

C H A P T E R - 5.0
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOCIETY

5.1 Demographic feature :-

In this chapter an attempt has been made to analyse the demographic features of the Maria Muslim population in respect of sex-ratio, age-sex structure, marital status, social and economic structure and cultural characteristics.

5.11 Sex-ratio :-

Sex-ratio has been calculated on the basis of field survey during 1988, because in earlier census separate figures for males and females are not available. The sex ratio of the Maria population in the Brahmaputra Valley is 732 (Table 5.1) which is found to be lower than the Muslims of the Brahmaputra Valley (918, according to 1971 census) and the Muslims of the country (936, according to 1981 census).

When the rural-urban sex-ratio is calculated, it is found that the rural sex-ratio of the Maria population is 739 which is lower than the Muslims of the Brahmaputra Valley and it is calculated to be 926 according to 1971 census and the Muslims of the country which becomes 955 according to 1981 census. (Table 5.2). The lower rural ratio is mainly due to the urban character of the Marias, which they developed for economic considerations as stated earlier.

The districtwise variation in sex-ratio of the Maria Muslim population reveals the real situation. It is found that the Kamrup district has the highest sex-ratio (902), while the same is the lowest in Golaghat district (538), further of all the districts of the Brahmaputra Valley the urban sex-ratio is highest in Darrang district (870), where they inhabit in greater number. Further, it may be mentioned that the rural sex-ratio is higher in the Kamrup districts is due to the fact that they cannot eke out a living by cultivation so some male members have gone

Table 5.1
Rural Urban composition of Maria Muslims
Sex-Ratio, 1988

(Females per 1000 males)

Areas		Maria Muslim Population		Ratio
		M	F	
Kamrup	T	999	901	902
	R	235	247	1051
	U	764	654	856
Darrang	T	338	294	870
	R	338	294	870
	U	-	-	-
Sonitpur	T	2388	1437	602
	R	2388	1437	602
	U	-	-	-
Lakhimpur	T	1138	972	854
	R	887	824	929
	U	251	148	590
Dibrugarh	T	2267	1691	746
	R	273	173	634
	U	1994	1518	761
Sibsagar	T	1834	1348	735
	R	1383	1009	730
	U	451	339	752
Jorhat	T	1622	1253	773
	R	1571	1210	770
	U	51	43	843

areas		Maria	Muslim	Population
		M	F	Ratio
Golaghat	T	1014	546	538
	R	100	80	800
	U	914	466	510
Nowgong	T	2077	1567	754
	R	2077	1567	754
	U	-	-	
Brahmaputra Valley	T	13677	10009	732
	R	9252 (67.65 P.c.)	6841 (68.35 P.c.)	739
	U	4425 (32.35 P.c.)	3168 (31.65 P.c.)	716

Table 5.2

Rural-Urban composition of the Muslims of the Brahmaputra Valley
Sex-Ratio 1971

(Females per 1000 males)

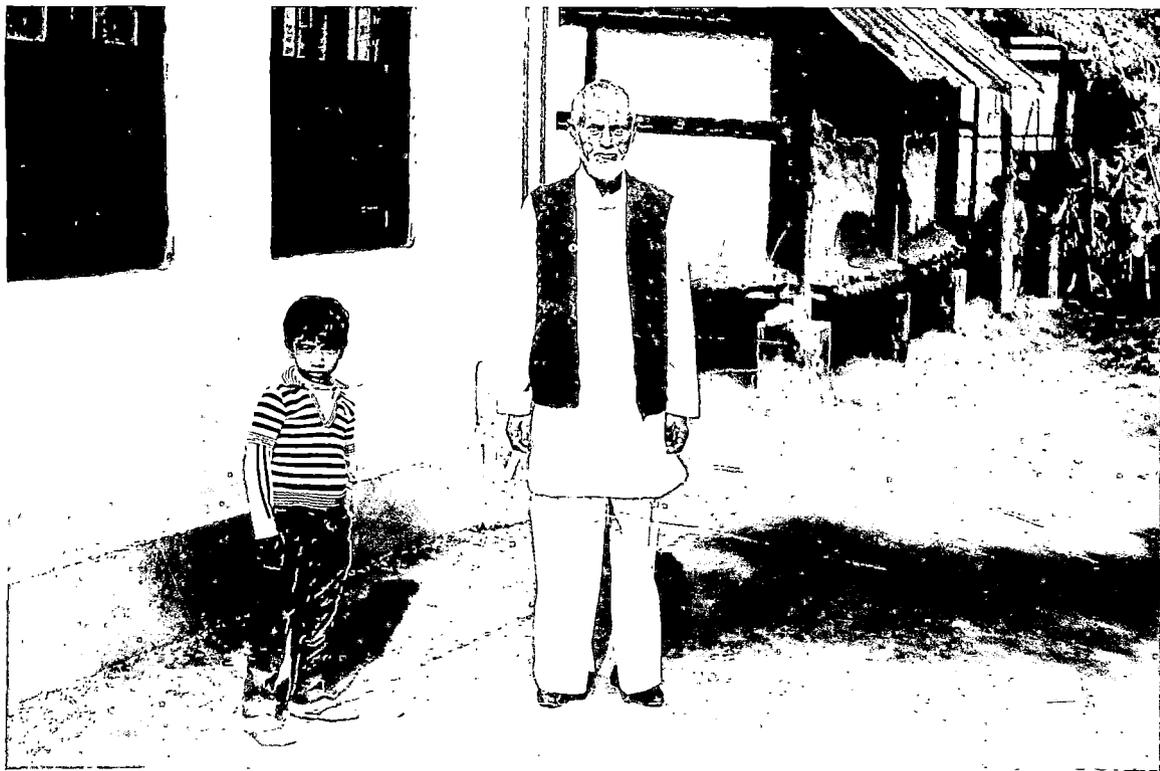
Areas		Total Muslim Population		Ratio
		M	F	
Goalpara	T	483784	456306	943
	R	466630	441890	947
	U	17154	14416	840
Kamrup	T	431482	394175	914
	R	416180	383592	922
	U	15302	10583	692
Darrang	T	147134	133961	910
	R	142275	130379	916
	U	4859	3582	737
Nowgong	T	346159	316022	913
	R	337977	309770	917
	U	8182	6252	764
Sibsagar	T	51873	44928	866
	R	41016	36687	894
	U	10857	8241	759
Lakhimpur	T	53046	44283	835
	R	38456	33919	882
	U	14590	10364	710
Brahmaputra Valley	T	1513478 ^s	1389675	918
	R	1442534 (95.31 P.c.)	1336237 (96.15 P.c.)	926
	U	70944 (4.69 P.c.)	53438 (3.85 P.c.)	753
India	T	38989763	36522676	936
	R	25492486 (63.38 P.c.)	24341903 (66.65 P.c.)	955
	U	13497277 (34.62 P.c.)	12180773 (33.35 P.c.)	902

The figures within parentheses indicate percentages.

Source : (i) Based on field survey, 1988 (ii) Census of India, 1971, Series - 3 (iii) Census of India, 1981.



Old Maria Couple in traditional dress.



Appearance of an old with a child.

out to the urban areas in search of some employment, like service, petty business, daily wage labour, etc.

The village wise variation in sex-ratio gives further insight to the situation. The highest rural sex-ratio is found in Baliyan Tengabari (1076) village which is significantly high. But the highest urban sex-ratio is found in Hajo Islampatti (909) which is lower than the rural sex-ratio. This is because of the movement of the males of the Maria population to the urban areas for better employment facilities which have contributed significantly to the lesser number of females in the urban areas and higher number of males in the urban areas (Table 5.3).

5.12 Age-sex structure:-

In the broad sense population structure implies any division of the population entity into constituents arranged in a definite pattern based on age-sex structure. Thus age-sex structure of a human population is the population structure. The age-sex structure is the Population Pyramid and it is the age composition by sex of a given population. It can be expressed as a ratio of several absolute age classes by sex (the age-sex pyramids). The population pyramid is therefore the geographical representation of age classes (say 4 years interval) by sex.

From the population pyramids the age-sex structure of a community can be identified. When the base of a pyramid is broader gradually tapering towards the peak then the population group may be considered as growing population. But if the pyramid is reverse then the population group may be considered as declining population. From the diagram it is observed that the Marias are of a growing population group.

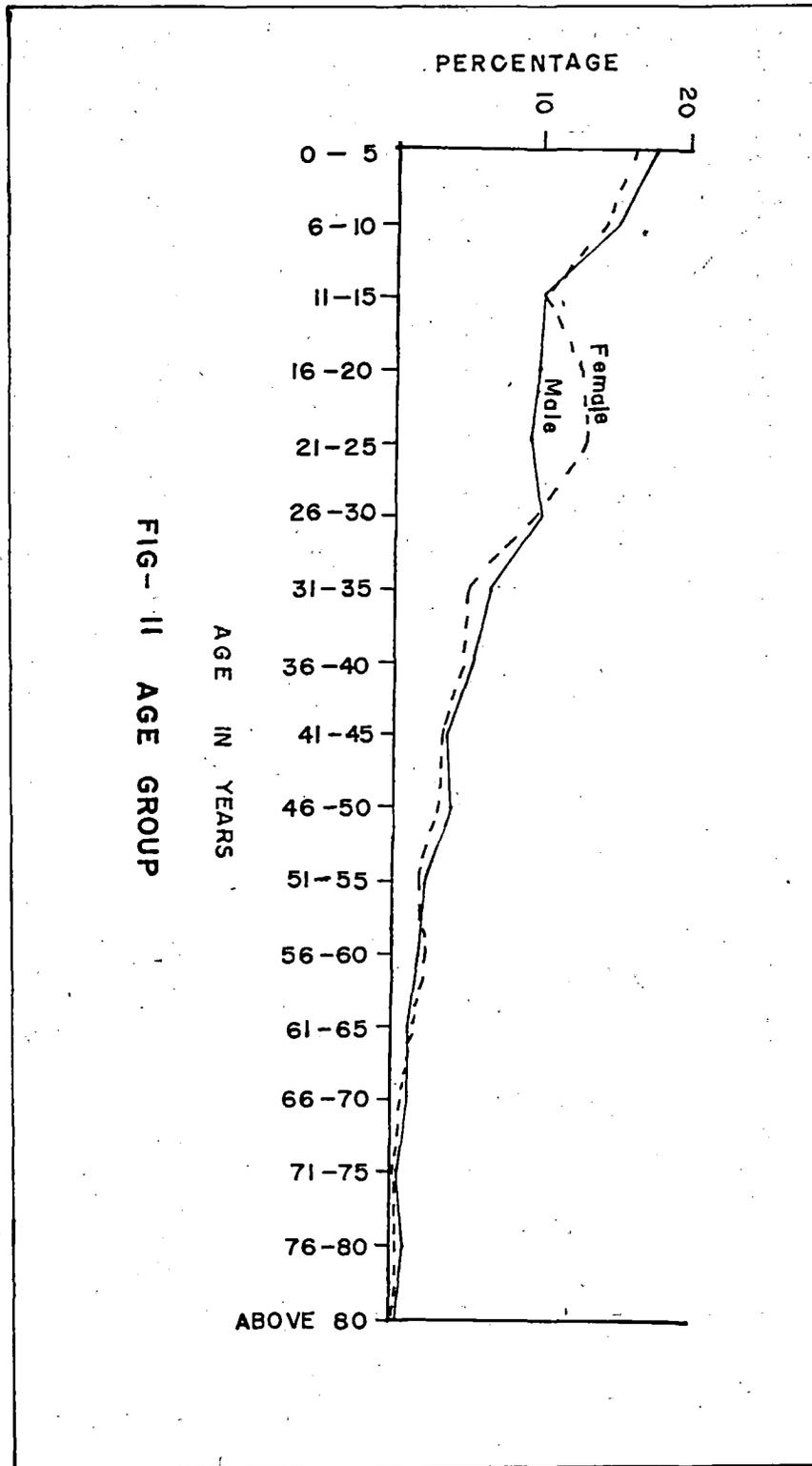


FIG- II AGE GROUP

Table 5.3

Villagewise rural urban composition of the Maria Muslims

Sex-Ratio 1988

(Females per 1000 males)

Name of the Villages		Total	Maria	Muslim	Population
		M	F		Ratio
Hajo Islampatty	T	410	373		
	R	-	-		
	U	410	373		909
Malara Islampatty	T	235	247		
	R	235	247		1051
	U	-	-		
Uzanbazar	T	354	281		793
	R	-	-		
	U	354	281		793
Vevarghat (Islampur)	T	338	294		
	R	338	294		869
	U	-	-		
Pithakhowa	T	952	648		
	R	952	648		680
	U	-	-		
Gavarugaon	T	30	20		
	R	30	20		666
	U	-	-		
Niraiati	T	100	50		
	R	100	50		500
	U	-	-		

Name of the Villages		Total	Maria	Muslim	Population
		M	F		Ratio
Becheria	T	795		415	
	R	795		415	522
	U	-		-	
Bakula	T	511		304	
	R	511		304	594
	U	-		-	
Shilabari Balijan	T	250		240	
	R	250		240	
	U	-		-	960
Dhekial	T	207		177	
	R	207		177	855
	U	-		-	
Nawkari	T	190		184	
	R	190		184	960
	U	-		-	
Lilabari	T	201		181	
	R	201		181	900
	U	-		-	
Dhokuakhana	T	251		148	
	R	-		-	
	U	251		148	589
Laluka	T	315		267	
	R	-		-	
	U	315		267	847

Name of the Villages		Total	Maria	Muslim	Population
		M	F		Ratio
Chawlkhowa	T	1400		1100	
	R	-		-	
	U	1400		1100	785
Sadia	T	273		173	
	R	273		173	633
	U	-		-	
Bakul	T	200		120	
	R	-		-	
	U	200		120	600
Margherita	T	79		31	
	R	-		-	
	U	79		31	392
Demoumukh	T	310		271	
	R	310		271	874
	U	-		-	
Mothadang	T	168		173	
	R	168		173	1029
	U				
Bambari	T	11		09	
	R	11		09	818
	U				
Dopdar	T	11		05	
	R	11		05	454
	U	-		-	

Name of the Villages		Total	Maria	Muslim	Population
		M	F		Ratio
Panidihing	T	177		120	677
	R	177		120	
	U				
Khatopahar	T	12		08	666
	R	12		08	
	U				
Amguri	T	255		105	411
	R	255		105	
	U	-		-	
Gauri Sagar	T	210		182	866
	R	-		-	
	U	210		182	
Nazira	T	241		157	651
	R	-		-	
	U	241		157	
Geleki	T	249		126	506
	R	249		126	
	U	-		-	
Veleuguri	T	50		30	600
	R	50		30	
	U	-		-	
Mudoijan	T	74		52	702
	R	74		52	
	U	-		-	

Name of the Villages		Total	Maria	Muslim	Population
		M	F		Ratio
Jhanji	T	51		43	843
	R	-		-	
	U	51		43	
Koliapani	T	129		71	550
	R	129		71	
	U	-		-	
Badulipukhuri	T	153		103	673
	R	153		103	
	U	-		-	
Neemati Ghat	T	144		107	938
	R	114		107	
	U	-		-	
Tamulishika	T	200		150	750
	R	200		150	
	U	-		-	
Fatigasiga	T	120		124	1033
	R	120		124	
	U	-		-	
Naobaisya	T	161		125	776
	R	161		125	
	U	-		-	
Kakojan	T	405		348	859
	R	405		348	
	U	-		-	

Name of the Villages		Total	Maria	Muslim	Population
		M	F		Ratio
Gakhir Howa	T	130		79	
	R	130		79	607
	U	-		-	
Boloma	T	35		21	
	R	35		21	600
	U	-		-	
Kacharihat	T	300		200	
	R	-		-	
	U	300		200	666
Kamarbandha	T	100		80	
	R	100		80	800
	U	-		-	
Moinapar	T	64		16	
	R	-		-	
	U	64		16	250
Islampatti	T	550		250	
	R	-		-	
	U	550		250	454
Langi	T	148		139	
	R	148		139	939
	U	-		-	-
Jayantipur	T	482		443	
	R	482		443	988
	U	-		-	-

Name of the Villages		Total	Maria	Muslim	Population
		M		F	Ratio
Hutergaon	T	479		437	
	R	479		437	912
	U	-		-	-
Baligaon	T	551		250	
	R	551		250	453
	U	-		-	
Bilotia	T	417		298	
	R	417		298	714
	U	-		-	

Source : Data collected from the field survey, 1988.

According to Sundbarg's (Datta, 1962) age categories of population are:-

Table - 5.4

	Age in years		
	0 - 15	15-50	Over 50
Progressive	400	500	100
Stationary	330	500	170
Regressive	200	500	300

To analyse the population structure the data was collected from sample villages. On the basis of this data Sundbarg's theory has been used to examine the population structure of the Maria population and it is found that, the studied community is of a Progressive type (Table 5.6).

Table - 5.6

Population Structure

	Age in years		
	0-15 years	15-50 years	Over 50 years
Progressive	2005	2399	326
	(42.39 percent)	(50.72 percent)	(6.89 percent)

On the basis of the sampled data the classification of age-sex composition has been done and the different groups have been shown in Table 5.5.

