

CHAPTER-1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction:

Development has become a prime concern for every society. No society can flourish if the women are not given their due place in the process of development. Without any cooperation of women, it is impossible to achieve all round development in a society.

“Empowerment of women means reorganization of power in favor of women. It is the manifestation of redistribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and the male dominance. It is a transformation of the structures or institutions that reinforces and perpetuates gender discrimination. Women empowerment means empowering women socially, economically and politically so that they can break away from male dominance and claim equality with them”¹. It is thus a multidimensional social process which enables women to acquire control over their own life as well as resources and decisions thereby ensuring gender equality in the society.

The issue of women empowerment in most of the countries does not cover all the womenfolk due to their lack of education and awareness and little enthusiasm shown by government functionaries. Women must be empowered by enhancing their awareness, knowledge, skills so that they can contribute to social progress in rightful way. They should become active members in development process rather than mere beneficiaries of programmes and services. In brief, women empowerment

¹ Avasthi Abha, Srivastava A.K. (ed.) (2001) Modernity, Feminism, and Women Empowerment, Rawat publications.

in real sense is only possible when there is an improvement in all dimensions such as social, political, economic status of women.

In the layman perception, the concept of status refers to social prestige in relation to others. A person or group having higher status means more prestige. In sociology, the placement of a person in different social organizations with an identity refers to his/her social status.

Ralph Linton defined “A status is marked off by the fact that distinctive beliefs about, and expectations for social actors are organized around it.”

Duncan Mitchell defines status as “the position occupied by a person, family or kinship group in a social system relative to others. This determines rights, duties and other behaviors, including the nature and extent of the relationships with persons of other statuses. Thus, status is commonly thought of as the position that an individual has in society.

Morris Ginsberg defines status as “a position in a social group or grouping, a relation to other positions held by other individuals in the group or groupings”.

Sociologists identified two kinds of social status namely ascribed status and achieved status. While the ascribed status is attained by birth like that of sex, age and kinship, achieved status on the other hand is derived by the virtue of individual choice, ability and accomplishment.

Accordingly, the term “social status of women” comprises the position, power, abilities of women as well as privileges enjoyed by them in their society.² This

privileges include mobility and freedom outside the house, opportunities of interacting and inter - relationship with outside people, free outside movements for various reasons like organization, friends, society, groups, standard of living, level of education etc.

Similarly, the term economic status comprises of the position, power, and abilities of women as well as work done by them both in the formal and informal sectors. Here, the question of due recognition of their work in terms of its importance to the economic share of the family or country on the basis of certain universal economic features are taken into contribution. Women contribute in their own ways to the family wealth and income by engaging themselves in different economic activities. Hence the question of economic position and privileges are connected with the economic status in the family and thereby the family.

Political status of an individual denotes about decision making from the family to state matters. Political participation covers many things like reading newspaper, casting vote, taking decisions, etc. So far as political status of women is concerned, it covers the women right of forming the government and becoming its part themselves, avail opportunity of franchise and its usage in practice. Basically in India, the Panchayati Raj Institution has given the highest national priority to women of rural areas so that more and more women power is involved in governance. It has brought about significant transformation in the lines of women themselves who have become empowered, have gained self-confidence, political awareness and affirmation of their own identity. After 73rd amendment 33% women are taking part in the Panchayat Election all over India. But for the reservation in state assemblies and the parliament, women have not seen successful.

Women awareness about their own interest, their thoughts and attitudes towards various social changes and the degree of traditionalism and modernity etc. Thus the concept of status of women is wide and it can be judged from different angles.

1.2. Statement of the problem:

With a rich cultural heritage, India is recognized as one of oldest civilizations in the world. The country is a home to a large number of castes and tribes. As a result of this diverse eco system, there exists a variety of tradition, culture and colorful way of life. There are 705 tribes notified by the Central Government under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution in 30 States and Union Territories (**Census of India, 2011**). As per 2011 census the tribal population of the country is 10.43 crore constituting 8.6% of the total population. Living mostly in the interior rural areas of the country, this section of people occupies a marginal position within the mainstream of Indian society.

The Constitution of India desires to secure social, economic and political justice to all citizens. A number of important provisions have been made to provide specific safeguard to STs who due to tradition or any other circumstances were the most deprived, weak and vulnerable amongst the various sections of the society.

The Directive Principles as contained in **Article 46** of the Indian Constitution provide that “the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker section of the people, and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitations”. To implement the above mentioned Directive Principle, the Constitution of India provides social, economic, educational & cultural, political and service safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Article 14 states that “the state shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.”

Article 15 states that state should not discriminate against any citizen only on the ground of caste, creed etc.

Article 16(4) State shall make any provision for the reservation in matters or promotion of any class or classes of posts in the services under the state in favor of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes which are the opinion of the state are not adequately represented in the services under the state. (By Constitution Amendment Act 1995).

Article 15 (4) the Constitution gives government the power to make special provisions “for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens.” This provision has made during the 1st amendment in 1951. This amendment, the article made way for reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in educational institutions including technical, engineering and medical colleges.

Article 29 (1) provides “any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.”

Article 75 (1) makes provision that the union of India shall make grants to states for implementing welfare schemes in the areas of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Article 244 (2) the “provisions of the Sixth Schedule shall apply to the supervision of the tribal areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.”

Article 330, 332 and 334 states that seats are reserved in the parliament and state legislatures in favor of scheduled castes and schedule tribes.

Article 244 (2) the “provisions of the Sixth Schedule shall apply to the supervision of the tribal areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.”

Article 350 (a) “It shall be the endeavor of every state and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.”

Unfortunately, in spite of such constitutional safeguards and regular planning endeavor to uplift their condition for more than seven decades, socio-economic progress among them has been far from satisfactory compared to the non-tribal communities. Education, for instance, is the main tool which facilitates in the improvement of their socioeconomic conditions. The literacy rate of Scheduled Tribal population is 58.96%, which is less than the country’s average (74.04%) according to 2011 census. This clearly shows that tribes are remained backward educationally.

Morigaon, comparatively a smaller district of Assam has been suffering from severe lacunae of basic requirements of life including education, health, sanitation, transport and communication and so on which are even more acute in the rural areas of district. Due to lack of industrialization and existence of traditional agricultural practices, the district economy has not been improved. The major area of this district is covered by Tiwa people. As per 2011 census report the major Tiwa in habited (district wise) in Assam are as follows:

Table-1.1: District wise population of the Tiwas, Census 2011:

District	Total S/T Population	Total Tiwas in person	Male	Female
Kokrajhar	304985	03	03	00
Dhubri	32523	01	01	00
Goalpara	131800	05	03	02
Bongaigaon	110696	25	13	12
Barpeta	123266	08	04	04
Kamrup	250393	5618	2798	2820
Nalbari	202577	02	02	00
Darrang	249861	63	12	04
Morigaon	120730	102070	51394	50676
Nagaon	89394	56247	28423	27824
Sonitpur	195083	122	59	63
Lakhimpur	208864	451	231	220
Dhemaji	270496	5491	2722	2769
Tinsukia	67234	245	130	115
Dibrugarh	88337	55	31	24
Sivsagar	41533	37	22	15
Jorhat	123134	14	06	08
Golaghat	93920	188	94	94
Cachar	18631	07	05	02
Karimganj	2901	15	09	06
Hailakandi	821	00	00	00

Source: Census Report 2011, Office of the Director of Census operations, Assam, Bhangagarh, Guwahati -78005.

A close observation of the table above, gives us as a clear idea that the Tiwa tribe is mostly dominant in the districts of Morigaon(84.54%) and Nagaon (62.92%), among the tribal population of these two districts. Again majority of the Tiwa people of the state are living in these two districts (Morigaon- 59.82%), Nagaon (32.96%) of the total estimated Tiwa population in the state.

According to 2011 Census report, the literacy rate of the Tiwas is 63.5%, thus a large number of people 36% in the Tiwa community are illiterate. Among the literates 54.4% are male and 45.5% are female. Similarly, the same Census shows that 44.2% of the people in the Tiwa community are the workers. Among the working population the male is dominant with 63.1%. A large number of people in the community are registered as the non-workers 55.7%. Among the nonworking population the female is dominant with 60.4%. The average sex ratio of Morigaon district is 967. Sex ratio in urban region of Morigaon district is 953 and in rural areas, it is 969, according to same census. Moreover, in the field of politics also, the status of Tiwa women is not been satisfactory. Even after seven decades of independence, no Tiwa women have been able to mark their presence in the regional or national political scenario. An organization, exclusively for the Tiwa women named All Tiwa Women Association (ATWA) has been formed but it has not been able to do anything worth mentioning. The Tiwa Autonomous Council of 1995 had reserved six (6) seats for women out of total forty (40) seats. An important fact to be mentioned here is that, though six (6) seats are reserved for women, no seats out of that exclusively belongs to Tiwa women. Although, the Government of India has taken serious effort to include women in PRIs through 73rd Amendment Act, yet there are many questions concerning nature, extent of women's

participation as well as impact of PRIs on women need to be explored in this area also.

All this clearly shows the pathetic condition of Tiwa women of Morigaon District. Due to lack of education and awareness they have not been able to enjoy the privileges given by the govt. through different schemes. In this regard, it is necessary to study the socio- political status of Tiwa women with the changing scenario of present society.

1.3. Objectives and Research Questions:

1. To study the present socio-political status of the Tiwa women of Morigaon District.
2. To find out the factors affecting the socio-political status of the Tiwa women of Morigaon District.
3. To suggest measures for the improvement of their socio-political conditions.

Based on the above mentioned objectives, following research questions have been set:

1. Is the present socio-political status of Tiwa women in Morigaon district low?
2. Is there any relationship between level of education and socio-political status of Tiwa women in Morigaon district?
3. Is there any relationship between income level and socio-political status of Tiwa women in Morigaon district?

1.4. Academic Rationale of the Topic:

Women studies are now emerging as a vital frontier in the field of social science. The studies of women, especially of the more backward ones like the tribal women have great academic and practical significance. The target group of my study is in particular the women of Tiwa community- the prominent scheduled tribes of Assam. As already mentioned, they are lagging behind in many respects and have to face many challenges from the society. This present study is, therefore an attempt to find out existing socio-political status of Tiwa women along with its affecting factors. The study would also be significant for the policy makers as well as policy implementers as the study would provide in-depth idea about requirements to contain the problem. Moreover, the study would open up a line of thinking for further research on this issue.

Till now no such attempt has been made to undertake a study on this area. Here in lies the academic rationale of this study.

1.5. Area of the study:

The study will be carried out in the Tiwa inhabited areas of Morigaon district. Although the Tiwa people are living in different parts of the Assam and also in some areas of Meghalaya, the study will cover only those Tiwa peoples who are living in plain areas of Morigaon district on the ground that this district has the highest number of Tiwa population.

1.6. Methodology:

The study is essentially empirical one. It is based on both primary and secondary data and information. However, primary data are given more importance as compared to secondary data. Empirical survey with the help of questionnaire containing 20 questions is considered to conduct the study. At the initial stage a pilot study has been carried over 10 households to see the appropriateness of the question schedules. After pilot study necessary changes has been made in the schedule of questions. Every question of questionnaire has been translated into Assamese language as majority of the target group uses it in spite of having their own Tiwa language. Also for proper understanding of the problem, relevant data have been collected from the interviews with leading women personalities, elderly people, focus group discussion as well as knowledgeable persons from the study area.

