

# **Chapter-III**

## **Land and People**

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## LAND AND PEOPLE

### The Region

The two sample villages-Balaghat and Guriarpar under study are situated in the subdivision of Tufanganj of Cooch Behar district in West Bengal, India. West Bengal having a total population of 68.00 million according to 1991 census, is one of the densely populated states in India. Population density of West Bengal is 766 persons per square Km as compared to the national average of 267. Rural population of West Bengal constitutes 72.61 percent to the total population. The percentage of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe to the total population is 21.99 and 5.63 respectively. The literacy rate of the state (57.72 percent) is higher than the national rate (52.1 percent).

The district Cooch Behar is geographically situated in the Himalayan terai of West Bengal. It lies between 26°32'46" north latitude and 25°57'56" north latitude. The longitude of the eastern most point is 89°52'00" east and the longitude of the western most point is 88°45'02" east. It's about 20 miles away from the Bhutan range of the Himalayas. The district having 1165 mouzas covers a geographical area of 3345 square Km. The economy of Cooch Behar is mainly based on agriculture. It is marked as "no- industry zone." The major crops of the district is paddy. The traditional cash crops are jute and tobacco. The district is the major tobacco growing zone in the state. Recently, it has achieved a remarkable progress in cultivation of summer paddy (Bodo) and winter vegetables like potato, tomato, green chilly, cauliflower and cabbage. The use of high yielding varieties of seeds and ground water contributed to such progress.

The district has a unique agro-ecological feature. The highest precipitation (above 3000 mm per annum) and a moderately high temperature during summer with a fairly prolonged chilling night temperature (from October to April) hitherto make situation favourable for cultivation of mulberry silk, motra (*clinogyne dichotoma*), bamboo and betel nut. The subdivision, Tufanganj

is situated in the North-Eastern side of Cooch Behar, about 25 Km away from the main town by the side of National High Way 31. The geographical area of the subdivisions is 585.7 square km. It's surrounded by Jalpaiguri to the north, to the east by Assam, to the south by Bangladesh and Dinhata; and to the west by Cooch Behar Sadar.

There are two blocks and two *Panchayat Samities* in Tufanganj. The two villages under study are under the jurisdiction of the Tufanganj Block I and Tufanganj *Panchayat Samity* I but they are under two separate *Gram Panchayats*. There are fourteen *Gram Panchayats* under the *Panchayat Samity* I. The village Balaghat, is under the jurisdiction of the Dewcharai *Gram Panchayat*, situated in the southern part of the Tufanganj. The other village, Guriarpar is under the Dhalpal *Gram Panchayat*, situated in the northern side of Tufanganj.

## **The Villages**

### **The Village Guriarpar**

*Gram Panchayat* is the smallest administrative unit of the *Panchayat* administration in West Bengal. Every *Gram Panchayat* has some villages under its jurisdiction. The village Guriarpar, is under the Dhalpal II *Gram Panchayat* which has twelve villages under its control. The village has an area of 1210.51 square Km; situated about 7 km away in the northern side of Tufanganj Town. The village is surrounded by the river Raidak in the east, in the west by Chatrampur II, in the south by Bans Raja and in the north by Dhalpal. A metalled road connecting Tufanganj and Alipore, is passing by the western side of the village. The nearest Bus Stop is 1 km away from the village. There is no metalled road in the village. There are three major kachha roads which connect the nearest metalled road. All buses bound for Rampur and Alipure, are available here. Besides the buses, one can go to the village by cycle rickshaw from Tufanganj Town.

No electricity is available in the village except in a particular pocket for running 3 motor pumps for irrigation ( Deep tube-well ). These tube-wells were installed by the Indo-Dutch Terai Development Project. One Primary School and three Anganwadi Centres are available in the village. However, biweekly market locally called *Hat*, Sub-Post Office, Junior High School, *Gram Panchayat* Office, Revenue Inspectorate office one each are available within a radius of 2 km from the centre of the village.

