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Power and functions of the Sarkari Gaon Burah in Karbi Anglong district of Assam: A case study of Dilaji Mithiphang Village, Diphu

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Abstract---The Sarkari Gaon Burah (Village Headman) is playing a crucial role in the administrations of Village. It is the institution of Village administration system each and every corner of Northeast and as well as main land India. It is the bridge between village and district administrative setup. Gaon Burah system was prevailed since ancient period in India by various names such as in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other Northern states it is known as Mukhia or Gaon Pradhan. In Assam it is known as Gaon Burah or Bor-Gaon Burah etc. Among the Karbi's of Karbi Anglong district Gaon Burah's are known as 'Sarthe' (Village Head) and Sarkari Gaon Burah's are known as "Rong Asar". In village whatever things or work (Socio-cultural) have to do or done all are under the guidance of Gaon Burah. Every village has a Gaon Burah but the Sarkari Gaon Burah may be one in for area of one village or may be in more than one i.e. some cases one Sarkari Gaon Burah for area of 5/6 villages. Sarkari Gaon Burah and its power and functions for the development of the village are very important. In this study it is tried to find out how the Sarkari Gaon Burah's are performing their duties for the smooth running of the Village administration and for the all round development of the Village. Whether Gaon Burah providing his contribution for the development of his jurisdictional area or they have any judicial authority, if up to what extend he can able to interfere with the administrative machinery of the district. Sarkari Gaon Burah's are getting any kind of privileges because of his position in society or not.

Keywords---acts, administration, administrative, development, facilities, functions, frontier, headman, jurisdiction, power, government.

Introduction

The word 'Gaon Burah' has consists of two words 'Gaon' meaning 'village' and 'Burah' meaning 'Old Man' or 'Head Man'. Thus the Gaon Burah means the Headman of the Village. Those Gaon Burah are registered or appointed by the government authority generally Deputy Commissioner Office for the plains district of the Assam and for the Scheduled district it is done by the District Council they are known as Sarkari Gaon Burah. In every Village there a Gaon Burah, who is not registered or appointed, simply decided by the villager for their Village. The institution of Sarkari Gaon Burah is an integral part of Village administrative system of our Assamese society. From hundreds of year the Gaon Burah or Sarkari Gaon Burah serves the state on the developmental and judicial matters as well as Socio-Cultural aspect of the society and still it is very important part of our administrative machinery. The Institutions of Sarkari Gaon Burah helps the other institutions to function smoothly and without its support and guidance developmental program can't be successfully implemented in Assam.

The Institution of Sarkari Gaon Burah in Assam is the product of colonial era when British Officials appointed the oldest and wise man of the Village as Head of the Village. In the year of 1890, this system was introduced in Assam. The Assam Frontier (Administration of justice) Regulations, 1945, states the powers and functions of the Sarkari Gaon Burah. There are 26,637 Sarkari Gaon Burah in Assam. Being a district of Assam in Karbi Anglong Sarkari Gaon Burah institution was introduced at the same time with the state. At present, there are 2928 Sarkari Gaon Burah in Karbi Anglong District (Undivided). He is responsible for all the developmental and law and order related issues of the village and also the representatives of the Government to the village. It has been observed that Sarkari Gaon Burah's are not aware of about their powers and functions given by the authority. There are less Woman candidate for the post of Sarkari Gaon Burah compare to Male candidate, though there in few villages Woman are also performing the same. They are known as Sarkari Gaon 'Burih'. The various Central as well as State sponsor programmes such as SSA, NHRM, Disaster Management and others Schemes and programmes are require permission and active participation of Sarkari Gaon Burah/Burih for the implementation in Village level. It is the key role of Sarkari Gaon Burah to supervise, monitor and create awareness among the villager about the village institutions like Anganwadi centres, village level Education Committee, village level Health Committee and village level Disaster Management Committee's performance and if needed provides support to them or take necessary actions. Even the Immunization team, Pulse Polio team is has to seeks permission and helps of the Sarkari Gaon Burah/Burih's for implementation.

