the settlement of the pastoral community.

### CHAPTER - II

The second chapter of the work try to explains the concept of Pastoralism followed by its origins, development, and its features in Darrang district.

### CHAPTER - III

The third chapter tries to explain the historical existence of the Gorkha Pastoral community and the social-cultural aspects of the community. This chapter also highlights the effect of the colonial intervention.

### CHAPTER - IV

The fourth chapter deals with the Economic and Political Conditions of Pastoralists in the area of study. Attempts have been made to study the overall economic and political scenario as well as to find out the grazing area which caused the social exclusion of the pastoral community of Darrang district, Assam.

### CHAPTER - V

The final chapter deals the findings and concluding summary of the work.



## CHAPTER-2

### UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF PASTORALISM

People engage in various occupations for livelihood and to meet their needs. In earning the means of livelihood and meeting various wants through occupation, people engage in a number of economic or productive activities producing goods and services. It is undeniable facts that wants are unlimited but people inescapably remain in occupation is three major need and reason. These are food, cloth, and shelter. Among the various occupations to meet such basic needs of livelihood, Pastoralism is noticeably considerable.

#### 2.1. ROOTS AND THE MEANING OF PASTORALISM

Historically, Pastoralism and cattle herding has been a major means of livelihood. It has been a successful strategy to support a population with the limited resource of land. Origins of Pastoralism can be estimated from archaeological and in the particular from careful optometric work demonstration the gauged divergence between wild forms of livestock and their domesticated relatives. Some claims have been made for domestic cattle in Northeast Africa as early as 9000 BC. Although not all the scholars accepted this date more solid dates are now available to comprehend the year 6000BC as the date of the beginning of Pastoralism.<sup>27</sup> The earliest reference to people who would appear to be pastoralists were Amorites herded cattle in the near East in the first half of the second millennium.<sup>28</sup> Herodotus, who is known as father of history mentioned that a number of peoples assumed to be pastoral across Central Asia.<sup>29</sup> Even Spencher Trotter stated that undoubtedly, the most far-reaching achievement in human history, next to the discovery of fire was the domestication of grazing animals.<sup>30</sup>

Pastoralism can be categorized in a number of ways based on the degree of movement, species, management strategy, geography, and ecology. In the Indian context, Pastoralism is classified on the basis of region and migration -Pastoralism of Himalayan region and Pastoralism of western region. Pastoralism in the Himalayas is based on transhumance practices. The

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<sup>27</sup> Roger Blench and Kevin MacDonald, *The origin and Development of African Livestock; Archaeology, Genetics, Linguistic and Ethnography*, London, Routledge, 2006, p.87.

<sup>28</sup> R. Cribb., *Nomads in Archaeology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.10.

<sup>29</sup> R.Cribb, p.10.

<sup>30</sup> Spencher Trotter, Pasture, in *The scientific Monthly*, Vol.18, No.4, published by the American Association for the advancement of science, p.395. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/7287>, Accessed: 23-02-2018 14:18 UTC.

Himalayan pastoral group categories are based on migration types such as nomadic Herders, semi-nomadic pastoralist, and transhumant herders.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, Pastoralism that exists in western part of India is known as Pastoralism of Western region, that are further classified into the following like urban Pastoralism, village-based Pastoralism, long-distance group migration and permanent migration. The major pastoralist groups of Himalaya pastoralist are Bakarwals, Gujjars, Champas, Gaddis, Bhotias, Bhuttias, Monpas, and Kinnauras.<sup>32</sup> Pastoralism is one of the components of south Asia that has been practicing herd cattle like sheep and goat, buffalo, camel and, yak varies from region to region since Paleolithic age.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to Central Asia and Africa which do not have vast stretches of natural grassland in South Asia would have provided habitats for large and consolidated pastoral groups, here grassland is confined to small stretches or else consequences of forest degradation.<sup>34</sup>

## 2.2. TYPES OF PASTORALISM

Depending on the geographic factors and technological development, Pastoralism is practiced at two level or forms- Subsistence form and Commercial form.

### 2.2.1. NOMADIC HERDING

Nomadic means living the life of nomad where they are people who shift from one place to another in search of food and shelter and herding constitutes a group of animals moving in a nomadic group. So Nomadic herding in this sense are people who move from one to another with their livestock. Wide varieties of animals are kept in the different region. In tropical Africa, cattle are the most important livestock, while in Sahara and Asiatic desert, sheep goats and camel are reared. In mountain region of Tibet and the Andes regions, yak and llamas and while in the Arctic and sub -Arctic areas, Reindeer are the most important animals.<sup>35</sup>

Pastoral Nomadic is associated with three important regions. The First region extends from Atlantic shores of North Africa eastwards across the Arabian Peninsula into Mongolia and

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<sup>31</sup> Veena Bhasin, *Himalayan Ecology and social organization of Gaddis in Himachal Pradesh*, NewDelhi, Kamal Enterprise,1988, p.22.

<sup>32</sup> Roger Blench and Kevin MacDonald, *The origin and Development of African Livestock; Archaeology, Genetics, Linguistic and Ethnography*,p.87.

<sup>33</sup> Veena Bhasin, *Himalayan Ecology and social organization of Gaddis in Himachal Pradesh*, p.22.

<sup>34</sup> Arun Agarwal ,*Greener Pastures;Politics,Markets,and Community among a Migrant Pastoral people*, Duke university Press,2004,p.274.

<sup>35</sup> [www.yourarticlelibrary.com/agriculture/nomadic-herding-an-ecological](http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/agriculture/nomadic-herding-an-ecological),accessed on 1.02.2018

Central China. The second one is the region over the tundra region of Eurasia. Third region is in the southern hemisphere, there is a small area in South –West Africa and on the island of Madagascar. Movement in search of pasture is undertaken either over vast horizontal distance or vertical from one elevation to another in the mountain region. In tundra region, the nomadic herders move from north to south during the winter.<sup>36</sup>

Evans Pritchard stated that the nomadic pastoral society is very patriarchy, therefore, men are often largely responsible for herding larger stock such as cattle, and all the activities are controlled by the man.<sup>37</sup> There are different communities of nomadic pastoralists in India. Pastoralists are people who earn their living by raising and herding livestock. The nomads living in these different terrains follow various seasonal movements to earn their livelihood and mobility is the key features of Pastoralism. The Gujjar Bakarwals from Jammu and Kashmir raise herds of goats and sheep and earn a living through livestock and commonly follow an annual cyclic movement between winter and summer for grazing grounds to find pasture for their herds.<sup>38</sup> Though they follow their traditional occupations since time immemorial but still nomadic pastoralists are regarded as backward, uncivilized in India and many parts of the countries.

#### 2.2.2. COMMERCIAL LIVESTOCK REARING

Whenever the word commercial comes it means engaging in some sort of business or commerce and the main intention is to make profit. So commercial livestock rearing is rearing animals for business purpose or making profit out of it. The most important animals for commercial livestock are buffalo, cow, sheep, cattle, goats, horses and etc. from which products such as meat, wool, hides, and skin is processed and export to different world markets for business. United States of America, New Zealand, Australia, and Argentina Uruguay are the countries where commercial livestock rearing is practiced.<sup>39</sup> In India, State like Assam,

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<sup>36</sup> [www.yourarticlelibrary.com/agriculture/nomadic-herding-an-ecological](http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/agriculture/nomadic-herding-an-ecological), accessed on 1.02.2018, and also see Tikendra Kumar Chhetry and Simanta Chettri , Conflicting Pastoral Policy in India: Case of Sikkim” in *Journal of North-East Region*, Vol: 3, No:2,2015, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Evans Pritchard, *The Nuer*, oxford, Clarendon,1944, [https://monoskop.org/.../Evans\\_Pritchard\\_E\\_E\\_The\\_Nuer\\_a\\_description\\_of\\_the\\_modes](https://monoskop.org/.../Evans_Pritchard_E_E_The_Nuer_a_description_of_the_modes) (accessed on 01.04.2017 )

<sup>38</sup> Vijay Paul Sharma, Ilse Kohler-Rollefson, and John Morton , '*Pastoralism in India; A scoping study*,' Ahmadabad, Centre for Management in Agriculture, India, 2003, (<https://www.gov.uk/.../scoping-study-on-pastoralism-in-india-centre-for-management>.accessed on 01.04.2017)

<sup>39</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry and Simanta Chettri , Conflicting Pastoral Policy in India: Case of Sikkim ,p.2.

Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Tamilnadu, Kerala, dairying has a greater commercial livestock based on Cows and buffaloes.<sup>40</sup> It is also to be noted that Pastoralism has been one of the oldest and important sources of occupations in India ever since the age of Rig-Veda. Arthasashtra reflects the importance of milk and its products with ritual and social importance.<sup>41</sup>

David Ludden stated:

“Pastoral societies are characterized by the domestication of animals. They first appeared about 12,000 to 15,000 years ago. These societies are typically found in the mountainous region and in areas within areas with insufficient rainfall to support horticultural and agrarian societies. It has been suggested that from the Gupta period onwards, with the consolidation of agrarian states the expansion of their influences into arid and in the mountainous areas, pastoral nomadic in India had declined and the remaining nomadic animals were increasingly marginalized.”<sup>42</sup>

### 2.3. SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF PASTORAL COMMUNITY

Though not exclusively, Pastoralism is primary a feature of the Old World. In this profession people in order to maintain their livelihood, domesticate large herds of animals. And it is an important economic and cultural way of life of between 100 to 200 million people. It is estimated that Pastoralism and its related production covers about 25% terrestrial surface of the earth.<sup>43</sup> Despite the fact that majority of pastoralists are found in Africa and Asia, Pastoralism is also practiced in the Middle East, South, and East Asia, South America, Europe, and Sub – Saharan Africa, particularly in the dry and sub-humid lands in this region.<sup>44</sup>

The means of livelihood maintained following the way of Pastoralism is one of the major sources of livelihood and way of living to the million of the people around the globe but there

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<sup>40</sup> Pratap S Birthal and Digvijay S Negi, Livestock for Higher, Sustainable and Inclusive Agricultural Growth, in *Review of Rural Affairs*, Vol.47, No.26/27, published by Economic and Political Weekly, 2012, Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23251727> Accessed: 01-03-2018 14:14 UTC

<sup>41</sup> Shereen Ratnagar, *The other Indians Essays on Pastoralists and pre-historic Tribal People*, New Delhi, Demy, 2004, p.19.

<sup>42</sup> David Ludden, *An Agrarian History of south Asia*, Cambridge, Cambridge university press, 1999, pp.6-7.

<sup>43</sup> Pastoralism, Nature Conservation And Development –Convention on Biological Diversity(CBD), <https://www.cbd.int/development/.../cbd-good-practice-guide-pastoralism-booklet-we>, accessed on 6.01.2018.

<sup>44</sup> Pastoralism, Nature Conservation And Development –Convention on Biological Diversity(CBD), <https://www.cbd.int/development/.../cbd-good-practice-guide-pastoralism-booklet-we>, accessed on 6.01.2018

are various factors which are affecting the this oldest means of lifestyle. Among the factors which are found responsible to affect and ruin the Pastoralism, may be noted as follows-

### 2.3.1. CROP PRODUCTION AND EXTENSION OF AGRO FIELD

To meet the scarcity of growing food with the rapid growth of population, the need for crop production is increasing every year. For it, the need for the extension of agro field was also increasing. With it, globally grazing grounds which had been used of pastoralists was being converted into crop cultivating the field. A dramatic example in this regards is provided by the Barabaig, semi-nomadic cattle breeders in Tanzania. The community lost more than 40,000 hectares to a wheat growing project funded by the Canadian government.<sup>45</sup>

### 2.3.2. SHORTENING OF THE FALLOW PERIOD

In this case, the former, fields were left fallow in some month of the year and during this time pastoralist were welcomed by the farmer for the fertilizing effects of the manure of the animals. But these days this practice has been replaced by using the fertilizers. Hence, pastoralists were pushed out of their field and there was nowhere to go like Rebari and Bharwad(Community) in Gujarat and Raika(Community) in Rajasthan .<sup>46</sup>

### 2.3.3. PROJECTS OF IRRIGATION AND HYDRO ENERGY GENERATION

The pastoralists and their traditional grazing were found to be severely affected by the construction of dams to generate power or to increase agriculture production of low rainfall areas. The example of the government in Angola could be placed here in this regards. In the name of generating hydroelectric power, the policy of Angola government affected the life-world of Pastoralists.<sup>47</sup>

### 2.3.4. POLICY OF WILDLIFE PARKS AND SANCTUARIES

With the growth in parks and sanctuary policy of different governments across the world, the mode of an occupation of Pastoralism was often found to be affected. There were many instances; where a pastoralist has been prevented from using their historic grazing yard. In the

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<sup>45</sup> Charles R.Lane, 'Pasture Lost:Alienation of Barabaig land in the Context of land policy and legislation in Tanzania', in *Nomadic people*, White horse press,1994,vol:30,pp.81-82.

<sup>46</sup> [www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/...001.../oxfordhb-9780199569885-e-40](http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/...001.../oxfordhb-9780199569885-e-40),accessed on 15.02.2017

<sup>47</sup> [www.pastoralpeoples.org/pastoralists.htm](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org/pastoralists.htm),accessed on 15.02.2018.

name of the protection of nature and ecological surrounding the pasture land used by pastoral has declared 'nature protect areas'. Following such policies, grazing of cattle in such land has totally been banned. It had caused numbers of problems for the pastoralists. In this regards few examples can be placed in the Indian context. Gurjar, migratory buffalo keepers in Uttar Pradesh faced severe problem when a national park named Rajaji National Park was created in the state. The traditional lifestyle of Raika camel pastoralists faced acute situation because of the similar policy of the government. Raikas are groups of graziers who live in the deserts of Rajasthan; they herded cattle like camels, sheep and goat. Therefore they had to move long distance in search of good pastureland, access to the Aravalli range, their traditional grazing ground, has been curtailed since the area became designated as Kumbhalgarh Reserve.<sup>48</sup>

The case of Assam is not free from this predicament as the, pastoralists were affected in Assam since the days of colonial administration. The nasty declaration of the pasture land as Kaziranga Park with improper management by colonial administration caused tight spots to the pastoralists, especially those who were using the said land for their cattle. Similarly, in the postcolonial period similar policy was followed by the government, and the space available by the pastoralists too was greatly affected. Particularly, the government of Assam and India declared Orang National Park in the then Darrang Districts in 1956 without preparing any rehabilitation and related policy to the pastoralists or graziers of the corresponding areas.<sup>49</sup>

### 2.3.5. PRIVATIZATION POLICY AND ACQUISITION OF GRAZING LAND

In the ancient or traditional pastoral society, pasture land was not owned by individual and private property, rather it was considered as the common property. In Kenya, "Group ranch programme was imposed on the Maasai that conferred individual land ownership to group living together resulted in most of the land being owned individually and this land has been used for maize cultivation."<sup>50</sup> Recently the pastoralists in Assam faced similar issue. The government of Assam allotted a large amount of land to Patanjali Corporate House to establish its new plant. The land allotted has been a grazing land used by pastoralists in the forests. Sudden barrier and prevention of grazing in the said plot created problems to pastoralists of the region.

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<sup>48</sup> Vijay Paul Sharma, Ise Kohler-Rollefson, and John Morton, 'Pastoralism in India; A scoping study, p.34.

<sup>49</sup> Assam Secretariat, Forest Report of 1959, file No. for/wl/115/59.

<sup>50</sup> Galaty, *The world of Pastoralism: herding systems in comparative perspective*, London, Guilford press, eds. 1990, p.48.

### 2.3.6. FOOD AND DRINKING WATER MANAGEMENT

A Settlement is often a voluntary gesture, it occurs as a result of certain process made. And the spontaneous growth of human settlement and activities in the pastoral land causes a pastoral existence impossible.<sup>51</sup> Well-intended interventions from outside such as food aid and drilling of wells of drinking water management, provoking pastoralists to quit their traditional way of life and remain in one spot. Finding some studies read that settled pastoralist under Sedentarization policy are more likely to suffer from the problems like malnutrition than their nomadic relatives.<sup>52</sup>

### 2.3.7. MISMANAGEMENT DURING COLONIAL RULE

The mismanagement and ill effective policy under colonial rule dramatically changed the life of pastoralists and has affected the Pastoralism in many ways. During the Colonial period the administration wanted to transform land used by the pastoral community as grazing lands into agro-farming to enhance their revenue and to meet the requirement in their motherly State. Naturally, expanding agro-farming colonial masters increased the Colonialist revenue. In this connection, in various parts of the country, Waste Land Rules were enacted. Grazing land plots were declared as cultivation land plots and the same were given to the selected individuals. Grazing grounds of pastoralists were declared Wasteland (An area of land that cannot be used for agriculture purpose).It was resulted in a decline in Pastoralism.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover the forest Acts were enacted in the different provinces in the nineteenth century. In accordance with such Acts pasture land were declared as “reserved forest”, no pastoralist was allowed to access to the forest in those declared forest land. Similarly, some forests were classified as “Protected forest”. Although “customary grazing rights” were granted to the pastoralists in the so called “protected forests” but with sharp regulations in regards to their movement.<sup>54</sup>They were charged the permit fee for the entry in these forests and the time of entry and departure in the forest was highly specified. As much they were now prevented from entering into many forests those that earlier were used for valuable forage for their cattle. In

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<sup>51</sup> Fratkin, Elliot, Pastoralism Governance and Development Issues Annual Review of Anthropology, 1997, Vol.26, pp.231 , Annual Reviews, <http://www.Jstor.org/stable/2952522> Accessed on 22.09.2017.

<sup>52</sup>Fratkin Elliot, Pastoralism Governance and Development Issues, p.232.

<sup>53</sup>Anjanwagner,*The Gaddi Beyond Pastoralism:Making place in the Indian Himalayas*,Berghahn,Newyork,2013,p.55.

<sup>54</sup> Anja Wagner, p.56.

this way the forest acts informed by the colonial rulers affected and had changed the lifestyle of the pastoral community.

