

# Transitioning Livelihood Strategies Among the Garo Community: A Case Study in Netrakona, Bangladesh

Mostakim Mia\*, Dr. Md. Golam Rabbani\*\*

---

## Abstract

*Garo community is one of the greatest neglected instinctive communities of Bangladesh. The Garo people are neglected from their basic needs and it is significant to detect the situation and attitude to draw the real picture of them. This research work predominantly favors on the Garos livelihood pattern from past to present and to ascertain the alter of their livelihood. This study has conducted on the endemic community named Garo living within Durgapur and Kolmakanda upazila area of Netrakona district in Bangladesh. In doing so both historical and explorative data was applied; historical data was mostly procured from secondary sources such as revealed books, journals, articles, reports, census and souvenir. Qualitative research method was adopted for this study and 30 Garo people were chosen by using purposive sampling method for the study. The study uncovers that Garo's traditional life practices are under the intimidation of the cancellation and over the motion of time they are acquiring completely a new life. In this research, the researchers have found several interior and exterior factors which are mainly accountable for Garo's livelihood change. Ultimately, while the Garo community is switching then they are rejecting many of their characterized criterion and accommodating to some other livelihood criterion which are directly influenced by Christianity, NGOs, globalization and social development. As a result, many of Garos traditional cultures including language, food habits, dress pattern and even religion are under challenges. They need better communication and transportation system, more educational facilities, more government and non-government assistance including material and financial.*

---

**Keywords:** Garo, community, Netrakona, livelihood and changes.

## Introduction

Bangladesh hosts a variety of tribal communities, with the Garo tribe standing out as the largest minority group. Spread across regions like Haluaghat, Dhubaura, Susang Durgapur, Srivardi, Nalitabari, Jhenaigati, Madhupur, Dharmapasha, Taherpur, and Bishwambarpur, the Garos have established themselves predominantly in the border areas of Mymensingh. Originating from regions like Tibet and Burma, the Garo people refer to themselves as

---

<sup>1</sup> Mr.Mia is a Lecturer at the Department of Social Work, University of Barishal, Barishal, Bangladesh.  
Email: [mmurahman@bu.ac.bd](mailto:mmurahman@bu.ac.bd)

<sup>2</sup> Dr.Rabbani is Professor at the Institute of Social Welfare & Research, Dhaka University, Bangladesh.  
Email: [Rabbani.iswr@du.ac.bd](mailto:Rabbani.iswr@du.ac.bd)

Mandi or Achchik, depending on whether they dwell in the hills or plains. It is estimated that over 1,20,000 people of the Garo tribes live in Bangladesh (Wikipedia). The origins of the Garo tribes are obscure, but ancient (Playfair 1909). Garo history likely predates the Hindu-Indian culture prevalent in the plains of the subcontinent (Bal, E. 2000). He posits that they might represent the westernmost extension of the cultural type observed in the mountainous regions of Southeast Asia (Burling, 1953). Linguistically, the Garo language has roots in the Tibeto-Burmese family, with scholarly investigations revealing influences from both Mongolian and indigenous sources (Bal, E, 1999). Numerous ethnographers and field researchers have documented the lifestyles of the Garo people over the last five decades (Burling 1963; 1980). It's noteworthy that Garo society revolves around matrilineal structures and is deeply rooted in family values (Gaswani and Majumdar 1972).

The Garo community upholds a unique cultural tradition, particularly notable for its matriarchal family structure, which has intrigued researchers, scholars, and anthropologists (Homrich, E. 1996). Despite the pervasive presence of male dominance globally, particularly evident in the patriarchal family structures of mainstream Bengali society, Garos coexist with Bengalis and closely engage with Bengali culture (Sattar et al, 2002). While observing the prevalence of patriarchy in mainstream Bangladeshi society, Garos maintain their matriarchal family pattern, showing resilience against complete assimilation into the Bengali family structure (Jengchan, S. 1994). Their cultural practices, including lifestyle, marriage customs, inheritance norms, social dynamics, dietary habits, housing arrangements, attire, language, and religious festivities, diverge from those of mainstream Bengalis and other tribal communities (Milton, G., 2002). Garo families are reputed for granting women a high status, although the underlying reasons for this status warrant thorough exploration (Khaleque, K., 1982). In Garo families, the matriarchal structure dictates that women hold the position of authority and ownership of family property, while men are excluded from inheriting family assets (Burling, R., 1993). In terms of lineage, children inherit the Mahari or descent of their mother rather than their father. Consequently, women enjoy the highest status within both the family unit and the broader community (Chakma, R., 2000). Garo women play significant roles in the workforce and are actively involved in socio-cultural and economic activities, often surpassing their male counterparts in levels of education and participation (Islam et al., 2009). Bangladesh is a diverse society where individuals from various religious, racial, and caste backgrounds have coexisted for centuries (Milton, G., 2002). While the majority identify as Bengali, the country is also home to approximately 30 ethnic minority groups spread across different regions (Mohsin, Amena, 1997). These minority communities differ significantly from the mainstream Bengali population in terms of their dietary preferences, religious customs, social interactions, cultural rituals, and family structures (Dey & Soma., 2004). This diversity, encompassing variations in ethnicity, religion, culture, and lifestyle, has greatly enriched Bangladesh's cultural heritage (Babul, 2002).