From the sample survey the entire population has been classified

Table 5.5

Maria Muslims
Age-sex structure (Sample Population) 1988

Age group	Population	P.c.	Male P.c.	Female P.c.
0-4	648	13.70	7.29	6.41
5-9	686	14.50	7.57	6.93
10-14	603	12.75	7.15	5.60
15-19	437	9.24	4.42	4.82
20-24	493	10.42	4.92	5.50
25-29	442	9.35	4.40	4.95
30-34	322	6.81	4.08	2.73
35-39	279	5.90	3.36	2.54
40-44	187	3.95	2.11	1.84
45-49	185	3.91	2.24	1.67
50-54	130	2.75	1.48	1.27
55-59	106	2.24	1.37	0.87
60+	212	4.48	2.32	2.16
Total	4730	100.00	52.71	47.29

Source : Based on field survey, 1988

into thirteen age groups for males and females. The age groups are 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60 +. The population distribution in each group shows that the females in the age group of 15-29 years, outnumber the males. But in other age groups the position is reverse. The causes of high percentage of females show the high birth rate of female child at least in the surveyed villages. There is a gradual decrease of population beyond the age of 35 years, which shows low mortality among the adult population due to the availability of medical and other amenities. The general longevity of the people is still low and only 4.48 percent of them can hope to survive upto 60 years of age.

5.13 Dependency ratio :-

The dependency ratio has been calculated on the basis of the data collected from the sample survey and the calculated figures have been shown in Table 5.7.

The dependency ratio is found to be 76.89 percent, of which 79.37 percent is found in rural areas and 71.05 percent in urban areas. From the calculation it is revealed that the urban dependency ratio is lower than rural dependency ratio. This is because of their landlessness. In rural areas due to non availability of sufficient agricultural land the children of 0-14 years age group do not get jobs in the agricultural field, moreover, in rural areas there is no scope of getting petty jobs for children. But in urban areas the children of lower age group get jobs in small factories, P.W.D., big shops etc. So, the urban dependency ratio is lower than the dependency ratio of rural areas.

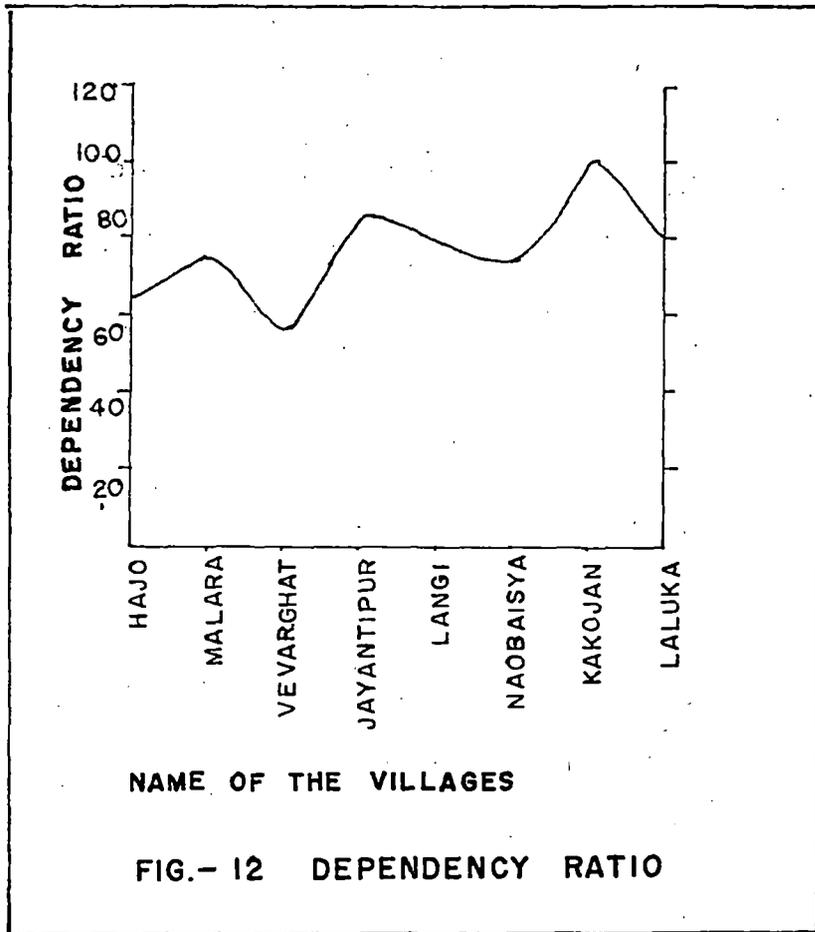


Table - 5.7.

Dependency ratio of the Maria Muslims

(Sample Survey) 1988

Name of the Villages.	Percentage of population			Dependency ratio
	upto 14 years	(15-64) years	65+ years	
Hajo Islampatti	38.19	60.53	1.28	65.19
Malara Islampatti	40.87	56.85	2.28	75.91
(Islampur)				
Vevarghat	29.43	63.61	6.96	57.21
Jayantipur	43.78	54.16	2.06	84.63
Langi	44.25	55.40	0.35	80.50
Naobaisya	39.51	57.34	3.15	74.39
Kakojan	48.07	49.94	1.99	100.27
Laluka	42.61	55.67	1.72	79.63

Total Dependency ratio = 76.89 percent.

Rural dependency ratio = 79.37 percent

Urban dependency ratio = 71.05 percent.

Source : Based on field work, 1988.

Of the eight sampled villages, the highest dependency ratio is found in Kakojan village and it is found to be 100.27 percent. This is due to the fact that 48.07 percent of the total population is found in

the 0-14 years age group and 1.99 percent people are found in the age group of 65+ years. Both these groups are assumed to be non-workers. But 49.94 percent people are found in the age-group of 15-64 years, which is assumed to be workers. So, in this village 49.94 percent people have to feed 50.06 percent non-workers.

5.14 Marital status:-

The marital status has been calculated from the eight sampled village study. Table 5.8 shows that the percentage of married persons is 39.41, of which 37.81 percent of married persons ^{of the total males} are males and 41.49 percent of married persons ^{of the total females.} are females. It shows that they do not prefer early marriage due to their economic backwardness and the influence of Assamese Hindu culture. This may be supported by the fact that the percentage of married males and females under nineteen years are 0.83 and 11.58 respectively. But above twenty years the percentage of married males and females are found to be 99.17 and 88.42 respectively, which shows their disinclination to an early marriage.

The percentage of widows is found to be 3.47 which is very low. It is due to the system of widow marriage among them.

0.27 percent of divorce cases are found in this society of which 0.04 percent of males and 0.54 percent of females. The percentage of divorce is negligible and it is rarely seen. This is also due to the poor economic condition and the influence of Assamese Hindu culture. A case of divorce rarely happens due to the inability of returning the 'Denmehar' by the husband which is fixed at the time of marriage. Moreover, in Assamese Hindu society a divorce case rarely happens, so this might have also influenced their society.

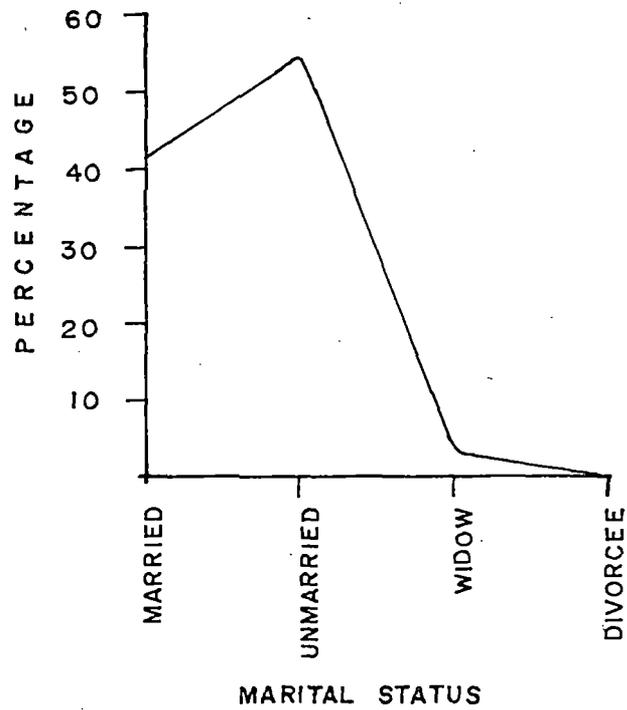


FIG-13 MARITAL STATUS (WOMEN)

Table 5.8
Marital status of the Maria Muslims,
villagewise, 1988 (sample survey)

Name of the villages	Married		Unmarried		Widow	Divorce	
	M	F	M	F		M	F
Hajo Islampatti	168 (40.98)	166 (44.50)	242 (59.02)	181 (48.53) (48.53)	23 (6.17)	-	03 (0.80)
Kakojan	144 (35.56)	139 (39.94)	260 (64.19)	194 (55.75)	15 (4.31)	01 (0.25)	-
Jayntipur ^a	208 (43.15)	204 (46.05)	274 (56.85)	201 (45.37)	33 (7.45)	-	05 (1.13)
Naobaisya	51 (31.68)	48 (38.40)	110 (68.32)	65 (52.00)	11 (8.8)	-	01 (0.8)
Vevarghat (Islampur)	113 (33.43)	112 (38.10)	225 (66.57)	154 (52.38)	27 (9.18)	-	01 (0.34)
Langi	62 (41.89)	61 (43.88)	86 (58.11)	72 (51.80)	06 (4.32)	-	-
Malara Islampatti	92 (39.15)	94 (38.06)	143 (60.85)	120 (48.58)	31 (12.55)	-	02 (0.81)
Laluka	105 (33.33)	97 (36.33)	210 (66.67)	152 (56.93)	18 (6.74)	-	-
Total	(37.81)	(41.19)	(62.15)	(50.94)	(7.33)	(0.04)	(0.54)
GRAND TOTAL	39.41		56.85		3.47	0.27	

Source : Data collected from the field survey, 1988.

The figures within parentheses indicate percentage.

Villagewise analysis provides more insight into the problem. The percentage of married couples is found to be the highest in Jayantipur village of Nowgong district (Total 22.10 of which 43.15 percent of males and 46.05 percent of females) and the lowest is found in Naobaisya village of Jorhat district (total 5.31 of which 31.58 percent of males and 38.40 percent of females). Here also is found the practice of late marriage.

It was observed at the time of field survey that at present rich boys and girls do not prefer to get married early due to their changed outlook. Guardians are also against early marriage. This is due to the influence of Assamese Hindu society. Polygamy - is allowed by the Mahammedan law, but it is not seen in this society. It may be the influence of Assamese Hindu society.

5.15 Child women ratio :-

To calculate the child women ratio the data have been collected from the eight sampled villages, and have been shown in Table 5.9.

The child women ratio has been found to be 612.48 per thousand, of which rural child women ratio is 612.82 per thousand and urban child women ratio is 611.65 per thousand. The rural and urban child women ratio is almost equal.

The highest child women ratio (797.39 per thousand) is found in Kakojan village. This is due to the higher number of children (18.83 percent) in 0-4 years age group, than the number of mothers. It shows the high birth rate in this village. The lowest child women ratio (307.19 per thousand) is found in Vevarghat village. This is due to the lesser number of children (7.25 per thousand) in the 0-4 years of age group.

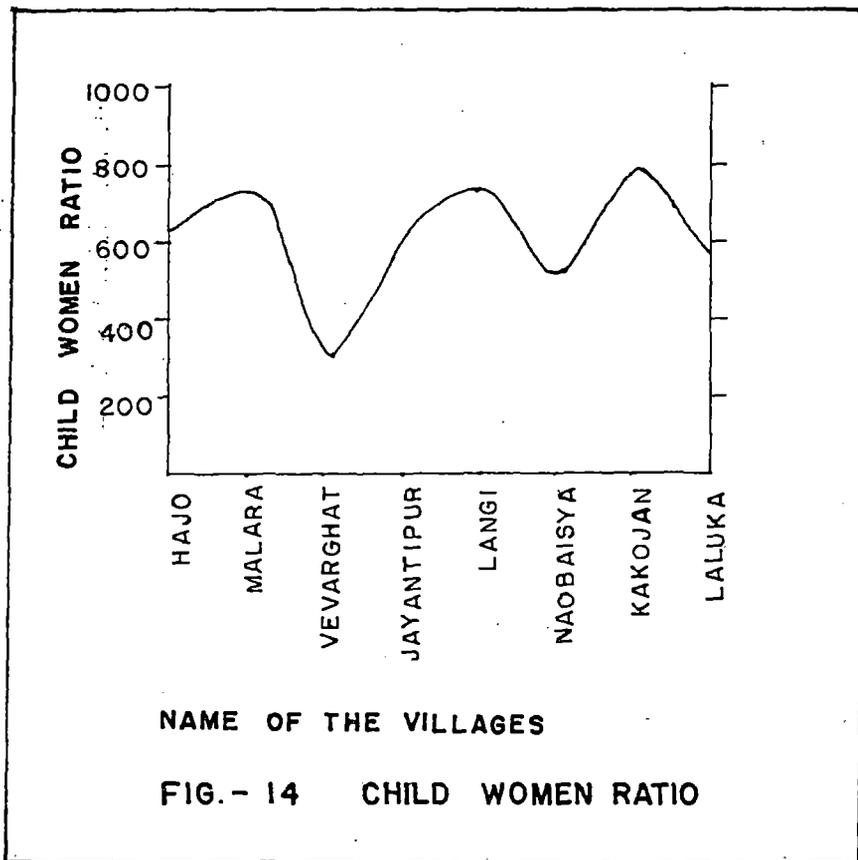


Table - 5.9

Village-wise child women ratio of Maria muslims

1988

Name of the villages	Children aged 0-4 years	Women aged 15-44 years	Child women ratio per 1000
Hajo Islampatti	127 (19.60)	200 (18.90)	635
Malara Islampatti	81 (12.5)	112 (10.59)	723.21
Vevarghat Islampatti	47 (7.25)	153 (14.46)	307.19
Jayntipur ^a	130 (20.06)	208 (19.66)	625
Langi	50 (7.72)	67 (6.33)	746.27
Naobaisya	29 (4.48)	56 (5.29)	517.86
Kakojan	122 (18.83)	153 (14.46)	797.39
Laluka	62 (9.57)	109 (10.30)	568.81
Total	648	1058	612.48

The figures in the parentheses indicate the percentage.

Source : Based ^{on} sample survey, 1988.

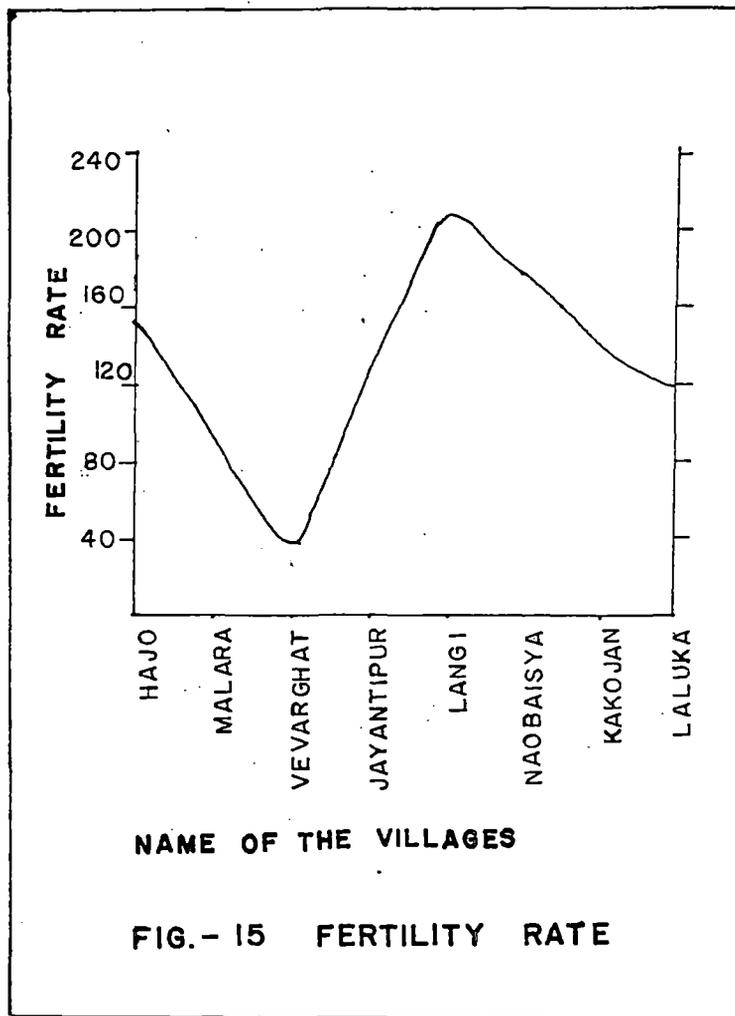
5.16 Fertility rate :

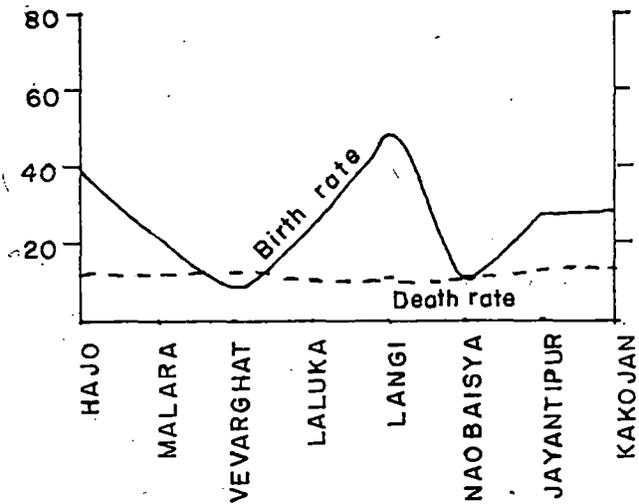
The fertility rate has been calculated from the data collected from sampled villages. The fertility rate of the Maria population is found to be 119.09 per thousand of which 109.48 per thousand in rural areas and 142.39 per thousand in urban areas. From the calculation it seems that the fertility wastage is less in the urban areas than in the rural areas. It is due to the better medical facilities in the urban area. But in rural areas proper medical facilities are not available moreover due to malnutrition, low standard of living, lack of hygienic sense etc. are responsible for high fertility wastage in rural areas.