British colonial officials were often suspicious of nomadic people (A member of a community that moves with its animals from place to place). Therefore to expand revenue, they levied a tax on grazing land. Now Pastoralists were to pay taxes against every animal for using the grazing land.

### 2.3.8. RELUCTANT GOVERNMENT ON PASTORALISM

Pastoralism or the lifestyle of pastoralists has often been treated as less civilized one. It also counted as less productive.<sup>55</sup> Colonial ethnographer recorded that the colonial administration passed the Criminal Tribes Acts in 1871. Criminal Tribes Acts was enacted by the British India year 1871. Under this acts ethnic group in India were defined as” addicted to the systematic commission of non bailable offences. This act was specially enacted to restrict their movement under this act, including pastoralists; many communities were termed as Criminal Tribes. Members of such those communities were classified criminal by birth.

The Pastoral community of Himalayan has been the victim of social exclusion in the various policies. Lack of the opportunity of participation in decision making and ignorance to their due rights and status have seriously marginalized these communities. Mistaken and panicky perception and policy regarding the environmental security have caused negative consequences on pastoralists in the Himalayan region.<sup>56</sup> J. Ives Stated that:

“The governmental policies on conservation and base the famous theory of Himalayan degradation which assumes a threat of disastrous floods for the population of the Indo Gangetic plain, as the result of overgrazing of the Himalayan slopes and massive soil erosion.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Vasant k.Saberwal, *Pastoral politics: shepherds, Bureaucrats, and conservation in the western Himalaya*, Oxford university press, 1999, p.246.

<sup>56</sup> Jack Ives, Beyond UNCED (United Nations Conference On Environment and Development): A Strategic Plan of Action, in *Himalaya the journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, Vol.13, No: 1, 1993, p. 27.

<sup>57</sup> J.Ives, p.27.



#### 2.4. SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND PASTORALISM

The literature on Pastoralism in Africa, Asia, and India replete with accounts of the difficulties that pastoralists have been facing in these parts of the world i.e. sustaining Pastoralism environments. Despite the fact that this is the oldest occupation and tradition which enhances the socio-economic means of livelihood. Pastoralism is the victim of governmental reluctance, and due to the various policies initiated by the governments have been one of the causes of suffering to the existing Pastoralists. Vijay Paul Sharma Stated that these policies related to natural resources and its protections have adverse impacts on it. However, today they feel alienated and excluded.<sup>58</sup>

Pastoralism is at a critical juncture or in severe crisis globally. Such crises were both as a result of natural constraints and manmade crisis and also the product of internal and external influences. Issues of the pastoral community have been completely ignored or at a very little level efforts have been paid to empower and to allow their participation in their own development process. The concerns of the Pastoral community and the pastoral regions of the world have not been properly well documented by far. There are rarely any pastoral development policies officially. Most often the forest policy, Parks and wildlife sanctuary acts, agriculture policies and environment policies are often designed to victimize the existence of the pastoral community.<sup>59</sup> Looking from the prism and perspective of social exclusion, it is noticeable easily that the pastoralists were being excluded socially. A political theory of social exclusion shows that they could as a result of economic transformation. If we look at the course of Pastoralism since colonial period to contemporary period of globalization world we can easily understand that pastoralist has become 'subject to marginalization, discrimination and deprivation. They are being considered as backward, barbaric, uncivilized and their occupation as irreverent'.<sup>60</sup>

According to Amartya Sen exclusion are namely economic and political and social exclusion. Poverty, income disparity, wage differences and access and control of productive resource etc are understood as economic exclusion. Caste hierarchies, ethnicity, religion, class stratification etc., are on the centre of Social Exclusion.<sup>61</sup> It focuses on the lives and intrinsic human rights

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<sup>58</sup>Vijay Paul Sharma, Ilse Kohler-Rollefson, and John Morton, '*Pastoralism in India; A scoping study*, p.41.

<sup>59</sup> V.Sharma, Rollefson, p.41.

<sup>60</sup> Sharma, Rollefson and Morton, p.42.

<sup>61</sup> Amartya sen, *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny*, Social Development, Office of Environment and Social Development, Asian Development Bank, p.10.

of poor, not just their lack of income. Role of imbalanced social relation and exclusion of certain groups are the central concerns of Social Exclusion.<sup>62</sup>

Through the prism of Sen's Framework of exclusion, the issue of Exclusion of pastoralist can be easily understood. The colonial administration in Africa and Asia began to promote the commercial farming with the advent of industrial revolution, in Europe. With this, the Forest Service was established in connection to manage the forest. But these policies of the policymakers directly or indirectly affected the forest dwellers, including the pastoral community. Communities directly dependent upon the forest output were forced to give up traditional means of livelihood as due to the irresponsible policies of the government. Thousands of forest dwellers including the pastoral community fell into poverty.<sup>63</sup>

United Nations' Conference on Human Environment, 1997<sup>64</sup> and, the report of the World Bank 1992 announced the marriage between carving for development and concern for the environment. In this process, the poor were identified as the agent of environmental degradation.<sup>65</sup> In concerns about these reports and the conferences, it came with the notion and effect of "sustainable development". As a convergence of it, a new wave of the state intervention, political governance, and regulation emerged in the third world countries in the name of planet protection. Consequently, the tribal lifestyle and peasantry, as well as Pastoralism that have been practiced for centuries for their survival in harmony with the nature of sustainable, were ignored.<sup>66</sup> In this process, pastoralists were being excluded socially, economically and politically.

The relation between Pastoralists, government, and developers thus come close to institutionalized dishonesty. Most of the governments depended on the pastoral sector in regards to milk and meat products to feed urban population but, such governments often were unwilling to pay attention towards the concerns of the pastoral community. Except for

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<sup>62</sup> Amartya sen ,p.10.

<sup>63</sup> Amartya Sen,p.11.

<sup>64</sup> The Brundtland Report was primarily concerned with securing a global equity, redistributing resources towards poorer nation with encouraging their growth. This report also highlighted three fundamental development: environment protection, economic growth and social equity.

<sup>65</sup> Anjan Chakrabati, 'Transhumance, livelihood and Sustainable Development and Conflict between Formal institution and Communal Governance: An Evaluative Note on East Himalayan State of Sikkim, India', *International Conference on Social Science and social Science and Humanity*: Singapore IACSIT press,2011,p.133.

<sup>66</sup> Anjan Chakrabati, ,p.133.

services, nothing a kind of concern been paid was notice to recognize the contribution of Pastoral community in the nation-building.

Most of the succeeding Governments time and again often dealt the pastoralists with violence and coercion. Members of the Pastoral community were compelled to live with a sense of being neglected and marginalized from main stream of government administration. Despite this sense of marginalization, and hostile attitude to the community avoided larger conflict in manifesting their alienation of. Hence relations between the state and pastoralists thus tended to be 'confrontational' at the best of times.<sup>67</sup>

By nature of profession, the Pastoralists mostly depended on the natural resources, particularly for fodder and water. Their dependence on the natural resources was institutionalized through a variety of social and cultural mechanism such as religion, folklore and traditions. When the government assumed control of natural resources, these mechanisms had become defunct, and a radical reorientation of existing patterns of resources had taken place, including a transition from collective to individual's use of resources.<sup>68</sup>

## 2.5. PASTORALISM IN ASSAM

Assam is found to have a deep history of Pastoralism. Assam had it different Identity as greater Kamrup, Pragjyotishpur and Ahom kingdom prior of becoming an integral part of free India. Assam has been inhabited by sets communities like Koch, Mech, Miri, Missing, Garo, Tai-Ahom, Gorkha etc. Historically the mode of livelihood had been jhum-cultivation (shifting cultivation), cattle-rearing (cattle herding), fishing etc. As in other part of the world, from time immemorial, Pastoralism has been one of the major traditional occupations, the source of livelihood for the section of peoples. Pastoralism is a self- sufficient and sustainable in nature. Even during the initial days of colonial rule, cultivation/farming and Pastoralism has been identified as the crucial mode of earning a livelihood. Particularly, the Darrang district of Assam used to have a crucial role in Pastoralism prior to the advent of colonial rule. The giant districts of Kamrupa-Pragjyotishpura kingdom that stands on the lap of the mighty Himalayas shares deep-rooted history of Pastoralism starting from the foothills of Himalaya. With the arrival of the Ahom rulers, the district on the based /valley of the giant Brahmaputra, Pastoralism had been promoted for the better economic and health of the Ahom state and the

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<sup>67</sup>Blench and MacDonald, *The origin and Development of African Livestock; Archaeology, Genetics, Linguistic and Ethnography* Blench, p.33.

<sup>68</sup>Bhasin Veena, *Himalayan Ecology: and social organization of Gaddis in Himachal Pradesh*, Kamal Raj Enterprise, New Delhi, p.22.

common masses. Even the colonial policymakers had given importance to agriculture and Pastoralism and, had formulated policies for the same cause in 1886 under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act (ALRRA) of 1886.<sup>69</sup>

It is to be noted that the name Darrang was derived from Dourang which means Lilabhum (playground) of Gods. According to Dineswar Sarma, the word 'Darrang' came from Dwarrang which mean gate, as there was a direct entry to Bhutan and from there to Nepal. The District of Darrang has been created with effect from July 1983 converting the erstwhile subdivision of Mangaldoi. The land which is now known as Darrang District was included in the Hindu kingdom of Kamrupa as mentioned in Mahabharata.<sup>70</sup> The old district of Darrang has been the home to the largest number of herdsman since the middle of the nineteenth century. The Darrang district of Assam had a crucial role in Pastoralism during the Kamrupa-Pragjyotishpura kingdom, Ahom kingdom and even the colonial administration.

Based on the progress Revenue Report of Assam 1919-1920, Tejimala Gurung stated that the pastoralists had established considerable colonies in Darrang district.<sup>71</sup> The colonial authorities were puzzled as to why the graziers preferred this particular district for settlement despite the fact that there were other large areas for cultivation. The reasons cited were due to the vast expanse in the greenery dense forest and hills, an abundance of land and the 'chars' (small island) of the mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries with lush green vegetation.<sup>72</sup>

The ecosystems in Assam historically, the people, especially the villagers in particular practiced a mixed livelihood obtaining the sources of income from agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and other tertiary occupations. Livestock such as sheep, buffalo, cow, and goats had been grazing in the forests and meadows of the state. Animals rearing play a bigger role as it was a multiple dimensional activity in the state. Livestock in Assam not only contributed to the livelihood of the people, being the main income generation activity, but also

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<sup>69</sup>Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, *Buffer Ethnic Identity: A Case of Gorkhas in Chirang District, Bodoland Territorial Council, Assam*, an unpublished dissertation submitted at Department of Peace and Conflict Studies Management, Sikkim University for the award of M. Phil degree, 2013, pp.29-30.

<sup>70</sup> Retrieved from URL: [http://darrang.gov.in/darrang\\_files/dist.htm](http://darrang.gov.in/darrang_files/dist.htm) on 10/04/2016

<sup>71</sup> Aman Passah, 'Gorkha's in Meghalaya Diaspora and Identity' in A.C Sinha(ed.), *The Gorkhas in Northeast India; a community in search of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, Indus, 2003, p.118.

<sup>72</sup> Sajal Nag, *Fei-isation of the Nepalis of Northeast India*, p.186.

assist in agriculture and help to meet the increasing demand for protein-rich food items such as milk, egg, and meats.<sup>73</sup>

During the colonial rule pastoralists who had started establishing *Goath*<sup>74</sup> in the forest practiced in the region a semi-nomadic life with horizontal and vertical movement, depending on the animals. Apart from construction and maintenance of cattle shed, fuelwood and fodder requirements were met by intense cutting and logging of nearby trees. Agro-Pastoralism slowly evolved in the region. One of the first cattle sheds was introduced by the King, Under the *Patta* system (Patta system rent or Licence of Certificate for grazing animals in the forest) where the headers had to pay rent for grazing animals in the forest. Apart from this, forest guards were also introduced known as '*chaprashi*' their main duty was to look after the forest resource and check the *patta* of the pastoralists. But during the Colonial rule, headers had to pay rent for grazing animals in the forest, to the colonial administrator and the rent was varied from animals to animal.

In Assam pastoralism has been known as *gothwala* (Shepherd who herds the cattle) or *Khuttiwala system*. The *gothwala* system was divided into various types on the basis of cattle reared such as *Bhedigoathwala* (sheep herding/rearing), *Gaigoathwal* (cow herding/rearing) a *vhaisegoathwal* (Buffalo herding/rearing,) and so forth.

## 2.6. COLONIAL POLICY AND PASTORALISM IN DARRANG

Dominant pastoral community in the Assam region, particularly in Darrang, historically, found to be Nepali speakers. The British colonial power encouraged the community in Assam with a view to exploiting the land and forest for economic purposes. The discovery of 'Magical drink' (Tea) was the reason enough to resettle Gorkhas in the fashion of labour, coolie along with the tribal community of Chottanagpur since or during the 1830s.<sup>75</sup> By the thirties of the nineteenth century along with the annexation of Brahmaputra valley, the colonial masters had realized the usefulness of the Nepali speakers to further extend colonial hegemony in Assam. As Imdad Hussain stated:

“One of the virtues early recognized communities was their capacity for colonization. After recognition of virtue of partiality, the colonial master had

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<sup>73</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, p.30.

<sup>74</sup> In order to accompany livestock in the search of food inside forest, pastoralist built temporary shelter, locally known as *Goath*.

<sup>75</sup> Kaushik Ghosh, *A Market for Aboriginality: Primitivism and race Classification in the Indentured Labour Market of Colonial India*, p. 8.

begun to employ the Gorkhas in agriculture for economic purpose through agro-industry.”<sup>76</sup>

From the report of Captain Francis Jenkins and Lieutenant Robert Pemberton cited in Imdad Hussain’s article, the colonial interest in land use for agro-economy through Gorkhas is understandable, and according to such report,

“An increase to our cultivation and villages is beyond all doubt of the greatest importance to the present as well as future prosperity of this barren province, and might be accomplished by admitting monied speculating community to hold lands on a long lease and encouraging Gurkhas and Manipuries and others who may feel inclined to colonize for the inhabitants are by no means prolific.”<sup>77</sup>

Imdad Hussain observes that this suggestion was not made randomly. Citing the report of FSC 15 October 1832: No 114, by Captain Francis Jenkins and Lieutenant Robert Pemberton, he added that it was with this very end in view that David Scott had some years earlier authorized Captain Neufville to grant to Gorkhas who had brought their families with them land at the very moderate rate of eight annas per pura<sup>78</sup> annually. The Gorkhas, the Nepali speakers readily availed this offer and the magistrate who provided them with the land later reported that “there was an extensive village of Goorkhas (sic) established with flourishing Dhan (Paddy) on a spot which before was a jungle.”<sup>79</sup>

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, apart from historic Nepali speakers in the region, the colonial government encouraged migration of certain community from Sikkim, Darjeeling, Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri of West Bengal, the erstwhile Bengal Doar (the entry point) gate of Bhutan and the joining of Bhutan’s Assam Dooars. Migration from Nepal (though by then, the recruitment of Gorkhas from Nepal was discouraged or somehow prohibited, however migration from Nepal for other purpose was unrestricted) led to the growth of a sizeable Gorkha population in the forest areas. By this time, the Gorkha cadres in the colonial army also started to retire and settled in the nearby areas of their cantonments. During the last decade of the same century, according to census 1901 cited by Tejimala Gurung, Assam had a population

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<sup>76</sup> Imdad Hussain, ‘Soldiers and Settlers: The Recruitment of Gorkhas’, in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba (eds.) *The Nepalis of Northeast India, A community in search of India Identity India*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 2003, reprinted in 2007, p. 67.

<sup>77</sup> Imdad Hussain, p.68.

<sup>78</sup> The term pura is used as a unit of land measurement in Assam, for detail see Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, Surjeet publication, New Delhi Sixth Indian Reprint, 2011, p.78.

<sup>79</sup> Hussain, *Soldiers and Settlers: The Recruitment of Gorkhas*, p. 67.

of 20,193 Nepali speakers.<sup>80</sup> This Gorkha population was highly engaged in the cultivation and predominantly in cattle rearing due to their traditional attachment to this profession.

The Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1898 Stated that many of the Gorkha Sepoys after their retirement settled down in Assam , preferred cattle grazing to cultivation.<sup>81</sup> Citing the Progress Report of Forest Administration in Province of Assam, 1892-1893, in this regard, Tejimala Gurung stated that in the unclassed forests, the ryots were allowed unlimited grazing land free of payment for their plough and domestic cattle. However, Nepalis who reared cattle for the dairy purpose were charged for grazing privileges, excluding the Gorkhas of rest of colonial India, absolutely from the Gorkhas who migrated from Nepal and who obtained a ready and lucrative rate for the dairy products in the numerous tea gardens of the province.<sup>82</sup> In the year 1892-93, 13,025 buffaloes and 1162 cows paid grazing fees amounting Rs. 6772.<sup>83</sup>

The colonial administration started to notice the increasing number of cattle in grazing forest area and speculated the possible revenue from those cattle. Especially when the Nepali speaking graziers started to migrate to Assam from Jalpaiguri areas of West Bengal due to the rise in grazing fee on cattle,<sup>84</sup> the administration of Assam came with a new regulation for the professional graziers as effective from July 1, 1917.<sup>85</sup> As per the new regulation, annually Rs. 3 was fixed per buffalo and 6 annas for other horned cattle. By the time the regulation came into effect, there were already 42,000 and 86,325 buffaloes in 1915 and 1920 respectively.<sup>86</sup>

The regulation came equally effective on all the Nepali speakers of the valley irrespective of whether they were from Nepal or from any part of colonial India. It may be noted that the grazing fee was very unpopular among the graziers. In return for assistance in forest fire protection, reserved forests in the region were left open partly for grazing of cattle owned by Nepali speakers.

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<sup>80</sup> Gurung , *Human Movement and the colonial state; The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire*, p. 172.

<sup>81</sup> Report of Land Revenue Administration of Assam, 1913-1914, cited in Gurung, p.178.

