

## The family structure and cultural practices of Garo community in Bangladesh: An overview

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### Abstract

The Garo is one of the marginalised ethnic minority groups in Bangladesh originally migrated from Tibet. They have been living in the different areas of Bangladesh for few centuries with mainstream Bengali community. However, they hold distinct cultural tradition and social system not consistent with mainstream Bengali people although they frequently interact with each other. Based on ethnographic study, the present paper argues that although Garo's traditional family pattern and cultural practices are changing gradually largely because of frequent interaction with mainstream Bengali people and influence of Christianity, traditional norms and practices still dominate their family and cultural life to a considerable extent.

**Keywords:** *Ethnic minority, Family structure, Culture, Bengali, Garo*

### Introduction

Bangladesh is a pluralistic society where people from different religions, races and castes have been living together since time immemorial. Although most of the people in Bangladesh belong to Bengali ethnic group, around 30 ethnic minority groups living in different parts of the country. The ethnic minority communities are, to a great extent, different from mainstream Bengali community in the context of food habits, religious beliefs and practices, pattern of interactions, social systems, rituals and family pattern (Babul 2002). The diversity of population in Bangladesh in terms of ethnicity, religion, culture, life style, etc, in fact, enriched its cultural heritage.

The 'Garo' is one of the larger ethnic minority groups living in Bangladesh. Basically, two groups of Garos are found in Bangladesh, namely Achick or Hill Garos who live in thickly clothed forest areas and *Lamdani* or plain Garos who live at the base of Garo Hill in the greater Mymensingh (Sattar 1971, cited in Das & Islam 2005). There is no concrete statistics as to how many Garos are living in Bangladesh. It is estimated that the total

population of Garos around the world is approximately half a million, and about one-fifth of them live in Bangladesh (Chowdhury 2007, cited in Ahmed et al. 2010:133), which means more than 10 million Garos have been living in this country. However, they always remain behind the curtain and we know very little about them. This paper is based on a study conducted on the Garo tribal community living in Sunamganj, Bangladesh. The paper explains the life style of Garos focusing upon their family life. How Garo people interact within and outside the family, and how their traditional family pattern and cultural traditions are changing are the key points in this study.

Garos have been holding a distinct cultural tradition. Their matriarchal family system is one of the inquisitive matters to the researchers, scholars and anthropologists. Now, as we know, male domination exists all over the world. Especially in Bangladesh, the families of mainstream Bengali people are patriarchal. Garos are somehow living together with Bengalis. They invariably interact with Bengali people and closely associate themselves with Bengali society. They have observed male domination everywhere in the mainstream society of Bangladesh. Therefore, it is natural for them to be influenced by the patriarchal values of mainstream Bengali people. But still now, their family pattern is matriarchal and yet to be completely influenced by the Bengali family structure. In addition, they observe different kinds of cultural activities, not consistent with the cultural activities of Bengali people. Their life style, family pattern, marriage system, inheritance system, norms, values, social system, food habits, housing pattern, dressing, language, cultural and religious festivals seem to be different from mainstream Bangladeshi people as well as other tribal communities (Milton 2002). Moreover, the status of women is said to be high in Garo families. But the fact behind the said status of women explored and explained here thoroughly. The study tried to analyse the functions that are being performed by the matriarchal family of Garo community. Therefore, this study has focused on the effectiveness of matriarchal family system and the attitude of Garo people towards their traditional family system. It also explained the nature of the participation of women in the decision making process of the family as well as in the society.

## **Methods**

This is an analytical and explorative study which has used ethnographic

method. Participatory observation method along with social survey and case study were used to get overall picture of family structure and cultural practices of Garo ethnic minority group living in Bangladesh. Empirical data have been collected from intensive field work, oral history, informal interviews and discussions. We tried to interact with the Garo people directly and observe their daily life very closely. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect authentic data from the respondents. Formal and informal discussions were held at several times whenever we felt that necessary. We did not interact only with the household heads but also with the other members of the family including children and elderly people. We had been careful during our study so that demerits of this kind of study could be kept at the minimum level.