The village wise general fertility rate provides more insight into the problem. The highest general fertility rate is found in Langi (208.96 per thousand) village of Nowgong district and the lowest is found in Vevarghat (Islampur) village (39.22 per thousand) in Darrang district. The higher rate is found in Langi village due to non-practicing of birth control methods for which they do not prefer to accept the medical facilities offered by the Family Planning Department. Because this village is situated 32 thirty two kilometers away from Nowgong town. So, it is not possible for the villagers to avail themselves of the medical facilities to control the general fertility rate. On the other, Islampur village is situated one kilometer away from Mangaldoi town of Darrang district, from where the people can get the medical facilities very easily. (Table 5.10).

5.17 Birth rate and death rate :-

The birth rate per thousand of Maria Muslim population of the Brahmaputra Valley (26.64) is found to be significantly lower than that





NAME OF THE VILLAGES

FIG. - 16. BIRTH AND DEATH RATE

Table 5.10

Fertility rate of the Maria Muslims.(village wise) 1988.

(Sample Survey)

Name of the villages	No. of birth in a year.	Women aged (15-44) years.	General fertility rate per 1000
Hajo Islampatti	31	200	155.
Malara Islampatti	11	112	98.21
Vevarghat	06	153	39.22
Jayantipur	26	208	125.
Langi	14	67	208.96
Naobaisya	03	56	53.57
Kakojan	22	153	143.79
Laluka	13	109	119.27
Total	126	1058	119.09

Source : Data collected from the field work, 1988:

of the general population for the state (31). It is due to the acceptance of the birth control methods. It happens due to the closer contact with the urban people. Moreover the urban population is (32.06 percent) higher than the Muslim population of the Brahmaputra Valley (4.28 percent).

So they have adequate knowledge of family planning. The rural-urban birth rate per thousand also reveals the true situation. The rural birth rate per thousand is (24.37) is lower than the urban birth rate (32.23) per thousand. It is due to high fertility wastage in the rural area due to the non-availability of proper medical facility at the proper time, malnutrition and lack of hygienic sense. So the birth rate is less in rural areas than that of urban areas (Table 5.11).

The villagewise analysis reveals the characteristics regarding the birth rate. The rate is found to be highest in Langi village (48.78). It is due to the availability of proper medical facilities in and around the village and this village is having good transport facility which connects Nawgong town and Tejpur where the proper medical facilities are available. The birth rate is lowest in Islampur of Mangaldai. It is due to the non-availability of medical facilities and poor economic condition.

Further, the death rate per thousand of Maria Muslim population (11.62) is slightly lower than the state's (12.5) for general population. It is due to the availability of medical facilities due to more urbanisation. The urban death rate is (10.98) found to be lower than the rural death rate (11.89). It is due to proper medical facilities which are available in urban areas. Among the villages, the highest death rate is found in Islampur in Mangaldai (12.65), followed by Malara Islampatti (12.45). It is due to the bad communication system with urban areas, non-availability

Table - 5.11

Birth and death rate of the Maria Muslim Population, 1988

(Sample Survey)

Name of the villages	Total population	Total No. of birth	Birth rate per 1000 of Population	Total No. of death	Death rate per 1000 of population
Hajo Islampatti	783	31	39.59	09	11.49
Malara Islampatti	482	11	22.82	06	12.45
Vevar Ghat	632	06	9.49	08	12.65
Laluka	582	13	22.34	06	10.31
Langi	287	14	48.78	03	10.45
Naobaisya	286	03	10.49	03	10.49
Jayantipur	925	26	28.11	11	11.89
Kakojan	753	22	29.22	09	11.95
TOTAL	4730	126	26.64	55	11.62

Source : Based on field survey, 1988.

Rural birth rate is 24.37 and urban birth rate is 32.23. Rural death rate is 11.89 and urban death rate is 10.98.

of proper medical facilities and poor economic condition (Table 5.11).

5.18 Types of family:-

The types of family have been studied from field based data collected from the sampled villages. The size of the family also has been calculated from the sample villages. The calculation shows the variation from 1 to 20 persons with an average of 6 persons per family. From the table it is revealed that 68.67 percent families are of nuclear type, 13.05 percent families are of vertically extended type, 8.88 percent and 9.4 percent families have been categorised under horizontal and broken type of family respectively. The nuclear type of families consist of parents and children. The joint families have been divided into two - vertical extended families are constituted by parents, sons, daughter-in-laws and grand children and the horizontal extended families are formed by brothers, their wives and children who live in the same house using the same kitchen. The broken families are headed either by a widow or by a widower along with their minor children.

Jayantipur village in Nowgong district is the most populated village among the sample villages with 146 families. It is to be found that 63.01 percent families are of nuclear types. The size of the nuclear families varies between 2 to 8 persons. The joint families are less in number and it is calculated to be only 28.76 percent (15.75 percent of vertically extended, 13.01 percent of horizontally extended). The average size of the family is of 6 persons. The largest size is of 20 persons.

In Hajo Islampatti of Kamrup district there are 141 households having an average family size of 5 persons. It is calculated that in this

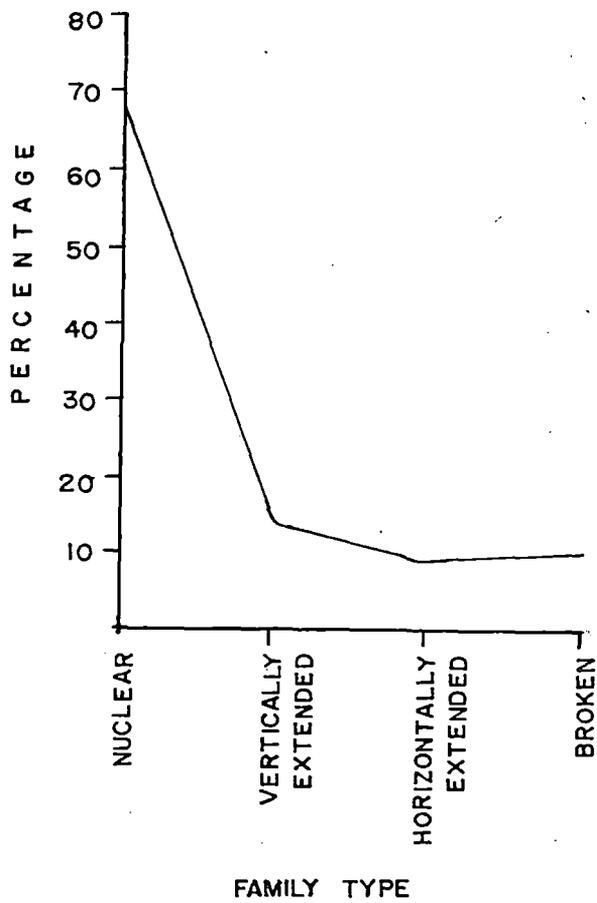


FIG - 17 TYPES OF FAMILY

village 70.21 percent families are of nuclear types. The size varies from 2 to 8 persons per family. Only 20.57 percent joint families are found including both vertically and horizontally extended family. The largest family size is of 18 persons and most of the families fall within the range between 4 to 6 members per family.

In Malara Islampatti there are 93 families having an average of 5 persons in each household. The largest family size of is 11 and the lowest size is of 2 members. In this village 78.49 percent nuclear families are calculated and the percentage of joint families are only 10.76 including both vertical and horizontal types.

In Vevarghat there are only 84 families having an average of 7 members per family. Largest family size is of 20 persons. In this village the nuclear types of family are 50.00 percent and the percentage of the joint families is only 44.05 percent.

Laluka village of Dibrugarh district have a total number of 92 families and average number of members per family is 6 persons. The largest family size is of 17 persons. Most of the families are found within the range between 4-6 members. Here 72.82 percent families are of the nuclear type.

In Langi village there are altogether 59 households having 4 persons per household. The largest family size is of 17 members and the smallest family size is of one member. In this village it is found that 84.75 percent families are of the nuclear type.

Naobaisya has only 54 families having an average of 5 persons per family. The largest family is of 10 persons, and the smallest is of

one member. The dominance of the nuclear type of family is also seen here and it is calculated to be 77.78 percent.

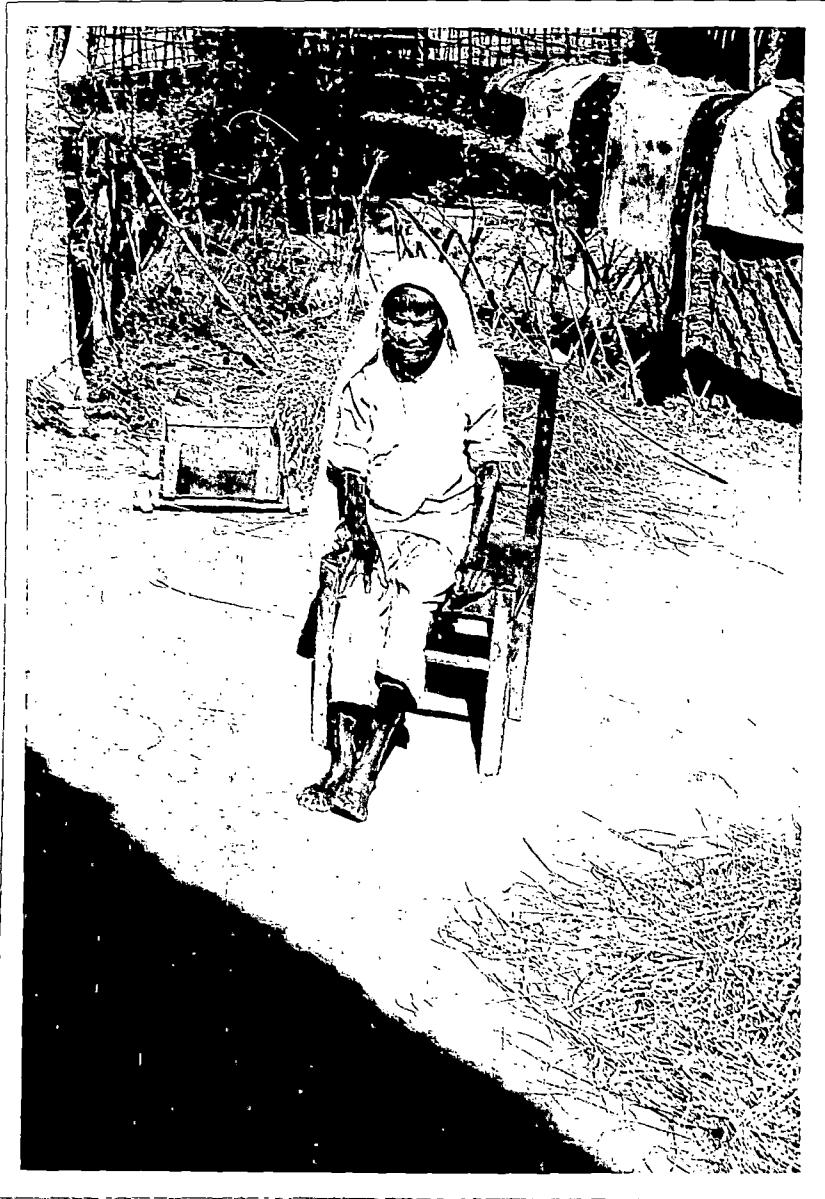
Kakojan village has 97 numbers of families with an average of 7 persons per family. The largest family size is of 26 persons and the smallest is of 3 persons. In this village 60.83 percent families are of the nuclear type (Table 5.12).

Table 5.12

Types of family (in percentage)

Name of the villages	Nuclear family	Vertical extended family	Horizontal extended family	Broken	Total no. of family
Hajo Islam-patti.	70.21	17.02	3.55	9.22	141
Malara Islam-patti.	78.49	7.53	3.23	10.75	93
Vevarghat	50.00	15.48	28.57	5.95	84
Laluka	72.82	4.35	4.35	18.48	92
Langi	84.75	3.39	5.08	6.78	59
Naobaisya	77.78	5.56	1.85	14.81	54
Jyantipur	63.01	15.75	13.01	8.22	146
Kakojan	60.83	24.74	11.34	3.09	97
TOTAL	68.67	13.05	8.88	9.4	766

Source : Field Survey , 1988.



Oldest Maria Woman.

From the above discussion it may be concluded that the joint family system is gradually replaced by the nuclear type of family. It is because the sons are staying separately from their parents after getting married and the married brothers also have separated due to shortage of living space; family dispute over properties and other matters. But the average size of 6 persons per family is higher in the present position of the country.

5.19 Literacy:-

Of all the aspects of population attributes, literacy is the best indication of the people's socio-economic development. The trends of literacy are indicative of the pace at which a particular society is getting transformed (Chandana 1980).

Literacy among the Maria Muslims has been calculated on the basis of the sampled village survey. The data have been collected from eight sampled villages. On the basis of this data it is found that the literacy of the Maria Muslims is quite high (64.48 percent) as against 28.15 percent literacy of Assam in 1971 and 37 percent of the country's literacy for the general population. The high literacy percentage is due to the fact that they are not basically cultivators. So, to get jobs the parents send their children for education. The male literacy percentage is 72.29 percent and female literacy percentage is 55.77 percent (Table 5.13). It is mainly due to the fact that the guardian's consciousness about education. But the percentage of rural literacy (72.20 percent) is higher than the urban literacy (27.80 percent). It is because of easy availability of job in urban area, where guardians send their children for earning money, though in urban areas educational facilities are more. In rural areas the

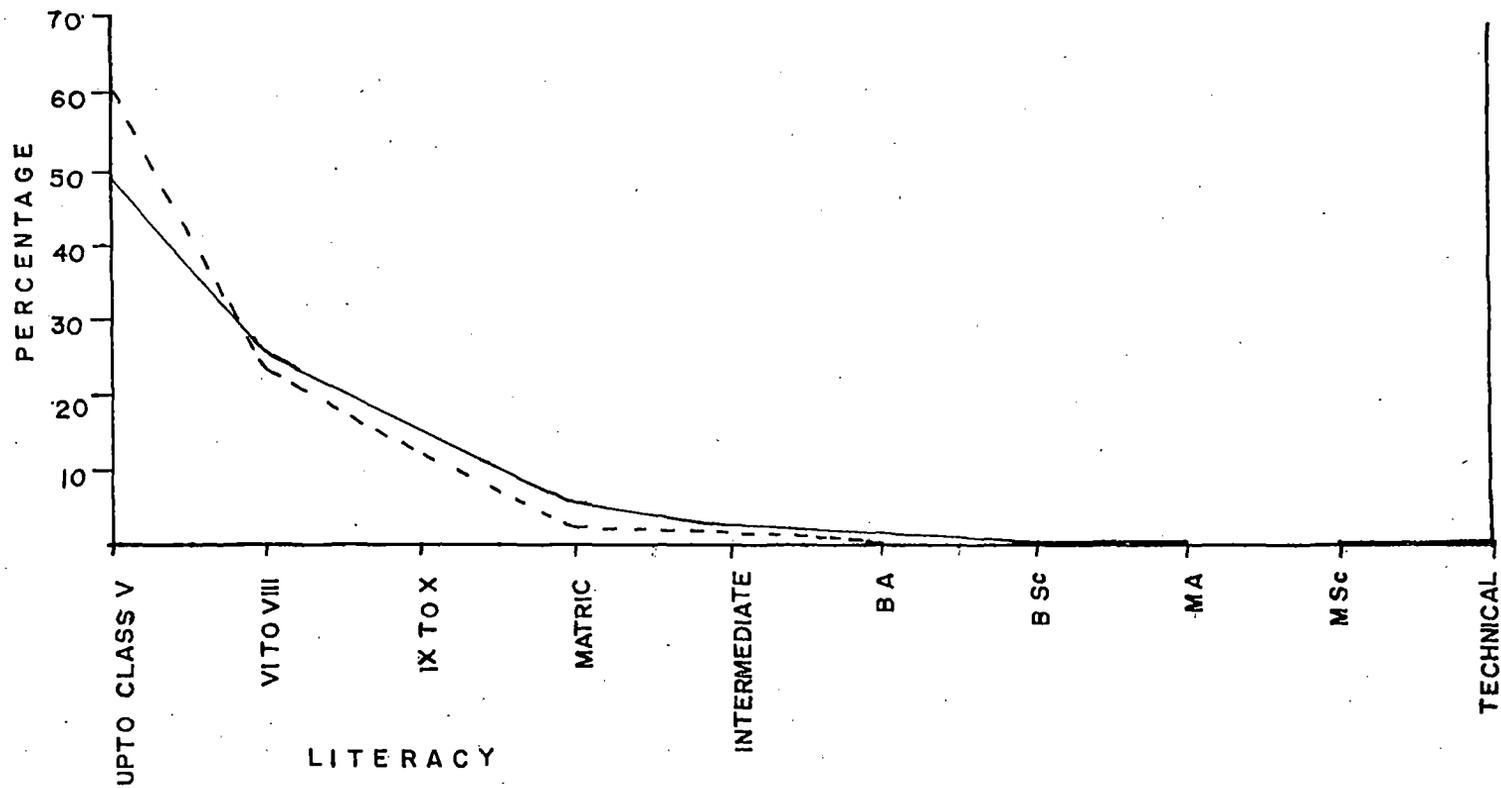


FIG. 18 LITERACY RATE

higher literacy rate is due to the non-availability of jobs and all the villages have at least one primary school where the guardians can send their children for education. The percentage of literacy upto primary level is 53.44 percent of which 47.69 percent are males and 61.75 percent are females. The high female literacy upto primary level is due to the availability of educational facility within the village. The low literacy percentage of males is mainly due to the fact that the male children go to the nearby urban areas to earn. The percentage of literacy upto VI to VIII level is 25.54 percent of which 26.96 percent are males and 23.50 percent are females. Percentage of literacy upto IX to X level is 12.75 percent of which 14.42 percent are males and 10.34 percent are females. Percentage of literacy upto Matric level is 3.96 percent of which 5.27 percent are males and 2.09 percent of females. The percentage upto Inter level is 2.52 percent of which 3.16 percent and 1.52 percent are males and females respectively. Upto the level of B.A. and B.Sc. the percentage of literacy is 1.48 and 0.13 percent respectively, of which 1.94 and 0.80 percent of males and females upto B.A. level respectively and upto B.Sc. level the percentage of males are 0.22 percent and the females are nil. Upto the level of M.A. 0.17 percent are males and the females are absent. Upto technical level 0.09 percent literacy is found of which 0.17 percent are males.