The respondents have been chosen only from the rural areas of Morigaon district as because Tiwa people are mainly concentrated in Rural areas. The voter list has also been taken into consideration to conduct the study.

Various statistical methods such as figures, tables, average, percentage and other related statistical techniques have been used to analyze the collected data and information.

Secondary data have been collected from various published and unpublished documents which include relevant Books and Journals, Newspapers, Magazines, Electronic Media etc. Apart from these, secondary data have also been collected from District Elementary Education Office, Tiwa Autonomous Council Office, Morigaon, Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati etc. Moreover, District Statistical

Handbook, Statistical Handbook of Assam etc. have also be used to collect secondary data.

Sample Design:

The method of sampling used for the purpose of selection of sample is a mixture of purposive and multi-stage random sampling. It is purposive in the sense that the only rural areas of Morigaon district has been considered for selection of sample as the purpose of the study is to examine the socio-political status of Tiwa women and most of the Tiwa population reside in rural areas of the district only. Accordingly, two development blocks viz. Mayong and Bhurbanda belonging to rural area of the district have been chosen.

There are total 243 villages and 117 villages in Mayong block and Bhurbanda block respectively. Therefore, in the first stage, 3 villages from each block have been selected. In the next stage, from each village, 15% of the total Tiwa households have been selected for constructing the final sample for the study. The following table clearly shows the manner in which the sample has been designed-

Table 1.2: Table showing sample design

Block	Villages	Total Households	Households selected (15% of total households)
Mayong	PaschimNagaon	241	36
	Bangthaigaon	170	26
	Markangkuchi	90	14
Bhurbandha	Tetelia	217	33
	Bonpara	280	42
	Karaiguri	120	18
Total		1118	169

1.7. Review of related literature:

There has been no exclusive study on socio-political status of Tiwa women in Morigaon district. However, some studies have been done on different aspects of this community in Assam. A few relevant literatures on this issue has been reviewed.

G.C. Sharma Thakur (1985) has given detailed overview on the life, culture, economy etc. of the Tiwa community with a view to introduce them to the outside world.

A.K. Baruah (1989) explains the socio economic condition and culture of Tiwa people living in both hill and plain areas. Though, they have special housing pattern, dress habits and food habits, but at present due to the impact of Hinduism, they are found to be largely used to the diverse habit of the rural non-tribal people.

Birendra Kumar Gohain (1993) also tries to make a sincere attempt by analyzing domestic, social, economic and religious life of the hill Tiwas by emphasizing the role of ‘Lalung Darbar’- The Prominent political organization of Tiwa community.

Mahidhar Goswami (1996) mentioned that spread of education and emergence of newly educated middle class among the tribals of Assam have contributed in developing a sense of consolidating tribal identity. The tribal problem in Assam, although apparently political in nature, however agrarian issue and economic aspirations also give new dimensions to the tribal movement.

Ramesh Nath (1996) has mentioned in order to develop all sides of Tiwa community; the implementation of Sixth Schedule is quite indispensable. Socio-political development of the Tiwa community is possible only by the protection of tribal blocks. Their distinctive socio cultural life can also be protected by giving them sixth schedule status.

M.R.Biju (2006) highlights the socio-economic life of the tribal women and children. To him, changing socio-economic conditions in non-tribal society has influenced the traditional norms of the tribal society.

Rupa Deka Patar (2007) focuses on the origin, folk culture, traditional dances and music of Tiwa community. Her focal point is that the Tiwa community contributes a lot to the growth and development of Assamese language and literature.

Tiwa Sanskritir Rehrup, collection of articles on Tiwa culture, history, language, etc. edited by Krishna Ram Mili (2009) includes the writings of eminent scholars who talk about different aspects of socio-political life of the Tiwa community.

Hemakanta Chutiya (2010) mentions “Due to spread of modern education, the Tiwas have started adopting the modern trend of culture. They are getting better education in the formal educational institutions and as such their total way of life has been changing day by day. As a result of modern educational impact, the social conscious develops among the Tiwas who were once far away from the mainstream of modern civilization.”

Madhushree Das (2012) observes that the socio-economic life and development of the tribal women now stands in the midpoint of tradition and modernity. The tribal women in particular and tribal society in general are moving at a very rapid pace of change from the earlier stage of traditional life to the present stage of modernization and globalization.

Kaberi Saha and Kalyan Das (2013) in their study finds that rural Tiwa households of Morigaondistrict are more aware towards education and less aware towards economic issues.

Dibakar Bordoloi(2014) through his study finds that only education can create a strong environment for the development of womenfolk of Tiwa community. If proper awareness is not created through education, then the socio-economic status of Tiwa women will not be improved.

Chafikur Rahaman (2015) through his analysis points out that to reduce the intensity of problems associated with the improvement of living conditions of Lalung people

of Sonapur area, the government should pay special attention to the creation of more basic infrastructure facilities on a primary basis in the interior villages where the Lalung tribes generally reside.

Dr. Pankaj Kumar Deka (2015), in his edited book highlights the community's socio-cultural dimensions. Most of the articles in the edited book discuss about language, culture, literature, customs and social norms of the community.

Dadul Dewri (2016) observes that the present policy of the government for constitution of tribe specific Autonomous Councils for the Tiwas and the Rabhas are not enough. For its smooth functioning the government has to strengthen the system by transferring the financial and administrative powers as provided by the Act. Moreover, the leaders of both the tribes should be more accountable and masses are supposed to be conscious to make the system democratic and efficient.

Satybrat Baruah (2016) reveals that academic achievement and occupational aspiration of the tiwa students greatly depends upon socio-economic status of their family. He therefore gives importance on "Tribal Education" for adult as a means of inclusive education for overall development of the community as well as society in general.

Dola Borkakati(2017) highlights how *Jonbeel Mela* helps in bringing Tiwas together despite their internal differences to adore their age old tradition, memorize and rejoice their common past, and offer their homage and loyalty to the traditional authority. Assam is a diverse region with people inhabiting in different geographical terrains and having prosperous cultural legacy. Fairs, Melas, Hatts(Markets) have been playing a significant role in the interaction of the people. They have helped in

initiating and intensifying social relations hereby bringing social solidarity among people.

SOGRASAL, a souvenir edited by Lakhinandan Kholar (2017) includes many articles on Tiwa community where many eminent 'writers' attempt to explain the traditional social customs of Tiwa community along with continuation problem of such customs. Moreover, some articles of this souvenir also highlight about political aspirations of the Tiwa community with its justification.

Pijush Debnath (2018) is of the view that the Tiwas are not given real autonomy with necessary legislative, executive and financial powers. There should have been definite boundaries within which they can function with autonomy. He emphasizes the need of wise policy of the government for the promotion of the varied interest of the Tiwa people.

Dhanada Kakati (2019) through her brief and careful study observes that though they were originally animists but now there is no unique, sole formidable and infallible religious belief among Tiwas. Beliefs of different religion and sects have influenced the Tiwa community from time to time and place to place.

1.8. Chapterization:

Chapter 1. The chapter one is an introductory chapter which relates women empowerment issue with development existing development process. Also this chapter includes operational definition of the key terms like socio-political status, statement of the problem, the main objective of the study, research questions, academic rationale of the topic, the methodology adopted, review of literature, scheme of chapterization, and delimitation of the study.

Chapter 2. The chapter two of this study contains a brief profile of Morigaon district.

Chapter3. The third chapter highlights the profile of Tiwa community along with their political achievement till today.

Chapter 4. The fourth chapter deals with the analysis of socio-political status of Tiwa women of the study area.

Chapter 5. The fifth chapter presents summary and conclusion of the study. It also tries to give some helpful recommendations relating to the study area.

1.9. Limitation of the study:

1. The present study has been undertaken within Plain Tiwa population only. Hill Tiwa population has not been included in the study.
2. The study has been delimited to rural Tiwa households only since the size of Tiwa population residing in urban area is very negligible.
3. The study has been conducted only on rural Tiwa house-holds residing in the two (2) Blocks of Morigaon district viz. Mayong block and Bhurbandha block because of high concentration of Tiwa people in these blocks.
4. The findings of the study are applicable to Morigaon district only.

CHAPTER 2:

PROFILE OF MORIGAON DISTRICT

2.1 Brief Profile of the District:

Morigaon district is situated on the Southern Bank of the Brahmaputra river in Assam Valley. Till September 1989, Morigaon has been a sub-division of Nagoan district. It was upgraded as a district with its headquarter at Morigaon vide Govt. Notification No. – GAG/C13/370/87/102 dated September 1989.³

The District is situated between ‘26.31’ and ‘26.33’ North Latitude and ‘92.59’ and ‘92.35’ East Longitudes. It is bounded on the north by the river Brahmaputra, on the east by Nagaon district, on the South by Karbi-Anglong hill district. There is a line of hills of different height on the southern boundary of Morigaon district, namely Amsoi, Nelli, Jagiroad and Nakhola. There are small hillocks namely Baghara, Kumoi, Tetelia, Monoha, Baha, Buraburi, Mayang, and Kachasila on the western part of the district. The mighty Brahmaputra flows along with the northern boundary of the district. Killing, kolong and kapili rivers flow through the southern part of the district. The Killing meets the Kapili at the Matiparbat where from Kapili moves westward. The Kolong joins Kapili at the Jagi Dui KhutiMukh and from here they jointly fall into the Brahmaputra. During rainy seasons, all the rivers get flooded with water. Floods are frequent in this district and causes tremendous change in nature and day to day life of people of this district.

Climate of Morigaon district is almost same as like as other parts of Assam which is characterized by a highly humid atmosphere with abundant rains and general coolness. The cold season in general, starts from the month of November and continues up to the month of February. This follows by the season of thunderstorms from April to June. Rainfall occurs heavily during this season because of the effect

³District Census Handbook, Directorate of Census Operation, Assam, 1991.

of south west monsoon. October and November is considered as the post monsoon season. The temperature generally, in summer remains something over or less than 36 degrees Celsius while in winter it comes down to even 7 degrees Celsius.

Morigaon is well known for its boggy lands and beels which are rich sources of different species of fish. The Charon, Gouranga, Gotongga, Kachadhra, Tihulia, Udaribeels provide economic benefits to the people. Jagiroad of this district is commercially important place for dried fish trade. There are three Reserve Forest, constituted under Assam Forest Regulation Act, 1891. These are Sanikuchi, Khulahat, and BuraMayong. The Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary which situated on the South Western part of the district is an important sight from the viewpoint of tourists. The sanctuary is famous for the Indian One Horned Rhinoceros.

The district is also well known for her large number of Satras founded by followers of Vaissnavitee reformer Sri Sankar Dev and Sri Madhavdev. Shri ShriSankardev was born at Patekibari village of this district. Melas (fairs) are most important religious occasion for the people of the district. The old Barter System is still practiced in Jonbeel Mela where tribal people exchange their products.