The study has been conducted on 206 Garo families living in Sunamganj district of Bangladesh. One person from each family, mostly household head, was interviewed and informal discussions were held with other family members. During interview, their non-verbal behaviours like attitude and pattern of interaction with the researcher, their everyday lifestyle, and relationship with family members, housing pattern, dressing, etc were observed keenly. In addition, secondary data were gathered from books, journal articles, and newspaper reports.

### **Emergence of Garo Society in Bangladesh**

The Garo is an ethnic group of '*Tibeti Borman*', a branch of the *Mongolian* human race. Scholars have identified the aboriginal dwelling place of Mongolians to be the adjacent areas of mid-Asia and ethnologists opine that this is also the aboriginal dwelling place of Garo community. They used to live in Sinkiang, province of China, from where they moved to the northern side of *Tibet* and lived there for many decades (Jengcham 1994). However, unfavourable and hot weather of *Tibet* and increase of population propelled them to move to the north-eastern side of India. Allen (1906) has stated that "Garos lived at the bank of *Eang Sikiang* and *Huanghu* river of China. This was the original dwelling place of Garos. Afterwards, they came to Assam from China". There is no concrete information when Garos entered into Indian sub-continent. But Anthropologists assume that Garos entered into Indian sub-continent during pre-Aryan era. They started living at *Coachbihar* of India and thereafter got scattered at the different areas of Indian sub-continent.

In the early years of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Garos migrated to Bangladesh

from 'Tibet'. They started living at the Garo hills of Mymensingh where they lived until the 13<sup>th</sup> century under the 'Garo Empire'. This area of Bangladesh was covered by deep forest which attracted them as they like to live in the hill areas and it is also suitable for cultivating *zoom* (a kind of agriculture product grown only in hill areas). The Garo Empire expired with the assassination of the last king Baissa Manda in 1280. In the meantime, they disseminated in the various areas of Bangladesh (Jengcham, 1994). Still now, Garos are living in some hill areas of Mymensingh, Netrokuna, Tangail, Gazipur, Sylhet, Sunamganj, Jamalpur and some other places of the country.

## **Family Structure and Cultural Practices of Garos in Bangladesh**

### **Nature and Size of Family**

Family is a universally recognized as a primary social group existing all over the world. Family existed all the time in human history since the mankind became civilised. But there is little agreement on the definition of family, which may be applicable in every kind of society found throughout the world. The structure, form and nature of family differ from society to society, nation to nation, and culture to culture and even within the people of same culture spread out in a country.

Usually, traditional joint, nuclear and extended families are found in Bangladesh. The size of families is larger in rural areas than that of in urban areas. Garo families are relatively larger in size (Table 1). According to traditional values of Garos, there is no scope for the newlywed couple to form a new family. A person is supposed to go to his wife's house after getting married. In some cases, the husband lives permanently in the family of wife and becomes the member of that family. Among Garo community, the youngest daughter of a family is called *Nokna* and elder daughters are called *Agettey*. The husband of *Nokna* is called *Nokrom*. It is the responsibility of *Nokrom* to take care of wife's father and mother until their death. If he does so, he can be owner of all the properties of wife's family. But he has to seek permission from wife and her other relatives in order to use the properties. But if he is the husband of *Agettey* daughter, he gets the opportunity to live there temporarily. Husbands of *Agettey* daughters have to form a new family after living few years in the wife's parent's house. However, nowadays, some Garos are not interested to live in their wife's parent's house. It is worth mentioning that, in Garo families, only *Nakna*, is the successor of family property. *Abetteys* are deprived of

family property.