From the above discussion it is observed that the higher education is significantly very low among the Maria Muslims. It is mainly due to the fact that the facility for higher education is not available in nearby area. Moreover due to economic backwardness most of them go for earning a livelihood at an early age. So, the guardians cannot send their children for higher education due to poor economic condition.

Table 5.13

Spatial distribution of Rural and Urban Literacy, 1988.

(Sample Survey)

	T	M	F
Total	3050 (64.48)	1803 (72.29)	1247 (55.77)
Rural	2202 (72.20)	1313 (72.82)	889 (53.45)
Urban	848 (27.80)	490 (27.18)	358 (28.71)

The figure in the parentheses indicate the percentage.

Source : Based on field survey, 1988.

A villagewise analysis of (Table 5.14) literacy reveals that the percentage of literacy among the Maria Muslims is significantly higher, 74.70 percent, of which 78 percent and 71.11 percent are males and females respectively in Jayantipur village in Nowgong district than those of other studied villages. The high literacy percent is due to the availability of Primary school, High school and college in the nearby area. So, the guardians can easily send their children for education. It is the lowest (50.41 percent) in Malara Islampatty in Kamrup district. The percentage of literacy is 68.09 percent of males and 33.60 percent of females. The

Table 5.14
Villagewise literacy percentage (Sample survey)
1988

Name of the village	Upto Class V		Upto Class VI to VIII		Upto Class IX to X		Matric		Inter		B.A.		B.Sc.		M.A.		M.Sc.		Technical		Total literate		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T	M	F
Haji Islampatti	106	96	75	50	31	23	14	07	15	08	10	05	02	00	01	00	00	00	01	00	444	255	189
	(41.57)	(50.79)	(29.41)	(26.46)	(12.16)	(12.17)	(5.50)	(3.70)	(5.88)	(4.23)	(3.92)	(2.65)	(0.78)	(0.00)	(0.39)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.39)	(0.00)	(56.70)	(62.19)	(50.67)
Malara Islampatti	84	58	43	15	16	09	11	01	05	00	00	00	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	243	160	83
	(52.5)	(69.88)	(26.88)	(18.07)	(10.00)	(10.85)	(6.87)	(1.20)	(3.12)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.63)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(6.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(50.41)	(68.09)	(33.60)
Vevarghat Islampur	112	60	61	43	49	32	14	02	14	02	08	03	01	00	02	00	00	00	01	00	404	262	142
	(42.75)	(42.25)	(23.30)	(30.28)	(18.70)	(22.54)	(5.34)	(1.41)	(5.34)	(1.41)	(3.05)	(2.11)	(0.38)	(0.00)	(0.76)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.38)	(0.00)	(63.92)	(77.51)	(48.29)
Laluka	111	94	66	45	32	25	16	03	06	02	04	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	404	235	169
	(47.23)	(55.62)	(28.09)	(26.63)	(13.62)	(14.79)	(6.81)	(1.78)	(2.55)	(1.18)	(1.70)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(69.42)	(74.60)	(63.29)
Langi	68	74	13	04	19	01	01	00	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	181	102	79
	(66.67)	(93.67)	(12.75)	(5.06)	(18.62)	(1.27)	(0.98)	(0.00)	(0.98)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(63.07)	(68.92)	(56.85)
Naobaisya	37	35	46	27	29	19	08	00	06	02	04	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01		214	131	83
	(28.24)	(42.17)	(35.12)	(32.53)	(22.14)	(22.89)	(6.11)	(0.00)	(4.58)	(2.41)	(3.05)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.76)		(74.83)	(81.37)	(66.4)
Javantipur	226	258	57	50	38	04	11	03	01	00	04	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	691	375	316
	(60.27)	(81.64)	(25.86)	(15.82)	(9.6)	(1.27)	(2.93)	(0.95)	(0.27)	(0.00)	(1.07)	(0.32)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(74.70)	(78.00)	(71.11)
Kakojan	116	95	85	59	48	16	20	10	09	05	05	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	469	283	186
	(40.99)	(51.08)	(30.04)	(31.72)	(16.96)	(8.60)	(7.07)	(5.38)	(3.18)	(2.68)	(1.76)	(0.54)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(62.28)	(69.87)	(53.45)
TOTAL	860	770	486	293	260	129	95	26	57	19	35	10	04	00	03	00	00	00	03	00	3050	1803	1247
	(47.69)	(61.75)	(26.96)	(23.50)	(14.42)	(10.34)	(5.27)	(2.09)	(3.16)	(1.52)	(1.94)	(0.80)	(0.22)	(0.00)	(0.17)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.17)	(0.00)	(64.48)	(72.29)	(55.77)
GRAND TOTAL	1530	779	589	121	77	45	04	03	00	03	00	03	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.00)	03	3050						
	(53.44)	(25.54)	(12.75)	(3.96)	(2.52)	(1.48)	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.00)	(0.09)	(0.00)	(0.03)				(0.09)	(64.48)						

Source : Data collected from the field survey, 1988

The figure in the parentheses indicate the percentage.

lowest literacy rate is mainly due to the bad communication system, economic backwardness and non-availability of educational facilities within the village (Table 5.14).

It is important to note in the conclusion that the literacy among the Marias is quite promising but higher education among them is practically nil. The reason for this is due to :-

1. economic instability, for which the guardians send their children for earning money either after the completion of primary schooling or also before any schooling.
2. non-availability of higher educational centres within a reasonable distance.
3. the defect in the implementation of the government plans for the development in educations. As a result very few of the Maria youths could study upto graduation level.

5.2 Social structure :-

The Maria Muslim villages are both uni-ethnic and multi ethnic. The villages are surrounded by Assamese Hindu caste groups like Brahmin, Kalita, Keot etc. and the tribes like Koch, Mishing etc. The surrounding communities keep harmony with Maria Muslims which is reflected in their behaviour with their fellow villagers.

The existance of different castes and tribes with Maria Muslims in and around the village shows a relationship of reciprocity and co-operation among the communities. It has also been observed that other communities usually invite Maria Muslim at the time of socio-religious rituals and

festivals, which develops a cordial and friendly relation among them. These social and economic relationships have developed between Maria Muslims and other communities through a process of interaction.

The community under study came as soldiers from Gaur. After settling in this region they married the low caste Hindu women, which has been discussed earlier. It is found that they do not follow the strict Muslim customs in relation to their life cycle, such as - Pre-natal, Birth, Adolescence period, Marriage and Death. Here, some of their customs have been discussed which are assimilated with the Assamese Hindu Society by the way of marriage in the historic past.

5.21 Pre-natal and birth ritual :-

On the seventh month of pregnancy a ritual is performed by the married women. This ritual is locally known as Gopinisewa. Any day on the seventh month of pregnancy the married women (number is not fixed) of the society visit the incumbent family and a feast is arranged on this occasion. Rice, pulse, fish etc. are offered to the pregnant women. This ritual is alike to 'Hatkhowa' in the Assamese Hindu Society. The ritual is performed during day time. The pregnant woman can move outside the house also. The other muslim groups do not perform this ritual. Moreover Islamic rule does not permit a pregnant woman to move out of the house.

On the third day after the birth the Napit shaves the head of the newly born baby. The shaving of the head is locally known as 'Murkhurua'. On this day the mother and new born take bath. This ritual is locally known as Chuabichaya. The new born baby is kept inside the

room for about an week to protect it from contamination. It is presumed that they have borrowed all the above mentioned customs from the Assamese Hindu Society.

5.22 Ritual in adolescence period:-

Ritual in connection with the adolescent period is observed by this society. When a girl first attains the adolescent period they perform a ritual like marriage and is locally known as Tulonibiya. During this period the girl is kept in a room for three to four days and she is not allowed to come out of the room. During this time she takes only milk and fruits. The food is offered by the unmarried and married females. In every evening Biya nam is sung by the unmarried girls who come from neighbouring houses. On the last day the girl takes bath and wear new mekhela-chaddar, ornaments etc. and takes blessings from the elderly women. The women sing Biya nam. This ritual which they observe is the influence of Assamese Hindu Society. At present this ritual is not observed in all the villages. This is due to their awareness of the Islamic religion. The villages located near the urban area, either perform this ritual, very secretly, or they have given it up altogether. Since this custom has been borrowed from the Assamese Hindu Society and not approved by the other Muslim groups like Garia, Syad etc. So, they are giving up this ritual very slowly to get recognition in Muslim society.

When the boy attains the age of five years the ritual - chunnat Biya or Hatna Biya is performed. Before the day of Chunnat Biya the guardian throws a party to the villagers. The night before the Chunnat Biya the boy sits inside the Rava. The male invitee sing the Bihu song, Gazal, Hindi songs throughtout the night. On the next morning the boy is



A Scene of primary education.



A Scene of primary education in High Madrasa.



Bridegroom in wedding dress.



Bride in wedding party.

smearred with the paste of Matikalai and Haludhi before taking bath. Chunnat is done after the bath and it is done by the Napit.

In Pithakhowa village of Darrang district it is reported that Chunnat Biya is locally known as Hatna Biya. On the day of Chunnat they hold a procession twice (one in the morning time and the another in the evening time). During this procession the boy is decorated like a bride-groom and an elderly male person takes the boy on his shoulder, the procession moves around the village. This procession is locally known as Gajfura. It is also reported that at the time of Ahom King, the king used to supply them Gaja for this procession. At that time the boy used to sit on the back of the elephant. In Sanskrit language Gaja means elephant. So to travel or move about sitting on the back of an elephant is Gajfura.

5.23 Marriage ceremony:-

Marriage is an important social institution through which the status of a community can be understood as compared with the surrounding communities and which makes relationship with other communities.

In this community the maximum number of marriages are performed within the community itself. This is because the boys and girls are not accepted by other sections of Muslims, because they are considered degraded Muslims by other Muslims. Many customs have been entered their society from the Assamese Hindu culture, which the other Muslims do not like. In marriages also many customs have been entered in their society from the Assamese Hindu society.

After the selection of the mate, Jurandiya is performed. The marriage date is fixed three to six months before the marriage by the astrologer (generally Hindu). On the day of Jurandiya, party from the bridegroom's residence goes to the bride's residence. The party consists of twenty to fifty males and females. They take with them a gold ring, kanphool, mekhela - chaddar, cosmetics, one pair of shoes, sweets, banana, akhoi, gakhir etc. to the bride's residence. All the articles are carried in a bhar. An elderly person (either male or female) gives the ring to the bride.

In the past, on the day of Jurandiya, laru was used to be sent to the bride's residence. Laru was used to be prepared at home for all the villagers at least one piece per head. On the day of Jurandiya the laru was distributed to the villagers.

Murarteldiya is observed on the day before the marriage. On this day seven females (all whose children are alive) first go to bridegroom's residence carrying mustard oil and tamul-pan. The seven females hold the bottle of the mustard oil together and put a phot. They perform the same practice in the bride's residence. The widows are not allowed to attend this ritual. They sing Biya nam at the time of Murarteldiya. The night before the marriage day baithaki is performed. Baithaki is performed in both the bride's and the bridegroom's houses. In the house of the bride the females sing the Biya nam throughout the whole night. But in the house of bridegroom the males sing Hindi film song, Gajal and Bihu song throughout night. They sing with the accompaniment of dhol, harmonium etc. at that time. It is continued through the whole night.

On the day of marriage, early in the morning the female members go to either a river or a pond to fetch water for bathing. This ritual is known as Paniloya. For this they carry eight to ten Kalash made of brass. At this time they sing Biya nam. After filling up the Kalash they bring it to the house and keep in the rooms of the bridegroom and the bride in their respective houses. The water pitcher are kept on the floor in one line. Lota filled with water is kept on each Kalash. Flower (according to availability) is also put on the Lota and the whole thing is then covered with Seleng Kapor of baga rang.

A Beye is prepared in both the houses. The Beye is prepared by putting the seedlings of banana trees in the four corners. The seedlings are connected by the strips of bamboo and is decorated with flowers and leaves. The Baye is rectangular in shape. A Taktoposh is placed in the middle of the Baye where the bathing is performed. Before the bath they move round the Baye either three times or five times or seven times. At this time, mother (in absence of the mother, the nearest female relative) will remain in the front, then either bride or bridegroom and then other females move. At this time the bridegroom has to catch his mother's little finger of the left hand by his right hand and the second woman catches the little finger of the left hand of the bridegroom by her right hand and they move. The same custom is practiced in the bride's residence. After going round the Baye, the bridegroom or the bride sits on the Taktoposh facing towards west. The Imam or a respectable person comes and then co-conut oil is poured from the bottle containing two to three grains of paddy on the head. Then all the persons present give co-conut oil on the head. After this the body is smeared with the paste of Matikalai Halodhi and mustered oil. They take bath with soap. The same

females also go the bride's residence to perform the bath.

The marriage is performed during night time. The bridegroom with his party reach the bride's residence at night. When the bridegroom arrives the females come to receive him at the gate. First, they offer Pan and Tamul and give Gamocha at least, a younger girl kisses his cheek by touching a pair of Pan on his cheek. This custom is known as Mandhara. Then the bridegroom enters the gate but in front of him a lady sprays water from Lota either by any flower leaves or by mango leaves. When the bridegroom comes the females keep an umbrella (black coloured) over his head. After the completion of all these rituals the bridegroom sits in the Rava. The bridegroom wears Sheroany and Pajama and Pagri but pant shirt is also worn in some urban areas. Two Ravas are prepared; one for the bridegroom and the other for the bride facing west. The bride wears Mekhela-Chaddar and ornaments. The face of the bride remains open. In the past after arriving at the bride's house the bridegroom's guardian used to go to the bride (before marriage) with Pan and Tamul, Paise and also cloth to see her. At that time the face of the bride used to remain covered, with a piece of cloth. At present this practice is observed only in Tamulishika village of Jorhat district.

Inside the Rava one seedling of the banana plant is placed in which a pin or Beji is put inside. They keep this Beji because they believe in black magic. It is also believed that this piece of Beji will save the pairs from the black magic. Moulovi keeps the Beji in the banana plant.

The marriage is performed according to Islamic law. Nikah is performed by the Moulovi. Denmehar system is also there. The marriage

is performed on contract basis.

The bridegroom returns to his residence early in the morning. At the time of entry into the bridegroom's house, first the mother of the bride-groom enters then the bridegroom and at least the bride. At that time the bridegroom catches the little finger of the left hand of his mother by the little finger of his right hand cross-wise and the bride catches the little finger of the left hand by her right hand little finger cross-wise. At that time a lady sprays water from the Lota by mango leaves.

On the eighth day the bridegroom goes to the bride's residence. If the distance is long they stay for two to three days and if it is within the short periphery they return on the same day.

In the past Gadhan (bride price) system was there. Before the marriage the parents of the bridegroom had to give a certain amount to the parents of the bride. If any one unable to pay, the marriages would not have solemnised. It seems from this system that in the past a marriage used to be solemnised between families of equal economic status. At present Gadhan system has stopped due to the common economic backwardness of the people (Marias) in general.

The above mentioned system is observed in the society of the Miri and the Mishing tribes, hence it can be concluded that this was the influence of the Miri or the Mishing. As the Miri and the Mishing tribes are seen nearer to the Maria villages located in Upper Assam.

It may also be mentioned that the marriages are not performed on tuesday and saturday and in the month of Saon Bhad and Chat.