2.2 Administrative Setup

The Deputy Commissioner of the district controls the administration of the entire district. He is the collector in case of Revenue matters and acts as a District Magistrate regarding maintenance of Law and Order and as a District Election Officer in case of conduct of Election. He acts as a Principal Census Officer during Census. He is assisted by number of officers like Additional Deputy Commissioners, Sub divisional Officers, and Extra-Assistant Commissioners to look after the administration of the district. The district has no any other sub

division except sadar sub division Morigaon. For the administrative convenience, the district is divided into five revenue circles. Under each revenue circles, there are Mauzas comprising all kind of village. The revenue circles are Morigaon, Mayong, Bhuragaon, Laharighat and Mikirbheta. Morigaon has one Statutory town and 5 Census Towns. The district constitutes 7 Community Development Blocks, 85 Gaon panchayats, and 632 numbers of villages.⁴

The distribution of revenue circles with Mouzas is depicted below in the table

Table-2.1 Revenue circles of Morigaon District.

Sl. No.	Name of Revenue Circle	Name of Mouzas under each circle
1.	MorigaonSadar	(1).NizTectelia (2).Uttarkhula (3).Morigaon (4).Dandua
2.	Mikirbheta Revenue Circle	(1).Silpukhuri (2).Mikirbheta (3).Charaibahi
3.	Bhuragaon Revenue Circle	(1).Buragaon (2).Bokani
4.	Laharighat Revenue Circle	(1).Laharighat (2).Moirabari

⁴ District Census Handbook, Morigaon, Census of India 2011.

5.	Mayang Revenue Circle	(1).GovaMouza
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Source: - D.C. Office Morigaon.

2.3. Origin of the name of Morigaon:

Though, there is obscure regarding origin of the name of Morigaon district but still a historical story has been continued. During the reign of Ahom king Chandra KantaSingha in 17th century, two princes of the king Darrang (DarangiKonwar) fled from Darrang due to some internal conflict with the king. The two princes along with 72 families crossed the mighty Brahmaputra River at ChaulkhowaGhat, came towards south and took shelter in a place known as Borbari.⁵The place Borbari was under sixth subordinate kings of Ahom during that time. The two princes along with 72 families allowed settling temporarily in Borbari. Later on SupradhawasSingha, one of the prime was declared as king of Sukhangog by these sixth local king as a mark of hospitality.

Due to the insufficient land, the two princes left Sukhangog in search of new land. After few days, they came a long distance and took rest by the side of a big tank (beel). There, they made some bhur (a kind of boat) from a botabari (a kind of local herb available in the jungle of that area) and with the help of those bhur they went

5 . Deuri, Maneswar, Morigaonzillar lokasanskiri,1998, p-9

further in search of new land. Thus, from that time this place was known as Bhurbandha. ⁶They settled in Bhurbandha only for a short period.

Later on prince BhimSingha went forward and found a tank (beel) which was the dead stream of the river Kolong and they named the place as Morikolong (Mori — Dead and Kolong river Kolong). To the east of that Morikolong, princes BhimSingha established a small village and named it as Morigaon. From that period the place is well known as Morigaon.

2.4. History of the District:

Prior to 1989, Morigaon was a part of the Nowgaon district. In ancient time Assam was known as Pragjyotishpura and in the medieval time it was known as Kamrupa. Nowgaon district was the part of ancient kingdom of Pragjyotisha. The ancient Pragjyotisha kingdom was ruled by the dynasties like Barman, Salastambha, and Pusyavarman constitute the first historical dynasty of the Barman family. Bhaskaravarman the greatest monarch of the Barman family and he was remarkable rulers of mediaeval India. He ruled over Kamrup from 594-630 A.D. Balavarman III that the grant recorded in the Nowgaon Copper plate from Haruppessvara. He rightly called this place his ancestral camp, for it was, as noted above already the capital in the time of his great grandfather, Harjjara. It definitely proves that the Nowgaon formed an integral part of kamrup during 10th century A.D. JongalBalahu the son of Ari- Matta became the king of this territory and he reigned from 1385-1400 A.D. He had formed his capital first at Khalaand then Sahari near Raha. He established a Garh near Raha known as Jongalbalahugarh, which is still existence on the bank of 37 National highways near Raha. Historians demand that JongalBalahu was the

6. Buragohain, Birincidhar :Sonai, 2002, p-11.

legendary king of the Tiwas. The kachari king with his nasty conspiracy killed JongalBalahu ruthlessly. After his death Hindu families began to decline and many small principalities were found by Ahoms, the kacharis, the koches, the khasis, the Jayantias, and Bhuyans.

During the reign of ShungmungDihingia Raja (1497-1539) the Ahom Kindom was extending to the western boundary up to the Kolong river in the Nowgong district, by defeating the Kacharis, then the Kacharis were moved southward up to the Kapili valley. This time, the Tiwas (Lalungs) did not have central power in the Kapili valley. They had failed to resist the kacharis and many of them moved to the hill tracts of the Jayantias.

It is fact that, the historical contact between the Jayantia and Lalung kings of the middle Assam dates from the early 16th century. At that time the Koch King Naranarayana had sent an expedition to extent Jayantia kingdom under his General VeerChilarai. It was the first attack made by a tributary chief on Jayantia king in the Lalung areas bordering the hills and subsequently on the Jayantia State.

Since then the supremacy of the Jayantia King over the Lalungs (Tiwas) chiefdoms both in the plains and the hills to have continued till 1707 A.D.

During the period of occupation of Western Assam by the Mughals in 1616 A.D., Ahom king PratapSingha had organized with different rulling chiefs of the tribal principalities of Brahmaputra Valley to fight against the Mughal at that time. The Tiwa chiefs were giving their full support to Ahom king to drive away the Mughals from Kamrupa. Thus the chief of these provinces also made their submission to the Ahom King. During the early period of British rule Nowgaon district was first administrated with Kamrup and Darrang district. In 1835, Nowgaon was formed as

a separate district with headquarter at Puranigudam. During British rule the Nowgaon district included considerable portion of the Naga Hills and Mikir Hills, such hills were later on separated and formed another district. In 1951, Mikir Hills portion of Nowgaon was separated and combined with the North-Cachar Subdivision to formed as, new district to be known united Mikir and North Cachar Hill District.

Finally in 1989, the Morigaon Subdivision was separated from Nowgaon district and recognized as a new district of Assam as Morigaon district.

2.5. Demographic Structure:

Morigaon district is purely an agro-based area. The Tiwas constitute the major tribe of the district. Besides Tiwas, there are scattered villages of Bodo, Nepali, Nath, Bengali, Kacharis and Karbis. There are good numbers of Scheduled Caste villages in the district. The district is also inhabited exclusive pocket of char inhabitants who are mostly found in the riverine area. According to the Census 2011, there are 9,57,853 persons in Morigaon district out of which 4,85,328 and 4,72,5245 are male and female respectively. The sex ratio of the district is 967 females per 1000 male. The population density of the district is 617 people per sq. km, which is much higher than the state density of population. As per 2011 census, 92.34 % population of Morigaon district lives in rural areas of villages. Average literacy rate of Morigaon in 2011 were 68.03 compared to 58.53 of 2001. If things are looked out at gender wise, male and female literacy were 71.90 and 64.04 respectively. For 2001 census, same figures stood at 65.15 and 51.51 in Morigaon District. Total literate in Morigaon District were 539,902 of which male and female were 289,698 and 250,204 respectively.

2.6. Major Characteristics of the District:

Forestry has been playing a significant role in the economy of the district. A considerable portion of people still are dependent on forest. They depend on forest mainly for firewood to cook their food and also to construct their houses. Moreover, a few number of forest based small industries are also found in the district. The district is rich in forest resources. The forest area of the Morigaon district includes the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Sonaikuchi Reserve Forest, Khola Hat Reserved Forest and Bura Mayong Reserved Forest. The Pobitora National Park and Wild Life sanctuary is one of the important sanctuaries of the state. The important forest wealth of the district are Koroi (Albizia Procera), Ajhar (Lagerstroemia speciosa), Sagun (Tick), Simul (Bobax Malabarica), Khokan (Duabanga Sonneratioides), Sonaru (Cassia firluta), Gomari (Gmelina arborea), Kako Bamboo (Dendrocalamus hamiltonii), Bhaluka Bamboo (Bambusa falco), Amara (Amoora) etc.

The main source of livelihood of the people of the district is agriculture. The soil of the district is soft and sandy enough to suit for the growth of agricultural products and various kinds of vegetables. Growth of agricultural crops and other vegetables is accelerated by abundant rain and nature gifted highly humid climate of the district. Cultivation of paddy occupies the highest area of agricultural land of the district. Besides paddy, the other important crops cultivated in the district are Jute, Sugarcane, Mustard, Pulses, Tea, Tobacco, Potato, Chilly and other vegetables. As the district is situated nearby the Guwahati city, it enjoys some sort of marketing advantages and as such the agricultural crops cultivated in the district are transported to the city for their marketing. It is noteworthy that Tiwa and Karbi women from the district constitute the

major part of the people engaged in the marketing processes of these agricultural products.

Weaving is still one of the most common household industries of the district. This traditional industry has been the subsidiary occupation of the women folks of the district since long. The Tiwa womenfolk are expert weavers and almost every household possess loom. They also know the method of indigenous dyeing. In the district, all the Tiwa women know the art of rearing silk cocoons particularly endi and spinning yarn out of it Riha, Chadar, Mekhela, Borkapur, Pani Gamucha (ordinary towel) etc. are worn by ladies at their homes. To promote this traditional industry, the government has opened 4 Handloom Training Centers, 2 Weavers Extension Service units in the district.

The principal trade centre's for wholesale business in the district are Morigaon, Laharighat, Moirabari and Jagiroad. The place is well connected by network of roads with other important trade centres and markets inside and outside the district. Daily bazaars and weekly huts are held regularly in different parts of the district where commodities imported and locally grown are open for retail sale. Over and above, good number of shops dealing in various Intel's particularly stationary etc. is increasing in every year both in rural and urban areas of the district. Moreover, the district is well known for the existence of the largest dry fish market of Asia which is located in the Jagiroad town of the district from where dry fish are supplied to the whole part of India including its north-eastern part.

CHAPTER-3:

PROFILE OF TIWA COMMUNITY

3.1 Historical Background of Tiwas:

Assam as a part of Northeast region of the country embraces all ethnic groups who had settled from various racial backgrounds. Among these aboriginals, Tiwas are one of the aboriginal tribes belonging to the Tibeto- Burman Linguistic family. They are also known as “Lalungs” but they prefer to call themselves as the “Tiwas”. They are broadly divided as the Hill Tiwas, i.e., the Tiwas residing in hill areas of Assam and Meghalaya and the Plain Tiwas who lives in plain areas. There is also another division called “*DantialiaTiwas*” resides in the foothill areas of Assam and Meghalaya.⁷

Tiwas, under the denomination of "Lalung", have been recognized as a Scheduled Tribe since the first Constitution Order (1950) for the State of Assam "excluding the autonomous districts of KarbiAnglong and North Cachar Hills (now named Dima Hasao). It was only in 2002 that the Lalung ST status have been extended to Karbi-Anglong district and thus to the Hill Tiwas. Tiwas still do not get benefit of the ST status in the State of Meghalaya.