The family of Garos is matriarchal in nature. Women are the head of family and also owner of family property. Males are deprived of family property. Children adopt *Mahari* (descent) of their mother instead of their father. Therefore, women enjoy highest status in the family as well as in the community (Chakma, 2000). Apart from enjoying high social status, Garo women occupy significant role in the labour force. Garo women's level of education is higher than their male counterparts'. Their participation in socio-cultural and economic activities is also greater than male Garos' (Islam et al. 2009). Garo women work outside the family to earn livelihood along with performing domestic duties within the family.

Garo families are like an institution of informal education. Family is responsible to provide basic education to the children regarding their own norms, values, religious pursuits, etc. Children learn their own traditional cultural pattern in the family. They also get habituated to practice various religious functions. Families teach children about socially acceptable behaviour and the rituals of Garos.

Garos traditional joint families usually organize various festivals. There is a specific system for Garo community to celebrate different festivals every year. The leader of the community, who is selected usually on the basis of high family status, is supposed to ask a family to make arrangements for celebrating a festival. Everyone from the community participates in the celebration. The responsibility of arranging a festival comes to a family through a rotation system. That is how every family has to take the responsibility at one point of time. If a family is financially poor, but has been asked by the leader of the community to arrange a function, then everybody of the community may help that family. For the celebration of each festival, there is another custom to arrange a feast for the community people. The expenses for the arrangements of the feast have to be shouldered by that particular family which has been asked to take the responsibility of celebrating the festival. Garos' traditional joint families spontaneously organize these festivals and the family which organizes it considers it as a symbol of good luck for them.

### **Types of Family**

In Garo family, authority is with the mother and it runs through female lines. Following the absence of mother, authority is with the eldest living female or with the eldest daughter. Garo family is matrilineal with regard

to descent and succession. Descent is traced through mother in each generation and titles or ranks are transformed from female to female. Children are familiar with their mother's *Mahari* (descent). Females are the successors of the family property and eldest female becomes head of the family. In terms of post-marital residence, Garo family is matrilineal. A male person has to go to his wife's parent's house to reside there permanently. After marriage, the husband becomes a general member of wife's parent's family. However, some neo-local families are also seen among Garos.

Traditionally, the Garo families are larger in size. Joint family is adopted by most of the Garos. This family consists of a married man and women with their offspring along with the husband of youngest daughter. The husbands of other daughters also live there but not permanently. However, these days, the Garos are unable to maintain their traditional pattern of family. Young stars are less interested to live with their wife's parents. In addition, it is becoming impossible for most of the Garos to live together with family members as they are getting disseminated at different areas following the expansion of education and expectation of living with modern facilities. There are some Garo families living in urban areas as many members of those families are having jobs there. In fact, Garos started migrating to big cities mostly in Dhaka, Chittagong and Mymensingh since 1960s mainly for finding work and following higher education (Bal, 2010). This trend is increasing day by day. That is why traditional form of joint family is struggling to exist in Garo society. Therefore, nuclear families are also arising in the Garo community (Table 2).

### **Kinship Ties**

Kinship is traced through female descent among Garo ethnic minorities. Children take the title of their mothers and adopt the descent of their mothers instead of their fathers. Garo society is divided into five *Chatchi* such as *Sangma*, *Marak*, *Momin*, *Sira* and *Abetty*. A *Chatchi* is a greater kin group based on matrilineal relationship. The members of a *Chatchi* are relatives of each other. Each *Chatchi* is different from others in terms of culture, tradition, food habits, norms, etc. Garos of Bangladesh are mainly the members of three *Chatchi* such as *Sangma*, *Marak* and *Momin* (Jengcham 1994).

A *Chatchi* is divided into some small groups and each group is called *Machong*. A *Machong* is also a small kin-group based on matrilineal

relationship. A *Machong* is also divided into various small clans and each clan is called *Mahari*. *Mahari* is relatively smaller and its members are related through blood. *Mahari* is formed by the combination of few families. They usually live at same place. Kinship tie among Garos is said to be very strong. Traditionally, an elder person of kin governs kin-members and also interferes in the various matters of a kin group.