The Garo community stands as one of the prominent ethnic minority groups within Bangladesh. Within this community, two distinct subgroups exist: the Achick or Hill Garos,

residing in densely forested regions, and the Lamdani or plain Garos, who make their homes at the foothills of Garo Hill in the broader Mymensingh area (Sattar 1971, as referenced in Das & Islam 2005). Concrete statistics regarding the population of Garos in Bangladesh are lacking. However, estimates suggest that globally, the Garo population totals approximately half a million, with about one-fifth of them residing in Bangladesh (Chowdhury 2007, as cited in Ahmed et al. 2010:133).

### **Research Questions**

1. How has the socio-economic life of the Garo community in Netrakona evolved from the past to the present?
2. What are the significant professional changes observed among the Garo community in Netrakona over time?
3. How have the cultural and religious activities of the Garo community in Netrakona changed over the years?

### **Objectives**

Main objective of the study is to ascertain the transitioning livelihood strategies among the Garo community in Netrakona, Bangladesh.

Other specific objectives are:

1. To explore the changes in their socio-economic life from past to present;
2. To detect the professional changes of Garo community;
3. To reveal out the changes of cultural and religious activities of Garo community;

### **Methodology**

The research is concentrated on the Garo community situated in Durgapur and Kolmakanda upazilas within the Netrakona district of the Mymensingh division. Adopting a qualitative research design, the study seeks to comprehend the evolving livelihood patterns within this community, utilizing non-numerical data to contextualize their experiences. Employing a case study methodology, the research delves deeply into the underlying factors influencing these shifts, selecting 30 cases through purposive sampling. Primary data collection involves in-depth interviews, observational techniques, and focus group discussions, supplemented by secondary data from a range of published and unpublished sources. For data analysis, Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) is employed, following a deductive approach that emphasizes qualitative interpretation aligned with the study's specific objectives, with careful referencing throughout the analytical process. The limitations of the study primarily stem from its qualitative nature, including potential biases in data collection and interpretation, as well as constraints related to sample size and scope. However, the qualitative approach is justified due to its ability to provide nuanced insights into the lived experiences and perceptions of the Garo community, offering valuable context for understanding the dynamics of their changing livelihoods.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Changing Socio-economic Condition**

In delving into the social fabric of the Garo community in Bangladesh, a nuanced journey emerges, spanning from the past to the present, revealing both continuity and change across various facets of communal life. Historically, social norms and cultural practices formed the cornerstone of Garo society, fostering a close-knit community bound by shared traditions and customs. These included rituals such as Wangala and Den-Barsong, which celebrated agricultural milestones and spiritual connections with the land (Bal, Ellen., 2007). The economic status of the community in the past was largely shaped by agrarian livelihoods, with subsistence farming and traditional crafts serving as primary sources of income (BARCIK, 2006). Limited access to resources and infrastructure hindered economic development, perpetuating cycles of poverty within the community (Kelkar et al, 2005).

The health status of the Garo population in the greater Mymensingh district, emphasizing their healthier lifestyle compared to the Bengali community due to dietary habits and living conditions. They noted shortcomings in the study's coverage of health practices and treatment methods (Sarker & Ghani, 2009).

Since the 1960's Garos have increasingly migrated to major urban centers such as Dhaka, Chittagong, and Mymensingh primarily in pursuit of employment opportunities and access to higher education (Bal, 2010)

One respondent said, *“Our economic condition is so much poor, we can't eat properly. Our family income is low. The members of the family are unemployed most of the time.”*

While economic advancements have been notable, disparities persist in access to resources and healthcare within the Garo community. Geographical remoteness and inadequate infrastructure continue to pose challenges to accessing quality healthcare services, particularly in rural areas (Pareek & Udai, 1989). Despite efforts to improve healthcare provision, such as the establishment of community health centers and mobile clinics, gaps in service delivery remain a concern, impacting the overall well-being of individuals and groups within the community (Khan et al., 2012).

Another respondent said, *“the socio-economic condition of our family is good because of my elder brother he works in a renowned company and earn a good amount of money.”*

Some of the respondents said, *“socio-economic condition of Garo people is insufferable, we are suffering from different types of problem related to poverty.”*

Two third of the respondents said, *“the economic condition of the Garo community is changing day by day. They are now more active to work. Male person of the family is working now which was rare after the marriage because of rituals of Garo community.”*

The social condition of the Garo community in Bangladesh reflects a complex interplay of historical legacies, socio-economic dynamics, and contemporary challenges (Rashid et al.,

2022). While progress has been made in various areas, including economic empowerment and educational attainment, addressing persistent disparities in access to resources and healthcare remains essential for fostering inclusive development and ensuring the well-being of all members of the Garo community (Jalil & Abdul, 2002).