<sup>82</sup> Gurung , p.173.

<sup>83</sup> Bhandari , *Evolution and Growth of the Nepali Community in Northeast India*, p.107.

<sup>84</sup> *Report on the Administration of Assam 1912-13* indicated that when the colonial administration in Bengal rose in the rate of graziers' fee in Jalpaiguri and its adjoining areas in West Bengal, large numbers of professional Nepali graziers were migrated to Assam from those areas.

<sup>85</sup> *Report on the Administration of Assam 1916-17*, Cited in Tejimala Gurung, 2003, p.172.

<sup>86</sup> *Report on the Administration of Assam 1912-13*, Cited in Gurung, p. 173.

Soon after the tax was levied on grazing areas and cattle, the articulated youth of the pastoral community could realize the attitude of the colonial ruler towards them. When the Nepali speakers, the dominant pastoral community started to take an anti-colonial turn by participating in the process of 'Indianization', the colonial administration conspired to evict graziers from the settled region since 1904.<sup>87</sup> The colonial administration assimilated the pastoral community by burning down pastoral settlements in Darrang, and other areas in Brahmaputra valley. For instance, in 1920, foresters burnt the house of the graziers of Kaziranga as an action of defying the notice given to vacate against disobedience to a notice to vacate within 24 hours.<sup>88</sup>

The realization of the colonial rule by the emerging youth from the community led to anti-colonial feeling and started to raise their voice against the colonial administration in the valley, especially with the Assam Association which had already started the anti-colonial moment in the valley. The Assam Association, which had changed its name and virtually turned into a Congress platform in its Tezpur Session, had special and the last meeting at Jorhat with Chabilal Upadhyaya in Chair in April 1921.<sup>89</sup> Besides condemning the recent eviction of the graziers from the Kaziranga Forest Reserves and police atrocities, the meeting also discussed to hold the Non-Co-operation programme and organized mass movement under Chabilal Upadhyaya who took the leadership of the Nepali speaking community in the Non-Co-operation Movement in Assam.<sup>90</sup>

Overall from the above discussions, one can conclude that the practice of herding was a primary economic activity for the society. The Pastoralists later known as the grazier community of Darrang district of Assam preferred for this settlement because of the fact that there was a large area for grazing, cattle rearing and cultivation.

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<sup>87</sup> Bhandari , *Evolution and Growth of the Nepali Community in Northeast India*, p.108.

<sup>88</sup> Nag , *Fe-isation of the Nepalis of Northeast India*, p. 184.

<sup>89</sup> Bhandari, *Evolution and Growth of the Nepali Community in Northeast India* ,p.109.

<sup>90</sup> Bhandari ,p.109.



## CHAPTER-3

### SOCIO-CULTURAL CONDITIONS OF THE PASTORALISTS IN ASSAM

It is well known that individuals live in immediate physical and social settings. Society is made up of individuals, a group of families etc. It is always difficult on the part of the individuals to stay away from the chain of society although they are born free. The immediate physical and social setting as social conditions put an impact on individuals' life as they are the prime unit of society. Society is the result of never-ending change and evolution, the changing phases of it conditions the lifestyle and the culture of living of individual within it. It is undesirable to deny that individuals are the change maker of society and again, the changing society changes the individuals shaping with the social as well as other conditions. As change is inevitable, the units of the society often grow to shape and cop up themselves with the changing social conditions. Changes appear with positive as well as negative impacts.

The Pastoral community of Assam which includes the majority of Gorkhas, the Nepali speakers also has been witnessing changes in changing social conditions. This chapter tries to attempt to explore the social conditions of the pastoral communities, particularly the Gorkhas, the Nepali speakers of Assam. It is also an attempt to understand to examine how the present socio-cultural scenario as well other historical aspects have brought changes and reshaping their socio-cultural condition of the pastoralists.

#### 3.1. SOCIAL FORMATION OF GORKHA PASTORALISTS IN ASSAM.

Human history in no point of time was permanent and stable. The human mobility was its integral part. From the time of inception, human being moved from one place to another place in search of food, shelter and better livelihood for survival. Apart from the prospect of better livelihood as the Network theory says the interpersonal ties of kinship bonds, cultural affinities, religious similarity and shared community origins also play the crucial role to encourage people to migrate from the place one to another.<sup>91</sup>

With the emergence of the nation-state system, the imaginary political lines started to be drawn on the geographical surface in the name of national border fragmenting the geographical surface into various nation states. Mobility and relation between the people of two different

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<sup>91</sup> Gibernau, Monteserrat and Johan Rex, *The Ethnicity reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1997, p.35.

sovereign political territories became dependable on the relation and national policy of such sovereign units. National borders of nation-states have grown as the source to bifurcate historical commonality into the constitutional identity of the culturally parallel community and, it also became a source of discrimination of the constitutional entitlements of citizens. Once the national borders between the sovereign entities are defined, the homogeneous cultural units started to be fragmented because of the national borderline and the majority group of one cultural unit as insiders in one end of the border is alleged as the outsider in another end of the border.<sup>92</sup>

At this juncture, the pastoral communities of Assam, particularly the Gorkha pastoralists of Assam have been a topic of discussion and the Gorkha-Assam relation was in no point of time had been new. From time immemorial, India and Nepal have shared similar ‘geographical’, ‘historical’, ‘cultural’, ‘social’ and ‘economic’ sphere. From the mythological narratives to modern history, the relation between two nations is clearly reflective. Both the countries had witnessed the mobility of people from one to another end. It was almost impossible to control and regulate the movement of people for which the existed social relations, cultural exchanges (pilgrimages, festivities, fairs, etc.) and trade and commerce were the capital reasons.<sup>93</sup> Apart from the common people interaction and mobility, the matrimonial relations between the royal courts, colonial legacies to postcolonial foreign policy strategies between two nations have considerable position on such relations since timeless past centuries.<sup>94</sup>

It is more reflective in the context of the Gorkha of Assam. Assam has unforgotten phases on the premise of pastoral community, particularly the Gorkha’ history in regard to the relationship with Nepal. Both the Gorkhas of Assam and the people Nepal have a close bond of relation since time immemorial. Social, Cultural and phenotypical relation to royal matrimonial ties and colonial facts, there had been ample evidence of the Assam-Nepal

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<sup>92</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, ‘The Flipside of Indo-Nepal Friendship and Peace Treaty 1950: (Re) evaluating Impacts on Gorkha of Assam’ in *Marginalized/Subaltern Voices and Beyond: Issue and Challenges in North-East India Federalism*” edited by Jyotiraj Pathak, New Delhi: Excel India Publishers, 2014,p.51.

<sup>93</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, Mapping the History of Gorkhas in pre-Independence North-East India: A Special reference of Bodoland Territorial council (BTC), Assam in *Journal of Social Sciences Bodoland University*,JOSSBU, Kokrajhar, Assam,p.22.

<sup>94</sup>Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, *The Flipside of Indo-Nepal Friendship and Peace Treaty 1950: (Re) evaluating Impacts on Gorkha of Assam*, p.52.

connection. The historical phases of matrimonial relations between royal courts of Gorkhas in Nepal and Assam were often highly referred evidence in the history.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, the British colonial administration added an attestable definition in such relations. The colonial administration promoted the Gorkha recruitment to serve colonial expansionist policy.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, this policy was not restricted only in the recruitment of the Gorkhas in imperial soldiers only, but the aspiration of economic enhancement encouraged settlement of the Gorkhas in Assam during the colonial age.<sup>97</sup> In post-colonial days also India had been trying to maintain cordial relation with Nepal. After independence, relation with Nepal became the part of India's foreign policy with its neighbors. In this regard, Indo-Nepal friendship and peace treaty 1950 was visualized as the need of time for the revision and betterment of bilateral

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<sup>95</sup> In The Linguistic Survey of India, Grierson wrote that the Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloids with yellow complexion came to be known among vedic Aryans as 'Kiratas'. Their presence is attested through literacy evidence by about 1000 BC. In the Mahabharata, the historical core of which probably goes back to the 10th century BC, there are suggestions that the Sino-Tibetans or Kiratas belong to the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. There is also mention of the Nepalis of Assam as Kiratas, who were known to the Hindu world as a group of people whose original home was in the Himalayan slopes and in the mountains of the east. The presence of Nepalis in north-east India (earlier Assam) is historical and their role in unification and economic development of this region is very crucial. According to T B Subba, "The ancient Kamarupa kingdom is, for instance, known to have its boundaries extended right up to eastern Nepal as late as 1520; the two Kamrupa kings- Nidhwaj and Narayan had married the princess of Nepal...." Studies carried out by social scientists and scholars like Srikant Dutt, A C Sinha, T B Subba, Lopita Nath, Lokraj Baral, B C Upreti, etc, reveal that there had been marital relationships between the people of Nepal and Assam from the period of Harsha-Varmadeva (730-750 AD). For the detail, please check, Monimala Devi in *Economic History of Nepalis migration and settlement in Assam*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 42, No. 29, 2007, p. 35.

<sup>96</sup> The colonial face of Gorkha mobility in Assam began in early 19th century, 1817 to be exact, when their direct contact with the region took place with the deployment of the Gurkhas in the Sylhet Operation, as part of the Cuttack region. The Cuttack Legion came to be known as the "Assam Light Infantry" after its permanent location in Assam and consisted mainly of Hindustanis and Gurkhas. These Nepali sepoys continued to constitute a floating population following their respective customs, usages and traditions. The recruitment of Nepali people to the British army dates back to the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814, followed by the Treaty of Seagauli in 1816 that opened the borders between the two countries. The treaty also facilitated free recruitment of Gurkhas in a big way as the British found them loyal, hardworking, best fitted for hilly terrains and comparatively cheaper than the Hindustani soldiers. In reality though, recruitment of Gurkhas into the British army was not an easy task. In the "Nepali Durbar", for a period of 70 years right from Bhimsen Thapa to Ranudip Singh, all the prime ministers were against the idea of recruitment of their subjects by the Indian army. Despite strong restrictions and legal punishments however, Nepalis continued to migrate to India with their families on the instigation of the British government in India. see K.K Muktan, *The Legendary Gorkhas*, Spectrum Publishers, Guwahati .2001.

<sup>97</sup> The Nepalese were just the people to fill of British and so they were attracted in large numbers to the forests, roads, construction sites, mines, fields, plantations and so on. Expanding economic activities, particularly with the advent of commercial cultivation of tea, construction of railways, dairy farming and commercial plantation of sugar cane, establishment of sawmills, etc, under colonial patronage, accelerated Nepali migration into Assam. Retired Nepali soldiers in India were engaged by the British in these non-military works. These immigrants were subsequently engaged in low profile jobs like guards, peons, 'chowkidars', bodyguards, coolies. see, S.L Baruah, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi ,2003, p. 39.

relation.<sup>98</sup> But since the days of inking the treaty, it had become a source of grievances among the indigenous Gorkha generation in Assam. The Gorkha community in the state has the argument that it has been a tool to erase the centuries-old or to say immemorial history and their attachment in the state.

Pastoralists had been one of the important sources of India since the age of Rig-Veda. Pastoral societies are characterized by the domestication of the animals.<sup>99</sup> Being Graziers and the dairymen, the pastoralists in the beginning were progressively more as they mixed towards to inhabit as agriculture and also cultivated in several districts. The pastoralists have settled in almost all the districts of Assam though they were mostly intense in the districts of Sonitpur, Darrang, and Tinsukia. The majorities of them had settled in the rural areas and have taken up dairy farming and agriculture as their main occupation. On the basis of occupational work, the pastoral society has grouped into four divisions viz; (1) Soldiers, (2) dairy farmers, (3) agriculturalists and (4) labourers.<sup>100</sup> At present, a large bulk is of agriculturalists. During 1880s the pastoralists who started settling down were basically dairy farmers and the present Kaziranga sanctuary was mainly their grazing area. Generally it was the Gorkhas who were concerned mainly in cattle rearing and grazing as a profession.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.1.1. IN THE SPACE OF MYTHIC NARRATIVES

The mythological narrative convince that in ancient times, there was a greater territory called '*Jambu Dwipa*'<sup>102</sup> including the territories of undivided India, Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal. Mention may be found in narratives on the Vedic age that the tribes like 'Kirata'-who inhabited in the kingdom of greater Himalaya including the larger part of the present Northeast region.<sup>103</sup> The Aryan people used to go the Himalaya for 'Tapashya' (meditation) for the realization of life and self and for greater development of the human kind and gradually became the inhabitants of the mighty Himalaya. Similarly, there was uninterrupted human

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<sup>98</sup> The Indo-friendship treaty was signed between India and Nepal Government in 1950, recognizing as the the ancient ties which have happily existed between the two contries., agree mutually to acknowledge and respect the complete Sovereignty, territorial integrity and Independence of each other.

<sup>99</sup> Shereen Ratnagar, *The other Indians Essays on Pastoralists and pre-historic Tribal People*, p.19.

<sup>100</sup> Bisnual Upadhaya, *Asame Nepaliharu*, Behali, Sonitpur, Assam, p.58.

<sup>101</sup> L.P Upadhaya, 'contribution of the Assamese-Nepali in Agicultural development' in Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies Assam (eds.), '*History and culture of Assamese-Nepali, Guwahati; Narayani Handique Historical Institute, 2009, p.156.*

<sup>102</sup> Mythologically, Indian subcontinent is called Jambu Dwipa

<sup>103</sup> Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, p.86.

interaction and the pastoral community was freely moving from one place to another with their herds.<sup>104</sup>

The noted linguist, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee asserted that the Tibeto Burman speaking Mongoloids with yellow complexion came to be known among the Vedic Aryan as Kiratas, whose presence is attested through literary evidence of about 1000 BC.<sup>105</sup> There are suggestions that the Sino-Tibetan known as the 'Kiratas' belong to the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. Ahom, Khamti, Aka, Dafla, Miri, and the sub-ethnic communities from the greater ethnic Gorkha community like Rai, Limbu, Gurung, and Magar are Kiratas of the region.<sup>106</sup> A Pastoral community like Gorkhas, the Nepali speakers communities like Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, and Dhimal along with the greater Bodo community predominantly were moving across the Brahmaputra and Koshi. The narratives majorly based on mythology strive to validate that there was an interaction of people in the age of space and 'Jambu Dwipa'.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.1.2. KAMRUPA AND ITS STRETCHED TERRITORY

The greater Kamrupa kingdom has affirmed that an interaction among the people of present India's northeast and Gorkhas. History of Kamrupa reads that it had a territory comprising large parts of present Nepal and Bhutan.

Yogini Tantra describes Kamrupa in the following way:

“From the mountain Kancana in Nepal up to the confluence of the Brahmaputra from Karotoya to Dikkarasini the northern limit in the mouth Kanya, in the west the Karatoya, in the east the Diksu.<sup>108</sup>

Tika Bhattarai says that some Kings of the Kamrupa during their reign brought several families of the priests of larger Gorkha community and encouraged them to settle permanently in Assam providing them revenue free land. Bhattarai stated that among those families, the family of Bhaskar Acharya was assigned to serve as the priest in Kamakhya temple and most

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<sup>104</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, 'The History of Socio-cultural and Political Interaction between the People of India's Northeast with Nepal and Bhutan' (Re) visited in *INDIA'S NORTEAST AND BEYOND: Governance, Development and Security* (eds.) Nawal K. Paswan, New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2017, p. 311.

<sup>105</sup> P.Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese 1800-1950*, p.18.

<sup>106</sup> P.Bhandari, p.18.

<sup>107</sup> Tikendra kumar Chhetry, p.312.

<sup>108</sup> Arup Jyoti Das, *The history of Kamatapur* [Online Web] accessed on May 13, 2017, URL:

<http://www.kamatapur.com/node/4>

of these families who were encouraged to settle permanently had served in the Kamakhya temple and were known as Lal Panda (Red Priest),<sup>109</sup> Some of these families are still known as Nepali Pandas and many have forgotten their language and have assimilated into local Assamese culture and society.<sup>110</sup> This gesture of human mobility and socio-cultural interaction among people not only encouraged the incursion of the Pastoralists with their cattle and itinerant huts but also aspired them to settle permanently. Ceasing the nomadic mode of life the pastoralists started to settle in the region where they could easily access the pasture land and fodder for their cattle.

### 3.1.3. SOVEREIGNTY AND GORKHAS

During the age of Koch kingdom it had the region received huge socio-cultural and political interaction among the people including the pastoral community. The politics of the region caused the political shift of large population in the region from one frontier to another and, it also encouraged the mobility of the pastoral community. This kingdom was consolidated since 1250 A.D.<sup>111</sup> The petty states of Bhuyan had started the consolidation of a number of petty states between Koch kingdom in the west and Chutiyas and Kacharis in the east. In reference to Bhuyan, Harka Bahadur Chhetri Atreya discussed that the Bhuyans were landlords of Nepali origin.<sup>112</sup> The community known as Bhuyan in Assamese society was from the Nepali origin (presently known as Gorkha) when they were establishing the petty state in medieval Assam since 1326 A.D.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> According to tradition of the Kamakhya temple in Brahmaputra bank in Guwahati, the priest of the temple use to wear the red costume coinciding with the belief of shaktipeeth (the religious place where devotees prayer for the power and strength), and because of their costume, they were/are called Lal Panda (the red priest)

<sup>110</sup> This is a section translated from Tika Bhattarai's *Assam ma Gorkhaliharuko Aagman rh Awdaan* (History of arrival and contribution of Gorkhas in Assam,2011,p.29.

<sup>111</sup>Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, Mapping the History of Gorkhas in pre-Independence North-East India: A Special reference of Bodoland Territorial council (BTC), Assam in *Journal of Social Sciences Bodoland University*,JOSSBU, Kokrajhar, Assam,p.26.

<sup>112</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, p.27.