The Tiwas are mostly inhabited in the Morigaon, Nagaon and Kamrup districts of Assam. In Nagaon, they are mostly concentrated in the revenue circles of NagaonSadar, Kaliabor, Lanka, Raha and Kampur. In Kamrup, the Tiwas are concentrated in the Sonapur revenue circle. A few Tiwa people are also found in the Dhemaji and Jorhat districts. The Hill Tiwas are mostly living in the KarbiAnglong and in the Jaintia Hill Districts of Assam and Meghalaya respectively. There is a clear difference in the socio-cultural life of the Hill Tiwas and the Plain Tiwas which is important to be mentioned here. The Plain Tiwas are not living in the

⁷Dhanadakakoti- "Religious Beliefs and practices of Tiwas of Assam: A study." PhD thesis, Gauhati University, 2019.

exclusive villages in Assam rather they are living in close proximity with the non-Tiwas, as a result of which they have fully adapted to the Hindu Assamese way of life. On the other hand, the Hill Tiwas are still maintaining their culture and traditions. At present, the typical Tiwa culture and other social traditions are preserved and practiced only in the Hill Tiwa society.

In the historical past, the Tiwas had ruled in central Assam. They had twelve small kingdoms, among them the Gobha kingdom was the famous and most powerful one. The smaller kingdoms like Nelly, Gobha, Topakuchi, Mayang, Dhing, Tetelia, Rani, Demoria and Beltola etc. also existed.

3.2 Origin of the word Lalung:

Different beliefs, oral histories and explanations are prevailing regarding origin of the word “Lalung” and “Tiwa”. They are called as Lalungs by the Karbis who were living on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. For Karbis, “*La*” means water “*lung*” means rescued. The river Brahmaputra gave shelter to the bohemian people, hence they were known as Lalungs.

Another popular version prevalent is that the people came to be known as Lalungs when they left their original home and took shelter beside the river *Nilalung* flowing through the present Karbi Anglong district.⁸ As the people lived on the bank of the river *Nilalung*, tributary of the river Dayang, they got the name Lalung.

There is also another belief that *Langbor* was the first King of Gova Kingdom and *lungbor* was the first minister. The people living under these two kings and minister

8. Gohain, B.K. The Hill Lalungs, ABILAC, Guwahati, 1993, p.3

became to be known as Lalung (P.K.KakatiLalung: GovarLalungBuranji 1984, P-16).

In the legendary and proverb, there is another reference of the origin of Tiwas. The legend says that they were the sons of the ancestral demon king Bali. The king Bali, on his change of the acceptance of the faith of Vaishnavism urged upon the people to follow him and on refusal people were inscribed on forehead with red 'Lal' mark as penalty and were driven out of his kingdom. Later they were said to be recognized as Lalung (Bordoloi, B. N. Thakur Sharmah, G.C. Saikia M.C. (1987) Tribes of Assam, Part-1, Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati)

A similar story with some slight variation is also prevalent among the Tiwas. Once upon a time *LordMahadeo* and his Consort *Parvati* were enjoying the scenic beauty of *Manas-Sarovar*lake. The soothing beauty of the lake area enchanted the Lord so much that he soon fell asleep on the bank of the lake. As he waked up, he saw five drops of saliva at the place where he was resting. The Lord created five human beings out of the five drops of saliva. These five human beings were created out of the divine saliva they came to be known as 'Lalungs'. These five original Lalungshad the unique privilege of seeing the creator in the form of human being and, therefore,theTiwas call Lord Mahadeo as '*ManusMahaded*' (G.C. SarmaThakur: The Lalungs, 1985).

3.3 Origin of the word Tiwa:

'Ti' in Tiwa dialect means water while 'Wa' means superior. The Tiwas make constant references to water and rivers in connection with their religious activities.

They believed that earth was lying under a vast sheet of water and they were the sons of holy water and originally they lived on the bank of Holy River.

There is a popular legend among certain sections of the Lalungs of Morigaon and Nagaon revealing a different meaning of Tiwa. According to this legend, Ti means water and Wa means pig. The Lalungs believe that originally the earth was lying under a vast sheet of water. Then God appeared in the form of a pig and lifted the earth from water. The Lalungs believe themselves to be descendants of pig in the shape of almighty God. But the general opinion among the Lalungs is that this legendary origin has no basis as they kill pigs and eat pork in their socio-religious ceremonies.

Probably the word Tiwa derives its origin from the term Tibbetia meaning people hailing from Tibbet.⁹In course of time this Tibbetia might have changed into Tiwa. It is believed that in ancient time the three great divisions' of the Bodo namely Tifra, Tiwa and Dimasa lived along the banks of a lake near Tibbet. In course of time, they enter into Assam through the north east passes. The local people could not pronounce Tifra and thus in their tongue Tifra become Tippera.¹⁰ Tiwas introduced themselves as TiwaIibung meaning Tiwa men. In their caste, the prefix Tiwa was eliminated and in place of libong or Iibung, the word lalung came to be used.

9. Sharma Thakur, GC.:The Lalungs, Guwahati, 1985,p.10

10. Ibid

3.4 Tiwas Migration to Morigaon District:

Due to least importance given by the historians, anthropologist and archaeologist to the lost history of Tiwa tribe, it is difficult to speak clearly about the origin and migration of the Tiwas to the present place of their habitat in Assam. Yet there are some popular beliefs, oral histories and explanations though insufficient which can be mentioned.

A popular belief was that the Tiwas migrated from Tibet to the bank of the river Jamuna near Allahabad. But they were pushed out by the Aryans from their original habitat near Allahabad and came towards east following the Himalayan passes. They reached Pragjyotisha, where they established a principality and ruled for several years. In old scriptures, they have been mentioned as the *Kiratas*, whereas the people called themselves as 'Tifras'. Then the 'Tifras' were pushed out of Pragjyotisha by the king Narakasura and were compelled to move towards east. They reached the Kapili Valley and established a principality known as 'Tribeg'.¹¹ It is believed that the 'Tifras' or the 'Tiwas' ruled in this region for about sixteen generations¹². Depending on the folk songs sung during harvesting and purification ceremonies after child birth, there is another belief among the legends that Tiwas originally lived in the Hillali Kingdom. The Hillali kingdom is identified as the whole of present Nagaon and eastern Darang district. As time passed, the people preferred to call themselves subject to Lali, an abbreviated form of Hillali, on the northern part of Nagaon district there is a dead branch called Lali¹³. Probably the Hillali kingdom was on the north western part of Nagaon district called as Morigaon district. In the middle of the 16th century, when the Ahom rule prevailed

¹¹SarmaThakur,G.C. : The Lalungs, 1985

¹²Nath,R.M.: A Background of Assamese culture,1978.

¹³ Ibid.

in the other part of the Nagaon district, the Gova kingdom was established at Gova on the bank of the river Gova, presently known as Killing, a place about 14 km south east of present Jagiroad and it was ruled by the Lalung kings. Later on the capital was shifted to Nakhola for better administrative purpose. (Na-means new, Khola means administrative headquarter).

According to an oral history prevailing in the Tiwa society, during the reign of the Ahom king RudraSingha, the Jaintia king Ram Singh was defeated by the Borphukon of Jagi, the Ahom General who is the Officer-in-charge of the Ahom outpost at Jagi. In 1708, the Ahom King RudraSingha issued an order to produce Tamradhwaj, the Kachari King and Ram Singh, the Jaintia King before him. Ram Singha succumbed to an attack of dysentery. His son, who was also a captive, gave two of his sisters in marriage to the Ahom king. Ahom king RudraSingha prepared for an attack of the Mohammedans. The Kachari and the Jaintia kings joined his army by providing soldiers. The elderly Tiwas tell that their forefathers were fleeing away from the Jaintia kingdom, because the Jaintia king was utilizing the Tiwas as soldiers to the Ahom army. The Tiwas, thus, came down to the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley. After reaching the plains, they sacrificed one '*water gourd*' (Komora) symbolizing their cutting off the relation with the Jaintias once for all. Since then the place is known as 'Komorakata'. Even today, a particular clan of the Tiwas does not eat this vegetable following this tradition.

Yet another legend about the migration of the Tiwas from the Jaintia Hills to the Plains of Assam is that they disliked the tradition of human sacrifices of the Jaintias. Many Tiwa families left the Jaintia kingdom out of fear of losing their only son. ManeswarDeuri, a prominent scholar on the society, culture and language of the Tiwa community, who published a number of books on this community, narrated in

his *AsomiyaJati Aru SanskritiGathanatLalung (Tiwa)*, (2011) about the legend regarding migration of the Tiwas from the Jaintia kingdom due to the clash on the acceptance of the tradition of matrilineal system. Referring to some elderly Tiwas, he stated that there was difference of opinion between the leaders of the two sections, namely, Tangara and Hura regarding acceptance of the matrilineal tradition followed in the process of the selection of a social portfolio called as *Jela*. One group demanded to follow matrilineal tradition, the other to follow patriarchic tradition. Finally, the two leaders decided to resolve the issue in a fight. In that fight, the Hura killed the Tangara and as a result of that the followers of the Tangara fled away from the Jaintia kingdom and they reached a place called *Tiwa Jong Thong* (meaning border post) near *Nongpuo* of the present Meghalaya. In that place, the Tiwas sacrificed a water gourd, symbolizing their cutting-off relations with their counterparts remaining in the Jaintia Hills. After leaving the Jaintia kingdom, these people moved towards the plains of Assam. As they crossed a river, many of them drowned in the river. Others were rescued by the people of that locality, mostly belonging to the Karbi community. When the local Karbis did not understand the language of the rescued people, they called them as '*Lalung*' meaning '*people rescued from the water*'. These migrated Tiwas established several villages in the foothills of Jaintia Kingdom which were in a later period transformed into their own principality. However, these principalities remained as the tributary to the Jaintia King.¹⁴ B. K. Gohain gives a reference to the migration of the Tiwas to the Ahom kingdom by narrating the Ahom Chronicle '*Deodhai Assam Buranji*'. He narrates '*during the reign of king Jayadhvaj Singha, (1648-1663 A.D.), outposts were set up in Raha and Jagi in order to stop incursion of the Kacharis into the Ahom Kingdom.*

¹⁴Deuri, Maneswar, 2011; *AsomiyaJati Aru SanskritiGathanatLalung (Tiwa)*, pp. 38-40).

The king's father-in-Law, TelekaSandikai, was deputed to Raha as the RohialBarua, i.e., the Ahom Governor of Raha with four trusted nobles and a host of other people. One day, TelekaSandikai noticed a fire on the top of the neighboring hills and sent his officers to survey the place. The officers discovered several villages there. They asked them about their identity and customs. The inhabitants there reported that as per to their social custom, a son was debarred from succession and instead the daughter was granted inheritance of her ancestral property. When asked why they had migrated to Ahom territories, they replied that it was only to escape from the operation of the matrilineal law of inheritance. The Ahom officials assured them a better law of inheritance in which a son would inherit the property of his father, on the condition that they would have to submit themselves to the rule of the Ahom king. As a result of this negotiation, twelve families of Lalungs (Tiwas) and twelve families of the Mikirs migrated to the Ahom Kingdom¹⁵.

In various historical documents, it is clearly mentioned that there are some small provinces like Gobha, Nelli, Khala and Sahari under the Ahom rule in Assam, which were called as Dantiolia Kingdoms. These actually belonged to the Jaintia Kingdom but administered by tributary chiefs belonging to the Tiwa (Lalung) tribe. "In 1658, *Pramatarai* rebelled against his grandfather *Jasamattarai*, the Jaintia King and called upon the Chief of Gobha to help him. The latter refused and an enraged *Pramatarai* destroyed four of his villages. The Gobha Chief applied for help to the Kachari king, who was preparing to come to his assistance but the local Ahom officials intervened and said that as the Ahoms were exercising the paramount powers, it was imperative for them to seek protection from the Ahom

¹⁵Gohain, Birendra Kumar (1993): The Hill Lalungs, AB/LAC, Tarun Nagar Guwahati-5

king. The Gobha Chief accordingly went with seven hundred men to Ahom king Jayadvaj Singha and begged for help. The Ahom king ordered Barphukan to settle them in Khagarijan, corresponding to modern Nagaon district and this was accordingly done.¹⁶

The process of migration thus started along with this incident and later on batches after batches of Tiwas began to enter the plains of Assam, especially in the Morigaon area due to various socio-religious as well as political reasons.

