

THE RAPHAEL



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THE RABHAS OF WEST BENGAL



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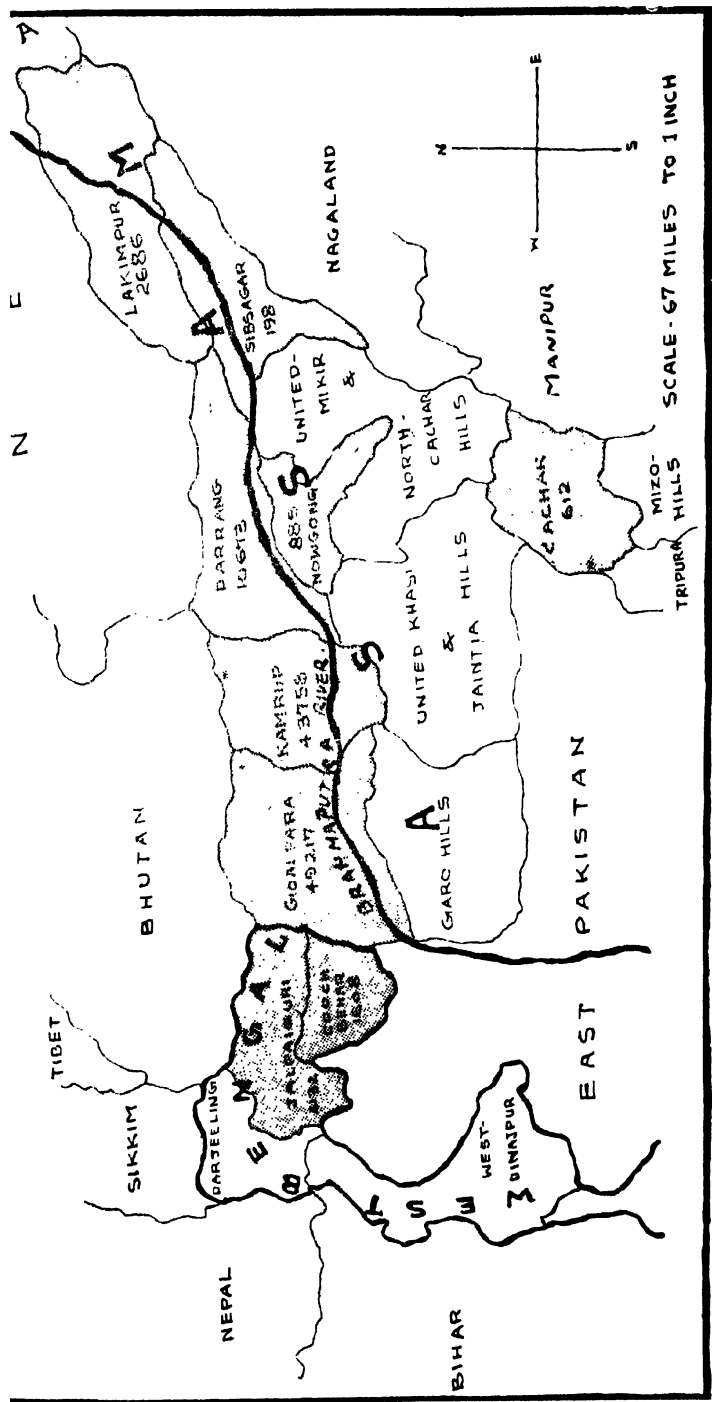
The Rabhas of West Bengal is an ethnographic study and is the ninth monograph of Special Series of publications of the Cultural Research Institute.

This study mainly deals with the present day culture-pattern of the Rabhas living in the villages of Cooch-Bihar and Jalpaiguri districts of the State of West Bengal with agriculture as their major subsistence activity. These Rabhas of the State depict a matri-patri culture-complex, the study of which is quite important from the sociological point of view and the interesting socio-cultural pattern gives it a distinctiveness from the other plains tribal groups of this State.

The present study is also expected to receive similar appreciations as in the case of previous publications of the Institute.

COVER

Spinning : A vanishing trait among the Rabhas of West Bengal.



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INTRODUCTION

Rabhas are a little known Scheduled Tribe community of West Bengal. According to 1961 Census there are 6,053 Rabhas in this State forming 0.29% of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the State. They are mainly found in the districts of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri, the districts quite adjacent to Assam State, where a large number of them are found to reside.

No detailed study has yet been done on this community of West Bengal. However, a few articles were published regarding this community and that too by the personnel of this Institute* In this connection it may be mentioned that the materials on the Rabhas of Assam are more readily available as a few studies have already been undertaken among them. Though the Rabhas are a little known Scheduled Tribe community of West Bengal, the Cultural Research Institute thought it worthwhile to undertake a systematic detailed study on them because of its interesting socio-cultural pattern generally not found among the tribal groups of this State. The present day Rabhas of the State depict a matri-patri culture-complex, the study of which is quite important from the sociological point of view.

Friend-Pariera mentioned that this tribal group had once a full-fledged matrilineal base and now "they are in a stage of transition from matriarchal to patriarchal form of life." It may so happen that the Rabhas who were originally a matrilineal people, gradually started imbibing patrilineal traits due to the influence of neighbouring patrilineal communities. And if that be agreed upon then it would be quite justifiable to state that they are passing through a transitional phase with matri-patri complex towards a full-fledged patrilineal form.

The Rabhas living in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts of this State are surrounded by dominant Rajbansi community of

* Raha, M. K. The Rabhas of West Bengal, Bull. of the Cultural Research Inst. Vol. I. No. 3 pp. 24-29 (1963); A note on the Rabha Kinship Terminology Proc. of the Indian Science Congress Association Abstract. 54th Session, pp. 491-492 (1967).

the region. Due to living side by side with them and due to recognising the Rajbansis as superior to them in every sphere of activities, these Rabhas have imbibed a good deal of Rajbansi culture traits as a result whereof the present day cultural pattern of the Rabhas present a profile which is quite similar to that of the Rajbansis. From the ecological point of view the Rabhas of this region may be divided into two groups--(1) those living in the villages having agriculture as their major subsistence activity and (2) those living in the Reserve Forest Bastis being employed as forest labourers by the Department of Forest, Government of West Bengal. These two groups of Rabhas have two different sets of cultural pattern. The cultural pattern of the agriculturist Rabhas is quite akin to the Rajbansi community whereas the forest dwellers have still retained many of their traditional socio-religious beliefs, customs and practices.

This study among the Rabhas of West Bengal was carried out during 1962-64 in different phases from Madhya and Dakshin Kamakhyaguri and Hemaguri of Kumargram P.S. and Dakshin Parokata of Alipurduar P.S. of Jalpaiguri district and Barasalbari of Tufangunj P.S. of Cooch Behar district. This study mainly embraces and presents the life and activities of the agriculturist Rabhas living in the villages, leaving aside those Rabhas who are forest dwellers. However, later on an attempt would be made to undertake a comparative study of these two groups of Rabhas and present the differences between them in their socio-cultural and economic life.

Lastly we take this opportunity to record our deep gratitude and heartfelt thanks to our informants and their co-villagers without whose help, co-operation and active assistance, this study would have not at all been possible. We also owe our sincere gratitude to all the official and non-official organisations and personnel who have rendered their co-operation in direct or in an indirect way to make the study a success. The different workers of the Research Institute also deserve special mention, without whose help and assistance this monograph would not have so early been published.

A.K.D.
M.K.R.

HISTORY AND ENVIRONMENT

Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts have a good deal of historical traditions and these are available from the accounts of some of the earlier authors such as Buchanon-Hamilton, Hunter, Glazier, Gruning and others. In order to give an idea of the historical background of these two districts some portions from the accounts of the earlier authors are being quoted below so that these may be helpful later on in understanding the life and culture of the Rabhas of these areas.

"In prehistoric times, the district (Jalpaiguri) was a part of the powerful kingdom of *Pragjyotisha* or *Kamrupa* as it was subsequently called, which extended as far West as Karatoya. There is a legend that a temple was originally erected on the site of the present temple at Jalpes by a Raja named Jalpeswar, in whose day the *Jalpes Lingam* first appeared. There are extensive remains at BHITARGARH, which is said to have formed the capital of Sudra king named Prithu. The Bengal Pal dynasty included this district in its dominions, so did the Khen Rajas—Niladhvaj, Chakradhwaj and Nilambar—of whom the first founded the city of Kamātāpur in Cooch Behar. It subsequently formed part of the Koch Kingdom founded by Biswa Singh and when that kingdom fell to pieces, the western part was annexed by the Mughals. There was a long struggle for the possession of Patgram and Bodā; but at the beginning of the eighteenth century they were nominally ceded to the Muhammadans, a cousin of the Cooch Behar Raj continuing to farm them on his behalf. After the Muhammadan conquest it was included in the frontier *faujdari* (magisterial jurisdiction) of Fakirkundi or Rangpur, and passed to the East India Company with the cessation of the Diwani in

1765 the Duars or lowland passes had fallen to the Bhotias, who found here the cultivable ground that their own bare mountains did not afford. They exercised predominant influence over the whole tract from the frontier of Sikkim as far east as Darrang, and frequently enforced claims of suzerainty over the enfeebled State of Cooch Behar Cooch Behar was delivered from the Bhotia tyranny by the treaty of 1773; but the Bhutan Duars, as they were called, remained for nearly a century longer in a state of anarchy. They were annexed after the Bhutan War of 1865; they were then divided into the Eastern and Western Duars, of which the former have since been incorporated with the District of Goalpara. In 1867 the Dalingkot sub-division of the Western Duars, which lies high up among the mountains, was added to Darjeeling, and the remaining part was united in 1869 with the Titalya sub-division of Rangpur to form the new District of Jalpaiguri.

The permanently settled portion of Jalpaiguri, which includes the old *chaklas* of Patgram and Boda and old Raj of Baikunthapur, has no history of its own apart from the parent District of Rangpur.”¹

“In 1765 the *Dewani* of Bengal, Behar and Orissa was conferred on the East India Company by Shah Alam, Emperor of Delhi, and it was not long before the Company entered into the relation with Cooch Behar. The aggression of the Bhutias, encouraged by the weak and disturbed state of the plains States, had been going on in increasing degree ever since the beginning of the 18th century, and by 1765 Bhutan was supreme in Cooch Behar and nothing could be done without the sanction of her representative. In 1772 the Raja of Cooch Behar, unable to support this intolerable state of affairs any longer, appealed to the Company and in 1773 a treaty was concluded whereby Cooch Behar became a Feudatory State of the English, and the latter immediately ejected the Bhutia forces from Cooch Behar.

A treaty was made by the Company with Bhutan in 1774 and the Raikat of the time, Darpa Deo, who was, according to Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, at the bottom of the whole of the events

1. The Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1908 New Edition pp. 32-33.

that led up to these troubles, was confirmed in such parts of Batrishazari or Baikunthapur as had not been already ceded to Bhutan, but a revenue was assessed on his lands and he was being deprived of all authority in Cooch Behar proper.”² “It is interesting to note that Darpa, in the petition of remonstrance against the heavy revenue assessed on him, which he addressed in 1777 to the Collector of Rangpur, calls himself Raja of Batrishazari and it seems he was popularly called Raja.

The Bhutias did not rest satisfied with the terms of the treaty of 1774, and soon set to work to wrest still more land from the unfortunate zamindars of Baikunthapur, whose interests suffered from the fact that the Government being desirous of reaching Tibet through Bhutan, were apparently more anxious to carry out this policy and conciliate Bhutan than to scrutinise very carefully the merits of other party’s claims. The result was that by persistent application on the part of Deb Raja to the Governor-General, the Bhutias obtained a large tract of Baikunthapur lying on the east of the Teesta, containing the celebrated temple of *Siva* at Jalpesh, and also a village west of the Teesta named Ambari Falakata, right in the centre of the Zamindary.”³

“Baikunthapur, was during the latter part of the 18th century not much more fortunate in its relation with its western neighbour, Nepal, than in those with Bhutan, for from 1780 to 1786 raids were made almost annually into Baikunthapur by the Nepalese on the pretence that the *fouzdar* of the Sikkim Raja had taken refuge there.”⁴

“Baikunthapur was also infested by *Sanyasis* who ravaged the country in armed bands amounting to several hundreds.

An interesting link between Baikunthapur and the outer world is contained in a letter which came in 1783 from the Governor-General to convey the thanks of, and some presents from the Emperor of China to the Talukdar of Batrishazari (Zamindary of Baikunthapur) for helping on some elephants

2. Mitra, A 1953a District Handbooks, Jalpaiguri, Census 1951, p. 2.

3. Op. cit p-ii

4. Op. cit p. ii-iii

which had been sent from the Raja of Nepal to the Emperor and had passed through Baikunthapur.

The country west of Teesta belongs to the Raja of Baikunthapur who had in the second half of the 18th century become quite powerful with the help of *Sanyasis*. In January, 1773, the Committee of Circuit of the East India Company considered that it was very necessary for the security of the districts of Dinajpur and Rangpur to engage and subdue the Raja of Baikunthapur and accordingly on the 20th January, 1773, required of Capt. Stewart to proceed against the Raja Capt. Stewart acted promptly and on 3rd February, 1773, made a report from his camp in Jalpaiguri to P. M. Dacres' and the Gentlemen of the Committee of the Circuit."⁵

"In 1783, Captain Turner was deputed to Bhutan, with a view to promoting commercial intercourse, but his mission proved unsuccessful. From this period little intercourse took place until the occupation of Assam by the English in 1826. It was then discovered that the Bhutias had usurped several tracts of lowland lying to the foot of the mountains, called the Duars or passes, and for these they agreed to pay a small tribute. They failed to do so, however, and availed themselves of the command of the passes to commit depredations within Indian territory."⁶

When all the missions failed to obtain redress and security were unsuccessful, "the Assam Duars were wrested from the Bhutias and the British Government covenanted to pay £1,000 per annum to Bhutan, during good behaviour as compensation for the loss. Continued outrages and aggressions were, however, committed by the Bhutias on the British subjects in the Duars."⁷

From the published Summary of Affairs in the Foreign Department of the Government of India, from 1864 to 1869, it was understood that Mr. Ashley Eden C.S. who went to Bhutan in the cold months of 1863 in order to stop these depredations and outrages, came back unsuccessfully in April 1864.

He had been subjected to gross insults, and obliged by force

5. Op. cit p. iii

6. Op. cit

7. Op. cit p. iv

to sign two papers, agreeing to make over the Assam and Bengal Duars to Bhutan on Mr. Eden's return, the Government at once disavowed the treaty which he had been forced to sign, suspended all communication with the Bhutan Government, and strengthened the police force on the frontier. In June, the Government addressed letters to Deb and Dharam Rajas⁸ permanently annexing the district of Ambari Falakata (the Bengal Duars), and declaring that the annual payments previously made by the British Government to Bhutan of £200 as rent for Ambari Falakata, and of £1,000 as revenue from Assam Duars had ceased for ever on the 12th November, 1864, Government issued a proclamation permanently annexing the Bengal Duars; Meantime in the beginning of 1865 the Bhutias appear to have resolved on a bold effort to recover the territory they had lost, and to drive the invaders from their country. They suddenly debouched in force along the frontier, threatening the whole line of military posts” “On the 15th March, General Tytler reoccupied the position at Tajgaon and on the 2nd April General Tombs recaptured Diwangiri. With these two affairs all active operations ceased. The Bhutias lost heart, and made no further efforts to regain their ground, or to molest the force which had taken possession of the Duars and their forts. Active hostilities were brought to a close by the setting of the rains and the Bhutan authorities evinced an earnest inclination to come to terms The Bhutan authorities were soon convinced by the reality of these preparations, that the Government of India was in earnest, and they accepted the terms which had been offered them.

A treaty of peace on these terms was accordingly concluded on the 11th November, 1865, and it was fairly anticipated that the material guarantee for the good conduct of the Bhutia Chiefs which the Government possessed, in the shape of withholding payment, either altogether or in part, of the annual grant, would secure the peace of the border, and generally put a stop to the raids and scenes of rapine which were of such frequent occur-

8. The Deb Raja is the administrative or temporal ruler whereas the Dharam Raja is the Spiritual Chief of Bhutan.

9. Mitra, A 1953a Op. cit p. iv

rence in former years. Under the treaty arrangement with the Bhutan Government an annual subsidy of Rs. 50,000 is paid to Government. Payment is made on the 10th January each year by the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri at Buxa.”¹⁰

“In 1866-67 the Government of Bhutan addressed the Commissioner of Rajsahi Division pointing out that a small tract of hilly country east of Buxa, and known as *Deosthan*, had been ceded to the British Government in 1864-65, but was held sacred by the Bhutias and they asked that this land which was quite useless to us, may be returned to them. The Government of India received the request favourably, and directed that the land should be given up to Bhutan. About this time it was found that a tract of table land also situated east of Buxa, which belonged to the Bhutan Government was being made use of by the people for the purpose of catching wild elephants in the reserve forests of our Government under licenses granted to them by the Dev Raja of Bhutan.”¹¹ This tract of land, on being pointed out by Mr. Sunder was visited by the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Dalton, who afterwards, instead of allowing the Bhutias to have the aforesaid table land which had apparently been given to them by mistake, during the settlement of boundaries in 1864-65, decided to extend the boundary further north, along the crest of Schinchula range of hills. When this was pointed out to the Foreign Department of the Government of India, they sanctioned the proposal and directed to purchase the land from the Government of Bhutan.

“Accordingly the then Divisional Commissioner authorised me in his letter No. 567 Jct., dated the 10th March, 1888, to negotiate for purchase of the land. The Dev Raja of Bhutan sent an envoy whom I met at Buxa and we arranged matters to the satisfaction of both the Governments without a hitch of any kind. I made over the Deosthan land together with Rs. 10,000 to the Bhutan Government and received in lieu, through their envoy the

10. Op. cit p. iv-v

11. Sunder D. H. E. 1836 Survey and Settlement Report of the Western Duars in the District of Jalpaiguri 1889-1895, p. 21

whole of the tract of country which is known as the Jainti lands, "covering about 21.43 square miles, or 13,719.05 acres."¹²

As the country between Jalpaiguri and Bhutan is liable to diluvian and alluvion, almost every year an annual conference takes place between the Bhutan authorities and the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri and Bhutan. Another boundary which was fixed rather late was the Jalpaiguri-Cooch Behar boundary, Cooch Behar having been until 1950 a princely State. In 1895 a boundary dispute arose between Jalpaiguri district and the State of Cooch Behar. The two Governments directed a re-demarcation. It was mutually agreed that both sides should abide by the line shown in the map of O'Donel in 1868-70. The relaying was accepted in September 1899, and the re-adjustment was finalised in 1901. The matter, however, was reopened in 1910 and the map was relaid in 1910-11 by O. J. Hart of the Survey Department of the Bengal Government. The work of Hart was accepted by the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and confirmed by the Government of India in November, 1914 and April, 1915, respectively.

"The territory of modern Cooch Behar formed part of the ancient Kingdom of Kamarupa and had no separate existence of its own as a district principally before the division of that country between King Naranarayan and his brother Sukladhwaja, commonly known as Chilarai, in the middle of the 16th century.

The early history of this district, therefore, legitimately belongs to the wider history of Kamrupa The earliest materials available having an account of Kamrupa which now designates only one district of Assam, was formerly applied to the whole of the eastern province of ancient 'Bharat Barsha.' In the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* the country is called Pragjyotisa and its ruler of Pragjyotiseswara. Kamarupa seems to be synonymous with Pragjyotisa. The term Kamrupa is first mentioned in some *Puranas* and *Tantras*. In very early times Pragjyotisa did not perhaps include the whole of Kamrupa of later date. The ancient kingdoms of Sonitapura, Jayanta, Kachhar and probably also the country of Kudin, which were in existence in the *Mahabharata* period, seem to have subsequently gone under the control of

Pragjyotispura, and the united territory was named Kamrupa How ancient the Kingdom of Pragjyotisa was, cannot be ascertained with any great certitude. There is no definite information regarding the territorial extent of the ancient Kingdom of Kamrupa. The boundaries appear to have varied in different times. In the *Ramayana*, Pragjyotisa is described being situated near the sea. This is corroborated by the *Mahabharata* where Bhagadatta's territories are described as being extended to the sea coast. The *Jyoginita*¹³, which is one of the greatest sources of the eastern Kingdoms, describes the country as being of triangular shape, 100 *Yojanas* (1 *Yojana* = 8 miles) in length and 30 in breadth.”¹³

The whole of the northern part of Bengal and southern part of Assam were popularly known as Duars. After the annexation of the Duars in 1864, they were divided into the Eastern and Western Duars, the former of which now forms part of the district of Goalpara in Assam. The Western Duars was divided into three *tahsils*, viz, the Sadar, the tract of the country between the Tista and Torsa rivers with its headquarter at Mainaguri, the Buxa *tahsil*, extending from the Torsa river to the Sankos river with its headquarter at Alipur, and the Dalingkot *tahsil*, which includes the mountainous part of the annexed territory In 1867-68 Buxa was formed into a regular sub-division. In January, 1867 the Dalingkot *tahsil* was transferred to the Darjeeling district and at the same time the criminal jurisdiction of Titalya sub-division of Rangpur comprising the police circles of Boda, Sanyasikata (now Rajganj) and Fakirganj (now Jalpaiguri) was made over to the Deputy Commissioner of the Western Duars, the civil and revenue jurisdictions remaining with Rangpur. This arrangement lasted until January 1st, 1869, when as the Titalya sub-division was separated completely from Rangpur (with the exception of civil jurisdiction) and was united to the Western Duars to form the district of Jalpaiguri. The Deputy Commissioner removed his headquarter from Mainaguri to Jalpaiguri town on the west bank of the Tista and the district was divided

13. Mitra, A 1953b Cooch Behar District Handbook, Census 1951, p. xxvii

into two sub-divisions, the Sadar which includes the former Titalya sub-division and that part of Western Duars which lies between the Tista and the Jaldhaka river, and the Falakata sub-division which comprised the rest of the Buxa sub-division the headquarters of the Sub-divisional Officer being removed from Buxa to Falakata. The headquarters of this sub-division were again transferred to Alipur in 1876. On April 1st, 1870, the civil jurisdiction of the Titalya sub-division was vested in Jalpaiguri and the Patgram police circle was transferred to the Falakata sub-division. In 1874-75 Patgram was attached to the Sadar sub-division and since this change the Jalpaiguri district has remained unaltered."¹⁴

At present Jalpaiguri district had two sub-divisions—Sadar or Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar, with the district headquarter at Jalpaiguri town. The Sadar sub-division covers the police stations of Jalpaiguri, Rajganj, Mainaguri, Nagrakata, Dhupguri, Mal and Matiali, and the Alipurduar sub-division consists of the police stations of Madarihat, Falakata, Kalchini, Alipurduar and Kumargram.

Cooch Behar district has five sub-divisions at present. These are (1) Sadar or Cooch Behar (2) Tufanganj (3) Dinhata (4) Mathabhanga and (5) Mekhliganj, with their headquarters at the towns of their respective names, the district headquarter being Cooch Behar town. The Sadar sub-division covers the police station of Cooch Behar, Tufanganj sub-division of Tufanganj police station, Dinhata sub-division of Dinhata and Sitai police stations, Mathabhanga sub-division of Mathabhanga and Sital Kuchi police stations, and Mekhliganj sub-division of Mekhliganj and Haldibari police stations.

Cooch Behar is situated on the north-east part of West Bengal and until January 1950 used to be a Feudatory State in Political relations first with the British Government and then with the Government of India. On the 28th August, 1949, an agreement was contracted between the Governor-General of India and His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar which came to be known as the Cooch Behar Merger Agreement, in which His Highness,

14. Mitra, A. 1953a Op. cit. p. 1.

the Maharaja of Cooch Behar ceded to the Dominion Government (Government of India) full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to the governance of the State and agreed to transfer the administration of the State to the Dominion Government (Government of India) on the 12th day of September, 1949.

GEOLOGY

Both Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts are made up of alluvial deposits except the hilly regions. The alluvium consists of coarse gravels near the hills, and sandy clay and sandy loam further south. The tract between the Jaldhaka and Teesta possesses a patch of black clay. The Buxa-Jainti hills are composed of a series of rocks, known as the Buxa series consisting of a variegated states of quartzite and dolomites. North of the 2-3 miles wide band of Buxa series lies a series of phyllites, schists and quartzites known as Daling series.

CLIMATE

Both the districts owing to their proximity to the Himalayan range have much heavier rainfall, and the temperature is rarely excessive. November, December and January are the driest months, though some rain usually falls even during these months. The rains are heavy during June, July and August when the atmosphere is saturated with moisture.

From the end of March warm season starts and reaches its maximum in the month of June and thereafter the rain starts and the temperature gradually comes down. The winter season starts from October, reaches its maximum intensity in January and becomes warmer from the end of February.

The rainfall of these areas is proverbially long and persistent. During rainy season, it rains almost continuously day and night for days and sometimes for weeks together. During these outbursts of foul weather the low lands and the fields are submerged, the rivers are flooded, the roads come under water at places, and communications become difficult if not impossible.

RIVER SYSTEM

Both Jalpaiguri and Cooch-Bihar districts have networks of rivers and small streams. Majority of these rivers have risen from the Himalayas, and entered these districts from Western Duars. In Jalpaiguri district the rivers flow from west to east whereas in Cooch-Bihar district they are from north-east to south-west. The banks are generally abrupt giving proof of the willy nature of the stream and the beds sandy, mostly with a beach on one side of the stream. Boulders, rocks and gravels are common in the beds of rivers, as they are washed down from the hills. Generally tame and shallow in the dry season they become very turbulent and fierce during the monsoon. They are subject to floods or sudden onrushes of water due to heavy rain on the hill slopes. A little more than ordinary rainfall in the hills is followed by a sudden rise of waters, which overflow the banks and down the country for miles around. Crops and cattle are often damaged or even destroyed.....Towards the end of October the rivers begin to dwindle and by March even the mightiest of them, except the Teesta, are nothing but tame, narrow, shallow and limpid streams meandering through innumerable sandbanks.

The Mahananda and the Teesta are the principal rivers of districts and the other important rivers are the Jaldhaka, the Torsa, the Kaljani, the Baidak, and the Sonkos.

FLORA

In the northern part of Bengal, a large number of various species of trees is available and these trees are found in various forests and also in country side. The following important vegetation of northern part of West Bengal are worth mentioning—Bahera (*Terminalia Belerica*), Bot (*Ficus Bengalensis*), Champ (*Michelia Champaca*), Chestnut (*Castanopsis tribuloides*), Endi (*Ricinus communis*), Gab or Gendu (*Diospyros embryopetris*), Kadam (*Anthocephalus Cadamba*), Khair (*Acacia catechu*), Mohwa (*Engelhardtia spicata*), Nim (*Melia azadirachta*), Pakus

(*Ficus cordifolia*), Palas (*Butea frondosa*), Pipal (*Ficus religiosa*), Saj (*Terminalia tomentosa*), Sal (*Shorea robusta*), Siris (*Albizia procera*), Sissu (*Dalbergia sissoo*) etc.

Of these trees, some (e. g. Sal, Sisso etc) are used for the manufacture of agricultural implements and for house building purposes. Besides above trees and shrubs; various fruit trees are also found, most common of these are—Am (*Mangifera indica*), Atta (*Anona squamosa*), Bel (*Aegle marmelos*), Chalta (*Dillenia indica*), Jambura (*Citrus decumana*), Jalpai (*Elacocarpus serratus*), Kela (*Musa sapientum*), Kalajam (*Eugenia jambolana*), Kanthal (*Artocarpus integrifolia*), Lichu (*Litchi Chinensis*), Santra or Kamala (*Citrus aurantium*) etc. Various types of grasses are also found in both Jalpaiguri and Cooch-Bihar districts.

FAUNA

Both the districts, specially the Jalpaiguri, are famous for big games. The heavy grass and reed fields are the favourite places for many big games. At present due to quick clearing of these grass and reed fields, these animals have taken shelter in different dense Reserve Forests and by law these wild lives are given protection as in the past these animals become prey to hunters in innumerable number causing rapid decrease in number. Of these Reserve Forests the following are worth mentioning—Apalchand, Lower and upper Tondou and Moraghat in Jalpaiguri Division, Bamni, Kodalbustee, Chilpata, Panbari, Buxa, Tashigaon, Jainti, Gangutia, Raimatong, Rajabhatkhawa, Bhutia, Rydak and Chipra of Cooch Behar and Buxa Divisions. The game sanctuaries at Garumara and Jaldapara are famous for rhinoceros, bison and the elephant, and Chapramari is famous for birds. The following are some of the important wild animals—tiger, leopard, rhinoceros, bison, elephant, various types of bear, jungle cat, civet cat, wild dog, wild pig, wild buffalo, various types of deer, etc. Besides the above animals various kinds of birds, snakes and other reptiles, amphibia and insects are also found. The rivers streams and other water sources contain fishes, crabs and tortoise.

LAND AND PEOPLE

JALPAIGURI

The District of Jalpaiguri is situated in the northern region of the Jalpaiguri Division of West Bengal. It derives its name "from *Jalpai*, an olive tree, and *Guri*, a place; it means therefore, the place of *Olive* trees, of which there used at one time to be many in the town."¹⁵ This district is somewhat rectangular in shape lying lengthwise in the east-west direction. The principal town and the administrative head-quarter of the district is Jalpaiguri situated on the west or right bank of the Teesta river in 26° 32' North and 88° 43' East. Jalpaiguri District is situated between 26° 16' and 27° 0' North latitude and between 88° 25' and 89° 53' East longitude, with an area of 2,407 square miles (6,234 sq. km.) according to the Surveyor General of India.

In Table I, the changes in area (in square miles) and variation of population of this District in different decades have been furnished in order to give some idea regarding the matter.