Appointment Procedure of Sarkari Gaon Burah

Earlier appointment of Sarkari Gaon Burah was Hereditary in Assam. Now appointment with competitive recruitment interview held by the Deputy Commissioner Office in the plain district of Assam but in the Karbi Anglong District (Scheduled) same will be done by the Deputy Secretary, Revenue Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC). In the plain district of Assam for appointment of Sarkari Gaon Burah the Deputy Commissioner invites an

application for the vacant post of Sarkari Gaon Burah of the particular areas through the Revenue Officer from the eligible candidate. In Karbi Anglong it is done by the KAAC, but after 2013, appointment of Sarkari Gaon Bura did not held by KAAC and if there is any vacancy due to death of the existence Sarkari Gaon Burah. Then villager's or the people of the area select an eligible person for the vacant post and it to the KAAC authority for the approval.

Qualifications

Followings are they require qualification for Sarkari Gaon Burah:-

- a. He or She should be Permanent resident of the concern area for where s/he can apply for the post of Sarkari Gaon Burah.
- b. He or She should have myadi patta land in his name (In the plain Districts).
- c. He or She should not have any criminal record.
- d. He or She should be recommended by the administration officer of the concern area.
- e. Minutes of the village level meeting conducted by the concern villager should attached with the application.
- f. He or She should not be less than 30 years of age and not more than 65 years of age.
- g. He or She should be HSLC Passed.

Term Of The Sarkari Gaon Burah

Sarkari Gaon Burah once appointed they can remain in their Office till death or became unable to perform his work as Sarkari Gaonbura, He or She can involved in corrupt and illegal practices due to which he or she can be remove from the post of Sarkari Gaon Burah and He or She can be discharged from his Sarkari Gaon Burah duty if appointed any other governmental Job or He or She can remain in Office till they reach at the age of 65 years.

Salary/Remuneratio/Honorarium Of Sarkari Gaon Burah

Institution of Sarkari Gaon Burah was introduced in Assam in 1890 at Remuneration of Rs. 250 per annum. After several hikes Sarkari Gaon Burah, instead of salary they are provided an Honorarium of Rs. 700 in the sixth schedule district of Karbi Anglong and Dimahasao and in the plain district of Assam they are getting Remuneration of Rs. 6500. In October, 2020, Assam Government decided to increase Sarkari Gaon Burah's Remuneration from Rs. 6500 to Rs. 9000. On 23rd March, 2022 Chief Executive Member, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (CEM, KAAC) Dr. Tuliram Ronghang has passed Rs. 232 Lakh (Under SOPD and CSS) as Honorarium to Sarkari Gaon Burah in the KAAC, Budget 2022-23 and from the April, 2022 Sarkari Gaon Burah of the KAAC Jurisdictional area get Rs. 3000 per month as Honorarium.

Power And Functions Of Sarkari Gaon Burah

Power and Functions of Sarkari Gaon Burah can be study in the following way:-

Administrative Power and Functions: - Sarkari Gaon Burah is the bridge between the public and the law enforcing agencies of rural administrative system. They are always comes forward to assist the administration agencies. Following are the administrative power and Functions of Sarkari Gaon Burah: -

- I) He or She Organized Village Defence Party (VDP).
- II) Settlement of petty disputes among the villager as per the laws or precedent.
- III) It also encourages villager and youths for social works, games and sports and culture etc.
- IV) He creates awareness for the Protection of government properties in village areas like Schools, Colleges, Community Hall and Clubs etc.
- V) Maintaining records of petty criminal cases, Disputes and others in the village and He may apprehend any such persons if he has reasonable grounds and hand over the person to Deputy Commissioner or Additional Deputy Commissioner or any other Administrative Officer.
- VI) Helps administration agencies, Police personal and NGO's during disaster.
- VII) Helping administration/police in verification of person seeking ILP, Gun License, PRC, ST, Caste Certificate etc.
- VIII) He or She should report to the Administration officials, Police personal if he comes to know that anyone is in possession of illegal arms and others objectionable materials.
- IX) He or She also report to the Police against drug peddlers etc.
- X) On receipt of information of commission of any offence (whether petty or heinous crimes) within the village, immediately Sarkari Gaon Burah have to proceed without delay to the place where the offence was occurred.
- XI) It is the duty of Sarkari Gaon Burah to co-operate with the Panchayat members in the implementation of developmental program in the village.
- XII) He or She form the Village level Disaster Management Committee (DMC).