Lyll mentions that Tiwas were living in the contiguous areas of the Mikirs, side by side with the Mikirs dwell in the Mikir Hills, the Rengma Naga in the Jamuna and Diyang valley, the Dimasa or Kacharis in the Jayantia Hills and along the Nagaon and Kamrup borders of Lalungs and a few settlements of Khasis.¹⁷

After the defeat of the Kacharis by the Ahom, the Jayantias extended their kingdom to the Kolong and Kapili of the Nagaon district. The Jayantia king established this area as the tributary chief of the Lalungs. Under the Jayantia king Ram Singha, four brothers were ruling in Gova, Nelli, Khola and Sahari as tributary heads.¹⁸

As recorded in the History of Assam, there were seven principalities (Sato Rajya) established under the Jagi administrative circle. Later on five principalities (PanchoRajya) were established namely Topakuchia, Baropujia, MikirGonya, Phuloguria and Khagoria under Raha administrative circle. The chief of these principalities area designated as Powali Raja or mini king. In return for the

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Lyll C.J. "The Mikirs", Kolkata, 1908.

¹⁸Bora, N. "JagiChakirEtihas", Souvenir, 1988.

prevailing these mini kingdoms they had to pay taxes to Ahom king and also be associated with the Ahom soldiers at the time of war.

In 1824 A.D. the Britishers took Raha, Kaliabor and ultimately the whole district of Nagaon. Soon after this, the Gova kingdom also came under the British Rule. The name of the last famous king of the Lalung was Rai Singh, whom the then chief Commissioner of Assam Mr. Fuller appointed as Mouzadar of Gobha. Thus the Tiwa state came under the direct control of British East India Company.

Though, the Tiwa people came under the control of British power but they acted against the British and prepared for revolt against the British Government. They revolted against the British imperialism which was popularly known as, 'Phulguri Dhewa'. In 1860, the British banned the cultivation of opium and the period was marked by a phase of agrarian's outbreaks against enhancement of land revenue or imposition. So, the Tiwas in Phulguri protested through their mel (assembly) against imposition of new taxes in 1861. In the freedom movement against the British Government, the Tribal people of Assam played a significant role. The Tiwa people had joined the "Tribal League" which was formed in 1933 and actively participated in the freedom movement.

After independence, though provisions were made to include Tiwas under schedule tribe category list, but the central as well as the state government did not implement any substantial development policy for them. This led to organize them culturally and politically. The Tiwas started their movement with an identity consciousness to fulfill their aspirations. As response to it, like Bodos, Tiwas and Mishings, they were also given Autonomous Council in the year 1995, with the object of fulfilling economic, educational and linguistic aspirations, preservation of land rights as well

as socio-cultural and ethnic identity. The Tiwa Autonomous Council is however not under the sixth Schedule of the Constitution, but it has created by legislating statute of the tribe in the State Assembly. But the proposed Autonomous Council could not satisfy all the sections of these communities. ATSU (All Tiwa Student Union), ATWA (All Tiwa Women Association) etc. have strongly opposed it. As such, another movement for demanding autonomy under sixth schedule has been continued.

3.5 Socio-cultural Aspects of Tiwa Society:

Like all other tribal communities of Assam, the Tiwa people have their own system of socio-cultural life. They are also very rich in their folk art and culture, i.e., dancing, singing, folk believes, religion and worshipping Almighty God, performance of customs and traditions.

Family:

Among all the social institutions, family is the simplest and outstanding primary group. The Tiwa society has now both nuclear and joint family systems. The traditional family pattern of the Tiwa society was joint family system, but due to increase of population along with the spread of modern technology and urbanization, occupational pattern of joint family system has been declined now. Earlier the Tiwas were matri archal and matrilineal, but today the plain Tiwas are patriarchal and patrilineal whereas the hill Tiwas still adhere to the old system. They have rich traditional customs and dresses. A Tiwa family usually consists of father, mother and their unmarried children. In other words, they have a nuclear or primary type of family which is a universal human social grouping. The Tiwa family extends to a '*Khuta*' and thus plays a major role in determining social behaviour among the

members of '*Khuta*'. Family is still maintaining the main architect of socializing of new born child where they learn all dos and don'ts.

The property of the Tiwas can be divided among the sons. The house, however, goes to the son who lives with father till his death. Among the plain Tiwas, daughters don't inherit property, but reverse is in the case among the Hill Tiwas who inherit the property from mothers.

Clans system:

The Tiwa community like other tribal communities has their own system of social organisation. Their society is based on the *Khels* and *khels* are on the *kul* or *khuta*(clan). Originally they had only twelve clans but later on these main clans have been divided into number of sub clans, called "*DhanBangah*". These are as follows:

Table: 3.1

Clan	Sub clan
Macharang	Machereng, Magor
Madur	Ladur, Puru, Sagra
Maloi	Fangsong, pumbe, (puma)
Dafor	Mithi, Lomfoi
Sukai	Kharai
Amfil	Aagara, Chanchara
Lasa	Mithi
Chalang	Muni, Melang
Amsong	Amsi

Kakhor	Aagari
Darnong	Damlong, khoire
Lorom	---

Source: Bordoloi, B. N. Thakur Sharmah, G.C. Saikia M.C. (1987) Tribes of Assam, Part-1, Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati.

The people of the same clans are regarded as the members of the same family and, hence, marriage is strictly prohibited among them. Each clan is a composition of some greater families called *Mahari*. Every clan has its own deity which is worshipped by the clan members.

Marriage System:

Among the Tiwas, marriage is the accepted form of practice between a man and women. Illegal unions are very much hated and social recognition has not been given to such unions. Marriage is solemnized after attainment of puberty. Monogamy is socially recognized type of marriage although cases of polygamy can't be ruled out. In the present day Tiwa society, broadly four types of marriages are performed. These are:

1) *Gobhia or GobhiaRakha (adopting son in law)* 2) *Barbia*, 3) *Joronbia* 4) *Paluaipatabia*.

Gobhiya or GobhiyaRakha:

Whenever a guardian of girl does not possess a male child, he adopts a boy or accepts a marriageable young man in his house as "Gobhia" with an introduction to his '*kula*'. There are no much formalities except the entertainment of the villages of

the girl's side with a simple feast for such marriage by girl's father. The elderly villagers are invited for a feast. After the feast, the couple is taken inside the *Borghar* of the bride clan. The couple bows before the elders and elderly villagers who bless them to remain as good forever. This type of marriage system has been followed, especially the Hill Tiwas, but now most of the PlainTiwa people do not prefer to follow this.

Barbiya:

As per Hindu traditional marriage system, this type of marriage continues in Tiwa society. The well to do and educated Tiwa prefers to this form of marriage which entails huge expenditure and long drawn formalities. The guardian of the prospective couple takes the initiative. *Zelas*, who are experts in the historical and legendary background of the community play important role in such marriage.

Borbiya continues for three days. Two days before the marriage, the groom and bride are ceremonially bathed in their respective houses. Marriage ritual is observed at the house of the bride on third days. During these days, feasts are arranged for the villagers in both the households, rice beer, and pork form essential items prepared in the marriage feast for the non-convert Lalungs. In the evening, the groom along with his friends and 'Zela' proceeds to the girl's house. The marriage procession is preceded by a '*Garakhiabhar*' which contains one bunch of banana, one pot of milk, three pots of rice and some betel leaves and nuts. The elderly villagers gather at the girl's house and the bride and groom bow down before them who bless the couple for a happy conjugal life. Then the couple returns to the groom's house.

Juranbiya:

This is also a formal type of marriage but limited formalities have to be followed by both of the houses. It is a marriage known by the family and unknown by the others. When both the parents of the prospective couple agree, on a specific day (fixed by both party), the groom's party with limited relatives proceeds to the bride's house. The party carries gold ornaments and dresses for bride along with *borbhar* and *garakhiabhar* which contains rice beer, curd, jiggery, betel nuts etc. The groom's party offers the dresses and ornaments to the bride's father. Both bride and groom bow down in front of the elders and after that, the girl's father entertains the villagers with rice beer. After some entertainment, the groom party returns to their own house along with the bride which marks the end of the marriage. Generally, persons of lower income group, arrange this type of marriage.

PoluaiPattaBiya:

“*PoluaiPatta*” or marriage by elopement is widely prevalent among the Lalungs. In this marriage, boys and girls get maximum liberty in selecting their life partners. This system of marriage is not only socially acceptable but also economical. Traditionally, the Tiwa marriages are held under this system and there is no social stigma.

The boy and girl after deciding that they are actually for each other and wants to remain as a couple for the rest of the life, the boy takes away his beloved to his residence. The information of the event has been given to girl's father by next day. A party from the boy's house consisting two relatives of the boy and the *zela* proceeds to girl's house. The party holds discussion with the parents of the girl and finalizes a date for the couples visit to the girl's house. Along with the friends, the

couple proceed to the girl's house with a '*Bhar*' containing rice beer, rice cakes etc. The parents of the girl invite the fellow villagers and entertain with eatables from the boy's house. The boy's party returns after getting a date for the '*BharSinga*' ceremony. During that day, the boy's party offers two '*Bhars*'. The couple is recognized as formally married by the elderly villagers of girl's village in a simple ceremony at '*Barghar*'. A big feast has been arranged for this occasion where rice beer forms important one.

In the traditional Lalung and tribal society, the position of girls in marriage is more valued than that of boys. Now-a-days, the practice of dowry is taking place in the marriage of the Lalung society. The practice of giving money, materials, furniture, television, motor cycles etc. are found in some cases. Widow Remarriage is widely accepted and child marriage is unknown to Tiwa society.¹⁹

Village Organization:

The village organization of the Tiwa is divided into two categories. The first category is headed by the *gaonbura* and assisted by an official called *barika*, who plays the role of mediator between the *gaonbura* and the villagers.

The second category organization is the religious organization, run by the three office bearers namely *gharbura*, *zela* and *harikunwari*. Besides, there is a *deori* to preside over the worship. On the other hand, *changdoloji*, *changmaji*, *huruma*, *khuramul* are four officers to run the affairs of a *Samadi*.

There are two types of *GharBura* or *Borzela*. One is selected from *khuta* or *bansha* and another from *khel* or village society. *Gharbura* is the religious head of the *khuta*.

¹⁹Dhanadakakoti- "Religious Beliefs and practices of Tiwas of Assam: A study." PhD thesis, Gauhati University, 2019.

As this system is hereditary, after the death of a Gharbura, his son becomes the next *Gharbura*. A *Gharbura* should be always a married man and should be wellversed in religious ritual and practices. As a Gharbura, he has to maintain certain restrictions. For example, eel and crab eating are prohibited items for him. He can go to the cremation ground but cannot play active role in the cremation.

