

REPORT ON  
THE SURVEY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS  
OF THE NAMASUDRAS  
OF THE KARIMGANJ AND CACHAR  
DISTRICTS OF ASSAM



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## P R E F A C E

The Namasudras are the largest group among the Scheduled Castes people of Assam. They constitute 32.97% of the total Scheduled Castes population of Assam. They are however, mainly confined into the Cachar and Karimganj districts of Assam. But unfortunately very little is known in regard to this ethnic group bereft of any literature and study report on it.

In one of the meetings of the Directors of Tribal Research Institutes held in New Delhi at the behest of Ministry of Welfare, Government of India, it was decided that the Tribal Research Institute, Assam should conduct a socio-economic survey on the Namasudras of Cachar and Karimganj districts. The present report is an outcome of this decision.

For the purpose of this study at first those villages where the Namasudra population was found to be 40 percent and above were identified. The total number of villages in the two districts on this criterion was found to be 100 and 10 percent of the identified villages were taken-up for conducting the study on the basis of random sampling. 20 percent of the households from each village was taken-up for sample study and as such altogether 156 families came under the purview of the survey. The devastating floods in the Barak Valley, however, caused some dislocation in conducting the field survey at a stretch.

The present study report contains a brief history of the Namasudras and their origin, population, demographic characteristics, infrastructural facilities and other basic amenities available in the surveyed villages, participation in education by the male and female members of this community, school drop-outs,



occupational pattern (primary and subsidiary), land holding pattern, live stock, fisheries, annual income and expenditure, savings and investments, rural indebtedness and changing <sup>trends</sup> ~~trades~~ like traditional institutions, family planning measures, inter-caste marriage, untouchability and atrocities, prohibition measures etc.

In the last part of the report concluding observations and a number of suggestions for the socio-economic development of this down-trodden community are incorporated. We have also incorporated the major findings of the survey at the beginning of the report.

This socio-economic survey was conducted by Shri G.N.Das, M.Sc., District Research Officer, Diphu. Since he has no field-staff at his disposal he himself had to conduct the study by visiting the selected villages himself. I offer my thanks to Shri Das who had conducted the survey and prepared the report under my guidance. At the field level he had received considerable help and co-operation from the different Government officials like Sub-Divisional Welfare Officers of Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi, Block Development Officers of different Development Blocks of the two districts and their sub-ordinate staff and also non-officials of the Namasudra inhabited area. I offer my thanks and gratitude to all of them for helping the Tribal Research Institute of Assam in conducting the field study.

I feel that this report which is revealing many unknown facts regarding the socio-economic conditions of the Namasudras, would help the Planners, Administrators, Officials of the Development Departments, Research Scholars and Others in various ways.

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(B.N. BORDOLOI) 30/9/87  
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Dated Guwahati  
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MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

1. The total population of the erstwhile Cachar district (at present Karimganj and Cachar districts) constitutes 11'7% of the total population of Assam, as per 1971 Census. Again, the percentage of scheduled castes population of this district is worked out to be 12'19 of the total population of the district. The Namasudras occupy the highest position i.e. 32'97% of the total scheduled castes population in Assam. On the other hand, the Patnis and the Namasudras constitute 37'5% and 27'4% respectively of the total scheduled castes population inhabiting the erstwhile Cachar district.
2. Although the Namasudras are generally supposed to belong to the fishing community, in fact, they are an agricultural caste in the Karimganj and Cachar districts of Assam.
3. The total No. of households selected for our study, on the basis of random sampling, is 156 only and the total population of these households is estimated at 965, out of which the No. of male and female population is 503 and 462 respectively. Sex-ratio is worked out to be 1000:918.
4. Except one village which is located at a distance of 4 K.M. all the other nine villages are located within the range of 0'1 K.M. to 3 K.M. only from the nearest motorable road. Two villages are located by the side of the gravelled roads and another two villages are located by the side of 'Katcha' fair weather motorable ~~roads~~ roads. People from the remaining six villages have to use foot tracts in winter season and boat in summer season to reach the motorable road. Proper maintenance of the gravelled motorable roads appears to be lacking and services rendered by public buses are quite unsatisfactory.
5. Civic amenities like post office, telegraph office, health dispensary, veterinary dispensary, etc, are within reach of the people, under study.

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6. Pre-primary school is not established in any one of the selected villages. Lower Primary schools are, of course, located in every village. The percentage of Namasudra students is found to be 79% of the total students belonging to all castes and communities, as per enrolment in the year 1985.
7. In the High School stage of education, the enrolment of students is not so much satisfactory. The no. of students, irrespective of caste and community, coming from ten villages to seventeen educational institutions is found to be 562 only, according to 1985 enrolment. In other words, 56 students, in average, from the selected villages attend various educational institutions.
8. The trend of ~~school~~ school drop-outs is gradually decreasing. The total No. of drop-outs as collected from the different educational institutions, right from L.P. to High schools, is 106 Nos. in 1984-85, 113 Nos in 1983-84 and 125 Nos. in 1982-83. Lack of proper guidance, extreme poverty, failure in examination and marriage of girls, etc. are the fundamental causes of drop-outs.
9. Fourteen colleges are available in the Karimganj and Cachar districts for general education. The total No. of students attending various colleges from the selected villages in 1985 is found to be 42 only. Out of 42, the No. of Namasudra students is worked out to be 21, the No. of boys and girls being 17 and 4 respectively. Although the No. of college going students appears to be very thin, even then a positive outlook towards higher education has been observed among the people during our field investigation.
10. The percentage of literates among the total population of 965 is estimated at 36'5, male literacy accounts for 43'73%. In case of female literacy, the percentage is found to be 28'78 only. According to 1971 Census the percentage of male and female literacy in the erstwhile Cachar district is estimated at 40'4 and 19'9 respectively. The increase of 8'9% of female literacy in the selected households is a healthy sign towards female education.
11. Provision of safe drinking water is quite unsatisfactory. People use to fetch water from the ponds, wells and the nearby rivers. Except the traditional method of filtering water the people do not adopt any scientific measure to get rid of water-borne diseases. The people appear to be least conscious of health hazard.

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12. Inspite of limited numbers of shops within the selected villages, availability of daily, bi-weekly and weekly markets near the villages has considerably helped the people in procuring essential commodities and selling their agricultural products.
13. 10 Nos. of G.P. level Co-operative societies with a share capital of Rs. 10,74,158/- have extended services to 29,343 Nos. of shareholders out of which the No. of Namasudra shareholders is 5963.
14. Bamboo and cane works may be mentioned as the only cottage industry as observed during our field investigation. Some of the households particularly in the villages Kamargram and Telikhalerpar have taken up bamboo and cane works as the primary source of livelihood.
15. In respect of primary occupation it has been observed that out of 156 households, 95 households (60'9%) are engaged in cultivation, 21 households (13'5%) in bamboo and cane works, 19 households (12'2%) in service, 8 households (5'1%) in business, 7 households (4'5%) in fishing and 6 households (3'8%) in daily wage. On the other hand, in case of subsidiary occupation it is observed that 72'4% of the total households have subsidiary occupation. The percentages of households engaged in cultivation, daily wage, fishing, bamboo and cane works and business are 27'4, 26'5, 21'2, 17'7, and 7'1 respectively. Perhaps, adoption ~~not~~ of daily wage as primary source of livelihood by 4'5% of the total No. of 156 households and as secondary source of livelihood by 26'5% of the total No. of 113 households indicates the appalling poverty of the people. However, agriculture still plays a significant role in the economic condition of the people, although, at present, occupational pattern has undergone some sort of changes due to influence of modern education, minimum land holdings and easy transport facilities, etc.
16. Out of the total population of 965, the total No. of earners and earning dependents is 290 (30'1%) and 261 (27%) respectively. On the other hand, the non-earning members constitute 42'9% of the total population.
17. It has been found that out of 156 households, 68 households (43'6%), 44 households (28'2%) and 23 households (14'7%) possess lands in the categories '0-5', '5-10' and '10-15' Bighas respectively.



8 households (5'1%) are found to possess lands in the category (15-20' bighas and 13 households (8'3%) in the category '20-bighas and above'. The total area of land possessed by 156 households is found to be 1356 bighas, out of which 1070 bighas, 268 bighas and 18 bighas are brought under cultivation, homestead and fishery respectively. It is to be noted that 32 households have got no cultivable land. The average land holding per household is 8'6 bighas. Per capita land holding is worked out to be 1'41 bighas only.

18. Cultivation of sali paddy is extensively undertaken by the people. We find 91% of the cultivable land under sali cultivation but in case of Ahu and Boro, the percentages are 23'3 and 6'8 only. The yield per bigha is estimated at 6 mands in Sali, 5 mands in Ahu and 4'1 mands in Boro. According to the informants, although they are not in the habit of utilising fertilisers, pesticides and improved variety of implements, etc, the rate of production would have been better if flood waters had not swept over the agricultural fields repeatedly.

19. Out of 156 households, the No. of households having different types of livestock population is as follows:-

69 households (44'23%)	- bullock,	73 households (46'79%)	- Cow
21 "	(13'46%) - he-buffalo,	24 "	(15'38%) she buffalo
26 "	(16'67%) - he-goat,	96 "	(61'54%) she-goat.
59 "	(37'82%) - pigeon,	136 "	(87'18%) - duck
19 "	(12'18%) - fowl.		

Among the different types of livestock population, the percentage of ducks is found to be the highest i.e. 46'61. Again, the percentage of bullocks and cows is estimated at 17. In respect of buffaloes, goats, pigeon and fowls, the percentages are 3'58, 15'3, 10'3 and 7'1 respectively. It may be mentioned that rearing of fowls has been recently taken up by some of the households. Pig is not reared by them.

20. Our field investigation reveals that only 9 households (5'7%) have possessed cultural fishery, one fishery per household. We have already mentioned that the total area of land under fishery is 18 bighas which is 1'3% of the total area of land possessed by 156 households. Of course, the people have the habit of collecting fish by means of nets and other traditional methods mainly for household consumption.



21. Out of various sources of income, cultivation stands first because of the fact that 41'33% of the total income is derived from cultivation. Other sources, in order of sequence, are service (18'28%) bamboo and cane works (13'15%), fishing (11'05%), daily wage (8'23%) and business (7'96%). It may be mentioned here that 80 households (51'2%) live below poverty line. The average gross annual income of a household is estimated at Rs. 7590'26. Per capita income is worked out to be Rs. 1227'03 only.

22. Of all the items of expenditure, food is the only ~~item~~ item which accounts for 77'55% of the total amount of expenditure. Other items are dress and ornaments (7'98%), payment of labourers for agricultural purpose (4'35%), health (4'05%), festivals and ceremonies (2'98%), education (2'4%) and miscellaneous (0'69%). The average annual expenditure per household is found to be Rs. 7255'51. As a result, we find that the average household has a very low budget with a little surplus amount of Rs. 334'75 only per annum.

23. Rural indebtedness has affected the village economy adversely. Out of 156 households, 58 Nos. (37%) are indebt. The amount of debt is found to be Rs. 1,33,600/-. The average debt per household is Rs. 856'41 and the average debt per indebted household is worked out to be Rs. 2303'45. The per capita debt is estimated at Rs. 138'45. The amount of loan taken from banks, D R D A and G.P. level Co-operative societies is to the tune of Rs. 41,800/- but the amount of loan taken from village people is Rs. 91,800/-. The rate of interest for the amount taken from bank and other Government agencies varies from 10 to 14% per annum but, on the other hand, the rate of interest for the amount taken from village people is as high as 10% per month. Inspite of the high rate of interest, people like to approach the village people for loan perhaps to avoid the complicated procedure of banks and other agencies.

24. The Namasudras, under study, appear to be less conscious so far as Constitutional safeguards and welfare measures for upliftment of the scheduled castes people are concerned. Moreover, they have not been able to derive much benefit from the provisions offered by the Government of Assam to bring all round development of the scheduled castes population of the state.

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25. Change is inevitable to a society. Among the Namasudras also we have observed certain changes, Traditional institutions like Family and Marriage have undergone significant changes. Disintegration of joint family has taken place. Marriageable age of boys and girls has gone up in recent times. Attitude towards adoption of modern treatment of disease is a good indicator of positive change. The importance of higher education has been felt by the people. In respect of material culture viz. dress and ornaments, hair style, household articles, food habits and house pattern, we observe notable changes. In short, the mind of modern civilisation has started blowing over the Namasudra villages.

In the context of family planning and birth control measures we find that out of 131 respondents, 20 persons (15%) have expressed their negative attitude towards these measures while 111 Nos. (85%) have expressed their support for the scientific methods but nobody in the selected villages has taken advantage of the family planning and birth control measures. In respect of inter-caste marriage also we have not found any case of such type of marriage. Evils of untouchability and atrocities are totally absent not only in the selected villages but also in Assam as a whole. According to the informants, drinking of liquor is absent among the people, although someone may take it quite secretly. It is heartening to note that drinking of liquor has not victimised anybody in the selected villages.

In the long run, we may sum up saying that the Namasudras themselves must come forward with a missionary zeal to mould and reshape their destiny by taking advantage of various welfare measures showered upon them by the Government.



CHAPTER - IINTRODUCTION

The twin districts of Karimganj and Cachar, commonly referred to as the Barak or Surma Valley lie between latitudes  $24^{\circ}8'$  and  $25^{\circ}8'N$  and longitudes  $92^{\circ}15'$  and  $93^{\circ}15'E$  with a total geographical area of 6941 sq. km. The two districts were till recently known as the district of Cachar which was bounded on the north by the North Cachar Hills district of Assam and the State of Meghalaya, on the south by Mizoram, on the east by Manipur and on the west by Tripura and Bangladesh. As a result of reorganisation of districts in the state in the month of July, 1983 the erstwhile Cachar district was bifurcated and constituted into two separate districts viz. Karimganj with H.Q. at Karimganj and Cachar with H.Q. at Silchar. The total geographical area of the present Karimganj district is 1839 sq. km. while that of the present Cachar district is 5102 sq.km. only.

Originating from the southern slopes of the lofty ranges of Nagaland the river Barak runs through the heart of the Barak valley. The important tributaries of this river are the Jiri, Jatinga, Longai and Sonai, etc. The Barak plain is dotted with small isolated hillocks, locally known as 'tillas' which consist of layers of sand, clay and gravel. The Barak Valley is of alluvial origin and is surrounded by hills on three sides except to the west. Annual average rainfall in the erstwhile Cachar district is 3059.5 ml as against 1864.6 ml of state average in the year 1978.

According to 1971 Census Report the total population of the erstwhile Cachar district (at present Karimganj & Cachar districts) is 17,13,318 which is 11.7% of the total population of the State of Assam. Again the number of Scheduled Caste population in the district is estimated at 2,08,867 which constitutes 12.19% of the total population of the district. The total No. of Scheduled Caste population in Assam is found to be 9,12,557 which is 6.24% of the total population of the State. The percentage of Scheduled Caste population of the district to the total Scheduled caste population of the State is 22.8. In Assam, there are 16 nos. of scheduled castes with 9 synonyms as per Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Lists Modification Order, 1976, Government of India. Castewise distribution of population in the different districts of Assam is shown in Annexure I. The percentage of population of each Scheduled Caste to total population of all Scheduled Castes found in Assam is shown in Table I, ~~xxx~~ as per 1971 Census.

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TABLE - I.

Percentage of population of each Scheduled Caste to total population of all Scheduled Castes in Assam.

Sl. No.	Name of the Scheduled Caste	P.C. of population of each scheduled caste to total	1	2	3
1.	Bansphor	00'67	0	0	0
2.	Bhutimali, Mali	02'43	0	0	0
3.	Brittal Bania, Bania	03'08	0	0	0
4.	Dhupi, Dhobi.	02'28	0	0	0
5.	Dugla, Dholi.	00'44	0	0	0
6.	Hira.	03'57	0	0	0
7.	Jai Keot.	00'28	0	0	0
8.	Jhalo, Malo, Jhalo-Malo	03'61	0	0	0
9.	Kalbarta, Jaliya	32'31	0	0	0
10.	Lalbegi	Negligible.	0	0	0
11.	Mahara	00'10	0	0	0
12.	Methar, Bhangei	00'80	0	0	0
13.	Muchi, Rishi	04'47	0	0	0
14.	Namasudra.	32'97	0	0	0
15.	Patni	09'41	0	0	0
16.	Sutradhar.	03'58	0	0	0
All Scheduled Castes		100'00	0	0	0

We come to know from Table I that the population belonging to the Namasudra community is the highest (32'97%) in Assam. Next comes the Kalbarta community (32'31%). However, in the Karimganj and Cachar districts the Patnis occupy predominant position i.e. 37'5% of the total Scheduled Castes population of the two districts. The Namasudras and the Kalbartas constitute 27'4% and 11'3% of the total Scheduled Caste population of both the districts respectively.