### **Marriage Networks**

Endogamy marriage is strictly prohibited among the Garos. A male of a particular *Mahari* (clan) is not allowed to marry a female belonging to the same *Mahari*. But cross cousin marriage is permitted in the Garo community. Garos usually marry their father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter. But parallel cousin marriage like daughter of one's father's brother or daughter of mother's sister is totally prohibited.

However, exogamous rules of Garo marriage are changing now-a-days. In the past, marriage within the same clan was considered as serious offence and the couple who married within the same clan were not allowed to stay in the village. But now, this type of marriage (endogamy) is often found in the Garo community. The Garo community has also accepted this derivation to some extent (Islam 2008; Ahmed et al. 2010).

The Garos who follow Sangsarek religion used to practice two types of marriage, namely 'bridegroom capturing' and 'Thunapp'a marriage'. In 'bridegroom capturing marriage', a girl chooses a boy for marriage. Thereafter, some people from her clan and family captured the boy of her choice in night and bring him to the girl's house. The couple live together from that night if boy also likes her. Otherwise, the boy leaves the house that night. Then some young men of the girl's clan again capture the boy and bring him to the girl so that they can sleep together. At this time, boy usually does not escape. In 'Thunnapp'a marriage', girl cooks a dish and sends it to the man of her choice through a female. She follows without appearing before the boy that whether he takes the food or not. If boy takes the food, it is assumed that boy accepted the proposal. Then girl also joins the boy and eat with him. If the boy does not take food, the girl goes to him late at night and to sleep with him. If the boy still refuses her then he leaves the village (Ahmed et al., 2010). However, these types of marriages are hardly seen among Garos of Bangladesh. Now, most of the Garos follow Christian rituals while getting married.

The most common form of marriage among Garos , nowadays, is arranged marriage where parents play key role in selection of the partners. Sometimes parents seek help from matchmakers, who are usually friends, relatives or reliable persons from the locality, in selecting partner for their son or daughter. However, love marriage is also becoming popular among Garos, particularly among educated Garos. Marriage system of Garos is very simple. After selection of bride and groom either by parents in case of arranged marriage or by bride and groom themselves in case of love marriage, a priest conducts the marriage. A plate of sweet is made available in front of bride and groom and then bride takes a piece of sweet and puts it into the mouth of the groom. Similarly, the groom does the same as his bride. Afterwards, bride puts a garland of flower around the neck of groom and they exchange rings with each other. Afterwards, priest announces their union and blesses them by reciting religious hymn. On the day of marriage ceremony, parents of the bride arrange a wedding-feast and invite relatives. During wedding feast, wine is necessarily served to the guests.

### **Religious Pursuits**

The traditional religion of Garos is *Sangsarek*. The things or forces of natural world which Garos experience as very powerful are considered as Gods and in order to satisfy these Gods they worship them through various rituals. They believe some of these Gods as symbol of good luck, saviour from diseases and the determining forces of happiness and misfortune. They experience the presence of strength in the Sun, Moon, Stars, Thunder and Rain. They worship those powerful things of the natural world with a hope to protect themselves from any harm of the Gods. Garos think that a very powerful God who has created the whole universe controls the small Gods. Garos also believe in transmigration of souls. After death of a person, the departed soul goes to the place named *Mongo Sangram* and then stays at *Chikmang*, where it meets other departed souls of relatives. Afterwards, it takes rest at *Missal Charms*. At that place judgement of the works in previous life is held. After the judgement, souls would return to the earth. If the soul is virtuous, it will be transmigrated to the earth as a man. But if the person has committed sins in previous life, s/he will return to the earth as an animal or a tree. If anyone dies with debt, s/he will be transmigrated 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. It is also believed that, if an evil spirit of another clan attacks any person, then the spirits of his own clan help him. There are many Gods which are worshiped by Garos such as *Tatara*, *Saljong*, *Susime*, *Calcame*, etc. Garos believe that, only *Khamal* (priest) knows the existence and activities of Gods. That is why Garos usually go to the *Khamal* for treatment of various diseases as well as for conducting worship. It is believed that God teaches *Khamal* about various *Montro* (hymn) through dream. However, the followers of Christianity celebrate the rituals of Christian religion mainly the Christmas day.