### **The Village Balaghat**

The village Balaghat, is located on the bank of the river, Gadadhar, at a distance of 8 kms in the southern part of Tufanganj Town ; and 25 Kms in the eastern side of Cooch Behar town. The village is about 3 Km away from the National High-Way No .31 The area of the village is 213.93 square kms. The western and southern part of the village is surrounded by the river Gadadhar, eastern and northeastern part is surrounded by the village Sikarpur. Not a single road in the village is pukka. One wide kachha road passing through the village connects the National Highway 31. The distance from the Bus Stop to the village is about 3 Km. All the local buses from Tufanganj to Cooch Behar halt here . Primary school, Anganwadi Centre, Sub-Post Office one each are available in the village. Like the village Guriarpar, this village is yet to be electrified. There is no *hat* in the village. The available nearest *hat* is located at a distance of 3 Km from the village by the side of the Highway. However, some big hats like Tufanganj, Chilakhana, Dewcharai are located at a distance of 8 Km, 6 Km and 7 Km respectively from the village. The High School, *Gram Panchayat* Office, Revenue Inspectorate Office etc. are also located at a distance of 7 Km from the village.

However, the villagers of the two villages can avail themselves of the facilities like college, daily market etc. from the Tufanganj Town. Rail communication is not available in this subdivisions. The nearest railway station is Cooch Behar and it is about 30 Km from the subdivisions. In respect of house type and settlement pattern, both the villages exhibit same character. Generally,

the settlement pattern of the two villages is the combination of linear and dispersed cluster. The villages are divided by caste and community quarters. Members of the same community / caste are living in the same cluster. The villagers themselves identified these clusters as Rajbanshi para or Muslim para etc. A cluster is locally called *para*. However, a complete clear-cut division of these *paras* based on caste and community is not always possible. Moreover, the agricultural labourers who are given *khash* land by the Government for their dwelling purposes, are residing together regardless of caste and community. Most of the houses of the two villages are kachha made of bamboo and corrugated tin. A few thatched houses which formed a predominant type in the past, are also found in the 2 villages. Rich people have pacca houses made of bricks and tin. The major source of drinking water is tube-well. Almost every land owning families have their own tube-wells. There are community tube-wells also mainly in the clusters where dwelling houses have no tube-wells. Guriarpar is comparatively a big village having 425 households; forming 65.46 percent of the total households of the 2 villages. There are 219 households in Balaghat which constitutes 34.54 percent of the total.

### Demographic Structure

**Population :** The total population of the two villages is 3517 ; of which 2284 and 1233 at Guriarpar and Balaghat respectively. The population of the two villages is distributed in table 5.

**Table 5** Distribution of population by sex and village.

Village	Population		
	Male	Female	Total
Guriarpar	1170 (51.22)	1114 (48.78)	2284 (100.00)
Balaghat	636 (51.58)	597 (48.42)	1233 (100.00)
Total	1806 (51.35)	1711 (48.65)	3517 (100.00)

Table 5 shows the percentage of male and female population of the two villages under study is 51.35 and 48.65 respectively which is almost similar to the district of Cooch Behar where the percentage of male and female is 51.69 and 48.31 respectively. Both the villages exhibit almost the same pattern in respect of percentage of male and female population. Thus number of female population per thousand male is 947 against the national rural number of 941 (Census 1991).

**Age :** In order to understand the age-structure and dependency ratio of the two villages, the population of the two villages is classified by age and sex in table- 6.

**Table 6** Distribution of population of the 2 villages by age and sex.

Age-Group	Number of Persons		
	Male	Female	Total
0-6	234 (12.96)	267 (15.60)	501 (14.25)
6-15	468 (25.91)	476 (27.82)	944 (26.84)
15-35	589 (32.61)	554 (32.38)	1143 (32.50)
35-60	368 (20.38)	304 (17.77)	672 (19.11)
60+	147 (8.14)	110 (6.43)	257 (7.30)
Total	1806 (100)	1711 (100)	3517 (100)

Table 6 shows that the percentage of child population ( two groups combined 0-6 and 6-15) to the total population is 41.09 percent, which is marginally above the national figure (40.50 percent) following 1981 but which is similar to that of West Bengal (41.37). The female child is more in number than male. The percent age of total dependency ratio of the two villages, is 93.77, which is higher than the national ratio following 1981 census (85.36 percent). The percentage of dependency ratio is calculated taking into consideration of the two groups i.e., child and older (0-15 & 60 above) to the total population of the villages under study. However, the percentage of economically active population in the age group 15-60 year ( two

groups combined of 15-35 & 35-60 ) to the total population is 51.61 where females' share (47.27 percent) is less than male ( 52.73 percent ).