Adequate planning for economic development of a particular community is primarily based on the size of the population of that community. It is highly essential to take into account the probable growth of population of that community before undertaking any planning. Census operation did not take place in Assam in the year 1981. We have to consider, therefore, 1971 Census figures as base in order to find out the required population projection. It has already been mentioned that the total population of the erstwhile Cachar district is 17,13,318 as per 1971 Census. Again the total number of Namasudra population in the above mentioned district is estimated at 57,244 only. Applying the standard rate of 3.6% annual increase we find the total population and the Namasudra population of the erstwhile Cachar district to be 28,11,080 and 93,910 respectively by the year 1985. Table II shows the population projection of the district.

T A B L E - II

Population Projection of the erstwhile Cachar district.

Sl.No.	Name of the district	Year	Total population	Namasudra population.
1.	Cachar	1971	1713318	57244
		1981	2440251	81524
		1982	2528100	84458
		1983	2619111	87498
		1984	2713398	90647
		1985	2811080	93910



. NAMASUDRAS - A LITTLE KNOWN SCHEDULED CASTE.

In Chapter III 'Reprint from the Census Report of 1891' of Census of India, 1961 the caste Namasudra, on the basis of traditional occupation, is shown under Group 40 - Fishermen, Boatmen, Palki-Bearers, Cooks, etc. As regards the Namasudras the Census Report further states: 'Namasudra is the euphemism under which the Chandals or Changs try to hide their true caste, which in Hindu eyes is one of great degradation. In the Brahmaputra Valley they call themselves Chandal. Mr. Risley suggests that Chandal may have been the tribal name of one of the aboriginal tribes whom the Aryans found in possession of the soil. Their occupation is beating and cultivation. They have a separate class of degraded Brahmans as their priests. They make their own barbers, as the Napit or Nava-Sakha barber caste declines to shave them'<sup>1</sup>.

H.H. Risley brings forth his opinion about the derivation of the name 'Namasudra' in this way: 'The derivation of this name is uncertain. Dr. Wise thinks it may be from 'the Sanskrit Namas, adoration, which is always used as a vocative when praying, or the Bengali Namaste, below, underneath'. The latter suggestion seems the more plausible. The Pundits' interpretation of the former is understood to be that the Chandal is bound to do obeisance even to a Sudra. It would be promotion for the chandals of Manu to get themselves recognised as a lower grade of Sudras. The name may also be referred to Namasa or Lomasa Muni, whom some Chandals regard as their mythical ancestor. On the other hand, Namasa Muni himself may have been evolved from the attempt to explain away the suggestion of inferiority implied in the name Namasudra.'<sup>2</sup>

As regards migration of the Namasudra people from Bengal, Bhakta Das comments : 'In Bengal during the period of King Gopal and other Kings of his dynasty and Raja Sitaram they were economically sound. They belonged to the Aristocratic community in culture and dignity and magnitude of their livelihood was high. But afterwards due to political changes and violence of untouchability incited during the reign of Raja Ballov Sen, who was a strong supporter of Brahmins and caste distinction, forced the Namasudras to accept some inhuman rules.

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1. Census of India, 1961 (Vol III, Assam Part V-A), P. 98.

2. The Tribes & Castes of Bengal (Vol 1) by H.H. Risley, P 183.



But the Namasudras opposed to accept the inhuman rules. The King with all powers operated his force against them and drove them away from their ancestral land tortured mercilessly and announced all over his state that Namasudras are 'CHANDALS', 'CHARAL' AND untouchables. Thus they were placed in the lowest & class of Hindu society. Being disgusted by such treatment a large number of Namasudras migrated to Assam and settled in Goalpara and Cachar districts. Further at the time of partition of the country Namasudras came to Assam as refugees from east Bengal and permanently settled in Assam'.<sup>3</sup>

Bimal J. Dev and Dilip K. Lahiri have stated : 'As early as in 1891 Chandal inhabitants of Karimganj submitted a petition to the Chief Commissioner praying that they might be called Namasudras. J.D. Anderson, District Commissioner, Cachar remarked : 'If Chandals like to call themselves Namasudra I don't see why we should not let them. We call the Kumars as Rudrapaul and fisherfolk as Patnis. There can be no question of ambiguity or confusion, for the title Namasudra is only used by the Chandals and is merely a part of an endeavour to raise their social status, an endeavour which I for one would encourage. When a Sahā in Sylhet calls himself Das there is a chance that he may be taken for Kayastha, but here no such difficulty exists'. The chandals of Karimganj subdivision in their petition claimed that although they generally were known as Namasudras they were call-ed in any actual transaction Chandal (male) and Chandalini (female). It appeared that in September 1890, when the Chandals of Karimganj applied to the Magistrate to replace Chandal and Chandalini by Namasudra and Namasudrani, strong objections were raised by many Sudra Castes, Later the Sudras obtained a verdict from the pundits in their favour'.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to their habitation it has been observed that in the Karimganj and Cachar districts, the Namasudra people use to live within a village alongwith population belonging to other castes and communities. As a result, the number of villages having 100% Namasudra population is found to be comparatively less than that of mixed villages. Like other communities, the Namasudra people also use bamboo, wood and thatch, etc, as materials in the construction of their houses. The main house is sometimes divided into compartments for the convenience of the members of the household. A small hut is also constructed by the side of the main house for the purpose of kitchen. Moreover, separate huts are made by them in order to keep domestic animals such as cow,

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3. A Glimpse of the Scheduled Castes and their Socio-Economic Development in Assam by Bhakta Das, P. 32

4. Cosmogony of Caste and Social Mobility in Assam by Bimal J. Dev and Dilip K. Lahiri, P-51.



goat, etc. The homestead is surrounded by bamboo fencings. Plantain, bamboo, betel-nut and other trees like mango, jackfruit, jarul, etc, are also seen within boundaries of their homesteads.

Although dhuti is their traditional dress, now-a-days most of them particularly the young people are in the habit of wearing modern dresses. Women wear sari and varieties of ornaments made of gold and silver. Chemical ornaments and costumes have also gained popularity among the womenfolk.

Namasudras are generally agriculturists by occupation. Cultivation of Sali paddy is mainly practised by them. In some places, cultivation of Ahu and Boro is also carried out. Some of the Namasudra households are found to be engaged in service, trade and commerce, etc. Moreover among the poorer section daily wage is the means of livelihood. However it must be admitted that the Namasudras, both male and female, are extremely laborious. Rice with curry and vegetables is ordinarily taken by them twice or thrice daily. Fish is most favourite. Pan or sufari and bidi or tobacco are also items of daily consumption.

So far as family system is concerned, the Namasudras follow patriarchal system of family. The line of descent is patrilineal. After the death of father the eldest son becomes the head of the family. In case question of separation takes place among the brothers, paternal property is then divided proportionately among them with the help of elderly persons of the village. It has also been observed that joint family system has been gradually fragmented into <sup>nuclear</sup> nuclear family system among the Namasudras.

Monogamy is the general rule. Marriage by negotiation is the usual practice. Marriage takes place within their own clan. Inter-caste marriage is not permitted by the society. Marriage by mutual consent and elopement within the same community also takes place. Junior levirate is allowed.

The religion of the Namasudras is Hinduism. They belong to the 'Sakta' sect. They worship a number of gods and goddesses viz. Durga, Saraswati, Manasa, Kali, Vishnu, Ganesh, Lakshmi, etc. Socio-religious ceremonies are performed by priests of their own caste. Dead bodies are cremated and the death ceremony is performed on the eleventh day according to Hindu law.



Disputes are generally solved by the village council consisting of elderly persons of the village. The village council also takes up matters relating to developmental activities within the village.

It is a happy sign to note ~~that~~ that evils of untouchability and atrocities have no deeper roots among various communities inhabiting the two districts. That the Namasudras have nurtured a tendency to raise their social status higher in the social hierarchy may also be observed at the time of physical visits to different villages inhabited by the people of this community.



CHAPTER - IIMETHODOLOGY

The present study is an attempt to throw some light on the socio-economic conditions of the Namasudra community in the Karimganj and Cachar districts of Assam. For this purpose a list of villages having 40% or above Namasudra population was collected from the different Gaon Panchayat offices located within the two districts. The list contains 100 nos. of villages. It is shown in Annexure-II. In this connection it may be mentioned here that tours were undertaken for collection of village names in the months of September and December, 1985. Every attempt was being made to cover more than 75% of the Namasudra villages under the above criterion. Hence all the Gaon Panchayat offices under whose jurisdiction, location of such villages made known, were physically visited and information collected. After completion of the village list, 10 nos. of villages were selected on the basis of random sampling for our study. The following table shows the list of selected villages:

TABLE -III  
LIST OF SELECTED VILLAGES.

Name of the district.	Name of the Dev. Block	Name of the Gaon Panchayat	Name of the village.
Karimganj	South Karimganj Development Block	Jatkapon	1. Kamargram
		Kanichail-Jabainpur	2. Telikhalerpar.
	R.K. Nagar Dev. Block.	R.K. NAGAR	3. Poddarpar.
		Wangirbond	4. Kishoripur.
	Badarpur Dev. Block.	N.E. Badarpur	5. Nayatila.
Cachar	Narasingpur Dev. Block.	Palonghat	6. Rukni Pt.I
		Dholai	7. Mahadebpur East
	Katigora Dev. Block	Kalain	8. Baraitoli Pt.II
		Gumra.	9. Khelma I
	Salchapra Dev. Block.	Tapang.	10. Chibitabichia Pt.IV.

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Interview schedules were prepared and canvassed to 156 respondents, selected on the basis of 20% of the total number of 780 Namasudra households belonging to these villages. All respondents who were heads of households were personally contacted for conducting interview. In addition, necessary particulars of each village viz. location, transport and communication system, civic and educational facilities and other basic amenities were recorded in the village schedule. Data were collected in between January 1986 and December 1986. Data collection took a ~~lot~~ lot of time mainly due to occurrence of devastating flood in the entire Barak Valley and disruption of train services in the Hills Section. In spite of unlimited hurdles, data collection came to an end in the last part of December 1986. After completion of data collection, time was fully devoted to processing and analysis of data. Report writing was also started along with tabulation and analysis of data and it was completed by the end of July 1987 only. However, at the time of writing the Report the essence of the following few lines was constantly kept in mind.

The basic ~~qualities~~ qualities of good scientific writing are accuracy and clarity. The first step is to decide just what information one wants to convey and to understand how the various bits of it are related to one another. The researcher should begin with preparing a detailed outline of his report. It would be very difficult for most researchers to produce a clear and well organised account of their research with only a vague and a general notion of the final shape of the report. Preparing a detailed outline allows one to concentrate exclusively on what is to be said. If one constructs the skeleton of the report, the looking at the bare bones one can more easily see whether any important points have been left out. Moreover, the outline with its clear indication of major topics, sub-topics, and further sub-divisions, helps a great deal in focussing attention on logical relationships between different bits of the material. Writing without an outline affects adversely the smooth flow and continuity in the  $\frac{1}{2}$  line of thought. The outline clearly marks the shift from one topic to another and thus, facilitates the grouping together of all the points on a given topic.

Once the outline has been prepared, it is necessary to carefully go through it to check whether anything important has been omitted and whether ideas that have been grouped together belong together logically. It may be helpful to have someone else read it and comment upon it. Then if changes in the basic structure of the report seem essential, they can be effected before the actual writing starts. In the long run, time is saved by writing the first draft of the report as quickly as possible. Once it is on paper, one can go back and rewrite sentences and paragraphs.

At some point, however, attention must be given to the style of the report. There is little that can be said about this except that the stress should be on clarity, simplicity and correct grammatical structure. It should be remembered that one of the functions of grammatical rules is to help us use language in such a way that convey our meaning with minimum ambiguity'.<sup>5</sup>

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5. Methodology and Techniques of Social Research  
by Witkinson & Bhandarkar, P. 394.



CHAPTER - IIIPOPULATION CHARACTERISTICS.

It has already been stated in the preceding chapter that 10 nos. of villages with 40% or above Namasudra p-opulation have been selected for our study. The total no. of households in these villages is estimated at 1052 out of which the No. of Namasudra households is 780 only. The following table shows the distribution of Namasudra households alongwith population in the selected villages :

TABLE - IV.

Distribution of Namasudra households  
alongwith population in the selected  
villages.

Sl.No.	Name of the village.	Total households.	Total population.	Total No. of Namasudra households	Total No. of Namasudra population	P.C. of Namasudra households to total population.	P.C. of Namasudra population to total population.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Kamrgram	146	842	143	829	97' 94	98' 46
2.	Telikhalerpar.	120	635	120	635	100' 00	100' 00
3.	Paddarpar.	60	390	45	295	75' 00	75' 62
4.	Kishorinur	40	245	40	245	100' 00	100' 00
5.	Nayatila.	41	275	41	275	100' 00	100' 00
6.	Rukmi Pt.I	165	987	81	556	49' 09	56' 33
7.	Mahadebpur East	81	635	60	492	74' 07	77' 48
8.	Baraitoli Pt.II	90	575	50	315	55' 56	54' 78
9.	Khelma Pt.I	130	686	120	621	92' 31	90' 52
10.	Chibitabichia Pt. IV	179	1281	80	535	44' 69	41' 76
Total =		1052	6551	780	4798	74' 14	73' 24

The above table reveals that the percentage of Namasudra households to total number of households of the selected villages is 74' 14. Again the percentage of Namasudra p-opulation to total population is 73' 24. Mention may also be made of 100% of Namasudra

households as well as population in three villages viz. Telikhalerpar, Kishoripur and Nayatila. On the other hand, the lowest concentration of Namasudra households (44.69%) and population (41.76%) may also be observed in the Chibitabichia village (Pt-IV).

The total number of Namasudra households selected on the basis of 20% sampling is 156 only. Table V shows the distribution of selected no. of Namasudra households against each village.

Table - V.  
Selected No. of Namasudra households.

Sl. No.	Name of the village	Total No. of Namasudra households.	Total No. of selected Namasudra households.
1.	Kamargram	143	29
2.	Telikhalerpar.	120	24
3.	Poddarpar.	45	9
4.	Kishoripur.	40	8
5.	Nayatila.	41	8
6.	Rukmi Pt.I	81	16
7.	Mahadebpur East	60	12
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	50	10
9.	Khelma Pt.I.	120	24
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	80	16
Total		780	156

The above table shows that out of 780 nos. of Namasudra households in 10 nos. of villages, 156 nos. of households have been taken into account. Moreover, it may be noted that the village Kamargram has the highest no. (143) of Namasudra households while the Kishoripur village has the lowest no. (40) of Namasudra households.

The total no. of Namasudra population in 156 households is estimated at 965 only. Table VI shows the distribution of population according to age-group.



TABLE - VI

Distribution of population according to age group.

Sl.No	Name of the village.	0-10 yrs	10-20 yrs.	20-30 yrs	30-40 yrs	40-50 yrs	50-60 yrs	60yrs & above	Total
1.	Kamargram	59	32	21	27	11	11	5	166
2.	Telikhalerpar.	27	31	25	15	12	7	6	123
3.	Poddarpar.	8	18	11	3	6	5	7	58
4.	Kishoripur	18	11	10	3	8	3	3	56
5.	Nayatila	12	9	10	11	3	5	3	53
6.	Rukni Pt-I.	25	22	21	16	11	12	5	112
7.	Mahadebpur East.	23	26	16	11	10	5	6	97
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	17	8	14	10	3	3	8	63
9.	Khelma Pt-I	32	28	25	20	15	6	4	130
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV	29	22	23	12	10	6	5	107
Total		250	207	176	128	89	63	52	965

It is seen from the above table that in the age-group '0-10' years the no. of population is the highest (250). The percentage of population in this age-group has been worked out to be 25'9. Again in the age-group '10-20' years' '20-30 yrs' '30-40 yrs', '40-50 yrs', '50-60 yrs' and '60years and above' we find the percentage of population as 21'5, 18'2, 13'3, 9'2, 6'5 and 5'4 respectively. It may, therefore, be said that from the age-group (0-10 yrs' upwards the percentages of population to the total population have been gradually decreasing.

Out of the total no. of 156 households, the no. of male population has been found to be 503 as against 462 nos of female population. Table VII shows the sex-ratio as calculated from the selected households.

TABLE - VII

Sex ratio of the total population of the selected households.

Sl.No.	Name of the village.	Male	female	Female per 1000 males.
1.	Kamargram	87	79	908
2.	Telikhalerpar.	62	61	983
3.	Poddarpar.	31	27	870
4.	Kishoripur	29	27	931
5.	Nayatila	28	25	892
6.	Rukni Pt-I	57	55	964
7.	Mahadebpur East	47	50	1063
8.	Baraitoli	34	29	852
9.	Khelma Pt-I	70	60	857
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	58	49	844
Total		503	462	918

The above table clearly shows that the no, of ~~females~~ females per 1000 males in the selected households is 918 only. It may be noted that the sex-ratio in the village Mahadebpur East is 1000:1063. According to 1971 Census sex-ratio in the erstwhile Cachar District is 1000:923 and that of the State of Assam is 1000:896. Hence the no. of females per 1000 males in the selected households is much higher than that of the state. On the other hand, it is slightly low in in comparison with that of the district.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES:

In the process of socio-economic development of any community the role played by infrastructural facilities can not be ignored. Actually development programmes designed for upliftment of a particular community are based on the infrastructural facilities available in and around their habitat. Let us discuss, in this chapter, some of these facilities available in the selected villages.