The changing economic condition of the Garo community in Netrakona, Bangladesh, presents a compelling narrative of transformation spurred by increasing education, awareness, development, and employment opportunities (Sarker & Jerome, 2002). The economic landscape of the Garo community was predominantly agrarian, with subsistence farming and traditional crafts serving as the primary sources of income (Chakma & Sugat, 2000). Limited access to education and awareness hindered economic mobility, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization within the community. The passage of time and concerted efforts to promote education and awareness, significant shifts have been observed in recent years.

The advent of educational initiatives and awareness campaigns has played a pivotal role in empowering the Garo community, particularly its youth, with the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue diverse economic opportunities (Banik et al., 2020). Increased access to education has equipped Garo youth with the tools to break free from traditional occupations and explore new avenues for employment and entrepreneurship (Jalil et al., 2012). The development of infrastructure and the expansion of communication networks have facilitated greater connectivity with markets and economic centers, enabling the community to tap into broader economic networks and access resources more efficiently (Kim et al., 2012).

There has been a noticeable diversification of livelihoods within the Garo community in Netrakona. While agriculture remains an important component of the local economy, there has been a growing trend towards non-agricultural activities such as small-scale businesses, service-oriented ventures, and employment in various sectors including education, healthcare, and administration. This diversification has not only expanded economic opportunities but also enhanced the resilience of the community against fluctuations in agricultural output and market conditions (Sarker et al., 2008). The increasing participation of Garo individuals in formal employment and entrepreneurial ventures has contributed to the overall socio-economic development of the community (Chowdhury et al., 2007). Rising incomes and improved access to resources have translated into tangible improvements in living standards, including better housing, healthcare, and education for Garo families. Additionally, the community's integration into mainstream economic activities has fostered greater social inclusion and empowerment, enabling Garo individuals to assert their rights and aspirations within broader socio-economic frameworks.

Overall, the changing economic condition of the Garo community in Netrakona reflects a transformative journey marked by increasing education, awareness, development, and employment opportunities. While challenges persist, including issues of access and equity,

the trajectory towards economic diversification and empowerment holds promise for a more prosperous and inclusive future for the Garo community in Netrakona.

### **Changing Food Habits**

The staple food of Garo is rice. Dried fish is their most favorite dish. The dried fish of puti species found in the bhati region which is regarded as most delicious food. They are used to have excessive green chilly in preparing curry. Garo like to have vegetables including brinjal, bottle-ground, sweat ground, pumpkin, vegetables chichinga, corolla, jheenga and kidney beans (Sangma & Udoy, 1998). Garos have become habituated to cook and eat as their Bengali neighbors. Even the well of Garo families frequently takes rich foods including hotchpotch, polao and biriani (Latif et al., 1983). However, they are still very fond of having pork, turtle meat, eel and vegetables like bamboo shoots and mushroom. Spirituous liquor, distilled by themselves is an essential item to them for entertaining guests and festivals (Krishna & Sumi, 1996).

The Garo people consume meats from a variety of animals but pork holds particular appeal for them. It is often served to guests during social and religious festivals (Islam, 2008)

One respondent said, *“Rice is our staple food till now. We also eat pork vegetable, beef, mutton etc. we usually do not drink at home. We eat healthy foods or we eat those foods which are good for health. We do not eat foods that bring unrests. When we were young drinking is available our home.”*

Another respondent said, *“he said that there is more change in their foods patterns. Now they do not eat pig and wine. Now they are taking food like general people.”*

Most of the respondent said, *“Rice is their staple food and they eat pork, vegetable, beef, mutton etc., now-a-days they also eat fast food and other food items which are available to them.”*

Two-third of the respondent agreed that, *“their staple food is rice and vegetable. They like fish, beef, mutton etc.”*

Garo food has been developing in modern time, at the time peoples are changed in their food habit. People are now eating as like as native people. Ancient wine drink is the important element in their everyday foods at their normal manual. But now they give up drinking wine because they are practice in Christianity rules (Burling & Robbins, 1997).

Now-a-days Garo’s food habits have changed a little bit. Their favorite dish is dried fish, pork, rabbit, ass, beef, chicken which they produce themselves. Their most favorite drink is ‘Chu’ except drinking ‘Chu’ any kind of program keep unfinished (Das et al., 2005). The changing food habits of the Garo community in Bangladesh reflect a nuanced journey of adaptation, globalization, and cultural preservation (Islam et al., 2008). Traditionally reliant on locally sourced ingredients like rice, vegetables, and fish, the community has witnessed a gradual integration of new culinary influences, including processed foods and dishes from other regions (Dey et al., 2014). While traditional cuisine remains a cornerstone of Garo

culinary identity, there's a discernible shift towards embracing diversity, evident in the incorporation of spices, cooking techniques, and ingredients from neighboring communities and beyond. This evolving gastronomic landscape underscores the community's ability to adapt to changing times while retaining the essence of their culinary heritage, forging a dynamic culinary identity that bridges tradition with innovation in the rich tapestry of Bangladesh's food culture.