A girl from the age of eight or nine can become a *Harikanwari* who plays a very important role in any religious ceremony at the *borghar* or *bansha*. She even plays a major role equivalent to *Gaonburà*. A *Harikanwari* should not touch utensils and food items of others. Taking eel, crab and mutton are prohibited for a *Harikonwari*. *Harikanwari* must remain in the same. So her husband must be a Ghabia.

It is however important to mention here that due to adoption of Vaishnavism by some sections of Tiwa people, they have introduced 'Pathek', 'Medhi', 'Gayan' and 'Bharali' who have been assigned different roles in the socio-religious ceremonies.

***Samadi*- A pillar of Tiwa Tribe:**

The *Samadi*, the centre place of traditional Tiwa village life is not common in the plains areas amongst the Tiwas. It is found in the Hill areas and foothill areas, also in a few plain Tiwa village too. This is the institution where generally youths are trained on the matters of social harmony and responsibility as well as to respect and practice Tiwa socio-cultural life. With the spread of Vaishnavism of the great Sankardev amongst the Tiwa, the place of samadi is taken over by Namghar among the villages of some Tiwa people.

Economy:

The Tiwa tribe is by and large heavily dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. They are accustomed to wet cultivation and plough and cattle are used as the mode of cultivation. In case of hill areas, hoe and harrow are normal mode of cultivation. The major agricultural products of the plain areas are paddy, jute, pulses, sugarcane, mustard seeds etc. On the contrary, Pumpkin, bottle gourd, ginger, turmeric, chili, brooms are heavily produced in the hill areas. To sell their products, the people have to depend on the weekly markets of their locality and Nongpoh, Shillong of Meghalaya. Some educated youth now, has been started broiler farm and piggery farm for commercial purposes. Goat and cow rearing are also very common for their domestic purposes. The well-to-do Tiwa also prefers in rearing the buffalo for agricultural and other purposes.

The Lalung womenfolk are very much experts in weaving and almost every household possesses one loom. They also know the methods of ingredient dyeing, *Dhotis* (towel used as the head dress), *pani* Gamosha(ordinary towel for day to day use), *Rihas*, *Mekhelas*, *Chadars* etc. are woven by the ladies in their looms. Cane and bamboo work is an important household small cottage industry of the Tiwas.

The work of bamboo and cane is done through the process of cutting, splitting and thinning which is known to all houses. Bamboo and cane products like “*japa*” (a suitcase), “*pera*” (a big suitcase), “*sepa*” and “*polo*” (fishing tools etc) are very common. The role of Tiwa women in improving the economic condition of respective families cannot be ignored.

Language:

The Tiwa language is an offspring of the Tibeto-Burman language which is mainly prevalent in the hill and foot hill areas of Assam and Meghalaya. This language is composed of seven vowels and twenty consonants. But due to assimilation process with larger Assamese society and use of Assamese language in their day to day communication purpose, Tiwa language is now in endangered situation.

Religion:

The religion of Tiwas is based on belief in some deities. Their religion can be considered as one of the branches of the Hindu religion. Except the Vaishnava converts, all Tiwas are Saktas but their images and equipment are not same as those used by other.

Lord Mahadev (Fa-Mahadeo) is considered as the supreme God. All worship begins with Lord Mahadev, the creator, protector and destroyer of all. Besides the Fa Mahadeo or Lord Mahadev, there are other Gods and Goddesses like *Palakonwar*, *Bodalmaji*, *Muramuzi*, *Rungshukonwar*, *Sumai-Mura*, *Yangli*, *MaBhagavati* (Kali), *Jol-thol-Devata*, *chari-bhai-chari-kura*, *Suni-devata*, *Baghdeo* etc. who are worshipped by them. The Tiwas have common place for worship which is known as 'Borghar' (Na-bar). Every clan has a *Borghar*. Generally, it is constructed in the central place of the village. The *Borghar* has two alters, one for the main deity and other for the ancestors. The *Gharbura*, head of the clan and *Harikonwari* are the two main male and female heads without whom any religious ceremony can't be performed at the *Borghar*.

There are some public worshipping places established for each village or a group of villages which is called '*Thans*' (means—place for worshipping). Some of the prominent '*Thans*' found in the name of *DeosalThan*, *LakhimiThan* or *YangliThan*, *BhagavatiThan*, *KesaikhaitiDeviThan*, etc. During pujas, sacrifice must be offered to these deities. But now-a-days, in many villages, instead of sacrifice *Nibut* or *Naibedy* is offered which contain gram, banana, betel leaves and nuts etc. The *Loro* or priest, the religious head of the village in the Tiwa society, performs functionary in all the religious ceremonies. The *Loro* has no supreme power and position in the administration matters of religions and social law in the Tiwa society. In every Tiwa village, a village *Loro* is selected for his office which is not hereditary but due to his special abilities and qualities inherent to him. He is the main counsel who consults on all important occasions, like private or communal, social or religious. During all social and communal festivals, his presence is invariably required. The *Loro* is the mediator between the people and their god, deities and spirits. Therefore, the *Loro* is considered as indispensable part for the day to day life of Tiwa people. The Tiwa followers of Vaishnava religion have established Namghar which occupies an important position in their respective area, although it was not the part of Tiwa traditional belief system. It is important to note here that due to Neo Vaishnavism and Srimanta Sankardev Sangha, the traditional religious practices of Tiwa community have been declined day by day.

Food Habit:

The staple food of Tiwa people is rice along with good use of Fish. In the Tiwa food habits, dry fish is an integral part. The place inhabitant by the Tiwas, mostly in middle Assam is filled with wetlands and *beels*, which is the source of abundant supply of fish throughout the year. Even during medieval period, the Tiwa vassal

kings used to supply dry fish as tribute to Ahom and Jayantia kingdoms. Various preservatives are used to preserve the fish locally. Tiwas are very fond of *chenaphalamach* and *sukuti*, which is offered as a token of reward to special persons of their villagers.

The Tiwas also have great liking for jute plant leaf called *shukutapat*. It is an unavoidable element of their food habit. '*Sukutapat*' is also used as offerings to cut off relation with dead people. It also combines well with pork and fish.

Another extensively used food item is 'Bamboo Shoot'. Its curry is offered to respective god specially by the Hill Tiwas. *Khaji*, another mentionable food items which is prepared with shukuta, arum sticks, banana sprouts etc.

The most used ingredients in Tiwa food items are chilli, black pepper, rice flour etc. Rice flour is used in almost all curries. Different rice cakes are prepared as a part of light snacks. During *gharchina* ceremonies, carrying of *urrahipitha* to relatives is a must. Pork is considered to be the most favorite food item which of course hardly offered in religious occasion. Goats and fowls are offered generally in religious ceremonies. Rice beer is an essential item in certain religious ceremonies. Today most of the educated sections of Tiwa people has discouraged the use of rice beer and take tea as a beverage. The Hill Tiwas of course still prefers such drink.

Dress habit:

The Tiwas wear their special traditional tribal dress. Their typical dresses include one *mekhela*, one *cheddar*, and one *riha*. They weave all the clothes for both male and female. During festive season, the ladies wear *Thongali*(a waist band) while doing their day to day activity. The women do not wear the *mekhela* on the waist, rather the same is worn at the breast, and extending to a few inches below the knee. The young girls however wear blouses. The dresses of the men folk are similar to

those of other Assamese men folk. The Tiwa women prefer scanty ornaments which they wear more as a sign of femininity than for enhancing their looks. The elderly women wear silver bead or stone necklaces and ear rings.

Festivals:

The Tiwa people celebrate various festivals which are associated with religion and agricultural practices. Some of the prominent festivals observed by this community are *Bihus* or *Bisu*, *Sagra-Misawa*, *Wansua-Miswa*, *Langkhun Puja Misawa*, *Barat Utsav*, *Jonbeelmela* etc. In most of these festivals, addition of music and dance is inevitable. Using different musical instruments like *khram*, *khrambar*, *kiringadhol*, *Gamona*, *Kali* etc. are important component of their festivals. Among all the prominent festivals, *JonbeelMela* is celebrated by the whole community irrespective of Hill and Plain Tiwas. This *Mela* is observed for three to four days on the bank of a bill known as *Jonbeel* during the weekend of *MaghBihu*. All people of Hills and Plains come together to this place and transact their necessary goods following traditional barter system for some moment. Community fishing, eating, singing and dancing are the most striking features of these festivals. It is now become more glamorous and commercial one.

Barat is another popular religious festival observed in plain areas. This is observed in the full moon day called *Purnima* of the month of *Puha*. It is celebrated through their *barat* song with their flawless dance performance. It is generally celebrated by the people of *Morigaon* under the patronage of the traditional *Tetelia Kingdom* to get relief from epidemic diseases by the villagers.

Sagra-Misawa is an agricultural based festival where generally the youths participate and it is full of dance and music. It has more or less similarities with some of the festivals of different communities of Assam.

Wansua- Misawa is performed after every five or six years by the community to integrate the people. This festival is celebrated for agricultural development generally in the Bachelor dormitories or *Samadies*

LangkhunpujaMisawa is a socio- religious festival observed by the community to worship bamboo princes. The community offers puja to bamboo princes so that she can vanish the impact of *Sani* (Saturn), which is destructive to the common people. The whole puja is connected with various songs and dances.

Bohagbihu, Magh and *Katibihu*, the proud cultural heritage of Assam is also celebrated by the Tiwacommunity where little difference is found in respect of food habit and worshipping of various deities. Tiwa people instead of *bihu* calls it as "*bisu*". The date of observance of *bisu* varies from place to place.

Due to New Vaishnavite movement of Sankardeva and assimilation process, *RasMohotsav* is also celebrated by some sections of Tiwa people where different activities of Lord Krishna are displayed.

Conclusion:

Like other major tribes of Assam, the Tiwa community has also been losing their old ethnic characteristics due to adoption of modernity, assimilation process as well as global consequences. The plain Tiwas particularly, are losing much their traditional traits due to larger contact with non-Tiwa society. Vaishnavism has penetrated now into a larger extent to Tiwasociety, which has changed their overall living patterns including food habits. Of course, feeling of re-tribalism is now going strongly among them and educated youths particularly, has been trying to preserve their glorious heritage.

CHAPTER 4:

ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-POLITICAL STATUS OF TIWA WOMEN

4.1 Socio-Political Analysis of Tiwa Women in Morigaon District:

Being as nearly half of the total population, women should be encouraged to realize their potentialities and for effective participation in decision making process at home, community, governance and work place. Since the “UN Declaration of the decade of Women” in 1975, attention and action on women’s concern have been increased steadily to develop the socio-economic as well as political condition of women. By ratifying, All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), often described as a “bill of rights” for women, in 1993 India also actively patronized international policies to promote equal rights for women. The Nairobi forward looking strategies (1985), the Beijing declaration of 1995, most importantly India’s commitment to facilitate the Millennium Development Goals shows India’s concern about gender equality.

The constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. Establishment of National Commission for women, reservation for women in local-self-government, National policy for the empowerment of women, 2001, New National Policy for empowerment of women 2016, etc. are the examples of few initiatives.

Socio political status is a combination of both political and social measure of a person's ability in shaping and sharing political power and social position in relation to others, based on income, education and occupation. When analyzing an individual’s socio political status, the individual’s level of education, decision making ability from household to state matters, and political consciousness are examined.