#### 1. Transport & Communication Facilities:

'The process of a country's economy depends on the extent of the availability of a good system of transport. Lack of adequate means of transport create bottlenecks in the economy and retards economic development. Transport may be regarded as the arteries of the economy. It has been rightly said that 'if agriculture and industry are the body and the bones of a national organism, communications are its nerves.' The economic and industrial development of a country is bound up with the development of the means of communication. It is only by an extensive and well-organised transport system that Europe, North America and Japan have risen to the pinnacle of economic and industrial development'.<sup>6</sup>

Our field survey reveals that all the villages except one, under study, are located at a distance ranging from 0'1 K.M. to 3 K.M. only from the nearest motorable road. Only one village is located at a distance of 4 K.M. Although the villages appear to be suitably located, in fact, the benefits derived by the people can not be said to be satisfactory. Most of the motorable roads are gravelled and these are also not maintained properly. Moreover, services offered by the public busses are also disheartening. There is no time, <sup>no</sup> speed limit of the buses. To carry passengers beyond the capacity of the bus is a regular phenomenon. As a result, people have to suffer a lot.

The following table shows the distance of each village, selected for our study, from the nearest motorable road and some other important places.

TABLE VIII.

Distance of each village from the nearest  
motorable road and other important places  
(in K.M.)

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Motorable road.	Railway station.	Block Office	District H.Q.
1.	Kamargram	0'3 Kaliganj-Karimganj Road.	6 Karimganj	4 South Karimganj Dev. Block Karimganj.	7 Karimganj.
2.	Telikhalerpar.	0'2 Kaliganj-Karimganj Road.	5 Karimganj	4 South Karimganj Dev. Block Karimganj.	6 Karimganj
3.	Poddarpar.	4 Kadamtol R.K. Nagar Road.	10 Anipur	6 R.K. Nagar Dev. Block R.K. Nagar.	56 Karimganj.
4.	Kishoripur	2 Bijoypur-Cheragi Road.	19 Kurlavcherra	30 R.K. Nagar Dev. Block R.K. Nagar.	75 Karimganj
5.	Nayatila	3 Badarpur - Karimganj Road.	1'5 Rupsibari	8 Badarpur Dev. Block, Mohakal	12 Karimganj
6.	Rukni Pt-I	1 Palonghat-Kabugang Road.	25 Silchar.	6 Narsingpur Dev. Block Narsingpur.	25 Silchar.
7.	Mahadebpur East.	2 Dholai-Silchar Road.	35 Silehar	14 Narsingpur Dev. Block Narsingpur.	35 Silchar.
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	3 Badarpur-Kalin Road.	7 Hilara	7 Katigora Dev Block, Hilara	28 Silchar
9.	Khelma Pt-I	3 Gumra-Kandigram Road.	8 Hilara	8 Katigora Dev Block, Hilara.	56 Silchar.
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	0'1 Hailakandi-Silehar Road.	12 Srikoma	20 Salchapra Dev Block, Salchapra	23 Silchar.

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The mode of communication from the motorable road to some of the villages is found to be on foot during winter season and by boat during summer season. Only two villages viz. Mahadebpur East and Kishoripur are located by the side of the gravelled roads. Moreover, another two villages viz. Telikhalerpar and Chibitabichia Pt IV are located by the side of 'Katcha' fair weather motorable roads. People from the remaining 6 nos. of villages have to use either foot tracts or boat for their movement. On the whole, it can be said that better transport and communication facilities in the near future will help the people in improving their condition to a great extent.

## 2. Civic & Educational Facilities:

Civic and educational facilities available in a particular locality indicate resourcefulness of the locality, With regard to civic amenities viz. Post Office, Telegraph office, Health Dispensary and Veterinary Dispensary, etc. we have observed that the people of the villages may take full advantage of the benefits without much difficulty. The following table shows the distance of each village from the nearest places where such amenities are available.

TABLE - IX.

Distance of each village from the nearest  
places of public importance.  
(in K.M.)

Sl. No.	Name of the Village.	Post Office	Telegraph Office	State Dispensary	Veterinary Dispensary/Hospital	Private medical practitioner
1.	Kamargram	1 Shysam Nagar.	7 Karimganj	7 Karimganj	7 Karimganj	7 Karimganj
2.	Telikhalerpar	4 Kaliganj Bazar.	5 Karimganj	5 Karimganj	4 Kaliganj	5 Karimganj
3.	Poddarpar	4 Kadamtol	6 R.K. Nagar	6 R.K. Nagar	6 R.K. Nagar	6 R.K. Nagar.
4.	Kishoripur	2 Cheragi	19 Durlavcherra	19 Durlavcherra	19 Durlavcherra	19 Durlavcherra
5.	Nayatila	2 Srigouri	5 Badarpur	5 Badarpur	5 Badarpur.	5 Badarpur.

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Sl. No.	Name of the village	Post Office	Telegraph Office	State Dispensary	Veterinary Dispensary/Hospital	Private medical practitioner
6.	Rukni Pt-I	2 Palonghat	2 Palonghat	2 Palonghat	2 Palonghat	5 Kabuganj
7.	Mahadebpur East.	2 Dholai	2 Dholai	2 Dholai	1 Mahadebpur	2 Dholai
8.	Baraitoli Pt-I, I	4 Kalain	4 Kalain	4 Kalain	4 Kalain	4 Kalain
9.	Khelma Pt-I	2 Gumra	6 Kalain	6 Kalain	2 Gumra	2 Gumra.
10.	Chibitabi-chia Pt-IV.	0'5 Chibitabi-chia	23 Silchar.	23 Silchar.	23 Silchar.	4 Digosrikona

Education is the backbone of modern civilisation. Hence all efforts should be channelised in order to derive proper benefits out of educational institutions. Let us discuss here how far the people, under study, have been able to squeeze the cream out of the educational facilities or in other words, how far the educational institutions have contributed towards all round development of the people.

The following table indicates Lower Primary Schools and enrolment of students in the year 1985 against each school:

**TABLE X**  
L.P. Schools & Enrolment of students.

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Name of the school, type & year of establishment	Distance from the village.	Students attending the schools from the village.	Namasudra students attending the school from the village.
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Kamargram	504 No. Kamargram Vivekandanda Vidyalaya, Govt. 1955	Located in the middle of the village.	Boys - 65 girls-40	Boys - 65 Girls- 40



1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	Telikhalerpar	56 No Telikhalerpar L.P. School, Govt. 1918	Near the village	Boys -39 Girls-29	Boys-37 Girls-26
3.	Poddarpar.	314 No. Padmarpar L.P. School, Pro- vincialised 1949.	Within the village.	B - 12 G - 9	B - 9 G - 5
4.	Kishoripur.	Hara Gouri L.P. School Venture, 1979	Withing the village.	B - 32 G - 16	B - 21 G - 13
5.	Nayatila	936 No. Nayatila L.P. School, Govt. 1974.	Near the village.	B - 15 G - 13	B - 15 G - 13
6.	Rukni Pt-I	488 No. Raghu Ram Buniyadi Vidyalaya, Govt. 1949.	0' 5 K.M.	B - 22 G - 29	B - 22 G - 29
7.	Mahadebpur East.	646 No. Panchanan Buniyadi Vidyalaya, Govt. 1954.	Within the village.	B - 32 G - 23	B - 21 G - 17
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	599 No. Tilagram L.P. School, Govt. 1953	Within the village.	B - 35 G - 28	B - 21 G - 18
9.	Khelma Pt-I	303 No. Kandigram L.P. shhool, Govt. 1922.	0' 5 K.M.	B - 47 G - 40	B - 42 G - 34
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	113 No. Chibitabichia L.P. School, Govt. 1913.	Within the village.	B - 51 G - 42	B - 26 G - 20

The above table reveals that each village is provided with one Lower Primary School either in the village or at the outskirts of the village. The total enrolment in these schools is estimated at 619 in the year 1985. Out of 619 the no. of Namasudra students is found to be 494, the percentage of Namasudra students to students of all communities being 79%. This indicates people's keen desire and active guidance in sending their children to the schools. Now let us have a look at the age groups of the Namasudra students reading in the L.P. schools, in Table XI.

TABLE - XI.

Age-groups of the Namasudra students  
- reading in the Lower Primary schools.

Sl. No.	Name of the school	Age group	Boys	Girls	Total.
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Kamargram Vivekanda Cidyalaya.	6-8 yrs. 9-11 yrs.	40 25	23 17	63 42
2.	Telikhalerpar L.P. School.	6-8 yrs. 9-11 yrs.	16 21	22 4	38 25
3.	Padmarpar L.P. School	6-8 yrs. 9-11 yrs.	6 3	3 2	9 5
4.	HaraGouri L.P. School	6-8 yrs. 9-11 yrs.	13 8	12 1	25 9
5.	Nayatila L.P. School.	6-8 yrs. 9-11 yrs.	8 7	9 4	17 11
6.	Raghu Ram Buniyadi Vidyalaya.	6-8 yrs. 9-11 yrs.	10 12	15 14	25 26
7.	Panchanan Buniyadi Vidyalaya.	6-8 yrs. 9-11 yrs.	12 9	10 7	22 16
8.	Tilagram L.P. School.	6-8 yrs. 9-11 yrs.	15 6	10 8	25 14
9.	Kandigram L.P. School.	6-8 Yrs. 9-11 yrs.	28 14	20 14	48 28
10.	Chibitabichia L.P. School.	6-8 yrs. 9-11 yrs.	16 10	12 8	28 18

From the above table we find that in the age-group 6-8 years, the no. of students is 300, out of which the no. of boys is 164 and that of girls is 136. Again in the age-group 9 - 11 years, the total no. of Namasudra students is estimated at 194 out of which the no. of boys is 115 while the no. of girls is 79 only.



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It may be out of place to mention here that there is not a single Pre-Primary school which is highly essential in order to impart education to children below 6 years of age, in these villages.

Now let us switch over to other educational institutions, The following table shows the names of M.E., High and Higher Secondary schools alongwith enrolment of students against each school, in the year 1985.

Table - XII

M.E., H.E., & H.S. Schools and enrolment of students from the selected villages.

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Name of the school type and year of establishment	Distance from the village	Students attending the school from the village.	Namasudra students attending the school from the village.
1. Kamargram		Kamargram M.E. School, Govt. aided, 1980	0'5 K.M.	B - 60 G - 19	B - 60 G - 19
		Kaliganj Public H.S. School, Provincialised, 1959.	4 K.M.	B - 4 G - 1	B - 4 G - 1
2. Telikhalerpar,		Pallishree M.E. School, Govt. Aided, 1960	Within the village.	B - 24 G - 19	B - 24 G - 19
		Kaliganj Public H.S. School, Provincialised, 1959.	6 K.M.	B - 2 G - 1	B - 2 G - 1
3. Poddarpar.		Palleshree High School, Ad-hoc, 1976.	1'5 K.M.	B - 8 G - 11	B - 1 G - 6
4. Kishoripur.		Cheragi Vidyapith High School, Venture, 1979.	2 K.M.	B - 2 G - x	B - 2 G - x
5. Nayatila.		Three Village M.E. School, Venture, 1981	1 K.M.	B - 7 G - 5	B - 7 G - 5
		Samabay High School, Govt. Aided, 1982.	1 K.M.	B - 37 G - 24	B - 37 G - 24

1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Rukni Pt-I	C.C.J.C. Palonghat High School, Provincialised, 1955	1'5 K.M.	B - 32 G - 17	B - 20 G - 9	
7. Mahadebpur East.	Haricharan M.E. School, Recognised 1978.	0'25 K.M.	B - 5 G - 8	B - 2 G - 4	
	B.N.M.P. School, Govt. 1922.	2 K.M.	B - 31 G - 16	B - 16 G - 10	
8. Baraitoli Pt-II	Balaram Vidyapith M.E. School, Provincialised. 1975	0'125 KM	B - 6 G - 4	B - 3 G - 2	
	Kalain H.S. School Govt. 1947.	4 K.M.	B - 3 G - 1	B - 3 G - 1	
9. Khelma Pt-I	Digarkhal High School, Govt-aided, 1969	3 K.M.	B - 20 G - 15	B - 16 G - 13	
	Gmra Public M.E. School, Provincialised, 1952	2 K.M.	B - 9 G - 5	B - 7 G - 3	
10. Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	Chibitabichia M.E. School, Provincialised 1968	0'5 KM	B - 73 G - 57	B - 30 G - 23	
	Chibitabichia High School, Govt-aided. 1980	0'5 K.M.	B - 20 G - 16	B - 7 G - 5	

The above table shows that the total no. of students attending different educational institutions, from the selected villages is 562 out of which the no. of boys is 343 and that of the girls is 219. Again out of the total no. of 562, the no. of Namasudra students happens to be 386, the no. of boys and girls being 241 and 145 respectively. It may be pointed out that after completion of primary stage of



education many Namasudra students give up further study which will be evident from the above table. As a result, in the High School stage, the enrolment of students is low. The above table reveals that in 17 nos. of educational institutions, the no. of students irrespective of caste and community, coming from 10 nos. of villages is 562 only i.e. 56 students in average from the selected villages receive education in those institutions.

Brief discussion about school drop-outs may not also be out of place here. It will be observed in the following table that the total no. of drop-outs in various educational institutions is 106, in 1984-85, 113 in 1983-84 and 125 in 1982-83. This shows that the no. of drop-outs has been gradually decreasing. In the primary stage of education the no. of drop-outs is less in comparison to the higher stage of education. Factors mainly responsible for school drop-outs are lack of proper guidance, poor economic condition, failure in the examinations and marriage of girls, etc. The following table shows drop-outs during three academic sessions:

TABLE - XIII

School Drop-outs in various  
Educational Institutions.

Sl. No.	Name of the school	1984-85	1983-84	1982-83
1	2	3	4	5
1.	504 No. Kamargram Vivekananda Vidyalaya.	NIL	B - 3 G - 1	NIL
2.	56 No. Telikhalerpar L.P. School.	NIL	NIL	NIL
3.	314 No. Padmarpar L.P. School.	B - 2 G - 2	B - x G - 4	B - 2 G - 1
4.	Hara Gouri L.P. School.	B - 5 G - 5	B - 1 G - 1	NIL
5.	936 No. Nayatila L.P. School.	B - x G - 1	NIL	NIL
6.	488 No. Raghun Ram Buniyadi Vidyalaya.	NIL	B - 1 G - x	NIL

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1	2	3	4	5
7. 646 No. Panchanan Buniyadi Vidyalaya.	Nil	Nil	Nil	
8. 599 No. Tilagram L.P. School.	B - 4 G - 2	B - 5 G - 4	B - 4 G - 4	
9. 303 No. Kandigram L.P. School.	B - 8 G - 6	B - 10 G - 6	B - 14 G - 5	
10. 113 No. Chibitabichia L.F. School.	Nil	B - 2 G - 3	Nil	
11. Kamargram M.E. School.	B - 6 G - 5	B - 5 G - 5	B - 17 G - 4	
12. Pallishree M.E. School.	B - 3 G - 3	B - 5 G - 3	B - 3 G - 4	
13. Three Village M.E. School.	B - 3 G - 2	B - 3 G - 1	B - 4 G - 2	
14. Haricharan M.E. School.	B - 2 G - x	B - x G - 1	B - 3 G - 2	
15. Balaram Vidvapith M.E. School.	B - 1 G - 2	B - 2 G - 1	B - 1 G - 1	
16. Gumra Public M.E. School.	B - 9 G - 7	B - 1 G - 1	B - 5 G - 4	
17. Chibitabichia M.E. School.	B - 3 G - 3	B - 4 G - 3	B - 3 G - 2	
18. Palleeshree High School.	B - x G - 1	B - 4 G - 2	B - 2 G - 1	
19. Cheragi Vidyapith High School.	B - 2 G - x	B - 2 G - x	B - 2 G - 3	
20. Samabay High School	B - x G - 2	B - 1 G - 1	B - 2 G - 1	
21. C.C.F.C. Palonghat High School.	B - 2 G - 1	B - 3 G - 2	B - 1 G - 3	
22. B.N.M.P. School.	B - 3 G - 1	B - 2 G - 1	B - 2 G - 2	
23. Digarkhal High School	B - x G - 2	B - 7 G - 6	B - 2 G - 4	
24. Chibitabichia High School.	B - 2 G - 1	B - 3 G - 1	B - 2 G - 4	
25. Kalain H.S. School.	B - 2 G - 1	B - 3 G - 1	B - 4 G - 2	
26. Kaliganj H.S. School.	B - 2 G - x	B - x G - 1	B - 1 G - 2	
Total	106	113	125	



## College Education :-31:-

In respect of college education we find a very gloomy picture. Although there are as many as 14 nos. of colleges for general education, ten in the Cachar district and four in the Karimganj district, as per estimate of 1983-84 (Provisional)<sup>7</sup>, the no. of students from the selected villages has been found to be negligible. The following table shows the names of institutions in which students from these villages attend classes. Moreover, no. of students coming from the selected villages in 1985 have also been shown against each institution.

**TABLE - XIV**

Colleges alongwith enrolment of  
students from the selected villages.