## Migration

The study of migration has a great significance to the study of rural society which contributes to the inter-ethnic relations in terms of social, economic, political and psychological factors. The National Sample Survey Organisation in its Report No 430 on migration observes, " Human mobility (migration) is supposed to be governed by a set of social, economic, political, cultural and personal factors and as such it is of interest from more than one angle ( NSSO 49th Round : 1998). In South Asia the incidence of ethnic violence in many cases is the result of strain relations between the migrants and locals. There had been population influx in Cooch Behar during the periods of 50s and 70s from East Pakistan ( Now Bangladesh) which changes the population structure of Cooch Behar. Table 7 shows the migration pattern of the two villages.

**Table 7** Distribution of migrants by type and sex of the two villages combined.

Sex	Total Population	Type of Migrant		Total
		In-migrant	Out- migrant	
Male	1806	187 (24.44)	100 (99.01)	287 (33.14)
	(100)	(10.35)	(5.54)	(15.89)
Female	1711	578 (75.56)	01 (0.99)	579 (66.86)
	(100)	(33.78)	(0.05)	(33.83)
Total	3517	765 (100)	101 (100)	866 (100)
	(100)	(21.75)	(2.87)	(24.62)

The data shows in table 7 that the percentage of migrants to the total population is 24.62 which is almost similar to that of the 49th Round of NSS data (22.74 percent). Among the total migrants, the percentage of male and female is 15.89 and 33.83 respectively. The per-

centage of female migrants is high because every marriage generates female migration. In India, the brides migrate to the place of residence of the bridegrooms. This phenomenon is called marriage- migration. Here total migrants have been classified in to two groups viz in-migration and out-migration. In-migrant means those who came from outside and settled in the village. It may be due to marriage, shifting of residence etc. The percentage of such migrants is 21.75. On the other hand, out-migration means born within the village and reside outside the village mainly for their lively hood. Percentage of such out-migrants to the total population is only 2.87. Here the males are more in number ( 99.01 percent) than females (0.99 percent). Nowadays males are going out of the villages for work . During my field survey it is reported that unemployed youth had been migrating to the places of Arunachal Prodesh, Nagaland, Assam for work as unskilled workers in the factories of timber, plywood etc. ; in Rajasthan for the works of Decorator, and in the district of Nadia in West Bengal for weaving works. They are mainly engaged in unorganised sector. A very few persons are engaged in government services and posted in out side the villages. It is also observed that some times villagers mainly agricultural labourers and poor peasants migrated to the lower Assam for cultivation of land on seasonal lease basis. Thus our observation is corroborative to the observation of National Sample Survey Organisation who observed " in case of male migrants, movement in both the sectors are mainly guided by employment angle. In case of female migrants, they are mainly due to the reasons of movement of parents / earning members and marriage. In rural India the latter has considerable lead over the former" ( NSS 49 Round : 1998 : H II & 21).

### **Marital Status**

Marital status is socially ascribed character of the population. Marital status is classified into three catergories viz married, wodow/widower and divorced or separated. Population of the two villages are distributed by status of marriage in table 8.

**Table 8** Distribution of population by marital status and sex of the two villages.

Village.	Sex	Marital Status			Total
		Married	Widow/ Widower.	Divorced/ Separated.	
Guriarpar	Male	481 (49.43) (94.82)	24 (21.82) (4.73)	02 (40) (0.40)	507 (46.60) (100.00)
	Female	492 (50.57) (84.68)	86 (78.18) (14.80)	03 (60) (0.52)	581 (53.40) (100.00)
	Total	973 (100.00) (89.43)	110 (100.00) (10.11)	05 (100.00) (0.46)	1088 (100.00) (100.00)
Balaghat	Male	240 (49.18) (94.11)	14 (23.73) (5.50)	01 (20) (0.39)	255 (46.20) (100.00)
	Female	248 (50.82) (83.50)	45 (76.27) (15.15)	04 (80) (1.35)	297 (53.80) (100.00)
	Total	488 (100.00) (88.41)	59 (100.00) (10.69)	05 (100.00) (0.90)	552 (100.00) (100.00)
All Total	Male	721 (49.35) (94.62)	38 (2.49) (4.99)	03 (30) (0.39)	762 (46.46) (100.00)
	Femal	740 (50.65) (84.28)	131 (77.51) (14.92)	07 (70) (00.80)	878 (53.54) (100.00)
	Total	1461 (100.00) (89.07)	16 (100.00) (10.31)	10 (100.00) (0.61)	1640 (100.00) (100.00)

Table-8 reveals that there are 1640 married persons (all the three categories taken together) which constitutes 46.63 percent to the total population of the two villages. Of the two villages percentage of married population to the total population is higher at Guriarpar (47.63) than Balaghat (44.76 percent). Of the three types, the percentage of married population (both spouses alive) is high (89.08). The other two widow/widower and divorced / separated

constitute only 10.31 and 0.61 respectively. There is almost uniform pattern of population of two villages. It is observed that percentage of female married population is marginally high in both the villages. It may be owing to a few incidence of polygamy. Similarly the incidence of widow is more in number than widower in the two villages. This may be due to the practice of early age at marriage of female. It is generally observed that at the time of marriage there is age gap between bride and groom. The age of bride is always lower than groom.