### **Changing Attire**

The dresses of Garo are now nearly similar to those of the Bengalis. Garo male people endue lungi, genji, trousers and shirts. Now-a-days most of the Garo male people endue lungi. They were also used to attire extra-large size colorful thin towel, gamcha like dhuti to cover the lower part of their body (Nath et al., 2004). The Garo women are habituated to dress up with sarees, blouse, peti-coat, salwar, kamij and orna. But Garo women endue their own conventional dresses at home (Muhammad et al., 2011). In the time of British regime, Garo male people became accustomed to wear half-pant and shirt, later they started to attire dhuti and shirt. Earlier, Garo women preferred to wear silver ornaments. But now, only the female members of well to do family wear ornaments mainly of gold (Gururani & Shubhra, 2002).

The Garo people have a distinctive style of attire that differs from the traditional attire of Bengalis. Over time, the traditional dressing of the Garos has evolved. Historically, Garos would adorn themselves with bark from trees. The traditional attire for Garo males is known as Jana or Nengti (Ahmed et al. 2010)

One respondent said, *“Our traditional attire is dakmanda, daksari and gandu. We also wear lungi, shirt, pant and sari as like as general people.”*

Another respondent said, *“We are usually wearing a lungi, shirt, and pant, at present time instead of dakmanda, daksar and gandu.”*

Most of the respondents said, *“they usually wear local dress of Netrakona in Bangladesh. Their favorite dress is lungi, shirt and pants.”*

The male also wears gamcha or dhuti and many women put on sarees, skirts and trousers. Their clothes contain religious and natural marks such as leaves, flowers, eye of gods etc. The names of their dress are gando, katib, salchak, marang, unpon and riking etc (Bal & Ellen, 2010).

The changing attire pattern of the Garo community in Bangladesh reflects a multifaceted narrative of adaptation, cultural preservation, and contemporary influences (Homrich, 1996). Over time, traditional garments such as the dhoti, chadar, and jainsem have evolved alongside modern fashion trends, with younger generations incorporating elements of Western attire while still honoring their cultural heritage during festivals and ceremonies. This dynamic shift underscores the community's resilience in embracing change while

maintaining a strong connection to their roots, weaving a tapestry of identity that bridges the past with the present in the vibrant fabric of Bangladesh's cultural mosaic.

### **Changing Occupational Identification**

The Garos rely on nature. Their occupation is preying and battler entitled as Matgrik. They practice 'Jhum' ploughing which is the greatest conventional farming tradition. Since more than 4000 years. The Garos have been practicing jhum cultivation. It was Garo people's primary occupation for fostering themselves (Gain & P., 2011).

One respondent said, *"People are engaging themselves other professions and try to do something new except farming. Present employment situation and before employment situation is not same. There is a huge change. Agriculture is the main source of income in my family. But people of our community are trying to do different works like fishing, coal extractions and leave this place for better job."*

Another respondent said, *"many people of our community engage with farming and it is primary earning source of our tribe."*

Another respondent said, *"I generally plough in the land as a peasant and I grow crops in the field so the main earning source of my family is ploughing. The government provides us one-acre land for gardening. We collect fuel from forest."*

The changing occupational identification of the Garo community in Bangladesh mirrors a complex narrative of economic transformation, social mobility, and cultural adaptation. Traditionally engaged in agriculture, forestry, and traditional crafts, the Garo community has seen a gradual diversification of livelihoods, with many individuals now pursuing opportunities in education, government service, and non-agricultural sectors. This shift reflects both internal changes within the community, such as increased access to education and exposure to urban centers, as well as external factors like market demands and technological advancements. While agriculture remains integral to their identity, the Garo community's evolving occupational landscape highlights their resilience in navigating changing economic realities while preserving their cultural heritage and sense of community cohesion in the diverse socio-economic fabric of Bangladesh.

