A couple of months ago, I caught myself asking: “What is my identity?” A rather existential question, I imagine, while sitting in the middle of Jimirigaon, a village of the Rabhas living in the remote village of Darrang. Almost immediately, a few Rabhas from Darrang appeared on the outskirts of the village. A group of women dressed in traditional Rabha attire were speaking Rabha and conversing along the unpaved path. A village elder was singing the story of a wise bird. They were accompanied by folk instruments made of animal skin and bamboo sticks. I was marvelling at such scenes gathered for the surrounding forests. The Rabhas, so sure of who they were, where they came from, and what they lived on; which gives them a self-satisfied look of a person rushing through life. Somewhere, there’s no rush to do things, no struggle for survival. Life seems to slow down here. And the sole identity retained is that of a person rushing through life. There are many occasions when I don’t eat well or skip meals altogether because I have no time for it. Often, I am disoriented because I sleep in one city and wake up in another. I seldom get to see my loved ones because they are not my top priority. It’s the hundred or so miles I am in the middle of, the places I am in and out of. Rushing to catch a train, reaching work on time, finding time to learn about the history of the city I am in. Many times, I don’t speak to the people around me. I am in a hurry to reach somewhere.

The Rabhas, so sure of who they were, where they came from, and what they lived on; which gives them a self-satisfied look. The Rabhas seemed so much more sure of who they were, where they came from, and what they lived on. The Rabhas are one of nine Scheduled Tribes from the districts on the south bank of the Brahmaputra in the plains of Assam. The biggest Schedule Tribes from the districts on the south bank of the Brahmaputra in the plains of Assam. The biggest.

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