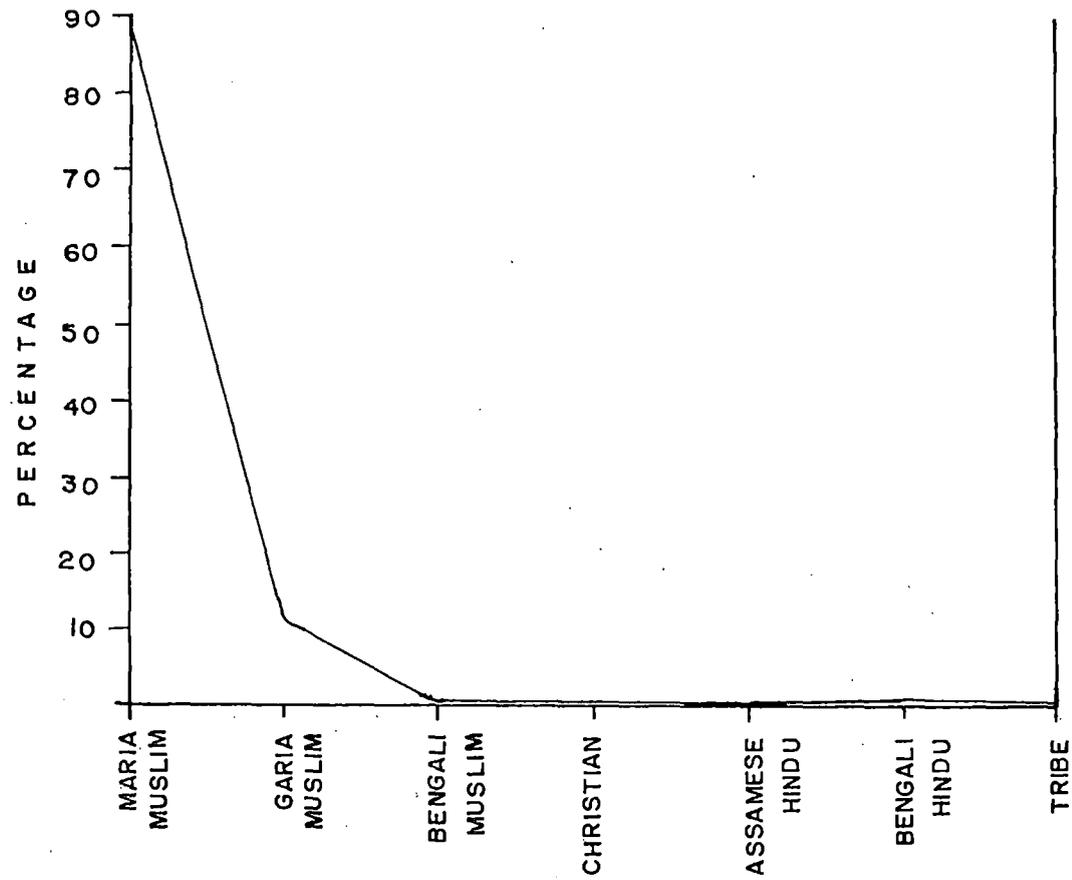
5.24 Marital relationship with other communities :-

Since the upper two groups namely Syad and Garia maintained a distance with the Marias, the Marias have become an endogamous group. They marry among themselves for which Irshad Ali (1974) calls it as Kin-community by using Murdock's (1949) term. But it is not according to Islamic rule. Ali writes that socio-economic background and network of Kinship here helped to create a sense of solidarity among the Marias, so there is a possibility of both hypogamy and hypergamy (1974).

Investigations are made on this aspect of eight sampled villages of the Brahmaputra Valley in different regions. From the table it is observed that 88.18 percent marriages are performed within the community. 10.86 percent marriages are performed with the Garia muslims, 0.21 percent marriages are performed with the Assamese Hindus, 0.11 percent with the Bengali Muslims, 0.21 percent with the Christians, 0.32 percent with the Bengali Hindus and 0.11 percent with the tribes. At present the tendency to establish marital relationships with other communities is very slowly increasing. This is due to the occupational diversification and close linkage with communities (Table 5.15).

5.25 Marriage distance :-

Marriage distance is the vital factor of marital relationship with other villages. Since the economic condition of this community is poor so, the maximum number of marriages are solemnised within the village. This is due to the poor economic condition and due to communication difficulties. Within the region they have good contact but contact is less with the distant villages. It has also been observed that the marriages



MARIA AND OTHER COMMUNITIES

FIG-19 MARITAL RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

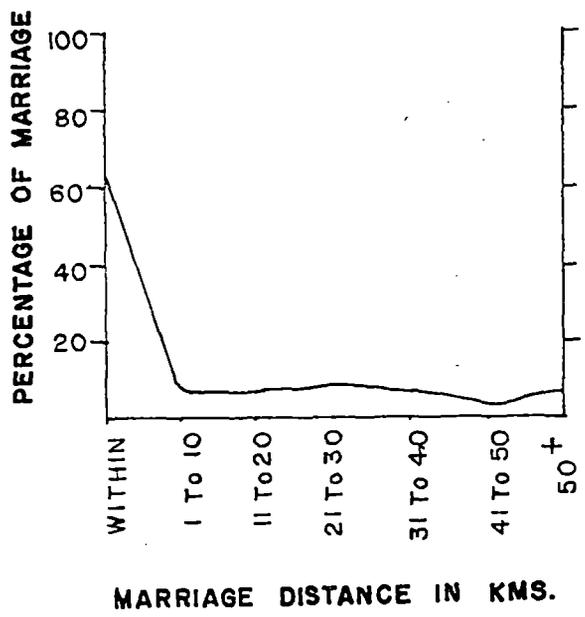


FIG.- 20. MARRIAGE DISTANCE

Table 5.15

Marital relationship with other communities.(in percentage).1988.

Name of the villages.	Maria Muslims	Garia Muslims	Assamese Hindus	Bengali Muslims	Christian.	Bengali Hindus	Tribe.
Hajo Islampatti	84.94	15.06	-	-	-	-	-
Vevarghat	78.07	18.42	-	-	-	2.63	0.88
Malara Islampatti	80.51	16.95	-	0.85	1.69	-	-
Langi	93.44	6.56	-	-	-	-	-
Jayantipur	99.01	0.99	-	-	-	-	-
Naobaisya	87.5	12.5	-	-	-	-	-
Kakojan	91.44	7.14	1.42	-	-	-	-
Laluka	84.69	15.31	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	88.18	10.86	0.21	0.11	0.21	0.32	0.11

Source : Based on Sample survey, 1988.

are not performed with the villages of Upper Assam and with the villages of Lower Assam. This is because of their incapability of spending money in transport. Moreover it has also been found that before 1974 they did not have any idea about the number of villages of their own community. The first conference of Maria Muslims was held at Jayantipur village of Nowgong district on 27th January 1974. From this conference Communication started between the districts. Before that the marriages were used to perform within the districts. But at present though marriages between families living in far away villages have increased but the percentage is quite low. Because they have started distant marriages only few years back, but the attitude towards distant-marriages is gradually changing (Table 5.16).

5.26 Death ritual :-

The body is buried according to Muslim religious customs. After that on the third day they perform Tindiniya or Tilani, on this day the Quran is read out by the Moulavi and fruits like banana, sugarcane, apple etc. are distributed. Upto three days they do not cook in the deceased person's house. They take rice and vegetables given by the villagers. On the tenth day they perform Dahdiniya. On this day they take the non-vegetarian items of food. On the fortieth day they perform Challisdiniya or Chouabichaya. On this day the moulavi reads out the Quran. The whole ritual is known as Hakam. But according to muslim religion there is no such rituals in connection with death. Jiyarat may be performed on any day.

5.27 Fairs and festivals:-

The people of Maria Muslims observe the Bihu festivals. Bihu is the main festival of the Assamese people. Three types of Bihu are

Table 5.16

Marriage distance in kilometers and in percentage (including total number of marriage).

Name of the villages.	Inside the village.	D I S T A N C E I N K M.						Total number of marriage.
		1 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 30	31 to 40	41 to 50	50+	
Hajo	105 63.25	03 1.81	22 13.26	24 14.46	09 5.42	01 0.60	02 1.20	166
Malara	71 60.17	10 8.48	06 5.08	20 16.95	04 3.39	03 2.54	04 3.39	118
Vevarghat	62 54.39	08 7.02	09 7.89	06 5.26	22 19.30	01 0.88	06 5.26	114
Langi	29 47.54	22 36.06	03 4.92	03 4.92	02 3.28	0 0	02 3.28	61
Jyantipur	166 81.77	05 2.46	03 1.48	06 2.96	16 7.88	03 1.48	04 1.97	203
Kakojan	61 43.57	12 8.57	20 14.29	18 12.86	06 4.29	08 5.71	15 10.71	140
Naobaisya	18 37.5	02 4.17	09 18.75	05 10.42	01 2.08	06 12.5	07 14.58	48
Laluka	64 65.31	05 5.10	03 3.06	06 6.12	0 0	02 2.04	18 18.37	98
TOTAL	576 60.76	67 7.07	75 7.91	88 9.28	60 6.33	24 2.53	58 6.12	948

Source : Based on sample survey, 1988.

performed in Assam. 1. Rangali Bihu in the month of Bohag. 2. Kati Bihu in the month of Kati and 3. Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu in the month of Magh. They perform all these three types of Bihu.

1. Rangali Bihu starts from the last day of the month of Chat and lasts for the first seven days of the month of Bohag. Before that the Assamese people sing Huchuri in front of the dwellings. The children of the Maria Muslims also take part in this song. They sing Huchuri during the Bihu time also.

On the 1st day of the month of Bohag the Assamese people bath their cattle in the river. The people of this community also bath their cattle. The cattle are bathed by both males and females. Before bathing they smear the body of the cow by Matikalai mixed with Halodhi. At the time of bathing they beat the cattle by Diglati mati loti. There after they offer brinjal, gourd cutting both into pieces and at that times they say :-

"Lau kha Bengena kha
Bachar Bachar Badi ja
Mar Haru Baper Haru
Toi Habi Bar Bar Garu"

The meaning of this poem is that "After eating gourd, brinjal etc. Your (cattle) growth will be more, year after year, and you (cattle) will be a big cow". Then the cattles are allowed to move in the field. In the afternoon the cattle is tied with new Pagha and brought to the cattle shed.

In the evening all the members of the family come and keep the cattle inside the cow-shed. This Bihu is locally known as 'Goru Bihu'.

2. Kati Bihu :- This Bihu is observed by the Assamese cultivators and mainly confined to the rural areas. The Maria Muslims also observe this Bihu. On this day, during day time, those who are cultivators go to the paddy field and see the condition of the production like the Assamese cultivators. During the day time they wash their Bharal with water. In the evening they light Saki and offer home made sweets and fruits on banana leaves in the Bharal ghar. They also place Saki in the agricultural field like Assamese cultivators. This is the worship of fire. In Assamese language this custom is known as Jui Puja. Jui puja is performed to kill the insects which is unhealthy for the crops. For this worship, the other Muslim groups do not take part. This Bihu is also known as 'Kangali Bihu.'
3. Magh Bihu :- Magh Bihu is also known as Bhogali Bihu. The Assamese people prepare home made sweets with Til, gur rice powder etc. The Maria Muslims also prepare home made sweets known as Pitha. They also prepare Jondali Pitha like Assamese people with rice powder, molasses, sesame etc.

During day time they tie the trunk of the fruit trees and the main pillar of the Bharal with a straw-rope and they say that,

"Megh Maha Bale Nazabi

Dal Bhari Bhari Lagibi"

which means that, "cloud should not go. If cloud is there, the rain will be there and the trees will grow fast." Particularly they select the trees of Jack fruits, Mangoes, Betel-nuts etc. It is

believed that if it is not done, the growth of quantity of the fruits will be less. The main pillar of the Bharal is also kept tied with straw-rope, it is believed that Lakhimi is kept inside the Bharal.

Besides all these festivals they also visit Rashlila sometimes and they also donate to this festivals.

5*28 Religion :-

They are Islam by religion. But they do not perform fully the Islamic religious rites. Since they are neither Muslims nor Hindus so the other Muslim groups treat them as outcasts. Though they perform all the Islamic religious functions like Id-UI-Fitre, Id-Uj-Zuha, Muhharam, Bakrid-Id etc. But at the same time they also go to the pandal of Durga-puja to see the idol. In some villages (Pithakhowa, Kakojan, Becheria etc.) the executive members of the Durga-puja committee are also taken from this community. They give subscription for the Durga-puja. In Kalipuja also they fire crackers. Since they are tilting towards the Assamese religion so the Tablique party - an Islamic missionary people preaches Islam among the Marias. The Tabliques don't take food in Maria houses. It may be mentioned that among the Marias only a few observe the Namaz. It is also observed that in Garia Jamat (mosque) if the attendance is sixty then at that time five or six persons attend the Maria Jamat. It shows their lack of interest in Islamic religion. But now Moulouis and other groups of Muslims are trying to raise the attendance in Maria Jamat (mosque) at the time of Namaz.

5*29 Superstitions :-

1. At the time of evening when fire Sakis (earthen lamp) are lit. They do not give anything for example they do not give money,

gold, rice etc. to any outsider. At that time they keep the cattle inside the cow-shed.

2. They do not cut bamboo on Tuesday and Saturday.
3. On the day of the parents death they do not give anything to outsiders. Even they do not do any marketing on this day.
4. The Bharal is closed on the last day of the month of Puh i.e., at the time of Magh Bihu for one month. During this period they do not bring grains from the Bharal. Bharal is opened on the 1st day of month of Fagun. On this day the Bharal is cleaned with water, then they light the Saki and fruits like sugarcane, banana etc. are offered on the banana leaves inside the Bharal and then Hewa is performed. After the completion of the custom they bring the grains like paddy etc. from the Bharal.
5. When anybody has an attack of Pox then on the third day Aisewa is performed. Ai Sewa means Ai means mother or Pox and Sewa means respect that is AiSewa means respect to Pox. On this day the room of the patient and other rooms are cleaned out. In the evening the saki is lighted, incense sticks and fruits like sugarcane, banana etc. are kept on the Aglati Kal Pat. These articles may be kept either in the room of the patient or in other rooms. The elderly women come and sing Aigan in Kneeling position. Young ladies are not allowed to take part in this ritual. At the end one lady shouts that "Ajir Para Hakale Bhal Hoke" means "from to-day all the persons remain free from illness", at that time others also shout "Ajir Para Hakale Bhal Hok". Then the

prashad is offered to the patient and his face is washed by touching it with gold, silver, gakhir and flowers.

6. When a person is attacked with Cholera then they perform Bhat Hewa. One night ten to twelve males become naked in a closed room and keep a small alive chicken in a charia. Then they sing different types of religious songs and after some times (time is not mentioned) they open the Charia, if the chicken still alive, it is believed that the patient will survive and if the chicken dies then the patient won't survive.
7. When a cow is attacked with pox then they perform Gohali Payas or Gohali Hewa. One day the Payas is prepared with rice, milk, sugar etc. either in the cleaned cowshed or outside the cowshed. It is prepared during the day by married females. Widows are not allowed to prepare. The Payas is placed on the front portion of the banana leaf and offered in the cow-shed, saki is lighted and incense sticks are also offered. With this they respect the cow shed to make it free from any disease of the cattle. At that time cow is kept outside the shed. After offering respect to the cowshed Payas is divided into three portions. First portion is kept on the tin ali on a banana leaf. The other two portions are given to the cow.
8. After the birth of the calf they suck the first milk from the cow and throw it into the jungle putting it in a Bhar. It is believed that if it is done then the calf won't drink the milk secretly.
9. They believe in horoscope. Locally the horoscope is known as 'Huoroni'. After the birth of a child they go to a Hindu Ganak

and Huoroni is prepared. They believe in Mangolsowa and for this purpose they go to a Hindu Ganak. When a person becomes seriously ill they go to the Bej to whom the horoscope is shown and they take necessary action according to his instructions and suggestions.

10. They believe in black magic. In the past black magic was very popular. The black magic was practiced either by the people of their own community or by other communities like Kaibarta, Ahom, Mishing etc. They have learnt black magic from these communities. A person named Deka Poali from the community of Tamulishika village of Jorhat district, was expert in practicing black magic. In the interior villages like Bagal, Demoumukh, Mothadang of Sibsagar district, this practice is still prevailing. They believe in Tantra and apply at the time of fever and other diseases. Posirat Ali of Bagal is an expert person in black magic. For this practice of black magic by these people, the people of the urban and semi-urban areas are afraid of making marital relationship with these villagers.

5.30 Economic structure :-

5.31 Occupational structure:-

The occupational composition of a group of population is always influenced by economic, demographic and social factors. The size of the labour force, its distribution into various occupations, sexwise participation in different economic activities and the difference in participation rates by age literacy and residence are fair indices of physical resource base, the system of social organisation and the nature of economy prevailing in a region (Chandana 1980).

Table - 5.17

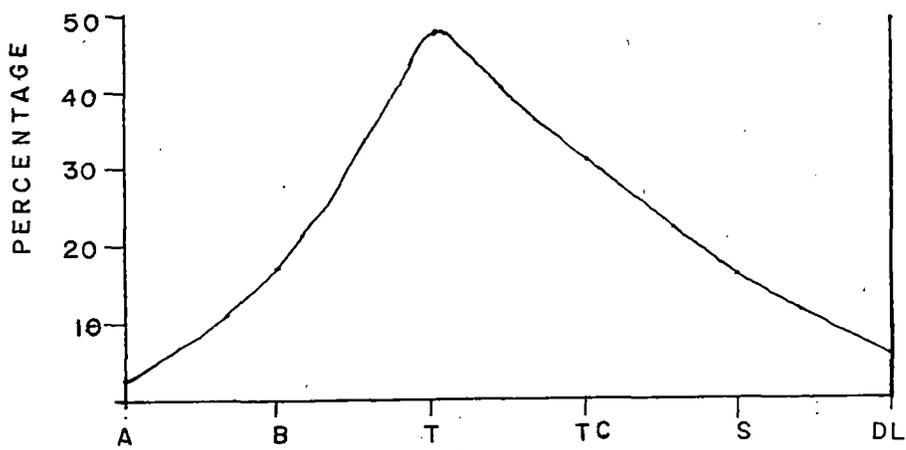
Percentage of the occupational structure of the Maria Muslims.