### Literacy and Education

Education is an important variable which affects marriage, fertility, migration, employment and so on. It's also an indicator of social development. Following 1991 Census, a literate is considered as one who can read and write with understanding. The number of literate persons of the two villages under study is presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Distribution of literate persons by sex and village.

Village	Total Population	Number of Literate Person		
		Male	Female	Total
Guriarpar	2284 (100.00)	748 (32.74)	445 (19.48)	1193 (52.22)
Balaghat	1233 (100.00)	362 (29.36)	248 (20.11)	610 (49.47)
Total	3517 (100.00)	1110 (31.56)	693 (19.70)	1803 (51.26)

The Table - 9. suggests that percentage of literacy to the total population of the two villages is 51.26 which is above the all India level (36.40 percent) as well as West Bengal (41.20 percent) following the 91 census. This higher rate may be due to the literacy programme under taken by the government of West Bengal which had been implemented after 1991. Since I collected data in the year 1996-97, the percentage had been increased during the period 91-96. Female literacy rate is much lower (19.70 percent) than that of male (31.56 percent). The pattern of literacy is more or less similar in both the villages.

After resuming power in 1977, the Left Front Government made the school education free for the poor to have easy access to it. The level of school education of the two villages is shown in table 10.

**Table 10** Distribution of population by standard of education and sex of the two villages.

Village.	Sex	Standard of Education			Total
		Primary	Madhyamik Pariskha	Higher Secondary	
Guriarpar	Male	79 (22.13)	254 (71.15)	24 (6.72)	357 (100)
	Female	61 (34.86)	110 (62.86)	04 (2.28)	175 (100)
	Total	140 (26.32)	364 (68.42)	28 (5.26)	532 (100.00)
Balaghat	Male	65 (30.66)	136 (64.15)	11 (5.19)	212 (100.00)
	Female	53 (46.90)	59 (52.22)	01 (0.88)	113 (100.00)
	Total	118 (36.31)	195 (60.00)	12 (3.69)	325 (100)
All Total	Male	144 (25.31)	390 (68.54)	35 (6.15)	569 (100.00)
	Female	114 (50.00)	169 (58.68)	05 (1.74)	288 (100.00)
	Total	258 (30.11)	559 (65.23)	40 (4.67)	857 (100.00)

Number of persons having school education of the two villages is 857 which constitute 24.36 percent of the total population. Of the three standards, percentage of attainment is high

in Madhyamik Pariksha level ( class X standard ) since it covers V to X i.e., six years of schooling . Similarly, the lowest attainment is found in Higher Secondary and above grade. Of the three levels, attainment of primary education of the female ( 50% ) is higher than male ( 25.31% ) in both the villages since number of female of child population is more than male child. But, their involvement in other two levels is lower than male. It may be owing to their high rate of school drop out after primary education. The social factor like marriage is responsible for such phenomena . The member of Bachelors Degree holders at Guriarpar and Balaghat are 10 ( 7 male and 3 female ) and 9 ( 8 male and 1 female ) respectively . However, there is only one person who holds Post Graduate Degree at Balaghat.

## Religion

In Cooch Behar following 1981 census, the percentage of the Hindu and Muslim population is 79.01 and 20.78 respectively. There are other religions also but their number is very negligible. They include Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains. No other religion is found in the two villages except Hindu and Muslim. The number of the Hindu and Muslim population of the two villages is shown in table 11.

**Table 11.** Distribution of population by religion of the two villages.

Village	Religion		Total
	Hindu	Muslim	
Guriarpar	2047 (75.98) (89.62)	237 (28.80) (10.37)	2284 (64.94) (100.00)
Balaghat	647 (24.02) (52.47)	586 (71.20) (47.53)	1233 (35.06) (100.00)
Total	2694 (100.00) (76.60)	823 (100.00) (23.40)	3517 (100.00) (100.00)

The table-11 shows that the percentage of Hindu and Muslim is 76.60 and 23.40 respectively, Hindu population being numerically dominant in the two villages combined.