The change in area prior to 1941 is due to minor alternations and adjustment of areas of this district with the neighbouring districts and States. But the change in area after 1941 is owing to the partition of undivided India in 1947. "Under the Radcliffe Award the southern police stations of Tetulia, Pachagar, Boda, Debiganj and Pathgram comprising of a total of 672-square miles were given away to East Bengal. The area of this district was thus reduced from a total of 3,050 square miles on the 14th August 1947 to a total of 2,378 square miles on the following

15. Gruning, J. F. 1911 District Gazetteer, Jalpaiguri, p. i.

Table 1.
Area and population of Jalpaiguri District, 1881-1961.

Census Year	1961	1951	1941	1931	
Area (sq. miles)	2,407(a) 2,382.9(b)	2,374.4	2,523	2,405	
Population	1,359,292	914,538	845,702	739,160	
Census year	1921	1911*	1901	1891*	1881
Area	2427	2381	2424	2424	2346
Population	694,056	661,282	544,906	433,334	316,575

day.”¹⁶ Thereafter due to some other alterations and adjustments changes in area in 1951 to 1961 have taken place. As regards variation of population it may be stated that from 1881 to 1961 the population has increased by 1,042,717 souls. The spectacular increase of population may be noticed during the periods 1872 and 1901 and 1951 to 1961 respectively. In 1872 the population of this district was only 201,651. Owing to the rapid establishment of tea gardens between 1872 and 1881 the population increased by 114,916 persons. This increase of population remained almost constant in each Census year i.e. by one lac and a few thousands due to the gradual development of tea-industry along with the natural growth of population. But the abrupt increase of the population from 1951 to 1961 which is roughly four and half lacs, is due mainly to heavy migration of refugees from East Pakistan.

This district comprises of two well defined tracts which

*The figures for 1911 and 1891 for Jalpaiguri are probably inflated by the inclusion of a number of enumerators' block in several thanas.

(a) According to the Surveyor General of India.

(b) Represents the area figures computed for purposes of the Census from last published jurisdiction list and other sources.

16. Mitra, A 1953a op. cit p. vii

differ alike in history and administration. The older portion situated mostly to the west of the Teesta, is permanently settled, and resembles closely the district of Rangpur of East Pakistan, whereas in the west of Teesta and between Bhutan on the north and Cooch-Bihar in the south, lies the Western Duars, which was annexed from Bhutan in 1864. Regarding Western Duars, Hunter writes, "The Bhutan Duars, the tract which was annexed at the close of the war of 1864, is a flat level strip of country, averaging about twenty miles in width, running along the foot of the Bhutan hills, etc. its chief characteristics are the numerous rivers and hill streams which intersect it in every direction and the large tracts of Sal forest and heavy grass and reed jungle, interspersed, with wild cardamoms"¹⁷

COOCH BEHAR

The district of Cooch Behar is also situated in the northern region of the Jalpaiguri Division. Hunter states that the name of the district has been derived from the Sanskrit word *Vihara* (Bengali *Bihar*), meaning recreation, especially applied to the Buddhist monastery.¹⁸ He further states that the appellation in the opinion of the Raja, "who repudiates the theory of a Koch descent is, *nij Behar*, the word *nij*, "own" (peculiar) being applied to distinguish the country from Bihar proper."¹⁹ The original name of the district was Kamrup. "Even during the reign of the last but one line of kings, the Khens, about 450 years ago the country was known by that name".²⁰ The country derived its name 'Cooch Bihar' in the 16th century when the Koch kings had come into power. "The name Cooch Behar is a compound of two words: 'Cooch' and 'Behar.' The term Cooch is a corrupted form of Coch or Koch, being the name of a race of

17. Hunter, W. B. 1876 Statistical Account of the District of Jalpaiguri p. 224.

18. Hunter, W. W. 1876 Statistical Account of the District of Cooch Behar, p. 1.

19. Op. cit,

20. Mitra, A 1953b Op. cit p. v.

people, inhabiting a large tract of country to the north-east of Bengal; and Behar and more properly *Vihara* denotes abode or sport."²¹ Therefore 'Cooch-Bihar' means the land of the Koches. The district is somewhat irregular in shape particularly towards the south where it meets with Rangpur district (of East Pakistan) and Jalpaiguri district. This district lies between 25° 58' and 26° 33' North latitude and between 88° 48' and 89° 55' East longitude. The present area according to 1961 Census is 3,339 sq. Km. (1289.0 sq. miles) according to the Surveyor General of India.

In Table II, changes in area and population in various Census years have been dealt with.

Table II

Area and population of Cooch Behar District, 1881-1961

Census Years	1961	1951	1941	1931	
Area (miles)	1,289(a) 1,313.9(b)	1,322	1,318	1,318	
Population	1,019,806	671,158	640,842	590,386	
Census Year	1921	1911	1901	1891	1881
Area (miles)	1318	1,307	1,307	1,307	1,307
Popula- tion	592,489	592,952	556,947	578,868	602,624

21. Op. cit

(a) Represents the area figures furnished by the Surveyor General of India.

(b) Represents the area figures computed for purposes of the Census from last published jurisdiction lists and other sources.

BOUNDARY

(i) *Jalpaiguri*

Jalpaiguri district is at present bounded on the north by the district of Darjeeling and the independent State of Bhutan, on the south by the district of Rangpur (now in East Pakistan) and Cooch Behar, on the west by the District of Darjeeling and East Pakistan and on the east by the Eastern Duars in Assam which form a part of the district of Goalpara, the right bank of the river Sankos making the boundary line. "Before 1787, the western boundary used to be the present bed of the Mahananda or approximately the old bed of the Teesta. After 1787 the western boundary of the district has been provided by the Mahananda while the eastern boundary by the Sankos river".²²

(ii) *Cooch-Behar*

The district of Cooch-Behar is at present, bounded in the north by the Western Duars of Jalpaiguri district, on the east by the Guma Duars and the Pargana Gurla of the Goalpara district of Assam and Parganas Gaibari and Bhitbarbande of Rangpur (East Pakistan). The rivers Gadadhar, Sankos, Beguni and Murududkumar one time or another formed the boundary line of the district on the east for a considerable distance. The southern boundary is demarcated by *chakla* Purbabhag and Parganas Kakina and Kajirhat in the district of Rangpur and Pargana Patgram in the District of Jalpaiguri, on the west it is bounded by the Pargana Kazirhat and *chakla* Boda of East Pakistan.

22. Mitra, A 1953a op. cit p. ix.

RABHAS AND THEIR AFFINITY

AFFINITY, ORIGIN, MIGRATION

The Rabhas belong to Mongoloid stock having similarity with other members of Bodo group such as Garo, Kachari, Mech, Koch, Hajong and others. Most of the Rabhas of Jalpaiguri district call themselves Rabhas but at present due to different Hinduistic movements, some of them instead of calling themselves Rabhas, often declare themselves as *Kshatriyas*. According to Buchanan-Hamilton²³ the Rabhas have a good deal of similarities in socio-religious and material life with those of the Pani-Koch. Dalton²⁴ on the other hand, is of opinion that the Rabhas and the Hajongs are the branches of *Kachari* race and connected with the Garos. According to Hodgson²⁵ they belong to the *Great Bodo or Mech family*. It is also considered that Pani-Koch and the Rabhas have the same lineage and the latter has their connection with the Garos.²⁶ Porter²⁷ treats them as a branch of the *Bodo* group, whereas Rev. Endle²⁸ with the Kacharis (*Datiyal Kachari* or Border Kachari). In this connec-

23. Mitra, A 1953a op. cit p. cxxxviii.

24. Dalton, E. T. 1872 Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, p. 87.

25. Hodgson, B. H. 1880 Miscellaneous Essays relating to Indian Subjects, London p. 105.

26. Dalton, op. cit, p. 92.

27. Porter, A.E. 1933 Census of India 1931 Vol. V. Bengal & Assam, Pt. I p. 597.

28. Endle, Rev.S., 1911 The Kacharis, p. 83.

tion Waddell remarks, "This (*Rabhas*, *Totala* or *Datiyal Kacharis*) is an offshoot of the Kachari tribe which have adopted a thin veneer of Hinduism, thinner than the Koch."²⁹ Allen opines, "the Rabhas are a section of the Bodo race and appear to be an offshoot of the Garos".³⁰ Regarding their affinity Gait says, "There seems to be a good deal of uncertainty as to what these people really are. In Lower Assam it is asserted that they are an offshoot of the Garos while in Kamrup and Darrang it is thought that they are Kacharis on the road to Hinduism. That they belong to the Great Bodo Family is certain, but it is not equally clear that the Rabhas are more closely allied to any one tribe of that group than to another. On the whole, therefore, although some Kacharias and Garos may have become Rabhas just as others have become Koches, it seems probable that the Rabhas are in reality a distinct tribe."³¹ Playfair³² on the other hand has pointed out some linguistic and cultural similarities between the Rabhas and the Garos. He has shown the linguistic similarities between the Rangdania (a section of the Rabhas) and the Atong and the Ruga (two divisions of the Garos). He further states, "while I class all other Garo divisions with the Kacharies and believe that they represent the primitive Bodo, I think that the Atongs, and the Rugas (divisions of the Garos) are a different stock and have a common origin with the Rabhas and Kooches."³³ Friend-Pereira has also shown the genetical relation between the Atongs and the Rangdania by stating a legend which narrates that, "the Atong (a section of the Garos) are the kinsmen of the Rangdania, both of them being descendants of two sisters Sae Bonga and Bonge Kata. The elder sister married a Garo and was the mother of the Atong clan. But the younger one had a liaison with her own brother and the

29. Waddell, L. A. 1900 The Tribes of Brahmaputra Valley, J.A.S.B. Vol. LXIX Pt. III p. 65.

30. Allen, B. C. 1903 Assam District Gazetter, Vol. III, Goalpara, p. 49.

31. Gait, E. A. 1892 Census of Assam, 1891 Vol. I Report, Pt. II, p. 232.

32. Playfair, A 1909 The Garos, p. 19-22.

33. Op. cit, p. 22.

guilty couple being driven away by their people became the progenitors of the Rangdania Rabhas.”³⁴ He also marks the striking linguistic similarity between the Atong (Garó) and the Rangdania (Rabha) dialects, and this led him to think that, at some time in their history they lived in contact with each other.³⁵ Baines affirms that this tribe is Bodo, but he is not certain whether the Rabhas belong to a distinct community or a branch of the Garos or merely a branch of the Bodo.³⁶

Regarding the origin and migration of the Rangdania section of the Rabhas, Friend-Pereira says, “The Rangdania Rabhas have a tradition that in earlier period of their history they dwelt in the Garó hills, and that after many conflicts with the Garó tribes they were finally driven down to the plains which they now occupy. They say the cradle of their race was at Sumsang, which is the Garó name for the modern Someswari river and the valley it waters before its descent into Pargana Shusang in the district of Mymensing.”³⁷ The legend prevalent among the Garos is that when Husheng was the chief of the powerful Atong clan, he brought the Rabhas into the Someswari valley to till the land, because at that time the Garos, being nomad, were not acquainted with more settled method of husbandry. Afterwards when the Brahman minister of the Husheng treacherously slew his master and seized the supreme power, a period of bloodshed and anarchy followed, and the Rabhas were driven out of the valley.³⁸ Rev. Endle states, “Their origin is imperfectly known, but they are said to be descended from a Hindu father who lost caste by marrying a Kachari woman.”³⁹ Anderson views that the Rabhas appear to be a Hindu name for the tribe and many of the so-called Rabhas are Kacharis.⁴⁰ Major Playfair believes that most of the

34. Friend-Pereira, J. E. 1912. *The Rabhas in Census of Assam 1911* Vol. 111 pt. I, p. 145.

35. *Opcit* p. 142.

36. Baines, Sir A. 1912 *Ethnography (Castes & Tribes)* p. 129.

37. Friend-Pereira, J. E. *Opcit*, p. 145.

38. *Opcit*.

39. Endle, Rev. S., *Opcit*.

40. Grierson, G. A., 1903 *Linguistic Survey of India* Vol. III, pt. II. p. 105.

tribes belonging to Bodo group such as the Kacharis, the Garos, the Rabhas and the Koches migrated from Tibetan regions. According to him the migration took place from that region to Brahmaputra valley and thence to the hills of Assam in the remote past. He further states that the Rabhas after migrating from Tibetan region occupied the Garo Hills wherefrom they came down to the plains.⁴¹ That their original habitat was the region bordering the northern slopes of the Garo Hills, is also supported by the fact that certain section of the tribe which lives on the border of that district has no word for the north and south but describe the former by the word *Bhota-hi-chu* or Bhutan and the latter by *Tura*, the district headquarters of the Garo Hills.⁴² Studying somatometric and some other genetical characters of the Rabhas with some other tribes of Assam, Das⁴³ has found that the Rabhas have more affinities with the Garos than other tribes. Regarding the origin of the Rabhas, he states, "Mongolian peoples came in successive waves from the north and northern eastern region. They have partly or wholly absorbed the autochthonous Australoïd and later on formed various tribes like the Rabhas, the Garos, etc."⁴⁴

PHYSICAL FEATURES

The physical features of the Rabhas are mostly akin to the Mongoloids. Their stature is short to medium, skin colour yellow, nose flat, hair straight or slightly wavy etc. Das⁴⁵ findings regarding the physical features of the Rabhas of Assam are given below as the same for the Rabhas of West Bengal are lacking:—

1. Among the Rabhas 42.7% have short stature, 25.3% below medium and 29.3% medium stature. The rest are either very short (1.7%) or above medium (6.3%) or tall (4.7%).

41. Playfair, A. Op. cit.

42. Playfair, A. Op. cit. see also Endle, S. Op. cit. p. 83.

43. Das, B. M. 1960. The Ethnic Affinities of the Rabhas, pp. 100-116.

44. Op. cit, p. 117.

45. Op. cit p. 100-116.

2. 56.6% of the Rabhas bear Dolico-cephalic head, 36.3% Mesocephalic and the rest belong to other groups.

3. 64.7% of the Rabhas have Hypsi-cephal head, 26.3% Orthocephal and only 9.0% have Chamaecephal heads.

4. 54.8% have Acrocephalic head, 25.6% having Metriocephal and 19.6% Tapeinocephalic head.

5. 63.7% of the Rabhas have Mesorrhine nose and 30.0% have Platyrrhine nose and the rest belong to other groups.

6. 45.4% of the Rabhas have Mesene faces, 36.4% have Euryene and 13.0% Leptene faces.

7. 41.0% have Euryprosopic, 26.0% Mesoprosopic, 18.3% Hypereuryprosopic and 13.3% Leptoprosopic faces.

Das has also shown that the Rabhas have closer affinities with the Garos than with any other community.⁴⁶

POPULATION

In India the Rabhas are only found in Assam and West Bengal. Of the total Rabha population of 1,14,082 in India, 108,029 (94.69%) live in Assam of which 57,000 are males (52.76%) and 51,029 females (47.24%) and 6053 Rabhas (5.31%) live in West Bengal of which 2673 are males (44.16%) and 3380 (55.84%) females. In Assam they are mainly concentrated in Goalpara, Kamrup, and Darrang districts. In Table—3 districtwise population figures of the Rabhas of Assam have been given:—

Table III
Showing Districtwise Distribution of the Rabhas in Assam.⁴⁷

No.	Districts	Person	Male	Female
1.	Assam State	108,029	57,000	51,029
2.	Goalpara District	49,217	26,333	22,884
3.	Kamrup	43,758	22,086	21,672
4.	Darrang	10,673	6,170	4,503
5.	Lakhimpur	2,686	1,414	1,272
6.	Nowgong	885	553	332
7.	Cachar	612	317	295
7.	Sibsagar	198	127	71

46. Op. cit.

47. Source : Office of the Registrar General, India, New Delhi.

In West Bengal though these tribal people inhabit in lesser number still they are dispersed in eight district of this State in varied number, the concentration being highest in Jalpaiguri (68.26%) next to highest in Cooch Behar (17.64%). Police stationwise Rabha population figures of the State have been given in Table IV.

The table reveal that majority (68.26%) of the Rabhas live in Jalpaiguri district, and even in Jalpaiguri district 90.30% live in Alipurduar Sub-division. Of the three police stations in this sub-division viz., Kalchini, Alipurduar and Kumargram the former two police stations have somewhat balanced population (the sex-ratio being 129 and 116 males per 100 females respectively).

Table IV

Showing Sexwise Distribution of Rabha Population in Different Police Stations of West Bengal.⁴⁸

District/Sub-Division/ Police Station		Tract	Person	Male	Female
(1)		(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
West Bengal State		T	6053	2673	3380
		R	6013	2648	3365
		U	40	25	15
Jalpaiguri Dist.		T	4132	1751	2381
		R	4126	1751	2375
		U	6	—	6
Sadar Sub-Division		R	395	203	192
		U	6	—	6
Nagrakata	P.S.	R	6	6	—
Dhupguri	P. S.	R	387	195	192
Mal	P. S.	R	2	2	—
Mal town		U	6	—	6

48. Source : Office of the Superintendent of Census Operation, West Bengal & Sikkim, Calcutta.

Table IV (Continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Alipurduar Sub-division	R	3731	1548	2183
Madarihahat P. S.	R	204	101	103
Kalchini P. S.	R	1052	593	459
Alipurduar P. S.	R	1589	852	787
Kumargram P. S.	R	886	2	884
Cooch-Behar District	T	1608	758	850
	R	1608	758	850
Tufanganj Sub-Division	R	1600	756	844
Tufanganj P. S.	R	1600	756	844
Dinhata Sub-Division	R	2	1	1
Dinhata P. S.	R	2	1	1
Mathabhanga Sub-Division	R	6	1	5
Mathabhanga P. S.	R	6	1	5
Midnapur District	T	152	87	65
	R	152	87	65
Sadar Sub-Division	R	17	14	3
Pingla P. S.	R	3	—	3
Kharagpur P. S.	R	14	14	—
Contai Sub-Division	R	135	73	62
Patashpur P. S.	R	14	4	10
Egra P. S.	R	121	69	52
24 Parganas District	T	76	18	58
	R	74	16	58
	U	2	2	—
Basirhat Sub-Division	R	74	16	58
	U	2	2	—
Gosaba P.S.	R	74	16	58
Madhyamgram Town	U	2	2	—
Darjeeling District	T	30	30	—
	R	30	30	—
Siliguri Sub-Division	R	30	30	—

Table—IV (Continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Naxalbari P. S.	R	30	30	—
Burdwan District	T	30	21	9
	U	30	21	9
Sadar Sub-Division	U	30	21	9
Burdown Town	U	30	21	9
West Dinajpur Dist.	T	23	6	17
	R	23	6	17
Balurghat Sub-Division	R	14	4	10
Hilli P. S.	R	2	2	—
Balurghat P. S.	R	11	2	9
Tapan P. S.	R	1	—	1
Raiganj Sub-Division	R	9	2	7
Raiganj P. S.	R	1	—	1
Kushkundi P. S.	R	8	2	6
Calcutta District	T	2	2	—
	U	2	2	—

In Table V Population figures of the Rabhas in different Census years have been dealt with. As the main concentrations of the Rabhas are in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar and as our study concerns with the Rabhas of these two districts, the variation of population in different Census years for these two districts have only been shown. In case of Jalpaiguri district population figures from 1911 (excluding 1921) are only available and in case of Coochbehar district only from 1931.

LANGUAGE

The Rabhas of this State generally speak the local Bengali dialect. Only the older people and some adults have still retained their original Rabha dialect. The younger generation has almost no knowledge of their own mother tongue.

They sometimes when speaking among themselves, use a language which is a mixture of local Bengali and Rabha dialects.

The Rabha dialect as stated by Grierson belongs to *Bodo*

Table V

Showing the Change in Rabha Population Figure in Different Census Years⁴⁹

State/District	1961	1951	1941	1931	1921	1911
West Bengal State	6053	5113	2955	3015	—	722
Jaipauri District	4132	2869	2954	2076	—	722
Coochbehar District	1608	624	—	938	—	—

group of languages of Assam-Burmese group of Assam branch.⁵⁰ Friend-Pereira noticed its striking resemblances with the Atong dialect of Garo language and also with other *Bodo* group of languages.⁵¹ Rev. Endle has suggested that it forms a link between Garo and Kachari languages and states, "it seems to be in the process of becoming inflexional through contact and intercourse with the speeches of more or less broken down Sanskrit languages e.g. Bengali, Assamese etc."⁵² The same view is expressed by Rev. A. F. Stephen.⁵³ Das in connection with Rangdani language states, "Rangdani dialect besides showing similarities to *Atong* dialect of the Garo, shows point of resemblance with the Garos of Cooch-bihar and Jalpaiguri and with Tintekiya Koch of Goalpara."⁵⁴ The Garos of Jalpaiguri district accepts their cultural and linguistic similarity with the Rabhas of the State.⁵⁵

49. Mitra, A. 1953 Tribes and Castes of West Bengal, Census 1951, p. 112. See also J. Datta Gupta's Census of West Bengal, 1961, Vol. XVI, Pt. V. A(ii). Tables on Sch. Tribes. p. XXXI.

50. Grierson, Op. cit. p. 102.

51. Friend-Pereira, Op. cit. p. 142.

52. Endle, Op. cit. p. 84.

53. Das, B. M. Op. cit. p. 13.

54. Op. cit.

55. Raha, M. K. 1966. The Garos, B.C.R.I. Vol. IV. p. 27.

MATERIAL LIFE

AGRICULTURE

The Rabhas like many other tribal groups of this country, live on agriculture, and paddy (*Oryza sativa*) is their main crop. Of course those who have no land to cultivate earn their livelihood mainly by daily labour or agricultural labour and a few by share-cropping. In agriculture they follow plough cultivation. Three types of land are generally recognised. This classification is done on the basis of the position and fertility of the land. The uppermost stratum or high land, the least fertile one, is called *Hotengu* or *Danga*. The lower most, the most fertile one, is *Dobha* or *Dola* or *Jal*. The land between *Danga* and *Dola*, the intermediate type, is *Debri*. In fertility also it takes the intermediate position. Though *Dola* type of land is considered as the most fertile type of land, but to a Rabha peasant the *Debri* type is considered as the most suitable one. The reason behind is that during rainy season the *Dola* type of land is easily flooded and often keeps heavy stagnant water which hamper the crops. But the *Debri* type of land is never flooded, on the other hand, sufficient water is always present there. Secondly the *Dola* type of land yields only *Aman* or *Heuti* (winter) variety of paddy whereas from the *Debri* land a farmer gets both *Aman* (winter) and *Aus* or *Bhadoi* (rainy season) paddy and also jute which helps them economically. As the production of different type of crops depends on the nature of land, the above mention lands are also used for the cultivation of different types of crops. The *Danga* type is cultivated for varieties of vegetables, some pulses, oil seeds and inferior type of jute, the *Dabri*

type for both *Aman* and *Aus* paddy and also jute, and the *Dola* for only *Aman* paddy. Though rain water is the main source of irrigation, still several streams or rivulets and some canals (*jumpoi*) also help in irrigating the land. For the cultivation of paddy and some other crops, first ploughing starts in December-January few days after the harvest of *Aman* paddy, ploughing is again done in the month of *Baishakh* which is followed by levelling. Ploughing is done several times, clod-crushing and weeding are also done at times. In the meantime nursery beds for *Aman* paddy are kept prepared. The nursery beds are often supplied with manure. When the field is prepared in the month of *Ashar* after a shower, paddy seeds are broadcast (*Aman* in nursery beds and *Aus* in ordinary field). After broadcasting of paddy, one plough is given in each field which is afterwards levelled by leveller. Sometimes, only levelling is done. These ploughing and levelling are done to conceal seeds in the earth so that the seeds may not be eaten up by the birds, etc. Then after a few days when the *Aman* plants in the nursery beds grow a foot or so high the transplantation starts (*Aus* plants are allowed to grow as usual). But before transplantation the field is made ready. Transplantation is only done when the *Aman* fields contain sufficient water. Then several ploughing are done to make the field muddy. Within this muddy fields paddy seedlings are planted. If the growth of the seedlings is more than normal due to late transplantation (which is mainly due to late coming of monsoon) the upper ends of the seedling are cut to prevent excessive growth and better crops.

The seedlings are planted in rows and about 8" to 10" apart from one another. After transplantation the plants are allowed to grow normally. Soon after transplantation of the *Aman* paddy, the farmer takes care of the *Aus* plants which are sufficiently grown by this time. Some weeding is then done there for thinning and also to weed off the unwanted plants. The weeding is also done in the *Aman* field when the plants are sufficient grown. Reaping of *Aman* and *Aus* are done in *Agrahan-Pous* and *Vadra-Aswin* respectively. After harvest the paddy plants are stacked in the court-yard for sun-drying. The

drying takes place for a day or two. Thereafter thrashing starts. This is done by trampling with cattle. After trampling, hay is separated and heaped in a place for future use of the cattle and other purposes. The paddy is then cleaned by winnowing and blowing and kept in store.

The Rabhas have certain beliefs regarding the rotation of crops. They believe that if *Aus* and *Aman* are rotated in the same field then, yield of *Aman* is affected. If in a certain land only *Aman* is cultivated the yield becomes 8 to 10 md. per bigha on an average but if *Aman* is rotated with *Aus*, then the yield falls to 4 to 5 mds. per bigha which means economic loss. Still a Rabha farmer prefers this as *Aman* wholly depends on water during transplantation. Scarcity of water at times results in serious failure of crops; on the other hand, *Aus* requires no transplantation and so not much water is required.

CEREMONIES CONNECTED WITH AGRICULTURE

The Rabhas perform some rituals in connection with different types of agricultural operations, and these are done for the protection of crops from the evil spirits, evil eye, insects etc. and also for bumper crops. This cycle of rituals starts with the first plough of the year (not actually the first plough of the field which is done in the month of *Magh* or *Falgun*) in the month of *Vaisakh* or *Jaistha*. This festival is known as *Viswakarma Puja*. The head of the family consults with the Brahmin or *Adhikari* who after consulting *Panji* (almanac) selects a suitable day for the same.

In the morning of the day of *puja*, the head of the family who generally conducts the *puja*, takes bath and wears new or clean clothes and prepares himself ready for the *puja* by fasting which is observed till the end of the *puja*. Prior to this *puja*, the female-folk of the house clean one portion of the court-yard and besmear the place with cow-dung solution. Then they arrange there different articles required for the *puja* such as *Letoi* (banana), *Par* (flower), *Atap mairong* (*Atap* rice), *Gainou Nono* (milk), *Chini* (sugar), *Dhup* (incense-sticks), *Dhupai* (incense), *Sindur* (vermilion), etc. Agricultural implements are also kept

there. When all the arrangement is over, performer starts worshipping the deity *Viswakarma* (*Viswakarma Baitang Aaiya*). He sits on the western side of the spot looking eastward. Then he starts offering various articles to the deity by uttering proper incantations. Thereafter he sprinkles sacred *Tulsijal* on the agricultural implements and marks each of these with the sacred vermillion of the *puja*.

Then with the plough and yoke he harnesses the bullocks which are previously bathed and marked with sacred vermillion on their forehead, and goes to his field to start the ceremonial ploughing. After ploughing a little portion of the field, he returns home and engages himself with his relatives and friends with drinking and feasting. They spend this day by doing no further agricultural works but by merry-making. No donation or alms is given to anybody in this day.

When the land is ready by successive ploughing and levelling for the broadcast of *Aus* paddy seeds, *Laksmi Puja* (*Aamai Laksmi Baitang Aaiya*) is held. An auspicious day for this *puja* is selected by consulting the almanac with the help of *Adhikari*. The head or an adult male member of the family generally acts as the priest of the *puja*. The performer who also observes fast till the end of the *puja*, gets himself prepared for the *puja* by bathing and wearing clean clothings. Taking some paddy seeds in a basket and some fruits such as pumpkin, cucumber, banana etc., he goes to the field. Sitting on the western end of the field and facing towards east he starts his *puja* by offering the fruits to *Laksmi* deity. Thereafter he broadcasts the seeds ceremonially in the field and comes back home. The fruits offered to the deity are distributed among the family members as *Prasad* after the *puja*.

Like the first plough of the year and broadcast of seeds, the Rabhas also perform some rituals just before the transplantation of paddy seedlings. For this purpose, a Rabha generally goes to the Brahmin or *Adhikari* for his advice for selecting an auspicious day. The priest after consulting *Panji* (almanac), fixes up a day and time for the same. He also gives advice about a suitable plot of land where this ritual is to be performed. On the

fixed day the person concerned arranges the various articles required for the *puja* on the spot selected for the purpose. These are one small banana plant, one black arum (*Calocasia*) plant, one narrow bamboo stick (*Kanchi*), one jute plant, four *dongas* (banana bark plate) containing milk, sugar and ripe bananas and some flowers, incense and burner, vermilion and a bunch of paddy saplings. All these articles are taken to the field. Meanwhile one portion of that spot of land is cleared and cleaned, and an altar is made over there with the mud. On that altar all the plants are planted and the *dongas* are kept. The head (male) of the family worships the deity of the wealth, Goddess *Laksmi*. He first of all offers milk, banana and sugar from the *dongas* to Goddess *Laksmi* and thereafter to *Dhartimai*. Then flowers are offered to the deity. At the end of the *puja* a few vermilion marks are given to the paddy seedlings which are afterwards transplanted in that field. No further transplantation is done on that day. When the ceremony is over, he returns home and relishes a feast with his family members, sometimes with relatives and friends also.