One-third of the respondents said, *"professional changes must be brought positive changes in my community in future and it will create more opportunity for my community. If people do a government job, then my community condition will improve because government job and business can play the most important role in improving my community."*

Some respondents said, *"The occupation and profession are changing in our community; my husband is teacher, he works in a high school"*

One respondent said, *"Main earning generation of my community is agriculture, employment and business and at present agriculture is not only the source of earning because people are getting engaged in other occupation."*



Some of the respondents said, “*We are changing our occupation because obtaining money from agriculture is not sufficient for our family, so we migrate town area for searching new work as a day labor, garment worker and others work.*”

The primary occupation of Garo tribe is farming. About 88% of the Garo people are directly involved with farming and land is their primary livelihood (Gaswani et al., 1972). In the last 50-60 years the most changing scenario of the Garo ethnic people is the trend of changing their occupation. The Garo people are currently affected and have adjusted to the new technology and occupations. They are engaged in Government and Non-government jobs. In Bangladesh Government job sectors, they get ample opportunity to engage themselves as a service holder. They get jobs in schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutional also. In Bangladesh, their jobs are more diverse. Almost 30000 Garos are living in Dhaka metropolitan city and a large portion of them are working in beauty parlors, EPZ industries, housekeeping, security personnel, driving, NGOs private service, real-estate, garment industries etc. there are a good number in Bangladesh Civil Service Cadre.

One respondent said, “*the rural-urban migration has increased day by day in our community. Many people are going to study in the city and many people are going to the city for treatment and some are getting ready for jobs and many people are going to the city in the hope of economic development.*”

Most of the respondents said, “*agriculture, employment, business are the main income sources of my community and at present agriculture is not only the sources of income because people are getting engaged in other professions.*”

They are being forced to change their profession to earn sufficient wages. Now the Garos are moving away from the forests to seek urban jobs with government and private offices, garment stores, beauty parlors, tea gardens, factories, police and military services. The job holder rate of instinctive people is less than the non-instinctive people. There are also marked occupational differences between Garos and non-Garos people. Garo people are classified as unskilled and belong at the bottom end of the occupational hierarchy which is partly a reflection of their low educational status. Considering at the continuity of employment, the Garo peoples are involved in irregular employment throughout the year than Bengali peoples.

### ***Conversion of Garo Religion***

The religion of all respondents is Christianity. In fact, The Garo people used to exercise their peculiar conventional religion. But from the fifteenth decade the missionaries started their camp in locality of Garos and after few times they succeeded to convince to Garos change their traditional religion into Christianity.

The influence of Christianity on the Garo community’s economic, psychological, cultural and political aspects, shaping a cohesive ethnic identity (Bal, 1999).

They believe that some trees, stoned and hills are the dwelling house of the spirits. After death the Garos accomplished various views before and after the mournful ceremonies so that the soul of the death person cannot any damage. Garos present the ceremony after the mournful and pray for the late soul and offers gifts (Bal & Ellen, 1999).

Actually, Garos convention to Christianity started in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when America Baptists missionaries had established their mission at the Garos hill and then some other missionaries started to work inn Garo communities with an influence of Christianity, they shifted from old beliefs of “Sangsarek” but they attend mostly their basic traditions and social customs.

Most of the respondents said, *“Once we used to believe in traditional religion but now, we prefer Christianity. Foreigners come and hypnotized our king with valuable gifts. Christian missionaries have the ability to easily persuade others. As we are united India, following them most of our people have become Christians.”*

The changing religious beliefs of the Garo community in Bangladesh signify a dynamic interplay between tradition, modernity, and external influences. Traditionally adhering to animistic practices and ancestral worship, the Garo community has witnessed a gradual shift towards embracing Christianity, particularly among younger generations. This transformation reflects not only the influence of missionaries and colonial legacies but also socio-economic factors such as education, urbanization, and exposure to diverse religious perspectives. While Christianity has gained prominence within the community, elements of indigenous spirituality and cultural rituals continue to endure, showcasing a syncretic blend of old and new beliefs. This evolving religious landscape illustrates the community's ability to adapt to changing times while preserving aspects of their cultural heritage, fostering a dynamic religious identity within the diverse religious tapestry of Bangladesh.

One respondent said, *“Previously I conceived in our customary religion, now I believe in Christian religion from the core of my heart. I believe in Bible and belief in God.”*

Another respondent said, *“I am Christian by birth. My father and grandfather were Christian. In religion transformation, I think that in modern civilization our community’s people are more aware as before, so the belief in trees and the sun as our God is really untrue. Now we believe in Bible and belief in God.”*

The traditional religion of Garos is ‘Sangsarek’. The things or forces of natural world which Garos experienced as very powerful are considered as Gods and in order to satisfy these Gods, they worship them through various rituals. They believe in some of these Gods as symbol of good luck, savior from diseases and the determining forces of happiness and misfortune. They are experienced about the strength in the Sun, moon, stars, thunder and rain. They worship those powerful things of the natural world with a view to protecting of themselves from anu harm of the Gods. Garos think that a very powerful God who has created the whole universe as they believe, controls the small Gods. Garos also believe in transmigration of souls. After the death of a person, departed soul goes to the place named

Mong Sangram and then stay at Chikmang, where it meets other departed souls of relatives. Afterwards, it takes rest at Missal Charms. At that place judgment of the works in previous life will be held. After judgement, souls would return to the earth. If the soul is virtuous, it will be transmigrated to the earth as an animal or a tree. If anyone dies with debt, he or she will be transmitted as a dog. If anyone commits suicide or dies following the attack of wild animal, his/her departed soul would get transformed into ghost, witch and evil spirits which are responsible for various diseases, fear and misfortune. There are any Gods which are worshiped by Garos such Tatar, Saljong, Susime and Calcame etc. The Garo tribe conceive that only Khamal (priest) identify the presence and functions of Gods. For that reason the Garo tribe commonly go to the Khamal for treatment of various illness as well as for carrying devotion.