(Sample Survey), 1988

Name of the villages	Trade and Comm-erce	Brass Indus-try	Service	Workers in								Total	Daily labour	Agri-culture	Total workers
				Pvt. bus driver	Pvt. bus Conductor	Transport A.S.T.C. driver	and Communication A.S.T.C. conduc-tor	Thala-wala	Taxi driver	Truck drivers	Rickshaw puller				
Hajo Islampatti	21 (8.64)	158 (65.02)	31 (12.76)	18 (7.41)	07 (2.88)	01 (0.41)	00 (0.00)	01 (0.41)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	27 (11.11)	06 (2.47)	00 (0.00)	243 (31.03)
Malara Islampatti	44 (33.84)	17 (13.08)	19 (14.61)	19 (14.61)	04 (3.08)	02 (1.54)	00 (0.00)	05 (3.85)	00 (0.00)	01 (0.77)	00 (0.00)	31 (23.85)	17 (13.08)	02 (1.54)	130 (26.97)
Islampur (Vevarghat)	102 (58.96)	07 (4.05)	40 (23.12)	01 (0.58)	00 (0.00)	01 (0.58)	01 (0.58)	00 (0.00)	02 (1.15)	04 (2.31)	01 (0.58)	10 (5.78)	08 (4.62)	06 (3.47)	173 (27.37)
Kakojan	101 (50.5)	27 (13.5)	27 (13.5)	15 (7.5)	00 (0.00)	05 (2.5)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	03 (1.5)	23 (11.5)	09 (4.5)	13 (6.5)	200 (26.56)
Jayantipur	176 (77.53)	06 (2.65)	32 (14.10)	03 (1.32)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	02 (0.88)	00 (0.00)	05 (2.2)	03 (1.32)	05 (2.20)	227 (25.54)
Naobaisya	48 (61.54)	01 (1.28)	08 (10.26)	02 (2.57)	00 (0.00)	01 (1.28)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	05 (6.41)	06 (7.69)	01 (1.28)	15 (19.23)	05 (6.41)	01 (1.28)	78 (27.27)
Langi	54 (73.97)	00 (0.00)	09 (12.33)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	05 (6.85)	05 (6.85)	73 (25.44)
Laluka	47 (42.73)	01 (0.91)	31 (28.18)	04 (3.64)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	05 (4.54)	04 (3.64)	00 (0.00)	13 (11.82)	18 (16.36)	00 (0.00)	110 (18.90)
TOTAL	593 (48.06)	217 (17.59)	197 (15.96)	62 (5.02)	11 (0.89)	10 (0.81)	01 (0.08)	06 (0.49)	12 (0.97)	17 (1.38)	05 (0.41)	124 (10.05)	71 (5.75)	32 (2.59)	1234 (26.09)

The figures in the parentheses indicate the percentage.

Source : Based on sample survey, 1988.

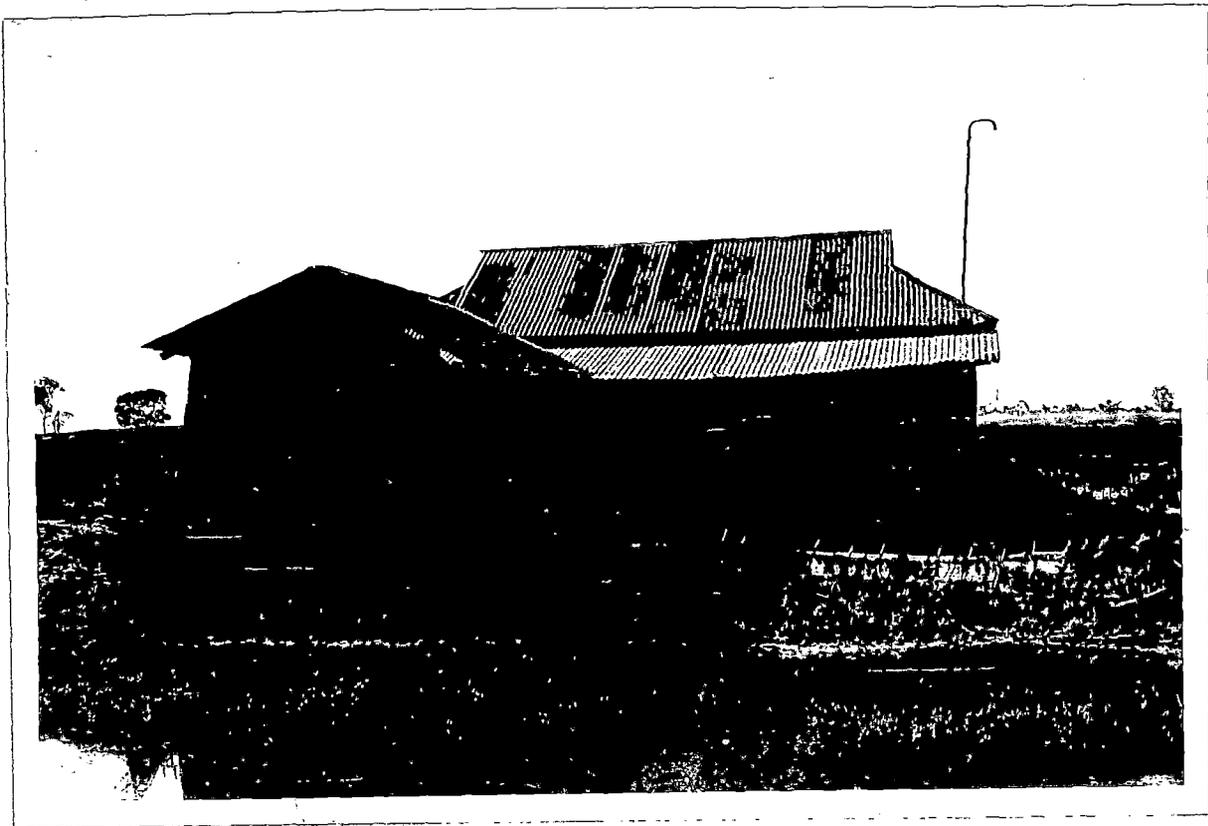


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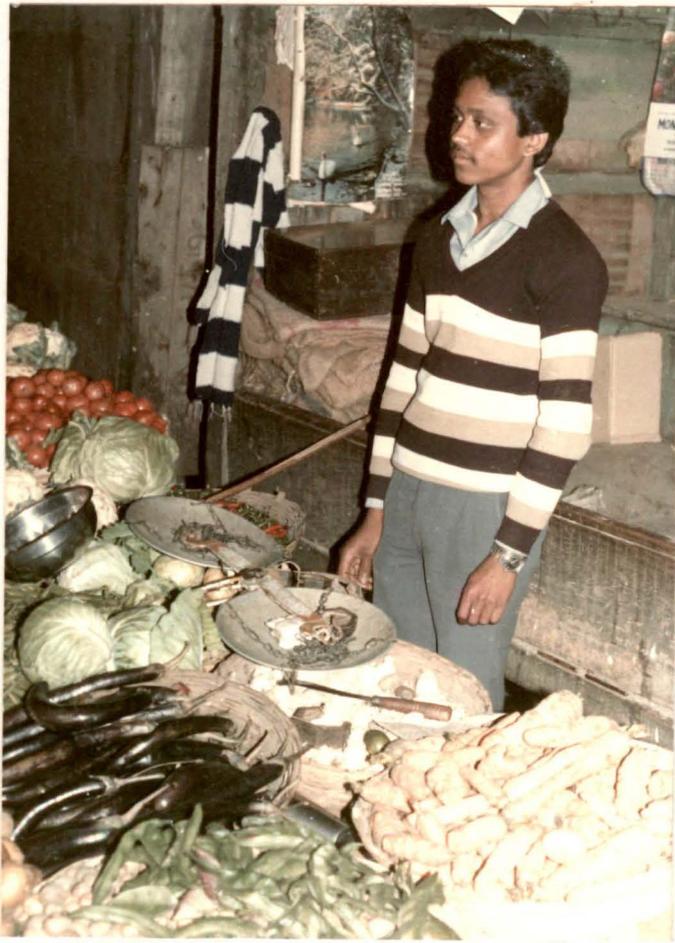
OCCUPATION

- A- Agriculture
- B- Brass industry
- T- Trade and Commerce
- TC- Transport and Communication
- S- Service
- DL- Daily Labour

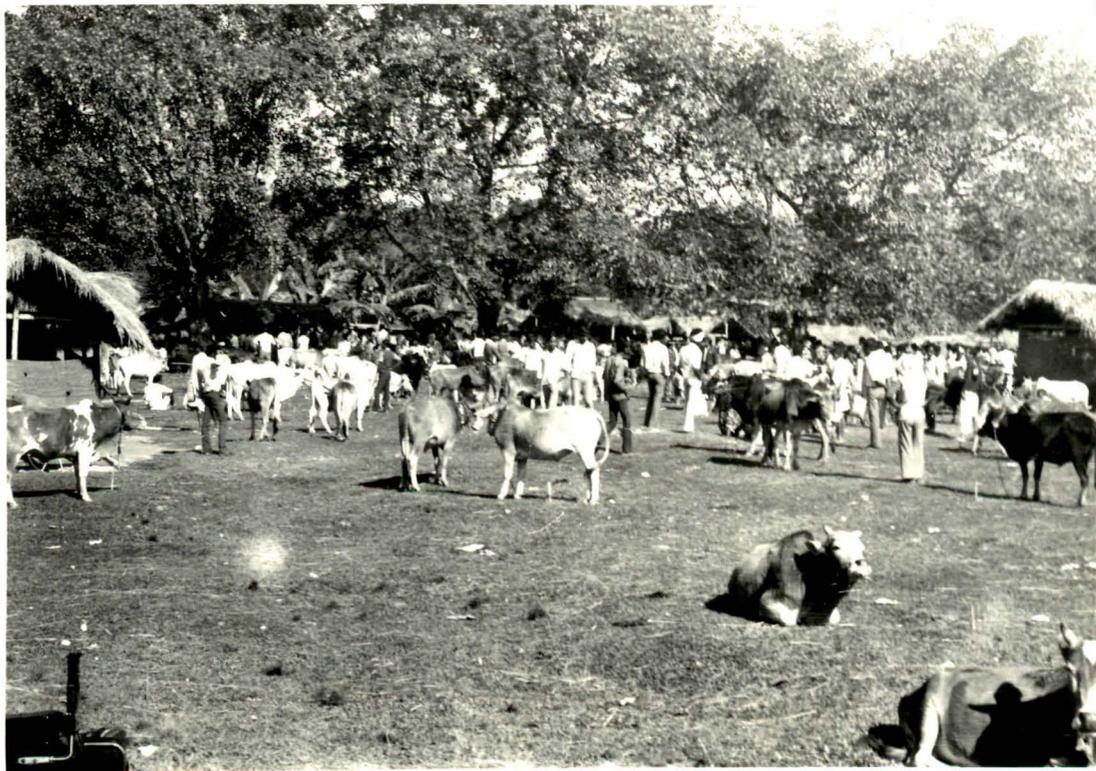
FIG-21 OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE



Dilapidated Mosque in Neemati Ghat.



Vegetable Shop.



Rural market.

The occupational structure of the Maria Muslim population has been studied on the basis of the survey made in the study area. It is found that the percentage of the Maria Muslim workers (26.09) is less in comparison with that of the state (28.35) for the total general population (Table 5.17). It is mainly due to the high number of non-working dependants (73.91 percent) particularly females (95.13 percent) among the Maria Muslims. Thus 45.11 percentage of males and 4.87 percentage of females have to feed 54.89 percentage of males and 95.13 percentage of females among them.

The Maria Muslims are the brass utensil makers. From the time of Ahom Kings they took up making brasswares as their primary occupation. But at present it is observed from the table 5.17, that out of the total (26.09 percentage) workers 48.06 percent of population are engaged in Trade and Commerce, followed by Brass Industry (17.59 percent), service (15.96 percent), Transport and Communication (10.05 percent), Daily wage labour (5.75 percent), and Agriculture (2.59 percent) for their livelihood.

5.32 Trade and commerce:-

Village wise analysis gives the inner view of their occupational structure. From the table it has been observed that engagement in trade and commerce is highest in Jayantipur village (77.53 percent) and Langi village (73.97 percent) of Nowgong district. These two villages are well communicated with Nowgong town and Tezpur town of Sonitpur district. Nowgong town is one of the important business centres of the Brahmaputra Valley. These two villages are situated thirty kilometers away from Nowgong town and fourteen kilometers away from Tezpur town - another business centre of the valley. People of these two villages do the business of

bamboo, wood, contract, big and small stationery and grocery shops. They supply wood, and bamboo to Nowgong and Tezpur towns. The purchasers are Marwari, Assamese Hindu caste groups, and Garia Muslims also. They sell out bamboo at the rate of Rs.30.00 to Rs.40.00 per bamboo (Jati variety mainly). Matured trees are sold at the rate of Rs.200.00 to Rs.500.00 per tree according to variety. The trees are sold for making furniture. The costliest trees are Honaru and Maz. Other varieties are Himula, Dimuru, Veleu and Chatiang. Some of them are the owners of shops also. Shops are found in their locality in Nowgong and Tezpur towns. Contractors are found mainly in urban areas. They are mainly engaged in house construction, culverts etc. They get the contract either from the private party or from the state Govt.

In Naobaisya and Kakojan the two villages of Jorhat district, their percentage in trade and commerce is 61.54 and 50.5 respectively. Naobaisya is situated twelve kilometers away from Jorhat town. The people who are engaged in business are mainly attached to the Jorhat town. Regular bus service is there. Majority of them are the owners of big and small stationery and grocery shops. Some of them purchase stationery items from Calcutta also. But grocery items like rice, pulses, mustard oil etc. are purchased from the local Marwari business men. A few of them are engaged in contract jobs. They construct small private houses of local people like Assamese Hindu, Garia Muslims etc. and are also engaged in Govt. work.

The people of Kakojan (18 kms. from Jorhat town) village are mainly engaged in cow and buffalo business. They purchase cows and buffalo from Nishi and Nath community of Majuli (largest riverine Island)

island. Majuli is 25 kms. away from this village. They bring the cattle upto Neemati Ghat by Ferry from Majuli island. Majuli island is very fertile for the growing of cattle grass, where local people like Nishi and Nath keep the cattle for business. They bring the cattle from Neemati Ghat to Kakojan on foot. After that they sell them in Nagaland - 30 kms. away from the village. Naga people like the flesh of these cattle. They keep the profit of Rs.500/- to Rs.1000/- per cow or buffalo. They have direct business contact with the people.

(Islampur) Vevarghat - a village of Darrang district where 58.96 percent people are engaged in Trade. This village is three kms. away from Mangaldoi - a district head quarter of the Darrang district. They are mainly shop keepers either grocery or stationery. They purchase stationery articles from Gauhati, from the Marwaris, but some of them purchase from Calcutta also.

Laluka - a village of Dibrugarh district, situated 3 kms. away from Dibrugarh town, and well communicated by road transport. Only 42.73 percent of the people are engaged in trade and commerce. Their main business centre is Dibrugarh. They are engaged as contractors, shop keepers etc. The people who are engaged in contract jobs, do the Govt. as well as private works. They get the order from the Assam Govt. and private parties like the construction of school building, small hotels, private houses etc. from Assamese Hindu caste, Bengali, Marwaris, Behari etc. Their work is mainly concentrated in Dibrugarh town. A few of them are owners of private buses which run between Gauhati and Dibrugarh as night service. Truck owners are also seen among them. The shop keepers

are concentrated in Dibrugarh town and in Dibrugarh University area. They purchase stationery articles from Gauhati, Nowgong and Calcutta. A few of them have automobiles parts shop. They purchase automobiles parts from Calcutta.