Most of the Garos of Bangladesh belong to Christianity. But a significant portion of Garos still believe in their traditional religion, *Sangsarek*. Some Garos have also converted to Islam. During British period, Christian missionaries had come to Garo hill of Mymensingh for propagating Christianity. But Garos did not accept them initially. They did not respond to the ideology of Christianity. Even they tried to resist the missionaries from propagating Christianity. However, in course of time, most of the Garos got convinced and gradually converted to Christian religion as Christian missionaries offered education and health care facilities to them. It is noted that, Garos belonging to the Christianity consider those Garos who follow their traditional *Sangsarek* religion as backward people. Similarly, *Sangsarek* Garos consider the Christian Garos as diverted from right path. But Garos of both religions live together and frequently interact with each other.

### **Occupational Diversification**

Main occupation of the Garos living in Bangladesh is agriculture. Most of them are landless. They are sharecroppers. Major portion of Garos earn their livelihood through selling their physical labour. A very few Garos are working at schools, NGOs and engaged in small-scale business (Table 3).

When the population was very sparse and land was covered mostly with forest, Garos used to earn their livelihood through zoom cultivation. But, nowadays, most of them are not interested in *zoom* cultivation, as it is economically unprofitable, and is also labour consuming. It requires hard physical labour. Moreover, there is no available hill-land which is essential to cultivate *Zoom*. That is why Garos have become habituated in the cultivation of rice crops as Bengalese does. Moreover, some educated Garos are working in Government or Non-government organizations.

Garos usually seek jobs just after completion of Secondary School Certificate or Higher Secondary Certificate examination. That is why they do not get high-ranked jobs and the money they earn from their respective job is also low (Table 4). Among Garo community, both husband and wife are involved in economic activities. Female Garos also cultivate land and work as day labourers. In some cases, females work harder than their male counterparts.

### **Education**

Education system of Garo society is like the existing education system of Bangladesh. However, Garos prefer to send their children to the Christian missionary schools. In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Christian missionaries came to the Garo hill of Mymensingh for the purpose of propagating Christianity. Apart from propagating Christianity, they also had set up several primary schools in Garo inhabited areas. Christian missionaries were able to influence educated Garos with the ideology of Christianity. For this reason, Garos belonging to their traditional religion, *Sangsarek*, are less interested to make their children highly educated. They think that, if their children become educated, they will convert to Christianity. In spite of this debate, contribution of Christian missionaries in terms of education among Garos is well recognised.

At present, each Garo community has a primary school run by Christian missionaries. In addition, Christian missionaries are running few high schools in the Garo inhabited areas. The quality of education run by the missionary schools is satisfactory, even in some cases better than that of government primary schools. Apart from these schools, there are some government primary schools adjacent to the Garo inhabited areas. Garo children also get the opportunity to receive education from the government schools. That is why primary education is well spread in the Garo community (Table 5). But higher education is very low among them (Table 6).

### **Language**

Garos have their own language named *Achchik Katha* (Ahmed et al. 2010) and earlier it had a written form. But now, there is no Garo alphabet found. The Garos of Bangladesh are bilingual. From very childhood, Garo children are habituated to speak both Garo and Bengali language. They usually speak Garo language although they talk in Bengali language while interacting with the Bengalese.