Two-third of the respondents informed that, *“Most of the Garos of the study area (Netrakona) belong to Christianity. But a significant portion of Garos still believe in their traditional religion, Sangsarek. Some Garos have also converted into Islam and other religion.”*

But the matter of fact after converting into Christians the Garo people are forgetting their traditions and practicing a new type of customs. Most of the Christian Garos think that they are much updated than that of Sangsarek people. The noticeable changes occurred among the Garos after converting into Christians are given below.

- Loss of traditional customs,
- A new type of employment,
- The pattern of dress also been changed,
- Matrilineal family to patriarchal family and
- Changes in food habits etc.

### **Changing Festival and Weeding Ceremony of Garo Community**

The Garo community has two major celebrations one is Wangala and Christmas day. The wangala is the most important festival of the Garos which is performed after the harvesting is over, generally in the month of October to December. It is “thanks giving” ceremony to misi-saljong also known as pattigipa ra rongipa (The great giver) for having blessed the human beings with rice harvest of the season. A day ahead of rich harvest of the wangala arrival called “Rugala” is performed by Nokma (A village chief) and these rituals the offering of the first-hand special rice bear along with cooked rice and the vegetable are given to misi-saljong the give. On the next day, he “Nokma” cha ‘chatso’ a ceremony or the burning of incense at the central pillar of his house to mark the beginning of the weeklong wangala festival. The festival has been practiced traditionally by the Garos from time immemorial.

The transformation of Garo marriage practices, noting shifts from traditional to Christian rituals and changes in marriage norms post-conversion (Ahmad et al. 2010).

The Garo people possess their own language known as Achchik Katha (Ahmed et al., 2010)

Recently, there has been a noticeable shift in the exogamous rules governing Garo marriages. Historically, marrying within the same clan was deemed a grave transgression, leading to the expulsion of couples who violated this norm from the village. However, contemporary Garo society has witnessed a growing acceptance of endogamous marriages, a departure from traditional practices (Islam 2008; Ahmed et al. 2010).

When the Christmas day arrives to the Garo people, they go to the church before they commence the celebration. The day is known as a national holiday and it is formally celebrated by the whole world. Garo Christians friends and family say “Happy Christmas Day” which mean greeting of the great day and offer traditional sweets and cakes (S.H. Milton, 2002).

Many respondents agreed that they choose to glorify “wangala” largely because this convivial is one of those which is till now existent among them. But now different casts like to celebrate this is their own way. This should not be happened; this is a festival for all Garo community. Their leaders organize this within locally and centrally. Even year in the end of month of October, they celebrate wangala.

One respondent said, *“We usually face obstruction during our cultural progrmme by the Muslim people; they encumber our celebration in different ways. Girls are the main victims of this bad situation. In Christmas day, we celebrate throughout the night and girls often being harassed. It becomes very hard to identify the main culprit at night.”*

Another respondent said, *“sometimes we face difficulties by local leaders, local leaders and Muslims are the main impediment to celebrate festival without their demand.”*

The marriage of Christian Garos is held according to Christian rules. But in selecting bride and bridegroom the Garos yet pursue their conventional customs and traditions. At present the boy do not go to father-in-law house to live their permanently (Jengcham & Subbash, 1994). Both the girl and the boy come to the boy’s house or father in law’s house to live permanently. A haggling continuous regarding the house, so sending and receiving the proposal for marriage of the boy and girl may continue from some days to some year. When the proposal is accepted by boy father, if they boy and girl are catholic Christian. The guardian takes them to the father of mission. They get their name and genealogy registered.

One respondent said, *“Marriage traditions differs from place to place. In our customs, it is the girls who propose a much to boys. Traditional dance and music are arranged in marriage ceremony. We generally present cow, black goat, chicken as per as our ability. In case prominent person, we offer laudable and better thinking. We enjoy special from of dance performed with soft rhythm and we have a own traditional alcohol called “chu” made from rice and other homemade ingredient.”*

Most of the respondents said, *“wangala was a famous program and we celebrated it very largely but now it is not celebrated like before. At present, it is celebrated in an institutionally but earlier it was celebrated in every village. This event was observed in October-November month.”*

The changing festival and wedding ceremonies of the Garo community in Netrakona reflect a fascinating blend of tradition, adaptation, and contemporary influences. Traditionally, festivals like Wangala and Den-Barsong were celebrated with fervor, marking important agricultural milestones and cultural events. However, with the passage of time and increased connectivity, these festivities have evolved to incorporate modern elements while retaining their core cultural significance. Similarly, wedding ceremonies have undergone transformations, with traditional customs like matchmaking and bride-price negotiations coexisting with modern practices such as elaborate wedding receptions and bridal attire influenced by mainstream Bangladeshi culture. These changes underscore the community's ability to adapt to evolving social dynamics while preserving the essence of their cultural heritage, creating a unique tapestry of traditions that bridges the past with the present in the vibrant landscape of Netrakona.