Maihana is the harvest festival of the Rabhas and is performed just before the harvest of the paddy, in the month of *Agrahana*. The day for this festival is selected by consulting the almanac. No one reaps paddy before performing this festival. Day before the *puja* or in the morning of the day of festivity, the unmarried girls of the family make artificial flowers by means of *Sola*. In the morning of the festival, arrangements are made in one portion of the paddy field. The following articles are required for the *puja*: flowers made of *Sola*, *Atap* rice in a plate, one *donga* containing milk and ripe banana, vermilion, four bunches of banana, incense and burner, one sickle. All these articles are taken to the field in the place specified for the *puja*. The unmarried females of the family worship *Laksmi*, the deity of wealth and agriculture by offering all these articles. Then they anoint with the sacred vermilion of the *puja* on a few paddy plants and cut those plants with the left hand and make two bunches with these.

Thereafter these bunches of paddy are wrapped up by means of two pieces of new cloth and brought home. All the articles also are brought home on a winnowing fan. On the way the girls make holy sounds (*Ulu-Ulu*) from their mouths and sometimes blow conch-shells.

In the house these bunches of paddy are kept in a place of worship (*Thansiri*) for a week. The *Prasad* is then distributed among the family members. After a week this bunch is tied with a pole of the door of the hut or granary and on the pole vermilion marks are given. In the evening a feast is given. The officiator of the *puja* observes fast throughout the day till the end of the *puja*. On this day no further harvest is done. This harvest festival is sometimes done during the harvest of *Aus* paddy also.

Like other castes and tribes, Rabhas also perform new rice festival or *Mai Pidang Sana*. But this is more or less like an ancestor worship. This festival is performed either after *Aus* crop in the month of *Vadro-Aswin* or after *Aman* crop in the month of *Agrahan* or after both. An auspicious time on an auspicious day is fixed as in the previous occasions. The senior-most male member of the family generally performs the *puja*. He observes fast. For the *puja* he collects the following articles: new *Atap* rice, betel and arcca nut, honey, sugar, milk, curd, and rice beer made from new rice. At the time of *puja*, he offers on a plantain leaf a little of each of the articles to each of the dead ancestors of his mother's line such as MoFa (*Achu*), MoMo (*Oai*), MoBr (*Mama*), MoBrWi (*Moni*) and others. After offering each of the articles to them, he pours rice-beer on the same place in the name of each of the ancestors. This marks the end of the *puja*.

MOCK CULTIVATION

If the Rabha cultivators suffer from drought for a long time for which the paddy cultivation suffers awfully, the adult

female-folk or the male-folk in the guise of females (i.e. wearing female dress) on a day at the dead of night, start for mock cultivation and go from door to door taking different agricultural implements and seeds. This is so done to insult or dishonour the deity concerned as he is not giving proper rain which is destroying the cultivation. After performing this rite for a couple of hours, they return to their respective houses and relish rice-beer or tea.

HUNTING

Hunting at one time played an important role in Rabha economy. The abundance of forest and games, and lack of any restriction concerning the forest in the past had helped hunting to form part of their livelihood. But now the situation has entirely changed. The forest has much been cleared and the rest has been reserved where hunting as well as collection of fuel and edible objects are strictly prohibited.

The Rabhas at present practise ceremonial hunting three to four times a year. One of these hunts is held in the *Chaitra Sankranti* i.e. on the last day of the month of *Chaitra*, (March-April) known as *Bisamoy*. Before starting for the hunt they first of all worship the forest deities, *Sur* and *Masan*. *Huji* or *Roja* i.e. village magician performs the rites associated with the festival. In the morning, the *Roja* after taking bath sits for worship. The articles required for this puja is honey, *Ganja*, (hemp), home-brewn liquor etc. At the time of worship the safety of the hunters and success in hunting are prayed for to the forest deities. After the worship, the hunters get ready and start for the forest with their weapons, nets etc. Among the weapons spear, rod, bow and arrow are important. Net is also an important instrument of hunting. Just before entering the forest *Mahadev* and *Bura Thakur* are invoked. After this, they start hunting. In one part of the forest numbers of such nets are spread by means of bamboo poles etc. and a few hunters remain hiding near the nets. Other hunters make a large hue and cry from the other end and beat the jungle so that the animals are forced to run towards the net. When any animal gets dashed in force with the

net, it gets entangled in it. The more it tries to get rid of the net, the more it gets entangled in it. Then those persons who remained in hiding so long, kill the animal with their weapons. After the hunt the hunted games are dressed and cut into pieces and distributed equally among the participants, the owner of the net into which the animal was entangled getting a bit larger share. Again during this collective hunting if any person kills any animal by individual calibre, the game is distributed equally, keeping an extra share for the hunter. The extra share generally consists of a portion of leg or the head. If the hunted game is deer, the skin is taken by the owner of the net. On returning home generally delicious dishes are prepared and taken in each house. On the day of hunting no other work is done by the participants.

Another ceremonial hunt takes place on the last day of the month of Pous i.e. *Til Sankranti* day. This hunt is known as *Phajsani*. At present for hunting they have to take permission from the Forest Department. If the permission is at all given it is given only for ceremonial hunts.

These ceremonial hunts at present have lost their regularity in occurrence due to strict forest rules. But it is also seen that occasionally an individual or a group of hunter trespasses in the forest for illegal hunts. When a big game is hunted all the Rabha families of the village even those who could not join in the hunt, are given share of this game though participants get a bit larger share. But now-a-days the Rabhas living in the villages are much disinterested in hunting, probably because of Hindu influence.

HOUSE TYPE

Like the settlement pattern, the houses of the Rabhas also vary in type and structure according to their ecological setting. Two types of houses are generally visible among the Rabhas—(i) the house that is constructed by themselves and (ii) the other type which is constructed and given to them by the Tribal Welfare Department of the State Government. The Rabhas call their house as *Nogou* or *Ghar*. The houses made by the Rabhas themselves are mostly two sloped. A few four

sloped and one or two eight sloped houses are also found among them. All these are either rectangular or quadrilateral in ground plan. The floor (*Mejia*) is generally made of beaten earth and plastered with a paste of cow-dung, earth and water. The same kind of paste but more thick is used in the preparation of wall. First of all a frame work of bamboo splits or jute sticks (*Ila*) is erected on which this thick paste of clay is applied. Sometimes instead of bamboo split or jute-sticks, *Kash* (a kind of reed) is also used for constructing wall.

The roof (*Haprang* or *Chal*) is made of *Shan* grass thatched on a bamboo framework. Many of the houses have high plinths made of earth mainly meant for protection of the house from the intrusion of rain and flood water. Sometimes the plinths in the front is somewhat extended and covered by a roof which serves the purpose of a covered varandah (*Panchal* or *Chali*) which is often used for sleeping, cooking and other purposes.

Each house is generally provided with a door (*Nogdur* or *Duar*) but usually devoid of any window (*Kherki*) except in a few rich and enlightened houses. The doors and windows are made of wood or bamboo-splits but the intervening rods of the windows are often absent. No decorations are found on the interior or exterior surface of the walls. On the planks of the door and window too no curving is found.

Majority of the houses have facings away from the public thoroughfare. Some of these houses which have facings towards the road, have a front fencing which protects the house from the gazes of the passers-by.

The number of rooms in a house varies according to the economic condition of the family and the number of family members. It varies from a single room to many. The house consisting of a single hut is generally used for multifarious purposes. It is used as bed-room and at the same time as kitchen, animal shed, place of worship and so on. But a typical house consists of a bed-room (*Mojia*, *Akhni nogou* or *Thakaaghar*), one kitchen (*Radam nogou* or *Pakerghar*), one cattle-shed (*Moshugul* or *Goolighar*), one goat shed (*Tarum Khopra* or *Chagalkhopra*), one fowl-sty (*Toukhopra* or *Charaikhopra*), place of worship (*Baidamnogou* or *Thakurghar*), etc. When the kitchen is situated

within the bedroom, it is separated by a partition wall (*Deboni*). The animal sheds are generally situated a little away from the main hut. Sometimes separate sheds for different animals or a single shed partitioned by bamboo poles for several animals is constructed. Most of the houses have one front or central courtyard known as *Hetikong* or *Agna*.

The other type of houses which are constructed by the Tribal Welfare Department for these people are quite different from their own pattern of house. These are single roomed, two sloped, rectangular houses, the roof of which is made of tin and the walls of bamboo splits. Two or three windows and a door are present in each house. There is a covered verandah in the front. The facings of these houses are in the opposite direction of the main road.

The selection of site for the construction of a house was once a very important aspect in the life of the Rabhas. According to their belief all the homestead lands were not suitable for the construction of house. There were some places which were very suitable as house-sites whereas others not fit for the purpose as these were always haunted by several evil spirits. In order to test the suitability of any homestead land, they used to perform some magical rites (*Chal saka*) for which they first provisionally use to select a place for construction of house. Then, either the head of the family after consultation with a *Roja* (exorcist) or the *Roja* himself used to place in each of the four corners of this plot of land *Durba* (a kind of grass), Basil leaves and rice, each nine in number, in the evening. On the virtue of all these remaining in tact, this plot of land used to be considered as sacred and suitable for building house. But if the materials of any corner of the plot were found disturbed, the site was usually abandoned. This type of belief now-a-days is almost non-existent among the Rabhas. At present they sometimes employ *Adhikari* or Brahmin (local Hindu priest) who after drawing some astrological figures on the land (meant for building the house) and counting the same, verdicts for or against the suitability of the land. At present the enlightened and educated Rabhas are trying to wipe out this sort of belief and are building houses at road

CONSTRUCTION OF HUT

side suitable places or at the place given to them by official and non-official organisations at time.

After the selection of the site, the construction of the hut starts. At first from the area, the site for the main hut is selected. Then in the four corners of the site of the main hut four bamboo poles (one in each corner) or sometimes wooden poles are inserted. Sometimes, beside these four poles some other poles also are inserted on four sides. On these poles first of all the roof is constructed. At first on the top of the poles a framework made of bamboo and wood is constructed on which *Shan* grass or straw is thatched. After the completion of the roof the floor is made. At first, clods of earth are spread on the floor which are beaten and pressed by means of pestle. The uppermost layer of the earth is sometimes mixed with cow-dung. When the floor is beaten and pressed uniformly, it is finally plastered with a paste of cow-dung, earth and water.

Thereafter beginning from the edge of the floor, the walls are made. The walls are generally framed by means of bamboo splits, jute sticks or *Kash* (a kind of reed), tied by means of rope or bark-string with a cross-bar of bamboo. These walls are later on placed on four sides of the hut and tied to the poles. Sometimes a plaster of earth is given on the external or on both sides of the walls. Later on the door and the window (if any as in most of the cases window is absent) are fitted to the house.

As soon as the house is finished an auspicious day is fixed for celebrating the first-entrance-into-the-new-hut ceremony. The *Adhikari* (the local priest) or an Assamese Brahmin selects the date and also presides over the ceremony. The priest establishes an altar for the household deity and performs the *puja* with the following articles :—earthen pitcher (small)-5, red cloth (*Shalu*) 2½ yds., fire-wood, ghee ½ seer, *Til*, *Haritaki*, *Dhuti* or napkin, *Pan-masala*, *Pan-Karpar*, small earthen cups, banana (*Malbhog* type), cocoanut, cane sugar, etc. All these articles are kept on several *Dhona* i.e. plate made of plaintain petiole. One portion of the main room of the newly constructed hut is

selected for the same. This portion is previously cleaned with a liquid paste of cowdung, earth and water. Sometimes designs are also made by a solution of rice flour and water. The *Adhikari* at first sits there and purifies all the articles by sprinkling *Tulsijal*, water in which Basil (*Ocimum Sanctum*) leaves are dipped. He then utters *Mantras* and worships the respective deities of the house by offering the articles one after another kept in the *Dhonas*. At the end of a *pūja* the priest is given some fee and also a good feast or some raw foodstuff such as rice, vegetable, fruits, etc. This religious ceremony of the first-entry-in-the-new-house is done for the safety of the family members from spirits, death and diseases and also for the prosperity. After the ceremony the house is used regularly for different purposes. When the *pūja* is over the *Adhikari* gives *Prasad* to each member of the house and also to the assembled persons and then sprinkles consecrated water all over the house in order to purify it.

PERSONAL CARE AND DECORATION

Bathing is the usual habit of the Rabhas. There is no fixed time for bathing, anytime during the day considered suitable is utilised by them for the purpose. At least once in a day in summer, young and old people of both the sexes take bath and this sometimes become twice, but in winter the regularity in bathing is not maintained specially by the young and the old. They take bath in streams, canals, or in the wells. Sometimes tube-well water is also utilised for the purpose. Oil, soap etc. are not regularly used at the time of bath by the male folk but these are mainly used by the female folk. It is sometimes seen that the people using mustard oil during winter to retain smoothness of the body. Though ritual is not associated with the bathing still a few Hinduised Rabhas salute sun or some of their deities to pay homage at the time or at the end of the bath.

The women folk take little care of the hair in their day-to-day normal life, but during any socio-religious ceremony or during a *haat* (market) day, they give mustard oil or sometimes cheap scented cocoanut oil in their hair, comb it properly and make top-knot of different designs with coloured tapes and small

iron hooks (*Kanta*). Cosmetics are rarely used. Only a few wealthy or some enlightened persons use cheap cosmetic which they purchase from the local market (*Huat*). Of these cosmetics powder, scented oil, snow, *aalta* (red-paint) etc. important. These cosmetics they use only during any festive occasion or *huat*-day (weekly market day).

CLOTHING AND ORNAMENT

Among the Rabhas their clothings vary little from person to person though economic condition, enlightenedness, social or political status etc. create some difference in quality and also in quantity. Seasonal variation of clothings is also seen.

During summer the male folks are often seen to wear a *dhuti* only to cover the lower part of their body keeping the upper part bare except certain occasions such as festivity, *huat*-day etc. or during visits to relatives' houses when they often put on a shirt or sometimes wrap up their body with *chaddar*. The womenfolk in summer wear only *sari* but during certain occasions as stated above they use blouse, *saya* (petticoat) etc. along with *sari*. Little boys and girls put on half pant sometimes the boys only loin-cloth and the girls short *sari*. During their work in agricultural fields the malefolk spend most of the time by wearing a loin-cloth or very short *dhuti* and the femalefolk only a short *sari*.

Winter dress of the malefolk consists of *dhuti*, shirt and *chaddar*. Sometimes they also wear coat, sweater etc. whereas the femalefolk and the children wrap up their body with a *chaddar* only.

The method of wearing garments among the femalefolk is somewhat distinct. Except some enlightened Hinduised women others wear *sari* in somewhat different way. In this case either they wear two pieces of cloth, one covering the breast and keeping the shoulder naked. This cloth hangs upto waist. The second piece of cloth is tied from waist and this hangs upto knee. Or sometimes they use a single piece of cloth or a *sari* which is tied from breast and hangs upto knee. The enlightened Hin-

duised Rabha women wear *sari* in the same way as local Bengalee women do.

Footwear is almost absent among the Rabhas excepting a few advanced people and among those who wear footwear, majority use it occasionally and only a few regularly.

Use of valuable ornaments is not common among the Rabhas. In their day-to-day life Rabha women are not seen to use much of ornament. Only during any social and religious ceremonies they beautify themselves with varieties of ornaments. Most of these ornaments are made of silver. Some plastic and glass bangles or bead necklace are also found. But gold-made ornaments are very rarely found. Further, most of the Rabha families due to their depressed economic condition cannot afford different kinds of ornaments, and it is only the women who use the ornaments. These ornaments are either purchased from local market or made to order from the local smiths. Table VI gives the names of different ornaments used by the Rabhas of this area.

Table VI

English Equivalent	Rabha term	Where used	Material used	Price (approx)
				Rs.
1. Earring	Mero	Ear	Silver	16.00 per pair
2. Ear-tub	Mekri	Ear	Brass	3.00 „ „
3. Necklace	Takan	Neck	Do	6.00 „ „
4. Bangle	Sankung	Hand	Glass	0.50 „ „
5. Bangle	Sankung	Hand	Conch	2.50 „ „
6. Mal	Sankung	Foot	Silver	25.00 „ „
7. Chur	Muta	Head	Do	32.00 „ „
8. Armlet	Baja	Arm	Do	15.00 „ „

Food

The staple food of the Rabhas is rice (*Mar*) boiled in water. It is taken along with cooked vegetables, fish, meat etc. But the variety and quantity of different cooked vegetables, fish, meat, pulses, etc. depend on one's economic condition.

Generally they take very little of these specially during agricultural season. When rice becomes scarce they sometimes take wheat and even only vegetables etc. The vegetables, fishes, meat etc. are prepared in different ways such as curry, fry, boiled baked etc.

Generally they take their meals twice a day one in the noon and the other in the evening. Sometimes after harvest they often take one more meal in addition to the above two meals. During agricultural season, those who work in the distant lands generally start for the field after finishing meal or sometimes take food along with them. But those who work nearby, either go to the field after taking meal or come back at noon and finish their meal and again go back to their work.

Occasionally they take fried rice (*Mudi*), chapped rice (*Chida*) etc. in the morning and go out for work. During socio-religious festivities the Rabha dishes contain many items such as:—meat of pig, fowl, goat, etc. Beside these *Dahi-chida*, i.e. curd and chapped rice take an important part in this matter.

There is no fixed time for taking food. Generally in the morning those who work in the field take their meal earlier than others. The little ones follow them. Generally the adult women take food after their males—specially the wife takes food after husband which seems to be a Hindu custom borrowed by them.

Though no ritual is associated with the meals still some Rabhas are seen to offer a little food to *Ma Basumati* or *Dharti-Mai*. The Rabhas prepare their food in the kitchen. But the kitchen is not always a separate one. It is done either in one portion of the main hut or on the varandah or the courtyard due to the lack of separate room. Dried wood and leaves are common fuel used by the Rabhas.

Use of coal is not seen among them. Normally the Rabhas do not hesitate to take everything edible except a few items such as flesh of cow and the bullock and their totemic objects. Some more Hinduised Rabhas abstain from taking the meat of pig and fowl also. The diseased and pregnant women sometimes refrain

from taking certain types of meat, fish and vegetables. When either or both of the parents or some relatives die, sons and some relatives observe certain prohibitions concerning certain types of food-stuff.

The Rabhas do not consider any sex or age restriction in preparing, handling or taking of food from a normal person. But generally the men and children and also very aged women do not prepare food. The menstruating or a mature pregnant woman is not allowed to cook or to handle food so also a diseased person, due to the fear of pollution or harm. A stranger is never allowed to cook or handle food for the Rabhas for the same reason. The person bearing death or birth pollution also observes such restrictions.

Generally the food is distributed by women folk excepting those who bear certain pollutions. Sometimes in socio-religious function the priest or any other elderly man also distributes food.

It is important to state that the Rabhas are generally very poor. Most of them are not able to feed them throughout the year with staple food i.e. rice. Many of them remain half-fed for a considerable part of the year or even unable to get rice they fully depend on boiled arum or wild potato or some vegetable for at least two or three months a year. As a result they suffer from mal-nutrition which causes a number of diseases among them. A month or two before the harvest of paddy is the most acute time in the Rabha life. In this time many Rabha houses do not get any rice and the result is semi-starvation.

DRINK

In their past, the Rabhas had a keen attraction over the home-brewn liquor (*chakat*), which had been their main drink and was almost regularly taken. The quantity and the number of times taken varied according to the economic capacity and degree of intoxication. But the quantity and the number of times of taking this drink generally increased during socio-religious festivals and also just after the harvest of paddy. As soon as the ripe paddy from the field were heaped on the courtyard of a Rabha house, *chakat* was prepared and their joy

knew no bound. Like many other tribal groups of India they spend paddy like anything for the preparation of this intoxicating drink, *chakat*. From a child of two upto a man of wrinkles shared this *chakat*, and the ultimate result of this was the exhaustion of the reservoir of paddy at an early date.

The excessive attraction for liquor was definitely one of the important factors for their acute economic depression. It is true that they had to incur debt (still they do) before harvest and thereafter a very large share of their yield went to the *Mahajan* as repayment of loan still the little amount that remained even after the repayment of loan could profitably be utilised for the preparation of food (not drink) and thereby they could lead a fair life for a considerable period of the year. But alas! they spent this amount within a few months by preparing *chakat* and boiled rice to feed their thirsty, hungry souls and also for appeasing the numerous deities and spirits.

Due to the long contact with the dominant Hindu castes and their influence and pressure, the present day Rabhas have given up this habit of their attraction for liquor to a great extent. Now-a-days they are not seen to take this drink openly or offer this to their relatives and congeners always when they pay visits. Except for merry-making during some social ceremonies and religious festivities, they generally refrain from taking this drink. *Chakat* is not used or offered to the Hindu deities worshipped by them. Now they say, "We do not like it as we are Hindus and Hindus do not have this bad practice," though some of them even now are habituated in taking this drink and they usually take this secretly. At present tea has replaced *chakat* among many Rabhas. Even in many Rabha houses tea is regularly taken. Guests are also refreshed with at least a cup of tea in these houses. When the Rabhas go to the weekly market many of them are seen to drink tea in the tea-stalls in the market.

The Rabhas prepare their rice-beer in the same way as done by different other tribal groups of India. For the preparation of this rice-beer, they first of all boil an amount of rice in an earthen jar. When the rice is sufficiently boiled, the jar is taken out of the hearth. The whole quantity is then allowed to cool

down. When it is sufficiently cooled down, the rice is rubbed and a thick paste is made in which a few fermenting tablets are mixed. Then this paste is poured in the earthen jar again. The mouth of this jar is covered with an earthen lid and is sealed with mud. It is then kept in a dark place and allowed to ferment. After 3 or 4 days when the contents are sufficiently fermented, a quantity of water is poured in it and stirred and then strained. This marks the end of the procedure for the preparation of the *chakat*.

Preparation of tea is sometimes done in the usual way and sometimes instead of sugar they use molasses and also salt. Milk is not always used. Use of milk is rather a *rara avis* among the Rabhas unlike that present among other people of the area except the Garos. Previously they used to consider milk as an unholy object (ercreta of the cow). Even to this day, though many others milk the cow, they sell the same in the market or to some agent, but do not consume by themselves. Milk is tabooed to the members of certain clans of the society. Generally the malefolk and rarely the femalefolk milk the cows. This activity of milking the cow is known as *Taisamakh*. When the calf is very young they milk the cow in the morning, but when the calf grows older considerably milking is done at noon. But milking is not done at night. This milk is either sold or curd (*Dai*) is prepared and then sold in the market or to some agents. On the first day of milking, after the pirth of new calf, the first milk is turned into curd and offered to *Rishi*, *Bura Thakur* and *Rakhul Thakur*.

STIMULANT AND NARCOTICS

Besides *chakat* (rice-beer), they also smoke the hubble-bubble and also *bidi* (country-made cigarette).

FISHING

Fishing is considered by the Rabhas both as a sport and also an economic pursuit. Though most of them catch fish mainly for their own consumption still a few sell this in the local market for earning some cash. There is no fixed time for

catching fish. It is done both in day time as well as at night and practised almost throughout the year excepting during severe winter or summer when fishing is not considered suitable. But from March to May when the severity of the winter ceases to continue or after the main phase of rain i.e. in September-December fishing is considered very suitable. During March to May when the water of ditches, ponds etc. almost dry up, it becomes an usual scene that a number of people rinch water from these water-sources and catch fish by means of different traps or by bare hands or even by using some utensils. During this period also instead of baling out the water, they ransack a big area and catch fish by means of hand-net etc.

In the month of September-October they mainly use cast-net and rod and line as during this time all the water sources get filled up with water upto their edges.

For fishing they use a number of nets and traps. Sometimes fishing by bare hand and fishing by means of a napkin or a piece of cloth are also done.

There is no restriction of any age or sex, both male and female from 6 to 60 catch fish. Fishing both on community level as well as by individuals is practised and no ritual whatsoever, is associated with it.

The collective fishing is done by three, four or more families together of a village. Sometimes several members of a large joint family fish in the same ditches collectively. In both the type of fishing though there is no age and sex restriction but generally the women folk are less accustomed in this matter and very young and old persons usually refrain from doing this.

Regarding the bait used in fishing (only for the hook of the rod and line) earth worm, eggs of ants, flour balls, rice etc. are used.

(1) *Jhakhà*—It is a hand operated cage-trap made up of bamboo splits. It is almost triangular in shape with a loop of thick string attached to the middle of the pole. There is pole at one end which is held by hand. It is at the time of operation, dipped in shallow water, holding the pole. The string in the middle is held by other hand. The fishes enter through a hole at the bottom.

(2) *Jhoka or Polo*—It is a cone-shaped hand operated trap made of bamboo splits. There is a narrow circular opening at the top through which the operator enters his hand to catch fish.

(3) *Jolonga*—It is a rectangular basket trap having some internal valves. These valves are arranged in the same direction and in such a way that the fishes can enter the basket through the valves but cannot go out of it. Generally it is placed against the direction of the current of the stream having fences (*chach*) made of bamboo splits, kept in both sides i.e. the opening of the trap.

(4) *Burum* It is a cage-trap made of bamboo splits. It has no internal valves. The narrower end is somewhat bent. It is set just on a central hole of an embankment in a stream. Sometimes it becomes oval shaped not having an inlet valve.

(5) *Doksa*—It is a funnel-shaped trap made up of bamboo splits.

Beside these traps they also use different nets such as hand net, cast net, seine etc. and also metal implements like trident, fish-spear, etc. For keeping fish during operation they use *Jakoi* and *Kholoi*.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS AND POULTRY BIRDS

Domestic animals and poultry birds like cattle, goats, pigs, fowls, etc., help a Rabha family in securing a little money which brings some relief to its depressed economic condition. Not only the products given by these animals such as milk from cows, meat from pig, goat and fowl and egg from fowl, etc. help them but also the cattle are utilised in agricultural activities such as ploughing, levelling, trampling, etc. Now-a-days they milk the cows and use the milk though mostly they sell that as it is or as curd in the local market or to some Government or non-Government agents.

Imitating Hindus they have started observing the holiness of the cattle and as a result of this they generally do no harm to this domestic cattle group except mild thrashing. Even during days of hardships a Rabha feels for his cattle in the same way as he does for his family member. When any one of the cattle dies,

at the present days, he tries to bury it. If by chance a cow dies for his fault or if he considers himself responsible for it, he incriminates himself for the murder of the cow (*Gobadh*), and in order to get rid of this crime he has to perform a kind of *Praschitta* known as *Dandi* in the following way:—After the death of the cow the man concerned buries it with the help of others. After the burial he takes the cord by which the cow used to be tied up and puts the same round his own neck. Thereafter with this cord in his neck he goes on begging from one door to another in his locality making sounds like a cow. As soon as house-master hears this sound from the man, he realises that the man has fallen into the sin of cow-slaughter. He then gives the man some alms. In this way the man collects some alms for his release from the sin of the cow-slaughter. Then the man goes to the house of the *Adhikari* who after consulting a *Panji* (almanac), selects a suitable auspicious day for the man's *Praschitta*. In the morning of the selected day, the barber shaves the man's beard, moustache and head. He also shaves the beard and moustache of all other male members of the family and pares off the nails of both males and females. Then all the family members go to some water source to take bath after anointing their body with a little oil and turmeric paste. They also observe fast till the end of the *Praschitta* rite. After bath they all come back home and arrange all the articles required for this ceremony on the courtyard which is previously cleaned with a paste of cowdung, water and mud. Meanwhile, the priest after taking bath, sprinkles *Tulsijal* (water in which sacred basil leaves have been dipped) on all these articles and the person of the rite for the purification. Then he sits to perform the ceremony. He first prepares three *Dongas* (plate made of plantain bark) in which *til*, banana, a piece of brass, *durba*, basil leaves, flower, etc. are kept. Thereafter he offers all these articles to the presiding deity. When the ceremony is over each and every one gets the *Prasat* and the family members salutes the priest. The priest and the barber are also paid for their services. Lastly the priest sprinkles *Santijal* (water for peace) to all the members of the family, and thus the man becomes free from the sin of cow slaughter.

Castration of animals is not done by the Rabhas by their own hand. For this purpose they take the help of the experts of other communities such as Bedia, Oraon etc. The castration is done generally to the male calves, male buffaloes and he-goats. Castration is done to enliven these animals for getting more activity (bull and buffalo) and better flesh (he-goats). A few weeks after birth generally the castration is done, and for this purpose either they take the new male calf or buffalo to the nearby Oraon or Bedia house, or call in them for the purpose in their own house. The method of castration as applied by the Bedia community is somewhat different from that of the Oraons. In both the cases the legs of the animal are tied and some persons hold it on the ground so as to restrain it from moving or jumping. The Bedia then cuts the testes and takes these out of the epidermal layer and then apply there the paste of the powder of burnt clay of the oven. This paste, they believe, helps in soothing the pain and drying the sore. The Oraons on the other hand castrate the animal in a different way. They either hold the testes within two bamboo or wooden rods, roll and press until these are crushed or they crush these testes by hammering. Afterwards they apply on the affected area some lukewarm paste of lime and turmeric. The Rabhas use their domestic animals for various purposes. Cows are mainly used for milk. Most of this milk is sold in the local market or to the public or private creamery societies or to the agents and very little of this milk is consumed by themselves. Sometime from the milk, curd and *ghee* (clarified butter) are prepared and sold in the local market. Beside this, cows are in rare cases employed for trampling paddy. Castrated bullocks and buffaloes are employed both as draught and drag animals. These animals drag carts and also perform various agricultural operations, such as ploughing, levelling, harrowing, thrashing, etc. though buffaloes are mainly meant for dragging carts. The goat, sheep and pig are reared for their meat. These also are sold in the market at high prices. The milk of the goat and sheep is rarely used. Some Hinduised Rabhas have given up rearing pig and also fowl.

The fowl brings a considerable amount of money to a Rabha

house. Previously one could see a number of fowls in each Rabha house. But now-a-days on account of imbibing strong doses of Hindu religious beliefs, some Rabha families do not keep fowls. The fowls and egg are both consumed by themselves and sold in the market. Very few families have duck.