<sup>113</sup>Tika Bhattarai in his article *Assam ma Gorkhali Haruko Aagman rh Awdaan* says that the statement was made by Jogdanand Goswami, the head of *Mayamara Satrah*, one of the oldest spiritual and religious institution of Assamese *Bhasnavite* (who followed and worship lord Bishnu, a Hindu deity). Goswami is suppose to have made a statement during the fourth triennial conference of *Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha* (highest literary institution of Gorkhas in Assam) held in March 2011 at Tingrai Charali, Dibrugarh, that the community who are known as *Bhuyan* in Assam are/were the descendants of Giri sub-community of Gorkhas. Brothers of king Harishingh Giri

These Bhuyans were known as Baro-Bhuyan (twelve chiefs altogether), ruled independently like zamindars as mentioned in the Persian language. The chiefs at the time of Muslim invasion united themselves and fought decisively and defeated their rival.<sup>114</sup> Bhuyans not only fought to protect their respective territories in time of need they turned to be the good ally of the Koch kingdom.<sup>115</sup> The split of Koch kingdom in 1581 eased the way for Mughal imperial design towards the region.

Though historical evidence is available about Mughals and their territory annexation of the Koch kingdom and their extension up to the north bank of Brahmaputra, mention is found only of the Southern part of the then Goalpara, the western end of present Assam.<sup>116</sup> In the event of these political upheavals and frontier overlapping, the Pastoral community, particularly belonging to Gorkha ethnic group received mobility across the state confronting and (re)designing the shape of the state and the frontiers.

#### 3.1.4. EMERGENCE OF BHUTAN AND GORKHA PASTORALISTS

The consolidation of Bhutan began under the leadership of a person named Shabdrung Nawang Namgyel.<sup>117</sup> In keeping with the assigned destiny, Namgyel soon established his authority over the still unconquered land presently known as Bhutan. He initiated a friendship treaty with the king of Gorkha state (presently a district in central Nepal) in 1624 A.D. Eventually the Gorkha king named Ram Shah dispatched some families of his subject where the majority of the Gorkha pastoralist were also included.<sup>118</sup>

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of Bhaktapur kingdom, a district of present Nepal they entered Assam via Koach Behar (*sic*) kingdom in 1326 A. D. Soon after they entered in Assam, they started to consolidate themselves as landlords and established petty states or feudal states named Tezpur, Lakshimpur, Dholpur, Narayanpur etc. Later, they assimilated into socio-cultural environment of Assam, known as *Bhuyan* the landlord in Assamese term. P. 48.

<sup>114</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, *Mapping the History of Gorkhas in pre-Independence North-East India: A Special reference of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), Assam*, p.23.

<sup>115</sup> Arup Jyoti Das, 'The history of Kamatapur' [Online Web] accessed on May 13, 2017, URL: <http://www.kamatapur.com/node/4>

<sup>116</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, *Buffer Ethnic Identity: A Case of Gorkhas in Chirang District, Bodoland Territorial Council, Assam*, p.29.

<sup>117</sup> He was a famous Tibetan Lama belong to the Drukpa sect, entered Bhutan having been forced out by his rivals.

<sup>118</sup> Shabdrung Nawang Namgyel wanted a chunk of population who could settle both in cold and hot areas keeping in view to settle population in southern part of the country as a inter mediatory between hill and plain areas of country and to protect specially the southern areas. For more details see , Chhetry The History of Socio-cultural

Responding the order of Ram Shah and request of Sandrup Nawang Namgyal , Bishnu Thapa made the Gorkha Pastoralists and subject to Gorkha kingdom to arrive at a newer land of Bhutan. They were considered as Bhutanese subjects assigned to ‘protect and enrich the Bhutanese territory’. That chunk of the population was prepared to settle in the Southern part of the state to fill up a shortage of manpower on the area as the ruling community of the state always preferred to stay in high altitude rather than in the southern hot areas adjoining the then Koch kingdom. The friendship Ram Shah of Gorkha kingdom and Sandrup Nawang Namgyal of Bhutan encouraged a new social synthesis at the frontiers of Bhutan, Nepal and Kingdoms of the then Koch, and Sikkim. <sup>119</sup>

The reign of king Shiva Singh Mall of Kathmandu during the 1640s recruited people to work in the “Dzongs” ( monasteries of Bhutan). Sandrup Nawang Namgyal not only encouraged the Gorkha settlement in his state but also maintained expansion of the state toward the southern border with the help of those Gorkhas challenging the occupation of Koch kingdom which was put together by Koch king Biswa Shingh and Nar Singh. <sup>120</sup> He started to occupy the areas adjoining the southern part of the foothills of Bhutan and gave the charge to Gorkhas in order to maintain the revenue and develop cattle rearing including, other services as well as protection of the land.

The successor of Namgyel also promoted the settlement of more Gorkhas families in the southern part of the country and continued the expansion of the state in the plain lowland areas of southern end of the country. With the strength of the growing Gorkha population, Bhutan attacked Koch kingdom in 1772 keeping the King and his brother in confinement. In the opinion of D.S. Bomjan, “the victory of Bhutan over the Koch Kingdom is certainly due to the combined strength of the army that constituted of Nepali (Gorkha) and Bhutanese subjects.”<sup>121</sup>

Bhutan with the help of settled Gorkha population had been maintaining its southern plain tract dividing it into several units called Dooars. And these Dooars were part of Shadrung’s rule and was administered by Subhas, a Gurkha ethnic group. <sup>122</sup> These Dooars were created mainly for the supply of food items and other materials that were not available in the high hills. People

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and Political Interaction between the People of India’s Northeast with Nepal and Bhutan’ (Re) visited in *INDIA’S NORTEAST AND BEYOND: Governance, Development and Security*, p .3.

<sup>119</sup>Menuka Gharelu udhyog ,*Bhutan: A Last shangrila without Human Rights*, Jhapa Nepal, 1993, p. 311.

<sup>120</sup> Chhetry,*Mapping the History of Gorkhas in Pre-Independence Northeast India*,p.27.

<sup>121</sup> Chhetry,p.28.

<sup>122</sup>Menuka Garhelu udhyog, *Bhutan: A Last shangrila without Human Rights* ,p.313.



from the plains and hills used barter system to exchange woolens, gold-dust, salt, musk, horses, chowries (yaks) and silk with an article such as food, oil, dried fish and coarse cotton cloth, or (silkworm) cocoons, etc.<sup>123</sup> For all these manual services, the pastoral community members were predominantly employed. Since all the Indo-Bhutan trade passed through the Dooars, they became the most valuable territories of Bhutan. Mentioned that there were ‘eighteen Dooars including seven in Assam and eleven in the present Indian state of West Bengal’.<sup>124</sup>

### 3.1.5. PASTORAL GORKHA SOCIETY IN COLONIAL POLICY BUFFER ZONE

The Bhutanese-Gorkha expedition and conquering the Koch kingdom (in Koch Behar) in 1772 was short lived. Bhutan was forced to restore back the kingdom to the king of Cooch Behar by releasing the king and his brother at the intervention of the British East India Company.<sup>125</sup>

D.S.Bomjan stated that:

“In 1773, during the rule of Dharmendra Narayan, the Koch Kingdom came under the rule of the British East India Company by virtue of a treaty. The East India Company agreed to drive away the Bhutiyas from the Kingdom. Thus the Kamrup Koch Kingdom became a princely state of British India.”<sup>126</sup>

The existence and growing power of the Gorkha with the warfare strategy in the region was perceived as a threat by the Company administration. It designed a policy to consolidate Gorkha population for Company purpose in the region. After Warren Hastings assumed the position of Governor General of India and following the adoption of the Regulating Act of 1773, the region came under the control of the British East India Company.<sup>127</sup> It was during

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<sup>123</sup> John Shinya Wary, ‘The Lost Bodos Diaspora’ in (eds) Brahma Rajendra Nath, *The Bodo, the mouthpiece of Bodo sahitya Sabha, 37 issues*, Kokrajhar, Assam, Narzary offset printers.,p.47.

<sup>124</sup> Interviewed with Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, on 24.02.2018, 3.30, Tezpur .

<sup>125</sup> D.S Bomjan, *Darjeeling-Dooars, People and Place under, Bengal’s Neo-Colonial Rule*, Darjeeling, Bikash Jana Sahitya Kendra, 2008, P.311.

<sup>126</sup> D.S.Bomjan, p. 312. and ([www.kamatapur.com](http://www.kamatapur.com))

<sup>127</sup> Chhetry, *Ethnic Identity: A Case of Gorkhas in Chirang District, Bodoland Territorial Council, Assam*, p.29.

Company rule that the next phase of Gorkhas mobility at Bhutan began with the mobility of the majority of pastoralists.<sup>128</sup>

The East India Company, although it was not successful at the initial stage however the company was successful at the third attempt as the treaty of Segowlee was concluded in 1815. Taking the advantage of the Burmese invasion in Assam during (1821-24), the company entered into Brahmaputra valley (Assam) with a bunch of Gorkhas soldiers who were recruited through the Treaty of Segowlee (1815). The Burmese were pushed back by the British East India Company which resulted in the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. With this Treaty, the Assam Valley was brought under the colonial valley of British East India Company.<sup>129</sup> The triumphant concert of the Gurkhas (sic) in the Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826) opened the door to recruit the Gorkhas in all the branches of imperial forces and their settlement in the North Eastern region.<sup>130</sup> Apart from recruiting as the soldiers, Gorkhas were allotted land to set up village to grow *dhan* (paddy) and domesticate cattle. Further, with the discovery of 'Magical drink', British colonial administrators encouraged Gorkhas to settle during the 1830s.

<sup>131</sup>

Gradually the colonial administration began to annex the Dooars in 1828 and, in 1838 Captain R.B. Pemberton led a mission to the Bhutan winter capital Punakha. By 1841, all the Assam Dooars were annexed by the British.<sup>132</sup> It cleared the way for the Company supremacy over all the Dooars of Bhutan in Assam side. By then, there were seven Dooars in Assam viz., Boree Goomah, Kalling (Darrang district, Shurkolla, Baska, Chirang, Chapkahama and Bijni (Kamrup district). Along with these Dooars, Gorkhas who settled in erstwhile Dooars of Bhutan also came as the part of western Assam of the Company administration.<sup>133</sup> As a result of this instance the greater part of the region fell under the company and the entire Gorkha population too came under colonial administration. Apart from the families who had been

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<sup>128</sup> Chhetry, 'The History of Socio-cultural and Political Interaction between the People of India's Northeast with Nepal and Bhutan' (Re) visited in *INDIA'S NORTEAST AND BEYOND: Governance, Development and Security*, p.3.

<sup>129</sup> Tek Narayan Upadhaya, and Roma Adhikari, *Contribution of the Nepalis of Northeast India to the Development of Nepali Literature*, p.148.

<sup>130</sup> Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Nepalese 1800-1950*, p.22.

<sup>131</sup> Kaushik Ghosh, 'A Market for Aboriginality: Primitivism and race Classification in the Indentured Labour Market of Colonial India, 1999, p. 8.

<sup>132</sup> Hutt, Michael., *Unbecoming Citizens*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003, p.18.

<sup>133</sup> Hemant Rimal, 'Paschim Assam ma hami: Hijo, Aaj rh Bholi', in *Usha Nepali Sahitya Samittee*, Shantipur, vol. 2, No. 4, 1974, p 15.

living in Assam prior to the arrival of colonial rule, the Gorkhas who became part of Assam after the merger of Dooars, and also the families of the soldiers who entered Assam during various expeditions as part of the colonial band of soldiers were encouraged to settle in various parts of Assam.

With the entire chunk of the Gorkhas, the entire colonial Assam was brought within the purview of Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 (ALRRA). The Gorkhas pastoral were recognized as Graziers and cultivators under this Act. The Graziers and cultivators were allotted forest land for the cultivation and rearing of cattle.<sup>134</sup> And gradually this became their permanent profession and came to be known as professional Graziers and cultivators (it is discussed in detail in the following).

### 3.1.6. AFTERMATH OF INDEPENDENCE

The British colonial rule had consolidated India and by 1947 their administration came to an end. The colonial rule took departure but the hangover and legacy and, the mode of rule and control over geo-politic remained unabated. The relation between Government, policymakers, and developers thus come close to institutionalized dishonesty in regards to Pastoral community. Despite the fact that the governments depended on the pastoral sector in regards to milk and meat and other relative products .They perpetually appeared reluctant and unwilling to pay attention towards the concerns of the pastoral community.

### 3.2. ETHNIC COMPOSITION GORKHA PASTORAL COMMUNITY IN ASSAM

There are different sub-ethnic groups among the pastoral community particularly among Gorkha pastoralist, the Nepali speakers in Assam.

A.R. Radcliffe Brown has defined ethnic group and stated that :

“By ethnic group, we mean a culture group which is not an isolated and independent group or community but forms a part of the wider social system where it completes with similar other groups for a share in the fruits of political

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<sup>134</sup> D.B. Chhetry and 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, Guwahati*, Narayani Handique Historical Institute,2009, p.122.

and economic activities. The concept of the ethnic group is considered very important in democratic societies.<sup>135</sup>

The Nepalese in general and the Assamese-Nepali, in particular, can be divided into two groups such as the Indo-Nepalese and the Tibeto-Nepalese from the point of ethnic origins. The Indo-Nepalese comprise mostly of the general castes such as Chhetri, Bahun, Thakuri, Rana, Sarki etc, whereas the Tibeto-Nepalese consists of the ethnic groups such as Bhote, Serpa, Rai, Dolpo, Tamang, Limbu, Lepcha etc. The groups under the category Indo- Nepalese have a common language viz. Nepali and a common culture, professing Hinduism. The groups under the category Tibeto-Nepalese have their respective mother tongues and their distinctive cultural heritages which are also quite different among themselves. Some of the major ethnic groups in Assam are- The Gurung, the Magar, the Tamang, Newars etc.<sup>136</sup>

Formerly the Gorkha were divided into different castes and sub-groups referred to as jati(Caste or Sub-caste) which is hierarchical in order. The Brahmins (Upadhayas), the priestly group occupy the highest position in the society. The Chhetris were traditionally the warrior group, while the Sarkis (cobblers) Kami (smith), Domai (tailors) were placed lowest in the society. From their ancient days the Gorkhas of Assam were engaged, in reforming various socio-cultural organisations for the sake of protecting the interest of the community. The oldest socio-cultural organization of the Nepalese in undivided Assam to have the literary interest and was in Shillong founded in 1886.<sup>137</sup>

Social situation found in many villages of Assam in which Assamese and Nepalis live together as members of the same village. Each of these communities maintained their separate identity largely through their exclusive socio-political and community organizations. The Gorkhas in Assam is mainly Hindu society and a very little part believes in Buddhism,<sup>138</sup> and few of them believe in Christianity. The Hindus were divided into different sects such as Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Tantrism and so on. Some of the Nepalese practiced Sanatani, Anukul Pantha, Pranami and etc.

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<sup>135</sup> Pitambar Gurung, 'Different Ethnic Groups 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, p.365.

<sup>136</sup> Pitambar Gurung,p.366.

<sup>137</sup>Jamadangi Upadhaya, 'History of Literary 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, p.196.

<sup>138</sup>Chavan kumar Sarmah and J.Hazarika, 'Age at marriage and fertility status of the Nepali women in Assam', *Journal of social sciences Bodoland University*, Vol.3,no.2,2015,p.58.

Though the Gorkha in Assam has preserved and maintained their own traditional social customs, there is enough evidence that they actively participated in all the customs and traditional festivals of the Assamese community. However in the process, a certain degree of assimilation with the host society has been noted. This is evident from the festivals celebrated, food habits and matrimonial relations where a high degree of assimilation is noted.<sup>139</sup>

### 3.3. HOUSING STANDARD

The pastoralists had built their houses based on their socio-cultural and economic condition. Earlier the pastoralists in villages had houses made of bamboo, straw, mud houses. They used cow dung to smoothen the floor instead of plastering it with other materials and they used thatch roof.

The common features of the Nepali or Gorkhas housing were the double Storeyed tungsi house (house made of wood or mud). Since dairy farming and cattle rearing was common, a huge haystack in front of the house often identifies a Nepali household. For animal shelters i.e., cow, goat, buffalo, the *chang* house (made of Bamboo) was commonly used.<sup>140</sup> But as times goes by this system has practically disappeared, only with few exceptions. Now-a-days, they opted for more convenient Assam type, thatched roofed house and where finance permits, the asbestos roof, RCC houses etc. In the village, their houses were mostly furnished with a simple manner and did not contain excessive luxury like that of the modern houses. The same goes for animal shelter as such they built the shed with bricks half which would be constructed with asbestos.

### 3.4. FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

The most important primary social group is the family. For performing the various functions and tasks, the family organized a specific social group with roles and interaction patterns. This group followed the dominant norms of the society and the other reflected the unique experiences, beliefs, and values shared only by the members of a particular family. In their early days people used to live in a joint family in which they have a common property, common house, common kitchen, and common worship idols or deities. The father was the head of the family who commands respects from every member. Even now there were some

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<sup>139</sup> 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, Guwahati*, Narayani Handique Historical Institute, 2009, p.371.

<sup>140</sup> Lopita Nath, p.373.

Nepali speaking people who live in a joint family. But as a large now the Nuclear family was common in the society. Male equigeniture was the general rule of inheritance. However the unmarried daughter received equal share of the property of her parents. After the death of the father, the eldest son was the responsible of maintaining the household property, and to look after them.<sup>141</sup>

In olden days among the Nepali speakers Child marriage was very common and had strictly followed the rule of caste endogamy and clan exogamy. Overall the society was rigid in this case and endogamy was inherent in the society. They could not marry within five generations, both from mother and father side. Marriages were conducted through the *Ghatak* (matchmaker) and some were through mutual consent. Love marriage was not allowed. They have to marry inside their own communities and own caste, as they were not allowed to get married with other caste and other communities. (For example, the Upadhyay could not marry to the low caste i.e .the *Kamis*, *Domais* or another low caste). The *bahuns* were considered essential for the marriage and arranging the marriage ceremony based on rituals and customs. The presence of the *bahun* till the end of the marriage ceremony was mandatory.