At Guriarpar the Hindu population is 89.62 percent where at Balaghat they are 52.47 percent to the total population. However of the total muslims, Balaghat has more (71.20 percent) than Gurirpar (28.80 percent)

## Social Setting

### Caste

In rural Cooch Behar the caste system has less importance since the area is mainly dominated by the Rajbanshi. Next to the Rajbanshi, we find the Muslims. The caste group along with their number of households and population is shown in table 12.

**Table 12.** Distribution of household and population by caste of the two villages.

Caste		Village				All Total	
Name	Constituti- onal Status	Gurirarpar		Balaghat		No of H.H	Total Person
		No of H.H	Total Person	No of H.H	Total Person		
Rajbanshi	S.C.	240 (57.83)	1308 (57.27)	108 (49.32)	563 (45.65)	348 (54.89)	1871 (53.20)
Muslim	Minority	42 (10.12)	237 (10.38)	95 (43.38)	586 (47.52)	137 (21.61)	823 (23.40)
Kaibarta	S.C.	114 (27.46)	640 (28.02)	—	—	114 (17.98)	640 (18.20)
Kumbhakar	O.B.C	—	—	08 (3.65)	43 (3.49)	08 (1.26)	43 (1.22)
Namasudra	S.C.	—	—	08 (3.65)	41 (3.34)	08 (1.26)	41 (1.17)
Napit	O.B.C	07 (1.67)	31 (1.36)	—	—	07 (1.11)	31 (0.88)
Tanti	O.B.C	05 (1.20)	27 (1.18)	—	—	05 (0.79)	27 (0.77)
Sutradhar	O.B.C	03 (0.72)	19 (0.83)	—	—	03 (0.47)	19 (0.54)
Brahmin	General	03 (0.72)	17 (0.74)	—	—	03 (0.47)	17 (0.48)
Kayastha	General	01 (0.24)	05 (0.22)	—	—	01 (0.16)	05 (0.14)
Total	—	415 (100.00)	2284 (100.00)	219 (100.00)	1233 (100.00)	634 (100.00)	3517 (100.00)

There are ten castes in two villages besides muslims. At Guriarpar there is no Kumar and NamaSudra. Similarly, At Balaghat we do not find any Napit, Tanti, Sutradhar, Brahmin and Kayastha. Kaibarta, Kumar, Nama Sudra, Napit, Tanti, Sutradhar, Brahmin and Kayastha were migrated from East Pakisthan (now Bangladesh). Most of the Rajbanshi and Muslim are original settlers of the area. But, a small percentage of them have also come from Bangladesh.

### **The Rajbanshi**

In terms of households Rajbanshis are majority in both the villages but numerically they are next to the Muslims in Balaghat. They constitute 53.2 percent of the total population of the two villages. Discussion on origin of Rajbanshi has been made in Chapter - II. During my field study I observed that generally Rajbanshis were not conscious of their caste identity. Usually they identified themselves as *Kshatriyas*. Culturally they form a homogeneous community. Endogamousness is also another feature of them. No social hierarchy is observed by them though they have different surnames like Barman, Roy, Sarkar, Addikary, Mondal, Das etc. who enjoy the same social status except adhikary. Like Brahmins, adhikaris enjoy ritual power; they are entitled to perform some rituals mainly which don't require of worshipping of fire (*yogna*). To achieve the status of priesthood, a Adhikari has to observe *upanayana* ceremony. After going through the *upanayana* ceremony they wear a *kanthi* ( a necklace made of small pieces of *Tulshi* tree), and a sacred thread; and observe some restrictions in food habits and in economic activities. On gaining the status of priesthood, Adhikari is not allowed to eat meat and fish; they are not entitles to perform agricultural activities. But, there is another higher class of priest among the Rajbanshis who are known as Assamese-Brahmin; migrated from Assam; originally they were from Mithila( Bihar). These Brahmins are entitled to perform ceremony and other religious rites which require the worshipping of fire. Hierarchically they are superior to the Adhikaris. The migrated Brahmins of Bangladesh are not entitled to perform any rituals of the Rajbanshis.