One-third of the respondents said, *“In wedding ceremony we arrange music, dance and feast for entertainment. Usually, all arrangements are provided by family but sometimes we get help from the society.”*

There are so many cultural changes in Garo community because people of this community are now at follow Christian religion. So, the traditional festival such as “wangala” and pattern of marriage are changed in Garo community. They are now celebrating Christmas day and follow the Christian marriage system. At present the marital base system are evaporating from Garo community. As Garo community are the minorities in our country, they are facing numerous problems when they celebrate their festival and wedding ceremony like:

- Domain of local leader if not fulfilled their demand,
- Girl harassed when they celebrate their festival and
- Insecurity by native people.

### **Conclusion**

The study embarked on a captivating exploration of the Garo community's livelihood patterns in Netrakona, delving into their socio-economic evolution, professional transitions, and cultural transformations. Through meticulous analysis spanning historical contexts to contemporary realities, it revealed the intricate interplay of societal dynamics and economic forces shaping their lives. By tracing shifts in occupational pursuits and scrutinizing cultural and religious practices, the study unveiled the resilience and adaptation of the Garo community amidst changing times. In its culmination, it presented a vivid portrayal of a community navigating the currents of change while preserving its identity, offering valuable insights not only into the Garo community but also into broader societal evolution in multicultural settings. The Garo are mainly dependent on agriculture although earlier, they used to cultivate zoom (one kind of agriculture) in the hill areas but now they are cultivating in a modern way. Lack of education has also caused many problems to them. A very few numbers of people were found graduate in Garo community although primary education has spread well among them. The special feature of Garo ethnic minority people in Bangladesh is their matriarchal family structure. Although Garos has acculturated many cultural traits

from mainstream Bengali people and ideology of Christianity, still now, many traditional practices are found in their cultural life and livelihood. There are so many problems are existent in Garo community such as communication, health problem, insecurity of girl, early marriage, native people domain, educational problem, drinking water problem. The people of Garos societies are want to help from government such as with better communication system, better education facilities, better health facilities and supply for pure drinking water, security and infrastructural development etc.

### **References:**

- Rashid, M. H., Ahmed, T., Nokrek, S., Hasan, N., & Akter, T. (2022). Indigenous Garo Women's Role in Family Transformation in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 5(9), 175-191.
- Banik, N., & Gouala, A. (2020) Analyzing Spatial Pattern of Housing: A case study on Garo ethnic community in Haluaghat, Mymensingh.
- Jalil, M., & Oakkas, M. (2012). The family structure and cultural practices of Garo community in Bangladesh: An overview. *Himalayan Journal of Sociology & Anthropology*, 5, 95-110.
- Kim, A., Kim, S., S., Ahmad, S., & Sangma, M. (2012). The Garos in Bangladesh: A sociolinguistic survey.
- Ahmed, K., Ali, R.N. & Begum, F. (2010). Changing marriage system of Adivasi Garo community and its impact on their socio-economic development. *Journal of Bangladesh Agricultural University*, 8(1), 133-139.
- Sarker, M. M. R., & Ghani, A. (2008). Cultural and Health Management Practices of the Garo community of Bangladesh: A case study of the Garos of Greater Mymensingh District. *Stamford Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences*, 1(1), 29-37.
- Chowdhury, K.A.N. (2007). Residence, gender and power in the Garo society of Bangladesh. Dhaka: University of Dhaka.
- Das, T. K. & Islam, S.M.H.Z. (2005). Psycho-social dimension of ethnicity: The situation of Garo ethnic community in Bangladesh. *Asian Affairs*, 27(3), 45-54.
- Islam, M. Rafiqul. (2008). The changing Garo Adivasi culture of Bangladesh: A case study of marriage rituals. M.Phil. Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tromso, Norway.
- Dey, S., Resurreccion, B. P., & Doneys, P. (2014). Gender and environmental struggles: voices from Adivasi Garo community in Bangladesh. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 21(8), 945-962.
- Muhammed, N., Chakma, S., Masum, M. H., Hossain, M. M., & Oesten, G. (2011). A case study on the Garo ethnic people of the Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forests in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Social Forestry*, 4(2), 197-211.
- Islam, M. Rakibul, Islam, M. Amirul. & Banowary, Banya. (2009). Antenatal and postnatal care seeking behavior in a matrilineal society: A study on the Garo tribe of Bangladesh. *The Journal of Family Welfare*, 55(1), 62-69.
- Chakma, S. (2000). *Bangladesher Upozati O Adibashider Samaj, Sankskriti O Achar Bebohar* (Society, culture and behavior of ethnic minority and indigenous of Bangladesh). Dhaka, Bangladesh: Nouroz Kitabistan.
- Bal, E. (1999). *Manderangni Jagring: Images of the Garos in Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: University Press Limited.
- Babul, R. (2000, August 12). Concern for Adibashis, *The Daily Star*. Dhaka, Bangladesh.