The women from the community used to wear *pote*, *chaubandi cholo*, saree and glass bangles etc and the boys used to wear *Daura*, *suruwal*, *Dhaka Topi*, etc and till today they used to wear and practiced their tradition. The Dowry system was practiced earlier but that too was not compulsory. But nowadays adult marriage is the rule. The girls were married at the age of 18-25 years, while boys at the age of 20 -25years.Though largely endogamous in nature, as time passed the matrimonial relations between the Nepalese and the Assamese occurred. Love marriage was also slowly accepted in the society and especially educated youth prefer to choose their spouse according to their own way.<sup>142</sup>

This inter-community alliance or inter- marriage have attributed to the personal preferences of the boys and the girls who wish to marry outside their community. But these relations were well accepted by both the communities. These alliances were nowadays, not limited only to love marriages but are also arranged with proper rituals. This process of assimilation has led to the evolution of a distinct *Asamiya* culture, with an admixture of both.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>Lalit Shreshtha, A Socio-Economic Study of the Assamese Nepalis in Darrang District with particular reference to Sipajhar Area, [shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/68411](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/68411), accessed on 12.12.2017.

<sup>142</sup> Lalit Shreshtha, pp,116-117.

<sup>143</sup> L.P.Upadhaya, *contribution of the Assamese-Nepali in Agicultural development*, p.157.

### 3.5. CULTURAL PRACTICES

Manuel Castells stated that:

“ the identity depends more on people’s cultural heritage and in being able to preserve it, than on the geographical space they occupy. So even if people are deprived of a geographical space, they continue to feel the meaning of their existence with the collective memory of their history, myth and achievement.”<sup>144</sup>

The desire to uphold, protect and develop one’s language, culture and tradition are inherent in every community and the Indian Nepalis are, no exception. They wanted to maintain their identity through their own culture and language. At the same time, the Nepalese of India want to distinguish themselves from the territorial identity of Nepal and inherit their linguistic and cultural heritage. They regarded themselves different from the Nepali of Nepal, but they also preserve and enrich Nepali culture, language and literature and as such, this is also mentioned in Bhanubhakta Acharya, the *adi kabi* of Nepali literature. The symbolic expression of Nepali cultural and linguistic perfection is expanding beyond the political boundary of Nepal.<sup>145</sup>

Religious functions, rituals and festivals are some of the main occasions through which Assamese Nepalese of the villages established a close relationship with the villagers of the neighboring villages. Every year the Nepali speaking community celebrated Bhanu Jayanti (Acharya Bhanu Bhakta is regarded as the founder poet of the Nepali community who translated the Ramayana into Nepali from Sanskrit) on 13th July where neighboring villagers were invited and some chief guests where they delivered some speeches about the life history of Adi Kabi, his achievement in Nepali Literature and also about the development and welfare of the present Nepali community and closed up the programme with cultural night. Several of the cultural and rituals ceremonies which the Nepali follows during the year are as follow.

The most important and holy festivals of the Nepali women is *Bhadhra Shukla* or *Tij*. They feast throughout the day without even a drop of water and offer puja to Shiva and Parvati in the

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<sup>144</sup> Castells Manuel, *communal Heavens: Identity and Meaning in the network society, The power of Identity*, Blackwell publisher, 1997, p.1.

<sup>145</sup> 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, Guwahati* ; Narayani Handique Historical Institute, 2009, p.413.

evening wishing the fulfillment of their desire and of their husband.<sup>146</sup> Besides, Durga Puja or *Dasain* (derived from the word *Dashami*) is another important festival for every Hindu and especially the Gorkhali started the occasion from the day of *Mahalaya*. On the last day of Durga puja which is called as *dashami* or *vijayadashami*, (the immersion of the idol of Durga after worship), every Nepali worship their clans-deities according to their traditional ways. Then Comes the important function which is called as *tiko* (made with rice mixed with curd).

The *tiko*, at first, was put on the main pillars of the houses by taking *jamara* or *Doorba* (a kind of herb) on the head and offered the first *tiko* to their deities. And after this, the elders put *tiko* on their forehead and on the foreheads of their children and the younger ones of their family and bless them. This function of *tiko* continued till the *kojagari* (Lakshmi) *Purnima* and people visit the house especially new married couple visited with sweets and clothes to receive their blessings. This ceremony also serves as an occasional meeting of relatives, as those at distant places and also *Dasain* was an occasion where they enjoy the various cultural programmes and theatre shows. The *Dasain sammelan* is celebrated joyfully through cultural exhibitions, competitions, meetings etc.<sup>147</sup> Now a day it is gradually getting developed in the Nepali areas of Assam. Thus we can say that the festivals of *Dashain* bear great significance in Nepali society.

*Tihar* was another joyful festival of the Nepalese. The first day of *tihar* was known as *kak* or *kag* (crow) *Tihar*. On this day prayers were offered to a crow which was believed to be the messenger of *yama* (king of death), where a garland of marigold and pure food were offered. The second day is known as *Kukur Tihar* or *Narke Chaturdashi* where people feed two or three dogs especially with pure food and offered them a garland of the marigold flower. They believed that the dog should be worshipped on this day because it guards the household and also would escape from many danger things.<sup>148</sup> The third day is called *Gai Tihar* or *Gai Tihare Aunsi*. (Second biggest festival of the Gorkhas)

People worship cow with *aksata* (rice mixed with water and curd), and flowers etc. In this festival cow play an important role and every Nepali regarded the cow as one's own mother. They washed the legs of the cow with holy water from a *Kalash* (vase) and praise her with songs, garlands of marigold or any other flowers were put around the cow neck. *Tiko* was put

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<sup>146</sup> Shiva shastri and Dambar Dahal, 'Festivals 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, p.447.

<sup>147</sup> Shiva shastri and Dambar Dahal,p.448.

<sup>148</sup> Shiva Shastri and Dambar Dahal,p.448.



on the forehead, body parts and mustard oil was applied to her horns and hooves and thanking her for the sustenance of their livelihood. After this, they offered to the cow with sweets and *roti* made of rice powder, salt, and other food items. The Hindus including Nepali celebrate this day as the festival of light. On this ritual they sing a special kind of song with dance, called *deushi* and *bhoili*. The *Deusi songs* are as follows:

“ *jhilimili jhilimili – Deusi Shri Ram*

*Ke ko jhilimili- Deusi Shri Ram*

*Phulako Jhilimili- Deusi Shri Ram”*

The literal meaning is:

Twinkling Twinkling- Shri Ram the Lord

What is Twinkling- Shri Ram the Lord

It's the twinkling of

Flowers- Shri Ram the Lord

The important holy festivals fall on the last day of *Tihar*, which was called *Shukla Dvitiya of Kartik* Nepali sisters; observe this festival with solemnity wishing their brothers and sisters from the cruel clutches of the *Yama*. They began the ritual by oiling and combing their brothers' hair and then the sister put *tiko*, paste made of powder of rice and also few colours in the forehead of her brother in a linear vertical shape with seven colours and a garment of *poilo thunge fool* (yellow marigold flower) were put on his head and neck. At the same time even the brother put *tiko* in the forehead of his sisters with the same rituals, and at the end, an *okhar* (walnut) or betel-nut is treated as a symbol of *yama* and puja is offered on it which is smashed and thrown away.<sup>149</sup>

There were also other similar ceremonies performed by the Nepalese in Assam in addition to their traditional ceremonies. This shows a high level of assimilation into the Assamese fold. Besides, the Nepalese of Assam actively participated in the local festivals called Bihu.<sup>150</sup> Till today the Nepalis boys and girls are excellent Bihu dancers.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Shiva shastri and Dambar Daha, p.448.

<sup>150</sup> Lopita Nath, *The Nepalese of Assam: Ideal Instance of Assimilation with the Mainstream*, p.371.

According to the Nepali traditions as a sign of respect and honour, a Dhaka *topi* was offered to a man and a *chowbandi cholo* (a Nepali traditional blouse) to a woman. Among the dresses, *Topi, Pete Bhoto, Daura, Askot, Langauti, Kachhar, Suruwal, Godo, ghalek* etc are some of their own traditional dresses. Till today there are several organisations in Assam namely Assam Gorkha Sanmelan, Nepali Sahatiya parishad Assam, AANSU etc and such dignitaries were usually felicitated with both the Nepali *Topi* and the Asamiya *gamocha*. All these are the examples of a very high degree of cultural and social assimilation.<sup>152</sup>

A *Gamocha* (made of cotton thread with red embroidery) is also offered as a mark of honor in Assam. The Assamese –Nepali have already combined both the tokens of these cultural practices and started offering a *Dhaka topi* and a *gamocha* to honor a guest during the cultural celebrations, which now has evolved into a tradition. Such attempt at inter cultural reciprocation and assimilation were also seen in food, dresses, songs, music, etc. Having settled in the Assamese village the Gorkha pastoralists had adopted the traditions and culture, lifestyle, of the Assamese and, these pastoralists were assimilated into the host society to become a part of the distinct Asamiya identity.<sup>153</sup>

Musical instruments also played an important role in Nepali culture, such as *Madal*, (made of hollow wood where leather skins are attached at both ends) *Naumati Baja* (which is basically used in marriage), *Sarangi* (violin), *Basuri* (flute), *Neku* (blowing instrument made of buffalos horn) *Dhyangro*, *Shankha* (shell of a sea creature, the sound of this instrument enlivens and encourages a man), *Dholaki* (Drum), *Damphu* (it is called Daphli in hindi played with the help of fingers by holding the hands) etc.<sup>154</sup>

### 3.6. IMPACT OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS AND INSURGENCY ON SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE IN POSTCOLONIAL EPOCH

The recurring ethnic conflicts and violence had various cause such as ethno political mobilization of various ethnic groups in the region and changes in the socio-cultural landscape

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<sup>152</sup>Juddhabir Rana, 'Traditional Nepali Dresses ,Fabrics,ornaments,Musical Instruments, utensils,Farming Articles, Appliances Etc',in Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies Assam (eds.) *History And Culture of Assamese-Nepali*,Guwahati:Narayani Handique,Historical Institute,2009,p.463.

<sup>153</sup> Gita Upadhaya, *Celebration of Bhanujayanti In Assam and its significance*, pp.413-414.

<sup>154</sup> Juddhabir Ranna, *Nepali Dresses ,Fabrics,ornaments,Musical Instruments, utensils,Farming Articles, Appliances Etc*,p.464.

of the Gorkha community. Respondents place their observation that the socio-economic life-world of the community that they belonged has been receiving visible changes. The ethnic contestation and conflicts started between major ethnic groups i.e., Bodos, linguistic Assamese, Bengali (both Hindu and Muslim) and Rajbongshi have brought major changes in the social demography of the Gorkhas.<sup>155</sup>

As per the share the observation of respondents, it was found that due the Assamese language movement till date, there was a drastic change due to the domination as the dominant language and culture. Many times the members of the community in this research had had to fall in dilemma in regards to ethnic dress code. In contesting multi-ethnic space of Darrang district and its adjoining areas, the language, festivals and dress code remained as dominant factors representation for the hegemonic ethno symbolism.<sup>156</sup> The language is spoken and dress code in school also played a dominant role. The Assamese medium schools preferred to adopt Assamese *chador-mekhela* (Assamese ethnic dress) for female students whereas organizations from the Bodo community considered such directory seems to be a hegemonic tendency and opposed the same and conversely advised to Bodo students to appear with Bodo ethnic attire *dwkhona* (Bodo ethnic dress) . Similarly, in the Bodo dominated areas especially in Udalguri districts communities like Adivasis and Bengali Adivasis counter both the dress codes, i.e., Assamese and Bodo with preference to their own ethnic attire.<sup>157</sup> As respondents shared experiences, they were in dilemma in choosing any dress code as their

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<sup>155</sup> Assam has been witnessing drastic socio-political transformations since or before the independence of the country. Importantly, it has been a space of contestation between various potential sub-nationalistic forces since the country started nation building process after the independence. In this juncture, it is to mention that, just after the independence the region had experienced assertion of Assamese nationalism through Assamese language movement and Assam movement during 60s and 70s and 80, of last century. Consolidation of Assamese nationalism cultivated a fear of Assamization among Bodo ethnic group causing the demand of Bodoland for Bodo identity and autonomy. In similar way, when the central the state governments started the process to resolve the issue of disgruntling Bodo community through the constitutional safeguards to enhance socio-cultural and economic status of the community, it created a fear of Bodoization among similar other ethnic groups of same space, and caused serious ethnic contestations and conflicts between Bodo-Rajbongshi in 1989, Bodo-Santal in 1996, 1998, and Bodo-Bangla speaking Muslim in 1992, 2009 and 2012. For detail, Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, Buffer Ethnic Group(s): Understanding the Existentiality of Gorkha Community in Space of Multi-Ethnic Contestation(s) of Chirang District, Assam, published in Democracy and Development in India's North-East: Challenges and Opportunities, published by Bookwell, New Delhi ,in association with ICSSR-NERC,2015, Shillong.

<sup>156</sup> Chhetry,p.15.

<sup>157</sup> Tikendra kumar Chhetry, Identity Mobilization, Conflicts and Linguistic Minorities in India: A Case of Gorkha Community in Assam presented during 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Asian Political and International Studies Association' (APISA) in *An Agenda for Asia: Human Security, Conflict Management, Security Sector Reform and Local Democratization*, held in Nohm Phenn, Cambodia on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September 2015,p.60.

ethnic attires was not allowed. In such condition, they were also mobilizing to demand to allow their ethnic attire *chaubandi gunyo-choli* (Nepali traditional dress) in schools.<sup>158</sup>

The ethnic-militarization too had certain effects in the socio-cultural sphere of life. The undeclared dress code tactics of the ethnic divisions continued to linger in the atmosphere of tension and suspicious nature. For a certain period of time, wearing of shoes of clothes of some brands was a very common phenomenon among the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) cadres and also it was the symbol to identify the cadres and sympathizers. As soon as the spy and intelligence squads of security agencies found out the secret of certain dress code, the youth whosoever found wearing similar dress code were detained and interrogated in unkindly manner and even with huge extrajudicial treatment. The Gorkha youths, particularly the pastoral section of the areas was to wear the same shoes in order avoid the security personnel and to be regarded as NDFB cadres. Similarly, as respondents exposed, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) also, apart from their common camouflage uniform, they had their secret identical wearing code in certain areas. Therefore order of the underground outfit affected the life world of Gorkhas along with other community.<sup>159</sup>

The Gorkhas in Assam soon accepted Asamiya as the state language and medium of instruction, but still many of the immigrant communities declined to do so. This was probably because they realized that their interests could be well protected if they compelled the Assamese language. Thus, in Assam they not only whole-heartedly supported Assamese as the state language but also accepted it as a vernacular of the school level. The process of assimilation of the Gorkhas in Assam was a continuous process. The Nepali *Asamiya* felt that retention and development of distinct cultural traits of all the communities of Assam along with assimilation would lead to the progress and prosperity of this land as a whole since they considered themselves as a part of the larger Assamese society. Thus it may be stated multicultural communities in Assam have strengthened the cultural unity and integrity of the state.

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<sup>158</sup> Tikendra kumar Chhetry, Identity Mobilization, Conflicts and Linguistic Minorities in India: A Case of Gorkha Community in Assam presented during 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Asian Political and International Studies Association' (APISA) in *An Agenda for Asia: Human Security, Conflict Management, Security Sector Reform and Local Democratization*, held in Nohm Phenn, Cambodia on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September 2015,p.60.

<sup>159</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry,p .62.

## CHAPTER-4

### ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF THE PASTORAL COMMUNITY IN ASSAM

Pastoralism is a traditional form of subsistence farming practiced among the rural population throughout the world. This means of livelihoods depend on intimate knowledge of the surrounding ecosystem and on the well-being of livestock. Pastoral systems take many forms and adapted to particular natural, political and economic environments. The types of livestock kept by pastoralists vary according to climate, environment, water and other natural resources, and geographical area. Mobility is a key feature qualifying Pastoralism.<sup>160</sup> Within a pastoral society, the ecosystem diversity does not only mean the variety of ecological zones or habitats, but it encompasses cultural diversity and ecological processes related to different pastoral production system as well.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, biodiversity provides a fundamental base to Pastoralism and to overall economic systems.

The firm increase in the number of cattle and grazing fees indicated the emergence of pastoralists as an important economic group in the society.<sup>162</sup> The Economic condition of the Gorkhas in Darrang district deals with cattle rearing, farming, and with agriculture. The pastoralists kept their type of livestock vary according to climate, environment, water and other natural resources, and geographical area.

#### 4.1. COLONIAL ECONOMIC POLICY AND GORKHA PASTORALISTS

The entire Assam region had witnessed the greatest human movement and settlement of people resulting in the transfer and distribution of diverse population group in different parts during the colonial period. The British colonial administrations had entered Assam with lots of hope and aspiration, as the country was rich in natural as it resources. The Colonialist administration policy of commercialization and industrialization had greatly stimulated the nature of the people's livelihood.

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<sup>160</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry and Simanta Chettri , *Conflicting Pastoral Policy in India: Case of Sikkim* ,p.1.

<sup>161</sup> Anjan Chakrabati , 'Transhumance, livelihood and Sustainable Development and Conflict between Formal institution and Communal Governance: An Evaluative Note on East Himalayan State of Sikkim, India , p.133.

<sup>162</sup> Gurung, *Human Movement and the colonial state; The Nepal's of Northeast India under the British Empire* , p. 179.