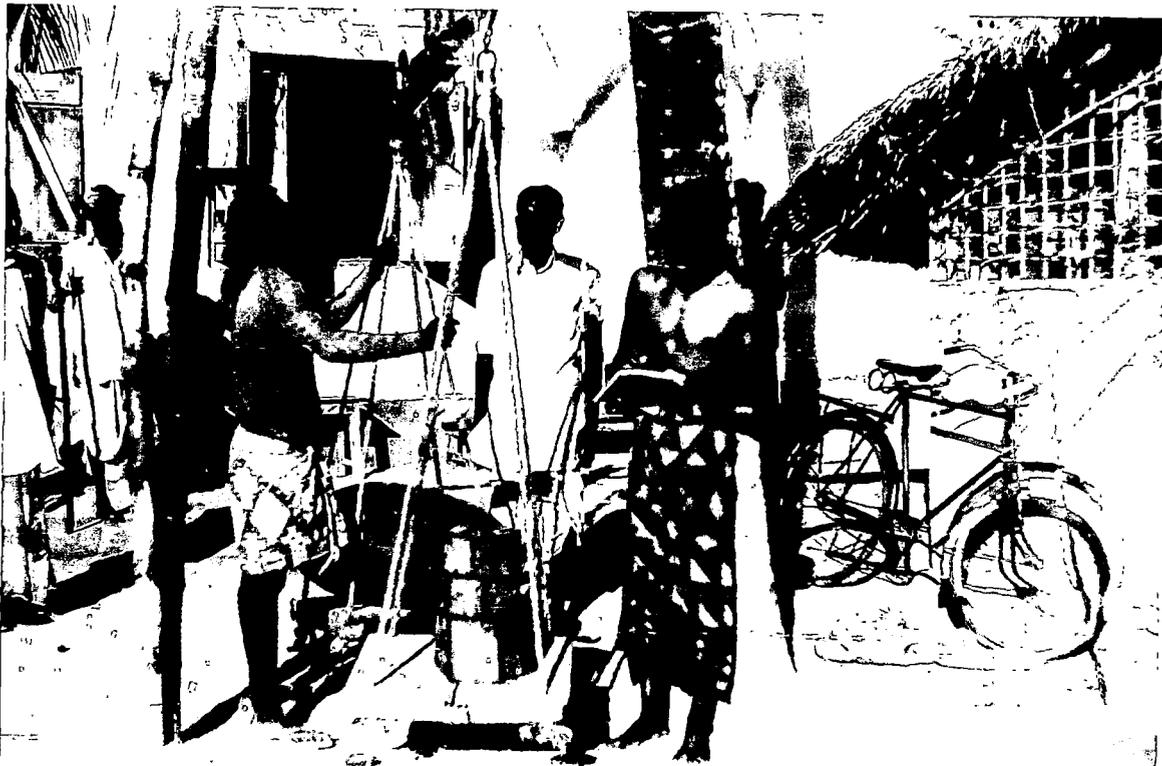
In Malara Islampatty - a village of Kamrup district, situated 30 kms. away from Gauhati, only 33.84 percent of people are engaged in trade. The villagers are very poor. They run petty business. They are mainly engaged in mobile business selling stationery articles in other villages of Kalita, Nath, Garia Muslims etc. A very few of them have their own shop of stationery or grocery. Engagements in Trade and commerce is found lowest (8.64 percent) in Hajo of the Kamrup districts. This is because almost all the families are engaged in brass industry. But only 8.64 percent people are engaged in brass utensils shop within the village or in Hajo town. They sell the machine and hand made brass utensils. They purchase machine-made brass utensils from the factories in Gauhati. Factories are mostly run by the Marawaris. Gauhati is situated 24 kms. away from Hajo and well connected by transport. A few of them are the owners of stationery and grocery shops in Hajo town - half km. away from the village. They purchase stationery and grocery articles from the Marawaris of Gauhati.

5.33 Brass and allied industries :-

Trade and commerce is followed by brass industry and allied business. Only 17.59 percentage of people are engaged in brass industry, blacksmith, goldsmithy etc.



Engaged in Stationery shop.



Engaged in business enterprise.



Rearing buffalo.



Making the cane products.

They are basically braziers. But at present the demand of hand made brass utensils has fallen down due to :- 1) popularity of machine-made brass utensils. 2) high rate of raw materials 3) tendency of the common people to purchase utensils of stainless steel and plastic. Another factor is that, after the partition of Bengal in 1947, the communication with Dacca the capital of Bengal had stopped. As a result the market of Dacca has closed suddenly, where the brass-made articles were used to be exported from this region. As a result the brass industry got a severe set back. Hence after Independence the demand of brass articles has gradually fallen.

1. At present two brass industries are found in Gauhati (a) Chiatiya Metal Industries and (b) Ambari Cheraugi Metal Industries. Where skilled artisans are engaged in the making of brass utensils, with this machine-made products, the hand made products cannot compete in the market. Though the hand made utensils are more heavy and durable than the machine-made products. But since the machine-made products are cheaper the common people purchase them. As a result the public demand is tilting towards the machine-made products. 2) High rate of raw brass metal which they cannot afford. They purchase raw brass metal from Gauhati, Jorhat and Dibrugarh from the Marawaris (merchants) at the rate of Rs.70.00 to Rs.75.00 per kg. But after making the finished product they keep only a marginal profit (Table 5.18). The rate of various products are mentioned below :-

Table 5.18

Name of the articles, weight and sell price.

Name of the articles	Weight	Sell Price(Per Kg.)
1. <u>Kalash</u> (Water pitcher)	1 kg. to 2 1/2kg.	80/- to 85/-
2. <u>Lota</u> (Small water pot)	1/2 kg. to 3/4 kg.	25/- to 30/- per piece.
3. <u>Charia</u> (Name of the utensils).	1 kg. to 2 kg.	80/-
4. <u>Harai</u> (")	1/2 kg. to 5 kg.	120/-
5. <u>Hata</u> (")	250 gm.	40/- to 45/- per piece.
6. <u>Dunari</u> (")	1 and 1/2kg.	300/- to 350/-
7. <u>Doba</u> (")	8 kg. to 10 kg.	100/-

Source : Data collected from field survey , 1988.

So, at present the brass industry business is not profitable. The owner of the industry also keep skilled and unskilled labour.(Table 5.19). The wage rate of the skilled and unskilled labour is mentioned below :-

Table 5.19

Wage rate of workers	
Category of workers	Rate
Skilled	20.00 with lunch.
Unskilled	10.00 with lunch.

Moreover, they are not getting bank-loan for brass industry. Though there is a provision for giving them loan by the bank. The loan rate is Rs.6000/- per head. But in the year 1987 in Hajo only 45 persons got this loan. Rs.3000/- subsidy is also given. The remaining amount is returned along with 11 (eleven) percent interest. But the other villages do not get this type of loan.

3) Common people to-day prefer the utensils of stainless steel and plastic, because these are cheaper than brass utensils.

From the table it is observed that 65.2 percent of people of Hajo Islampatty of Kamrup district are engaged in brass and allied industries followed by Kakojan (13.5 percent) of Jorhat district, Malara Islampatty (13.08 percent) of Kamrup district, Vevarghat (4.05 percent) of Mangaldai district, Jayantipur (2.65 percent) of Nowgong district, Naobaisya (1.28 percent) of Jorhat district, Laluka (0.91 percent) of Dibrugarh district, and none in Langi village of Nowgong district.

5.34 Services:-

Brass and allied industries is followed by service. Of the total workforce 15.96 percent are engaged in service. People of villages adjacent to the urban areas are engaged in service in local factories, Govt. and private farms etc. Since higher education is not seen among this community very few of them are found to be engaged in service in the higher category. From the table it is observed that in Laluka 28.18 percent of people are engaged in service. This village is in close proximity of Dibrugarh town, followed by Islampur (Vevarghat)(23.12) and also in close proximity of the Mangaldai town, followed by Malara Islampatti (14.61), Jayantipur



Brass utensils in the making.



Finished brass utensil.



Finished brass utensils.

(14.10), Kakojan (13.5), Hajo Islampatti (12.76), Langi (12.33) and Naobaisya (10.26).

5.35 Transport and communication :-

Service is followed by Transport and communication. Of the total workforce 10.05 percent people are engaged in Transport and communication. Out of this 10.05 percent, are engaged 5.02 percent as public bus drivers, 0.89 percent are engaged as public bus conductors, 0.81 percent are engaged in Assam State Transport Corporation as drivers, 0.08 percent are engaged as conductors, 0.49 percent are engaged as Thelawala, 0.97 percent are engaged as Taxi drivers, 1.38 percent are engaged as Truck drivers and 0.41 percent are engaged as Rickshaw pullers.

From the table it is observed that, in Transport and communication 23.85 percent people are engaged in Malara Islampatty of Kamrup district, 19.23 percent people are engaged in Naobaisya village of Jorhat district, 11.85 percent people are engaged in Laluka village of Dibrugarh district, 11.5 percent people are engaged in Kakojan village of Jorhat district, 5.78 percent people are engaged in Vevarghat of Darrang district, 2.2 percent people are engaged in Jayantipur village and none in Langi village of Nowgong district.

5.36 Daily labour and Agriculture :-

Transport and communication is followed by daily labour. Of the total number of workers 5.75 percent are earning their livelihood on daily wage basis. The people are engaged in agricultural field at the time of sowing and harvesting of the land of Garia Muslims and Assamese Hindu

caste groups, construction of houses either in the village or in the towns, in brass industry, in road construction etc.

The total number of daily wage earners 16.36 percent labour are from Laluka of Dibrugarh district. This village is in close proximity of the Dibrugarh town. They are absorbed in the town area in various jobs. 13.08 percent people are engaged in Malara Islampatty of Kamrup district. Economically these villages are very backward. Moreover, the village is not well connected with Gauhati. so, majority of them are doing daily labour work in the agricultural fields of Garia Muslims, and Assamese Hindu caste. 6.85 percent people are engaged in Langi village of Nowgong district, 6.41 percent people are engaged in Naobaisya village of Jorhat district, 4.62 percent people are engaged in Vevarghat of Darrang district, 4.5 percent people are engaged in Kakojan village of Jorhat district, 2.47 percent people are engaged in Hajo Islampatty of Kamrup district and 1.32 percent people are engaged in Jayantipur village of Nowgong district.

Of the total number of workers only 2.59 percent people are engaged in agriculture. This community is mainly landless but some of them have agricultural lands which they use either for self consumption or for 'commercial purposes'. But average land holding per family is not encouraging. But some of them do cultivation on Adhi system in the agricultural field of Garia Muslims and Assamese Hindu caste group. 'Adhi' system means after the production in the field the crops are divided into two portions. One portion is for the owner of the land and the other for the cultivator. In this case the expenditure for cultivation is borne by the owner of the land.

From the table (5.17) it is observed that 6.5 percent people of Kakojan village of Jorhat district are engaged in agriculture. The average land holding per family of this village is 3.16 bigha(**measurement of land**). 6.85 percent people of Langi village of Nowgong district are engaged in agriculture, the average land holding per family is 1.17 bigha. 3.47 people are engaged in Vevarghat of Darrang district and the average land holding per family is 1.40 bigha. In Jayantipur village 2.20 percent people are engaged in agriculture and the average land holding per family is 0.47 bigha. In Naobaisya village of Jorhat district only 1.28 percent people are engaged in agriculture and the land holding capacity per family is 1.31 bigha. 1.54 percent people are engaged in Malara Islampatty of Kamrup district and the average land holding per family is 0.58 bigha. ~~Islampatty~~ Cultivators are totally absent in Hajo Islampatty of Kamrup district and Laluka of Dibrugarh district. Average land holding per family is 0.30 bigha and 1.18 bigha respectively. The land of these two villages are cultivated only for self consumption.

On the basis of the sample survey, when the percentage of the occupational structure of the rural areas is compared with the urban areas it shows that the percentage of workers is significantly high (71.39) (Table 5.20) in rural areas as compared with the percentage of workers (28.61) in urban areas. It is mainly due to the high literacy rate (72.20) of the people of the rural areas. From the table it is also observed that, 59.59 percent of rural people are engaged in trade and commerce as compared with the percentage (28.61) of the people of urban area. This is mainly due to the fact that the big business men go to the village and purchase the articles like bamboo, cane, wood etc. from them. They collect it from nearby villages. In some rural areas the people do the

business of cows and buffaloes which they purchase from other villages and sell it to the urban centres. As for example - the people of Kakojan village purchase cows and buffaloes from Nishi and Nath community of Majuli (largest riverine island) island and sell them in Nagaland. It happens due to the good transport facility. Moreover, the villagers who are owners of big and small shops, they keep them in urban centres and live in rural areas. So, the trade and commerce is significantly high in rural areas. On the other hand, 45.04 percent of urban workers are engaged in brass industry which is significantly high when it is compared with the percentage (6.58) of rural workers. It is mainly due to the fact that, the raw materials for brass industry are easily available in the urban area, which they purchase from the Marawaris and the finished products are sold either to the Marawaris or to other shops. So, the percentage of workers in brass industry is significantly high in urban areas. In urban areas the cultivators are practically nil, it is mainly due to the non-availability of cultivable land in urban areas.

Table 5.20

Rural-urban composition of the percentage of the occupational structure of the Maria Muslims. (Sample Survey), 1988.

	Trade and commerce	Brass Industry	Service	Transport and co- mmunication	Daily Labour	Agri- culture	Total Workers.
Total	593 (48.06)	217 (17.59)	197 (15.96)	124 (10.05)	71 (5.75)	32 (2.59)	1234 (26.09)
Rural	525 (59.59)	58 (6.58)	135 (15.32)	84 (9.53)	47 (5.33)	32 (3.63)	881 (71.39)
Urban	68 (19.26)	159 (45.04)	62 (17.56)	40 (11.33)	24 (6.80)	00 (0.00)	353 (28.61)

Source : Based on Sample survey , 1988.

5.37: Occupational distinctiveness :-

To determine the occupational distinctiveness the data of occupations have been collected from eight sampled villages. The workers have been divided into six types viz, Trade and Commerce (T), Brass Industry(B), Services (S), Transport and communication (TC), Daily labour (DL) and Agriculture (A).

According to Betal (1972), the mean (\bar{x}). and standard deviation(σ) for the selected occupations have been calculated to determine the occupational distinctiveness.

Table 5.21

Degree of distinctiveness

Occupations	\bar{x}	σ	$\bar{x}+\sigma$	$\bar{x}-\sigma$	$\bar{x}+2\sigma$	$\bar{x}-2\sigma$	$\bar{x}+3\sigma$	$\bar{x}-3\sigma$
T	74.13	46.68	120.81	27.45	167.49	-19.23	214.17	-65.91
B	27.13	50.23	77.36	-23.1	127.59	-73.33	177.82	-123.56
S	24.63	10.78	35.41	13.85	46.19	3.07	56.97	-7.71
TC	15.5	10.09	25.59	5.41	35.68	-4.68	45.77	-14.77
DL	8.88	5.28	14.16	3.6	19.44	-1.68	24.72	-6.96
A	4.00	4.06	8.06	-0.06	12.12	-4.12	16.18	-8.18

From the table (5.21) it is revealed that, trade and commerce is predominant in Jayantipur village of Nowgong district followed by Langi village of Nowgong district, followed by Naobaisya village of Jorhat district and Islampur (Vevarghat) of Darrang district.

Brass industry is highly specialised in Hajo, of Kamrup district followed by Kakojan of Jorhat district and Malara of Kamrup.

Service is predominant in Laluka of Dibrugarh district, followed by Islampur of Darrang district.

Workers in Transport and communication are found in Malara Islampatty of Kamrup district, followed by Naobaisya village of Jorhat district, Laluka of Dibrugarh district, Hajo Islampatty of Kamrup district and Kakojan village of Jorhat district. Daily Labour is found in Laluka of Dibrugarh district, followed by Malara Islampatty of Kamrup district, Langi village of Nowgong district and Naobaisya of Jorhat district.

Agricultural workers are found in three villages. Langi village of Nowgong district is followed by Kakojan village of Jorhat district followed by Islampur (Vevarghat) of Darrang district.

It may be mentioned from the above discussion that the diverse occupation is seen among the Maria Muslims in almost all the districts. At present they are not engaged in any fixed occupation. Their occupations depend on the location, ecological settings and the socio-environmental influence.

The test of homogeneity shows χ^2 value = 698.46 which is highly significant at 0.1 percent of probability, thereby suggesting that the villages differ from each other in respect of occupational pattern.

5.38 Income and Expenditure pattern:-

It has been already mentioned that 26.09 percent of Maria Muslim

workers have to feed 73.91 percent of non-earning dependants. It has also been mentioned that though their primary occupation was brass industry since the time of the Ahom kings but at present occupational diversification is seen among the Maria Muslims. In trade and commerce out of the total number of workers 48.06 percentage of people are engaged, the rest (51.94 percent) are engaged in transport and communication, services, daily wage labour, brass industry and in agriculture.

The Sample survey (Table - 5.22) also shows that the monthly average income per Maria Muslim household is Rs.851.47 in the study area. The monthly per capita income is found to be Rs.137.33 for the Maria Muslim population as against Rs.546.00 for general population of the state. The villagewise analysis on the basis of the sample survey, shows that per capita income is the highest (Rs.186.59) in Jayantipur village of Nowgong district and the lowest in Vevarghat (Rs.105.46) of Darrang district. Jayantipur village is situated by the side of Assam Trunk (NH37) Road, where good transport facility is available. This village is situated thirty kilometers away from Nowgong town of the Nowgong district and fourteen kilometers away from Tezpur town of the Sonitpur district, and are well communicated by Govt. bus, mini bus etc. These two towns are important business centres and also have other industries like printing press, ice manufacturing, distilleries, electric light and power, and miscellaneous repair works, where a good number of workers are engaged. On the other hand 77.53 percent of people are engaged in trade and commerce due to the availability of transport facility to the business centres like Nowgong town and Tezpur town. The lowest per capita income in (Islampur) Vevarghat is mainly due to non-availability of transport

Table 5.22

Monthly Per Capita Income of Maria Muslim Population.

(Sample Survey), 1988.

Name of the villages.	Number of households.	Total No. of persons.	Average family members per household.	Average monthly income per household (in rupee).	Monthly Per Capita income(in rupee).
Hajo Islampatti	141	783	5.5	742.49	134.99
(Islampur)	84	632	7.5	790.97	105.46
Vevarghat					
Laluka	96	582	6.06	861.32	142.13
Langi	59	287	4.86	800.71	164.76
Naobaisya	54	286	5.3	623.46	117.63
Jayantipur	146	925	6.34	1183.00	186.59
Kakojan	96	753	7.84	846.91	108.02
Malara-Islampatti.	93	482	5.18	709.98	137.06
TOTAL	769	4730	6.2	851.47	137.33

Source : Based on Sample Survey, 1988.

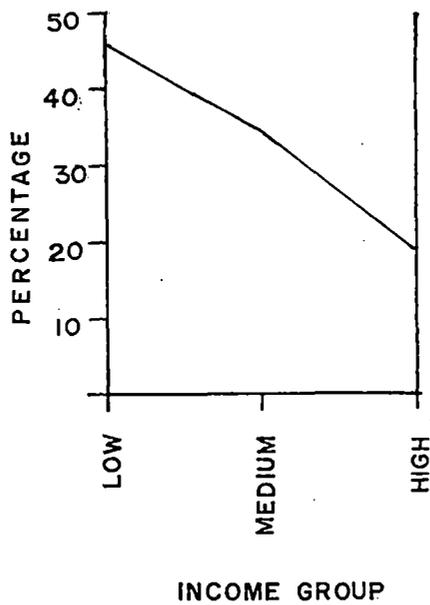


FIG-22: PER MONTH FAMILY INCOME

facility to the nearby urban centre - Mangaldai. Moreover, Mangaldai town of the Darrang district is underdeveloped where ample scope for employment is not available.