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	(Name of the College.	Distance from the village.	Students from all communities.		Students from Namasudra community	
				Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Kamargram	Karimganj College, 7 K.M. Karimganj.		4	-	4	-
2.	Telikhalerpar.	-do-	5 K.M.	3½	1	3	1
3.	Poddarpar	R.K. Nagar College, R.K. Nagar.	6 K.M.	-	-	-	-
4.	Kishoripur	-do-	30 K.M.	-	-	-	-
5.	Nayatila.	Nabin Chandra College, Badarpur.	5 K.M.	1	-	1	-
6.	Baraitoli Pt-II	G.C. College, Silchar.	28 K.M.	3	-	1	-
		Cachar College, -do-					
		Nabin Chandra College, Badarpur.	20 K.M.	1	-	1	-
7.	Rukni Pt-I	Janata College, Kabuganj.	5 K.M.	3	5	3	3
8.	Mahadebpur East.	-do-	12 K.M.	2	1	1	-
9.	Khelma Pt-I	Nabin Chandra College, Badarpur.	22 K.M.	2	-	2	-
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV	G.C. College, Silchar.	23 K.M.	7	4	1	-
		Cachar College, etc.					
Total:-			31	11	17	4	

7. Assam at a glance, 1984 by Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Assam, P-40.

Contd.....32/



A cursory glance on the above table reveals that the no. of students not to speak of Namasudra students alone, attending colleges from these villages is very less. The main reasons are failure in the High School Leaving Certificate Examination and poor economic condition of the people. Total No. of students attending various classes of colleges in the year 1985, happens to be 42, out of which the no. of girl students is found to be 11 only. The no. of Namasudra boys and girls out of 42 is 17 and 4 respectively.

It will be better to discuss here about the percentage of literacy as found in the selected villages. Our field investigation reveals that the no. of literates out of the total population of 965 is 353 while the no. of illiterates is 612. If we calculate the percentage of literacy, we will find that 36'5% of the total population are literates only. The percentage of male literacy is 43'73% and that of female literacy is 28'78%. It may be mentioned here that there was no census operation in Assam in the year 1981. As a consequence, we ~~are~~ are not in a position to present a comparative statement. Any way, as per 1971 Census the percentage of literacy in Assam is found to be 28'3 only. On the other hand, the percentage of literacy among the total population of the erstwhile Cachar district is 30'6 and the percentage of literacy among the Scheduled Caste population in the said district is 27'63. If we consider the percentage of literacy among the total population of the Namasudra caste in Assam, we will find the percentage to be as low as 21'32. Again we find the percentage of male and female literacy in the erstwhile Cachar district to be 40'4 and 19'9 respectively. In the meantime many years have rolled down since 1971. An increase of 3'3% only in case of male literacy can not be said to be satisfactory. However, we find an increase of 8'9% in case of female literacy. This indicates the mental attitude of the people towards female education.

The following table shows no. of literates and illiterates in the selected villages.



TABLE - XV

Literates with educational level and  
Illiterates in the selected villages

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	L.P. Standard		M.E. & H.E. Standard		H.S.L.C.		H.S.S. & P.U. Standard		B.A. Standard		Illiterate	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1.	Kamargram	14	12	11	7	1		2		1		58	60
2.	Telikhalerpar	12	11	15	8	1		2				32	42
3.	Poddarpar.	9	7	8	3	1		2				11	17
4.	Kishoripur.	5	3	6	3							18	21
5.	Nayatila	5	3	9	4							14	18
6.	Rukni Pt-I	8	8	19	8	4	1	2	3	1		23	35
7.	Mahadebpur East.	9	9	18	9	1		1				18	32
8.	Baroitoli Pt-II	5	6	7	1	1						21	22
9.	Khelma Pt-I	9	6	15	6	3	2	1	2			42	44
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	8	10	4	1							46	38
Total =		84	75	112	50	12	3	10	5	2		283	329

### 3. Sources of Drinking Water:-

In the villages, under study, it has been observed that provision of drinking water is not at all satisfactory. People use to take water from the ponds, kutchha wells and the nearby rivers. The no. of pucca wells is also very limited. Tubewells are not common. Water supply schemes are not implemented. The following table indicates the sources of drinking water in the selected villages :

Contd.....34/



TABLE XVI.

## Sources of Drinking Water.

Sl.No.	Name of the village	Source	No.
1.	Kamargram	Pond	5
2.	Telikhalerpar.	Pond	7
		Tubewell	3
		River	1 (Kakra)
3.	Poddarpar.	Pond	4
4.	Kishoripur	Pond	2
		Katcha well	5
		River	1 (Singla)
5.	Nayatila	Pond.	3
6.	Rukni Pt-I	Pond	9
		River.	1 (Sonail)
7.	Mahadebpur East.	Pond.	6
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	Pucca well	2
		Pond	5
9.	Khelma Pt-I	Pond	6
		Pucca well	2
10.	Chibit, bichia Pt-IV	Pond.	9

It may be mentioned here that except the application of crude method of filtering water for the purpose of drinking, the people do not adopt any suitable measure for purification of water so as to get rid of water-borne diseases. We may, therefore, imagine how the people in a scientific age have been using drinking water in an unscientific manner without least consideration of health hazard.

#### 4. Marketing Facilities :-

With regard to marketing facilities it can be said that there are 5 nos. of Fair Price shops in five villages and 8 nos. of other shops viz. grocery in four villages only. Although there is dearth of sufficient number of shops within the villages, even then the people need not go to distant places in order to purchase their daily necessities and to sell their domestic products. There are daily, bi-weekly and weekly markets. Among the local products available in the markets, mention may be made of paddy, rice, fish and vegetable, etc. while other essential commodities brought from outside include cloth, kerosine, sugar, atta and salt, etc.



'The market occupies a pivotal role in the economic and social life of the people. It is the place where men and women from different walks of life gather, and sometime for economic reasons - are often compelled to rise above narrow considerations of caste, creed, religion and language. A dent, though temporary, is made on the otherwise conservative mental frame work and this provides an excellent opportunity for positive socio-economic activities. The market can be used very effectively for exchanging social ideas and also for studying the economy of the people'<sup>8</sup>.

The following table shows the name of the market place alongwith its type and distance from the respective village :

TABLE - XVII

Name of the market place with its  
type and distance from the village.

Sl. No.	Name of the village	Name of the market	Type	Distance from the village
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Narargram	Karinganj	Daily	7 K.M.
		Kaliganj bazar	Bi-weekly (Friday & Tuesday)	3 K.M.
2.	Telikhalerpar.	Karinganj	Daily	5 K.M.
		Kaliganj Bazar	Bi-weekly (Friday & Tuesday)	4 K.M.
3.	Foddarpar	R.K. Nagar.	Daily	
			Bi-weekly (Monday & Friday)	6 K.M.
4.	Kishoripur.	Cheragi	Weekly (Friday)	2 K.M.
5.	Nayatila	Badarpur	Daily	3 K.M.
			Bi-Weekly (Tuesday and Friday)	
		Srigouri bazar	Bi-weekly (Monday & Thursday)	5 K.M.
6.	Rukni Pt-I	Kabuganj	Bi-weekly (Wednesday & Monday)	5 K.M.
		Falonghat	Bi-weekly (Thursday & Sunday)	2 K.M.

8. 'Social Role for the Market' by G.R. Biswas in the book entitled 'Marketing in North-East India' edited by J.B. Ganguly, P-203.

1	2	3	4	5
7.	Mahadebpur East Dholai	Bi-weekly (Thursday & Monday)	2 K.M.	
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II Kalain	Daily Bi-weekly (Wednesday & Saturday)	2 K.M.	
9.	Khelma Pt-I Gumra	Daily Bi-weekly (Tuesday & Friday)	2 K.M.	
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV Kuarpur bazar.	Bi-weekly	1 K.M.	

#### 5. Co-operative Societies :-

The main function of the Gaon Panchayat level Co-operative Societies is to provide agricultural loans, both short term and medium term to the shareholders and to procure and distribute consumers' commodities. Recently the agro custom service has been introduced and steps are being taken to expand it in collaboration with the Agriculture Department as well as Agro Custom Service Deptt.

Our field study reveals that there are 10 nos. of G.P. level Co-operative Societies in which the total number of shareholders is found to be 29,343. Out of this figure, the no. of Namasudra shareholders is 5963 only. (20.32%). The total share-capital of the Co-operative Societies is estimated at Rs. 10,74,158/- only. Govt. aid received by these societies during the year 1984-85 and 1983-84 is found to be Rs. 1,83,890/- and Rs. 1,22,000/- respectively.

The following table shows the name of each co-operative society with total no. of shareholders and total share capital, etc.

Contd.....37/



TABLE - XVIII

## G.P. LEVEL CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES.

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Name of the co-op. society, year of estd. and distance from the village.	Total no. of share holders (in 1985)	Total no. of Nama-sudra share holders	Total share capital	Govt. aid received during	
						1984-85	1983-84
1.	Kamargram	Jatkapon Co-operative Society, Ltd. 1983, 1 K.M.	3266	1676	102557/-	55390/-	38500/-
2.	Telikhalerpar.	Kanichail-Jabainpur Co-operative Society Ltd. 1973, 5 K.M.	3258	278	130729/-	30,000/-	30,000/-
3.	Poddarpar.	R.K. Nagar Co-op. Society Ltd. 1973, 4 K.M.	3063	223	116000/-	10,000/-	20,000/-
4.	Kishoripur	Wangirabond Co-op. Society Ltd. 1973, 6 K.M.	4271	2114	103701/-	26,000/-	-
5.	Nayatila	N-E. Badarnur Co-op. Society Ltd. 1973, 2 K.M.	1513	109	73635/-	5,000/-	-
6.	Rukni Pt-I	Palonghat Co-op. Society Ltd. 1973, 2 K.M.	3531	740	134158/-	5,000/-	6,000/-
7.	Mahadebpur East.	Dhalai Co-op. Society Ltd. 1973, 2 K.M.	2783	201	112000/-	40,000/-	40,000
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	Kalain Co-op. Society Ltd. 1973, 5 K.M.	3276	315	100234/-	5,000/-	-
9.	Khelma Pt-I	Gumra Co-op. Society Ltd. 1973, 2 K.M.	2303	247	89758/-	2500/-	7,500/-
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	Tapang Co-op. Society Ltd. 1973, 4 K.M.	2059	60	111386/-	5000/-	-

## 6. Cottage Industry:

Bamboo & cane industry may be considered as the only important cottage industry prevalent among the population of the selected villages. Raw materials are easily available. Some of the households particularly in the village Kamargram have taken up this industry as the means of livelihood. It may be mentioned here that cane goods, viz, chair, table, murha, basket etc, of different shape and size are supplied to various parts of India due to heavy demand for the durability and artistic design of the ~~the~~ objects.

CHAPTER - VECONOMIC PROFILE

Nearly 80% of the total population of the Karimganj and Cachar districts of Assam live in the villages and there is, no doubt, that the village economy is predominantly agrarian in character. Agriculture plays a vital role in the economic condition of the people. In this chapter, an attempt is made to reflect the economy of the Namasudra people, under study, on the basis of their occupation, land-holding pattern and annual income and expenditure, etc.

Occupational Pattern:

It has been observed that although agriculture is the mainstay of the people, even then, in recent times, the occupational pattern has undergone significant changes due to some factors viz. influence of modern education, fragmentation of land-holdings and availability of transport and communication facilities etc. In order to get a true picture of the occupational pattern of the people, occupation has been classified into primary and subsidiary occupations. By primary occupation we mean the occupation from which the maximum income of a household is obtained. On the other hand, the occupation which augments the total income of a household is considered as subsidiary occupation. Table XIX shows the distribution of primary occupation of the selected households.

TABLE - XIX.Distribution of Primary Occupation

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Total no. of house holds.	No. of households engaged in					
			Cultivation	Bamboo & cane works	Daily wage	Fishing	Service	Business
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Kamargram	29	11					
2.	Telikhalerpar	24	14	13	1	1	2	1
3.	Toddarpar.	9	8	5	1		2	2
4.	Kishoripur	8	8				1	
5.	Nayatila.	8	4	1	1			
6.	Bulni Pt-I	16	10				2	
7.	Mahadebpur East	12	7	1	1		5	1
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	10	7	1		2	2	1
9.	Khelma Pt-I	24	17	1		1	1	
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	16	9		2		3	2
Total :		156	95	21	6	7	19	8
Percentage:			60.9%	13.5%	3.8%	4.5%	12.2%	5.1%

Contd.....39/



We come to know from the above table that out of 156 nos. of households 95 households (60'9%) are engaged in cultivation. Again 13'5% are found to be engaged in bamboo and cane works. It ~~may~~ may also be observed that in the village Kamargram 13 nos. ~~out~~ out of 29 households have accepted bamboo and cane works as primary occupation against 11 nos. of households having cultivation as primary occupation. This points out to the fact that the people of the above mentioned villages have been compelled to take up bamboo and cane works due to lack of sufficient cultivable lands. The percentage of households having daily wage as primary occupation is found to be 3'8 which indicate extreme poverty of the households. In case of fishing, the percentage is 4'5. On the other hand, 12'2% of the households are engaged in service. Only 5'1% of the households have taken up business which includes shop keeping, rickshaw pulling, tailoring, carpentry and contract, etc. On the whole, it may be said that cultivation is still the primary occupation of most of the households although few households have accepted other categories as primary occupation for livelihood.

As regards subsidiary occupation it may be mentioned that out of 156 nos of households the no. of households having subsidiary occupation is 113 i.e. 72'4% of the total households. The following table indicates the distribution of subsidiary occupation.

TABLE - XX  
Distribution of Subsidiary occupation

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Total households	Cultivation	Bamboo & cane works	Fishing	Daily wage	Business.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Kamargram	26	7	9	3	6	1
2.	Telikhalerpar.	20	6	8	1	4	1
3.	Poddarpar.	7	1	1	3		2
4.	Kishoripur	4				4	
5.	Nayatila	7	2		3	2	
6.	Rukni Pt-I	7	4		1	2	
7.	Mahadebpur East.	8	4		1	1	2
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	6	2			4	
9.	Khelma Pt-I	16	3	2	6	4	1
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV	12	2		6	3	1
Total =		113	31 27'4%	20 17'7%	24 21'2%	30 26'5%	8 7'1%

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The above table reveals that out of 113 nos. of households 31 nos. (27'4%) have taken up cultivation as subsidiary occupation. In case of daily wage, the no. of households is 30 and the percentage is 26'5. Again 24 nos of households i.e. 21'2% have been found to be engaged in fishing. In the category 'bamboo and cane works' 20 households (17'7%) are found while 8 households (7'1%) are found to have accepted business as subsidiary occupation. It, therefore, appears that although cultivation plays a vital role in the socio-economic life of the people, adoption of daily wage (26'5%) as a means of livelihood indicates marked deterioration of the economic condition of the people, under study.

While dealing with occupational distribution we may take into consideration the working and non-working members of the households. Hence members of every household have been included in three categories viz. earners, earning dependents and non-earning dependents. The following table shows the distribution of members of the households.:

TABLE - XXI

Distribution of members of households.

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Total households	Earner	Earning dependent	Non-earning dependent	Total members.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Kamargram	29	40	39	87	166
2.	Telikhalepar.	24	40	31	52	123
3.	Poddarpar.	9	21	17	20	58
4.	Kishoripur	8	14	16	26	56
5.	Nayatila	8	16	16	21	53
6.	Rukni Pt-I	16	33	32	47	112
7.	Mahadebpur East.	12	29	28	40	97
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	10	19	17	27	63
9.	Khelma Pt-I	24	38	36	56	130
10.	Chibifabichia Pt-IV	16	40	29	38	107
Total =		156	290	261	414	965
			30'1%	27%	42'9%	

Contd.....41/



A cursory glance on Table XXI indicates that out of 965 members, 290 nos. (30'1%) are included in the category 'Earner' while 261 nos. (27'2%) and 414 nos. (42'9%) are included in the categories 'Earning dependent' and 'Non-earning dependent' respectively. However, if we add the numbers of the two categories 'Earner' and 'Earning dependents' we find that 57'1% of the total members are workers. On the contrary, 42'9% of the members happen to be non-earning dependents.

Dr. U.N. Bordoloi, Director, Centre for Economic Research and Analysis, Assam, writes in an article. 'Assam is a backward economy', Agriculture still plays the dominant role in the economy of the state. But agricultural development in the state is very slow. Besides recurring floods, absence of facilities for winter cultivation, small land holdings is also an important factor that is responsible for slow developmental growth in agriculture in the state. In the state, the average size of operation holding is 1'47 hectares of the total 19'64 lakhs operational holdings, 57'04 percent are below one hectare size. District wise the size of operational holding is : Goalpara - 1'44 hectares; Kamrup - 1'36 hectares; Darrang - 1'19 hectares; Nagaon - 1'30 hectares; Sibsagar - 1'83 hectares; Dibrugarh - 1'95 hectares; Lakhimpur - 1'61 hect. Cachar - 1'47 hectares; Karbi Anglong - 1'20 hectares.<sup>9</sup>.

Table XXII reflects the land holding pattern of the households taken for our study.