After the occupation of Assam, the colonial master took greater effort to enhance tax accumulation. In this connection, the traditional mode of livelihood like Pastoralism, cultivation etc., were in the purview of policy and institutionalization. Forest lands were brought into the mechanism of policy and revenue harvest. Pastoralists, in whom the majority was from the Gorkha community, were planned to settle permanently as graziers and cultivators. One especially bell was hung in the neck of the herd (*Bathan*). The herd-man tracked the herd even in dense forests only by listening to the jingling sound of the bell which is known as Goalpara bell, perhaps originated from Goalpara (a district of Assam).<sup>163</sup> Grazing lands were allotted to graziers for cattle breeding and for cattle grazing. Such graziers were known as *Gopalak* in the local colloquial term.<sup>164</sup>

In a country with less industry like, Assam had no other option but then to increase land revenue, and as a result lands were leased out to the people in favourable terms. The British government had not missed an opportunity to maximize their revenue collection. Accordingly, grazing which was free from time immortal in Assam was taxed. To attract the people and increase the revenue of the region, the Company introduced the Wasteland Rules on 6th March 1838.<sup>165</sup> According to this Rule, one-fourth of a land grant was to remain revenue-free in perpetuity and the remaining portion of the grant, was to remain revenue-free for the initial of five to twenty years, and this too depends on according to the nature of the wasteland concern.<sup>166</sup>

Colonial officials established grazing settlement on the Gorkha population as they considered them more industrious, laborious and valor. The active policies pursued by the colonial government had opened up the valley to the Gorkha graziers. The colonial government required a labour force for clearing forests to lumbering to domestic help, which was effectively provided by the 'versatile community'.

#### 4.1.1. LAND REVENUE REGULATION ACT, 1886 AND PASTORAL COMMUNITIES.

The majority of the Gorkhas, as discussed in the last chapter, have been found to follow Pastoralism as their main occupation. The history shows that how Gorkha pastoralist had

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<sup>163</sup> Deben Sapkota, Nepali settlement and Cattle rearing in India's Northeast in T.B.Subha and A.C.Sinha, *Indias Nepali Issues and perspective*, Indus Publication, New Delhi, 2009, p.214.

<sup>164</sup> Deben Sapkota, p. 214.

<sup>165</sup> Amalendu Guha, *Planters Raj to Swaraj: Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947*. Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2006, p.90.

<sup>166</sup> Amalendu Guha, p.90.

mobility in the Himalayan region including Assam. Although Pastoralism owns a deeper history in the region, it received the administrative attention during the days of colonial administration. The colonial administration counted it as a lucrative sector to harvest the tax in Assam. Through policymaking, transformed and institutionalized Pastoralism into graziers and grazing permit. The Gorkhas with the entire colonial Assam was brought within the purview of Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 (ALRRA). The Gorkhas because of their pastoral mode of occupation were recognized as graziers and cultivators under this Act. The Graziers and cultivators were allotted forest land for the cultivation and rearing of cattle.<sup>167</sup>

In this way gradually it became for the Gorkhas a permanent profession and was now commonly due to this practice, known as professional Graziers and cultivators.<sup>168</sup> They were basically cultivators, cattle rearer which included growing crops and rearing animals for their own use and then for trade and commerce etc.

#### 4.1.2. COLONIAL MODULE OF TAXATION AND GORKHA GRAZIERS

Under the British, the grazing rights were gradually encroached upon to bring forth additional revenue to the government. It was primarily the Gorkhas who were involved in cattle rearing. After the taxation of the government, the Gorkhas were the first to pay the grazing fees as and as their number grew the colonial revenue was greatly enhanced and as well largely had increased the British exchequer.<sup>169</sup>

Since dairy farming had become such a common economic activity of the Gorkhalis, it became a part of the everyday life and mode of the general people to earn livelihood.<sup>170</sup> The occupation of cattle rearing which the Gorkha people started in Darrang district helped the villagers and other communities by providing milk products, adding fertility to the land as well as showing the skills of their profession. Through this, it not only maintained a friendly relationship with other communities of the district but also extended economic contribution to all. They also started to cultivate the crop also like maize, paddy, vegetables etc to meet their own demands and earned a good market and helped in the economic growth of the districts as

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<sup>167</sup> D.B. Chhetry and Bhabani Prasad Sharma, *Protected Classes vis-à-vis Nepalese in tribal belts and Blocks*, p.123.

<sup>168</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry and Simanta Chettri, "Conflicting Pastoral Policy in India: Case of Sikkim" in *Journal of North-East Region*, Vol: 3, No:2,2015, pp. 133.

<sup>169</sup> Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Nepalis*, p.92.

<sup>170</sup> Lopita Nath, *The Nepalese of Assam: Ideal Instance of Assimilation with the Mainstream*, p.371.

well as the economic growth of the Gorkhas. During the period of study the entire land has to be tilled by spade for cultivation. In the low land area the use of spade was impossible, but cows and buffaloes were deployed to till the land to plant the crops and paddy. This process of cultivation and animal rearing was intimated by the Assamese and Nepalis and were, in the process of economic development.<sup>171</sup>

The Nepali graziers must occupy the waste land and through their cattle they made much larger profits as compared to any cultivators. Through cow, the people used the manures for their own household purposes and for fertilizer. As the domestic front its manure was made in a disc shape and they dried it in sun and stored for future fuel purposes. As the Nepalis were nomadic in their habitat they therefore moved their camp frequently. For this reason, the forest department who used collect the poll-tax on such animals had faced difficulties in collecting their dues

According to the revenue report of 1934, stated that among the PGR (professional grazing reserves) Ojagaon in Bokoni Mauza is the only PGR reserve which has been included in the list. It was a part of Amla khuthi PGR. The grazing communities included few Nepalese family and Assamese raiyats.<sup>172</sup>

The Revenue Report of 1937 file no.viii-5 of 1937 stated that under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation,1886 the Governor in council appointed Srijut Nilakanta Hazarika,sub-Deputy collector in charge of grazing etc in the district of Darrang.<sup>173</sup>

The Revenue Report of 1938 file no-viii/36 stated that professional Graziers were not allowed to use the village grazing grounds but only in exceptional circumstances, that the Deputy Commissioner may allowed to do so and levy a fee of any amount. In case any professional graziers whoever grazes his cattle without prior permission or without reasonable excuse for exceptional circumstances was liable to a fine of fifty rupees.<sup>174</sup>

Moreover large number of Nepali graziers reared buffaloes and cows, at Tengakhuti panchmile area (present Tezpur), near the bank of the river Mora Bhorali River. But during the rainy season they faced problem due to floods and at that time they settled with their cattle in some other places. Amongst the graziers, Gajan Subha who had about 1,000 of buffaloes and a few

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<sup>171</sup> Guru Prasad upaddhaya and K.C Das, Socio-Economic and political condtions of the Nepalese in Karbi Anglong ,IJELLH vol:4 , p.231.

<sup>172</sup> *Revenue Report of 1934*, Settlement of land with Nepalese,file no-iv-34/3 of 1934.

<sup>173</sup> *Revenue Report of 1937 file no.viii-5 of 1937*.

<sup>174</sup> *Revenue Report of 1938* ,file no-viii/36 of 1938.



number of cows in Tengakhuti area had faced problem due to flood ,and in which many of buffaloes and cows were drowned or otherwise they suffered from various diseases and as a result the graziers would deprived of his profession and definitely with the means of daily livelihood.<sup>175</sup>

The Forest Report of 1956 stated that as all the grazing reserved and basti lands were under water therefore the people of the flood-affected areas suffered great hardship to save their cattle from flood and starvation for want of fodder. It was resolved that the Forest Department be moved to, and to allow grazing of a cattle from flood-affected areas for three months i.e. September to November free of any grazing tax.<sup>176</sup>

In the year 1892- 93, those graziers who owned 13,025 buffaloes and 1162 cows paid grazing fees amounting to Rs.6772. Henry Cotton, the chief commissioner of Assam, noted in 1898 that many of the retired Gorkha Sepoys who were fond of settling down in Assam preferred cattle grazing to cultivation.<sup>177</sup>

The British administration had taken a firm root and the administrative machinery, which started with handful officials, grew larger with the passage of time. John F.Gruning then Deputy Commissioner of Assam valley District stated that the Nepalis are the troublesome settlers.<sup>178</sup> It was found that in the Northeast history of India the graziers were often seen as excluded people, rejected people and had suffered from such action.<sup>179</sup> The colonial government introduced the idea of grazing tax, to be levied on every horned animal, which in 1886 were 4 annas of per buffalo and in 1888 were 8 annas for each buffalo and 4 annas for each cow per annum respectively.<sup>180</sup> In 1890 a definite instruction was issued to the levy of grazing fee at the rate of 8 annas per buffalo and 4 annas for other horned cattle. The grazing fee was suddenly raised up and it made its impact on the new rulers as well. In 1907 the grazing fee of per buffalo was raised to Rs.1 and still raised in 1912 and more higher was in 1917 to R.s.3 per buffalo and 6 annas per cows.<sup>181</sup> According to Guha initially the rise of

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<sup>175</sup> Interview with Lakhi chhetry, panchmile on 20 July 2017.

<sup>176</sup> *Forest Report of 1956,fileno-FOR/276/56, Of 1956,Grazing of Cattle free of Royalty in Flood affected areas.*

<sup>177</sup> Henry cotton cited in Gurung , *Human Movement and the colonial state; The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire*, p. 172.

<sup>178</sup> *Assesment of Nepali Khutis to Land Revenue , 24 february 1903,Common office File NO.28,1903.*

<sup>179</sup> Nag, *Fei-isation of the Nepalis of Northeast India*,p.184.

<sup>180</sup> Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj*,p.91.

<sup>181</sup> Guha,p.91.

revenue source was due to a steady rise in the immigration of Nepali graziers along with their cattle.<sup>182</sup>

According to the revenue report of 1920, Reservation of Grazing Ground in village thana Udalguri Mauza Baroilajhar Dorong stated that the field was necessary for grazing their cattle of the villagers. The land covered by the field was all government waste land. It may, therefore, be declared as reserve grazing ground.<sup>183</sup>

In the early 1920s, A.W. Botham, the chief secretary to the Governor Sir William Marris noted:

“The attractions in Assam for the Nepalis are buffalo grazing and timber work, and when so many Nepalis are visiting Assam for these purposes, it is most unlikely that the recruitment of 300 for the Assam rifles is going to make any difference one way or another. The numerous Nepali graziers in Assam are Upadhyaya Brahmins or chettris of non-martial class and jaisis.”<sup>184</sup>

The reason behinds this was that the Brahmins used to worship cow as a sacred animal and also they kept the animal for the purpose of dairy farming and side-by-side they earn their livelihood through this occupation. Among the Nepali graziers, the Bahuns were engaged very strongly in dairy farming. As the Gorkha were involved in the Army after their retirement from the service they were also involved in dairy farming since they had a tradition of pastoralism it was easy for them to earn their livelihood after retirement.<sup>185</sup>

According to the Revenue Report of 1929, stated that the area of Bhaguamari which was about 10,000 bighas of waste land for grazing the entire chapari was reserved, only 24 Nepali graziers own 143 buffaloes paying Rs.429/ in 1928-29 and Assamese assessed to Rs-1335 on 444 buffaloes in the same year. Thus the total number of buffaloes belonging to the Nepalis and the Assamese had come up to 588, or in round figure to 600 only. So the very large areas of the Bhangnamarida reserved should be more than enough to meet the requirements of both the Assamese and the Nepalis throughout the year.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, p.91.

<sup>183</sup> *Revenue Report of 1937*, file no-viii-50f 1937.

<sup>184</sup> A.C.sinha, *The Indian Northeast Frontier and the Nepali Immigrants*, p.45.

<sup>185</sup> Nath, *Migrant in flight: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalese in Northeast India*, p.56.

<sup>186</sup> *Revenue Report of 1929*, file no-xvii-15 of 1929.

Moreover the buffaloes which were three years of age or more or whose horns were longer than the ears or longer than one foot were taxed. Sometimes the injured or older animals were exempted from the taxes. The Mohsirdar, was appointed by the government, and was responsible for making the assessment of the taxes. He used to collect the total amount of the taxes from the graziers and used to get a commission from the colonial government. As most of the graziers were Nepalese, the steady increased in the buffalo population and higher revenue collection through tax, no doubt were clear indications of growing Nepali population.<sup>187</sup>

Amalendu Guha Stated:

“As most of the Gorkha graziers were in the vast expanded greenery dense forests and hills, the abundance of land and the ‘Chars’ of the mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries, dotted with verdant full of lush green vegetation was, indeed, an ideal scenario for cattle breeding. Some of the pensioners of the retired soldiers took milk production as their occupation. In a land-abundant Assam peasant enjoyed from time immemorial the traditional right to graze their cattle freely on the Common villages and neighboring forests, the colonial British government imposed a tax on grazing.”<sup>188</sup>

The Forest Report of 1959 stated that the:

“Villagers of Bhabapur, Rahmanpur, Rangagora, Kachumari, Bhejimari, and Selbori under the Mangoldoi are contiguous to the forest reserve of Orang. The people are all agriculturalist class and possessing cattle of own and having no grazing reserve nearby are obliged to graze cattle in the Orang forest park.”<sup>189</sup>

So as long they were allowed to tend their own cattle in the reserved by the reserved authority on payment of some amount of rent. On an easy term, they were also provided with a kind of token for the entrance to the reserved forests. But after a few days, they were not allowed the entry to the reserved grazing of their own cattle as it caused great difficulty to the agriculturalists.

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<sup>187</sup> L.P.Upadhaya, *contribution of the Assamese-Nepali in Agricultural development*, p.156.

<sup>188</sup> Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, p.91 .

<sup>189</sup> *Forest report of 1959, Wild life Sanctuary grazing cattle, File no-FOR/WL/115/59 of 1959*

#### 4.1.3. POLICY OVER KAZIRANGA AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY

At hand there is no exact record as to when exactly the Nepali graziers started keeping their herds in Kaziranga area since 1880 or before. Amongst the graziers of Kaziranga notable were Harilal Luitel, Kamlikant Thalal, Tulsilal Thalal, Nandalal Upadhaya (Pokhrel), Chabilal Upadhaya, Ramlal Upadhay, etc. and grazing areas extended from Boralimara to Bhavani Thana.<sup>190</sup> One peculiar feature was that the grazing lands were controlled by the Mahajans who exercised power and influence over the graziers. For instance, Bidyapati Mahajan was the man to count on at Boralimara centre while Chabilal was the person looked up to at Amachapari. In those days, demand for milk was negligible; the only option left was to convert it into curd or ghee and explored linkage for marketing the product.<sup>191</sup> But later on they had started doing their business on Milk and till today selling of Milk on market is one of the important professions they chose and they are well known throughout the regions.

During 1903-1904, the proposal to declare Kaziranga, a reserved forest was initiated which caused a large number of evictions of graziers from their grazing area. The colonial administrator ordered all the graziers to vacate their grazing lands within twenty-four hours in 1920. With the households of these Nepali graziers were burnt down by foresters and rangers. 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.<sup>192</sup> Being forcibly evicted from their land and livelihood, the grazier looked for alternative settlement. This massive incident compelled the Nepali speaking people to initiate for the first time a political organization in Assam in order to safe guard their interest, and such organization certainly became a great achievement to protect their cause.

In the meantime, when these pastoralists had no option of rearing their cattle they had to settle in a River Island of the Brahmaputra valley. Since 1860 the pastoralists of Brahmaputra valley had started these professions. The graziers simultaneously also started raising buffaloes and cattle in the River on the banks of the Brahmaputra. But during the rainy seasons, the animal husbandry practices adopted by them were of shifting type. In summer due to floods, the graziers had the difficult time in maintaining their herds. However in winter raisings of animals was comfortable due to the availability of grassland. Starting from Dhubri district up

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<sup>190</sup> Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj : Freedom struggle and Electoral politics in Assam, 1847-1947*, p.91.

<sup>191</sup> Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese 1800-1950*, p.91.

<sup>192</sup> Bhandari, p.91.

to Arunachal Pradesh, the grazier settlers raised cattle's and buffaloes in numerous islands and on the river banks.<sup>193</sup>

In 1923, in Darrang district of Rohinikatti village, the pastoralists had proposed to the British government for a reservation of land for grazing ground as the land covered by the field were all government wastelands and hence the Government declared reserved grazing ground.<sup>194</sup>

#### 4.1.4. HOME OF PROFESSIONAL PASTORAL AND GRAZIER

It is believed that in Burachapari, the second largest river-island in Assam next to Majuli, lying to the Tezpur Town, most of the Nepali graziers had shifted, along with their cattle for their survival. According to D.B.Chhetry since 1870 Settlement of Nepali graziers is believed to have commenced.<sup>195</sup> In the Brahmaputra valley, the pastoralists initially settled in the grazing reserved forest, i.e., in *the Chapari* areas. The Burachapari of Tezpur was recognized as a professional grazing reserve as early as in 1881 and the dairy activity of Tezpur was also mainly concentrated in Burachapori.<sup>196</sup> As per records, the Sonitpur, Burachapori PGR (Professional Grazing Reserves) was constituted by the Government notification No. 3129R, dated 31-10-1916.<sup>197</sup>

It is to be noted that among the graziers, a person named Dharmananda Timsina had a herd of nearly two hundred buffaloes as far back as in 1840 at a place called Erabari under Silabandha Mouza of the present Sonitpur district.<sup>198</sup> In 1860 or thereabouts, one Rudra Bahadur Sirpali owned about one hundred heads of buffaloes and cows each and lived at the same site of the present Loka Priya Gopinath Bordoloi Mental Institute at Tezpur.<sup>199</sup> Way back around 1890, another grazers' name Atibar Pande was the proud owner of three hundred and fifty heads of buffaloes and one hundred and fifty heads of cows at Pandepal (name after him).<sup>200</sup> Another

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<sup>193</sup> Deben 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*, Guwahati: Narayani Handique Historical Institute,2009, p. 140.

<sup>194</sup> *Government of Assam Report of 1923 file no-1-223 of 1923: Reservation of land for the Roninikatti village grazing ground, Darrang district Assam.*

<sup>195</sup> Durga Prasad Ghimre, *Mero Dristiko Seropheroma Burhachapari*, Publisher Vidya Ghimre, Tezpur ,Assam,1983, p.13.

<sup>196</sup> D.B Chhetry, Grazing Reserves And Nepali Graziers in Assam ,in Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies Assam (eds.) *History And Culture of Assamese-Nepali*, Guwahati: Narayani Handique, Historical Institute,2009,p.127.

<sup>197</sup> Durga Prasad Ghimre, *Mero Dristiko Seropheroma Burhachapari*, p.14.

<sup>198</sup> Durga Prasad Ghimre, p.14.