4.2 Factors taken for assessment of socio- political status of

Women of the study area:

In order to study the socio-political position of the Tiwa womenfolk of Morigaon district various indicators have to be identified and measured. But these indicators have not been well defined in previous studies. In general, lack of education, early marriage, nonexistence of employment opportunities, lack of decision making ability from household to state matters etc. are the main reasons of low socio-political position of women folk. Therefore, education, marriage, decision making ability from household to state matters, political participation in terms of voting, political representatives, political consciousness regarding govt. various schemes etc. are taken into consideration in the measurement of socio-political status of Tiwa women.

Education:

Literacy and educational attainment is considered as the key to the process of socio-political development of any society. The quality of a society can be judged through level of educational attainment. Decision making ability, better employment opportunities, awareness of social mobility etc. largely affected by the level of education that achieved by the individual during his life. It is very crucial for women as such it can reduces their social and economic dependence on men. An educated woman can face the challenges of life without any fear. It creates modern outlook among women which, in turn, strengthens their claim for better status in the society. Lack of education implies lack of awareness about their own rights and privileges which ultimately becomes a factor in deteriorating their social status. Regarding importance of women education, Pt. Jawaharlal

Nehru beautifully quoted “if you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered.” So in present context, the most important thing is to impart education to women to grow confidence, competency and responsibilities so that they become socially and economically independent. This is more applicable in case of tribal women as because tribal women can play vital role towards socio-economic uplift of their society.

Table 4.1: Profile of Educational Qualification of Respondents:

Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	117	69.23%
HSLC/HS	41	24.26%
Degree	09	5.33%
Masters	02	1.18%
Technical	00	00
Total	169	100%

Table 4.1 represents the educational attainments of the sample respondents. As is evident from the table, almost 70% of the sample women are illiterate which is a major cause why the Tiwa women are not still very much empowered in terms of their socio-political status. Among the literates, most are found to pass the HSLC/HSSLC examinations. The number of women who are having higher education and technical education is negligible. This intensifies the need to enhance the educational level among the Tiwa women if their socio-political situation is to be really enhanced.

Decision making:

Women's participation in decision making process in all spheres of life is important for establishing gender equality and development in the society. In order to sustain real democracy women must be incorporated at different levels and different process of decision making. The role played by women in the decision making process in the family and society is a critical factor for examining their status. It involves the decision in the allocation of resources and the distribution of roles within the family. It is however important to be mentioned here that women's ability in relation to decision making is even ignored by male-counterparts due to existence of patriarchy, religious practices and social norms.

Table 4.2: Participation in Decision-making on Family Matters:

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	169	100%
No	00	00
Total	169	100%

Table 4.2 depicts a picture of involvement of the sample women in the decision making process within the family. In this regard, the women in the study area are found to be quite empowered as all the sample women have reported to take part in the decision making process in their respective family matters.

Female Activities:

An indicator of the freedom and autonomy enjoyed by women is how freely they can go out of home on their own different purposes. The Tiwa women engage themselves in various economic and non-economic outdoor activities in their day to day life.

Table 4.3: Freedom of Women in going outside

Activities	No. of Responses	Percentage
At Home Only	00	00
Both at Home and Outside	169	100%
Total	169	100%

Table 4.3 indicates that the sample women are also very much empowered in making decisions whether they would go out of home for different purposes without any interference from their male counterparts. Higher the involvement in outdoor activities indicates better status of Tiwa women in the society

Table 4.4: Awareness Regarding Family Planning:

Family planning is important to control over the birth rate. It reduces population explosion and improves the standard of living of the people. India being a highly populated country, the importance of family planning should be given priority.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	160	94.67%
No	09	5.33%
Total	169	100%

As can be understood from table 4.4, most of the women in the study area are well aware of the different family planning measures. General awareness of family planning measures especially among the women is very much essential for the betterment of the households. This is because people unaware of such measures seem to have larger families living in mere subsistence level. However, still there exists some people who are not aware of the family planning measures in the study area and hence there is a need to make them aware of these.

Marriage:

Marriage is the most basic and fundamental institution of every type of society around the globe. A general belief in patriarchal society is that marriage provides settlement, security, respect, completeness, and confidence to a woman in the society. Widow, divorcee and separated women rarely get respect in that society. This indicates that the status of women largely spins around her marital status in

patriarchal dominated society like India.²⁰ Of course it is reversed in case of matriarchal society, which is more or less prevalent in North eastern tribal society of India.

In ancient Indian society including Assamese society, it was believed that marriages of girls should be done before attaining puberty and certainly immediately after menstruation. This was religiously desirable. It was only after the passing of Sharda Act in 1930 that fixed the age of marriage for both boys and the girls. Later the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 was passed which totally abolished the early marriage system among Hindus. At present, marriage of girls is done after attaining 18 years of age among all castes.

Among Tiwas, marriage is form of union between man and women, the most common form of marriage which provides better social status to women. In their society though there are different form of marriages, but most of the of my study area prefers poluaipatabiya rather than other form of marriages. Nevertheless, their marriages are solemnized in a simple way. They were essentially and traditionally endogamous. But now, they believe in inter caste marriages also. Dowry system is very negligible in Tiwa society.

Table 4.5: Types of Marriages:

Types	No. of respondents	Percentage
Gobhia	30	17.75%

²⁰Chaitisharma Biswas andIshita Mukhopadhaya, research article published on 15 february 2018.

Borbiya	26	15.38%
JurunBiya	40	23.66%
PaluaipataBiya	73	43.21%
Total	169	100%

Table 4.5 shows that 43.21% of the respondents prefer paluaipatabiya followed by jurun biya. Almost 70% respondents prefer paluaipatabiya and jurun biya. The other two forms of marriage – gobhia biya and bor biya do not seem much popular among the Tiwa tribe.

Table 4.6: Respondents' Age of Marriage:

Early Marriage	No. of respondents	Percentage
Below 14	0	0
14-18	60	35.50%
Above 18	109	64.50%
Total	169	100%

Child marriage below age 14 is rare among the Tiwa community which is a good sign. However the matter of concern here is that marriage in the age group 14-18 is still prevalent. Among the respondents, nearly 36% got married in age 14-18. Most people are now aware of the problems associated with early marriage below age 18. Since such early marriage is not that uncommon among

the Tiwas, steps are welcome to make them aware of all the demerits of early marriages.

Table 4.7: Inter Caste Marriage:

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	101	59.77%
No	68	40.23%
Total	169	100%

Table 4.7 presents percentage of responds having inter caste marriages. The figures point to the fact that inters caste marriages are not treated as anti-social by the Tiwas.

Table 4.8: Widow Remarriage:

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	110	65.08%
No	59	34.92%
Total	169	100%

The table 4.8 indicates that the Tiwa believe in remarriages of the widows. Among the sample respondents, more than half reportedly endorse remarriages of the widows. In this regard, the Tiwas are developed in their social insights.

Occupation and income:

Economic status of a society is highly associated with income and occupational structure of the population. As such, it is dependent on the employment available in that locality or area. Availability of employment opportunities helps to boost up the socio economic conditions of a community. Occupational status, being an important component of socio-economic status, reflects the educational attainment required to obtain the job and income levels that vary with different jobs and within ranks of occupations. Additionally, it shows achievement in skills required for the job. Occupational status measures social position by describing job characteristics, decision making ability and control, and psychological demands on the job.

The economic status of Tiwa women is not satisfactory at all from the viewpoint of income. Agriculture is the main source of income for Tiwa women within the surveyed villages. Because of seasonal nature of their occupation as most of them engaged in agriculture, their income level is low and is unable to adequately meet even basic needs of life. Although a large portion of Tiwa women are actively engaged in cultivation, it has been observed that some of the women in the study area are good in weaving and dyeing. Also they are expert in bamboo and cane work which helps them to earn money both for themselves and for their family. Few women of my study area have their own mini piggery and poultry farm. They sell their products at home themselves and weekly local markets.

Table 4.9: Occupational Profile of Respondents:

Occupation	No. of respondents	Percentage
Agricultural Activities	130	76.92%
Self-Employment/Business	20	11.83%
Govt./ Private Job	10	5.92%
Others	09	5.33%
Total	169	100%

As put in table 4.9, nearly 80% respondents are dependent on agricultural activities for earning their living. Respondents depending on non-agricultural activities are slightly above 20%. The fact that the Tiwas are still very much dependent on agriculture may be attributed to some extent for their economic backwardness. This is because agriculture especially in the state of Assam is overburdened with problems like excessive population pressure along with natural disasters such as flood, drought and irregular monsoon. All these factors have led to low productivity of the agricultural sector in the state.

Table 4.10: Family Income of the Respondents:

Income Level	No. of respondents	Percentage
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(Monthly)		
<5000	130	76.92%
5000- 10000	20	11.83%
10000- 15000	10	5.92%
>15000	09	5.33%
Total	169	100%

Since Tiwas are heavily dependent on agriculture where prospect of return is very low, the economic status of Tiwas is not much encouraging. This fact is reflected in table 4.10. Almost 80% of the respondents have reported their monthly income to be less than Rs. 5,000/-. Only 11.3% of them are having monthly income more than Rs. 10,000/-.

Table 4.11: Savings Deposit in the name of Female Member:

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	163	96.45%
No	06	3.55%
Total	169	100%

Savings is also another important indicator that determines the economic status of an individual. Table 4.11 reveals that most of the Tiwa sample women are having bank accounts representing the fact that they are financially included to

avail different financial services. The awareness regarding savings shows that Tiwa women are economically conscious.

Political Participation:

The basic notion of democracy is that it advocates equality for all human beings including men and women. But normally what we have seen that women are excluded from different aspects of decision making, particularly in political matters. For the attainment of true spirit of democracy, it is essential to ensure better political participation of womenfolk.

In laymen perception, political participation is that process through which people take part in political activities by means of casting vote. Political participation is not just casting vote. Political participation means not exercising the right to vote, but also power sharing, co-decision making, co-policy making at all levels of governance of the state²¹. Formal enrollment in a party, canvassing and registering as voters, working in campaign and competing for a public or a party office etc. are the signs of active political participation.

The most prevalent political action in the form of 'right to vote' was not enjoyed by the womenfolk until the 20th century. American women were the first to start fighting for their 'right to vote'. Later on most of the western liberal democracies, women won voting rights after a grim battle. In case of

²¹Sing, J.P. "Indian Democracy and Empowerment of Women" The Indian Journal of Public Administration, Oct-Dec. Vol. XLVI, no.4, 2000, p-619.

India, the constitution which came into existence in the year 1950 granted universal adult franchise to all its citizens.

At present the percentage of women as voters has considerably increased, but their political participation is not equal to men. Women have been accepted only as voters rather than policy formulators and decision makers. In India, although 33% reservation was provided for women at grass root level and local institutions through the 73rd amendment in 1993, the bill providing for 33% reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies has been not passed till today, by the Lok Sabha. The bills fate remains uncertain till its final passage by the Lok Sabha. Adequate representation in representative bodies is very important for empowering women politically.

Table 4.12: Regular Vote Casting:

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	161	95.27%
No	08	4.73%
Total	169	100%

In case of women of Tiwa society of Morigaon district of Assam, it has been observed in my study area that they are well aware of their voting rights as more than 95% sample respondent's cast their votes regularly.