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9. 'Economic Condition of the Tribal People Living in Assam' by Dr. U.N. Bordoloi, published in a Souvenir of the Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangha, P-5.

TABLE - XXII

Land holding pattern of households.

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	No. of households.					Total households.
		0-5 bighas.	5-10 bighas.	10-15 bighas.	15-20 bighas.	20 bighas and above.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Kamarigram	17	4	2	2	4	29
2.	Telikhalerpar	13	5	1	2	3	24
3.	Poddarpar.	4	2		2	1	9
4.	Kishoripur		4	4	-		8
5.	Nayatila	5	1	2	-		8
6.	Rukni Pt-I	5	8	3			16
7.	Mahadebpur East	7	3	1	-	1	12
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	3	3	2	1	1	10
9.	Khelma Pt-I	7	10	4	1	2	24
10.	Chibitabichia PtIV	7	4	4	-	1	16
Total :-		68	44	23	8	13	156
Percentage.		43'6	28'2	14'7	5'1	8'3	

The above table clearly indicates that out of 156 households, 68 nos. possess lands in the category '0-5' bighas only, the percentage being 43'6. In the category '5-10' bighas the no. of households happens to be 44 i.e. 28'2% of the total households. Again we find 23 nos of households (14'7%) having lands in the category '10-15' bighas. On the contrary, only 8 households (5'1%) have been found to possess lands in the category '15-20' bighas. We also see that 13 nos. of households (8'3%) possess lands in the category '20 bighas and above'. On the whole, we find a non-too happy position so far as land holding pattern of households is concerned.

The following table shows total land holdings of various types as found in the selected households of 10 nos. of Narasudra villages:

Contd.....43



TABLE - XXIII.

Land holding of various types of the households (in bigha)

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Total households	Total area of land possessed.	Total area under cultivation.	Total area under homestead.	Total area under fishery.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Kamargram	20	298	262	33	4
2.	Telikhalerpar.	24	222	178	38	6
3.	Poddarpur.	9	108	89	15	4
4.	Kishoripur	8	78	57	18	3
5.	Nayatila.	8	46	35	11	4
6.	Rukni Pt-I	16	99	82	16	1
7.	Mahadebpur East	12	77	66	11	-
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	10	93	81	12	-
9.	Khelma Pt-I	24	223	170	53	-
10.	Chibitabichia Pt IV.	16	112	81	61	-
Total :		156	1356	1070	268	18

The above table shows that the total area of land possessed by 156 nos. of households is estimated at 1356 bighas out of which 1070 bighas are brought under cultivation. However, it may be pointed out that although the total cultivable area is shown under the ownership of 156 households in the above table, actually there are as many as 32 nos. of households having not a single bigha of cultivable land. Thus the percentage of households without cultivable land to total households is found to be 20'5. The no. of households without any cultivable area of land is shown in bracket against each village : Kamargram (11), Telikhalerpar (4), Nayatila (1), Rukni Pt-I (3), Mahadebpur East (2), Baraitoli Pt-II (1), Khelma Pt-I (5) and Chibitabichia Pt-IV (5). The total area of land under homestead has been found to be 268 bighas. Only 18 bighas of land are found under the category fishery. The average land holding per household as calculated from the above table is 8'6 bighas only. We have already found the total members belonging to 156 households to be 965. Hence per capita land holding is estimated at 1'41 bighas only.

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Table XXIII indicates that the total area of land under cultivation is 1070 bighas only. But it may be mentioned here that 33 bighas of cultivable land have been handed over to other households on bandhaki system by the land owners included in the selected households. Hence the total area of land under cultivation would come down to 1037 bighas only. Cultivation of seasonal kinds of paddy is widely practised by the households. It may be stated that cultivation of sali paddy is extensively carried out by them in their respective agricultural fields while cultivation of Ahu paddy is practised by few households. On the other hand, Boro cultivation has been found only in two villages viz. Baraitoli Pt-II and Khelma Pt-I. The following table shows the distribution of seasonal kinds of paddy:

TABLE - XXIV  
Distribution of seasonal kinds of paddy.

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Total area under cultivation (in bigha)	Area under (in bigha)			Yield (in md)		
			Sali	Ahu	Boro	Sali	Ahu	Boro
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Kamargram	261	261	-	-	1471	-	-
2.	Telikhalempar	174	146	28	-	596	120	-
3.	Poddarnar.	89	79	21	-	457	113	-
4.	Kishoripur	57	41	19	-	113	136	-
5.	Nayatila	29	27	26	-	96	74	-
6.	Rukmi Pt-I	82	74	51	-	623	336	-
7.	Mahadebpur East	66	66	52	-	618	233	-
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	69	40	-	29	202	-	108
9.	Khelma Pt-I	159	159	-	42	1060	-	208
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	51	51	45	-	361	268	-
Total :-		1037	944	242	71	5796	1280	316

The above table indicates that the total area under Sali cultivation is 944 bighas out of 1037 bighas of land, the percentage being 91%. On the other hand, the Ahu cultivation is carried out in 242 bighas of land, the . In this case, the percentage becomes 23.3 only. Again the area of land under Boro cultivation is found to be 71 bighas. The percentage of land under Boro cultivation happens to be simply 6.8. It may, therefore, be stated that



the households under study, engage themselves mainly in the cultivation of Sali paddy. It may not be out of place to mention here that other important crops viz. potato, sesame, mustard, jute and vegetables, etc, are not cultivated by the households except for consumption. We have, therefore, intentionally left such crops from the purview of discussion. So far as production is concerned we find that 5796 mds. of Sali paddy are obtained in 944 bighas of land, the yield per bigha being 6 mds. Again 1280 mds of Ahu paddy are available in 242 bighas of land. In this case, the yield per bigha happens to be 5 mds. 316 mds of Boro paddy are produced in 71 bighas of land, the yield per bigha being 4'1 only. In this connection it may be mentioned that although the households are not aware of utilising fertilisers, pesticides, improved type of implements, etc, the rate of production would have been higher if the devastating floods had not submerged the paddy fields during the last year.

Mention may also be made of the Adhi system. In this system the cultivator gets 50% of the total production for cultivating a particular plot of land while the land owner gets other 50% of production. It has been seen that altogether 212 bighas of land (not included in the category 'Total area under cultivation') are brought under sali cultivation by 27 nos. of households out of 156 households in the Adhi system. The total production is estimated at 1268 mds. out of which 634 mds. i.e. 50% of the total production have gone to the land owners.

#### Livestock Population:

The importance of livestock in the village economy can not be overlooked. It has been observed during our field investigation that bullocks and he-buffaloes are used as draught animals while cows and she-buffaloes are meant for the purpose of obtaining milk. Cow-dung is used as good manure in the agricultural fields. Moreover the people have the habit of rearing goats, ducks, pigeons and to a less extent fowls. But pigs are not reared by them. The following table shows the distribution of livestock population in the selected villages.



TABLE-XXV

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## Distribution of Livestock Population.

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Bull-ock	Cow	He buffa-lo	She-buffa-lo	He-goat.	She-goat	Pigeon	Duck	Fowl
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.	Kamargram	22	36	4	6	10	60	44	194	-
2.	Telikhalerpar.	29	15	1	3	11	32	36	110	-
3.	Poddarpar	12	10	3	2	3	8	4	33	-
4.	Kishorinur	8	15	4	2	4	10	8	26	-
5.	Nayatila	2	8	1	1	2	3	4	44	-
6.	Rukni Pt-I	18	20	1	5	3	23	28	86	-
7.	Mahadebpur East	22	21	7	4	5	26	28	88	5
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	2		2	2	4	10	4	337	8
9.	Khelma Pt-I	29	11	6	4	2	45	22	172	119
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	14	16	2	6	5	16	12	68	-
Total :-		158	155	31	35	49	233	190	858	132
		18'58%	8'42%	1'68%	1'90%	2'66%	12'66%	10'32%	46'62%	7'17%

From the above table we come to know that out of the total livestock population (1841), the no. of ducks is the highest (858) while the no. of buffaloes is the lowest (66). In other words, the percentage of ducks is found to be 46'61 against 3'58% of buffaloes. If we combine columns 3 and 4, we will find that the total no. of bullocks and cows is 313 only. This constitutes 17% of the total livestock population. Similarly, if we add columns 7 and 8 together, we will find the no. of he and she-goats to be 282, the percentage being 15'32. It may be noted here that the percentage of he-goats is estimated at 2'66 against 12'66% of she-goats. This has resulted due to the sale/consumption of he-goats. ~~This is~~ The percentage of pigeon is worked out to be 10'32. On the other hand, the percentage of fowls is 7'17 only. It is interesting to note that rearing of fowls is a recent trend among the Namasudras. Our investigation reveals that the rearing of fowls has taken place in three villages viz. Mahadebpur East, Baraitoli Pt-II and Khelma Pt-I out of 10 nos. of selected villages. A day may come soon when the people will practise the habit of rearing pigs also.

The following table shows the distribution of households according to possession of livestock:

Contd.....47/

TABLE - XXVI .

Distribution of households according to possession of Livestock

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Total No. of households.	No. of households having								Pigeon	Duck	Foul
			Bullock	Cow	He- buffalo	She- buffalo	He- goat	She- goat					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9			10	11	12
1. Kamargram		29	9	16	1	4	5	20		11	27	-	
2. Teli Galarpar		24	12	10	1	3	4	14		10	22	-	
3. Poddarpar.		9	6	4	3	1	2	5		2	8	-	
4. Kishoripur		8	4	6	3	4	2	5		3	7	-	
5. Nayatila		8	1	4	1	1	1	2		2	6	-	
6. Rukni-Pt-I		16	10	9	1	4	2	8		10	14	-	
7. Mahadebpur East.		12	8	8	4	3	2	8		7	10	1	
8. Baraitoli Pt-II		10	1	2	2	2	2	7		2	8	3	
9. Khelma Pt-I		24	13	7	3	4	2	16		7	21	15	
10. Chibitabichia Pt-IV.		16	5	7	2	1	4	11		5	13	-	
Total :-		156	69	73	21	24	26	96		59	136	19	
			44' 23%	46' 79%	13' 46%	15' 38%	16' 67%	61' 54%		37' 82%	87' 18%	12' 18%	

The above table clearly reveals that out of 156 nos. of households, 136 nos. (87' 18%) have possessed ducks. On the contrary, 19 households (12' 18%) have reared ~~fox~~ fowls. The percentages of households having bullocks and he-buffaloes are 44' 23 and 13' 46 respectively. This may perhaps indicate that many households have to practise cultivation by means of hiring draught animals or they have to take help of spade. Again, the no. of households having cows and she-buffaloes is worked out to be 73 (46' 79%) and 24 (15' 38%) respectively. In respect of goats, we find that 26 nos. (16' 67%) have got he-goats while 96 nos. (61' 54%) have she-goats. So far as pigeon is concerned, we find that 96 households (61' 54%) have reared it. Any way, we can assume that the livestock population has rendered a positive contribution, though not quite satisfactory, towards the economic life of the households, under study. In this connection, it may be said that the

Contd.....48/



people are not fully conscious of rearing improved variety of cattle. Artificial insemination is not adopted by any household. Although there is sufficient scope for rearing ducks and fowls, on a commercial basis, nobody has taken up so far. On the whole, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary may adopt suitable measures in order to make the people motivate towards enhancement of their economy by means of animal husbandry in a scientific manner.

#### Fishing:-

Fish is a favourite among the Namasudras. There was a time when the people could not think of their diet without flavour of fish. Those days are gone. At present, due to non-availability of beels and marshy lands, the people are facing extreme difficulty in getting fish in sufficient proportion for households consumption. Even then they manage somehow some quantity of fish by means of various methods and appliances which include mainly different types of nets, locally known as jaakin, jimti, pheluin, khewajaal and moglai jaal, etc, artificial barriers in shallow water, bamboo traps and baskets of various shape and size and also focus of light in shallow water at dark night. It may be mentioned here that the people have the habit of keeping a sizeable quantity of fish dried in the sunshine for future consumption. Moreover, some of the households also sell the surplus amount of fish in the nearby markets to maintain their livelihood. We have already mentioned in Tables XIX and XX that 7 nos. (4'5%) and 24 nos. (21'2%) of the total no. of 156 households have taken up fishing as primary and subsidiary occupations respectively.

With regard to cultured fisheries, we may refer to Table XXIII which indicates that the total area of land under fishery is 18 bighas only out of 1356 bighas of land possessed by 156 nos. of households. The percentage is worked out to be a mere 1'3 of the total area of land. The following table shows the distribution of fisheries in the selected villages.

Table - XXVII

#### Distribution of Fisheries.

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	No. of households having fishery.	No. Fishery	Area of land covered by fishery (in bigha)
1.	Kamargram	2	2	4
2.	Telikhalerpar.	1	1	6
3.	Poddarpar.	3	3	4
4.	Kishoripur	2	2	3
5.	Nayatila	-	-	-
6.	Rukni Pt-I	1	4	1
7.	Maladebpur East	-	-	-
8.	Baraitoli	-	-	-
9.	Kholna Pt-I	-	-	-
10.	Chibitachia P -IV	-	-	-



From the above table we come to know that only 9 households, out of the total no. of 156 households, have possessed one cultured fishery each. In other words, only 5.7% of the households have got fisheries. Our field investigation further reveals that only one household (Kamargram) has received an amount of Rs. 1000/- by selling fishes from his fishery. The production of another fishery (Rukni Pt-I) was taken away by the devastating flood. Two nos. of cultured fisheries, one measuring 3 bighas of land (Kamargram) and the other measuring 6 bighas of land (Telikhalerpar) were under construction during our field study. So far as production from the remaining 5 nos. of fisheries is concerned, the opinion of the households is that they will start selling only when fishes grow well. Of course, they use to catch fish occasionally from the fisheries for household consumption.

On the whole, it can be inferred that the people have gradually realised the importance of fishery as a profitable source of income. The Department of Fishery may provide them adequate facilities like scientific demonstration, supply of suitable variety of fish seeds at subsidised rates and also supply of food, etc for development of fishery which will, in turn, augment the economy of the people.

#### Annual Income :

'The general experience of a social researcher in the collection of data on the total income of a population is not encouraging. Very often it may not be possible to rely entirely on the stated figures relating to the total income of a family from all possible sources. The problem becomes more acute when no genuine counter-checks are available for the purpose. The respondents may be quite honestly ignorant of the actual income of the family or may deliberately mis-state them.'<sup>10</sup>

In spite of the limitations, we have attempted here to get a picture of the annual income of the households. Table XXVIII shows the gross annual income of the households from various sources.

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10. The Savaras of Mancotta by R.K. Kar, P. 128.



TABLE XXVIII

Gross Annual Income of the households from various sources. (in Rs)

Sl. No.	Name of the village	No. of house-holds.	Total No. of members	Cultivation	Bamboo & cane works	Daily wage	Fishing	Business	Service	Total income	Per capital income.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.	Kamargram	29	166	77050	81800	17200	8500	17000	27600	229150	1380' 42
2.	Telikhalerpar	24	123	62900	57900	19000	1000	11400	24000	176200	1432' 52
3.	Poddarpar.	9	58	35650	3000	-	16900	5800	10000	71350	1230' 17
4.	Kishoripur	8	56	25380	-	8400	-	-	-	34280	612' 14
5.	Nayatila-	8	53	14100	2000	9000	14000	-	31400	70500	1320' 19
6.	Rulmi Pt-I	16	112	62950	-	5500	7200	10000	57300	142950	1276' 34
7.	Mahadebpur East.	12	97	56300	2500	6100	1500	18000	18000	102400	1055' 67
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	10	63	35050	2500	7800	10600	-	12000	67950	1078' 57
9.	Khelma Pt-I	24	130	74050	6000	14400	19000	21000	23600	158050	1215' 77
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	16	107	45450	-	10100	52100	11000	12600	131250	1226' 64
Total		156	965	489380	155700	97500	130800	94200	216500	1184080	1227' 03
				(41' 33%)	(13' 15%)	(8' 23%)	(11' 05%)	7' 96%	(18' 28%)	(100' 00%)	

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Table XXVIII shows that agriculture still plays the dominant role in the economic life of the people. Out of the total income from all sources 41'33% is derived exclusively from cultivation. The next important source of income is found to be service, the percentage being 18'28. But in this case, it must be remembered that only 19 households out of a total of 156 households i.e. 12'18% of the households are engaged in service. Hence it can be said that employment in service does not necessarily show any marked improvement of the overall economic condition of the households. Next comes the income from bamboo & cane works. Income from this source is estimated at 13'15%. It has already been mentioned some where in the Report that the practice of bamboo & cane works has been extensively carried out due to non-availability of suitable cultivable lands in sufficient proportion. In the two villages viz. Kamargram and Telikhalerpar 34'46% of the total income comes from bamboo and cane works against 34'53% of income from cultivation. It can, therefore, be said that in the two villages, households have laid much emphasis on bamboo and cane works for their livelihood. The preceding table also indicates that income from fishing, daily wage and business accounts for 11'05%, 8'23% and 7'96% respectively. The lowest percentage of income from business clearly indicates the total unawareness of the people towards earning a handsome amount of income from the business source. 8'23% of income derived from daily wage really brings to light the deteriorating economic condition of the households, under study. If we exclude the income derived from business and service, we will find that 73'76% of the total income is obtained from cultivation, bamboo and cane works, daily wage and fishing.