- Burling, R. (1997). *Rengsanggri: Family and Kinship in a Garo Villag, 1963*. Tura: Tura Book Room.
- Bal, E. (2000). *They ask if we eat frogs: Social Boundaries Ethnic Categorization, and the Garo People of Bangladesh*. The Netherlands: Uitgeverij Eburon Press Limited.
- Homrich, E. (1996). *The Garos of the Modhupur Forest in Bangladesh*. Tangail, Bangladesh: St. Paul's Church.
- Playfair, A. (1998). *The Garos*. Delhi: D.K. Fine Art Press Limited.
- Gain, P. (2011). *Survival on the Fringe Adivasi of Bangladesh*. Dhaka: SEHD.
- Playfair, A. (1909). *The Garos: A Study of the Hill Tribes of Meghalaya*. Kolkata: W. Newman & Co.
- Burling, R. (1963). *The Garos: A Study in the Dynamics of Culture Change*. Delhi: University of Delhi Press.
- Gaswani, S., & Majumdar, D. (1972). *Garos of Meghalaya: Ethnography and Bibliography*. Shillong: Meghalaya Historical Society.
- Milton, G. (2002). *The Garo People*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited.
- Sattar, A., & Jalil, A. (2002). *Family Structure and Cultural Pattern of Garos in Sunamgonj* (Master's thesis). Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh.
- Khaleque, K. (1982). *Social change among the Garos: A study of a plain villages of Bangladesh* (Master's thesis). Canberra: Department of prehistory and anthropology, Australian National University.
- Ahmed, K. (2009). *Changing Patterns of Marriage and Cultural System of Adivasi Garo Community* (Unpublished master's thesis). Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh.
- Islam, M. S., Sarker, M. H., & Talukder, M. S. (2009). Ethnobotanical study on the Garo tribe: their lifestyle and livelihood development. *The Agriculturists*, 7(1&2), 60-68.
- Nath, T. K., Inoue Makoto, M. J. Islam, and M. A. Kabir. (2003). The Khasia Tribe of Notheastern Bangladesh: Their Socio-Economic Status, Hill Farming Practices and Impacts on Forest Conservation. *Forests, Trees and Livelihoods*, 13(4), 297– 311.
- Mohsin, A. (1997). Garo Society: Lost in the Mainstream? *Samaj Nirikhon*, 64, 72 – 75.
- Gururani, S. (2002). Forests of Pleasure and Pain: Gendered Practices of Labor and Livelihood in the Forests of the Kumaon Himalayas, India. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 9(3), 229– 243.
- Kelkar, G., & Nathan, D. (2005). Gender, Livelihoods & Resources in South Asia. Fifth South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference, Celebrating Beijing Plus Ten, Islamabad, May 3–5.
- Khan, A., & Samadder, M. (2012). Weeping of the Forest: Unheard Voices of Garo Adivasi in Bangladesh. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 19, 317–326.
- Chakma, R. (2000). Garo Religion and Customs. In M. Rafiuddin & H. A. Mahmud (Eds.), *Banglapedia: The National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*. Retrieved from [http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Garo\\_Religion\\_and\\_Customs](http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Garo_Religion_and_Customs)
- Bal, E. (2010). Taking Root in Bangladesh: States, Minorities and Discourses on Citizenship. In IIAS Newsletter, Special Issue on Indigenous India. Retrieved from [http://www.iias.asia/files/IIAS\\_NL53\\_2425.pdf](http://www.iias.asia/files/IIAS_NL53_2425.pdf)
- Milton, S. H. (2002, August 8). A Tribal Marriage. *The Independent*.
- Sarker, J. (2002, August 9). Adibashis Need Patronage. *Daily Star*.
- Pareek, U. (1989, July). Synergic Pluralism- Psycho-Social Dimensions of Ethnicity of India. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 1(3).
- Jalil, A. (2002). Family Structure and Cultural Pattern of Garos in Sunamgonj. A Study, M.S.S. Thesis (Unpublished) Dept. of Social Work, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet.
- Jengcham, S. (1994). *Bangladesher Garo Samproday (The Garo Community of Bangladesh)*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Bangla Academy.