Besides the above purposes some of the animals and fowl are used as sacrificial animals for various magico-religious and socio-religious ceremonies. Of the animals goat, sheep and pig are important though Hinduised Rabhas do not favour pig for sacrifices. The same attitude is present towards fowl.

The reason behind the sacrifices and offerings of animals and poultry birds and eggs is to defend themselves, their crops and animals from diseases and destruction caused by various evil spirits, etc. The cattle, goat, sheep, pig, etc., depend on grass of the field and green leaves of the bushes. The cattle are sometimes supplied with hay. But these are mainly supplied during agricultural periods and rainy season when these animals get little time for grazing. In other times of the year these animals are taken to the nearby pasture grounds for grazing. They also move in the nearby forest areas and take green leaves. Generally the young boys and girls take these animals out for grazing early in the morning from their respective sheds and allow them to graze for the whole day. They also take the goats and sheep for the said purpose. These animals are either tied by means of a long rope with a peg giving much liberty to move about or are set free. The pigs are not usually set free, but kept tied with a rope. Of the poultry birds, fowls are set free early in the morning and allowed to move freely here and there in search of food. The ducks and geese generally move on to the nearby water sources and live on small snails, small fish, and other small aquatic animals. They, along with fowls, also take food grains, grasses, etc. The pigeons are also reared by some Rabha families. For all these birds and also for the pig and goat, the Rabhas generally do not have to spend money. The birds are some times given paddy and grains and the goats and pigs are supplied with green leaves. But for the cattle they sometimes have to purchase hay from the local market or from neighbouring people.

These animals and birds are generally kept in different sheds. The cattle are kept in elongated sheds with their sides having walls and one side open. The cattle shed is usually situated within the compound of the domicile, and the cattle are kept tied to pegs by means of rope. The goats, sheep and pigs are kept in their respective sheds—so also the poultry birds. The pigeons generally prepare their nests within some holes in the house. The sheds of pigs, goat, sheep, fowl and duck remain closed at night due to the fear of fox, civet cats, etc. But those who live near the forest area, even keep the cattle shed closed at night because of the infestation of tiger, wolf, etc.

The animals and poultry birds are generally tended by the young persons of the family. The well-to-do families and the family where there is none to look after the animals and birds, keep servant for the job. The poultry birds as stated previously, are set free and the pigs are tied in the field. But the cattle, goat and sheep are taken by the youngsters to the nearby fields or near the forests for grazing. The animals graze almost the whole day and at dusk these return home. The cow-boy after his breakfast with stale rice or *chila* (chapped rice), goes to tend the animals and again in the midday comes back either alone, keeping the animals grazing or with the animals to have his mid-day meal. The animals are also given water to drink at that time. After his meal and a little rest he again proceeds with his animals towards the grazing field. During the whole time, though he spends time by playing with his colleagues, still he keeps an eye on the animals to protect them from wild animals or from being lost, etc. At dusk he returns home from the field with all his animals and keeps these animals in their respective sheds. The cattle and goats are sometimes given straw, green leaves, etc., for the night.

During agricultural seasons the bullocks are not allowed to graze always or throughout the day as these are employed in agricultural operations. These are generally given opportunity for grazing after the noon when the agricultural operations like ploughing, levelling, etc., are not usually done.

Regarding the cleanliness of the animals, it may be stated

that the domestic animals and poultry birds are not usually washed and cleaned except the cattle. These are some times given a wash in summer, when they are taken to some nearby water sources like streams, river, rivulet, ponds or at least well and washed and sponged with water.

The sheds of the animals and poultry birds are occasionally washed but never any anticeptic or insecticide is used, except the D.D.T. which is once a year or biannually spread by the local authority or the Health Department of the State Government.

The Rabhas of this area in connection with the rearing of animals and birds, have been much influenced by the neighbouring castes and communities, more specially by the Rajbansi community at the time of their Kshatriyaisation during the early forty's of the 20th century. During that period a movement took place among them for upgrading their social status to get the equal social rank as that of the Hindu castes like the Rajbansi. This movement refrained most of them to practise the unclean habits, of which rearing of pig and fowl is one. And accordingly in order to obtain this higher status many of them willingly gave up this trait and those who still continued, were forced to withdraw themselves from carrying on this 'nasty' habit by their congenors and also by the local influential caste people, better say, Rajbansi leaders. As a result of this all the Rabha families gave up or rather were bound to give up pig and fowl rearing. This state of affairs continued for a decade. Thereafter when after partition a large number of refugees came to this area, a slackness in the rigidity of this rule of Kshatrism was gradually noticed. Again, meanwhile, with the progress of time when the Rabhas began to feel their economic hardships and also the utility or rather economic benefit from the rearing of these unclean animals and birds, a few influential Rabhas dared to sever the bond of this rigid rule and start rearing pigs and fowls only for selling (and not for their own consumption which is believed to degrade the social status and a sinful act) in order to earn money. Observing this other Rabhas, both wealthy and poor, (excepting those who consider themselves as sufficiently Hinduised) gradually started keeping pigs or fowls in their houses.

TRIBAL GROUPINGS

Among the Rabhas of West Bengal generally two types of divisions are noticed—(1) Regional and (2) Ethnic. They are regionally divided into two groups, firstly those who live in the villages and having agriculture as their primary occupation, and secondly those who live in the forest bustees within the Reserve Forest areas and are employed as labourers under the Department of Forest, Government of West Bengal. Inter-marriage between these two regional divisions is very rare. Ethnically the Rabhas of West Bengal belong to the Koch Rabha group which is one of the sections of the Rabhas.⁵⁶

According to Dalton the Rabhas are divided into two sections Rangdania and the Pati. The Rabhas of the former group have been known to be more conservative to race purity and ancient customs than the latter who adopted the language and many of the customs of the Bengalee Hindus.⁵⁷ Martin also found the same two divisions. According to him the Patis are more numerous and have adopted the Bengali language and practice plough cultivation. But the Rangdania have retained their original language, having some similarities with the original language of the Koch.⁵⁸

“The term Pati given to those who have adopted the language of Bengal implies little, as having been degraded. Even those who still retain the original customs of the tribe, have not

56. Friend-Pereira, *op. cit.* p. 142.

57. Dalton, E.T., *op. cit.* p. 87.

58. Martin, M. 1838 *History, Antiquity, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, Vol. III p. 546.

adopted the Hindu doctrine seriously, and inter-marry with those who still retain their native dialect.”⁵⁹ Martin further remarks that “the Rabhas seem to have been divided into different branches, Bingga, Ringga and Rabha and the last sub-division being the most important, its name has been communicated to the whole.”⁶⁰

Gait has mentioned five sections of the Rabhas, viz., Rangdania, Pati, Maitoriya, Daburi and Kachari,⁶¹ while Allen mentions seven such as Rangdania, Pati, Maitoria, Koch, Bitlia, Dahuria and Sangla.⁶²

Friend-Pereira observed more than two sub-divisions, and actually he too counted seven sub-divisions such as Rangdania, Pati, Maitori, Koch, Dahuria, Baitlia and Shonga.⁶³

Das also mentions divisions like Rangdani, Pati, Maitori, Totla, Dahuria, Baitlia, Shunga, Hana etc. The former three sections as stated by Das are believed to enjoy superior status.⁶⁴

Of these three sections, the Pati section is the most advanced section of the tribe for they have adopted Hindu customs and they have lost their mother tongue and speak a *Patois* of the Assamese language.⁶⁵ The Maitorias on the other hand, resemble the Garos in their habit and custom “but they have a status equal to that of the Rangdania and the Patis.”⁶⁶

Endle also counts seven sub-tribes among the Rabhas. These are Rangdania, Maitoriya, Pati, Koch, Bitliya, Dahuria and Sangha.⁶⁷ He also finds that “the members by the three sub-tribes first in the list occupy a position of some eminence above the others, and are at liberty to inter-marry among themselves.”⁶⁸

59. Op. cit.

60. Op. cit.

61. Gait E.A. 1892 op. cit. p. 232.

62. Allen B.C. 1903 op. cit. p. 50.

63. Friend-Pereira op. cit. p. 142.

64. Das, B. M. 1955 *Rabha Kinship terms, Man-in-India* vol. 53 No. 1, p. 52; also see *Family Structure of the Rabhas of Assam* by the same author in *Man-in-India* vol. 37, No. 2, 1957 p. 119.

65. Friend-Pereira, J. E. op. cit.

66. Op. cit.

67. Endle, S. op. cit p. 83

68. Op. cit.

Inter-marriage as stated by Friend-Pereira is permitted between the Rangdaniyas, Patis and Maitorias.⁶⁹ The same thing is also noticed by Das.⁷⁰ But "a man of any of these three sections may marry a woman of a lower section on payment of a fine of Rs. 50 to Rs. 80 which is used in providing a feast for the clans people, who are supposed to have suffered degradation by such a connection. A woman of any one of the higher sections may also marry into a lower section. But in her case she sinks to the level of her husband's clan, and she pays no penalty to her clan people. Inter-marriage with people of another community as Garos, Kacharis or Rajbansis, is allowed on the same term, a woman sinking to the level of her husband and a man rising to the position of his wife."⁷¹

HUSUK ORGANISATION

The Rabha society of this State of West Bengal is divided into a number of exogamous septs known as *Husuk*. The only difference among them is that some Hinduised Rabhas sometimes call it as *Gotro* like the local Hindus. These are unilineal groups of relatives, the members of which reckon their descent through female line i.e., the children both married and unmarried get, their mother's sept, the father's sept is ignored by them. They cannot marry within the same sept (i.e. in their respective mother's sept) whereas there is no prohibition in marrying into father's sept, though at present the Rabhas due to their inclination towards Hinduism, do not prefer to select bride from his father's sept. Sex relation is also not permissible as they consider themselves to be the descendants of a common ancestor.

Some of these septs are totemistic in nature whereas others do not have any totem object. Persons belonging to totemic clan observe many restrictions and prohibitions in connection with the totem objects. They "abstain from eating or otherwise using, domesticating, killing, destroying, maiming, hurting or injuring the totemic object."⁷² But slackness in observing

69. Friend-Pereira, J. E. op. cit. p. 142.

70. Das, B. M. 1960 op. cit. p. 11

71. Friend-Pereira, J. E. op. cit.

72. Roy, S. C. 1915 *The Oraons of Chotanagpur*, p. 330.

these restrictions and prohibitions may now be present among the enlightened and sophisticated Rabhas.

Some of these septs are further sub-divided into sub-septs. Marriage or intercourse within these sub-septs are also prohibited. Further, there are some septs which consider some other septs as their friend-sept (*Bandhab gotra* or *Saru Husuk*) such as *Kantran* and *Pomrei*. The members of the *Kantran* sept consider the members of the *Pomrei* sept as their friends. They also believe that the ancestors of the *Kantrari* sept were friends to those of the *Pomrei* sept and as such no marriage is permissible between these two septs.

Regarding the sept organisation Friend Pereira⁷³ says that each of the above sections consists of several septs or groups of families that trace their descent back to a common ancestor. He has mentioned the following septs:—Tengtung, Rungdung, Pam, Pamnung, Churchung, Hadu, Bagu, Bakshok, Chebenga and Gur. Some of these septs are common to Rangdania and the Patis which seems as if they are merely local divisions of the same people. The local conditions have probably formed them into two more or less separate endogamous groups. The *Barai* or septs are strictly exogamous groups because being collection of families they are of the same blood, and marriage within the *Barai* is absolutely prohibited. Sometimes two or more *Barai* form an exogamous group in themselves e.g. the Rungdung and the Pam *Barai* and the Hadu and the Bagu *Barai* and inter-marriage between the kindred *Barai* cannot, of course, take place.⁷⁴ Regarding the clan organisation of the Rabhas, Das is of opinion that each of the Rabha section consists of several clans termed *Bar* or *Barai*. Two or more *Bars* might unite to form a lineage called *Hur* or *Huri*. Marriage within a *Bar*, is strictly prohibited. Each *Hur* is also exogamous in character. The *Bar* is matrilineal. The children take their *Bar* name after the mother.⁷⁵

In Table VII a list of septs of the Rabhas is given which is however, not a complete list.

73. Friend-Pereira, J. E. op. cit.

74. Op. cit.

75. Das, B. M. 1960 op. cit. p. 10.

Table VII

Septs, Sub-septs & totemic objects among the Rabhas.

Serial No.	Septs	Sub-Septs	Totemic objects
1.	Bananang		
2.	Banda	(a) Bandadhai (b) Bandasusuk (c) Bandasang	Curd/Milk
3.	Bantao	(a) Sojabantao	Brinjal
4.	Chinchet		Ginger
4a	Champek		
5.	Choru		Milk and Curd
6.	Dalangsa		<i>Boal</i> fish
6a	Dangdong		
7.	Darbahasu		
8.	Darboth		Banian Tree
8a	Dapar		
9.	Dedoi		
10.	Durunga		Peacock & Peahen
10a	Haiphang		
11.	Hengsarang		
11a	Hardak		
12.	Kantran	(a) Hedam-Kantran (b) Hasak-Kantran	<i>Dauk</i> , a kind of bird <i>Kora</i> , a kind of bird A Hindu <i>gotro</i>
13.	Kaswap		
14.	Kencham		
15.	Kara	(a) Kartablet (b) Karachindal	
16.	Kama	(a) Kama mochat (b) Kamaraba (c) Kamarasanji	Rat <i>Boal</i> fish
17.	Lavong		
17a	Lengsakumar		
18.	Lengbarai		
19.	Logobak		<i>Boal</i> , a kind of fish

Table VII (Continued)

	1	2	3
20.	Moiji		<i>Simla Alu</i> , a kind of tuber
		(a) Moijidong	<i>Boal</i> , a kind of fish
		(b) Moijisamper	<i>Beth</i> , a kind of plant
		(c) Moijinai	
		(d) Moijipran	<i>Boal</i> fish
		(e) Moijibhog	
		(f) Moijibhobra	
21.	Mositak		Deer
22.	Nokman		
23.	Negenang		
24.	Nogora	(a) Gabilanjinogora	
		(b) Kaksaninogora	
25.	Pomrei		Tortoises
26.	Ponjibok		
27.	Uni		
		(a) Uni Brahman	
		(c) Uni Chandal	Peacock
		(c) Uni Chatama	<i>Indi</i> , a kind of insect
		(d) Uni Chidang-barai	<i>Bhati</i> , a kind of bird
28.	Rongdom		
29.	Sarjinang		
30.	Tandoi		

FAMILY, KINSHIP & INHERITANCE

FAMILY

The family organisation among the Rabhas is some what different from that of other tribal groups of West Bengal excepting the Garos. So far as the composition is concerned both patrilineal and matrilineal families are found among these people though the former type has higher frequency than the latter type. Though monogamous type of family is the societal profile now still the polygynous type persists to a limited extent. But Polyandrous type is not met with. The major type of families (of a total of 45) is nuclear type constituting roughly 66% of the total families. These nuclear families may again be classified into three main types, firstly families composed of husband and wife, secondly families with parents and unmarried children (this type covers the major bulk of the families) and thirdly nuclear families with adhesions.

Next major type of family is extended or joint family. The incidence of occurrence of this type is about 22%. This type of families may again be classified into two types—the matri-kin oriented with matrilocal residence and the patri-kin oriented with patrilocal residence. In the former case the husband lives with wife with or without children in the wife's parent's family and in the latter case the husband with his wife and with or without children lives in his parents' house. Beside the above, some other types of extended families are also found in Rabha society, such as (i) Brothers with their respective wives and children; (ii) a man, his wife and children, son's wife with or without children and deceased brother's wife and/or children; (iii) widowed parent, sons and daughters, sons' wives with or without children; (iv)

widowed parent, daughters, daughters' husbands with or without children and unmarried sons, etc.; (v) another peculiar example of an extended type is noticeable in which parents live with their daughters, one of the daughter's husband and his mother and daughter's son; (vi) in this type of extended family the parents live with their sons and daughters, sons' wives with or without children and daughters' husbands with or without children, etc. But all the above peculiar types of families are very few in number.

Besides, the nuclear and extended types of families some other types of families may be noticed among the Rabhas. One of these types is the mixed Rajbansi-Rabha family. Here a Rajbansi after marrying a Rabha girl lives with his parent-in-law's house and also a Rajbansi girl marrying a Rabha man, lives in her husband's house. Another type of family consisting of widowed parents and unmarried children or a household of brothers and sisters is also met with.

Among the Rabhas so far as size is concerned, a family generally consists of 5.7 members. The minimum number of members goes as low as two and the maximum reaches up to 18.

In connection with the Rabha families of Assam, Das⁷⁶ surveying 110 Rangdani and 50 Pati Rabha families, states that the family type having husband and wife with issue and issues (which he calls as elementary family) has the highest frequency among both Rangdani and Pati Rabhas. He has also observed the following types of family composition:—

1. One of the parents with unmarried issues
2. Husband and wife without issue
3. Father or mother with married children with or without unmarried issue
4. Married brother with unmarried brother and/or sister
5. Parents with married son, with or without other issue
6. Married brother living with married brother without parents
7. Father and/or mother with married son

76. Das, B. M. 1960 op. cit. pp. 122-125. See also the article by the same author in *Man-in-India*, vol. 37 No. 2 1957.

8. A group consisting of a man and two or more wives with their children.
9. Above type with unmarried brother and/or sister with or without a parent
10. A group formed by the marriage of a widow or widower having children by a former marriage
11. Above type with unmarried brother and/or sister with or without a parent
12. Combination of (x) and (v)
13. Combination of (vi) and (viii)
14. Combination of (vii) and (x)

Regarding the above families Das has not mentioned the residence of these and as such it is difficult to know whether the families surveyed by Das have matrilocal residence or patrilocal residence or neolocal with varied frequencies, though he has mentioned 4 families where 3 Rangdani males and 1 Pati male have been found to reside in their respective father-in-law's house.

However, it is seen that the Rabhas of both West Bengal and Assam have both similar and different types of families.

From a survey of 45 Rabha families of Madhya and Daksin Kamakhyaguri, it is revealed that medium sized family (4-9 members) has the highest frequency among this community which is evidenced from the following table:

Table VIII

Family Size	Number	Percent
1—3	10	22.22
4—6	19	42.22
7—9	13	28.89
10+	3	6.67

It is also evidenced that the large-sized families have the least frequency.

In connection with the Rabhas of Assam Das⁷⁷ has shown that among both Pati and Rangdania Rabhas a family with 4-6

77. Op. cit.

members has the highest frequency (46.0% and 60.0% respectively) which is followed by the type with 7-9 members (26.0% and 21.8% respectively).

In a family of the Rabhas having patrilocal residence the authority is bestowed upon the seniormost male member of the family. Both in nuclear and extended types where the father is alive, he usually exerts his power and authority both in familial and extra-familial affairs though he does not totally ignore the views of other adult male and female especially the male members of the family. Often he is seen to consult with his wife in the familial affairs and regarding agriculture or other economic pursuits he is seen to consult with his adult sons or brothers. But in absolutely household affairs often the importance of the females is obeyed.

In these household affairs she predominates, and this privilege of her is not questioned. This is probably due to the fact that the adult male-folk mainly remains engaged in different economic pursuits such as agriculture, horticulture, selling of commodities, hunting, fishing, marketing, etc., and also other extra-familial activities throughout the year. In this regard he gets little scope and time to put his neck to the wheel of household affairs excepting those special cases such as socio-religious occasions in the family. It is true that the female-folk also engages themselves in different economic activities such as some agricultural operations, viz., transplanting, weeding, reaping, etc., and also other pursuits such as fishing, gathering and such others, still she has to engage herself in the operation of cooking food for her family, cleaning the house, washing, bringing water and such other domestic activities. Because not only the males, but the females also consider that they (females) are mainly meant for these jobs.

In these families the dominance of the seniormost male member (of course, he must not be sick or bed-ridden or cripple, when actually he is not considered as the head of the family, and then his position is taken by the next senior male member; in the absence, his wife in a nuclear family or any other adult male member in a joint family) is unprotestedly accepted by the

other members of both sexes who offer their implicit obedience and reverence and co-operate with the family head and also with each other in all the social, economic and religious activities. The family-head in return, looks after the smooth-running of the family, solving economic and other hardships which often occur in the family.

Even in a family with matrilocal or avunculocal base the dominance of a male is noticeable. The difference is that in this case the authority is vested with some male matri-kin such as mother's brother. But in the present day in a matrilineal nuclear family of the Rabhas with matrilocal or neo-local residence, the father occupies an important position with authority over the family members though the matri-kin are also regarded as important members and better facilities are available to them than the patri-kins. But in a matrilineal joint family or family with avunculocal base prominence of mother's brothers is often noticed though the importance of the father is also cared unlike the typical matriarchate society. Thus, it may be stated that in the Rabha society, in spite of the presence of some matrilocal residence and matrilineal family, the authority is often bestowed upon the father except in some cases where mother's brother predominates. The activity of the head in this case also is similar to the patrilineal family.

In spite of the utmost efforts of the members, the Rabha family often breaks up. For the break up of a joint family one of the important causes is the conflict between the family members. This conflict arises from the economic discrepancies or from marriage disharmony; of course it is usual case among the Rabhas that some of the sons and daughters after their marriage either live in their respective parents-in-law's house or establish separate neolocal homesteads. In connection with economic affairs or property or marriage conditions often conflicts crystallise between the father and the son or with father-in-law and son-in-law or among the brothers which result ultimately in the splitting up of the family.

Besides, when the father or the head of the family dies it is quite usual among them that the subordinate members who are

entitled to get the share of the property, demand for their respective share of property and as a result settlement of family property takes place causing the final break-up of the family, the non-heirs|heiresses of course, remain subordinate to some or all the heirs.

In addition to the above, some other factors are also responsible for the break-up of the family. These are lack of co-operation between the family members, economic trouble in the family, immorality, lack of obedience and also migration of a part of the family to another place for some job, etc., and probably due to all these above-stated reasons the Rabha joint families are becoming less day by day.

KINSHIP

Like all the other societies the Rabha society also bears various types of bonds, and one of such bonds is kinship or relationship bond in which the members of a particular group are related with one another either consanguineally or affinally. The present day Rabhas beside their own Rabha kinship terms, are also using local Bengali kinship terms which are generally used by the local Hindu groups. More Hinduised and sophisticated Rabhas, specially the younger generations, prefer Bengali terms to their traditional terms. However, in Table IX . . . though both types of terms have been given, discussion has been made only in connection with traditional terminologies. These kinship terms as given in Table IX . . . show that both classificatory and descriptive terms are used by the Rabhas. They have a common relationship term *Mama* for MoBr and also FaSiHu and also *Mani* for MoBrWi and FaSi. Again they use *Etei* for FaElBr and MoElSiHu (*Gada*, *Mejer* and *Pumar* are terms for senior, intermediate and junior persons respectively, i.e., said relatives senior or junior to ego). In the same way FaElBrWi and MoElSi and FaYoBrWi and MoYoSi are termed as *Akay* and *Eiti* respectively. Similarly in the ego's generation also common term is used for different persons. ElBr and MoBrSo (who are senior to ego) have a common term *Adagada* but *Ajong* or *Ada* indicates Fa BrSo (who is senior to ego), FaSiSo and MoSiSo. *Jenou* covers ElSi, MoBrDa, YoSi, and HuYoBrWi. The terms *Ajong* and *Ada* are used for MoBrSo, HuSiHu, whereas *Ajong* only indicates YoBr. The terms *Aya* refers daughters of FaBr,

FaSi, and MoSi and so on. In the younger generation sex-differentiation for particular terms can hardly be noticed. For example *Eteisa* indicates YoBrSo (ms), HuBrSo, and YoBrDa (ms) and *Eitisa* covers ElSiSo (ws), and ElSiDa.

Regarding denotative or descriptive terms it may be said that several relatives have their respective terms. Some of the terms are *Bau* (Fa), *Amai* (Mo), *Dadi* (FaYoBr), *Bangtei* (MoYoSiHu), *Janai* (WiElSi), *Nousil* (WiYoSi), *Bhasur* (HuElBr), *Deora* (HuYoBr), etc.

The criterion of sex-differentiation is reflected in the kinship terminologies of the Rabhas. They denote MoBr and FaSiHu by *Mama* but MoBrWi and FaSi by *Mani*, Fa by *Bau* but Mo by *Amai*. In the same way FaElBr and MoElSiHu by *Etei* but the respective spouses of those relatives by *Akay*, *Hau* denotes father of both Hu and Wi, while *Nei* indicates mother of them. *Eiti* for FaYoBrWi and MoYoSi while *Dadi* and *Bongtei* for FaYoBr and MoYoSiHu respectively. In the younger generation also similar sex-differentiation is noticeable in certain cases. *Bagnai* indicates SiSo (ms) whereas *Bagnaisa* mentions SiDa (ms) and HuSiDa (ws). Reversely it is also found that sex-differentiation cannot be made out from certain terms. That is in some cases similar types of terms are used to indicate kins of both sexes. For example *Jyeg* indicates both husband and wife, *Eteisa* covers YoBrSo and YoBrDa and *Eitisa*, ElSiSo (ws), ElSiDa (ws).

The Rabha kinship nomenclature also indicates generation differentiation. The term *Aoabuda* means FaFa and FaFaBr and also term *Achu* states MoFa and MoFaBr, both of the pairs belong to the same generation; in the same way by the term *Ayebudi* FaMo and FaMoSi and by *Ambudi* MoMo and MoMoSi are indicated, all of them belonging to the same generation level. Similarly in the ego's first ascending generation FaElBr and MoElSiHu and FaElBrWi and MoElSi are termed *Etei* and *Akay* respectively.

In the same generation *Eiti* refers FaYoBrWi and MoYoSi, *Hau*, WiFa and HuFa, *Nei*, WiMo and HuMo, *Mama* MoBr and FaSiHu etc. In the ego's generation the term *Adagada* is used

for ElBr and MoBrSo (elder to ego), *Ajongpumar* for YoBr, MoBrSo (junior to ego) and HuSiHu, *Jenougada* for ElSi and MoBrDa (senior to ego and *Jenoupumar* for YoSi, MoBrDa (junior to ego), and HuYoBrWi, *Ada* for FaElBrSo, FaYoBrSo, FaSiSo and MoSiSo and so on. In the first descending generation also same generation differentiation is noticed. Here *Jenoupumarnisa* is used for YoSiSo (ws), *Eteisa* for YoBrSo (ms) and YoBrDa (ms), *Eitisa* for ElSiDa (Ws), and ElSiSo (ws). In the second descending generation SoSo and SoDa have the term *Achusa* and *Aoisa* respectively and DaSo and DaDa have *Samichikya*. Reversely it may also be stated that belonging to the same generation level different terms are used for indicating different persons such as *Dadi* indicates FaYoBr but *Bongtei* MoYoSiHu. Also *Bau* for Fa and *Amai* for Mo, *Bhasur* for HuElBr and *Deora* for HuYoBr, *Janai* for WiElSi and *Nousil* for WiYoSi and so on.

The Rabhas give much value to the age-differentiation in the kinship terminology. In order to indicate the seniority of relation, they use the terms *Gada* indicating senior relatives, *Majer* for intermediate and *Pumar* junior ones. Both these terms are used after the actual nomenclature. For example, ElBr is termed as *Dadagoda* but YoBr *Ajongpumar* or *Ajonggada* for HuElSiHu but *Ajongpumar* for HuYoSiHu. Further, the father's eldest brother is termed as *Eteigada* and his next brothers i.e. father's second or third elder brother (excepting the youngest ones) is termed as *Eteimajer* or *Eteipumar*. Beside these, there are certain terms which themselves indicate particular relations on the basis of seniority of age, such as FaElBr is *Etei* (*Goda* or *Pumar* as the case may be) and FaYoBr is *Dadi*, MoElSi and FaElBrWi are *Akay* but MoYoSi and FaYoBrWi are *Eiti*, MoElSiHu is *Etei* and MoYoSiHu is *Bongtei*. In the same way ego's elder brother is termed as *Dadagada* but younger brother as *Ajongpumar* and so on.

Collaterality is also noticeable in the kinship terminologies of the Rabhas. A distinction may clearly be made in between the father and his collateral relatives i.e., classificatory brothers and between mother and her classificatory or collateral sisters.

Between the consanguineal and affinal relations, a dichotomy

tomy is noticeable in certain kinship nomenclature of the Rabhas. The term *Akay* indicates both FaElBrWi and MoElSi. In the same way for FaYoBrWi and MoYoSi one single term is used which is *Eiti*. Reversely, it is also seen that though there is a common term (*Etei*) for FaElBr and MoElSiHu, there are two different terms *Dadi* and *Bongtei* for FaYoBr and MoYoSiHu respectively. Again for FaBrSo, FaSiSo, MoBrSo and MoSiSo a common term *Ada* is used.

From Table IX it is seen that there lies a great difference in the kinship nomenclature of the Rabhas of West Bengal and those of the Rabhas (Rangdani) of Assam as stated by Das.⁷⁸ Not only the difference of terms is present between these two groups of Rabhas but there are also differences of characteristics. While the Rabhas of West Bengal call MoBr and FaSiHu as *Mama*, the Rangdani Rabhas of Assam as stated by Das call a group of relatives, viz., FaSiHu, WiBrSo, MoBr, WiFa, YoBrSo (ws), ElBrSo (ws) and HuFa by the same term *Mama*. And while former group of Rabhas includes only MoBrWi and FaSi within the term *Mani*, the latter group includes FaSi, WiBrDa, MoBrWi, YoBrDa (ws), ElBrDa (ws) and HuSiDa. Similar difference is noticed in respect of other terms also.