<sup>199</sup> Based on Statement of Shri Guru Prasad Upadhaya, Jamughurighat, Assam.

<sup>200</sup> Based on the Statement of Guruprsad upadhaya, Jamaughurighat Assam.

very prominent grazier was Hastabir Karki, who in 1900 had a 'khuti' with as many as one thousand and five hundred heads of cows and one thousand heads of buffaloes at the same site where the present Naduar Block Development office stands.<sup>201</sup> Though rearing animals i.e. cow, buffaloes in Burachapori was common but more emphasis was given to buffaloes for their capacity to produce more milk through which it help the pastoralists to earn their source of income.<sup>202</sup>

In the past colonial period of the year 1972 saw the most devastating nature of encroachment in Burachapari, the Government ended the Professional Grazing Reserve Status of Burachapari on 10.09.1975 when a forest reserved with 4406.25 hectares of land was encroached but owing to the hard-working efforts and uncompromising stand of advocate Khemraj Adhikari, Bedai Sarma and Nar Bhadur Subedi encroachment stopped, but not for long.<sup>203</sup> But the Burachapari graziers could not remain at peace for long. In 1988 the Government decided to include Burachapari within the Laokhowa wildlife sanctuary.<sup>204</sup> They protested against it but no alternative arrangement for then rehabilitation was made. Litigation ensued and the whole matter was sub- judice. Presently, there is something like one hundred Nepali graziers families with a sprinkle of Assamese, Bihari, and Muhammad herdsmen with their future uncertained.<sup>205</sup>

The life style of people changed, with the evolution of time, demands change and accordingly, the peasants have also changed crops to meet their demand and supply. The Gorkhas who were growing paddy, vegetables, started planting jute, sugarcane, and ginger. These crops helped Nepali to improve their economic conditions as well as to enhance their economic contribution to Darrang district.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> D.B.Chhetry, White Revolution And Role of Nepali Graziers In Assam, in *Shaulputri* ,Majgao Darpan, Magazine, Tezpur College, Tezpur, pp.308.

<sup>202</sup> Bisnual Upadhayay, *Asame Nepaliharu*, Behali, Sonitpur, Assam, p.82.

<sup>203</sup> Durga Prasad Ghimre, *Mero Dristiko Seropheroma Burhachapari*, P.14.

<sup>204</sup> Office of the Deputy Commissioner, PGR notification no.3129R, dated 30-10-1916.

<sup>205</sup> Deben Sapkota, *Animal Husbandry practices adopted by Nepalese in Assam*, p.173.

<sup>206</sup> Guru Upadhaya and K.C.Das, *Socio-Economic and political condtions of the Nepalese in Karbi Anglong* ,p.231.

#### 4.2. POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF GORKHA PASTORAL COMMUNITY

The massive eviction of Kaziranga episode fuelled the graziers of Kaziranga leaders to think politically organizing themselves. As a result of this, the Tezpur Graziers Association was formed in 1933 at Singri, with Chabilal Upadhyay as its president. This indicated the extent to which grazing had become a major occupation and source of livelihood for the Nepalese. The Tezpur Graziers Association was community-based Organization; it was mainly for the protection and the endurance of the Nepali community. It was basically the social group for the purpose of pursuing the interest of together on a co-operative pursuit. It was the oldest socio-economic organizations of the graziers in Assam, which was set up in 1933 at Singiri, Sonitpur district of Assam under the chairmanship of Chabilal Upadhaya.<sup>207</sup> Prior to this the first ever meeting was organized in January 1921 by the Nepali graziers in Assam Biswanath Ghat, to discuss the grazier's grievances and protection and was known as Graziers Meet (1921).<sup>208</sup> In due course this meeting ultimately led to the formation of the Tezpur Grazier Association, and later it was renamed as the Assam Graziers Associations.<sup>209</sup> It is also noteworthy among all the Graziers, the Nepali constituted the largest group of graziers in the Brahmaputra valley.<sup>210</sup> The main objective of the Association were as follows : Security and maintenance of grazing lands in Assam, ; Prevention of immigrants in Burachapari ;contribution of Nepalis in the freedom struggle of India ;Protection of forests of Assam for the endurance of Nepali community in Assam ; conservation of social assimilation between the Assamese and Nepali communities.<sup>211</sup>

The threats faced by the Nepali grazing community from encroachment by new immigrant cultivators from East Bengal also led to such mobilization, of the Gorkha graziers. In fact, the idea of graziers' Association was in the mind of Gangadhar Upadhaya of Shillong in 1913. He invoked Chabilal Upadhyay, one of a grazier and Mahajan, to take up the cause of the evicted graziers. Chabilal Upadhyaya was by then a prominent leader in Assam and was the first president of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee and wielded a lot of power and prestige in Assam. This indicated the extent to which grazing had become a major occupation

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<sup>207</sup> Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and the Role of Indian Nepalis*, p.88.

<sup>208</sup> Bhandari, p.88.

<sup>209</sup> Tranti upadhaya, *Socio-cultural organisations of the Assamese- Nepali In Agricultural Development*, in Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies Assam (eds.) *History And Culture of Assamese-Nepali*, Guwahati: Narayani Handique Historical Institute, 2009, p.399.

<sup>210</sup> Guha, *Planter Raj to Sawraj*, p.93.

<sup>211</sup> Nag, *Fei-isation of the Nepalis of Northeast India*, p.184 .

and source of livelihood for the Nepalese. The threats faced by the Nepali grazing community from encroachment by new immigrant cultivators from East Bengal also led to such mobilisation.<sup>212</sup> The Administrative Report of 1905-06 recorded that 'a noticeable feature of the year was the increased settlement of Nepalese in Lakhimpur, Darrang and the Barpeta sub-division of the district of Kamrup.'<sup>213</sup> The Land Revenue Administration Report of 1913-14 reported that the Pastoralists were establishing considerable colonies in Darrang district .where they had nearly 17,000 acres of cultivable lands and in 1914-15, 35,786 acres of land was settled by graziers of whom half alone was in Darrang.<sup>214</sup>

The second conference of the Association was held in 1936 at Singri of Gopeshwar. Besides, protection of the interest of the graziers of the colonial government, the Association faced a major challenge from the aggressive encroachment of grazing lands by the Bengali Muslim immigrants from Mymensing.<sup>215</sup> In fact, the problem became more acute and during 1939 -42 the confrontation between the two communities i.e. Nepali and Bengali Muslim turned into a more violent form. The Association took up the fight against the Mymensing immigrants under the leadership of Prasad Singh Subba. During the same period, the Nepalese were deprived of their right and several names of a domiciled Nepalese were deleted from the voter's list in a place like Gomeri and Behali.<sup>216</sup> Prasad Singh Subba took initiative through the Association in protest against such legislation and the names once again target to be include in the voter list and tried his best to prevent any possible eviction and deportation of the Gorkhas from their settlement.<sup>217</sup>

Assamese nationalist leaders had advocated the Assamese nationalism in colonial Assam in anticipation to the numerical strength of Gorkha graziers toward the Assamese society. They started to consider the role of community for the future of Assam. In the increasing number of the Muslims in Assam and the fear of the inclusion of Assam into Pakistan, the Assamese intelligentsia ran a campaign before the census of 1941 to declare the Hindu population as Assamese to the enumerators.<sup>218</sup> Pioneering Assamese nationalist leaders appealed to Gorkhas to enumerate Assamese as their mother tongue. Responding to the plea Gorkha community

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<sup>212</sup> Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese 1800-1950*, p.92.

<sup>213</sup> *Report on the administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-06*. cited in gurung.

<sup>214</sup> *Report on the Land Revenue Administration, 1913-14, Chief Commissioner of Assam, ,* cited in Nag, p.186.

<sup>215</sup> Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese 1800-1950*, p.93.

<sup>216</sup> Nag, *fei-isation of the Nepalīs of the Northeast India*, p.190.

<sup>217</sup> Nag, p.191.

<sup>218</sup> Nag, P.191 .



leaders requested their community to write Assamese as their mother tongue. With it, Gorkhas wrote “Assamese” as their mother tongue during the population census of 1941.<sup>219</sup>

Seeing the move of Gorkhas against the policy of “Grow more food”<sup>220</sup> and their support to Assamese mother tongue during the census of 1941, the Saahdullah ministry of the state led serious evictions of Gorkha settlements in the state. Facing the eviction and forcible encroachment by the immigrants mostly from Mymensing district of Bengal, Gorkhas along with the indigenous tribal communities of the state perceived a serious threat to their existence.<sup>221</sup> Dambar Singh Gurung, the then president of the AIGL came for a tour to the affected areas and discussed the issue with Gopinath Borodoloi, the Congress leader of the state in February 1944.<sup>222</sup> Further Gopinath Borodoloi led a Gorkha Graziers delegation to Saadullah, the Premier Prime Minister of the state. The Governor of the state gave a specific reference to the problem in the Assam assembly in November, 1944 and suggested the government to adopt certain measures in order to stop cultivation in the professional grazing reserved by serving notice to the encroachers to vacate grazing lands for Gorkhas and other tribal communities too.<sup>223</sup> However, the government failed to implement the suggestions of the Governor.

After the problem of population census of the 1941, the Assamese nationalist leaders faced problem from the proposal of Cabinet Mission of 1946 when the proposal of Cabinet Mission tried to club Assam with the Muslim majority province of Bengal. The Assamese leaders appealed national leaders as well as tried to mobilize all sections of people in Assam against such move. The Gorkha graziers stood by the side of the Assamese leaders and at Tezpur, Prasad Singh Subba on behalf of Gorkhas and the then Assamese society initiated opposition to colonial plan of 1946.

Gopinath Borodoloi sent two Congressmen, Vijoy Chandra Bhagawati and Mahendra Mohan Choudhury to meet Mahatma Gandhi to avoid inclusion of Assam into the Muslim majority

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<sup>219</sup> Tikendra Kumar chhetry, *Identity Mobilization, Conflicts and Linguistic Minorities in India: A Case of Gorkha Community in Assam*, p.160.

<sup>220</sup> Sir Saadullah led Muslim League ministry adopted a policy called ‘Grow more Food’ in Assam during early 1940s. By this policy the Saahdullah ministry opened up all the land to immigrants from Mymensingh district of the then East Pakistan which threatened the settlements of Nepali speaking community in the state. The Nepali community saw it as ‘Grow more Muslim’ agenda of the government of the state and submitted several memo .for more details see Sajal Nag, *Roots of Ethnic conflict: Nationality Question in North East India*, NewDelhi,1990,pp.96-97.

<sup>221</sup> P.Bhandari, *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese 1800-1950*, p.94.

<sup>222</sup> Nag, *feisiation of the Nepalis of Northeast India*,p.190.

<sup>223</sup> Sajal Nag, *Roots of Ethnic conflict: Nationality Question in North East India*, NewDelhi,1990,pp.96-97.

Bengal. Gandhi replied that Assam's quietness would finish it and only Assam could do what it wants.<sup>224</sup> Meanwhile, Muhammad Ali Jinnah brought the two nation theory, advocating inclusion of Assam into the proposed Pakistan then Assam stood at a critical juncture. Under the leadership of Chhabilal, the Gorkhas severely denounced the inclusion of Assam into the Eastern part of proposed Pakistan under the "two nation theory".

Chhabilal declared,

"Jinnah would not be allowed to decide the future of Assam. To avoid it, if necessary, thirty lakh kukuris would be used to save the motherland."<sup>225</sup>

At Guwahati in 1947, the Gorkha leaders passed a resolution,

"...Gorkhas of Assam, 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 constitution..."<sup>226</sup>

#### 4.2.1. ROLE OF GORKHA-GRAZIER IN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

The Gorkhas, graziers or the pastoral community of Assam found to play a crucial role in the freedom movement of India. It can be stated that almost if not all the entire Northeastern region took an active part in the freedom movement of India from 1920. With the visit of Mahatma Gandhi in 1921 to attend Pandu session of the Congress, the freedom movement took a new turn in the state. Assam Association led by Chabilal Upadhyaya, a leader emerged from Gorkha graziers ceased to function and incorporated in the Assam Provincial Congress Committee during its Jorhat session.<sup>227</sup> Chabilal Upadhyaya took the leadership of the grazier

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<sup>224</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, *Identity Mobilization, Conflicts and Linguistic Minorities in India: A Case of Gorkha Community in Assam*, p.160.

<sup>225</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry *Buffer Ethnic Identity: A Case of Gorkhas in Chirang District, Bodoland Territorial Council, Assam*, p.31.

<sup>226</sup> The part of the resolution is quoted from Rudraman Thapa's article "Nepalis in the Assamese Nation-Building Process: A Socio-Political Study", in the *proceedings of the North East India Political Science Association*, Fourth Conference, Shillong 1995, p.77.

<sup>227</sup> R.Thapa,p.78.

in the Non-Cooperation Movement in Assam. Upadhyaya with his brother Hari Prasad Upadhyaya was arrested by colonial police and imprisoned him for a period of three months.<sup>228</sup>

On the appeal of Mahatma Gandhi during the Non-Co-operation Movement persons like Ramlal Upadhyaya, Hari Prasad Upadhaya, Tikaram Upadhaya, Brihaspati Upadhaya, Chabilal Upadhyaya<sup>229</sup> and many others had played prominent role from the Nepali speaking community. There were also others from other communities from the valley appealing people to abandon foreign goods and start wearing handmade garments and clothes-Swadeshi.

Similarly during the Civil Disobedience movement persons like Dalbir Singh Lohar, Bir Bahadur Chettri, Anantalal Sarma, Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan were imprisoned against their active involvement such as assembling people and spreading the value of Independence. During the Quit India Movement, the Gorkha graziers freedom fighters of Assam were also sentenced to rigorous imprisonment and kept in different jails of Assam, and also more than three hundred Nepali volunteers were recruited in Shanti Sena and Mrityu Bahini from different places of the Brahmaputra Valley.<sup>230</sup>

#### 4.2.2. POLITICAL-ECONOMY IN POSTCOLONIAL PERIOD

Crucial but very few existing academic literature on Gorkhas graziers of Assam has reflected the problem faced by such marginal group. It is found out from this study that the Gorkhas of Assam were protected as “Graziers and cultivators” under the Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 by the colonial administration.<sup>231</sup> However India’s independence, and with the amendment of the Act, a new chapter was added were in the Gorkhas status as “Graziers and cultivators” enshrined in the original form of the Act was redesigned and reshaped as

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<sup>228</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, ‘Impact of Bodoland Movement on the Gorkhas of Assam: A case study of Chirang District’ in (eds.) Bindu Ranjan Chakma and Rajshree Dutta, *Ethnic Integration in North-East India: Issues and Challenges*, New Delhi: Excel India Publishers,2013, p.35.

<sup>229</sup> Two books *Karmabir Chabilal Upadhyaya Jyo ko Karma Moi Jeevan Ko Roop-Rekha* and *The Bishnulal Upadhyaya, Chabil Upadhyaya* (in Assamese) cited in Bhandari, explains that Chabilal Upadhyaya had attended the meeting at Tezpur polo ground organized on occasion of Mahatma Gandhi’s visit in August 1921 as a part of Non-Co-operation Movement. After adjourning the meeting, the District police superintendent took Chabilal to Hazarpar Park in his own car and made lucrative offers to him. Police officer said: your country is Nepal. That country is independent. Do not oppose the Government. I will pay you Rs. 500/- per month, I will return your seized gun.” Upadhyaya a born patriot of Assam, boldly replied: “I am born in Assam and shall die in Assam, Nepal may be an independent country, but I have not seen Nepal. Assam is my motherland. I cannot leave the Congress”. At that juncture, Gandhiji was resting in Parmananda Agrawalla’s house. When these words reached the ears of Gandhiji, he praised Chabilal in his two valuable words- ‘Achchha Kiya’ (well done) cited in (Bhandari 1996: 54)

<sup>230</sup> Bhandari ,p.20.

<sup>231</sup> *Land Administration in protected Belts Blocks, Assam*,1990,cited in D.B. Chhetry and Bhabani Sharma,p.120.

“Protected Class” on December 5, 1947.<sup>232</sup> Under this amendment, it was assured that Gorkhas would be protected along with other tribal communities. But when the national policies were resisted by some Assamese nationalists leadership and other organizations, the Gorkhas of the state were labelled as ‘outsiders’, ‘foreigners’ as well as ‘anti-nationals’ in the state.<sup>233</sup> Moreover the Gorkhas of the Tribal belts and Blocks were considered as an obstacle to the all-round development in the tribal Belts and Blocks and they were excluded from the status of “Protected Class” in 1969. As per the government of Assam circulated strict instructions not to employ Nepali speakers in any of the semi-government and non-government institution including private hotels, domestic works etc.<sup>234</sup>

Since the Assamese nationalist movement of the 1960s, there was no clear stand of the Assamese political leaders and intellectuals towards Gorkha, Nepali speakers in Assam. In a way, the Gorkhas have been labelled as ‘foreigners’ or ‘outsiders’ by the leader’s. There has been an anti-Nepali sentiment during the ‘anti-foreigners’ agitation. Consequently, the frontal organizations like Assam Sahitya Sabha (a literary and intellectual organization) have welcomed the Gorkhas into the greater Assamese identity and nationalism without submerging their language and identity.<sup>235</sup> It was clarified that the attitude towards the Nepali language should be similar to the other indigenous languages of other tribes of Assam.<sup>236</sup>

On the one hand, the indigenous Gorkha’s population was suspected as ‘foreigners’ or ‘infiltrators from Nepal’ and a large number of Gorkhas were enlisted as the “Doubtful voters” in the voter list in Assam, and several Gorkha were evicted from their settlement in the name of ‘illegal encroachers’. On the other hand, the Gorkha youths were asked to join ‘anti-foreigners’ agitation led by the leaders of Assam movement.<sup>237</sup> A large number of the Gorkha youths also participated in the ‘anti-foreigners’ agitation where twelve youths from the community lost their lives when security personnel opened fire on the agitators.<sup>238</sup> Even the

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<sup>232</sup> D. B. Chhetry and Bhawani Prasad Sharma, *Protected Classes vis-à-vis Nepalese in Tribal belts and Blocks*, p.121

<sup>233</sup> D. B. Chhetry and Bhawani Prasad Sharma, p.122.