In short, after detailed analysis of income from various sources we can simply say that economic condition of the people is far from satisfactory. Moreover, it may be mentioned here that out of 156 nos. of households, 80 households (51'2%) live below poverty line i.e. the total annual income of these households is less than Rs. 6400/-. The no. of such households against each village is enumerated below:-

Kamargram - 18 Nos.,	Telikhalerpar - 11 nos
Poddarpar - 4 Nos.,	Kishoripur - 8 nos.
Nayatila - 5 Nos.,	Rukni Pt-I - 6 nos.
Mahadebpur East. - 4 Nos.,	Baraitoli Pt-I 6 nos.
Rhelma Pt-I 14 Nos,	Chibitabichia Pt-IV. 4 nos.



Our field study reveals that the average gross annual income of a household is to the tune of Rs. 7,590'26 only. Again, the per capita income is found to be Rs. 1227'03 (1985 price level). It is to be noted that the per capita income in the village Telikhalernar is the highest (Rs. 1432'52) while it is the lowest (Rs. 612'14) in the village Kishoripur. These two figures indicate certain interesting facts to be noted : i) Introduction of cash economy in the village Telikhalernar as a result of bamboo & cane works, business, service and sale of agricultural products, etc. has raised the per capita income of the people.

ii) Kishoripur is the only forest village included in our sample. Although we can not draw any conclusion about all the forest villages (499 nos) located in Assam simply on the basis of the per capita as found in the Kishoripur village even then it can be said that the people of the forest villages are economically worst off in comparison to the people of the revenue villages.

#### Annual Expenditure:

In order to get an idea about the economic condition of the house-holds under study, it is considered appropriate to throw some light on the annual expenditure pattern of the concerned households. Table XXIX reflects the average annual expenditure of the households on various items.

Table - XXIX.

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	No. of house holds.	Total No. of members.	Food	Dress & ornaments.	Education	Festival and ceremonies.	Health	Paid to labourers.	Miscellaneous	Total expenditure	Per capita expenditure
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.	Kamargram	29	166	158600	15700	2750	6450	8500	15550	1450	209000	1259'04
2.	Telikhalerpar.	24	123	123700	11800	5650	4300	6600	8150	1200	161400	1312'20
3.	Poddarpar.	9	58	48400	5900	2250	2100	2450	6750	450	68300	1177'59
4.	Kishnorbur	8	56	29200	2950	850	1050	1250	2360	400	38060	679'64
5.	Nayatila	8	53	51800	6400	2000	2200	3650	-	400	66450	1253'77
6.	Rukni Pt-I	16	112	95750	14350	5300	4500	8615	1725	800	131050	1170'09
7.	Maharuppur East	12	97	82000	5000	1800	3700	1800	3300	600	99200	1022'68
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	10	63	54850	4800	600	1800	3150	1200	500	66900	1061'90
9.	Khelma Pt-I	24	130	126000	12950	4300	4650	5750	10200	1200	165050	1269'62
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	16	107	107480	10500	1650	3000	3020	-	800	126450	1181'78
Total :-		156	965	877780	90350	27150	33750	45795	49235	7800	1131860	1172'91
				77'55%	7'98%	2'40%	2'98%	4'05%	4'35%	0'69%	100'00%	

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A cursory glance on the preceding table will reveal that food is the only item which accounts for 77'55% of the total amount of expenditure. That is to say, all the households have to spend practically the maximum percentage of income to have a square meal for their livelihood. The next item of expenditure which represents 7'98% is found to be dress and ornaments. It may be mentioned here that womenfolk are not usually found to be engaged in wearing clothes necessary for their day-to-day life. Normally they use to purchase from the market. Moreover, young girls spend heavy amount for fashionable dress, cosmetics and imitation ornaments. The boys also have the habit of spending a good amount for luxury. On the other hand, we find a dismal picture when we look into the extremely low percentage of expenditure in connection with the item 'education'. Only 2'40% of the total expenditure is incurred. This indicates that the households are not yet conscious about sending their children for education beyond high school stage. Again, expenditure on festivals & ceremonies is estimated at 2'92%. Out of the total amount of expenditure 4'05% is incurred on health. That the households do not hesitate to spend a substantial portion of their income in connection with medical treatment available in the nearby hospitals and dispensaries, etc, may well be understood. Expenditure on the item 'paid to labourers' accounts for 4'35% of the total expenditure. The item 'miscellaneous' included expenditure on tobacco, bidi, cigarette, kerosine and those not included in the different categories of the table. Here we find 0'69% of the total amount of expenditure.

Any way, the average annual expenditure per household has been estimated at Rs. 7255'51 only against an amount of Rs. 7590'26, the average annual income per household. It is, therefore, clear that the average household has a budget with a very low surplus amount of Rs. 334'75 only per annum. Out of 156 nos. of households, the total no. of households having surplus amount is estimated at 105, the percentage of households being 67'3. In this connection it is to be noted that some of the households have some amount of surplus although they happen to live below poverty line. The following table shows the distribution of households having surplus amount.

Table - XXX

Distribution of households having surplus amount.

Sl.No.	Name of the village	No. of households having surplus amount		
		above poverty line	below poverty line	Total households.
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Kamargram.	10	12	22
2.	Telikhalerpar.	11	8	19
3.	Poddarpar.	5	1	6
4.	Kishoripur	-	3	3
5.	Nayatila	3	2	5
6.	Rukni Pt-I	8	5	13
7.	Mahadebpur East.	5	2	7
8.	Baraitoli Bt-II	2	4	6
9.	Khelma Pt-I	8	6	14
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	8	2	10
Total =		60	45	105

The above table reveals that out of 105 nos. of households, 60 households (52%) have surplus amount and live above poverty line. On the other hand, 45 households (42%) have some amount of surplus although they live below poverty line. If we consider the total no. of 156 households, under study, we will find that only 38'46% of the total households have surplus amount and live above poverty line and 22'84% have some amount of surplus and live below poverty line. We have already found that per capita annual expenditure is to the tune of Rs. 1172'91 against per capita annual income of Rs. 1223'03. Hence per capita surplus is estimated at Rs. 44'12 only per annum.

On the whole, detailed analysis of the annual income and expenditure of the households, under investigation clearly points out to the fact that the economy is of subsistence type.



Rural Indebtedness :

Rural indebtedness is one of the prime factors responsible for the deplorable economic condition of the people of rural Assam. Small and fragmented holdings, low productivity due to traditional method of cultivation and vagaries of nature, extravagance in festivals and ceremonies and treatment of diseases, etc. are some of the major causes of rural indebtedness.

To relieve the chronic problem of indebtedness among the agricultural labourers, the Assam Rural Indebtedness Relief Act, 1975 was enacted. The Act sought to provide relief from indebtedness to the landless and marginal agricultural labourers and artisans. Besides it provided for a moratorium on payment of debt for a period of one year from the date of commencement of the Act. However, in the case of the scheduled caste landless agricultural labourers and artisans, the Act provided for total discharge of all debts incurred by the debtors. It also provided for restoration of possession of any land under any mortgage on the expiry of a period of five years from the date of incurring the debt and also release of all movable or immovable property which might have been transferred to a creditor under any pledge or mortgage. Significantly, the Assam Rural Labour Enquiry Report, 1974-75, estimated ~~and~~ a decline in the incidence of debt in the case of scheduled caste agricultural labour households from 46 percent in 1964-65 to 32.5 per cent in 1974-75. This trend is not encouraging as the average debt in monetary terms had registered an increase from Rs. 65.00 in 1964-65 to Rs. 201.00 in 1974-75<sup>11</sup>.

Our field study reveals that out of 156 households, the no. of households having indebtedness is 58 while that of debt free households is 98. If we calculate the percentage we will find that 37% of the total households are in debt against 63% of debt free households. The total amount of debt is estimated at Rs. 1,33,600.00. The amount of loan, it is observed, varies from Rs. 100.00 to Rs. 5,000.00. The average debt per household happens to be Rs. 856.41. Again the average debt per indebted household is found to be Rs. 2303.45. The total members of the households, as already mentioned, is 965. Therefore, the per capita debt is Rs. 138.45 only.

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11. Cosmogony of Caste and Social Mobility in Assam  
by Bimal J. Dev and Dilip K. Lahiri, P-145.

We come to know that the people of the households use to take loan from various sources viz. bank, DRDA, Gaon Panchayat level co-operative society and village moneylender etc. The amount of loan taken from the different banks viz. State Bank of India, Allahabad Bank and Cachar Grameen Bank etc. is estimated at Rs. 14,900/-. Again, the District Rural Development Agency has provided loan amounting to Rs. 13,500'00 only. An amount of Rs. 13,400'00 is taken from the Gaon Panchayat level Co-operative Societies located in different parts of the two districts. The rate of interest, in these cases, varies from 10% to 14% per annum. On the other hand, the amount of loan taken from village moneylenders is found to be Rs. 91,800'00. In this case, the rate of interest is extremely high i.e. 10% per month. Although the people are aware of the fact that they have to pay much more interest for the loan taken from village moneylenders even then they do not like to entangle themselves with the complicated procedures of banks or other agencies due to illiteracy. Sometimes the village moneylenders provide money to the needy persons against standing crops. The rate of interest, in this case, appears to be very difficult to determine. It has also come to the notice that 40 boghas of cultivable land have been handed over to different households on bandhaki system.

The following table shows the no. of households with indebtedness in the selected villages.:

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**TABLE - XXXI**  
Households with indebtedness

Sl. No.	Name of the village.	Total house holds.	No. of house holds having debt.	No. of house holds without any debt.	Amount of loan alongwith source (Amount in Rs)				Amount of loan (in Rs)	Rate of interest.
					Bank	DRDA	G.P. level Co-operative society.	Village people		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.	Kamargram	29	6	23	11600	-	4400	-	16000	14% p.a.
2.	Telikhalerpar.	24	15	9	2300	13500	7500	10800 + *3500	37600	10% p.a. 10% p.m. * 4 bighas of land on bandhak
3.	Poddarpar.	9	1	8	-	-	-	1500	1500	10% p.m.
4.	Kishoripur	8	6	2	-	-	-	15600	15600	10% p.m.
5.	Nayatila	8	3	5	-	-	-	*4900	4900	*6½ bighas of land on bandhak
6.	Rukni Pt-I	16	8	8	10000	-	1500	6800	9300	10% p.a. 15 to 20% p.m.
7.	Mahadebpur East.	12	4	8	-	-	-	7500	7500	10% p.m.
8.	Baraitoli Pt-II	10	7	3	-	-	-	3500 *15500	19000	10% p.m. *12½ bighas of land on bandhak
9.	Khelma Pt-I	24	3	21	-	-	-	500 *12000	12500	15% p.m. * 11 bighas of land on bandhak.
10.	Chibitabichia Pt-IV	16	5	11	-	-	-	1700 * 8000	9700	10% p.m. * 6 bighas of land on bandhak
Total =		156	58	98	14900	13500	13400	91800	133600	

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In fine, let us quote the following few lines which will reveal something more about indebtedness and rural economy of the Barak Valley:

'After the transfer of the transfer of power in 1947 several reformatory laws, such as abolition of Zamindari system, Tenancy Act, and the land Ceiling Act have been enacted. But these have only resulted in the further impoverishment of the peasant and flourishing of the landowner and the moneylenders. Big landowners are able to increase their quantum of land by dubious means. Money lending class used to lend money from their own source at a high rate of interest but now these people take loan from the Bank for agricultural development which in turn is diverted towards giving loan to the peasants at high rate of interest higher than that of Bank. With this Bank money they are able to squeeze the poor and even the marginal farmers. Because of the complexities of the procedure of taking loan from the bank, the peasants are afraid of approaching the Bank Authorities for fear of harassment. In some case poor peasants are incapable of refunding the loan and in the process lose their land to the moneylenders. Moderately rich peasants possessing 30/40 bighas of land are also not always able to cultivate their whole land for want of input like seeds, fertiliser, irrigation and remunerative price of their products and are forced to part with their land. During the lean season they are forced to sell a plot of land or farm cattle to bear educational expenditure of their wards. Marginal farmer, small peasants are living on subsistence level. A silent change is thus going on in Cachar where the rich peasants are becoming middle peasants - Bilaipur is a village in Kathakal reserve forest of Hailakandi Subdivision. The village is called the granary of Cachar. They do not have any communication system. If they are to reach market they will have to walk 11 k.m. So they are forced to sell their paddy at the rate of Rs. 160/- per quintal to town businessman who sell the paddy in Hailakandi market at Rs. 240 per quintal. This is the general case in majority of the villages of Cachar. More than 2 lakh families in Cachar are the worst victim of moneylending business. The result is 30% landless peasants are wage earners. 50% of the land remain under the control of the moneylending class. On the other hand there are instances of how, taking advantage of the political power, political tonts who were once almost a beggar a few years back have now become very big landowner. In the year 1950-51 there were enough surplus lands in Cachar which they have

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grabbed with the help of bureaucracy. Secondly, by simple theft they have accumulated huge amount of money marked for development of the village economy which they are using for moneylending business.

Behind this backdrop, the rural economy of Cachar present a horrible picture. Huge amount of money is being concentrated in the hands of big landowners moneylenders. They do not re-invest them for productive purposes. Rather this huge amount is used for typical feudal consumptions like purchase of jewellery, construction of mansion, arrangement of lavish ceremonies, maintenance of concubines, political tonts and goondas while the balance is invested in merchant trading, black marketing, speculation, usury, etc. leaving a deep and adverse effect upon the socio economic environment. The generation of free capital from agriculture which is the basis for industrial development is, thus nil. <sup>12</sup>

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12. 'The District of Cachar - Peasant Movement, Economic Structure, Some Suggestions' by Girban Biswas in the book 'Land Reforms and Peasant Movement' edited by Atul Goswami, p- 212.

Chapter VITRENDS OF CHANGE

A society is not <sup>static</sup> rather it is dynamic in nature. In other words, change is inevitable. 'The study of change in a society generally reveals that some of the changes are endogenic in nature, while some are exogenic. Some changes may take place spontaneously i.e. due to the internal stress and strains within the community, changes may also be inspired and directed by the outside agencies deliberately in a planned programme'.<sup>14</sup>

We have observed during our field investigation that certain changes have also taken place in the selected villages. Let us first discuss about the changes in the traditional institutions viz. Family and Marriage. A family is the smallest social unit and the two important forms of family are nuclear and joint. Nuclear family consists of parents and unmarried children while the joint family consists of parents and the families of their children. Irawati Karve defines joint family as 'a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred'.<sup>15</sup> In the recent past the joint family system existed in the villages. Now -a-days, due to many factors mainly economic hardship and development of ideology of individualism and materialism this system has gradually disintegrated resulting formation of nuclear family system. Our field study shows that out of 156 nos. of households the number of joint families is 44 only against 112 Nos. of nuclear families, the percentage being 39%. It is beyond doubt that that after a lapse of few years the number of nuclear families will be much more than the present.

With regard to change in the marriage system we observe that the marriageable age of boys and girls has gone up in recent times. Previously girls were married after puberty and before the attainment of twenty years. At present, the case is totally different. Puberty is not considered as a signal for arrangement of marriage. Rather, marriage of a girl generally takes place after crossing over the age bar of twenty years. The boys also do not like to enter into matrimonial alliance.

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- 14 Social Relations in an Ahom Village by Indira Barua, P. 152  
 15 Kinship organisation in Indira by Irawati Karve, P. 10

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until they become self-dependent. As a result, they are generally not in a position to get married before attainment of twenty five years. Education has also played a positive role in elimination of marriage at early age. It may also be mentioned here that expenditure on celebration of marriage has been curtailed by the people as far as practicable. Extra pomp and grandeur has been usually avoided. Invitees are less in number. It is also a happy sign to note that the number of marriage between the Namasudra people of the Barak Valley and their counterparts in the Brahmaputra Valley is increasing day by day due to interaction with the people of the two Valleys.

Now let us direct our observation towards change in the treatment of diseases. Instead of offering worship to the malevolent deities or using indigenous medicine in order to cure various types of diseases, a tendency has gained ground among the people to approach the nearest allopathic, ayurvedic and homoeopathic doctors. Moreover, establishment of medical hospitals/dispensaries/sub-centres, etc, within easy reach of the people has widened their mental horizon in accepting scientific treatment of diseases without delay.

The attitude of the people towards modern education has also undergone sea change. Previously they engaged their children in agricultural or allied activities. But, at present, they like to send their children, irrespective of sex, to the schools by any means. They have realised the importance of education in the present day world. It is gratifying to note that 79% of the students enrolled in the year 1985 in 10 Nos. of L.P. Schools located in and around the selected villages belong to the Namasudra community. Out of 42 students prosecuting higher studies in different colleges from the selected villages, the no. of Namasudra boys and girls is found to be 17 and 4 respectively. Although the figures are not at all satisfactory, even then their change in mental attitude towards higher education is noteworthy.