Again while the Rabhas of West Bengal use two different terms *Dadi* and *Bongtei* for FaYoBr and MoYoSiHu, the Rabhas (Rangdani) of Assam use only one term *Bangbang* for said two terms. Similar difference is seen in case of the terms SiSo (ms) and HuSiSo (ws), and SiDa (ms), and HuSiDa. Reversely while the Rabhas of the former group use same terms for the members of the different sex, the Rabhas (Rangdani) of the latter area use different terms for them, e.g., the former group use *Jyek* for both Hu and Wi, the latter group use two different terms *Oomba* and *Michik* for Hu and Wi respectively. Similarly the Rabhas of the former area while they use the same terms for ElBrSo (ms) and ElBrDa (Ms), the Rabhas of the latter area use different terms for them.

78. Das, B. M. 1960 Op. cit. pp. 128-133. See also the article 'Rabha Kinship Terms' by the same author in *Man-in-India*, Vol. 35 No. 1, 1955.

So it is seen that the kinship terminology of the Rabhas of West Bengal has much difference from those of the Assam Rabhas.

The kinship among the Rabhas of West Bengal plays no less important role in the regulation of marriage than that of the *Husuk* organisation which though apparently controls the marriage system. They generally disapprove marriages with the near kins in both father's and mother's side having similar or different sept. Moreover marriage with wife's elder sister and deceased younger brother's widow is also prohibited. Marriage between brothers and sisters of the same parents, of same father and different mother or of same mother and different father is forbidden. Marriage with step-brother or step-sister and half-brother and half-sister is in the similar way avoided. Marriage between adopted child and actual child is also not allowed. Cross or parallel cousin marriage is also not favoured, though Friend-Pereira found the marriage with mother's brother's daughter prevalent among them.⁷⁹

On the other hand, marriage between certain relations is practised. Marriage with deceased elder brother's widow and also with wife's younger sister are prevalent. Marriage with deceased younger brother's wife or wife's elder sister is restricted due to the prevalence of social avoidance. The elder brother is always given a superior status like father-in-law by the younger brother's wife and rightly, the younger sister's husband gives a superior status of mother-in-law to the wife's elder sister, and as such the social taboo has come into being. Due to the prevalence of the rule of avoidance, they even disfavour to look at one another directly nor can they sit together, dine together, talk with each other directly, walk together and so on. Beside these, partial rule of avoidance is noticeable between son-in-law and mother-in-law and between daughter-in-law and father-in-law.

Joking relationship persists among different relatives of the Rabha society. Quite frequently a Rabha is seen to cut jokes with his wife's younger sister or with his elder brother's wife. Probably this joking relation among the above persons is present

79. Friend-Pereira, J. E. Op. cit. p. 143.

due to the prevalence of rule of marriage between a man and his wife's younger sister and also his deceased elder brother's widow. The grandparents are also often seen to joke with the grandchildren.

The ceremonial friendship is also present among the Rabhas. Generally they prefer to make ceremonial friendship with their own community people and also with local Hindu people. They style this type of friendship as *Baye Haya* (*Baye Haya*—to make friendship). The friendship is only possible between the persons of the same sex. No one is allowed to make friendship with the opposite sex. Moreover, though there is no restriction regarding age, but generally friends are selected from more or less of the same age-group. No marriage or sex relationship is allowed between the family members of those two persons entering into this ceremonial friendship bond.

For performing this ritual friendship ceremonially a suitable day is selected. In this day both the parties, desirous of being involved into the union, stand near the place of household worship which was previously cleaned with cowdung and designed with a mixture of rice powder and water. The persons concerned also take bath and wear new clothes. They utter incantations and take oath (for helping and protecting each other at the time of need and danger) along with the priest. Thereafter, they garland each other along with the muttering of *mantras* by the priest. They also exchange betel and nut and also feed sweets to each other. When these are over, they embrace each other and then salute all the elderly persons present there and also pay their homage to the family deities. Similar method is practised by the Rajbansis.⁸⁰

Among the Rabhas a peculiar custom of artificial or ritual parenthood (*Pani-chhitao Ma-Bap*) is found. In this case during marriage of a Rabha, an elderly couple of the village is selected as *Pani-chhitao-Ma-Bap*, even if the person going to marry, has parents living during marriage. These ritual parents are selected by performing some ceremonies at the time of marriage of the ceremonial 'child.'

80. Raha, M. K. 1967, Ceremonial Friendship among the Rajbansis of Jalpaiguri District, Science and Culture, Vol. 33, No. 3 p. 136.

If anybody desires to have ceremonial parents, he discloses his will to some couple in the village. If the couple gives consent, they are invited in the marriage ceremony. During the marriage this couple comes to the house of the groom and sprinkles sacred *Tulsijal* on the newly-wed couple. Then the ritual father gives his ritual son generally a small brass pitcher, and ritual mother, some money. This ritual son often works for the ritual parents free of cost and at their death, observe mourning. He also performs *Praschitta* (ceremonial libation) and also gives *Pinda* at the *Kam* ceremony. On the other hand the ritual parents sometimes give a little share of their property or some money to the ceremonial son.

Table IX
Kinship Terminologies of the Rabhas

Serial No.	English abbreviations	Bengali terms as used by more Hinduised and sophisticated Rabhas	Original Rabha terms	Rangdani Rabha Terms (Das ⁸¹)
1	2	3	4	5
1	FaFa	Burabapu	Aoabuda	Jujhu
2	MoFa	Aju	Achu	Jujhu
3	FaMo	Burima	Ayebudi	Bidi
4	MoMo	Aiburi	Oai, Ambudi	Bidi
5	Fa	Baba	Bau, Aoa	Babra
6	Mo	Ma	Amai	Jibra
7	FaEIBr	Jyato	Etei	Fajong
8	FaYoBr	Kaka	Dadi	Bangbang
9	FaEIBrWi	Jyatai	Akay	Aichung
10	FaYoBrWi	Kaki	Eiti	Amang
11	FaEISi	Pishi	Mani	Mani
12	FaYoSi	-do-	-do-	-do-
13	FaEISiHu	Pisha	Mama	Mama
14	FaYoSiHu	-do-	-do-	-do-
15	MoBr	Mama	-do-	-do-

81. Das, B. M. 1960 Op. cit. pp. 128-133. See also Man-In-India. Vol. 35, No. 1, 1955.

Table IX (Continued)

1	2	3	4	5
16	MoBrWi	Mami	Mani	Mani
17	MoEISi	Jyetai	Akay	Aichung
18	MoYoSi	Masi	Eiti	Amang
19	MoEISiHu	Jyeto	Etei	Fajong
20	MoYoSiHu	Mausa	Bongtei	Bangbang
21	WiFa	Sasur	Hau	Mama
22	WiMo	Sasuri	Nei	Aiya
23	HuFa	Sasur	Hau	Mama
24	HuMo	Sasuri	Nci	Aiya
25	EIBr(ms)	Dada	Adagada	Dada
26	YoBr(ms)	Bhai	Ajong	Fajongbra
27	EIBr(ws)	Dada	Adagada	Dada
28	YoBr(ws)	Bhai	Ajong	Fajongbra
29	EISi (ms)	Bai/Didi	Jenougada/ Aya	Bibi
30	YoSi(ms)	Bon	Jenoupumar/ Anou	Jhinbra
31	EISi(ws)	Didi, Bai	Jenougada	Bibi
32	YoSi(ws)	Bon	Jenoupumar	Jhinbra
33	FaEIBrSo	Jyeto Beta Bhai	Ada/Ajong	Dada, Fajong- bra
34	FaYoBrSo	Khura Beta Bhai	-do-	-do- -do-
35	FaEIBrDa	Jyeto Beti Boin	Aya/Jenou	Bibi, Jhinbra
36	FaYoBrDa	Khura Beti Boin	-do-	-do- -do-
37	FaSiSo	Pishi Beta Bhai	Ada/Ajong	Gimbhai
38	FaSiDa	Pishi Beti Boin	Aya/Jenou	Buji, Nushibra
39	MoSiSo	Jyeti/Masi Beta Bhai	Ada/Ajong	Dada, Fajong- bra
40	MoSiDa	Jyeti/Masi Beti Boin	Aya/Jenou/ Anou	Bibi, Jhinbra
41	MoBrSo	Mama Beta Bhai	Ada/Ajong	Gimbhai
42	MoBrDa	Mama Beti Boin	Jenou/Aya/ Anou	Buji, Nushibra
43	Hu	Swami	Jyeg	Oomba
44	Wi	Stree/Bou	Jyeg or Michil	Michik
45	WiBr	Sala	Anang	Anang, Khuchi bra
46	WiEISi	Jyeithani, Bhouji	Janai	Jhanbra

Table IX (Continued)

1	2	3	4	5
47	WiYoSi	Shali	Nousil	Nushibra
48	HuEIBr	Bhasur	Bhasur	Fobra
49	HuYoBr	Deor	Deora	Jhonong Kho- bra
50	HuSi	Bhoujhi/Bhaj/ Nanad	Anang	Anong, Nu- nongbra
51	WiEISiHu	Jyetopoth	Sodgada	Dada
52	WiYoSiHu	Shalpoth	Sodpummar	Sadu
53	HuEIBrWi	Bain/Didi	Ayagada	Bibi
54	HuYoBrWi	-do-	Jenoupumar/ Sodmaran	Momo
55	WiBrWi	-do-	Aya	Bibi, Jhinbra
56	HuSiHu	Dada	Ada/Ajong	Dada, Momo
57	EISiHu(ms)	Ano	Anang	Gimi
58	YoSiHu(ms)	Bonsugat	Anangsa	Bainibra
59	EISiHu(ws)	Bonou	Kabak	Gimi
60	YoSiHu(ws)	Bonjamai	Anang	Jhangbra
61	EIBrWi(ms)	Bhoujhi/Boudi	Jakak	Buji
62	YoBrWi(ms)	Bhausani	Bhausani	Buribra
63	EIBrWi(ws)	Bhoujhi/Boudi	Anang	Buji
64	YoBrWi(ws)	Bhousani/Bhouji	Anangsa	Momo
65	SoWiFa	Biyai	Biyai	Biai
66	SoWiMo	Biyani	Biyani	Biainee
67	DaHuFa	Biyai	Biyai	Biai
68	DaHuMo	Biyaini	Biyaini	Biainee
69	So	Chaoya, Beta	Sa/Miasa	Chabra mucha
70	Da	Beti	Samichik/ Michiksa	Chabra mecha
71	EIBrSo(ms)	Bhajya	Bangteisa	Bangbang
72	YoBrSo(ms)	-do-	Eteisa	Fajong
73	EIBrDa(ms)	Bhatijhi	Bangteisa	Amang
74	YoBrDa(ms)	-do-	Eteisa	Aichung
75	EISiSo(ms)	Bhagna	Bagnai	Namshabra
76	YoSiSo(ms)	-do-	-do-	-do-
77	EISiDa(ms)	Bhagni	Bagnaissa	-do-
78	YoSiDa(ms)	-do-	-do-	-do-
79	EIBrSo(ws)	Bhajya	Dadagadanisa	Mama
80	YoBrSo(ws)	-do-	Monisa	-do-
81	EIBrDa(ws)	Bhatijhi	Dadagadasami chik/Bateisa	Mani

Table IX (Continued)

1	2	3	4	5
82	YoBrDa(ws)	-do-	Monisa / Ajong pumarsamic- hik	-do-
83	EISiSo(ws)	Bhajya	Eitisa	Bangbang
84	YoSiSo(ws)	-do-	Jenoupumar- nisa / Akaisa	Fajong
85	EISiDa(ws)	Bhatijhi	Titinisamichik, Eitisa	Amang
86	YoSiDa(ws)	-do-	Jonoupumar- samichik / Akaisa	Aichung
87	WiBrSo	Bhajya	Bagnaisa	Mama
88	WiBrDa	Bhatijhi	-do-	Mani
89	WiSiSo	Bhajya	Eteisa, Akaisa	Bangbang, Fajong
90	WiSiDa	Bhatijhi	Eitisa -do-	Amang, Aichung
91	HuBrSo	Bhajya	Eteisa / Bong- teisa	Fajong, Bang- bang
92	HuBrDa	Bhatijhi	-do-	Aichung, Amang
93	HuSiSo	Bhagina	Bagnaisa	Bhagnibra
94	HuSiDa	Bhagini	-do-	Mani
95	DaHu	Jamai	Kilang	Jhanongbra
96	SoWi	Bouma	Namsa	Buribra
97	SoSo	Nati	Achusa	Subra
98	SoDa	Natni	Aoisa	-do-
99	DaSo	Nati	Samichiksa / Achusa	-do-
100	DaDa	Natni	Samichiksa / Aoisa	-do-

INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY

By property the Rabhas actually mean the belongings that are possessed by the individual families. These include the house and the household utensils and furniture, some cash and ornaments, food-grains, etc. Those who have land of their own, in

their cases homestead and/or cultivable lands also form valuable asset. All these types of belongings may broadly be grouped into two categories of property—(i) ancestral, which the family member or members inherited from their ancestors and (ii) self-acquired, which is owned by the individual by his/her own effort.

The rule of inheritance in most of the cases among the present day Rabhas follow male line in general. But the older Rabha generation still states that in their boyhood in majority of the cases the female-folk were regarded as the owner of the property and the inheritance used to follow the female line. Thereafter due to some external and/or internal forces the mode of inheritance has changed. In the past when some disputes arose in certain cases regarding the inheritance of property some Rabha males claimed their cases to be judged as per Hindu law as according to them they were Hindus and guided by Hindu beliefs and customs. Ultimately they were successful in getting the property. In this way the male claimants of Rabha society were gradually successful in acquiring all the properties in their names. After the occurrences of certain cases of male inheritance, the Rabha society gradually adopted the process of male succession and the females gradually lost hold of the property. At present in the Rabha society the males are the owner of the family property—both ancestral and acquired, and the inheritance follows the male line, i.e., sons are the heirs after the death of the father. The unmarried daughters and the widowed mother get only maintenance or they are maintained by some of the heirs who in return get some additional share, the married daughters being debarred from any share.

If a man has no son but a daughter, the daughter gets the whole property though now-a-days following the rule prevalent among the surrounding Hindu castes, the brother or brother's sons of the deceased claim the property as they think that the unmarried daughter or the widowed mother has got no right over the whole property. They can only get a small share for their own maintenance and major share of the property should go to the relatives of the father who are actually the owners of the property.

Though in the present day the property in Rabha society is following the male line, still the relics of the past customs are prevalent. In some of the cases female inheritance still prove the past existence of the rule of matrilineal inheritance among the Rabhas. In these cases the property was held by a female (mother or mother's mother of the present day family head) and after her death the same has been inherited by her daughter. The husband of the daughter only maintains the property and acts as manager. Of course, it is even in the present time the mother's property, if any in the Rabha society, is inherited by the daughter. In absence of the daughter sons inherit the mother's property.

It is also prevailing among the Rabhas that if the mother's brother dies without any issue, the property is shared by his sister's children, the widowed mother's brother's wife getting the maintenance only. Sometimes the mother's brother even in the presence of his children, gives some share of his property to his sister's sons and daughters.

According to the present day Rabha mode of inheritance, though the property goes to the son, depriving the daughters, the succession of *Thansiri* or *Rungtuk* (the abode of the family deity) follows the female line. The house-wife is regarded as the owner of the family *Rungtuk* and after her death the *Rungtuk* is formerly handed over to the daughter preferably the youngest one. In case of the *Basek* (the abode of the ancestors) also the same principle is followed.

LIFE - CYCLE

PREGNANCY

The Rabhas believe that pregnancy takes place due to the sexual union between the two opposite sexes, still God's mercy is sought for in this regard as they think it plays an important part in this matter. They strongly feel that without God's mercy no woman can become pregnant or no man can impregnate a woman even if he has much vigour. To justify this they often say that due to lack of God's mercy it is seen that even the wife of a strong and healthy person cannot become pregnant for a long time whereas a very weak man gets child in a year after marriage.

The pregnancy of a woman is determined from the physical change of the body of the woman. When a woman feels herself pregnant (which she understands from a prolonged stoppage of menstruation after copulation with her husband), she tells about the same to her husband, mother-in-law, or husband's elder married sister.

When the husband comes to know that his wife has become pregnant, he generally starts observing some prohibitions such as he refrains himself from killing certain living creatures, but he can catch living fish or bird. Moreover he tries to forbid himself also from doing any sinful deed. Beside these he controls himself from co-habiting with his wife when she attains her maturity in pregnancy (i.e. after 7th month of pregnancy). All these prohibitions as observed by the husband, are for the welfare of the expectant mother and the baby in the womb.

The wife (the pregnant woman) also on her part, observes

a number of prohibitions for the same reason. She generally refrains herself from going to any burial or cremation ground or the house where any pollution (death or birth) has taken place or crossing a leveller or ladder or a rope with which is tied a cattle or a goat nor she can go alone to any jungle or lonely pond or some unearthly place, riverside, etc., nor can she take active part in any socio-religious ceremony, nor allowed to bring water with a pitcher taking in her waist. She is also not allowed to stay outside the house after dusk in beheavelled hair nor can she take food from a stranger nor can she give anything to any outsider. In the same way husking anything with mortar and pestle and doing such other heavy jobs are considered to be injurious to herself and to the baby in her womb too.

Many of these restrictions are observed by the husband and wife both from the third month of pregnancy and onward and usually much stress on these prohibitions are given after attaining the maturity of pregnancy.

Generally the Rabhas do not observe any particular ceremony in connection with the first or successive pregnancies. To them pregnancy is a normal and usual matter of life. They know that after marriage husband and wife will have the sex-relation, the wife will be pregnant (of course if God bestows mercy on them) and ultimately a child will be born. But it is true that at the time of first pregnancy, both the husband and the wife become much more cautious regarding the spirit intrusion and harm caused by the evil-spirit, evil-eye, etc., and also by malevolent deities, and thus observe the prohibitions and restrictions more rigidly than in cases of subsequent pregnancies.

Along with the restrictions on movement and work, a Rabha pregnant woman also observes some restrictions regarding sex-life and food. They believe that sex-relation with a pregnant woman is injurious to both expectant mother and also the child in the womb, and as such a general rule is followed that the husband should not have any sex-relation with his pregnant wife after 5th month of her pregnancy. It is believed that if a husband cohabits with his wife being pregnant over 5 months, the cohabitation causes injury to the child in her womb. Inspite of this belief

it is often seen that the husband and wife cohabit even when the wife is bearing 6th or 7th months of pregnancy. Some times the husband compels his pregnant wife even at her maturity to satisfy his sex-desire, or the sex-crazy wife even at her maturity hounds her husband to cohabit with her.

Regarding restriction on food the Rabha pregnant woman generally does not take in any form egg (*Touchi*) and flower of banana (*Latai Laylang*) as they consider these two items to be injurious. Except the above two articles, Rabha women take all other articles during their pregnancy.

In the Rabha society it is often seen that the *Roja* (medicine man) gives *Jah* (a kind of sanctified thread) which the pregnant woman ties in her waist as a prophilectic charm in order to protect herself and the child in her womb from various evil powers.

BIRTH

The Rabhas believe that the child remains within the womb of the mother for 10 months and 10 days whereafter the child is born. At the time of child birth, generally the expectant mother remains at her husband's house or husband's father's house. For the birth generally no separate lying-in-room is erected. The main sleeping room or any other room is used as lying-in-room. In this room a bed on the floor is prepared for the pregnant woman. During winter months straw or grass is spread over the floor covered with a *Kantha* (rug made of old torn pieces of cloth) and a *chaddar* (bed-sheet) or a piece of cloth. No decoration is made inside or outside the room nor any picture is hung.

From the day of birth till the completion and final purification (which usually takes place after a month, i.e., 30 days) no male member, even the husband, is allowed to sleep in that room. No outsider nor any stranger is also allowed to enter the room due to the fear of evil spirits or evil-eye or evil touch. For the treatment of the pregnant woman, severing the umbilical cord and also for other various parturition rites a *Dhaini* (midwife) is employed. The *Dhaini* is either elderly and experienced Rabha woman or she belongs to some Hindu castes like Hari or Ghasi.

When the labour pain starts, she is removed to the lying-in-room and *Dhaini* is called. Generally, they believe, the labour pain starts at the tenth month when the pregnancy is fully matured, but sometimes the pain starts even before the full maturity is gained at the 8th or 9th month. They also believe that if the child is born at this pre-matured stage, the child becomes sickly and less vigorous.

On coming to treat the expectant mother the *Dhaini* first of all examines the patient to get an idea of her condition and probable time of delivery, by feeling the position of the baby in the womb. Sometimes the *Dhaini* understands the time of delivery by performing some magical rite. She pours some drops of mustard oil on the navel of the pregnant mother, and if the oil flows downwards, i.e., towards the vagina or thigh, then it is believed that the delivery will be finished quickly.

Further by another magical means the *Dhaini* also comes to know whether the delivery will be quick and safe or not. This magical rite is performed in the following way:—The *Dhaini* takes a pitcher of water in which she revolves anti-clockwise a leaf for a number of times keeping that leaf by index fore-finger and the thumb. In each rotation she mutters incantation and also blows a air from her mouth. After this she gives the expectant mother that water to drink. This magical rite is known as *Jal Kasa* and the belief behind this is that this sanctified water will hasten a safe delivery.

Before birth the *Dhaini* worships *Solomatrika*, deity for the child's welfare. For this *puja* she requires some flowers (which she plucks), some plantain leaves, incense, sacred water containing some Basil leaves. She then sits on the doorway inside the room and keeps the flowers on the plantain leaves and the cup containing the sacred water by the side of the leaves. The incense sticks are kept burning. After sprinkling the sacred water on the flowers, she offers these flowers to the deity with incantations for safe, painless and quick delivery. After the *puja* the *Dhaini* gives her patient a little sacred water to drink and also keeps some flowers of the *puja* on her bed. After child-birth all the

articles used in the *puja*, even the flowers in the patient's bed, are thrown away.

Sometimes, when the pregnant woman suffers from acute labour pain, a *Roja* (exorcist) is called for soothing this pain. The *Roja* first of all, observes the patient keenly and then sitting by the side of the pregnant woman within the room, makes some vow (*Bai Sakao*) to the Goddess *Solomatrika* that if the deity concerned cures her of acute labour pain, the deity will be worshipped with such and such thing (the vow) on an appointed day after the easy and safe delivery. Sometimes even for protracted labour (and also for acute pain) the *Roja* gives for rubbing the belly of the pregnant woman, some luke-warm mustard oil sanctified by magical formulæ or incantations for easy and quick delivery. Sometimes for the said reasons juice of the root of some tree is given to the patient to take or the root is tied to some parts of the body of the pregnant woman by means of a thread or a piece of cloth to act as an amulet.

When the delivery is about to take place, the pregnant woman remains in kneeling or squatting position till the placenta (after birth) comes out. The child is allowed to be on the ground first in order to get the blessings of Mother Earth. As stated earlier delivery is conducted by the *Dhaini* (midwife). Though they do not have special training in midwifery still they are considered as traditional-professional midwives. In spite of their lower position in social hierarchy, they are not hated even by the upper caste people for their profession. For this midwifery work a *Dhaini* gets Re. 1 to Rs. 2 and sometimes one *Sari* and one or two kgs. of rice. At present with the opening of Health Centres, some enlightened and well-to-do Rabhas send their wives there for safe delivery and scientific treatment. They have also learnt of the safety and security in this scientific method of delivery applied in the Health Centres or hospitals or by trained midwife or nurse.

During child birth only the elderly female-folk (generally married or widowed) are allowed to enter within the lying-in-room. But no male person, not even the husband, is permitted to be present in the room at that time.

Immediately after child-birth the midwife severs the umbilical cord by means of a sharp-edged bamboo-strip. After cutting the cord, the cut-end (navel of the child) is sprinkled with ashes of burnt plantain bark and the baby is placed on a bed made of torn cloth. During winter or rainy season the bed is made of straw on which some torn pieces of cloth are placed. The placenta is put into a cup made of the bark of plantain tree (*Kalar-donga*). The baby is then washed with water. During summer cold water, and during winter luke-warm water is used. In the same way the mother is also treated. Then both are allowed to take rest. Afterwards the placenta which was kept within a plantain-bark cup (*Kalar-donga*) is buried under the earth within the room or sometimes just outside the room. If it be a still birth, the dead child and also the placenta is buried together a little away from the lying-in-room, just outside the boundary of the homestead. Nothing in particular is done in connection with twins or other multiple births. No infanticide is also heard of.

After birth generally no treatment is done to the mother and the new-born except that if the mother suffers from eclampsia or any other illness the village quack is called who treats the mother. If the child does not cry after birth the *Dhaini* shakes it or gives it a gentle slap or blow through the mouth of the baby. If the mother has any bodily pain, she is generally given hot fomentation by the *Dhaini* or any other elderly woman.

After birth the mother is generally given no food for that day. From the day after birth, she is generally supplied with stew of magur (*Calrius batrachus*) fish and hot curry of certain vegetable (*Asani sak*). They believe that this would cure body pain and also hasten the flow of milk in the mother's breast. Sometimes stew of *Musur* pulse is also given for 2 or 3 days. After 2 or 3 days rice, potato curry and pulse stew are given. But chilli, sweet cucumber, egg, inflorescence of plantain and meat are never given to a mother. At the same time she is not allowed to work hard or walk much. She is not permitted to enter into the kitchen or the place of worship. She is prohibited from cooking or worshipping or going to any house with or without occasion. She is

not allowed to attend any religious festival taking place in the village or outside. This is also observed by other members of the family. No socio-religious ceremony can take place in this family unless the pollution period is over.

The Rabhas observe the pollution period for 30 days by all the members of the family.

The day when the pollution period ends, they observe *Chua kamao* or purification ceremony. In the morning of this day the barber (*Napit*) is called for shaving ceremony. The barber shaves the head of the new born and also pairs off the nails of the mother. Other male members cut their hair, shave their beards and moustache and pair off their nails. When the shaving ceremony is over all the members of the family including the mother and the new born go to the nearest water source usually to some pond or spring or stream for purification by bathing. In the meantime the house is cleaned by a paste of cow dung and water by other female members of the family or some female relatives.

After their return from bathing, the *Adhikari* is called for worshipping the deity *Balaram*. The arrangements are all made ready. Flowers, burning incense sticks, *Atap* rice, *Malbhag* banana, milk, sugar, clarified butter, honey, Basil leaves, *Durba* grass, seat and napkin are all kept ready near the *Tulsi Mancha* (sacred Basil altar).

The *Adhikari* sits by the side of this altar facing eastward. The mother with her child also sits there. All others assemble nearby. The *Adhikari* then starts worshipping the deity. One after another he offers different articles to the deity muttering incantations each time. Then he revolves the incense sticks before the Basil plant for three times. In this way when the *puja* is over, he puts mark of the mud of the Basil altar (*Tulsi-mancha*) on the forehead of the child (if the child is male) or the mark of vermilion (in case of a female child). Afterwards he blesses the child with paddy and *Durba* grass and puts a flower of the *puja* on the ear of the child. The *Prosad* is then distributed to all the assembled persons who take the same with great devotion. Only the mother of the child does not take the *Prosad* as she is the convenor of the *puja*. In the evening a feast is given to all the

invitees. The main items of the feast is either curd and chapped rice (*Chida*) or rice, pulse and vegetable, *Chakat* (rice-beer) or tea being the common item. During this ceremony generally no sacrifice is made. The belief behind this is that the Rabhas do not prefer to kill an animal in the day of birth which act, they believe, will bring misfortune to the child.

For their services in this ceremony the barber gets Rs. 2 in case of a male child, Re. 1 in case of a female child. Sometimes a well-to-do family gives the barber a *Dhuti* if there is a male child. The *Adhikari* gets 0.50 P. and some amount of uncooked rice, pulse, vegetables, etc. The *Dhaini* gets Re. 1 to Rs. 2 and sometimes one *Sari*.

NAME-GIVING CEREMONY

When the age of the child is between one and two months, the father of the child gets busy to celebrate the name-giving ceremony. One day he goes to the Brahmin or *Adhikari* and requests him to select an auspicious day for performing this ceremony. The Brahmin or *Adhikari* after consulting a *Panji* (almanac) selects a suitable day for the name-giving ceremony. Name is also given at the time of *Chua Kamao* ceremony.

On the selected day some of the relatives of the parents of the child and also some neighbouring villagers attend the ceremony. Generally the child's mother's father or mother's brother performs the ceremony. In the morning of the day he first of all takes a bath and wears a clean and new *Dhuti*. The child is also given a wash. Then he prepares a *Donga* (cup) by the bark of the plantain. Within this *Donga* some water is poured. Then he takes the child on his lap and drops a rice grain in the *Donga* uttering the name to be selected. If the rice floats, then this name is considered to be selected for the child. If the rice grain sinks down, another grain is taken, another name is selected and the same procedure is repeated. This process is continued until a rice floats and a name for the child is selected. Such name which is not present among the near relations is generally selected for the child. Sometimes the name of the day, month, village, particular bird, animal or flower or deities is given to the child. The name

thus given, becomes the original name of the child, and at the same time the child possesses another nickname. The name-giving ceremony does not take place in the months of *Jaistha* (May-June), *Vadro* (August-September), *Pous* (December-January), and *Chaitra* (March-April), and a day like Friday and Saturday as these are considered as inauspicious months and days. On the same ground new-moon day and last day of the month (*Sankranti*) are avoided.

After the ceremony a feast of rice, meat curry and rice beer is given to the assembled guests.

FIRST FEEDING OF RICE CEREMONY

When the child grows up a little (in case of male child it is 9 months and in case of female child it is 7 months), the 'first feeding of rice' ceremony takes place. This ceremony usually takes place in the house of the child's father. For this purpose the father of the child goes to the Brahmin or *Adhikari* for a suitable date. The Brahmin or *Adhikari* after consulting the almanac, selects an auspicious day for the ceremony. Restrictions on months and days are same as those of the name-giving ceremony.