Judicial Power and Functions: - Sarkari Gaon Burah is an institution who acts like a court to settle the disputes between the villagers. He is also plays a role of arbitrator. Following are the few power and functions of Sarkari Gaon Burah.

- i. Ordinary duties of police in respect of cases shall be discharged by Sarkari Gaon Burah and maintain law and order situation in the village but do not for the provision under section 25 and 26, Indian Evidence Act and section 162, Criminal procedure code.
- ii. He is empowered to impose fine not exceeding Rs.500 or any amount not exceeding to Rs. 3000 as a penalty for the settlement of disputes or as a punishment of an offence.
- iii. The Sarkari Gaon Burah may try following of the cases within his jurisdiction.
 - I) Theft.
 - II) Mischief.
 - III) Simple hurt.
 - IV) Criminal trespass.
 - V) Assault.
- iv. Sarkari Gaon Burah decides all the cases in open Darbar in the presence of at least three witnesses and of the complainant and accused and to impose

a fine not exceeding Rs.200/- or any person failing to attend when so ordered.

- v. Any party of the case settle by a Sarkari Gaon Burah may appeal within 30 days to the Deputy Commissioner Office or Additional Deputy Commissioner Office.

Social Power and Functions: - Sarkari Gaon Burah has been enjoying highest power in the village level administration. In the village each and every kinds of activities has been performed under the guidance of Sarkari Gaon Burah. Such as Marriage ceremony, Morn ceremony, Public meeting, birth and death rates, account of newly settled people etc. are maintained by him. He is the sole authority of the village.

Statement of the problem

Every village of India has a Headman. The Village Headman in Assam known as Gaon Burah or Sarkari Gaon Burah. In villages has been a Gaon Burah who performing a varieties of work. Whether Gaon Burah's are doing all their assigned work and responsibility thoroughly? Sometime they do their work very efficiently and many times it has been found on media that Gaon Burah's are engaged in corrupt practices, as example during the period of NRC preparation in Assam, several Gaon Burah's were found they are engaged in providing false No Objection Certificate (NOC), Permanent Resident Certificate etc. Sometime we also found because of Gaonbura so many developmental activities able to implementation in the village and He is the sole representative of the village to the district authority or administration.

Objectives of the study

Following objectives are taken for the study:-

- a. To examine the role and functions of the Sarkari Gaon Burah.
- b. To know the contribution of the Sarkari Gaon Burah into the development of the village.
- c. To find out the importance of the Sarkari Gaon Burah into the village Administration.
- d. To know the procedure of appointment of Sarkari Gaon Burah, whether it has taken place with or without any kind of political involvement.

Review of literature

During the British period under the provision of The Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation 1945, village administration system was introduced in Northeast India where the Gaon Burah or Sarkari Gaon Burah system was set up in the villages of Assam as well as entire Northeast. Since ancient times the village administration system was prevailed in difference places of India in different names. In Garo Hills it is known as Nokma or Nokmaship, in Mizoram it was known as Chieftainship, in Jaintia Hills it was known as Doloiship and as same way in Assam it is known as Gaon Burah or Bor Gaon Burah, Sarkari Gaon Burah etc. In the District of Karbi Anglong it is known as

Gaon Burah but among the karbi's it is known as Sarthe. According to the Historian Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, "In Karbi Anglong, The settlement pattern of the Karbi's is in the form of village. Each village has a Headman called Sarthe or Gaon Burah who is appointed by the authority of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council. But each revenue village has a number of hamlets situated kilometres' apart. Each of the hamlets has a Gaon Burah. Each Karbi village named after the Gaon Burah. The Karbi's like the other hill tribes have a tendency to live on the hill tops. But the people generally do not live in compact areas. The villages are not only smaller in size but scattered too. In the plain portion of the Karbi Anglong district where the karbi people practices permanent cultivation and where the village Headman are quite strong the villages found to be stationery, but in the interior areas of the district where shifting cultivation is practised. Shifting of village site is still in the practice. The reasons for continuing such a practice are sometimes economic and sometime social." The following reasons are the responsible for this:

- a. Sarkari Gaon Burah post is a prestigious. In performing of socio-religious rite or festival, the Sarkari Gaon Burah has to be honored first. The village as the hamlet is also named after him. Whenever any aspirant has been found that there is no chance to fulfilling his desire, so he leaves the village along with his followers and established a new village in the new site where he automatically becomes the Gaon Burah or Sarthe.
- b. If the karbi people realized a particular is a haunted place, frequented by ghosts or evil spirits, then they immediately shift their village to a new site as soon as possible to get rid from evil energy.
- c. The karbi's often shifted their villages to new sites for jhum cultivation.

According to Dr. Bhuyan has been described that the village council of karbi's known as "ME" and this council is consists of all elder male members of village. The council is presided by the Gaon Burah or Sarthe, the Sarkari Gaon Burah. Disputes those are petty in nature has been settled by the council and also plays an important role in social economic and religious aspect of the village. Sarthe or Gaon Burah has been playing key role in karbi culture and in the functioning of "JIRKEDAM" (Bachelor's Dormitory). Dr. Kago Gambo said that The Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation Act, 1945 (The AFR, 1945) was introduced to ensured that huge numbers of disputes and cases, both civil and criminal were adjudicated in accordance with the codes of the tribal's. The AFR 1945 divides the offences into two categories- heinous and non-heinous. The offences of non-heinous nature, such as theft, including theft in a building; mischief not being mischief by fire of any explosive substance; simple hurt; criminal trespass or house trespass; and Assault or using criminal force were entitled to be tried by the village authorities. The village authorities could try and dispose the cases under civil justice without limit of values provided the disputants involved in the cases were indigenous inhabitants. They were also allowed to perform the police duty of apprehending culprits or suspected ones within their respective village jurisdiction. The cases of heinous crimes or offences were referred to the administrative courts of the district.

Even with the introduction of modern participatory political institutions, the institution of Gaon Burah continues to function as an effective instrument in

management of village affairs along with the modern institutions. The Sarkari Gaon Burah's have been useful parts of any government program, policy, project or scheme in the rural of Assam. The Gaon Burah's has assisted the district administration on national and state festivals like Independence Day, Republic Day and during any dignitary visits to the village. The responsibilities entrusted on the Gaon Burah's have been geared up towards developments socio-political advancement. For the settlement of any dispute, the villagers came to the Sarkari Gaon Burah. The Sarkari Gaon Burah was needed to forwarding of the villager's appeals and petitions to the government, in the matter of arrest of the offenders, redresses and for the remedies.

Methodology

Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied in the field of study or in Research. It comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. The methodology is the general research strategy that outlines the way in which research is to be undertaken. These methods, described in the methodology as a procedure to done the Research, define the means and modes of data collection, it also provides a way to how a specific result is to be calculated in the research work. Research methods are utmost importance in a research process. It describes the various steps of the plan to be adopted in solving a research problem, such as the manner in which the problems are formulated. Through a proper methods study or research can be done more smoothly, but without proper methodology research cannot be done possibly. So for good research work a suitable research methodology is required.

Sources of data

Data has been collected from the Primary sources as well as from secondary sources. This study focused more on primary sources with the help of personal interview method and structured schedule from the randomly selected respondent of the population, such as Gaon Burah's and villagers and the secondary data collected from books, journals, reports, relevant published work and relevant works available in different websites etc.

Area of study

This study's primary investigation has been conducted in Dilaji Mithiphang village, Diphu, Karbi Anglong district of Assam. It is situated 3 kilometres' away from Diphu Town, Headquarter of Karbi Anglong District. It has 350 household. Total population of the village is 1511. In this village is inhabited by various communities such as Dimasa Kachari, Bodo Kachari, Karbi, Mizo, Hmar, Bengali, Bihari, Adivasi and others.