Table 4.13: Awareness Regarding Welfare Schemes of the Government:

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	34	20.12%
No	135	79.88%
Total	169	100%

Table 4.13 depicts a very serious concern that nearly 80% of the respondents do not know about various welfare schemes that governments implement from time to time for the uplift of the economically weaker section of the society. In one hand, Tiwas are economically backward and on the other, they are not much aware of the welfare schemes of the government. Unless they are made aware of the government's welfare initiatives, they may remain outside the purview of such welfare enhancing measures.

Table 4.14: Membership in Political Organization:

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	30	17.75%
No	139	82.25%
Total	169	100%

Lack of awareness about government developmental attempts especially among the women is also reflected in the fact that most of the Tiwa women are not member of any political organization. In general, the members of active organizations of any kind are well aware of the different initiatives taken by the government for the betterment of the underprivileged section of the society. For making the Tiwa women politically, socially and economically sound enough, there is an urgent need to increase various organizations which may cover who are not yet members of such organizations.

Table 4.15: Participation in Social or Political Rally:

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	34	20.12%
No	135	79.88%
Total	169	100%

Table 4.15 reveals that Tiwa women are very less interested in participation in Social or Political Rally. Therefore, political party, pressure groups, local NGOs, social workers should play active role to increase their participation level in politics.

Relationship between Level of Education and Socio-Political status of Tiwa Women:

Education	Literate	52	Relationship
	Illiterate	117	
Participation in Decision Making	Yes	169	No relationship
	No	0	

Freedom of Women in going Outside	Yes	169	No relationship
	No	0	
Awareness Regarding Family Planning	Yes	160	No relationship
	No	09	
Child Marriage	Yes	0	No relationship
	No	169	
Inter Caste Marriage	Yes	101	No relationship
	No	68	
Widow Remarriage	Yes	110	No relationship
	No	59	
Regular Vote Casting	Yes	161	No relationship
	No	08	
Awareness Regarding Welfare Schemes of the Government	Yes	34	Positive
	No	135	
Membership in Political Organization	Yes	30	Positive
	No	139	
Participation in Social or Political Rally	Yes	34	Positive
	No	135	

The above table shows the relationship between education level and socio political status of the Tiwa women under study. From the table it is evident that education level does not have any bearing on participation in decision making process, freedom of women in going outside, awareness regarding family planning, existence of child marriage system, inter caste marriage as well as widow remarriage thereby indicating non-existence of any relationship with social status of Tiwa women. As originally Tiwa community followed matri-lineal family system and the process of adoption of patri-lineal system is still in its transition phase, this may be the possible reason for non-existence of any relationship between education level and social status of Tiwa women under study. Because of the existence of the above mentioned family system, the Tiwa women still enjoy preference over their male counterparts

in different aspects of social life which have made their social status high irrespective of their education level.

Regarding political status of the Tiwa women under study, the above table clearly shows that there exists a positive relationship between education level and political status. Since, the low education level of Tiwa women under study has been accompanied by low political status; we may conclude that education level has an important bearing on political status of the Tiwa women under study.

4.3 Conclusion:

From the discussion, it can be said that the status of Tiwa women is not so satisfactory in case of educational attainment and political participation. Their social position is relatively high. In case of education, it has been found that the position of Tiwa women is not encouraging. Participation of Tiwa women in the labour force is quite significant as because they are more active in comparison to their male counter parts. But, due to lack of employment opportunities their economic condition is not up to the mark. Child marriage is a crime in India and thankfully it is unknown to Tiwa society. They are very much liberal in case of choice of life partner and inter-caste marriages and acceptance of widow remarriage reflects better social position. However, the political participation of Tiwa women in political matters is very low within the study area.

CHAPTER – 5:

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary, Findings and Conclusions:

The present study entitled “**Socio- political Status of Tiwa women: A Case Study of Morigaon Assam**” discusses the social and political status of Tiwa women. This is an empirical study based on primary and also secondary data. Data has been collected through field survey and simple statistical methods have been used to analyze the collected data.

The major findings and conclusions derived from the study can be summarized as follows:

In the social front:

- a) Education is the key indicator which determines the social position of an individual by empowering with the capacity to take rational and realistic decision along with job opportunities and livelihood. In case of the study area, most of the women found illiterate, few are H.S.L.C./ H.S. passed and incase of higher and technical education, the condition is piteous. So it requires improvement of female education to ensure socio-economic and political development of such area.
- b) Women’s active involvement in decision making from house hold to state affairs is considered essential for the socio-economic development of a society. Women should be given equal power and status with their male counterparts in decision making process. Accordingly, all respondents of study area admit that they have enjoyed equal power with their male counterparts in relation to deciding any household matters.
- c) The study reveals that women’s activities are not confined only to household level. Most of the respondents have informed that they can easily go outside for

different activities like visiting relatives, attend social functions or to go to market. They have just informed the male member while going outside.

d) Family planning is important to control over the birth rate. Majority of the respondents of the concerned study area are favoring to this system. They also consult with their husband in this matter. It is a great sign of empowerment process.

e) Regarding marriage, it is revealed that child marriage is rare in Tiwa society. Of course marriage in the age group between 14 to 18 is still prevalent within the study area.

f) Inter-caste marriage is not treated as anti-social by the the Tiwa society.

g) The Tiwa also believe in remarriages of the widows. Among the sample respondents, more than half reportedly endorse remarriages of the widows. In this regard, the Tiwas are developed in their social insights.

The Tiwa women enjoy better position in relation to decision making such as household matters, family planning; and involvement in outdoor activities such as visiting relatives, marketing, etc. along with their male counterparts. Most importantly, their society is free from some considered social evils like child marriage, prohibition of widow marriages which indicates the respectable social position of Tiwa women. However, their education level is pathetic which debars them to enjoy desired respectable social position in their society.

In the economic front:

Though study is mostly concerned with socio-political status of Tiwa women in Morigaon district, few indicators have been also chosen to study the economic status.

a) The study reveals that Tiwa women are enjoying equal status regarding choice of occupation. They have no family restriction. The Tiwa women equally participate along with male and contribute money to the family by the way of indulging herself in different economic activities. Only few respondents in study area are not engaged in any economic activities.

b) In terms of income, it is revealed that their economic condition is not satisfactory; most of the respondents are engaged in cultivation. Respondents depending on non-agricultural activities are very few. Since Tiwas are heavily dependent on agriculture where prospect of return is very low, the economic status of Tiwas is not much encouraging.

c) Savings is also another important indicator that determines the economic status of an individual. Most of the Tiwa women are having bank accounts, postal accounts and other kind of savings representing the fact that they are financially included to avail different financial services. The awareness regarding savings shows that Tiwa women are economically conscious.

Thus, though Tiwa women are free in terms of choice of any legal occupation, but due to lack of better economic opportunities, their economic condition is not encouraging at all.

In the political front:

- a) The study reveals that majority of the women are casting their vote regularly which is a good sign of participation as voters. The respondents inform that they have been casting their vote according to their own wishes without the influence of others.
- b) Though their participation is high in terms of voter but study reveals that majority of the respondents are not at all interested in campaigning for elections.
- c) Majority of the women did not show any interest to join in political parties, locally available pressure groups for Tiwa women like ATWA. (All Tiwa Women Association)
- d) Another important indicator for measuring political status is their awareness regarding various welfare schemes of the government. The study shows that most of the respondents are not aware of existing government welfare schemes.

Thus the study shows that Tiwa women have remained mere as voters, not as decision makers or policy makers. Even after celebrating 73rd Independence Day of our country, no Tiwa woman has emerged as a significant political figure from this community both at state and national level.

The main reason for low interest and participation of women is lack of education, particularly higher education. Majority of the respondents of the study area cannot play required role because of their low profile, poor orientation, lack of encouragement, and lack of political background.

5.2 Recommendations:

On the basis of above major findings, the following few suggestions may be put forth for improvement of socio-political condition of Tiwa women of Morigaon district of Assam.

1. In terms of education, Tiwa women are lagging behind as compared to their male counterpart. Considering the vital importance of education towards uplift of female section, effective steps need to be taken urgently by the government for promotion of female education within the area. Educational advancement obviously, among them would result in socio-economic improvement of their concerned society. It would also improve their decision making ability, better employment opportunities and more importantly encourage gender equity in the society.

Educated sections of the concerned society should have engaged in encouraging girl's education through the help of local administration and other non-governmental organizations. Some of the additional suggestions regarding improvement of educational level of Tiwa women are as follows:

- a) More educational institutions like primary, middle, high schools, particularly colleges should be opened up to accesses education easily in this tribal dominated rural areas.
- b) Special provisions, particularly for poor girls should be provided needful free cost to accesses higher education.
- c) Government should give free basic facilities to all the needful home of in these areas like (electricity, rice mills, transportation facilities etc.) Which will enhance their rise in educational level as poor economy conditions stood as one of the major barrier for low level percentage of women in higher education?

- d) More technical institutions for girls should be opened up in Morigaon District by the government and encourage more and more girls to join those institutions.
- e) The village people should come forward to educate their womenfolk leaving behind superstitions, rituals, and vain customs. In this regard social workers, local NGOs can play active role.

2. Economic opportunities for Tiwa women are highly limited, though they are free to choose any legal occupation to improve their economic backwardness. They have no family restriction and except Govt. services they can engage in other income generating and self-sustaining activities like piggery, poultry, bamboo and cane work, weaving and dyeing etc. For this government and other private organizations should take appropriate steps to provide them necessary training and financial support. Most importantly, majority of Tiwa women are engaged and assisted male counterpart in cultivation, they should be provided proper training on proper use of agriculture machineries, fertilizers, and HYV seeds so that their agricultural productivity and income can be raised significantly.

3. There is growing popularity of tribal ethnic foods, dresses and traditions and cultures not only in the state but at the international level. The women of the communities are experts in weaving and nowadays the dresses or handlooms of the Tribal Communities have a very good demand in the market. The Tiwa Autonomous Council should provide necessary support to the weavers of the Tiwa communities as well as for the marketing of their dresses.

4. Political parties should patronize and evolve women's wing to promote women leadership. They should sensitize and make women conscious of their right and

power to vote. In the selection process, political parties also need to maintain transparency and gender balance which will motivate them to participate in politics.

5. Political training of women should begin at school level and progress speedily to the local, provincial and national levels.

6. Most of the political scientists and activist have argued for appropriate quotas for women in political institutions in order to make women more visible and audible in political process. As already has mentioned that though, Tiwa Autonomous Council of 1995 had reserved six (6) seats for women out of total forty (40) seats, the important fact to be mentioned here is that, no seats out of that exclusively belongs to Tiwa women. For encouraging more participation from the side of Tiwa womenfolk in this area, it is essential to reserve seats exclusively for women in such local bodies.

7. Though the Government has implemented various schemes for the socio-economic conditions of rural female population, the majority of the Tiwa women are not aware of such schemes and plans. Hence, there is a need for concentrated efforts by the government and other agencies to spread the information about the various schemes and programmes for women so that they are not deprived of the benefits and facilities meant for them.

5.3 Conclusion

The above are just a few suggestions which could help in further development of socio-political conditions of Tiwa women in Morigaon district. The present research work tries to expose the patterns of education, occupation and income,

decision making ability of women, political participation and others relevant indicators concerned with socio-political status of Tiwa women based on secondary and primary data. However, further studies in this direction in the near future will let us know the direction and the pattern of change in the level of development among the Tiwa women in Morigaon district.

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