In the morning of the day of the ceremony the priest after taking a bath and wearing a new *Dhuti* comes to perform the *puja*. The child is then bathed and dressed with new clothings. He is then allowed to sit on the lap of its father or mother's brother facing eastward because in the east *Narayan* and *Balaram*, the two important deities who are also believed as brothers, reside. In front of the child a plate containing a book, a pen of reed, paddy, *durba* grass, *Kajal* (black paint used to decorate eyes) and a lighted lamp is kept. A cup containing *Payes* (rice boiled with milk and sweet) is also kept. When all of these are ready, the priest performs the *Balaram puja* in the same way as is done in connection with child birth. After the end of the *puja* the mother's brother of the child takes a little of the *Payes* and feeds the child thrice. Throughout the feeding ceremony musical instruments are played and women utter *Ulu-Ulu* sound (sound done by the typical movement of the tongue, and this sound is considered sacred by the Hindus).

Lastly a feast is given to the assembled relatives and villagers who give some presentations to this child according to their means. At this time whether they can give any presentation or not, all of them bless the child for its welfare.

From this date with the end of this ceremony, the child is entitled to take boiled rice and other cooked food. Prior to this ceremony the child cannot be given any cooked food.

As rice is the staple food of the people it cannot be given to a new born child unless it is first touched by the family deity or other deities. Once this *Prosal* which was offered to the deity and considered as being tasted by the deity, is taken by the child, it acquires the right of taking any and every type of food.

MARRIAGE

To the Rabhas marriage is one of the most important events of life because they believe that unless a man gets married he cannot have the legitimate claim to beget a child and unless he can beget a child specially a son neither he can get salvation in after-world nor can he continue the ancestral worship and keep the family tie intact. So it is a moral duty for every Rabha to marry in order to keep the continuity of family bond. But there is also another important aspect of marriage and that is the gratification of sexual urge. The present day Rabhas do not consider it a nice affair to fulfil his carnal appetite with a girl with whom he has got no marital relation, and he considers such sex relation as illegal. Moreover they know that marriage leads to familial and conjugal life in the society.

Marriage among the Rabhas is known as *Biye*. The most important type of marriage which covers the major cases is by negotiations. The negotiation is either done by the guardian of either or both the parties or by some *Ghatak*, i.e., the go-between. The go-between is either a relative of either or both the parties or merely a villager, who may or may not belong to the Rabha community. Beside negotiation, there is another type of marriage prevalent among the Rabhas known as *Gharjai*, i.e., marriage by service. In this type of marriage the bridegroom stays

in the house of the bride either permanently or for a few years whereafter some build a new house for their own family and shift there.

Sometimes a poor Rabha who cannot afford to pay the bride-price, serves a rich Rabha in his field and also does various household works for a period varying from six months to two years. At the end of this period of service (sometimes even before the completion of the period of service), he marries the daughter of his master. In this case the master remains responsible for giving his daughter to this man in exchange of his service. This man thereafter, stays in the house of his father-in-law and in rare cases returns back to his parent's house.

If the man refuses to give marriage of his daughter to this man after the period of service is over, the case is sent to the elderly villagers for judgement and according to decision their master has to give either his daughter or a fine equal to the remuneration of total days' wages of the man. Sometimes a man with only daughter takes household-groom (*Gharjai*) who has to pay no bride price nor he is required to serve his would-be father-in-law before marriage.

Though monogamy is the general rule, still polygamy is practised to a very limited extent but nobody has heard of polyandry. The Rabhas do not prefer any type of cousin marriage nor do they at present approve lavirate. But sororate, specially the junior one where the man marries the younger sister of his wife, is prevalent.

There is no fixed bride-price among the Rabhas. It generally varies from Rs. 100 to Rs. 300. Even it is seen that a Rabha sometimes does not demand bride-price from the father of his would-be son-in-law. When a widower or a divorced person marries a widow or a divorced woman, he may pay a bride-price varying from Rs. 20 to Rs. 60 but if he marries an unmarried girl, same amount of bride-price as that in case of negotiation is claimed from him. Of this bride-price what amount the groom's father will pay, is usually decided by the *Ghatuk* after consultation, with both bride's and groom's father.

The residence after marriage is generally patrilocal except

those of the marriage by service or *Ghajai* where the groom either permanently lives in his father-in-law's house with his wife or temporarily lives in the father-in-law's house then shifts to his own house which he builds in the meantime.

In the Rabha society marriage within the community and also with some Hindu castes except the menial castes, is sanctioned. But they do not favour the marriage with any other scheduled tribes even with Meches and Garos.

If a non-Rabha male marries a Rabha woman, he has to give a feast to the village Panchayat or villagers for his entrance in the Rabha society. Generally when a person from Hindu caste marries a Rabha girl he is not allowed to stay in his own society and as such he prefers to be a member of Rabha society. Other prohibitions regarding the marriage are that a Rabha should not marry within his own clan or sub-clan (i.e. of his|her mother's clan or sub-clan) nor he can marry within his *Saru Hasuk*. One cannot also marry in mother's line but can bring spouse beyond three generations in father's line.

Among the Rabhas only *Vadra* (August-September), *Kartick* (October-November) and *Pous* (December-January), these three months are considered as inauspicious and thus no marriage can take place in these three months. Other months are considered favourable for marriage. But *Magh* (January-February) and *Falgun* (February-March) have special attraction for marriage as these two months are considered as most auspicious and suitable months. Marriage also does not take place in the birth month or birthday, last day of the month (*Sankranti*), new moon day, etc. Marriage within and outside the village is allowed. Remarriage is permitted in Rabha society.

According to Friend-Pereira⁸², the Rabha society sanctions three types of marriage—by purchase, by gift and by servitude. The ordinary form is by purchase, the bridegroom paying a sum of money (*gaodhan*) to the bride's parents before the marriage. He also states that though adult marriage is the rule still infant

82. Friend-Pereira, J. E. op. cit. 6. 143.

marriage is gradually becoming prevalent, probably in imitation of the Hindus. "Remarriage of widows is allowed; but a widow may not marry her late husband's elder brother; she may marry the younger brother; but she is not expected to do so Divorce is permitted without any particular ceremony A divorcee is at liberty to marry again anyone she pleases. Polygamy is allowed if the first wife is childless or incapable of attending to household duties, but it rarely indulges in."⁸³ He has also found the prevalence of mother's brother's daughter⁸⁴ marriage.

When a boy attains his marriageable age, his father or guardian seeks for his marriage and as such sometimes employs a match-maker (*Ghatak*) for finding out a suitable mate for his son. When the *Ghatak* brings the information about a suitable girl, a day is fixed for the visit after consultation with the father and some other relatives of the boy and also with the *Mahat* (village head man) and *Adhikari* or Brahmin (priest) of the village. Similarly the father of the girl selects a day for the return visit. On the morning of the selected day the father of the girl with one or two of his relatives including the wife's brother, his mother's brother and some other relatives, and the *Mahat* go to the boy's house led by the *Ghatak*. On reaching the house of the boy they are cordially received by the father and other relatives of the boy and also by the village *Mahat*. They are then given water to wash their face and feet and afterwards given seats in a room or on the courtyard for relaxation. Thereafter they are refreshed with some sweets and *Chakat* (rice beer). But in the more Hinduised houses now-a-days tea is given instead of *Chakat*. After *Chakat* tea betel and nut are given for chewing. At the end of the refreshment some of the relatives of the boy's side ask the members of the bride's party to describe any omen marked on their way. The bride's party then describes any omen if marked on the way. Generally they consider the following incidents as bad omens:—

1. If someone is working with a hoe.
2. Somebody is passing with logs of wood on his head.

83. Op. cit.

84. Op. cit.

3. Logs of wood lying by the side of the road.
4. Snake on their right and jackal on their left side.
5. Dead body and funeral procession.
6. Empty pitcher, etc.

If the party comes across any of these bad omens then the purpose of the journey is abandoned. Even if the purpose of the journey is not abandoned, generally the journey is not done. It is seen that while seeing the bad omens often the party cancels the journey and disfavours the girl for marriage. But during their journey if they come across such omens which they consider good, they think that the work to be done, will be done smoothly and satisfactorily. The following omens are considered as good omens:—

1. Basket with fish (if any party going for matrimonial purpose, crosses such a basket, they generally take two fishes as a symbol of good omen).
2. Pitcher full of water.
3. Snake in the left and jackal in the right side.
4. Burning pyre, etc.

While these discussions and gossip go on between the bride's and the groom's parties, the boy is dressed at his best and made ready for showing to the bride's party. Then with an end of the counting of omens, he is brought before the bride's party by some of his relatives. He carries a brass plate consisting of a lighted lamp, some paddy, *Durba* grass and vermillion. On entering the room he keeps the plate on the ground or on a stool and salutes all the elderly persons. Then he is allowed to take a seat nearby. The bride's party then asks some questions such as the name of their village, his father's and brother's name, whether he knows agriculture, whether he will be able to maintain a wife, etc. Being satisfied with all these tests, the father of the girl keeps some money varying from Rs. 2 to Rs. 10 on the plate. Sometimes the well-to-do persons give a *dhuti* and a *genji* and ornaments also. The boy again salutes all the assembled elderly persons and goes back with the plate. Then the guests are served with refreshment again. In the meantime both parties start discussion regarding the date for the visit of the boy's party to the girl's house.

On the fixed day, the boy's party, consisting of the boy's father, mother's brother, some other elderly relations and *Mahat* starts for the bride's village. There they are heartily received by the girl's party. They are then taken to the girl's house, and after having their face and feet washed, they are allowed to take rest. They are also given some sweets and *Chakat* to drink and in some cases tea also. Then they start discussing the omens observed on the way. Afterwards on the request of the boy's party the girl is brought before them. The girl brings with her a plate containing the same articles as brought by the boy previously.

Then she salutes all the elderly persons present there, first of all those of the boy's party. They at the same time, bless her with paddy and grass. Then the boy's father keeps some money, exactly double the amount as kept by the girl's father during his visit to see the boy. Afterwards asking a few questions related to the household works, the girl is allowed to go back. Then both parties start discussing on many points connected to the marriage, such as fixation of bride-price (if any), date of marriage, number of guests to be received, articles such as dress and ornaments, etc., to be given, etc.

If the boy and the girl are choiced by respective parties, the marriage is considered to be settled. Then both the parties prepare themselves for the occasion and try to make all the arrangements ready before the day of marriage.

In the evening of the day before marriage, *Adhibas* ceremony—a premarital rite, is performed in the houses of both parties. In the afternoon, some of the members of each of the houses plant two banana trees on the respective courtyard. On each side of the door of the main room one earthen pot (*ghat*) is placed, and on each *ghat* a branch of mango tree containing seven leaves, a betel and a betel-nut are kept. The *ghat* and the mango leaves are marked with vermilion. In the meantime, one portion of the main room is cleaned with water, and in this place the Brahmin or *Adhikari* priest worships the family deities.

However, the women-folk in the meantime, keep the articles

such as milk, banana, sugar, *chida* (chapped rice), incense-sticks, flower, etc., ready for the occasion. The priest after taking bath and wearing new clothes (in some cases old but clean and washed clothing) sits for worship. He first of all prepares a number of plates of banana bark (*Kalar donga*) and keeps in each plate one of these items which are later on purified with sacred water. Then he makes *Bhog* which is made of some *Atap* rice, banana and sugar mixed together. Then the father of the boy, in his absence, the boy himself, or boy's father's brother or mother's brother, sits by the side of the priest and as per direction of the priest offers several articles to the deities and then to the ancestors and ancestresses. First of all the *Bhog* is offered. Similarly, the same type of function is also held in the girl's house.

Just before the *puja* in the house of the prospective groom a round and flat basket, and in the house of the prospective bride a winnowing fan both made by the women-folk of the respective house or the female relatives of the respective house. The basket or winnowing fan whatever it may be, is first of all decorated with a mixture of rice powder and water. Then on this is placed a portion of the free end of the plantain leaf on which some paddy, *Durba* grass, five lighted lamps, a small looking glass, a small vermilion box, a comb, seven conch (*Kari*), a pair of conch-bangle (*Sankha*), garland of each of wooden-beads and conch, etc., are kept. This is also kept near the altar at the time of worship. After the *puja* this is taken to the house which will be *Basarghar* meant for observation of certain post-marital rites.

Next morning, i.e., the morning of the day of marriage the *Gaye-halud* (smearing of turmeric paste to the prospective couple) ceremony is performed. This "smearing of the paste of turmeric" ceremony takes place in the house of the groom first, and thereafter a portion of this paste is sent to the house of the bride, and with this paste this ceremony is performed in the bride's house. If the bride's house is situated far away which cannot be reached on the same day, the bride's house performs this ceremony independently without the paste from the groom's house and in the day of marriage when the groom's party comes, they bring with them this paste and the bride is ceremonially touched with this

paste. If the bride is brought in the groom's house before this ceremony for marriage, the *Gaye-halud* ceremony of both may take place in the latter's house.

In this morning some of the married female relatives of the groom (*Bairati*) prepare paste of turmeric and scented oil with mustard oil and *Metameti* (a kind of spice). The boy in the meantime wears a new dress. Then the *Bairatis* taking the turmeric paste, scented oil and some *Metameti* (a kind of *spice*) in a brass plate or in a *Kalar-donga*, bedoub the prospective groom with all these. They also smear one another with these. Only married women take part in this ceremony. No widow is allowed to take part, and the unmarried girls also do not show their activity in this ceremony. When this ceremony is over the boy takes bath. He is not allowed to do any work this day. Some persons at the end of this ceremony in the groom's house, start for the house of the girl with a little of each of these, and with these articles from the boy's house, the *Gaye-halud* ceremony in the bride's house is performed. It is done exactly in the same way as in the boy's case.

In the afternoon some of the relatives of the groom led by the groom's mother's brother go to the house of the bride to bring her for the marriage. The would-be groom and his parents do not go with the procession. The procession is accompanied by musicians. The members of this procession generally consist of some of the relatives of the groom, some villagers and friends. The maternal uncle or some other relatives of the groom generally leads the procession. The *Ghatak* and the *Mahat* also accompany.

The *Muna* (groom's mother's brother) generally carries the *Pan* (bride-price), if any, which varies from Rs. 100 to Rs. 300 and other associated articles such as clothings, ornaments and now-a days cosmetics also. As soon as they reach the outskirts of the house of the bride, they are cordially received by her relatives, and also by the *Mahat*, *Choukidar* and some other neighbouring villagers. With much pomp and pleasure, music and song, they are taken to the house of the bride. On reaching the house, one or two persons give them a pot of water to wash their face and feet. After washing, they take their seat. They are then given

Chakat (rice-beer) to drink and also some sweets to eat. Now-a-days the guests are also served with tea instead of *Chakat* by the more Hinduised Rabhas. After this light refreshment they are given betel leaf and nut for chewing. During all this time they gossip and discuss various aspects of the marriage.

In the meantime, female-folk of the house dress the prospective bride. She generally wears a new *Sari*, sometimes a new blouse and ornaments. Now-a-days during dressing they are using cheap cosmetics also.

On the other side the guests are then served meal. Now-a-days the dish generally consists of cooked rice and meat curry of fowl, goat, or of pig. When the feast is over, the girl is taken before the guests and the mother's brother of the groom hands over the bride-price and other articles to the father or maternal uncle of the bride. In this time the mother of the bride is given a pair of *Sari* or equivalent amount of money. Then after due exchange of salutes the groom's party takes their departure from the bride's house taking the bride with them. They start from the house of the bride in such a time that they can reach the house of the groom in the same evening. The bride salutes all the elderly persons and starts towards the village of the groom with the groom's party for marriage. Generally a bullock-cart carries the girl, her father and/or maternal uncle, the *Mahat* of the groom's village, and groom's maternal uncle, the priest and the barber. Then after their start, different other relatives, some friends and villagers and the village head-man of the bride's village follow the procession which consists of musicians of both the parties.

As soon as they reach the outskirt of the groom's house the relatives, villagers and others from the groom's house heartily receive the procession. As soon as they arrive, the mother of the groom sprinkles sacred water on the girl who then salutes her would-be parents-in-laws. Then the *Bairatis* of the groom's house ceremonially receive the girl and take her in a somewhat decorated room. The father and other elderly relatives of the groom also invite the relatives of the bride and take them into the said room. While the would-be bride is allowed to take rest in

the room, the groom is dressed and decorated by his companions in the other room.

In the morning of the same day a marital canopy is made on the courtyard or within the main room. The canopy is made of four bamboo poles having a straw or grass-thatched roof or jute-stick woven sheet. Just by the side of each bamboo pole one small plantain sapling is planted at the foot of which new earthen pot (*Ghat*) is kept. In the middle of the room another *Ghat* is placed. Each of the *Ghats* is half filled with water. On the central *Ghat* mango twig with seven leaves and a betel leaf with a betel-nut are kept. This *Ghat* is painted with vermilion. When all these are ready, the groom's elder sister's husband hides the face of the groom with a piece of cloth and takes the groom in his lap and brings him in the marital booth. But before entering into the booth, the groom sits on a wooden stool. The parents of the groom and some *Bairatis* also sit by his side. Then the Brahmin or the *Adhikari* first gives a little water on the palm of the father of the bride who then keeps his palm crosswise and drops the water on the ground. He again gives on the palm of the bride's father one after another a little curd, one or two leaves of *Jujuba*, a few seeds of cotton, two rolls of betel leaves, burning incense sticks and lastly water, and the bride's father in the same way drops the aforesaid articles one after another. This ceremony is known as *Hukar-bhanga*.

When the *Hukar bhanga* ceremony is over, the bride's sister's husband brings her on his lap in this place. But before bringing her here, she is given final make-up. In the mean time the boy stands up on the stool facing eastward and two men cover him with cloth in the front so that the bride and the groom cannot see each other while revolving the girl round the boy. The bride's sister's husband then revolves anti-clockwise round the boy taking the bride in his lap for seven times, the two men holding the screening cloth in order to prevent her gaze on the boy and *vice versa*. As soon as one round of rotation is completed the bride throws a handful of *Khai* (fried rice) on the groom over the curtain. In this fashion the bride moves round the groom seven times and throws seven handful of *Khai* on the groom. When the last round is completed the bride's

sister's husband stands face to face with the groom taking the bride. A veil is then placed over the heads of both bride and the groom, and the covering cloth is removed from the groom's face. This is done for the 'first looking ceremony' so that the bride and the groom can look at each other ceremonially for the first time. After this first looking ceremony, the groom is taken to the marital booth. He sits in the middle of a side, on his right sits the Brahmin or *Adhikari* and on his left his would-be father-in-law. The priest first of all makes the father-in-law to utter incantations relating to marriage from the canons. Following the priest the boy also utters the *mantras*. When the reading of *mantra* (incantation) is over, the father-in-law gets up and brings his daughter into the booth. The girl sits down on the empty stool of her father. The priest in the same manner makes the girl to utter the marital incantations and then keeps on the right palm of the boy the left palm of the girl and then both utter fresh marital *mantras*. Then the priest ties the right thumb of the boy with the left thumb of the girl by means of *Kush* (a kind of grass) string. Thereafter he places a new napkin on the joint palms of both bride and the groom, and on the napkin he keeps the sacred *Ghat*. Both the napkin and the *Ghat* are given by father of the bride. Thereafter another course of incantations is uttered. Then the priest ties one end of the *anchal* (free end of the *Sari*) of the bride with one end of the *chaddar* worn by the groom. This tie is known as *Lagan-githu*.

Along with the making of this *Lagan-githu*, the priest utters the *mantra* of union. Then they keep the *Ghat* and the napkin on the ground. The go-between who sits nearby, then asks the father of the bride, "This *Kush* string ties the two hands. Do you want to tear this tie or to open it?" The father of the bride replies, "I shall open it." Then he unstrings the tie. Afterwards the priest requests the bride-groom to give the *Ghat* to the hand of one of his ceremonial friends uttering incantations. At this time the groom and his ceremonial friend utter *mantras*. The ceremonial friend then transfers the *Ghat* to the groom. This ceremonial friend gives some presentation to the groom.

In the same way some aged couple becomes the ceremonial parents (*Pani-chhūtao Ma Bap* or *Dharam Ma-Bap*) of the

groom. Generally his *Meso* (mother's sister's husband) becomes the *Pani-chhitao Bap*. He sits by the side of the groom and by uttering *mantras* and taking oath he becomes the ceremonial father. The man who has such ceremonial parents, has certain moral duties and obligations towards the ceremonial parents, such as when one or both such parents die, the ceremonial son has to observe pollution period for three days and also to do short *Kam* (obsequial) ceremony and also to give *Pinda* (oblation) for the deceased ceremonial father and so on. The ceremonial father also gives some presentation to his ceremonial son at the time of marriage.

When the above mentioned rites and rituals are over the *Sindur-dan* (painting of vermilion) ceremony starts. The groom according to the direction of the priest takes a little vermilion by the little finger of his right hand and with the same he gives a dot mark on the forehead of the girl and also paints the parting of her hair. This is done thrice. The girl then by her little finger of the left hand, takes a little black-paint (*Kajal*) and gives a dot mark on the forehead of the groom three times. In this way *Sindur-dan* or *Ang-Sindur Dekhna*, the vermilion marking ceremony is observed.

When the 'vermilion marking' ceremony is over, 'looking through the mirror' (*Ayena Dekhana*) ceremony starts. First of all the bride takes a mirror in her right hand and puts it three times before the groom so that he can see his face. Thereafter the groom holds the same looking glass by his left hand and shows the same to the bride. This is also done three times. Then comes 'the exchange of garland' ceremony.

First of all the bride takes the garland of marriage from her neck and puts the same into the neck of the groom, who thereafter in the same way takes the garland of his own from his neck and puts it in his wife's neck.

During all these ceremonies the assembled persons, specially the females and the young girls give *Ulu-lu-lu* sound (a typical sound uttered by Hindu women during any socio-religious ceremony and considered as befitting a sacred occasion) and also blow conch-shell.

When all the above typical rites are over, the priest starts

the *Yajna*. He prepares a small fire-place in which he offers various articles such as clarified butter, flowers, milk, sweets, curd etc. in the name of various deities and ancestors uttering *Vedic mantras* (hymn of *Veda*). When the *Yajna* is over, the newly-wed couple stands up, the bride stands in the front while the groom just behind her. He then stretches his hand from both sides of the bride and holds her palms. The younger brother of the girl then puts some *Khai* (fried rice) in the joint hands of the bride and the groom. Then the couple utters *mantras* along with the priest. When the *mantra* is over they drop the *Khai* into the fire of the *Yajna*. This rite is observed for three times. When the *Yajna* and the offering of *Khai* are over, the priest gives a new napkin of the *Yajna* to the groom.

In the meantime, some persons spread cloth throughout the path from *Yajna* place to *Basarghar* (the room where the newly-wed couple stays that night). The groom followed by the bride then, proceeds towards the *Basarghar* and sits on the bed. The bride sits by the left side of the groom. Then the couple plays with small conch-shells (*Kari*) assisted by their friends and relatives. The groom first takes seven conch-shells in his right palm, closes it and throws the same on the bed; and if the majority of the conch-shells falls with flattened surface, then the union is considered as good, otherwise not. In this way he throws the *Karis* three times. Then the bride plays with these shells and throws in the similar way. If the shells instead of falling flat, fall with convex back, then it is, in her case, considered as a good sign. She also throws the shells thrice.

Then they come out of the house and bow to the sacred altar of Basil (*Tulsi-mancha*), the family deity, parents and all other elderly relatives and again come back to the *Basarghar*. A large portion of the night is spent in merry-making, singing etc.

Next morning *Bowbhat* ceremony is observed in the groom's house. The main function of this ceremony is the distribution of food by the newly-wed bride to all the relatives and guests who assemble during the occasion. The bride distributes it to all for her social acceptance by the society. If the society does not accept the bride, none would take the food from this house. As soon as they take the food from the hand of the bride, it indicates that

they (the members of the society) have accepted her as one of their society. Afterwards, a feast is given with rice, meat, pulse, etc. When the feast is over, some women take the plate of the groom who has already finished his meal and places it before the bride in a separate place.

She for her first meal in her husband's house, must take the morsel of food from the plate of her husband and also in the presence of her husband. Then the couple is allowed to take rest.

On the eighth day after marriage, the relatives of the bride such as her father, mother, maternal and paternal uncles with their wives, her brothers, sisters, and others come to the house of the groom. There they are given a hearty welcome, and a delicious feast is served to them. After the feast all of them return. Next day the relatives of the groom pay a return visit to the bride's father's house. This marks the end of the marriage ceremony.

In this connection it may be mentioned that the boy's mother's brother plays an important role in the marriage of his *Baenai* (i.e. his sister's son). During or after marriage, he must present two rings to his sister's son and his wife, one to each of them. The ring to be given to his sister's son's wife, must be more valuable than that to be given to his sister's son. So long as he cannot give the rings, he should not accept the food and water in his sister's son's family. He can take food and water only when he presents the rings to his sister's son and sister's son's wife.

SAJABIYA

This marriage is a prototype of the previous form. All the associated rites and rituals are quite similar to those of the previous negotiation marriage. The only difference is that the functions of the marriage proper unlike those of the previous type, are performed in the house of the bride like the Hindus. Here the groom and his relatives along with co-villagers go to the house of the bride for marriage. Marriage ceremonies take place there. Next day after the usual post-marital rites in the bride's house, he starts

for his father's house with his wife and some of his companions and relatives and also some relatives of the bride. All the other rites are quite similar to those of the previous type of marriage. This type of marriage is preferred by the more Hinduised section of the Rabhas and now-a-days gaining much popularity among them.

GHIARJAI BIYA OR MARRIAGE BY SERVICE

If a poor boy who has no guardian who can arrange marriage for him, desires to marry or if he loves a girl, a *Bhateth* i.e. go-between is generally approached by him along with whom he one day goes to the house of the girl's father (the girl whom he desires to marry). They are cordially received in the house. The match-maker then discloses the desire of the boy and also mentions about the boy's inability for the arrangement of the marriage and for that he desires to serve the man and his family. If the girl's father agrees to the proposal, he fixes a period of service for the boy which varies from six months to two years. After the end of this period, the marriage of his daughter with this boy takes place. If the boy is agreeable to the proposal of the girl's father regarding the period of service to be rendered to him, the boy approaches his near relatives and requests them to see the girl. Then on a fixed day they go to see the girl. They are treated in the same way as in the previous type. During the 'blessing' ceremony, no money or token bride-price is paid. After the ceremony the guests are given a good refreshment after which they return to their own house. No reverse visit from the bride's side to the boy's house takes place. On the day of blessing the bride or thereafter, the Brahmin or the *Adhikari* after consulting the *Panjī* (almanac), fixes a suitable date for the formal discussion.

On the fixed day, the boy with his relatives, friends and the go-between and also village *Mahat*, goes to the house of the bride where they are very cordially greeted. After the exchange of good wishes, a light refreshment and a little gossip, the *Bhateth* starts discussion with the relatives of both bride and the groom regarding the period of service; and lastly a period is fixed. The relatives,

headmen and well-wishers of both bride and the groom take part in the discussion and remain as witnesses. Thereafter a final date for marriage is fixed which covers the period of service. Then a feast is given to the guests on behalf of the bride's father. After the feast all go away to their respective houses excepting the groom who according to the pact, lives in the house of his would-be father-in-law and serves for him. When the period of service is over, the marriage ceremony takes place in the same way as is done in previous type. The only difference is that in some cases the groom after marriage lives with his father-in-law.

Sometimes a rich Rabha landlord gives marriage of his daughter with his share-cropper (*Halua*) or servant and the married couple lives in his house, life-long or for a certain period. This is also known as *Gharjai* type of marriage.

DISEASE AND RITES CONNECTED WITH DEATH

The Rabhas believe that death and disease are mainly due to the evil effects of the spirits. For different types of diseases and also for death, various types of spirits are responsible. Only a few Rabhas give value to the scientific explanation of disease and death.

When a man falls ill, the *Roja* (*Huji*) or exorciser or *Kabiraj* (medicine man) is called in for his treatment. The *Roja* at first observes the patient and feels his pulse and diagnoses the cause of the disease i.e. which spirit is responsible for the illness. After determining the spirit responsible, he performs some magical rites for the remedy of the ailment.

Tel-para (determination of the cause of ailment and its remedy by sanctified oil), *Sarse-para* (determination of the cause of ailment and its remedy by sanctified mustard seeds), *Jalpara* (same by means of sanctified water) etc. are the various means by which the *Roja* cures the ailing person. Some of these methods of treatment are described below:—

(1) *Tel-para*—In order to treat the patient the medicine man takes some mustard oil in a cup or *Kalar-donga*. Then he sanctifies this oil by uttering the following magical formulae. “*Kiring ‘Kesta Mantra Jape,’ Baikunthe ‘Munijan Bise’ Tranga Pāpi*

*Karfar Nāsh Ikiri Ikiri Etūmati Thīkari Nāo Boi Naurā Nauri
Kule Saranga Boi Falna Sarile Chamkay Dhamay Chariya Palaya
Kiling Kesta Salāy.*

With the utterance of this *mantra*, the oil becomes sanctified. Then the *Roja* rubs some parts of the body of the patient with this sanctified oil in order to expel the evil spirit responsible for the disease. Next day again he rubs the body of the patient with this oil or with some newly sanctified oil or asks somebody of the family to do it. This continues for a certain period.

(2) *Sarse-para*—In this magical means, some mustard seeds are charmed by means of some magical formulae. One such formula is mentioned below:—

Bāramuti Sarisā

Teramuti Rāi

Fālne Sārile Rog Biyadi

Apad Bīpad Chhariya Palay.