Sample size

For this study, it has been taken samples of $N = 120$ (Hundred and twenty) respondent selected by random sampling method from the various community

inhabited in the Dilaji Mithiphang village, Diphu, Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Following table has been shown the Gender wise distribution of Respondent.

Table: 1

SEX	NUMBERS RESPONDENT	OF	PERCETAGE
MALE	55		49%
FEMALE	65		51%
TOTAL	120		100%

Source of the data: Field Study

Table no. 1 depicts the gender of respondent N = 120 out of which male 55 (49%) and female 65 (51%).

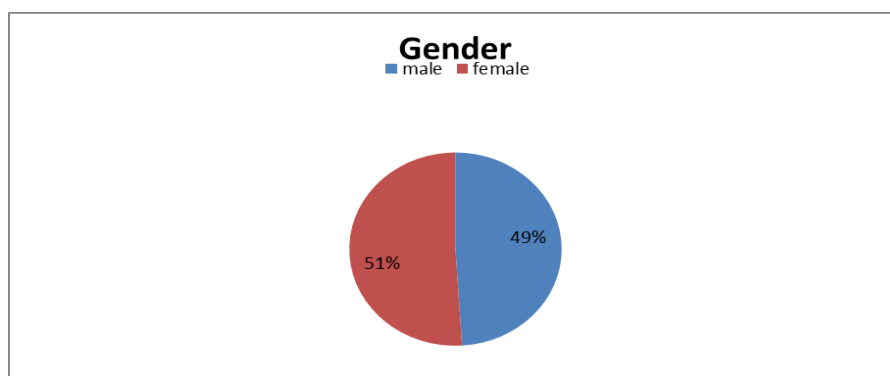


Figure: 1

Table No. 2

CASTE	NUMBER RESPONDENT	OF	PERCENTAGE
SCHEDULE TRIBE	88		73.33%
SCHEDULE CASTE	15		12.50%
OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES	15		12.50%
MINORITY	02		1.67%
TOTAL	120		100%

Source of the data: Field Study

Table No. 2 has been depicted the Caste wise distribution of the respondent. Where the respondent N = 120 out of which Schedule Tribes 88 (73.33%), Schedule Caste 15 (12.5%), Other Backward Classes 15 (12.5%), Minority 2 (1.67%).

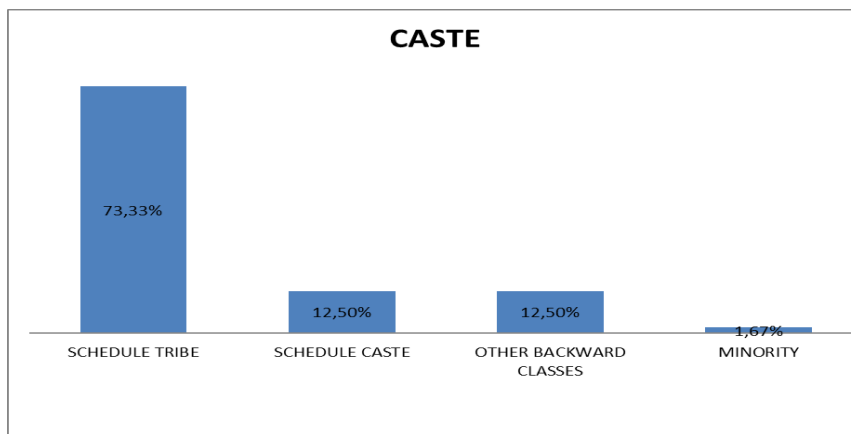


Figure No. 2

Table No. 3

AGE GROUP	NUMBER RESPONDENT	OF	PERCENTAGE
18-25	30		25%
26-33	20		16.67%
34-41	30		25%
42-49	15		12.5%
50-57	15		12.5%
58-65	10		8.33%
TOTAL =	120		100%

Source of the data: Field Study

Table No. 3 has been discussed the age wise distribution of the respondent N=120, i.e. age groups (18-25) 30 (25%); (26-33) 20 (16.67%); (34-41) 30 (25%); (42-49) 15 (12.5%); (50-57) 15 (12.5%); (58-65) 10 (8.33%).