So far as their religious beliefs and practices are concerned, the people appear to be less interested, now-a-days, in worshipping innumerable gods and goddesses of the Hindu religion. Of course, they like to celebrate Durga Puja and Kali Puja in a befitting manner. It may also be pointed out here that their belief in superstition has undergone change to a great extent.



Now let us see if there are any significant changes in material culture. In the context of dress and ornaments we find that modern style of dress has proactively replaced the old fashion particularly among the growing generation due to the effect of modernisation. Dhoti, their traditional dress is, at present, confined to the old generation only. Females are in the habit of using chemical ornaments, cosmetics, variety bags and other luxurious articles which were quite unknown to them a few decades back. Watch, Cycle, radio, sewing machine, torch and goggles etc. have been found to have possessed by some of the households of the selected villages. Hair design as found in the Hindi films has become very popular among the teenagers. Utensils made of stainless steel have occupied a favourable place in the households. Cane products like chair, murha etc. are also in use. According to our field study the number of notable household properties belonging to 156 Nos. of households is as follows.

Cycle- 41, Radio- 46, Watch- 102, Plough- 135, Boat- 79, Fishing net-131, Rickshaw- 2, Sewing machine-4 and Knitting machine-1.

We find some change in food habit also. Their normal diet consists of rice with dal and vegetable etc. Fish is a favourite. Meat is also taken by them occasionally. At present some of them have cultivated the habit of taking bread prepared from atta purchased from the shop. Also they use to drink tea without milk. Of course, these changes can not be referred to as positive changes. Poverty has compelled them to do so. On the other hand, cigarette smoking is observed among the people. Another remarkable change is that some of the households of the selected villages have started the habit of rearing poultry which was, till the other day, prohibited among the Hindu people.

The house type has also undergone structural change. Those who can afford, have constructed pucca Assam Type houses. Of course, the no. of households having such type of house is very limited. Field investigation reveals that among 156 nos. of households, the total no. of living houses is estimated at 336 out of which the no. of thatched houses is maximum i.e., 260.

Again, the no. of Katcha Assam Type houses is found to be 65 and that of pucca A.T. houses is 11 only. Any way, we can say that a change is gradually taking place among the people to replace the traditional house pattern.

Although use of fertiliser, high yielding varieties of paddy, pesticides and improved agricultural implements are not in vogue among the people, it is expected that in the near future they will adopt these practices due to contact with outside people as well as scientific demonstration of the Agriculture Department.

Mention may also be made of occupational mobility. Previously, agricultural practices were extensively carried out for subsistence. In other words, agriculture was the mainstay of the people. Cultivable lands were not only fertile but also more than sufficient in proportion to population. Increase of population on the one hand and fragmentation of land holdings on the other, have compelled the people, at present, to search for other sources of livelihood. Our field study clearly indicates that out of 156 nos. of households, 60'9% are engaged in cultivation, 13'5% in bamboo and cane works, 12'2% in service, 5'1% in business, 4'5% in fishing and 3'8% in daily wage.

Any way, we can assume that the effects of mass communication like radio, television and newspaper, etc, road transport facilities, railways, post offices, educational and financial institutions, weekly and daily markets, science and technology and development plans and programmes of the Government have generated gradual change in the life and culture of the Namasudra people inhabiting the Barak Valley.

Before we come to the end of this chapter we like to discuss about the impact of family planning measures & birth control, inter-caste marriage, untouchability and atrocities and prohibition measures with special emphasis on the Namasudra people of the selected villages.

#### Family Planning Measures & Birth Control.

Exponential growth of population in a particular community retards the economic development of the people belonging to that community and in order to check effectively the alarming growth population the only remedial solution is the adoption of scientific methods of family planning and birth control. Otherwise any attempt for the all round development of the people will be nothing but a wild goose chase only.

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'There is no denying the fact that considerable material progress has been achieved in India since Independence but it failed to raise the percapita income of families because of the faster growth of population. Remedy lies in the effective economic development. It is said that development itself works as contraceptive in western countries. Development does not necessarily mean only development in Industry and Agriculture, Science and Technology. Science and Technology must reach the people so that their social outlook, thought and habit is simultaneously transformed. India has entered the space age but unfortunately people still believe in existence of the hand of God on child birth. New age should be followed by the creation of new man. Integrated development is the key to the real development. Enough capital has been invested for economic development but the lot of the people has further deteriorated. Rs. 3,641,697 has been spent in the Silchar subdivision alone for family planning and birth control but people living 7 km away from Silchar town has never seen a man of the family planning department not to speak of receiving any help or guidance in this respect' 16.

So far as our field study is concerned, we interviewed 131 respondents out of a total of 156, leaving 25 nos. outside our purview of enquiry due to some factors viz. old age, physical infirmity, widowerhood and bachelorhood, etc of the respondents. Our enquiry reveals that out of 131 nos. of respondents 20 persons i.e. 15% of them vehemently oppose to adopt family planning and birth control measures, the adoption of which, according to them, is an immoral act against Nature. Their dogmatic view is that a child is the gift of God and man has nothing to do with procreation. On the other hand, 111 nos. i.e. 85% of the respondents, inspite of their belief in God in respect of child birth, support family planning and birth control measures but curiously enough nobody has come forward to take advantage of these measures. They have heard about vasectomy, tubectomy and contraceptives, etc, but they do hesitate to accept them perhaps due to ignorance, illiteracy, psychological obsession and religious sentiment etc.

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16. 'Population and Family Planning : A case of Some Villages in Cachar' by Girban Biswas in the book 'The Pattern and Problems of Population in North-East India' edited by Dr. B. Datta Roy, P-389



The respondents when asked about the habit of taking help of indigenous medicine viz. use of medicinal plants or herbs for prevention of pregnancy as well as performance of abortion, have replied in the negative. It is now crystal clear that it is the bounden duty of the Government to remove the prejudices from the mind of the people about these measures. If the Government machinery is directed properly towards popularisation of the scientific methods of family planning and birth control amongst the rural people with all possible ways and means, a day will certainly come when the people will realise its paramount importance and will voluntarily accept these measures for the sake of their own prosperity.

#### Inter-caste marriage:

Inter-caste marriage means the union of a man and woman belonging to two different castes. According to sociologists, inter-caste marriage existed in the very ancient India. The strict laws of endogamy came into force only when the varna system was transformed into the caste system. This leads to difficulties in finding a bridegroom resulting in such malpractices as dowry, unsuitable marriages, bride price etc. come into existence. The sole means to putting an end to such malpractices is the encouragement of inter-caste marriages. Two forms of inter-caste marriage were accepted - anuloma and pratiloma marriages.<sup>17</sup>

As a matter of fact, not a single case of inter-caste marriage is reported from the villages selected for our study. In this respect, the respondents appear to be very very orthodox in nature. Signs of happiness glow over their faces when they comment that inter-caste marriage is not taking place in their villages. We can, therefore, consider that until and unless the educated section of the Namasth community exhibits inclination towards such type of marriage it will be extremely difficult for the illiterate section to accept it easily due to their strong belief in the caste system.

According to Dr. G.S. Ghurye, the conflict originating in casteism can be removed by encouraging inter-caste marriages. Co-education should be introduced at the primary level and boys and girls should be given opportunity to come together. This will lead to improvement of behaviour between different sexes simultaneously with which casteism will be actively refuted. Inter-caste marriage will be encouraged and the individuals

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17. Indian Society and Social Institutions by Ram Nath Sharma, P-121.

marrying outside their own castes will be instrumental in creating an atmosphere that will be fundamentally opposed to casteism.<sup>18</sup>

It may be pointed out here that the Government of Assam has launched an ambitious scheme in order to provide with special incentive for inter-caste marriage which will gradually help in eradicating the evils of casteism, so deep rooted amongst the people.

#### Untouchability & Atrocities.

Prior to the enactment of the Government of India Act, 1935, the Scheduled Castes were known as the depressed castes or untouchable castes. By untouchability we mean certain disabilities viz. religious, social, economic and political which are enforced by the higher castes upon the scheduled castes. The prevailing caste system in India is mainly responsible for untouchability because of the fact that the scheduled castes are supposed to be low in the social hierarchy. Moreover, racial, religious and social factors may also be considered as some of the causes of untouchability.

We have already referred to various safeguards and provisions embodied in the Constitution of India in favour of the Scheduled Castes, in the previous chapter. To avoid repetition we pass on to the untouchability offences Act, 1955 which reads- It is an offence to prevent any person on the ground of untouchability (a) from entering any place of public worship which is open to other persons, professing the same religion (b) from worshipping or offering prayers or performing any religious service in any place of public worship or bathing in or using the waters of any sacred tank, well, spring or water-course in the same religion; and (c) from access to or use of shop, hotel, public restaurant or place of public entertainment or public conveyance or hospital, dispensary or educational institution or charitable trust.

But it is a matter of great resentment that in spite of various constitutional provisions and legislative measures the cherished goal of total eradication of untouchability has not been possible in India. Mazumadar and Madan have presented a nerve-raising description of untouchability prevalent in some parts of the country in the following few lines:

'The disabilities which a person has to suffer as a result of his belonging to a low caste are so many and so heavy that a whole

class of such depressed castes, totalling about fifty to sixty million persons, has arisen in India to-day. The worst affected by caste incompetence are the so-called 'untouchables', spread all over India, mere contact with whom is believed to result in pollution. In South India, where casteism is predominant even in urban political life, there are also castes of 'unseeables', seeing whom would pollute a 'twice-born'. Consequently, in South India there is a definite check on the territorial mobility of lower castes. They can not go out of their localities and may venture outside only after nightfall. Untouchables nowhere may draw water from a common well, or buy necessities of life from a common shop, or even though they are Hindus, enter a temple. They may not talk to high caste people from a distance nearer than that prescribed. They are often denied the use of public conveyances, roads and schools. In some parts of the country, their shadow carries pollution and they should not approach public thoroughfares without warning, or walk on them in such manner as to allow their shadow to fall on, or even be trodden over by, a Brahman. In one part of the Madras State, the untouchables and Pariahs can only use the roads at mid-day, when the sun is vertically overhead and the shadow is cast over a negligible distance'.<sup>19</sup>

With regard to atrocities committed upon the members of the scheduled castes Bhakta Das comments :

'Atrocities against Harijans in the country (are) continuing to mount, notwithstanding the various measures adopted by the Government. Murder, rape, arson and violence against these weaker sections of the society are acquiring new dimensions. Efforts made by the Government to ensure unhindered march of Harijans towards equality were not commensurate with the magnitude of the problem. The result achieved was not therefore the answer to the crying need. Government have so far not succeeded in getting for them freedom from poverty, inequality and social injustice. In spite of constitutional guarantees, protective legislations and development programmes, the vast majority of the members of these communities still continue to be impoverished. According to the latest report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Caste the number of atrocities on Scheduled Castes increased from 6197 in 1976 to 10,879 in 1977, 1,50,33 in 1978'.<sup>20</sup>

We have so far attempted to bring into focus the evils of untouchability and atrocities which are still taking place in some parts of India even after a lapse of several decades of India's independence.

19. An Introduction to Social Anthropology by Majumdar & Madan, p-224

20. A Glimpse of the Scheduled Castes and their Socio-economic Development in Assam by Bhakta Das, P-9



But if we look into Assam we will find a totally different picture. Bimal J. Dev and Dilip Kr. Lahiri opine : ' The Protection of Evil Rights Act, 1955 is in force in Assam but no case has been registered under the Act during 1978. This is in sharp contrast to 716 cases in Gujarat, 547 in Tamilnadu (upto 30<sup>th</sup> 1978) and 398 from Madhya Pradesh. In Assam if certain social disabilities are suffered by the Scheduled Castes, the same can be said equally about some of the so called high castes. Thus certain categories of Brahmins have a low status in the social hierarchy and the Brahmins having good social background refuse to rub shoulders with them not to speak of establishing any matrimonial link. As the social climate in the rural areas of Assam is congenial for a better understanding among different caste groups, younger generation can be made agents of social change in spreading the values and norms of a composite Indian culture' <sup>21</sup>

It is now crystal clear that the evils of untouchability and atrocities have not jeopardised the social fabric in Assam as a whole although the higher castes exhibit, off and on, some degree of superiority complex over the scheduled castes. Our field investigation also reflects the same fact. In fine, we can simply say that the two banks of the river Barak have accommodated the people of various castes for centuries together maintaining peace and tranquility.

#### Prohibition Measures.

The Constitution of India lays down a Directive Principle of State Policy enjoining upon the state to endeavour for the improvement of public health by bringing ~~about~~ about prohibition. In pursuance of the Directive Principles the Government of Assam have promulgated the following four Prohibition Acts: 1) Assam Liquor Prohibition Act, 1952 ( Assam Act I of 1953) ii) Assam opium Prohibition Act, 1947, iii) Assam Ganja and Bhang Act, 1948 and iv) Assam Excise Act. It may be mentioned here that there is total prohibition of opium, ganja and bhang in the districts of Assam. But in case of consumption of liquor all the districts have not been declared dry so far. ' In order to accelerate the prohibition network in the state of Assam, the Government of Assam has constituted a State Prohibition Council with a Chariman and 13 other members. This Council very often holds seminars, take part in

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21. Cosmogony of Caste and Social Mobility in Assam  
by Bimal J. Dev and Dilip K. Lahiri, p- 151



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exhibitions displaying evil effects of drinking. They also produce literatures in order to mobilise public opinion against ill effects of drinking.<sup>22</sup>

(C) The Assam Liquor Prohibition Act is in force in the two districts of Karimganj and Cachar. Our field investigation reveals that the people are fully conscious of the deleterious effects of consumption of liquor. The practice of preparation of liquor is totally absent in the selected villages. It can not, however, be said that nobody is in the habit of drinking liquor. Some persons do consume it quite secretly. But it is a matter of great satisfaction to know from the respondents that not a single household out of the selected villages has brought misfortune by way of complete erosion in health and happiness, wealth and economy being addicted to consumption of liquor.

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22. A study on the Impact of Enforcing Liquor Prohibition among the Bodo Kacharis in a Rural Setting - Tribal Research Institute, Assam p- 16.

CHAPTER - VIICONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

The present study is a mild attempt to highlight the socio-economic conditions of the Namasudras inhabiting the Karimganj and Cachar districts, in short, the Barak Valley of Assam, Namasudras occupy the predominant position i.e. 32.97% of the total scheduled caste population in Assam although they happen to be next to the Patnis i.e. 27.5% of the total scheduled caste population in the Barak Valley.

Since independence several decades have already elapsed. In the meantime many plans and programmes have been taken up for the upliftment of the scheduled caste population as a whole, in the Five Year Plans. Moreover the scheduled caste people have got constitutional safeguards and protective legislation in favour of them. Even then nothing spectacular has been achieved so far.

Sincere effort is being made in this Report to bring ~~into~~ into limelight all facets of the Namasudra community right from their origin, social customs and habits to the prevailing economy amongst the people. For this purpose the whole Report is prepared under several chapters with detailed analysis.

In the first chapter, a general outline with reference to geographical area and location, soil and climatic condition, etc, of the two districts in which the people of the Namasudra community happen to live, is given. Moreover population figures in respect of Scheduled Caste and total population of the erstwhile Cachar district is shown as per 1971 Census. It has been found that scheduled caste and total population of the aforesaid district constitute 22.8% of the total S/C population and 11.7% of the total population of Assam respectively. We have also laid emphasis on the population projection which is based on the standard rate of 2.6% annual increase, upto 1985 for the erstwhile Cachar district. As our Report is meant exclusively for the Namasudra community of the Barak Valley, a short note dealing with origin, habitat, food and drink, marriage and family systems, etc, of the Namasudras is also incorporated in to this chapter.

In Chapter II we have mentioned about the procedure of selecting villages and households on the basis of random sampling alongwith preparation of household and village schedules in order to collect necessary data for our study. It is our motto to give a scientific treatment to the Report rather than writing literary jargon.



In Chapter III a detailed analysis of population characteristics is dealt with. The percentage of Namasudra population to total population of the selected villages has been found to be 73'24. Again, total no. of Namasudra households in 10 nos. of villages is 780 out of which the no. of selected households is 156. The total population of 456 nos. of households is estimated at 965 only. In Table VI we have shown the distribution of population according to age-group. Here we find the percentage of population as 21'5 and 18'2 in the age-groups '0-10 yrs' and '10-20 yrs' respectively. Sex-ratio as shown in Table VII is 1000:918.

A comprehensive analysis of infrastructural facilities available in and around the selected villages is presented in Chapter IV. It has been observed that although the villages are located at a distance not more than 4 K.M. away from the nearest motorable road, the condition of the roads is not at all satisfactory. Furthermore, public bus service is also pitiable. It is seen that the maximum distance between a village and the District Headquarter is 75 K.M. (Table VIII). People have to face extreme difficulties to reach the motorable road during summer season because of the fact that in several villages people have got no alternative than to take help of country boat. As regards civic amenities it has been observed that people of the villages are fortunate enough to derive benefits from the services of post office, telegraph office and state dispensary, etc. If we take into account the educational facilities we will find that in every village there is one L.P. school. Enrolment of students can not be referred to as poor. But after the primary stage of education is over, many Namasudra students give up reading in High Schools. Table XII reveals the fact clearly. Only 562 students belonging to all castes and communities are found to read in as many as 17 nos. of M.E., High and Higher Secondary schools in the year 1985 from the selected villages. Attitude of the people towards college education can not be said to be satisfactory. Only 21 Namasudra students, 17 males and 4 females from the selected villages are found to have received education in 1985 in different colleges located in the two districts. Even then a gradual change in achieving higher education is noticed among them for better living. According to our field study, the percentage of literacy is 36'5 only.