It is observed that like the Brahmins all adult males of Rajbanshi are entitled to observe

the *upanayana* ceremony by wearing sacred thread for gaining the status of Kshatriya. Once a Rajbanshi observed the *upanayana* ceremony, he is entitled to follow the surname of Barman, if his surname is other than Barman. This suggests that Barmans are emerging as a superior class than other surnames. Barman means Bara-manus i.e., great man as explained by Powell (1977). The concept social hierarchy is gradually gaining importance in an egalitarian society of Rajbanshis.

### **The Muslim**

Numerically the Muslims are next to the Rajbanshi. Their share in terms of number of household and population to the total are 21.61 and 23.40 respectively. They are found in both the villages. However, they are more in number at Balaghat. They occupy a second position in the two villages combined and at Guriarpar their position is next to the Jalia Kaibarta. Dalton (1973) expressed "The grandson of Hajju, Vishu Singh, with all the people of condition apostatized to Hinduism, and took the name of Rajbansis; those who declined finding they were treated as vile, adopted Islam. Thus the mass of the Koch people became Muhammadans and the higher grade Hindus" (Dalton 1973 : 90). The Muslims of Cooch Behar exhibit many cultural similarities with the Rajanshi. They speak the same dialect. The material culture of both the communities also exhibit many similarities. Most of the Muslims in the two villages belong to the Sunni group. The Muslims of Balaghat are very economically active. They are engaged in agriculture. Moreover, their contribution to agriculture is also significant.

### **The Kaibarta**

The Kaibarta is one of the eight caste groups who had been migrated from east Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The others are Kumbhakar, Namasudra, Napit, Tanti, Sutradhar, Brahmin and Kayasta. Traditionally, Kaibartas were divided into three groups viz. Halua, Jalua and Manji. The traditional occupation of the Halua Kaibarta was agriculture. Now they have identified themselves as Mahisyas. The Jalua Kaibartas are fishermen who were untouchables; and the Manjis were the ferrymen who correspond to Ghattajivins and Patnis. They are said to have

originated from same ethnic group. However, majority of Kaibartas belong to the first category i.e. Jalia Kaibarta (Fishermen). But, at present, they are engaged in agriculture. There are some Halua Kaibartas but there is none in the category of Manji Kaibarta. These Kaibartas are found only in village Guriapar. Numerically they are next to the Rajbanshi. They shared 27.46% to the total population of Guriapar. However, they occupy a third position in terms of the total households and population of the two villages. Their constitutional status is schedule caste.

### **The Kumbhakaras**

In Bengali *Kumbha* means pot and *Karas* means makers. Thus *Kumbhakars* mean pottery makers. Mitra (1953:315) observes that "in Bengal pottery is essentially a family craft where men, women and children of the family work together." There are only eight households of kumbakars at Balaghat. They are migrated from east Pakistan, (now Bangladesh). Numerically their position is third at Balaghat. But, in terms of two villages, their position is fourth. Their constitutional status is *Other Backward Class*. They make earthen pots and sell them in their local *hats*.

### **The Nama Sudra**

According to Risley (Risley in Mitra 1953 31), the *chandals* of Bengal invariably call themselves Name Sudra. Like Kumbhakars they have also only eight households having a total population of fortyone. Numerically their position is fifth of two villages combined. But at Balaghat their position is fourth. Most of the members of Namasudra are engaged in agriculture.

### **The Napit**

In Bengal traditionally *Napit* belongs to the *Navasayaka* group. Their participation in many social ceremonies like marriage, birth etc. is essential. In the smriti texts, the Napita is a Sudra from whom food is acceptable to Brahmanas. There are seven households of Napit found at Guriapar, having a total population of 31 only. They have no representation at Balaghat. At present they are mainly engaged in agriculture. However, a few of them are engaged in their traditional occupation. Their constitutional status is *Other Backward Class*.

### **The Tanti**

They are also called *Jugi*, a weaving caste of Eastern Bengal . There are only five households of Tanti in the village Guriarpar; there is none at the village Balaghat . They were migrated from Bangladesh. None of them at present is engaged in their traditional occupation. Constitutionally they belong to the *Other Backward Class*.

### **The Sutradhar**

Among the different artisan castes, *Sutradhar* ( Carpenter ) is one of them. *Sutradhars* now claim to be Rathakarasa of ancient times. Mitra ( 1953 : 34 ) observes "according to Skandha Purana ( Nagara 7 ) Visvakarma's son were Manu, Mayu, Tvastr, Silpin and Taksaka collectively termed the Rathakara ." There one only there households at Guriarpar with a total population of nineteen . They were migrated from Bangladesh and at present engaged in agriculture. Constitutionally they are identified as *Other Backward Class*.