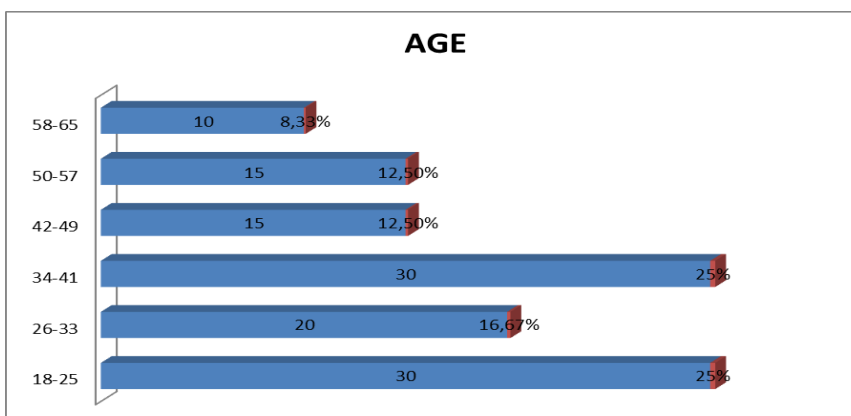


Figure No. 3

Table No. 4

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
ILITERATE	18	15%
BELOW HSLC	36	30%
HSLC	27	22.5%
H.S	24	20%
GRADUATE	12	10%
POST GRADUATE	3	2.5%
TOTAL =	120	100%

Sources of the data: Field Study

Table No. 4 given Educational Qualification of the respondent N = 120 out of which 30 (25%) is BELOW HSLC, 25 (20.83%) is HSLC, 20 (16.67) is H.S, 30 (25%) is GRADUATE and 15 (12.5%) is POST GRADUATE.

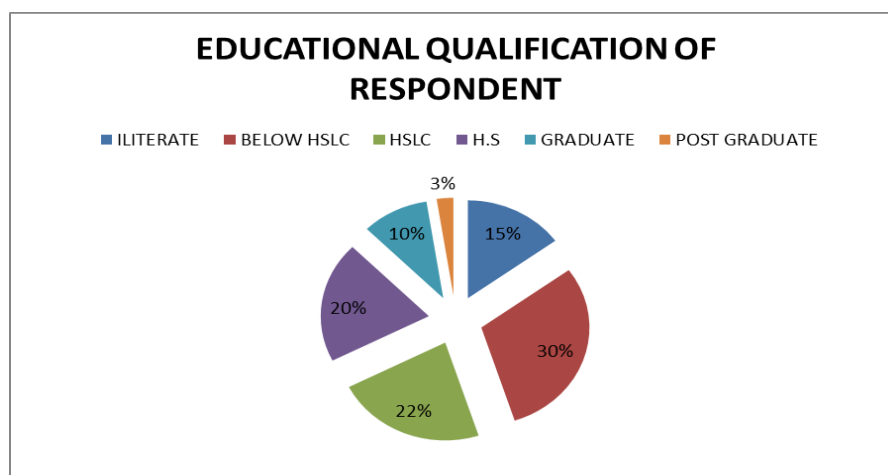


Figure No. 4

Tools of the data collection

In the this study, for the collection of data Interview method, Historical method, Analytical method, and Field study method have been used by the researcher.

Analysis of Data and Discussion

Throughout this study it has been found that the Sarkari Gaon Burah has playing very important role in the village administrative system. Sarkari Gaon Burah's are the sole authority of the village who work as a bridge between the village and District administrative procedure. He or She has been work for the all round development of the village. Without his or her involvement, it is impossible to implement any kind of developmental work into the village. Even the political parties are have seeks his or her prior permission to conduct a political campaigning meetings and also for the societal meetings in the village. He or She also involved in work like clean the village, create awareness regarding sanitation

& hygienic environment and it's important to his her villager. It has been that during the Covid-19 Pandemic Sarkari Gaon Burah's was played a very crucial role.