## Cultural Traits

In the past, Garo's cultural activities used to be performed centring with zoom cultivation. At various stages of zoom cultivation, they used to observe various cultural traits. At present, cultural rituals of Garos are performed at the different phases of agricultural production. *Wangala* is the main festivals of Garos, which is usually held after harvesting paddy. Garos believe that crops are produced with the blessing of *Saljong* God and therefore, worship is arranged after harvesting paddy to satisfy the *Saljong*. The ritual, through which this worship is held, is called *Wangala* festival. This festival is celebrated through dance, songs and feast.

Dances and wine are an integral part of Garos cultural festivals. Garos perform different types of dances during different festivals. *Ganna* dance is performed at the time of *Wangala* festival. The posture of the dancer is very graceful and the movement slow. The young men at times kneel-down and each girl stooping low sways one arm backwards and forwards as of the imitation of reaping paddy crops. This movement of the hands may not be intended for a magical operation calculated to ensure an abundant harvest.

In *Ambrey* dance, a woman comes dancing and stands like fruit-bearing tree. Another woman, at that time, shakes her through dancing and demonstrates as she is collecting fruits. This dance is performed at the time of worship to *Churabudi* God.

In every social and religious festival, it is a custom among Garos to provide wine to the guests. Garos make wine from rice. They putrefy cooked rice and after a few weeks the juice of this rotten rice is used as wine which is locally called *Garo Madh*.

## Dress Pattern

Garos have a different kind of dressing pattern not consistent with the dressing pattern of Bengalese. But traditional dressing pattern of Garos has changed in course of time. Earlier, Garos used to wear the bark of trees. Traditional dress of Garo males is *Jana* or *Nengti* (Ahmed et al. 2010). Casual dress of male Garos is half trouser, vest, shirt and towel. Usually, they wrapped a towel round their waist. Later they became habituated to *dhuti* and shirt. Now, male Garos wear *Lungi*, vest, trouser, shirt, etc. But educated young males wear dresses almost similar to the dressing pattern of Bengalese.

Traditional dress of female Garos is *Dokmanda*. Garo women wrap a piece of cloth round their and put on a blouse . A piece of cloth is put cross on left shoulder going below the right arm. This is called *Dokmanda*. Earlier, all of Garo women used to wear *Dokmanda*. But now, most of females wear *sharee*, blouse etc. The casual dress of Garo women is a blouse and a piece of cloth. They wear blouse and wrap a piece of cloth around waist. Garo women also like ornaments. Especially, ornaments of silver are popular to them although they also like gold ornaments.

### **Food Habits**

Staple food of Garo includes rice, fish, meet, split peas and vegetables. But dry fish is the most popular food item of Garos. They follow a procedure to make dry fish. Firstly, middle-size fish is dried up in the sun and then it is kept in a gloomy house for several days. Afterwards, they crush dried fish into powder, which is called *Chunga Nakma*. This powder is mixed with cooked vegetables.

Garos eat meats of various animals. But pork is most attractive to them. During social and religious festivals, pork is served to guests. Islam (2008) observes that there is a saying among neighbouring Bengali community that ‘Garos eat what they find’. Garos believe that eating the meat of a particular animal helps a person to have the quality of that animal. It is also believed that courage may be acquired from the meat of lions and the ability to jump from the Kangaroo’s meat and strengths from the tiger’s meat. Conversely, eating deer makes men timid and eating the meats of cattle makes them slow. Children are given the eyes of seal fish to eat so that their eyes may become bright and clear. It is believed that to eat a nightingale would cause insomnia. Garos usually take meals three times a day. Some of them take bread in the breakfast. Some poor Garos eat potatoes as substitute of rice.