<sup>234</sup> Government of Assam, Political Department, No.PLA/763/74/22, Dated February 23, 1977 cited in, Chhetry and Sharma, p.122.

<sup>235</sup> Interviewed with Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, on.01.03.2018.

<sup>236</sup> Lopita Nat, ‘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*, New Delhi Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2003, reprinted in 2007, p. 208.

<sup>237</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, *Identity Mobilization, Conflicts and Linguistic Minorities in India: A Case of Gorkha Community in Assam*, p.314.

<sup>238</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, *Impact of Bodoland Movement on the Gorkhas of Assam: A case study of Chirang District*, p. 289.

government of Assam did not have a clear stand on the status of Gorkhas in Assam. When the Gorkhas of the state were constantly suspected as ‘foreigners’ or as ‘outsiders’ and the eviction of some Gorkha populated area went unabated, and the Government was ensured on the socio-economic development of the Gorkhas in the state and granting them the status of “Other Backward Class” (OBC) in 1993.<sup>239</sup> Nevertheless the government of Assam ensured to the Gorkha community of guarantying OBC status.

Until the emergence of the Bodoland movement, the Gorkhas were never called as ‘foreigners’ or ‘outsiders’ in the Bodo dominated areas. There was no evidence in the history of conflict between Gorkha and Bodo community as well as other communities in the belts/blocks and other parts of the state.<sup>240</sup> The Bodoland Movement was started as the reference movement of the Assam movement. It is to be noted that the event of understanding between the bodos and the Assamese, the Gorkhas were in their midst and also had greatly aggravated their status. This was so that the Gorkhas were now declared as ‘anti-nationalist’ in the proposal Bodoland in 1993. With the demand for Bodoland, Bodo’s dominated area got polarized between Assamese, Rajbongshi, Bengali (both Hindu and Muslim) since 1986. Due to such such polarized contestation(s) and conflict(s), the problems of tortures, murders, lootings and forceful eviction went unabated. During the Bodoland movement, however the Bodo leadership did not have a clear stand toward the Gorkhas in their dominated area.<sup>241</sup> Some Bodo leaders declared Gorkhas as ‘outsiders’ ‘foreigners’ and ‘anti-nationals’ whereas some other sections of Bodo political and cultural organizations considered Gorkhas or the Nepali speakers as their “brethren” demanding the all-round development of the community.<sup>242</sup>

As Chiranjib Haldar stated:

“The Gorkhas have been the vulnerable target of assertions of various ethnic groups fighting over scarcely available resources often leading to loss of home, hearth and livelihood in the Northeast.”<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Under 12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt10/09/1993 and 12011/21/95-BCC dt15/05/1995

<sup>240</sup> Harka Bahadur Chhetry, *Ek Singo Byaktitva, Suwansiri*, Dhemaji Assam, Central Committee, AAGSU, 2000, p.2.

<sup>241</sup> Interviewed with Tikendra Kumar Chhetry on 23.02.2018, Tezpur.

<sup>242</sup> Tikendra Kumar Chhetry, *Impact of Bodoland Movement on the Gorkhas of Assam: A case study of Chirang District*, p.289.

<sup>243</sup> Haldar, Chiranjib, *The Nepali influx in North-East*, 2007, IPCS, accessed on March 8, 2016, URL: <http://www.ipcs.org/article/nepal/the-nepali-influx-in-northeast-india-2226.html>

Lopita Nath asserted that the Gorkha community in Assam suffers from the twin issue of ‘foreigners’ and ‘displacement’.<sup>244</sup> Displacement in the Bodo areas can be regarded as a fallout of the ‘foreigners’ issue. While labelling the Nepalis as foreigners, the Asomiya press did not realize its long-term implications and its effects on the community. Both problems needed an immediate solution but it was ignored by the government. Similarly, the community suffered from under-development, deprivation, insecurity and lack of proper facilities.

Lopita Nath stated:

“Assam today is at a critical juncture with social and political forces sharply divided regarding their approach to identity and development. In this situation when the alignment of forces committed to communal amity and national integration is of paramount importance, Gorkha grievances need genuine attention and reasonable promotion.”<sup>245</sup>

In support of the above argument made by Lopita Nath and while understanding the problem of the Gorkhas in Assam, Anindita Dasgupta Stated:

“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.”<sup>246</sup>

The Nepali speakers living in Assam particularly in Bodo dominated areas for generations peacefully and maintaining a submerged identity got caught in the crossfire in various ethnic contestations.<sup>247</sup>

In conclusion it may be stated that, the practice of herding was a primary economic activity for the Darrang society. One can also observe that the Gorkha people were peasants, farmers, and cattle farmers. But the historicity of the community and their contribution to the state and region has been ignored and they were the victims of circumstances. In reality they were directly or indirectly rejected or replaced community in the Northeast.

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<sup>244</sup> Lopita Nath, *Migrant in flight: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalese in Northeast India*, p.56.

<sup>245</sup> Lopita Nath, *The Nepalese of Assam: Ideal Instance of Assimilation with the Mainstream*, p.209.

<sup>246</sup> Anindita Dasgupta, *Othering of the not-so-other: A study of the Nepalis in Assam*, p.230.

<sup>247</sup> Lopita Nath, *The Nepalese of Assam: Ideal Instance of Assimilation with the Mainstream*, p.211.

## CHAPTER-5

### CONCLUSION

It is well known that Pastoralism is one of the traditional occupations, the source of livelihood of people in the world since time immemorial. It is also to be noted that existence of pastoral communities has been witnessed in many parts of India, especially in the Himalayan region. It has been a successful strategy to support a population with the limited resource of land. Archaeological studies estimated that Pastoralism with careful optometric work demonstrated the gauge divergence between wild forms of livestock and their domesticated relatives. As it is popularly claimed, the trend of domestication of cattle or animal was started in Northeast Africa and is traced back to 9000 years ago. Pastoralism has been considered as an evolutionary stage in the history of human society. Along with cattle rearing, hunting and gathering are taken in different manner for daily food and sedentary agriculture are also considered as the crucial nature of Pastoralism in its initial phase.

From the study there are evidences that the certain sections of society who were marginalized and till today nomadic pastoralists were regarded as uncivilized and backward and were assimilated to the so called 'modernization'. The pastoralists groups were seen through the lense of exclusion in Assam and though it is a common phenomenon in every society, but varies from time to time and from place to place. Their way of living custom and tradition were considered underdeveloped and their voices and suffering are often ignored by the authority in negotiating the people.

The ancient history of the Indian subcontinent, the human mobility was its vital part as the region of the subcontinent was a larger stretched land without the present form of political barriers made with the boundary lines of political imaginary between geopolitical units called sovereign states. Social units were moving from one place to another searching for food, shelter and better livelihood. The emergence of nation-states in the form of western modernity fragmented the homogenously stretched geo-surface with imaginary political lines naming (inter)national border. Such political development found to affect the socioeconomic lives in the region yet, in large Pastoralism still stayed to exist at such juncture too in this subcontinent. The mobility of Pastoralists could be noticed. As one of the larger occupier region of the Himalayan belt, Assam is not unknown to the profession of Pastoralism. Assam, the pivotal state of northeast India, being strategically located at the base of the Eastern Himalayas, lies on the path of various migratory groups of various professions in different phases of history. Such

migratory groups at some time or the other in the region's history made their home and contributed a lot in weaving Assam into a pluralistic and multicultural society.

In this juncture, the pastoral community of Assam, particularly the Gorkha pastoralists of Assam have been a topic of discussion. Gorkha pastoralists in Assam constitute a community; this community emerged as an integral part of the societal world in Assam. Gorkha-Assam relation had a glorious past. Excavation of History of India shows that in the past the Gorkha state it had shared 'geography', 'history', culture social and economic relation with Nepal. The narratives starting from mythology to modern history depicts the picture of the relation between Gorkha and India vividly. The region shared by Gorkha state and India had witnessed the mobility of people from one to another end. The existing social relations, cultural exchanges and trade and commerce were rarely stopped or interrupted.

This exuberance, in regards to Gorkha Pastoral community and Assam connection, was more reflective. Since time immemorial both the Gorkhas Pastoral community and Assam had close bond of relationship. Starting from social, cultural and phenotypical relation to royal matrimonial ties and colonial facts, there had been ample evidence of the Assam-Nepal connection. The phases of matrimonial relations between royal courts of Gorkhas in Nepal and Assam were often highly evidenced in the history of Assam and Nepal respectively.

The British colonial history of India, particularly of Assam also adds a credible relation to Gorkha and Assam. The region that belongs to Assam, had witnessed a larger human mobility and settlement resulting in the transfer and distribution of diverse population group in British colonial period. Colonial officials established grazing settlement transforming Pastoralists into graziers. In doing so, they branded Gorkhas as industrious, laborious and valor. The colonial government opened up the valley to the Gorkha Pastoralists with their new brand name of graziers.

The colonial government was in need of a yielding labour force for all and various works like clearing the dense forests, domestic help and the Gorkhas were used to fill such gap. Passing ALRRA in 1886, the Gorkhas with the entire colonial Assam was brought within the purview of the Government. Especially the Gorkhas of their pastoral mode of occupation were recognized as Graziers and cultivators under this Act. The Graziers and cultivators were allotted forest land for the cultivation and rearing of cattle. As a Pastoral community, the vast expanse of greenery dense forests and hills, an abundance of wastelands were attracted to Gorkhas to settle permanently and ultimately emerged as grazier community.



Conducive weather and natural surroundings with dense forests, hills and wasteland added the huge enthusiasm to the Gorkha graziers to flourish their traditional profession of cattle mastering. Such natural surroundings were the idyllic scenario for cattle-breeding. The sincere engagement of this grazier community could bring high yielding result in the growth of cattle and its related products. Counting it as a profitable profession, colonial policymakers designed the tax brackets to harvest the same from the graziers. However the study finds that the grazing rights were gradually encroached by the colonial administrator to bring forth additional revenue. With that, the Gorkha graziers who were involved in cattle rearing and grazing as a profession became the first victim in Assam to pay grazing fees. This was because soon the government imposed enhanced rate to the pastoralists.

The skill of Gorkha professional graziers not only help colonial revenue exchequer but also extended economic contribution to other communities and shared social friendly relationship. It helped the villagers and other communities by providing milk products, adding fertility to the land. Showing their skills in their profession, Gorkha graziers encouraged to other communities to follow similar economic path. They did not restrict themselves to cattle rearing only but also started cultivation of crops like Maize, paddy, vegetables etc to meet their own demands and earned a good market and helped in economic growth.

As the Gorkha pastoral society was patriarchal, the male member was the head of the family, and they decided every matter of the family. Female folks were engaged in household activities such as food production and processing, taking care of their children, making different crafts, and milking.

The Government allowed the graziers to occupy wasted land and in this way it helped the Gorkha graziers to prove their expertise in cultivating along with cattle rearing. Manure that was created from domestication of the cattle helped them to yield a good amount of agro product. Apart from using in the agro- field, the graziers used manure of cattle as domestic fuel, such as the burning cakes. Despite the fact of their nomadic style of the profession, they frequently move their habitation camp. This gave a big reason to the forest department of colonial administration to collect the poll-tax from them. Pastoralists initially settled in the grazing reserves, i.e., in the Chapari areas of Brahmaputra valley. The Burachapari of Tezpur was recognized as a professional grazing reserves as early as in 1881. A large number of buffaloes and cows at Tengakhuti Panchmile area of the present Tezpur, near the bank of the river Mora Bhorali River, were reared by the Gorkha graziers. Soon after taxes were levied on grazing areas and cattle, the educated sections of the community could understand the subtle

attitude of the rulers toward them. The British adopted a policy of encouraging Gorkhas particularly in the foothills which could serve two purposes- one, the ex-soldiers could act as a 'Buffer' between the British administration and restive tribal chiefs and, two, it could provide more dependable source and channel for fresh recruitment of Gorkha soldiers without depending on the Gorkhas of Nepal. When the Gorkhas started to take an anti-colonial turn by participating in the process of Indian national movement, the colonial administration conspired to evict graziers from the settled region. The colonial administration started to burn down Gorkha settlements in Darrang and other areas in Brahmaputra valley. In 1920, foresters burnt the households of graziers of Kaziranga as an action against disobedience to a notice to excavate the forest within 24 hours.

The realization of the colonial rule by the emerging youth from the community led to anti-colonial feeling and started to raise the voice with the anti-colonial agitation in the valley, especially with the Assam Association which had already started the anti-colonial movement in the valley. The Assam Association, which had changed its name and virtually turned into a Congress platform in its Tezpur Session, had a special and last meeting at Jorhat with Chabilal Upadhyaya in the Chair in April 1921. Besides condemning the recent eviction of Nepali graziers from the Kaziranga Forest Reserves and police atrocities, the meeting also discussed the Non-Co-operation programme and organizational matters. Bhandari cites the Krishna Sharma Diary that Chabilal Upadhyaya took the leadership of the Nepali speaking community in the Non-Co-operation Movement in Assam.

In 1947, the Gorkha Graziers were recognized as "protected classes" and the Gorkha graziers of Assam remained as a constitutive part of the larger society in Assam. Postcolonial space in India, the product of anti-colonial modernity started to engage in nation building process. With the passage of time to consolidate strong nationhood become a complex scheme when the issue of identity emerged and becoming a grave confronting force. The concept of unified India with a strong central government with its involvement in the local affairs of federal units became a matter of concern. Assamese nationalist organizations and leaders perceived it a homogenizing trend of the dominant 'one state, one nation'. The cultural and ethnic identity emerged as a great concern among locally emerging middle-class leaders who argued that the Indian state had failed to respect the Assamese culture and identity.

Several agitations took place for the Assamese culture and identity during the 60s, 70s and 80s of the last century. An active agitation was begun in the 1960s and 1970s with the language

issue, and later, it emerged with multiple issues during the time of the Assam movement (1979-85). Throughout the movement, the policy of Indian government was challenged as it was perceived as a threat to Assamese nationalism by Assamese nationalist leaders.

During such agitations, the Gorkhas living in Assam were not left untouched. The Gorkha community was equated with the East Pakistani migrants and they were made a target of the anti-foreigners policy and one of the agendas of the agitators as well as the state machinery in the state. Prior to these movements it was also found that the Gorkhas were projected as a threat to the Assam tendencies. As a result the community had been excluded from the list of “protected class” categories through a notification on 27th June 1969 by the Assam government. The chief minister of Assam Mahendra Mohan Chaudhary asserted that ‘Nepali was one of the obstacles in all round development of Schedule Tribes and Scheduled Caste’ without any logical and evidential justification. In respect to this remark Harka Bahadur Chhetry, the ex-president of All Assam Gorkha Student Union stated that was an in just comment given by the chief minister. Even during the Assam Movement there was anti-Gorkha feeling in the state, though they have immense Contribution in the Freedom movement of India. Restricted Area Permit (RAP) was Implemented in Assam on July 30, 1976 in which it became mandatory for each Gorkha of Assam to produce documents regarding the India Citizenship while returning from any parts of the country or state i.e in Boxigaht, Srirampur gates and other check Gates, entrance gates to the Assam well as in other public places like railway stations, bus stations and elsewhere in Assam. It is found that Gorkha populated villages were enlisted for eviction, registered lands of the community members were kept under suspect. The agitators circulated a notice to Bharat Chhodo (quit India) against Gorkha families including the families of freedom fighters of the country. Thousands of bona fide Gorkhas were removed indiscriminately from the electoral rolls which had negative impact not only to the Government employee but also to the dairy-men and graziers, which were the traditional professions of the Gorkha community since the colonial days in the state.

The study also revealed that the Gorkha graziers’ population of the state of Assam has been passing through the certain transformation as discussed above. Due to their sparse population, they are rarely in focus of governmental, civil society, humanitarian and scholarly attention. Such positions and situations of the community have become a growing concern among the educated youths of the community. There have been organizational movements for socio-economic and political security for the community. The proto-middle classes from the community tries to provide leadership for voicing their grievances. Various organizations such

as AAGSU(All Assam Gorkha Student Union), AGS(Assam Gorkha Sanmilian) etc, have been organizing mass rallies, demonstrations and submitting memorandum to the centre and state governments as well as local autonomous bodies seeking security in the community.

In such situation, Gorkha graziers' community was trying to adjust itself to the larger society in Assam. Apart from cultivation and cattle rearing they were engaged in numerous professions in the State for instance as wage labourers who earned their daily livelihood working in various construction sites or mining areas. Some members of the community were engaged in government services like teachers, policemen, army, paramilitary forces, peon, driver, etc. Apart from this, a small section were running their small-scale business like shops, vegetable vendors, tea stalls etc.

Under such presence this community was found to maintain and preserve their customs and socio-cultural institution. Notwithstanding it, in certain cases, the assimilation of the community with larger society in the state of Assam and the region at large was detectable. Starting from the nature of the celebration of several festivals, food habits and relation in regards to matrimony and so forth, the extent of assimilation was noticeable. Apart from numbers of their community-based festivals the Gorkhas of Assam celebrated some more festivals which were not common among their counterparts who were living in the region. The active celebration of Bihu and other tribal festivals, as well as involvement in other local socio-cultural practices, was commonly visible among the Gorkhas of Assam. Although they were an indivisible part of Assam the space for Gorkha graziers was very limited in the history of Assam and the region.

At present Pastoralism plays an important role in Darrang district and there are a large number of graziers in Darrang district in which one can easily noticed that animal husbandary has become the main pillar of agriculture in a particular district and also in other districts of Assam. In this age of modern technology the Gorkhas still used the traditional method of ploughing their fields with cows and buffaloes in this particular district. Agriculture in the district has become main source of income for the Gorkha graziers since time immemorial but now even other communities like Bodo, Assamese, Adivasi, Behari, and Bengalis etc are engaged in this activity. With the passage of time the Gorkha communities in the disrtrict came under the umbrella of Assamese culture.

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