Then the *Roja* takes some of these mustard seeds thus charmed and strikes the patient's body with these uttering the magical formulae. This is repeated for three times. Then he requests some of the family members to give him a black chicken. After receiving the black chicken he collects the mustard seeds from the bed and goes far away from the house. There he feeds the chicken with these charmed seeds and throws the chicken outside the village boundary. The body of the patient is struck with these charmed seeds so that the spirit concerned flies away; it is also believed by the Rabhas that sometimes the spirit takes its abode in the seeds from the body of the patient and as such the *Roja* permits a chicken to take the mustard seeds holding the spirits and throws out the spirits from the village by throwing out the chicken (which has taken these seeds) outside the village boundary.

(3) *Jal-para*—This method of treatment is almost similar to that of the previous one. The *Roja* takes a little water in a brass cup or pot and drops a few sacred Basil leaves in it. Then he utters some magical formulae and along with this revolves the contents of the cup. One of the formulae uttered in this connection is given below:—

Kharsan Kharban Tor Bara Nam; Siber Tirsule Tor Janma. Siber Hunkare Chalek to Tui, Falna Surile Due Dusi, Katbo Mui Huhunkare Sabder Dhani Falna Raska Kare Niranjan Sayani Kiling Kesta Balaramer Sahay.

This sanctified water is then given to the patient to drink.

(4) *Dhenki-Jhara*—In this method of treatment, the magician (*Huji*) prepares a bunch with five or seven saplings of *Dhenki* plant (a kind of Fern) and with this bunch which acts as broom, he thrashes the body of the patient uttering the following *mantras*:—

*Jorā Bole Joree He Kanya Dibyabati
Ai Mate Bibhisā Geiche Adyagati,
Dāinhāte Narak Bāo Hāte Surag
Jorā Surāo Kāto Tripuni Khāte
Hār Jor Bār Jor Bāga Bhallev Kaj
Chūkāi Telukāi
Kuchhā Muchhā Bāmūn Ke Utia
Dusi Gunt Jwar Ai Jwar
Mor Muti Korbo Bhar
Muti Hāte Lankār Pār
Shirat Bandāng Gurur Pāo
Phalnār Jwar Bis Chhūriy Nabāine
Ai Kālikā Chandī Māo.*

They believe that with the thrashing of the bunch along with the uttering of *mantra* by the exorciser who has particular power of curing the disease, the spirit responsible for the illness leaves the body of the patient.

There is no particular place or time fixed for the above-stated treatments by the *Roja*. On any day and at any time this type of magical treatment can be done. The *Roja* gets his fee which depends on the type of disease and also on the type of *Roja*.

Beside the above method of treatment, in every *haat* or local market stalls of indigenous medicines are seen. The village quacks and also some *Hature* from different other areas sell these medicines. This kind of medicines is prepared from the roots, tubers, barks, leaf, etc., of different plants and also from some other objects like powder of conch, *Bhaskar* salt, bones of various

animals, oils, etc. Often the Rabhas are seen to purchase these indigenous medicines. These they purchase from local or town dispensaries or get from charitable one, free of cost. In the Zilla Board Medical Centre at Kamakhyaguri these people are seen to take medicines for their diseases. In 1960, 157 patients came here for treatment out of whom 104 were Rabhas. In 1961 out of a total of 536 (who came to this centre) 336 were Rabhas of the surrounding areas. The main diseases among the Rabhas are Goitre, Dysentery, skin diseases, Lung diseases, Chronic Bronchitis, Dispepsia and diseases from malnutrition.

The Rabhas believe that human being dies mainly due to spirit action. But now-a-days the sophisticated Rabhas think that death is generally due to old age, diseases, accident or some such causes. But these educated Rabhas decline to believe the spirit action only. Some also make the fate responsible. They say that man dies as his longevity finishes. The common unsophisticated persons believe that due to spirit actions human beings fall ill and die.

When a man dies, the family members specially the women and children wail loudly. Whether a person is dead or not it is understood by the cessation of breath, pulse and movement of the body, fixation of eye-ball and fall of body temperature, etc. The medicine man or some experienced and aged persons are asked to confirm the death.

After the expiry of sufficient time they arrange for the disposal of the dead body. (On query, some Rabhas stated that they wait a certain period after the death of a person only to be sure of his death). Cremation is the general rule of disposal of the dead in the Rabha society of West Bengal, though burial is also practised. Friend-Pereira also noticed the prevalence of cremation among the Rabhas of Assam.⁸⁵

In the first stage for the preparation of the disposal of the dead among the Rabhas of West Bengal, relatives who live in the village or in the neighbouring villages are informed, generally by the family members or by the neighbours of the dead. In the meantime in the house, someone of the family cleans some por-

84. Op. cit.

tion of the land near the altar of *Tulsi* (sacred Basil) with cow-dung paste and water. Some male-folk then prepares *Moirsang-rang* (funeral bier) by means of bamboo. To prepare a bier, first of all two long poles of bamboo about 8 ft. to 10 ft. each are placed parallelly, keeping a distance of 2.5 ft. to 3.5 ft. between them. On these two poles, some odd number of bamboo splits (5, 7 or 9 in number) are placed. These bamboo splits are tied with the bamboo poles by means of bamboo string winding round the split and the poles without giving any knot. Knot must not be given in tying the splits with the poles. When the bier is ready, it is kept north-south direction before the *Tulsi mancha* (altar in which the sacred Basil plant has been planted) which was cleaned with cow-dung mixture. Meanwhile the dead body is dressed with a sheet of new white cloth which is about 7 ft. to 12 ft. in length.

If the dead is male by sex he is usually dressed by males and if female by the females. But if the dead is married one, the dressing is done by the respective spouse i.e. if the husband dies then the wife dresses the body and *vice versa*. When the dressing is complete another sheet of new cloth about 6 ft. in length is placed on the bier. Then two or three persons hold the dead body and place it on the bier where the body is further covered with another piece of cloth of previous size.

When all these activities are completed, four persons preferably the kins of the dead, take the bier on their shoulder and start for the cemetery. But before they leave the house of the dead, they with the dead body on the bier, revolve round the courtyard or the front of the house anti-clockwise seven times uttering '*Horibol*' (calling the name of the Lord Hari). The dead body is followed by a number of persons including the relatives, friends and neighbours of the dead. If the husband dies the wife also accompanies the procession. The party takes with them several things such as a hoe, an earthen pot, a digging stick, a stool, a cup containing *Til* (a kind of oil seed), mustard seeds, etc., a bottle containing a little oil, a hand fan made of palmyra palm leaf or grass, sticks and lighted straw-rope (*Bhuti*) etc. The cremation ground is generally situated by the side of the nearby

river or spring or canal. Reaching the cremation ground the bier-carriers keep the bier on the ground in the north-south direction. Then the eldest son (in his absence any other son in order of seniority, in absence, any senior male relative) keeps a pice on the ground where the cremation will take place in order to purchase the land symbolically from the supreme god. There after those who carried the bier or some other persons prepare the funeral pyre for the cremation of the dead body. One of them first of all dig a small pit, on four sides of which four pegs each about 1 to 2 ft. in height, are planted.

On these four pegs wooden pieces are arranged in cross-rows. In this way three or four cross rows of wooden logs are made; and the funeral pyre points north-southward. Then those persons who carried the bier lift the body and place it on the pyre. (More Hinduised Rabhas revolve the dead body anti-clockwise round the pyre for seven times). Thereafter a female relative of the dead having some *Husuk* with him, gives *Jula-pinda*. Generally ElSi, YoSi, Mo, MoMo or any other female member of the dead's mother's line having dead's mother's clan, can perform this rite. They first of all pour a little water on the mouth of the dead and then a little *Chakat* every time chanting incantations. Now-a-days this burden is taken by the males in many Rabha houses. Then another few rows of wood are placed on the body, keeping only the mouth of the dead open. Then *Mukhe-agun* (touching the mouth of the dead with fire) ceremony is performed. If the parents die then this rite is performed by the eldest son, in his absence the next son; in absence of the son, nearest male relative bearing his clan does the same. The person concerned then takes a bunch of jute sticks, lights it and then revolves the same round the pyre seven times anti-clockwise. At the completion of each round he touches the mouth of the dead with the fire turning his face on opposite direction. At the end of the seventh time he first of all lights the pyre with the fire. Others follow him. The dead body is then allowed to be consumed by the fire totally.

The spot where once a body is cremated will not be used for cremating another body. Another place is generally selected for

the purpose. When the cremation is complete, the person who performed the *Mukhe-agun* ceremony, first of all pours an earthen pitcher of water on the pyre. Then one after another the near kins, villagers, friends and others do the same. When the pouring of water is complete, a small pit is dug first by the side of the pyre in which the ashes, bones (if any), etc., are buried. Then four bamboo poles of about 8 to 10 ft. high are planted on four sides of the pyre. With the four free end of the pole a canopy of a piece of white cloth is held. On the middle of the ground under the canopy, that empty earthen pitcher is kept. In one side of the pyre a long bamboo stick is planted into which a flag is tied. With the pole of the canopy the umbrella, sandal, etc., of the dead person are also tied. Then on the spot seeds of mustard, *Til*, etc., are broadcast so that plants may grow out of these. Sometimes this area is also fenced.

When all these are over they take purificatory bath and with the wet clothings all of them return back to the house of the deceased uttering "*Bala Hari*" "*Hari Bol*" (name of Lord Hari). Meanwhile the whole house is cleaned with a mixture of cowdung earth and water. As soon as they return and shout *Haribol* finally, someone in the house sprinkles sacred water of *Tulsi* (*Tulsijal*) for the final purification. Then they are supplied with *Chakat* or tea. After the drink the villagers, friends and distant relatives go back to their respective houses and change their dresses. The nearest kins wear the same dress which they wore at the time of cremation.

The Rabhas observe *Chhua* (mourning) for a month. Generally the near kinsmen observe the *Chhua*. During this period they observe a number of restrictions such as the mourner do not take fish, meat, egg, onion, *Musuri* pulse etc. They do not wear any other clothing excepting what they wore after the time of cremation, nor they use shoe or sandal, oil, cosmetics etc. Generally they take meal once a day. The meal consists of cooked arua rice and vegetables, clarified butter, sweets, fruits etc. If the father dies the sons should not take banana (ripe or green) and in case of mother, milk.

On the 10th day after cremation *Dasa* ceremony is observed. In the morning of this day the sons of the dead take bath and give

up using the polluted clothings so long they have worn. After bath they wear new clothings. Then they all go to the very place where the dead body was cremated. On that spot a miniature hut is constructed where various rites and rituals take place. The *Dasa* ceremony has several rites of which *Chitakaram*, *Pindadan*, *Vairabpuja*, *Kheru*, etc. are important. At the time of *Chitakara* rite a small pyre is made on which a piece of bone of the dead which was collected at the time of the cremation, is kept. Then the sons put fire in the pyre by means of a bunch of jute stick. When this symbolic cremation is over, the bone is taken in a *Kalar-donga* and kept the same afterwards in the *Than* made there. Then *Pindadan* ceremony is observed. In this rite the son offers several articles to the departed souls. Thereafter the bone is buried in a pit there. After this ceremonial burial of the bone six *Pindas* made of *Atap* rice, pea, curd, milk clarified butter, honey, banana, etc., are offered. When the offering of bone is over the *Vairab puja* is celebrated. It is done by the priest who performs the *puja* by offering flowers, basil leaves, *Atap* rice, fruits etc.

After *Dasa*, mourning period for another 20 days is observed. On the 29th day i.e. 19 days after *Dasa* the *Kheuri* or *Kaman* (final purification) ceremony is performed. This rite of purification (*Kheuri*) is done by means of shaving the hair, beard, moustache and also by paring off the nails. A *Napit* (barber) is called who does all these things. The relatives other than sons and also some other villagers who took active part in the funeral rites, generally cut their hair, shave beard and moustache and pare off nails. The sons shave their head completely and also shave their beard and moustache and pare off nails. Womenfolk of the family cut nails only. Then after bath and wearing new clothings they become fresh.

Next day *Kam* (obsequial) ceremony takes place. From the dawn the arrangements for this ritual starts. The home, courtyard, etc., are cleaned. The ceremony is conducted by the priest. Several articles such as utensils fruits, flowers, *Atap* rice, sweet etc., are required. The main item of this ceremony is to offer *Pindas* to the departed souls along with the hyme of *mantras*.

When the *Kam* ceremony is over the priest is given his remuneration and also all the articles required in the ceremony.

Thereafter a feast consisting of curd, *Chilla* (chapped rice), molasses and salt is given to all the assembled persons.

This ends the funeral ceremony and from this day they lead their normal life.

RELIGION

The present day Rabha religion may be characterised as a mixed type of Hinduism and Animism. During the early forties of this century a strong movement for the Hinduisation took place among the Rabhas. This movement of Hinduisation though led by some Hindu and Rabha leaders and some village demagogues of the area, still the Rabhas in general showed a keen interest for the acceptance of Hinduism. The few enlightened Rabhas who first led the movement with the help of some Hindu leaders and some learned persons, were, at last, successful in convincing the co-tribesmen, and as a result, ultimately the Rabhas adopted the local Hinduism *en masse*. The main objective of this religious movement of the Rabhas was, of course, to get a place in the Hindu society and uplift the social position, status and hierarchy of their community people. They organised some large *Yajna* and in that they say, all the Rabhas, local Hindu leaders, Government Officers and also representatives of the Cooch Behar Royal family took part as witnesses. Then through the performance of some rites and rituals they entered into the Hindu society, took Hinduism as their religion and became Hindus. As a result of adopting Hinduism they gave up the habit of drinking '*Chakat*' (as the Hindus do not drink wine), rearing and eating pig and fowl (as they believe that the Hindus do not rear these and eat the meat of pig and fowl), utilised the services of Brahmin in their social and religious ceremonies (as the Hindus employ Brahmin for these purposes), and started worshipping Hindu deities and so on.

Though the present day Rabhas have readopted some of the past habits (such as drinking of *Chakat* and rearing of fowl and

pig, etc.), they gave up just after their mass adoption of Hindu manners and customs, due mainly to their long-standing habit and also some economic and socio-political factors, still they try to follow in their social and religious life as much of Hindu rites and customs as they can.

In absence of any early account on the Rabha religion of West Bengal, it is difficult to assess the extent of tradition the Rabha religion of today has still preserved or the extent of puritanic religious traits adopted in order to uplift their social position. However, earlier accounts on the Rabhas of Assam give some idea regarding their religion. One of the earlier accounts states: "Although they take part in popular Hindu religious festivals, like *Durga Puja* and *Kali Puja*, the Rabhas are in reality pure Animists."⁸⁶ Regarding Rabha religion Endle states, "The general type of the Rabha religion is distinctly animistic; but one or two of the higher sub-divisions, specially the Patis, are said to show a leaning toward Hinduism of *Sakta* form."⁸⁷

The present-day Rabhas of West Bengal worship a number of gods and goddesses. "Rishi is still regarded as the supreme deity. Mahakal is another name for Rishi. Kali, Shib, Kamaksha, Narayan, Shitala, Gangadevi, etc., are the most important deities. Beside these there are some other deities and spirits such as Rakhal, Biskarma, Bishahari, Masan, Bura Thakur, Surkumi, Satyapir, Muria, Jalmasan, Gabur, etc."⁸⁸

Each and every Rabha house has a place of worship. It is situated in the northern corner in the northern room where a bamboo platform is raised on which a small earthen altar with an earthen pot full of rice on it is placed. An egg is also kept in it. Vermilion paints are given on the outer side of the pot. This is known as *Thansiri* or *Runtuk* and is considered as the abode of Rishi or Mahakal. In this connection Allen states, "Their chief god is Rishi and is represented by a pot of rice on a bamboo platform to which offerings of fowls and pigs are made."⁸⁹

86. Friend Pereira, J. E. Op. cit. p. 144.

87. Endle, Rev. S., Op. cit pp. 84-85.

88. Raha, M. K. 1963, Op. cit. p. 29.

89. Allen, B. C. Op. cit. p. 51.

Beside the *Thansiri*, some of the more Hinduised and also some well-to-do Rabhas keep *Laksmi-ghar*, i.e., abode of Laksmi, Hindu deity of wealth and prosperity, and also *Tulsi-mancha*, i.e altar of sacred Basil plant, where different deities are said to reside.

All the above Rabha deities are worshipped along with different festivities, some of which are stated below:—

(1) *Balaram Puja*

This festival takes place in the month of *Baisakh* (April-May). Generally this festival is held in the beginning of the year (Hindus consider the month of *Baisakh* as the first month of the year) so that the family members can pass the year in good health and physique, without diseases in the family. Besides, this ceremony also takes place on every full-moon day in some Rabha families and also with almost all the socio-religious ceremonies. The ceremony is held at the *Tulsi-mancha* (altar of the sacred Basil Plant—usually a mud altar is made by the female-folk of the family in the middle or at one side of the court yard. In this altar a sacred Basil sapling is planted. This altar is regularly cleaned and evening religious services are held as this plant is considered to be the abode of certain deities). This ceremony, (which takes place in the month of *Baisakh*), is conducted by the *Adhikari* or Brahmin, who after consulting almanac (*Panji*) selects a suitable day for the puja. A day or two before the festival, the family which will celebrate the festival, arranges the articles such as *Atap rice*, curd, milk, banana, molasses, flower, incense-sticks, Basil leaves, *Durba* grass, lamp, seat, napkin and small coins etc., which are required for the *puja*.

On the appointed day, in the morning or at noon, the *Adhikari* comes after bath. He arranges with the help of some family members, all the articles at the *Tulsi mancha*, sits on the seat and then prepares (*Nobut* offering). For this he makes nine *Kalar donga* (Banana bark cups) and in each *donga* he puts a little of all the above articles excepting lamp, napkin and incense-sticks. All these *Nobuts* are then kept by the side of the *Tulsimancha*.

When all are ready, he first of all sprinkles sacred *Tulsijal* (water purified with sacred Basil leaves used in lieu of water of

Holy Ganges for purificating the objects) on these articles for purification.

Thereafter he starts the actual *puja*. He first offers the deity various articles along with incantations. Then he offers flowers and revolves the burning incense-sticks round the sacred Basil plant whereafter he offers the *Nobuts* to the deity. When the offering is over, he gives the family members the sacred flowers of the *puja* and also marks the fore-head of all of them with the mark of sacred vermillion of the *puja*. Lastly *Prasad* is given to all the assembled persons. The priest gets as his remuneration some small coins and some of the offered articles including the new napkin.

The *Balaram Puja* which is performed at the time of some social ceremonies, is also performed by the Brahmin or *Adhikari* in the similar way. But the same festival which takes place during the full-moon day is performed by an elderly female member of the family who has experience about the same. In this case the *puja* is performed at the *Tulsi-Mancha* in a less expensive but similar way.

(2) *Nisakali Puja*

This festival has no fixed day but it is performed during some socio-religious festivals by those who have the Goddess Nishakali in their house. It is generally celebrated in the evening or at night. Selection of time and day is done by the Brahmin or *Adhikari* or the *Deosi* after consulting the almanac. This festival celebrated during some social ceremonies, is performed by the *Deosi* or Brahmin or *Adhikari*, but if it is done merely for religious purpose, then it is officiated by the female head of the family as in the case of *Balaram puja*.

Usually the same articles are required as in *Balaram puja*, if the *Deosi* acts as the priest in this festival (which is done during some social ceremonies e.g. marriage, etc.). A sacrifice, generally of a pig or a fowl, is made and offered to the deity. In this *Deosi* officiated *puja* an earthen altar is made on the courtyard in the middle of which a bamboo plant with two or four branches on both sides, is planted. From these branches of the bamboo pole five or seven white cotton threads are hung. With these cotton threads some flowers (two in each side) are

tied. This bamboo pole is known as *Jerphak*. The *Deosi* then sits by the side of the *Thansiri* in the northern room facing northward in order to perform the *puja*. He lights the incense-sticks and then arranges all the articles there. Then he prepares three *Kalar dongas* in each of which he keeps some milk, sugar, banana mixed together. Then he paints the egg (specially required for the *puja*) with vermilion and keeps the same on the earthen pot filled up to the neck with rice. Thereafter the *Deosi* offers the articles and also the egg to the deity uttering in each time the *mantra*. The same *puja* is also held at the *Jerphak*. When offering is over he performs the sacrifice. He holds the fowl or pig to be sacrificed with his left hand and by the right hand he drops on the ground some rice of the *puja*. As soon as the animal or fowl starts taking the rice, he further drops some rice on its head uttering *mantras* and the name of the deity. This is done for three times then it is beheaded by a knife or other weapon. Then with the rice and meat *Mai* or *Blhog* is prepared, a little of which is first offered to the deity. Then this is distributed as *Prasad*. The *Deosi* gets a white *dhuti*, some offered articles of the *puja* and some small coins as *pagri* (remuneration of the *puja*).

If the *puja* is performed by the Brahmin or *Adhikari* or done in case of purely religious purpose by the female head of the family, usually no sacrifice is made, nor the *Jerphak* is constructed. The *Nishakali puja* as performed by Brahmin or *Adhikari* is done in a quite similar way as is done in other festivities.

(3) *Janmastami and Radhastami.*

The Rabhas do not observe these two festivals in their individual houses. These are held in the village *Haribari* (Temple of Lord Hari). The *Janmastami* is celebrated in the month of *Vadro* (Aug-Sept) while the *Radhastami* takes place either in *Vadro* or in *Aswin*, (Sept-Oct.). The Brahmin acts as the priest in the *puja* which usually takes place at night. The articles required for *puja* are earthen pot, a piece of red cloth about a hand's length, one napkin, one *Dhuti*, a quantity of *Atap* rice, curd, milk, fruits, molasses, suger-cake (*Batasa*) etc.

The worship takes place four times a night. All the adult members of the house keep awake for the whole night. The priest who presides over the *puja*, first sets the *ghat* (sacred pitcher) which is then worshipped with the offering of the articles, flower, fruits, sweets, milk, curd etc. Along with this *puja* the *Nam Sankirttan* (psalm praising Lord Hari) continues till the dawn. Next morning the priest performs the final *puja* by *Hom* and *Yajna*. All of them pay their homage. The priest marks the forehead of the members present with the mark of the ashes of the *Hom* moistened with *ghee* (clarified butter). Members of different families take the flower of the *puja* and keep this in their respective houses for prosperity and safety from danger. Then the *Dasangati* rite is observed. In this rite, coconut is offered by several persons to the deity. When the *puja* is over, the young boys and adult males play *Kada-khela* (a game played in a muddy place with different fruits such as coconut, cucumber, jambura, lemon etc.).

(4) *Bisahari Puja*.

The worship of *Bisahari* is done generally in the month of *Sravan* or *Vadro*. Any day, suitable for the *puja* is selected for the purpose. The female head of the family generally performs *puja*. The day is selected after consulting with the *Deosi* (traditional priest) or *Adhikari* or Brahmin. Articles required for this *puja* are quite similar to those used in other *pujas*. The main rite of *puja* is to offer various articles to the deity. Sometimes anthropomorphic image of goddess *Manasa* is worshipped in this *puja* and sometimes, sacrificed pigeon or goat is offered to the deity. A minor feast is sometimes given at the end of the *puja*.

(5) *Soari*.

This festival is held in the full-moon day of the month of *Phalgun* (Feb.-March) when the Hindus celebrate *Dol* festival. In this festival *Radha* and *Krisna* are worshipped and the worshipper is a Rajbansi Brahmin (*Adhikari*) or a *Bairagi* by caste who performs the *puja* in his own house on behalf of the Rabhas. Offerings are made of various articles such as milk, sugar, banana, a napkin, etc. The napkin is taken by the *Bairagi*

In the evening a *Mela* (informal gathering) takes place in a field near the village.

(6) *Lokjatra*.

This festival takes place in the month of *Aswin* (sept-Oct) or *Kartik* (Oct-Nov) when the Hindus propitiate Goddess *Durga*. Actually this festival is celebrated on the day of immersion of the Goddess *Durga* (i.e. on *Bijoya Dasami* day). In this festival actually they propitiate *Viswakarma*. Some adult male of the house or sometimes, in case of well-to-do but Hinduised Rabhas, the Brahmin or *Adhikari* presides over the *puja*. Various articles are required for the *puja*. The adult family members observe fast till the end of the *puja*. The agricultural implements of the house are cleaned with water and marked with vermilion dots. The *Kajal* (black eye-paint) and also white powder marks are given on these implements. Generally no work is done this day and it is considered as the day of rest and recreation. The main items of the *puja* are the offerings of articles and sacrifice of pumpkin. Before sacrifice ends, four sticks are inserted into the body of the pumpkin which symbolically act as legs, the whole pumpkin is then considered as a goat. It is then offered to the deity. Vermilion marks are also given. Then the pumpkin is kept standing on its four improvised legs. Thereafter it is cut into two by a single strike of scimister.

After *puja*, *Prasad* is distributed to all assembled there and they salute all the elderly persons. Then they all go to their respective relatives and salute the elderly relatives and in return some refreshment is given to them.

(7) *Kamakhya Puja*.

Kamakhya puja is the biggest ceremony of the Rabhas of Kumargram police station. It is absolutely a local festival. Not only the Rabhas but also some other local communities participate in this festival. The Rabhas of the neighbouring villages also assemble at the time of *puja*. Goddess *Kamakhya* was actually, according to the Rabha belief, the presiding deity of Kamakhyaguri. They say that temple of Goddess *Kamakhya* had been shifted from Kamakhyaguri to Kamrup in Assam long ago by the then Maharaja of Cooch Behar.

For a long time they are worshipping Goddess *Kamakhya* as they believe that at the time of *puja*, the Goddess *Kamakhya* appears in *Kamakhyaguri* from *Kamrup* in *Assam* where her present temple is situated. Few days before the *puja*, subscription is collected from the villagers, and with cash subscriptions various articles such as flowers, fruits, milk, sweets etc. are purchased. The deities which are propitiated during this *puja* are *Kamakhya*, *Kali*, *Sitala*, *Mahakul* (*Rishi*), *Pagli*, *Bura*, *Mahadev*, *Muria*, *Yaksa-Yaksini*, *Baksur* and *Kalsur*, *Masan*, *Rakhal*, *Narayan* and *Satyapir*. For each of these deities numbers of animals are required for sacrifice. For *Kali* one black he-goat, for *Sitala* one white he-goat (this white he-goat is set free after *puja* and not sacrificed), for *Pagli* one she-goat (this she-goat is also set free after worship), for *Bura Thakur* a *Khast* (castrated he-goat) and same for *Mahadev* (but in this case the *Khast* is set free), for *Baksur* a he-goat and for *Masan* one cock are offered. Various articles, beside the sacrificial animals and fowl, such as flower, fruits, sweets, milk, curd, honey, *Atap* rice, *Chida*, red napkin, earthen pitcher, *Kalardonga*, leaves of mango, sacred Basil and wood-apple, *Durba* grass etc. are required. The Brahmin or *Adhikari* and the *Huji* or *Roja*, both are employed for the *puja*. A number of banana saplings and flags are planted. The *Rabha* boys play musical instruments and sing. During *puja*, offerings and sacrifices are made. The *Nobut* is offered by the *Adhikari* with the meat of the sacrificed animals and rice. *Bhog* is prepared and this *Bhog* is first offered to the deities excepting *Narayan* and *Satyapir* for which *Sinni* (a thick paste made of milk, banana, sugar or molasses, flour or rice-powder). At the end of the *puja*, various articles are kept in *Kalardonga* which are placed on a raft. Four flags and some burning incense-sticks are also planted on the raft. After *puja* this raft is taken to some river or canal or spring or pond and launched on the water. Thereafter all the villagers are entertained with a feast. The *Adhikari* gets Rs. 4/- or Rs. 5/- and rice, fruits, sweets, napkin etc. The *Roja* takes some rice and some meat. A *Mela* (a fair) is also held near the temple of Goddess *Kamakhya*. The festival lasts for a day.

(8) *Satya Narayan Puja.*

In some Rabha houses, *Satyanarayan puja* takes place in the month of *Jaistha* (May-June). The Brahmin or *Adhikari* selects the day after consulting *panji* (almanac). In this *puja* a small earthen pot is covered with a piece of white new cloth and the whole is placed on the altar. This pitcher symbolises the deity. Under the pot a bunch of plantain is also kept. The pot is marked with vermillion. No sacrifice is made in this *puja* but only different articles are offered, important of which is *Sinni*. After *puja* every one pays homage and the *Prasad* is distributed to all present.

(9) *Kali Puja.*

The Rabhas perform *Kalipuja* on the new-moon night of the month of *Kartick* (Oct-Nov) when the Hindus perform the same *puja*. For this *puja*, they purchase earthen effigy of the deity from the local potters (*Kumor* caste). The village priest is employed for the *puja* which takes place in the temple of Goddess *Kamakhyā*. Along with various other articles such as rice, flower, fruits, *Tulsi-Jal*, wood-apple leaves, *Durba* grass, vermillion, incense-stick, etc., a dark black he-goat is also required. This goat is sacrificed to the deity. At the end of the *puja*, which is done by offering various articles along with *mantra* and other paraphernalia, the black he-goat is offered to the deity. After offering the goat it is marked with vermillion and thereafter beheaded by somebody other than the priest. The procedure of the *puja* is the same as is done by the local Hindus.

