

Preface

The present study has grown out of my beloved father's narration regarding the deplorable condition of char (riverine) people of Brahmaputra valley of Assam, particularly the char-dwellers of Barpeta District which my father experienced during State Elections in 1985, 1991 and 1996 because of his innumerable trips both as a social activist and as an Election campaigner in these inaccessible and backward areas of Assam. In fact, I had the opportunity to collect first hand information on the first-hand socio-economic condition and political awareness of char people in general and women in particular from my father, which in the subsequent period has inspired and encouraged me immensely to undertake a comprehensive and systematic analysis of this issue.

Today, economic and political empowerment of women of any society and community belonging to any region. More so in the case of the backward and inaccessible Char areas of the mighty river Brahmaputra and its tributaries is a complex subject with many issues and dimensions. The state of almost all the char dwellers barring a few permanent chars depends mostly on the currents of the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries. We do not claim any credit for being comprehensive, for we are only too aware of the limits of our data collection in the fields (major portion of these fields are temporary barring a few), offices and establishments in all too palpable atmosphere of tension, anxiety and suspicion. In fact, the Brahmaputra along with flood and erosion has rendered the Char dwellers homeless. The homelessness and loss of citizenship leads the char dwellers into a nomadic life. We would be happy nevertheless if our study leads to an animated discussion and review by those who have the ability and will to do something better for these horrible problems of these economically poor and culturally backward regions.

Now, I desire to take the opportunity of extending my sincere and heartfelt thanks to my eminent teachers, relatives and well-wishers without whose help, support, co-operation, advice and encouragement this work would not have been possible and completed. First and foremost, I sincerely express my deep respect, reverence and thanks to my eminent supervisor, Professor Soumitra De, Department of Political Science, North Bengal University without whose proper guidance, supervision and valuable suggestions and advice this work would have been impossible. I am also grateful to all the dignified teachers, staff and scholars of the Department of Political Science of North Bengal University who have encouraged

and helped me in one way or the other. Other persons from whom I have received help, inspiration and encouragement are Late Amulya Kumar Biswas, my dearest father and former President of UMF, Assam, Sri Jagannath Barman, Principal i/c G.L.C. College, Barpeta Road, Assam, Mr. Nripesh Roy, Barpeta Road, Assam, Mr. Uddhab Barman, former MP, Barpeta Loka Sabha Constituency, Former President, Governing Body, G.L.C. College, former MLA Sorbhog Constituency and State Secretary, CPIM, Assam and Member, Central Committee of CPIM, my colleagues and staff of my College, and all others whom I cannot acknowledge by name.

My deepest thanks are to my husband, Dr. Bijan Kumar Kunda and my daughter, Barsha and my son, Aditya who have not only encouraged me but also had patiently borne out my absence from my place and demanding schedule of work. I must also acknowledge my gratefulness to my elder brother, my parents, friends and Smt. Manashi De, wife of my supervisor and all my well-wishers for their moral support and encouragement. Not the least, my hearty thanks go to Sri Subir Das Mahanta for type setting and formatting the thesis. Moreover, I must add that any short comings of my work are entirely my own.

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