Sarkari Gaon Burah maintained peace and Law & Order situations into the village premises or in his or her jurisdictional area. He or She in this regard works as an agent of the district authority. He or She also performs as a police for the cases like theft, trespass, unknown person's entry into the village etc. He or She can apprehend any criminals if he or she believed that it may cause harm for the society and then handover to the police officer's.

It has been seen that the Sarkari Gaon Burah takes the decision democratically. Whenever he or she have to decide or to settle any disputes between the villager's, every time settled the disputes after hearing the plea of both the parties of the disputes and with the advice of the experienced and elderly persons and others members of the village. Sometimes it has been also found that Sarkari Gaon Burah's are involved in corrupt practices but it is less in comparison to the officials of governmental offices and other Bureaucrats.

Throughout the study there has been found some of the importance functions of the Sarkari Gaon Burah for the smooth functioning of village administration and without the institution of Sarkari Gaon Burah the rural village administration system cannot be functions. This is the institution which links the village with the district administration.

Following are the major findings of the study:-

- a. Sarkari Gaon Burah is the administrative leader of the village, he works for the all round development of the village.
- b. He or She is the bridge link between the village and the district administration.
- c. Sarkari Gaon Burah resolves all the disputes in a democratic way, with the help of elderly person of the village.
- d. Sarkari Gaon Burah took the initiatives of various developmental plans for the betterment of the village.
- e. Government schemes, program and policies are implemented into the village in the observation of Sarkari Gaon Burah of the village.
- f. Sarkari Gaon Burah's are not affiliated with any political party and ideology.
- g. Sarkari Gaon Burah's are getting very limited fund from the government and others, even they are not getting salary. Instead of that they get honorarium of Rs.3000 only.
- h. They are not found involve in corrupt practices generally in some cases.
- i. The study shows that efficiency of Sarkari Gaon Burah gradually decreasing.
- j. They have lack of clarity about their responsibilities.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In the conclusion it has been found that, the ancient judicial system was given recognition through the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation,

Acts, 1945 or (AFR, 1945). In Section 3 of AFR, 1945 provided that criminal and civil justice shall be administered in the districts by the political officers and assistant political officers and village authorities whose position has now been taken over by Deputy Commissioners Additional Deputy Commissioner and village authorities consisting of the Gaon Burah's. These powers of administration are vested under section 15 and 16 of the AFR, 1945 as amended in the year of 1965. Before the introduction of Gaon Burah system run by the authority consists of representative of the class. Sarkari Gaon Burah's as the representatives of the District Administration and they have to assist the administration and police whenever it is required. The Gaon Burah's are responsible for all the law and order related duties in the village. They are in position to act in such a way, the government instruction issued from time to time. The Sarkari Gaon Burah's are to make the people obey orders of the government.

In Traditionally Sarkari Gaon Burah's were selected and appointed on the basis of personal influence, wealth and status, the knowledge of customary laws and social practices, oratorical skill and experience about the systems, the later mode of appointment has been started by political interference. It is also often found that people having political and monetary powers appeal to the higher courts against the decision of Sarkari Gaon Burah as village authority. The Sarkari Gaon Burah performing their responsibilities towards its jurisdiction and the institution of Sarkari Gaon Burah is very important for the smooth running of the village administration and also in maintaining of peace, public tranquillity and Law & order situation.

The following suggestions are if implemented into grass root level than it shall be improve and increase the efficiency of the Sarkari Gaon Burah's. They are:-

- a. Sarkari Gaon Burah institution of studied area, for better performance it is utmost important to provides salary and other allowances as per the norms of Government.
- b. Reforms the recruitment procedure of the Sarkari Gaon Burah that should be as per the government of India's Employment Acts and Laws.
- c. It is required to set up Sarkari Gaon Burah office in the village for the better results.
- d. Government should provide funds and allowances so that Sarkari Gaon Burah can be take initiatives for the development of the village.
- e. Women should be encouraged to participate into the village administration.
- f. Government should provide training on judicial matter, so that they can resolve disputes more quickly and efficiently.

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