### **The Present Trend of Family Structure and Cultural Traits of Garos**

Joint family is the traditional form of Garo family and it is matriarchal in nature. But some remarkable changes are appearing both in its form and nature. Now-a-days the number of nuclear families is increasing among Garos. Traditional matriarchal nature of Garo family is also changing gradually. Due to the expansion of education, Garos are trying to get job in government or non-government organizations. That is why they are unable to live together with other family members which force them to form a nuclear family. Moreover, Garo males are supposed to live at the

wife's parent's house according to the traditional norms. But most of the educated Garos are not interested to live at their wife's parent's house. In most cases, they form a separate family. Apart from this, eldest female is said to be the head of the family. But it is understood that, modern Garo families consider the eldest female just as a symbolic head. Actually, these days the female head does not have the power for making any decision in the family. That is how the nature of Garos traditional matriarchal family is changing.

As traditional joint family system of Garos are shifting to small nuclear family and joint families are also unable to maintain their previous roles properly; therefore, it may be said that traditional family culture of Garos has also started changing to a great extent. Nuclear families of educated Garos have developed a different culture which is somewhat similar to the family pattern of mainstream Bengali community. Some Garos live in urban areas and become accustomed to the urban culture of Bangladesh. Their family culture is getting mixed up with the cultural system of mainstream society.

There are some significant changes seen in the family culture of Garos traditional joint family system. Garos cultural life is based on their mode of production. Traditionally, they earned their livelihood through *Zoom* cultivation. But now, they depend mainly on agriculture. The changed mode of production causes to change their traditional cultural life. In addition, present joint families are unable to maintain some of their previous cultural traits. Now-a-days, most of the males are interested to live at their parent's house instead of their wife's parent's house after marriage. It is not consistent with the traditional values of Garos. It may be inferred that these changes have penetrated into the family culture of Garos due to the frequent interactions with the mainstream Bengali people and conversion into Christianity. However, this changed culture of the family is not totally inconsistent with the traditional culture of Garo community. Till now, Garos joint families try to maintain their traditional cultural traits to some extent.

Garos are very simple and traditional. They are happy if they get rice, fish and wine regularly. They don't have any tendency to become rich and also do not try to save anything for their future. After daylong hard work, it is a habit of most of the males to buy wine. Some people spend all the money they earn for buying wine. Their wives also work and sometimes

they are forced to take the responsibility of running the family since their husbands' waste money. However, educated Garos are conscious about their present and future life and therefore, they try to save for future.

### **Conclusion**

The Garo people in Bangladesh are far behind in developing themselves following the trends of modern approaches and technologies. They are mainly dependent on agriculture although, earlier, they used to cultivate *zoom*, one kind of agricultural crop, in the hill areas. Lack of education has also caused many problems to them. A very small number of people were found graduate in Garo community although primary education has spread well among them.

Garos hold a distinct cultural tradition and different family patterns not consistent with the family pattern and cultural tradition of mainstream Bengali people. The special feature of Garo ethnic minority in Bangladesh is their matriarchal family structure. Although Garos have acquired many cultural traits from mainstream Bengali people and ideology of Christianity, many traditional practices are found in their cultural life.

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## Appendixes

Table 1: Family size of Garos

Family members	Number of families	Percentage
1-3	18	8.74
4-6	79	38.35
7-9	98	47.57
10-12	11	5.34
Total	206	100

Table 2: Form of the families

Form of the families	Number of families	Percentage
Nuclear family	19	9.22
Joint family	187	90.78
Total	206	100

Table 3: Occupation

Occupation	Respondent	Percentage
School teacher	6	2.91
Businessman	10	4.85
Nurse	8	3.88
NGO worker	22	10.68
Farmer	76	36.89
Day labourer	84	40.77
Total	206	100

Table 4: Income

Income	Respondents	Percentage
1000-3000	63	30.58
3001-5000	81	39.32
5001-7000	39	18.93
7001-9000	18	8.74
9001 and more	5	2.43
Total	206	100

Table 5: Literacy rate

Literacy rate	Respondents	Percentage
Literate	119	57.77
Illiterate	87	42.23
total	206	100

Table 6: level of education

Level of education	Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	87	42.23
Primary	72	34.95
Secondary	42	20.39
Higher secondary	4	1.94
Bachelor	1	0.49
total	206	100