People in the selected villages have to face acute problem for drinking water. They have to fetch water from the ponds, katcha wells and the nearby rivers. As regards marketing facilities it can be said that there are daily, bi-weekly and weekly markets in and around



the selected villages. Hence the people are in an advantageous position to sell or buy their commodities without much difficulty. Moreover there are 10 nos. of G.P. level Co-operative societies to cater the needs of the people of these villages.

In Chapter V we have dealt with the most important aspect of our study i.e. occupation and economy of the people. It has been found that 60'9% of the households take up cultivation as primary occupation while 13'5% and 12'2% of the households take up bamboo and cane works and service as primary occupations respectively. On the other hand, 72'4% of the total households have got subsidiary occupation. 27'4% and 26'5% of these households have practised cultivation and daily wage as subsidiary occupations. Again, the percentages of earner, earning dependent and non-earning dependent are 30'1, 27 and 42'9 respectively. In Table XXII showing land holding pattern of households we find that the percentages of households having '0-5 bighas' and '5-10 bighas' of land are 43'6 and 28'2 respectively. This indicates clearly the low fragmented holdings upon which the people have to depend for livelihood. It may be noted here that 20'5% of the households do not possess any cultivable land. The average land holding per household is found to be 8'6 bighas only. Cultivation of paddy is mainly practised by the people. The yield per bigha in respect of Sali, Ahu and Boro is found to be 6 mds, 5 mds and 4'1 mds respectively. With regard to the pattern of annual income of the households, it may be said that 44'33% of the total income is obtained from cultivation, 18'28% from service and 13'15% from bamboo & cane works, etc. The average gross annual income of a household is estimated at Rs. 7590.26 only. It may also be noted that 80 households out of 156 nos. of households of the selected villages live below poverty line. Again if we look into the pattern of annual expenditure of the households we will find that 77'5% of the total amount of expenditure is incurred for food while 7'98% is meant for dress and ornaments. In respect of education 2'4% of the total amount of expenditure is spent only. The average annual expenditure ~~xxxxxx~~ per household is found to be Rs. 7255.51 against an amount of Rs. 7590.26, the average annual income per household. So we find a very low surplus amount of Rs. 334.75 per annum per household. On the whole, it may be said that the economy of the households, under study, is of subsistence type. We have also mentioned, in this chapter, about the fundamental causes of rural indebtedness. Moreover we have referred to



various provisions offered by the Assam Rural Indebtedness Relief Act, 1975 for the benefit of the poor people. We come to know from our field investigation that 58 households (37%) of the total no. of 156 households are in debt. The average debt per household is worked out to be Rs. 856.41 against an amount of Rs. 2303.45, the average debt per indebted household. The per capita debt is estimated at Rs. 138.45 only. It has been observed that people are not very much interested in taking loan from the banks, co-operative societies and other Govt. agencies. Rather they like to approach the village moneylender to take loan at the cost of higher rate of interest. Table XXXI will support this fact.

In chapter VI we have concentrated our attention to throw light upon the silent changes that have taken place among the Namasudras. We have discussed about the changes in the traditional institutions viz. Family and Marriage. It has been observed that the traditional joint family system has undergone significant changes giving way to nuclear family system. Out of 156 nos. of households 44 households (39%) are joint families only. The marriageable age of boys and girls has also gone up in comparison to the earlier times. In respect of treatment of diseases, high education, religious beliefs and practices, etc. changes have taken place. Moreover we observe significant changes in material culture viz. in dress and ornaments, hair style, household articles, food habits, house type, occupational pattern, etc. to name only a few. We have finally dealt with family planning and birth control measures, inter-caste marriage, untouchability and atrocities and prohibition measures, in this chapter.

#### Suggestions.

Just before we attempt to put forward our suggestions for accelerated development of the Namasudra people inhabiting the Karimganj and Cachar districts of Assam, we can not resist our temptation to quote the following analytical suggestions meant for the development of the scheduled castes people of Assam as a whole, from a resourceful article:

'There should be a universal Bench Mark Survey for the scheduled caste families in Assam just like the Bench Mark Survey conducted for the Scheduled tribes within sub-plan area so that required data for proper planning and also the data on the number of families below the poverty line could be made available to the planners as well as to those who are implementing the development schemes.



Secondly, the problems of the scheduled castes people should be studied in their proper perspective and the result of these research studies should be made available to all concerned.

The schemes so far implemented under Special Component Plan for scheduled castes should be evaluated so that the defects could be found out and future plans could be formulated in a better way so that the benefits quickly reach the target groups.

Monitoring Cell should function more vigorously so that feed banks are disseminated to all concerned, a better co-ordination can be established among the development departments responsible for implementing the component plans and remedial measures can properly be ensured.

Family card system should be introduced wherein the assistance or benefits received by a scheduled castes family will be recorded so that there may not be duplication in counting. This will enable the authority to find out the actual ~~xxx~~ number of families benefitted. It may also be possible for the concerned development departments to record the incremental increments that a family receives from the package of schemes after a gap of one year or so<sup>23</sup>.

On the basis of our field study and personal experiences at the time of conducting the field study, we would like to offer the following suggestions :-

1) People should be motivated to acquaint themselves with the scientific method of cultivation. Necessary training courses/ demonstration should be imparted to the interested cultivators for proper use of pesticides and fertilisers to obtain maximum yield. High yielding varieties may be introduced in large-scale. Vigorous efforts must be carried out in order to control the fury of the river Barak ~~Wak~~ and other tributaries, failing which, marked development in agriculture will be next to impossible.

2) Pre-primary schools should be established within the villages with a view to imparting education to the children below 6 years of age. Educational institutions viz. High and Higher Secondary schools should be provided with all possible facilities so that students after completion of primary stage of education get emotionally attracted

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23. 'Assam Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes-Retrospective and Perspective' by B.N. Bordoloi in the book 'Planning in North East India' edited by K. Alam, P-77.



to the institutions for further study. Steps should be taken so as to minimise school drop-outs.

3) Family Welfare Department should adopt suitable measures to make the people aware of family planning programmes not only to reduce population pressure but also to gear up the rural economy to a great extent.

4) Villages should be linked with motorable roads so that the people do not suffer a lot in their movement from place to place and transportation of agricultural products and essential commodities becomes easier.

5) Loans in terms of cash/kind should be provided to the person who is actually in need of it. Care should be taken so that the loanee utilises the amount of loan in right earnest and misappropriation does not take place in any side. Political pressure should be left aside at the time of issuing loan. complicated procedures at the time of granting loans by the Gaon Panchayat level co-operative societies, nationalised banks, rural banks and other financial institutions, etc. should be avoided as far as practicable in order to make the poor people free from the grip of village moneylenders.

6) Provision of safe drinking water should be made available. At present people have to fetch water from the ponds, wells and the nearby rivers.

7) Medical hospitals and dispensaries should be furnished with modern equipments for proper diagnosis and better treatment of diseases.

8) People should be motivated by the Department of Animal Husbandary & Veterinary to enhance their economy by means of rearing improved variety of cattle, goats, ducks and fowls, etc. in a scientific manner. Artificial insemination should be made popular.

9) Attempts should be made by the Department of Fishery to stimulate the people for developing cultured fishery which will ultimately augment their economy.

10) Importance should be given on improvement of the cottage industries viz. bamboo & cane works. It has been found that many households have adopted bamboo & cane works as the primary source of income for livelihood. Training facilities, grants-in-aid and loans in cash/kind should be provided so that the people may depend entirely upon it.



11) Benefit should be percolated to the poorest of the poor belonging to the Namasudra community under the provisions of the Scheduled Caste Component Plan.

12) The crying need of the hour is to make all out efforts to create a congenial atmosphere for establishing matrimonial relationship through inter-caste marriage so that assimilation of the people belonging to diverse castes and communities takes place effectively.

Let us fervently hope the Namasudra people will come forward ungrudgingly to squeeze maximum benefits out of the facilities provided under various developmental plans and programmes specially designed for the improvement of the Scheduled Castes population of the State. Can we not expect a step further that the people of the Namasudra Caste will emerge as the torchbearer of progress and prosperity before the dawn of the twenty first century, to be followed by the people of other scheduled castes living simultaneously in Assam ?

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ANNEXURE - I.

Scheduled Caste population (Caste-wise) in Assam  
Source: Statistical Hand Book, 1980

District	Bansphor	Bhutma	Brittia	Dhupl	Dugla	Hira	Jal	Jhalo	Kalbarta	Lal	Mahara	Methar	Muchi	Patni	Sutra	Total	P.C. to Total S/C Population	
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Goalpara	1366	2309	1783	912	517	4776	578	10868	19592	12	120	495	4134	52926	1251	18367	120006	13.15
Kamrup	1941	3468	7238	1411	27	9398	553	7257	42347	4	10	2080	4473	76312	455	7793	164762	18.05
Darrang	245	514	5619	1153	55	3159	127	8574	30122	-	107	690	3182	22000	51	1506	77104	8.45
Lakhimpur	22	334	1981	100	34	363	17	1185	24135	4	3	97	635	11634	-	340	41089	4.50
Dibrugarh	613	578	1337	1720	29	276	456	678	23710	3	105	1456	1976	3318	112	333	36700	4.02
Subsagar	520	1014	5171	1212	247	345	551	716	69488	4	236	752	4743	927	112	82	86120	9.44
Nowong	376	1267	4525	2257	387	14237	100	2305	60208	1	175	889	3375	70688	4469	2004	167263	18.33
Cachar	744	12495	351	11233	2715	9	54	1295	23620	12	116	665	17704	57244	78433	2177	208867	22.89
Karbi Anglong	7	148	65	623	-	57	100	112	1490	1	24	145	482	5680	906	34	9820	1.08
M.C. Hills	54	48	27	114	-	2	1	3	107	4	-	27	128	113	121	77	826	0.09
Assam	6093	22175	28097	20735	4011	32622	2537	32988	294819	45	896	7296	40778	300842	85910	32718	912557	100.00



LIST OF VILLAGES WITH 40% OR ABOVE NAMASUDRA POPULATION  
IN THE KARIMGANJ AND CACHAR DISTRICT OF ASSAM

Name of the Block	Name of the G.P.	Name of the Village	Total No. of house-holds.	Total popu-lation.	Total No. of Namasudra households.	Total No. of Nama-sudra po-pulation.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
South Karim-ganj Develop-ment Block.	Jotkapon G.P.	1. Poddarpar	152	632	69	315
		2. Choradighirpar	146	819	96	567
		3. Suprakandi	152	778	124	636
		4. Solmara	108	647	104	623
		5. Pinnapar	225	1191	180	912
		6. Dakhin Nathupur	35	215	35	215
		7. Putimara	69	392	50	302
		8. Brojendra Nagar	193	1002	170	941
		9. Tinguri	100	586	100	586
		10. Kamargzam	146	842	143	829
		11. Maidamail	34	251	27	190
		12. Andakadi	40	270	40	270
		13. Jatai	93	532	68	349
		14. Surya Das	120	754	54	329
		15. Shyam Nagar	99	570	65	363
		16. Pirerchak	95	651	38	245
		17. Brahmin Sashan	42	272	21	130
		18. Uttar Nathupur	60	379	37	225
		19. Syedpur	26	129	26	129
	Kanchail Jabaiipur	20. Telikhalerpar	120	635	120	635
		21. Bhatgram	190	1137	80	468
	Subhas Nagar G.P.	22. Bagargool	250	1476	110	645
		23. Nakerkona	51	297	51	297
	Kaliganj G.P.	24. Mirzanagar	103	514	99	488
		25. Chatol	72	484	41	280
	Pharamposa G.P.	26. Keot Kona	200	1371	128	775
	Nilambar G.P.	27. Katagram	47	248	47	248



1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		28. Karikala	51	312	39	237
		29. South Kalachuk	114	651	49	292
	R.K. NAGAR	30. Poddarpar	60	390	45	295
	G.P.	31. Nallarpar	162	1135	65	475
		32. East Baruala	387	2586	176	1115
		33. Bhabanipur	100	696	40	270
	Candhigram	34. Paltawala	57	307	57	307
	G.P.	35. Nabingra,	250	1320	150	820
		36. Bijoypur	53	263	40	195
		37. Durgapur	99	431	78	327
		38. Sonapur Amdor	70	382	65	342
	R.K. Nagar	39. Sonapur Chonyala	65	286	53	226
	Dev. Block.	40. Kishoripur	40	245	40	245
	Wangirbond	41. Sonapur Lamarsit	43	235	42	229
	G.P.	42. Sonapur Nabingram	56	343	55	335
		43. Sonapur Jarulbari	34	165	34	165
	Gobindganj	44. Naya Babin	113	667	45	255
	Fakua G.P.	45. West Jarulbari	114	695	56	365
	Kazirbazar G.P.	46. Sonairpar	58	397	44	306
		47. Singlarpar	103	562	90	485
	Anipur G.P.	48. Baruala	188	951	95	495
		49. Amarkhal	176	1071	72	438
		50. Nayatila	41	275	41	275
	Badarpur	51. Bagua	92	722	59	480
	Dev Block.	52. Chatudaram	66	425	45	287
	N - W	53. Gualaghat	45	310	30	212
	Badarpur G. P.	54. Mirzapar Gaonpar	97	546	43	265
		55. Korikai	206	1195	90	517
	Pather					
	Kandi Dev.					
	Block.					



1	2	3	4	5	6	7
North Karimganj Dev. Block	Panighat Purahuria G.P.	56. Manikona	160	975	74	465
		57. Koilma	36	220	36	220
		58. Tukerpar	33	205	29	181
	Latu Dasgram G.P.	59. Ulukandi	40	258	40	258
Narsingpur Dev. Block	Palonghat G.P.	60. Rukni Pt-I	165	987	81	556
		61. Rukni Pt-II	268	1386	110	583
		62. Rukni Pt-IV.	306	1654	147	840
		63. Punimukh	257	1240	126	598
		64. Dharmigrant	505	2794	223	908
		65. Bhutankhal	63	365	40	225
	Dholai G.P.	66. Gojalghat West	162	1157	112	786
		67. Gojalghat East	125	871	87	595
		68. Jibangram	155	956	134	817
		69. Devipur East	124	860	56	385
		70. Mahadebpur East	81	635	60	492
		71. Bhubandhar F.V.	85	575	79	521
	Bhagabazar G.P.	72. Samneghat	175	1150	80	525
		73. Kulicherra F.V.	80	512	45	294
		74. French Nagar.	120	735	41	262
		75. Tulartol	79	508	53	325
Katlicherra Dev. Block	Rongpur G.P.	76. Roopacherra Basti.	78	413	40	228
Sonai Dev. Block.	Sonabarighat G.P.	77. Sildubi Grant	222	1496	195	1314
		78. Sildubi Pt-II	231	1551	205	1375
	Meherpur- Krishnapur G.P.	79. Syedpur Pt-II	120	752	95	595
Katigora Dev. Block	Kalain G.P.	80. Baraitoli Pt-II	90	575	50	315
		81. Bhatgram	147	932	125	788



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Katigorah Dev. Block	Kalain G.P.	82. Manipur Pt-I	102	670	81	524	
		83. Karkari Pt-IV.	78	475	52	317	
	Sonapur G.P.	84. Haribond Pt-I	89	448	80	406	
		85. Sonapur Pt-II	81	413	35	185	
		86. Natampur	150	956	105	672	
		87. Mahadebpur Pt-II	93	664	93	664	
	Gumra G.P.	88. Mahadebpur Pt-III	97	686	82	589	
		89. Khelma VII	110	815	100	742	
		90. Khelma I	130	686	120	621	
	Binnakandi G.P.	91. Kaptampur Pt-VIII (Tilka Nutan Basti)	36	233	36	233	
Lakhipur Dev. Block.	Rupairbali G.P.	92. Algapur Pt-I	95	483	38	197	
	Barakpar G.P.	93. Bethukandi	157	963	145	892	
	Baskandi Sonapur G.P.	94. Badripar Pt-IV	165	991	67	405	
	Dudhpatil G.P.	95. Chotta Dudh- patil Grant.	440	2578	202	1185	
Udarbond Dev. Block	Khaspur G.P.	96. Madhupur Pt-I	95	550	77	448	
	Rajnagar G.P.	97. Roypara	20	185	30	185	
Salchapra Dev. Block	Tarapur G.P.	98. Kalinagar Pt-II	77	473	31	192	
	Tapang G.P.	99. Chibitabichia Pt-V.	191	1378	82	636	
		100. Chibitabichia Pt-IV.	179	1281	80	535	
Grand Total =			12200	73325	7760	46325	

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