(10) *Sib Puja.*

The *Sib puja* (worship of Lord Siva) takes place in the month of *Falgun* (February-March) when the Hindus observe *Sivaratri*. The priest is called for the *puja*. He performs the *puja* by offerings and performing *Yajna*. No sacrifice is made. The women-folk, specially the unmarried adult ones observe fast and remains awake for the whole night. These unmarried girls like the Hindus, think that by paying proper devotion and homage to Lord Siva they will be able to get husbands like *Siva* by His blessings.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the foregoing chapters an attempt has been made to present the Rabha life and activities as systematically and as precisely as possible so as to give an overall profile of the social, economic and religious aspects of this little-known community of West Bengal. The picture of the Rabhas of West Bengal as a whole would have been complete if the materials on the forest-dwelling Rabhas also, could have been placed, side by side, as that would have given some idea about the traditional beliefs and customs still retained by the Forest Rabhas. This, in another perspective would have given an idea of the process involved in the deviations from the traditional norms and values *vis-a-vis* causes of changes and changing situation. However, the materials on the forest dwelling Rabhas are expected to be published later on with a comparative assessment of the situation between the village Rabhas as presented herein and throwing light on the degree and extent of changes from traditional norms and values in different situational perspectives. This, it is believed, is necessary in view of the complexity of Rabha society—a process involved in the gradual change of a society from a matriarchal base to a patriarchal one.

In view of the above it was thought worthwhile to present the life and activities of the village Rabhas mainly in a descriptive way, leaving aside the analytical aspect so that this may easily be understood and appreciated by the personnel belonging to different professions and disciplines who are expected to view this monographic study on these Rabhas from different angles. Further, this descriptive assessment of these Rabhas would be

helpful later on in understanding the analytical aspect of the process of change in different situational perspectives when the overall profile of the activities of the Forest Rabhas would be presented.

Rabhas are a North-Bengal tribal group of the State of West Bengal and have a socio-religious profile quite distinct from the plains tribal groups. Viewed from this perspective, this study on these Rabhas is expected to present quite interesting features which are not commonly found among the plains tribal groups of this State.

Last of all, from our experience from this type of ethnographic investigations, it is felt desirable to put forward a suggestion for encompassing the ethnographic materials of a community from a much wider area for getting a more comprehensive picture of the community in different set-ups. Most of the tribal groups of this State are also found distributed in large numbers in neighbouring States such as Assam, Bihar, Orissa, etc. Instead of undertaking ethnographic investigations on these communities separately by individual Research Institutes of each of the State Governments a co-ordinated and co-operative effort is highly desirable in between these Institutes to successfully cover up and complete the investigations about a large community, spreading over a number of adjoining States, so as to present a well comprehensive picture of a community instead of piece-meal presentation of a particular community by each of the State Institutes concerned. This would not only lessen unnecessary duplication and piece-meal picturisation of a particular community but would be able to present a thorough well comprehensive, well integrated profile of the community, spreading over a vast area, encompassing a number of States, under different ecological conditions and demographic situations.

The above suggestion may profitably be utilised if it is given a more concrete and practicable shape by the Institutes of neighbouring States, putting their heads together and working out a

well-thoughtful, integrated scheme. This would be ethnic as well as area approach oriented research work.

Finally, it is expected that the materials presented in this monographic study would be helpful to the administrators and other personnel directly or indirectly associated with welfare work, as a helpful handbook in understanding the community. Further, we would consider the undertaking of the study to have been fully successful if research workers keen on further problem oriented studies, find in these materials, base line information for their work.

A typical Rabha male.



An old Rabha female along with
modern Rabha girl.



APPRECIATIONS

[The Publications of this Institute have generally been very well received by various authorities of different parts of the world. Some of their appreciations were published in our earlier publications. A few more appreciations, are given below]

A. THE MALPAHARIAS OF WEST BENGAL
(Special Series No. 7)

I. "Thank you for your kindness in sending me a copy of the book *The Malpaharias of West Bengal*. With the best wishes".

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President of India
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M. S. Menon,
Research Officer
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T. Sen,
Education Minister, Govt. of India,
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IV. ".....In this hand-book the authors have tried to depict the way of living of the Malpaharias of the districts of Murshidabad and Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. The book presents some informative data which may be useful to the administrators, social workers and the anthropologists".

B. Malik,
Vice-Chancellor
University of Calcutta.

V. "I am directed to say that the Vice-Chancellor is thankful to receive from you a copy of *The Malpaharias of West Bengal*.....published by your Institute".

P.S. to Vice-Chancellor
Visva-Bharati
Santiniketan
West Bengal.

VI. "...I am much impressed by the little volume. It is clearly another fine contribution to our understanding of the cultural Anthropology of Indian groups, which have altogether too long remained poorly studied. May I offer you my congratulations on the research which was devoted to this major study and on the publication itself, which I find most attractive..."

Prof. Allan H. Smith
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Washington State University, U.S.A.

VII. ".....We are sure that this will be another valuable addition to our library as it has turned out to be a very exhaustive and interesting study of the Malpaharia tribe. Again, we would like to thank you for sending us such interesting books which the many readers and researchers in our library have found so helpful'.

Jose Ma Quintos
Chief
Office of Administrative Services
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VIII. ".....I am happy to note that your special series is continuing and that you are steadily filling in our picture of the tribal peoples of an important area".

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X. "Professor Raymond Firth acknowledges with grateful thanks the copy of the *Malpaharias of West Bengal*. He is very glad to have this publication".

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London School of Economics and
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XI. "Professor Evans-Pritchard asks me to thank you on his behalf for the copy of the book *Malpaharias of West Bengal* which he looks forward to reading during the long vacations."

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Prof. A. Aiyappan
Madras.

XV. "..... The book contains a lot of useful and interesting information on a little known tribal group. It also provides us with a fairly detailed bibliography."

Dr. S. C. Sinha
Deputy Director,
Anthropological Survey of
India, Calcutta.

XVI. "..... My heartiest congratulations to you and your co-authors. Your publications are now a standard ready reference to the Anthropologists and Sociologists of India. To Tribal Welfare workers and Social workers it is a must. I am glad that you are continuing the publication of these special series which in most other Institutions are dying a premature death."

Dr. Sachin Roy
National Museum,
New Delhi.

XVII. ".....I have gone through with pleasure the work and I think it a systematic study of the tribal community for which the writers have felt much curiosity. Tribal culture has blended with ethnographic description to render the work interesting and significant. The work is short, recommends itself being the product of three creative minds."

Pagal Chandra Mal, M.L.A.,
Bistupur,
Bankura.

XVIII. ".....a copy of the *Malpaharias of West Bengal*, for which may I thank you warmly."

Prof. A. C. Mayer
Department of Anthropology
and Sociology,
School of Oriental and African
Studies, University of London.

XIX: ".....This book is a valuable addition for our Library."

Prof. L. K. Mahapatra
Head of the Department of
Anthropology,
Utkal University.

XX. ".....The Department is very grateful to have this publication."

Department of Anthropology,
The London School of Economics
and Political Science,
London, England.

XXI. ".....and I will read this with interest."

Prof. K. L. Little,
Department of Social Anthropology
University of Edinburgh,
Edinburgh, U.K.

XXII. ".....we have deposited this useful volume in the
Department Library."

Dr. R. P. Werbner,
Lecturer in Social Anthropology,
University of Manchester,
Manchester, Egnland.

XXIII. ".....We would be pleased to be placed on your
mailing list to receive future issues."

James R. La Forest
Acting Chief Public Information Officer,
Office of the High Commissioner
Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands,
Mariana Islands.

XXIV. ".....I am sure it will be received well by the
students."

Dr. K. Chandrasekhariah,
Head of the Department of Sociology
Karnatak University, Dharwar.

XXV. ".....It will be read by our programme specialists
and any comments will be forwarded to you directly."

Nadjm Bammate, Head,
Division of Cultural Studies
Department of Culture
UNESCO. Paris, France.

XXVI. ".....and to say that he looks forward to reading it."

Secretary to Dean
Faculty of Economics and Administration,
University of Malaya,
Kualalampur, Malayasia.

XXVII. ".....We consider the book to be a valuable addition to our modest hill tribe library which we started in connection with the current study on hill tribe development in Asia. We shall be most grateful to receive any further publications in this field which may appear in due course of time."

Miss Dorothy Moses,
Chief, Division of Social Affairs,
United Nations.
Economic Commission for Asia and
the Far East Bangkok, Thailand.

XXVIII. ".....I look forward to reading it."

Prof. M. N. Srinivas
Department of Sociology,
Delhi School of Economics
University of Delhi.

XXIX. ".....I am to state that this has been a valuable addition to our library."

Officer-in-charge
Anthropological Survey of India
Assam Station, Govt. of India.

XXX. ".....As a student of East Asiatic linguistic and Indology I am interested to obtain publications on the tribals of West Bengal...."

Hans-Juergen Zaborowski
J. W. Goethe University
Frankfurt, Germany.

XXXI. "..... We will notice the same in the next issue of our journal...."

L. C. Kumar
Indian Council of World Affairs,
New Delhi.

XXXII. ".....this will be a valuable addition to the Institute's Library."

D. K. Sanyal,
Director,
Indian Institute of Social Welfare
and Business Management, Calcutta.

XXXIII. ".....I have gone through this Bulletin, published by your Institute. It gives a true picture of the culture, economic structure, social organisation, religion and life of the tribe, Malpaharias of the two different villages of West Bengal. All your publications have always inspired our research workers and have proved immensely useful in undertaking similar work in our state. I congratulate you for the wonderful work your Institute is doing in the field."

Devilal Samar
Founder Director
Bharatiya Lok-kala Mandir
Udaipur, Rajasthan.

XXXIV. ".....I am sure that it will be of the same high standard as your previous publications."

Amiya Kumar Banerji,
State Editor,
West Bengal District Gazetteers,
Govt. of West Bengal.

XXXV. ".....I am sure, the book will be very useful to us in our study of the Malpahari dialects which is to be taken up shortly."

S. Bhattacharya
Linguist,
Anthropological Survey of India,
Government of India.

XXXVI. ".....It has been placed in our library, and made available to our staff and students. The Department is very pleased to have your publications and wishes you continued success in the excellence of your ethnological publications."

Dr. Harvey B. Sarles,
Associate Professor of Anthropology
College of Liberal Arts
Department of Anthropology,
University of Minnesota, U.S.A.

XXXVII. ".....I appreciate very much your attempt to satisfy a long felt need for a detailed descriptive account of this important tribal community of West Bengal. I hope this book will serve a very useful purpose for the students of Cultural Anthropology in India.....The bibliography at the end of this book is especially commendable..."

Dr. Satadal Das Gupta,
Social Science Research Center,
Mississippi State University, U.S.A.

XXXVIII. ".....I am enjoying it and delighted to see this continuation of the special series..."

Donald M. Winkelman
Associate in Higher Education,
The University of the State of
New York, U.S.A.

XXXIX. "Thank you very much for your publication *Malpaharias of West Bengal*. We are sending, under separate cover, for your general information, a hand book on the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Elizabeth S. Udui
Information & Research Analyst
Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands,
Mariana Islands.

XXXX. ".....such studies are bound to promote the best understanding of the various cultural groups in West Bengal, which ultimately will help in the cultural development of that region. The entire staff of the Institute deserves special commendations for this very useful work they are doing."

Prof. G. C. Hallen
Indian Journal of Social Research,
Meerut.

XXXXI. ".....Your book contains very important material on the Malpaharia tribal community which will prove, I think, to be of value not only to ethnologists and anthropologists but also to all those interested in the processes of socio-cultural change and nation building."

K. Kavadias,
Chief, Division of Application of
Social Sciences,
Department of Social Sciences,
UNESCO, Paris.

XXXXII. ".....I am sure, it will be of immense help to our research workers working on the subject."

Librarian,
Calcutta Metropolitan
Planning Organisation,
Calcutta.

XXXXIII. "It has been placed in the library of this Institute for use."

Asstt. Librarian,
Rabindra Bharati University,
Calcutta.

XXXXIV. ".....the book has been highly appreciated by the reading public."

Secretary,
District Library Association,
Malda.

XXXXV. "Thank you for sending a copy of *The Malpahrias of West Bengal*. As a Dravidianist I am particularly pleased to see this book. It is a useful addition to the literature on Maler groups. Let me congratulate you on your continued devotion to the cause of ethnography."

Stephen A. Tyler
Associate Professor
Tulane University
New orleans, U.S.A.

**B. HAND BOOK ON SCHEDULED CASTES AND
SCHEDULED TRIBES OF WEST BENGAL**

(Special Series No. 8)

1. ".....The Prime Minister thanks you for sending a copy of your book entitled *Hand Book on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal*, She hopes to go through it when she finds some time."

B. P. Sinha
Hindi Officer
Prime Minister's Secretariat,
New Delhi.

1A. ".....I am directed to convey on behalf of the Minister that it is hoped, the hand book will be a useful reference book for people engaged in the welfare work and upliftment of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal."

Private Secretary
to Minister of State, Ministry
of Home Affairs, Govt. of India.

2. ".....This publication fulfils the long felt need for a ready and handy book of references, and I am glad that your Institute has taken the lead in this matter."

N. Sundaram
Director-General
Department of Social Welfare,
Govt. of India.

3. ".....This will acknowledge with thanks the very useful and compact Hand Book on Scheduled Castes and Tribes of West Bengal..."

Prof. Morris E. Opler,
Professor of Anthropology
Cornell University
New York, U.S.A.

4 "..... On behalf of the Department of Anthropology I wish to express my appreciation for your courtesy in sending it to us"

Prof. E. Adamson Hoebel
Department of Anthropology
University of Minnesota
U.S.A.

5. ".....This is obviously a very useful census of the tribes of west bengal for any researcher who is concerned with that area....."

Prof. Paul Hockings
Department of Anthropology and
Sociology, University of California
U.S.A.

6. ".....This will be a valuable addition to our departmental library".

Prof. J. A. Banes
Deptt. of Anthropology and
Sociology, The Australian National University
Canberra, Australia.

7. ".....As the book is an up-to-date analysis of the changing caste and tribal situation, it will be an useful addition to our Research Library. It will be placed with the other numbers of the special series, which we also have received from your government, therefore making this study even more so complete."

Dr. Lita Osmundsen
Director of Research
Wennear-Gren Foundation for Anthropological
Research, New York, U.S.A.

8. ".....We can make use of your book within the secretariat and I am first transmitting it to the department of Social Sciences which is more directly concerned with the subject matter".

Y. Kohno,
Division of Cultural Studies
Department of Culture
UNESCO, Paris, France

9. ".....We here at Logan Museum of Anthropology and in the Department of Anthropology at Belliot College find this an excellent and useful publication".

Dr. Andrew H. Whiteford
Chairman and Director of Logan
Museum of Anthropology
Belliot College, Washington, U.S.A.

10. ".....I find myself deeply interested in this compilation. Many years ago I had considered working on this very subject, but found that I was unequal to such a task. Publications like this are of great value as a record of the past and a guide for the future. The *Handbook* records many things that ought to be known now to administrators, as well as in the years ahead for situations change and mature. I am amazed at the work put out by certain administrators in the early when such studies were in their infancy. They were giants in their days: men like Dalton, Crooke, Risley, to mention only three. Sarat C. Roy is one who has created a deep interest in primitive groups and anthropology in India owes much to him. Now you and the Cultural Research Institute are opening new pathways in the great field in which you are working..... I am convinced that you have done an excellent piece of work in the production of this Hand Book.....Congratulations on the fine work in the preparation of this intriguing Hand book "

Walter G. Griffiths
Los Angeles, U.S.A.

11. ".....I look forward to reading it".

Prof. M. N. Srinivas
Department of Sociology
Delhi School of Economics
University of Delhi, Delhi

12. ".....should prove useful to the administrator and the social worker. It will be useful for comparative study too."

Prof. P. Goswami
University of Gauhati, Gauhati
Assam

13. ".....The book, as presented, will give a practical base line in assessing different changes that are in the process. It will be of immense help to the scientists, economists and the executives and the social workers as a base line for planning of the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal in the plan periods current today".

D. K. Sanyal
Director
Indian Institute of Social Welfare
& Business Management, Calcutta.

14. ".....I feel sure that this volume will be of particular value to any one working with the various groups of West Bengal. I shall see that an announcement appears in Abstracts of Folklore studies".

Donald M. Winkelman
Associate in Higher Education
The University of the State of
New York, U.S.A.

15. ".....*The Hand Book* would appear to be one that should have considerable utility to people in your State where the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes constitute such a large proportion of the total population. It is certainly got up in a handy manner for use of any one who reads English. I do appreciate having a copy of this effort....."

Prof. Henry F. Dobyns

Chairman

Department of Anthropology

University of Kentucky

U.S.A.

16.I would like to inform you that I am sending the enclosed review of your book *Hand Book on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal* to ANTHROPOS for publication....."

Dr. Stephen Fuchs

Theological College

Bombay

17. ".....As always, I am very pleased to obtain these useful publications.....I am most anxious to have a complete file of your publications in my personal library for my research"

Prof. Norman Jacobs

Department of Sociology

University of Illinois, U.S.A.

18. ".....It is an interesting addition to our Faculty Library, and we look forward to another studies which your Institute might care to send us".

Dean

Faculty of Economics and Adminis-
tration, University of Malaya

Malaysia

19. ".....It seems to me that this publication fills up a gap that has been within the series of hand books in this direction....."

Lydia Schwalbe
Staatl Museum Fur
Volkerkunde, Dresden

20. ".....I am to state that the book will be of immense help to us".

Amiya Kumar Banerji
State Editor
West Bengal District Gazetteers
Govt. of West Bengal

21. ".....This information will be appropriately utilized in the report of the study on the development of Tribal and Hill tribal peoples in ECAFE Region, which we are currently preparing".

Miss Dorothy Moses
Chief, Social Development Division
UNITED NATIONS
Economic Commission for Asia and
the Far East, Bangkok, Thailand

22. ".....It provided some information regarding Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal in a consolidated form. The book will be useful to the officials and non-officials working in the field of welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal".

Tribal Research Institute
Directorate of Social Welfare
Poona

23. ".....Your kindness in sending this material to the Library of Congress is deeply appreciated."

Jennings Wood
Chief
Exchange & Gift Division
The Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. U.S.A.

24. ".....which has been a valuable addition to this departmental library".

Officer-in-charge
Anthropological Survey of India
Assam Station
Govt. of India, Shillong, Assam

25. ".....This will be very handy for the administrators as well as research anthropologists. I congratulate you for compiling this very useful volume".

Dr. S. C. Sinha
Deputy Director
Anthropological Survey of India
Govt. of India

26. ".....I am desirous to inform you that the book is a very useful publication because it contains information on all the important aspects of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal. The information furnished in the Hand-Book will be useful both for people who are interested in the Welfare of Backward classes".

Assistant Director of Social
Welfare, Govt. of Mysore
Bangalore, Mysore

27. ".....The authors indeed deserve congratulations for the trouble taken to compile the Hand Book incorporating the different aspects of social, cultural and economic life of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of the State. I am sure this Hand Book will be highly useful for teaching in our faculty"

Dean
Faculty of Agriculture
University of Kalyani
Kalyani, Nadia

28. ".....I am adding the book to our staff library. I am sure it will be valuable in helping us to understand the social background and problems of West Bengal".

Mrs. Lois Flanagan
Director of Library Services
United States Information Service
Calcutta

29. ".....the book will be of great help to our field workers and our regular readers".

Officer-in-charge
Govt. Industrial and Commercial
Museum

30. ".....The book has been sent to the State Central Library for accession".

Chief Inspector of Social Education
Govt. of West Bengal

31. ".....This book is well produced and contains some very valuable information on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of this State".

Public Relations Officer
Govt. of West Bengal

32. ".....it will be to our mutual advantage to have a reciprocal Exchange of Journals"....."

Publication In-charge
Gandhian Institute of Studies
Varanasi

33. ".....I have come across a copy of your publication *Hund Book on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal*, and became very much impressed and found the book most useful....."

B. N. Mukherjee
Anthropometry Research Unit
Indian Statistical Institute
Calcutta.

34. ".....I must congratulate you on this excellent publication. Really this type of monograph containing first hand information on the groups is a dire necessity for all sociological purposes. Your efforts, in this line, can be called to be pioneer. I hope, with your sincere endeavours, your Institute will be able produce many more interesting publications. You and all the members of your Institute deserve hearty congratulations from all corners".

Biman Kumar Das Gupta
Research Associate
Anthropological Survey of India
(Shillong Station) Assam

35. ".....This is a valuable reference book for the social workers and the persons engaged in this particular line. This type of attempt is very praiseworthy."

Pranabananda Roy
Research Officer
West Bengal District Gazetteers
Govt. of W. Bengal

36. "....The Hand book gives overall basic information which will help in future investigations about different Scheduled Castes and Tribes of West Bengal."

Bibhas Chandra Sasmal
Social-economic and Evaluation Branch
Agriculture and Community Development
Govt. of W. Bengal

37. ".....This will be of invaluable help to me as a reference book".

Information Officer
24-Parganas
Govt. of West Bengal

38. ".....It will be a valuable addition to our University Library".

Assistant Librarian
Rabindra Bharati University
Calcutta

39. ".....I am sure, it will be of immense help to our research workers working on this subject".

Librarian
Calcutta Metropolitan Planning
Organisation
Govt. of West Bengal

40. ".....the book has been put in our reference library."

Librarian
British Council, Calcutta.

41. (Extracts of Review of the book published in Vol. VIII, No 6, 1967 of the Journal "Folklore").

".....An important book for ready reference.... It is a valuable compiled work which will serve useful purpose for primary information for the researchers and administrators."

42. "The Cultural Research Institute is obviously taking great pains to give significant knowledge to the world. These book will be a welcome addition to my Library, and for those studying the peoples of the sub-continent of India your hanbooks will prove a valuable source of information."

H. Siiger
Head of the Dept. of the
History of Religions,
Aarhus University,
Aarhus, C, Denmark.

43. "Professor Raymond Firth acknowledges with many thanks the copy of *Hand Book on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal*.

Professor Firth is very glad to have this publication."

Dept. of Anthropology
The London School of Economics
& Political Science
London

(C) OTHER PUBLICATIONS

1. ".....The Government of West Bengal certainly appears to be intelligently supporting social science research in important aspects of intergroup relations and socio-economic development.....It might well be useful for me to have a description of the structure and goals of the Cultural Research Institute, if you would be so kind as to send me one."

Prof. Henry F. Dobyns
Chairman
Department of Anthropology
University of Kentucky, U.S.A.

2. ".....The Institute is to be congratulated for its part in making these studies possible and the Tribal Welfare Department for its role in seeing the reports into print. All anthropologists are grateful, for we need to know much more about the tribal and other social groupings in Bengal. The Bulletin is clearly doing its part. I would deeply appreciate receiving other copies of your valuable publication as they appear."

Prof. Allan H. Smith
Chairman
Department of Anthropology
Washington State University, U.S.A.

3. ".....I think it is a highly informative publication and will be of great use for our students as an introduction to the tribal peoples of West Bengal. Congratulations on the sensitive and sympathetic photographs which were selected."

Prof. Robert Anderson
Department of Anthropology
University of Utah, U.S.A.

4. ".....Your books are always much appreciated by the members of our society, and interested persons in the University of Adelaide, and the copies form a valuable addition to our liberty....."

R. D. J. Weathersbee
Honorary Secretary
The Anthropological Society of
Australia, Adelaide, S. Australia.

5. ".....Our library is also interested in establishing friendly exchange relations between our institutions and we thankfully accept your offer about exchange of publications...."

I. F. Grigorieva
Chief of Foreign Acquisitions and
International Exchange Section
M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin
State Public Library, Leningrad, USSR.

6. ".....Very much thanks for the interesting and valuable numbers of your Bulletin Vol. 4, 1965 and Vol. 5 Number 1 and 2, 1966."

Prof. Halfdan Siiger
Department of the History of Religions
Aarhus University, Denmark.

7. ".....*West Bengal Tribes--Through Photographs*. The photographs are excellent; the text is clear; and the printing and get-up beyond research. The only fault that I find in the publication is that it is somewhat thin."

Dr. John V. Ferreira
Reader in Cultural Anthropology
University of Bombay

8. ".....These are excellent publications and should be of great value to any of our students who develop an interest in South Asia. We are trying to foster an interest in Asian societies

and, for this reason, are making an effort to improve our library holdings I should like to enter into a reciprocal exchange program. . . . "

Dr. Jack A. Lucas
Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Central Connecticut State College
Connecticut, U.S.A.

9. " a copy of the very beautiful collection of the photographs of the people of West Bengal that you sent my husband very shortly after his death last year. As I wrote you in August, some weeks after it came, I twined it and the Bulletins over to President Oxnam of Drew University, as I knew that was where my husband would want them to be, where they would have their impact on this country "

Mrs. George Weston Briggs
Washington, U.S.A.

10. "We wish to acknowledge with gratitude receipt of copies of Volumes IV and V of your latest bulletin. We have found the subjects in both bulletins to be highly informative and interesting. These publications are made available not only to the members of our staff but also to students and other researchers who avail of our library facilities. . . . "

Jose Ma. Quintos, Chief
Office of Administrative Services
Social Welfare, Administration,
Manila, Philippines.

11. " They are being placed in our departmental library where the faculty and graduate students will have easy and direct access to them. They are very handsome and useful and we will continue to refer our students to them. . . . "

Dr. Harvey. B. Sarles
Assistant Professor, Department of
Anthropology, University of Minnesota,
U.S.A.

12. ".....I do admit and acknowledge it gratefully that your Bulletin gives a good amount of new first hand information on little known tribes and is therefore very welcome....."

Dr. Stephen Fuchs
Indian Branch of the Anthropos
Institute, Bombay.

13. ".....Your Bulletin forms an important part of our acquisitions program for American research libraries. You are to be complimented on the sustained high quality of the Bulletin."

John C. Crawford
Director
American Libraries Book
Procurement Center, New Delhi.

14. ".....In exchange, we are placing you on the Mailing List for the Economic and Business Bulletin of the School of Business Administration of Temple University which is published Quarterly....." —

Elizabeth E. Aretz
Acquisitions Librarian
Temple University
Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

15. "Bulletins occasionally published by the Cultural Research Institute have been found very interesting for library and reference works....."

R. P. Lama
Junior Administrative Officer
Song and Drama Unit, Darjeeling.

16. ".....Quite frequently we have been receiving orders from our clients (mostly big libraries and research institutes) for copies of the publications of the Institute of Tribal Research...."

Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay
Calcutta.

17. ".....the impression that these make is that you are doing wonderful work for which the society should be very thankful to you....."

Dr. C. B. Mamoria
Udaipur
Rajasthan.

18. "..... It is a nice idea to introduce Bengal tribes mainly by photographs..... The special series of your Bulletin are always very much interesting and so I am eagerly looking forward to the next number....."

Lydia Schwalbe
Staatl Museum Fur Völkerkunde
Dresden.

19. "..... We are forwarding to you under separate cover eight publications of the United States Department of the Interior relating to anthropological and archaeological studies in the south western United States.... It is hoped that these will prove of interest. If publication in other subject fields are desired we shall be pleased to receive your suggestions."

Paul F. Edlund
Assistant Chief
Exchange and Gift Division
The Library of Congress
Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

20. "..... As you propose an exchange of books and reviews we have sent you today some of the publications of the Anthropos-Institute....."

Dr. Wilhelm Saake
Director of the Anthropos Institute
Bonn.

21. ".....The exchange articles will be sent by our lecturer...., within the next few days."

Secretary
Department of Indian Studies
University of Melbourne,
Australia.

22. ".....As regards comments on the Bulletin as asked by you, I would say that the Bulletin appears to have been a valuable one with precious articles...."

Deputy Secretary
Commerce and Industries
Govt. of W. Bengal.

23. "..... We gladly welcome this and request you to send us all the Bulletins and special series Monographs.... In reciprocate we have pleasure to offer our publications....and thus we like to establish an exchange of publications....we feel that this exchange will prove beneficial to both."

Librarian
Deccan College, Poona.

24. ".....Your publications have proved very useful to the research scholars here...."

Librarian
Servant of India Society's
Library, Poona, Bombay.

25. ".....In exchange we are sending you now under separate mail a copy of our publication No. 3 'sociological aspects of inter-island migration in Indonesia'....."

Librarian
Sociologisch-Historisch
Seminarium voor Zuidoost Azie,
Amsterdam.

The publications of the Cultural Research Institute (both Bulletins and Special Series of Monographic studies) have received high appreciations and commendations from different Institutions, Organisations, Scientists and Welfare Workers of this country as well as of U.S.A., U.K., Germany, Holland, Sweden, Philippines, Malaya, South Pacific Trust Territories etc., many of whom have joined with the Institute in Exchange Programme of Publications on reciprocal basis.

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The Bulletins and other publications of the Cultural Research Institute are meant for distribution among Social Scientists, Social Workers, Administrative Officers, Institutes, Organisations and others associated directly or indirectly with the welfare work.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE CULTURAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF THE
GOVERNMENT OF
WEST BENGAL

*A. SPECIAL SERIES
(MONOGRAPHS)*

1962. Impact of Industrialisation on the
Life of the Tribals of West-Bengal
—A.K. Das and S.K. Banerjee.
1962. The Lepchas of Darjeeling District
—A.K. Das and S.K. Banerjee.
1963. The Oraons of Sunderban —A.K.
Das and M.K. Raha.
1964. The Impact of Tea Industry on the
Life of the Tribals of West-Bengal
—A. K. Das and H. N. Banerjee.
1964. The Korās and some little known
Communities of West Bengal—
A.K. Das.
1965. West Bengal Tribes through Photo-
graphs—A. K. Das and M.
K. Raha.
1966. The Malpaharias of West Bengal—
A. K. Das, B. K. Roychowdhury
and M. K. Raha.
1966. Hand book on Scheduled Castes
and Scheduled Tribes of West
Bengal—A. K. Das, B. K. Roy-
chowdhury and M. K. Raha.
1967. The Rabhas of West Bengal—
A. K. Das and M. K. Raha

B. BULLETINS :

1962. Vol. I, Nos. 1, 2 & 3.
1963. Vol. II, Nos. 1 & 2.
1964. Vol. III, Nos. 1, 2, 3 & 4.
1965. Vol. IV.
1966. Vol. V, Nos. 1 & 2.
1967. Vol. VI, Nos. 1 & 2.