### **The Brahmins**

Among the higher castes ~~there~~ are only *Brahmin* and *Kayastha*. They are found at Guriarar. The number of Brahmin house at Guriarpar is three with a population of seventees. They were migrated from Bangladesh and now are engaged in their traditional occupation i.e priesthood alongwith agriculture .

### **The Kayastha**

Mitra observes ( Mitra 1953 :238 ) " Kayastha Kact, Kait, Kayath, is the writer caste of Bengal ". Only one household of *Kayastha* is found in the village, Guriarpar . This family is fully engaged in agriculture .

Thus it appears that the populatuion composition in the two selected villages is heterogenous. But, numerically Rajbanshis, Jaliakaibarts and Muslims are significant . The

villages are mainly dominated by scheduled caste Hindu population . Although Muslims have a considerable number of population; no communal violence is observed during the recent years. There is no higher caste population except three Brahmin and one Kayastha families.

## **Marriage**

Marriage is an institution that regulates the sexual behaviour of the individual. As it is already pointed out that marriage is attributed by many social, biological, cultural, economic, and legal factors and so on. Therefore, it is essential to have an idea of the present pattern of marriage system in the two villages under study. Monogamy is the prevalent form of marriage among the Hindus and the Muslims. A few cases of polygamy are also found in the two villages. The incidence of polygamy is found in both the communities - the Hindus and the Muslims. The incidence of polygamy among the Hindus may be due to prevalence of low caste people. However, new generation of literate people are not in favour of the polygamy Their residence is patrilocal.

## **Dowry System**

Marriage has an economic significance . The system of bride price is found among the tribal communities in India to compensate the bride's parent for the loss of their daughter. The practice of bride price was found in the traditional Rajbanshi society. Our field data shows that aged of the Rajbanshi used to pay bride price at the time of their marriage. They used to pay bride price in the form of either in cash or in kind or both . But, now a days , the brideprice has been replaced by groom price. The system of dowry in the form of groom price is also found among the muslims and the other caste groups also. The inter village linkage is reflected through the network of kinship and marriage relations. It is observed that most of the marriages took place within the adjacent villages i.e. with in the *Gram Panchayat*. Incidence of inter-state marriage is also found .

## Family

Though family is considered as an universal phenomenon, it does not mean that it is the same everywhere. The family is still largely an unit of production in the rural society. The size of family is important in rural life since it has an impact on economic, social and political life. The size of family in terms of number of members of the two villages is presented in table 13.

**Table 13** Distribution of households by family-size of the two villages.

Family Size (Number of member)	Village		Total
	Gurirarpar	Balaghat	
Small (1-4)	156 (37.59)	77 (35.16)	233 (36.75)
Medium (5-8)	218(52.53)	118 (53.88)	336 (53.00)
Large (9-12)	30(7.23)	18 (8.22)	48 (7.57)
Very Large (13+)	11 (2.65)	06 (2.74)	17 (2.68)
Total	415(100.00)	219 (100.00)	634 (100.00)

The incidence of medium size family is high ( 53.00 percent ). Commonly 5-8 members are found in a medium size family. The small-size family consists of 1-4 members ;occupies the second position (36.57 percent ). The percentage of very large family (13+) is only 2.68 of the total family of the two villages. The pattern of the family size is uniform in both villages. It is observed that two or more brothers have been living within the same compound under separate hut as a separate economic unit. Each brother is the deciding authority of his own family matters. This type of living arrangement is mainly found among the Rajbanshis and the Muslims. The same phenomenon. was also observed by Mukherjee (1971) .

The family types are conceptualised interms of family composition. The normative family patterns in traditional India are extended or joint family and elementary or nuclear family. Table 14 shows the types of family that are found in the two villages under study.

**Table 14** Distribution of households by types of family of the two villages.

Family Types	Villages		Total
	Gurirapar	Balaghat	
Nuclear Family	334 (80.48)	186 (84.93)	520 (82.02)
Extended family	81 (19.52)	33 (15.07)	114 (17.98)
Total	415 (100.00)	219 (100.00)	634 (100.00)

Nuclear family is the predominant form in the two sample villages . The percentage of nuclear family to the total households of the two villages in 82.02. Only 17.98 percent households belong to the category of extended type. This pattern is uniform in both the villages.