On the other hand when the monthly per capita income of the urban areas and the rural areas are compared on the basis of sample survey it shows that, per capita monthly income of the rural area is Rs.138.79 and that of the urban area is Rs.137.26, which is almost equal (Table 5.23). This is mainly due to the availability of transport, metalled road, facility and literacy. The people of the rural areas can very easily reach the urban areas where petty jobs and business facilities are available. It has also been observed at the time of field work that some of the villagers have their own stationery and grocery shops in the nearby urban centre but they live in the village. In the morning they go to the urban centre for trade and at night they return to the village, either by public bus or by cycle, scooter etc.

However, the income pattern of the Maria Muslims varies from one village to another. On the basis of the sample survey their economic status can be classified into four distinct groups. These are as follows

1. High income group upto Rs.1200 per month per household.
2. Medium income group upto Rs.600 ~~per household~~ to Rs.1200 per month per household.
3. Low income group upto Rs.600 per month per household.
4. Unknown income group . Per household income is very low and hence negligible.

Table 5.23

Rural-Urban composition of Monthly Per Capita Income
of Maria Muslim population, 1988. (in rupee)

(Sample Survey)

	Number of households	Total No. of persons.	Average family members per household.	Average monthly income per house- hold (in rupee).	Monthly per Capita income
Total	769	4730	6.2	851.47	137.33
Rural	532	3365	6.33	878.57	138.79
Urban	237	1365	5.76	790.62	137.26

Source : Based on sample survey, 1988.

Table 5.24

Percentage of Maria Muslim Households in Different
Income Group (in Rupees). 1988.

(Sample Survey)

Name of the villages	Unknown	Low upto 600	Medium 600-1200	High 1200+	Total no. of households.
Hajo Islam- patti.	06 (4.26)	46 (32.62)	74 (52.48)	15 (10.64)	141
Malara Islampatti	13 (13.98)	55 (59.14)	20 (21.50)	05 (5.38)	93
Islampur (Vevarghat)	03 (3.57)	42 (50.00)	24 (28.57)	15 (17.86)	84
Jayantipur	04 (2.74)	74 (50.68)	23 (15.76)	45 (30.82)	146
Langi	02 (3.39)	21 (35.60)	25 (42.37)	11 (18.64)	59
Naobaisya	05 (9.26)	25 (46.29)	20 (37.04)	04 (7.41)	54
Kakojan	0 (0.00)	19 (19.59)	53 (54.64)	25 (25.77)	97
Laluka	0 (0.00)	40 (43.48)	26 (28.26)	26 (28.26)	92
Total	33 (4.31)	322 (42.04)	265 (34.59)	146 (19.06)	766

Source : Based on sample survey, 1988. Figures in the parentheses indicate the percentage.

To determine the income per household of the Maria Muslims 766 households have been taken into consideration. The percentage of households (59.14)(Table 5.24) having an income of less than Rs.600.00 and the percentage of households (13.98) having a low income which is not considerable as only 5.38 percent of households are in the higher income group(Rs.1200+) in Malara Islampatti of Kamrup district. The reason behind this is mainly due to the bad transport communication, low literacy (50.41 percent) rate among the intensive studied villages. This village is situated at a distance of thirty kilometers from Gauhati, but bus service is very irregular. The nearby village bus stop is connected by three kilometers of unmetalled road with the village, for all these reasons the percentage of the higher income group is found to be less. On the other hand, higher percentage (30.82) in the higher income group is found in Jayantipur village. It has been discussed previously that this village is having a good communication system and well connected with business centres and a high literacy (74.70 percent) rate. For this reason the percentage of the higher income group is found to be more, compared with other villages.

When the income pattern of the rural areas and urban areas is compared, it shows that in the rural areas the percentage of households (44.28) having an income (Table 5.25) of less than Rs.600 is higher than the percentage of households (36.91) having an income less than Rs.600.00 in urban area. In the higher income group (Rs.1200+) also the percentage of households (19.69) in rural areas is higher than the percentage of households (17.59) in the urban areas. This is mainly due to the high rural literacy (72.20) rate and good communication with the urban areas.

Table 5.25

Rural Urban composition of the percentage of Maria Muslim Households
in Different Income Group (in Rupees), 1988

(Sample Survey)

	Unknown	Low upto 600	Medium upto 600-1200	High 1200 +	Total no. of House holds
Total	33 (4.31)	322 (42.04)	265 (34.59)	146 (19.06)	766
Rural	27 (5.07)	236 (44.28)	165 (30.96)	105 (19.69)	533 (69.58)
Urban	06 (2.58)	86 (36.91)	100 (42.92)	41 (17.59)	233 (30.42)

Source : Based on Sample Survey, 1988

Figures in the parentheses indicate the percentage

Table 5.26

Average Per Household and Per Capita Monthly Expenditure of the Maria Muslims Population
for Different Consumption Items, 1988 (in Rupees)

(Sample Survey)

Village/ Items	Hajo Islampatti		Malara		Islampur (Vevarghat)		Jayantipur		Langi		Naobaisya		Kakojan		Laluka		Total	
	H.H.	Captia	H.H.	Captia	H.H.	Captia	H.H.	Captia	H.H.	Captia	H.H.	Captia	H.H.	Captia	H.H.	Captia	H.H.	Captia
Food Staff	475.00 (63.96)	86.36	483.91 (67.11)	93.42	564.83 (71.08)	75.31	590.33 (64.30)	93.11	570.90 (71.69)	117.47	460.90 (73.16)	86.96	575.60 (69.68)	73.42	557.10 (64.19)	91.93	534.82 (67.95)	86.26
Cloth	78.33 (10.55)	14.24	75.80 (10.51)	14.63	70.00 (8.81)	9.33	80.45 (8.76)	12.69	70.00 (8.79)	14.40	50.75 (8.06)	9.58	85.91 (10.39)	10.96	99.48 (12.46)	16.42	76.34 (9.70)	12.31
Luxury	10.50 (1.41)	1.91	5.00 (0.69)	0.97	4.90 (0.62)	0.65	11.20 (1.22)	1.77	3.60 (0.45)	0.74	3.10 (0.49)	0.58	4.60 (0.55)	0.59	12.92 (1.49)	2.13	6.98 (0.89)	1.13
Education	40.60 (5.47)	7.38	32.43 (4.50)	6.26	31.80 (4.00)	4.24	50.30 (5.48)	7.93	35.45 (4.45)	7.29	20.65 (3.28)	3.90	35.10 (4.25)	4.48	37.28 (4.30)	6.15	35.45 (4.50)	5.72
Medicine	35.40 (4.77)	6.44	28.82 (4.00)	5.56	25.75 (3.24)	3.43	30.85 (3.36)	4.87	24.90 (3.13)	5.12	20.40 (3.24)	3.85	29.30 (3.55)	3.74	40.91 (4.71)	6.75	29.54 (3.75)	4.76
Fairs and Festivals	21.20 (2.86)	3.85	15.90 (2.21)	3.07	16.30 (2.05)	2.17	21.20 (2.31)	3.34	16.40 (2.06)	3.37	10.80 (1.71)	2.04	15.25 (1.85)	1.94	26.70 (3.08)	4.41	17.97 (2.28)	2.90
Recreation	15.25 (2.05)	2.77	8.40 (1.16)	1.62	6.45 (0.81)	0.86	12.30 (1.34)	1.94	5.80 (0.73)	1.19	5.65 (0.90)	1.07	5.80 (0.70)	0.74	17.22 (1.98)	2.84	9.61 (1.22)	1.55
Transport	35.82 (4.82)	6.51	34.83 (4.83)	6.72	41.00 (5.16)	5.47	50.80 (5.53)	8.01	40.20 (5.05)	8.27	30.45 (4.83)	5.74	41.75 (5.05)	5.32	41.26 (4.75)	6.81	39.51 (5.02)	6.37
House- construction	30.50 (4.11)	5.55	35.96 (4.99)	6.94	33.65 (4.23)	4.49	70.65 (7.70)	11.14	29.10 (3.65)	5.99	27.30 (4.33)	5.15	32.85 (3.98)	4.19	35.09 (4.04)	5.79	36.89 (4.69)	5.95
Total Expenditure	742.60	135.01	721.05	139.19	794.68	105.95	918.08	144.80	796.35	163.84	630.00	118.87	826.16	105.38	867.96	143.23	787.11	126.95

Source : Based on sample survey, 1988

The figures in the parentheses indicate the percentage of expenditure of different items
of consumption to total expenditure

Table - 5.27

Rural Urban Average per Household and per capita monthly expenditure of the Maria Muslims Population for different consumption Items, 1988 (Sample Survey)
(in Rupees)

Items	Food stuff		Cloth		Luxury		Education		Medicine		Fairs & Festivals		Rēcreation		Transport		House Construction		Total	
	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita	H.H. Capita
Total	534.82 (67.95)	86.26 (9.70)	76.34 (9.70)	12.31 (0.89)	6.98 (0.89)	1.13	35.45 (4.50)	5.72 (3.75)	29.54 (2.28)	4.76 (1.22)	17.97 (1.22)	2.90 (5.02)	9.61 (4.69)	1.55	39.51 (4.69)	6.37 (4.69)	36.89 (4.69)	5.95 (4.69)	737.11	126.95
Rural	445.15 (64.97)	85.48 (10.53)	72.15 (10.53)	11.39 (0.79)	05.4 (0.79)	0.85	34.29 (5.00)	5.41 (3.89)	26.67 (2.33)	4.21 (1.08)	15.98 (2.33)	2.52 (1.08)	07.4 (1.08)	1.17	39.84 (5.82)	6.29 (5.82)	38.25 (5.82)	6.04 (5.82)	685.13	108.24
Urban	516.05 (64.08)	89.59 (11.04)	88.91 (11.04)	15.44 (1.45)	11.71 (1.45)	2.03	38.94 (4.84)	6.76 (4.74)	38.16 (2.97)	6.62 (2.97)	23.95 (2.97)	4.16 (2.02)	16.24 (2.02)	2.82	38.54 (4.79)	6.69 (4.79)	32.79 (4.07)	5.69 (4.07)	805.29	139.81

The figures in the parentheses indicate the percentage of rural-urban composition of different items of consumption to total expenditure.

Source : Based on sample survey, 1988.

The test of homogeneity shows Chi^2 value = 71.28 which is highly significant at 0.1 percent probability, thereby suggesting that the villages differ from each other in respect of per family income.

From the survey it is revealed that an average monthly expenditure per Maria Muslim household is Rs.781.11 (Table 5.26) as against an income of Rs.851.47. Further per capita monthly expenditure of Maria Muslim is Rs.126.95, while the per capita monthly income is Rs.137.33. Though it shows a small surplus budget but only 19.06 percent of the Maria Muslim people belong to the high income group, 34.59 percent belong to middle income group but the majority (46.35) are below the minimum income level. Thus, the average per capita income and expenditure does not indicate the general level of the standard of living. So, the average budget of these families is always a deficit one.

It is also found from the survey that the common items for consumption of an average family consist of rice and rice products, flour and flour products, vegetables, egg, fish, meat (mutton, chicken, beef), salt, mustard oil, spices, molasses, sugar, tea, milk and milk products, tobacco, betelnut, etc. Clothing such as lungi, dhuti, trousers, shirt, saree, mekhala chaddar, pant are common items for general use. Kerosene, firewood are commonly used as fuel. Rich families use cooking gas as cooking fuel.

However, the survey shows (Table 5.27) that most of the expenditure is incurred on food stuff (67.95 percent) as against 0.89 percent in luxury goods. For that reason they cannot afford to spend enough on recreation (1.22 percent), education (4.50 percent), medicine (3.75 percent), fairs

and festivals (2.28 percent), transport (5.02 percent), house construction (4.69 percent). From this point of view the Maria Muslims are economically backward in all respects.

A villagewise analysis shows that the highest amount of monthly expenditure is incurred by a Maria Muslim family in Jayantipur village (Rs.918.08) , while lowest in Naobaisya village (Rs.630.00). It is only because that a deficit budget is a common affair in a Maria Muslims household.

On the other hand, variation in itemwise expenditure is also noticed among the villages. The expenditure incurred on luxury (1.22 percent) is found to be more in Jayantipur village. The expenditure on other items like education (5.48 percent), fairs and festivals (2.31 percent), are found more in this village. It is observed that due to the availability of urban facility from the two towns of the Brahmaputra Valley like Nowgong and Tezpur and due to good communication the villagers get jobs, do business etc. in these two centres - as a result the people of this village are economically less backward than that of the other villages.

Variation is also observed when the itemwise expenditure is compared between rural and urban areas. The expenditure incurred on foodstuff per household in the rural area (64.97 percent) is almost equal to that of the urban area (64.08 percent). But the expenditure on cloth (rural 10.53 percent and urban 11.04 percent), luxury (rural 0.79 percent and urban 1.45 percent), medicine (rural 3.89 percent and urban 4.74 percent), fairs and festivals (rural 2.33 percent and urban 2.97 percent), recreation (rural 1.08 percent and urban 2.02 percent), are found to be more in urban

area. Because in rural area per capita expenditure is (Rs.108.24) less as compared to the per capita expenditure in urban area (Rs.139.81). This is mainly due to the deficit budget for the Maria Muslim family (Table 5.27) in the rural areas.

5.39 General Economic condition and land tenure system of the Maria Muslims:-

The population of the Maria Muslims may be classified under the following economic groups : 1) Trade and commerce - who are engaged in the own business. ii) Service - who are engaged in different categories of employment. Since the higher education is not found among the Maria Muslims so they are mainly engaged in fourth grade category. iii) Brass Industry - who are engaged in brass industry. iv) Cultivators, who have a hand to mouth existence, are either landless or the owners of small areas of land. The landless category of people do cultivation work in the agricultural field of the Assamese Hindu caste groups and Garia Muslims on Adhi system. The people who have their land do cultivation work for their own consumption. v) Very poor - who have to earn their living by working as wage-earners.

i) Trade and commerce - who run their business dealing in either local product or in some consumer goods which they purchase from outside markets. They are mostly settled near the urban centres. Business in local products are like cane, bamboo and agricultural products like paddy, jute etc. Only 59.59 percent of people are engaged in trade and commerce which is the highest percentage in occupational structure. ii) Service holders are those who are engaged in different Government and Private

offices, industrial concerns, automobile centres, shopping centres etc. Only 30.18 percent people are engaged in Service. iii) People who are engaged in Brass Industry. The Brass Industry was their primary occupation. Even four generations previously, they were completely dependent on brass industry. But at present this industry is in a dying condition and only 6.58 percent of people are engaged themselves in brass industry. This is mainly due to (a) the coming of the mechanised brass industry (b) high price of raw ^{materials} which they cannot afford, (c) use of stainless steel and plastic and lastly, (d) after independence the communication with Dacca has been cut off, where they had a good market. Only in Hajo 65.02 percent of people are engaged in Brass industry. This is mainly due to the nearness (22 kms.) of Guwahati from where they get raw materials from Marawaris on loan. The people of this village get a Government loan of Rs.6000.00 per family for brass industry. Government gives Rs.3000.00 subsidy and for the remaining amount 11 percent interest is to be paid. But sometimes they get Rs.2000.00 in cash and the cost of raw materials of about Rs.4000.00. But in other villages the people are not getting this facility. Moreover, it may be mentioned that the finished products can easily be sent to Guwahati market by transport. Regular transport facility is available from Hajo to Guwahati. iv) Cultivators are only 3.63 percent of the total number of workers including the people working in the field of well to do agriculturists - mainly Assamese Hindu Caste groups and Garia Muslims. The Maria Muslims are mainly landless. Average land holding per family is only 1.19 bigha. They mainly produce paddy of Aizong and Dharia variety. The other varieties are Bora, Joha, Trikhali, Dhuchuri, Apahai, Hoagmani and Jalkachu in small quantities. Besides paddy they also produce jute of Mara and Deo variety, in a small

quantity. Some of them sell jute at the rate of Rs.90.00 to Rs.130.00 per maund, the price depends on the variety. Besides these productions they also produce various types of seasonal green vegetables for their own consumption. v) Very poor people who are below the poverty line have been categorised under 'Unknown' category, they are mainly homeless people exploited by traders, contractors and cannot find any solution of this problem of their indebtedness.

From the above discussion it has been observed that the occupational mobility contributed to the emergence of new dimensions in the field of social and economic relations (Ali, 1974). Ali also writes that the Marias have almost abandoned their original profession because of the popularity of factory made utensils etc. It has also been observed that tendency towards starting a business is high. Because in urban areas jobs are not easily available. So, they have leaned towards trade and commerce.

Land tenure system

Regarding acquiring of land, two systems are commonly found in this community. Firstly, they acquire land on Adhi system (share cropper) from the Assamese Hindu Caste groups who are incapable of cultivating their own land for some reasons. This system provides an opportunity to them to maintain their family by the half of the produce and the remaining half left for the owner of the land. Secondly, the forcible occupation of the Government land or ownerless land.

Besides these systems, distribution and re-distribution of land have

also been made among the members of the family after the death of the head.

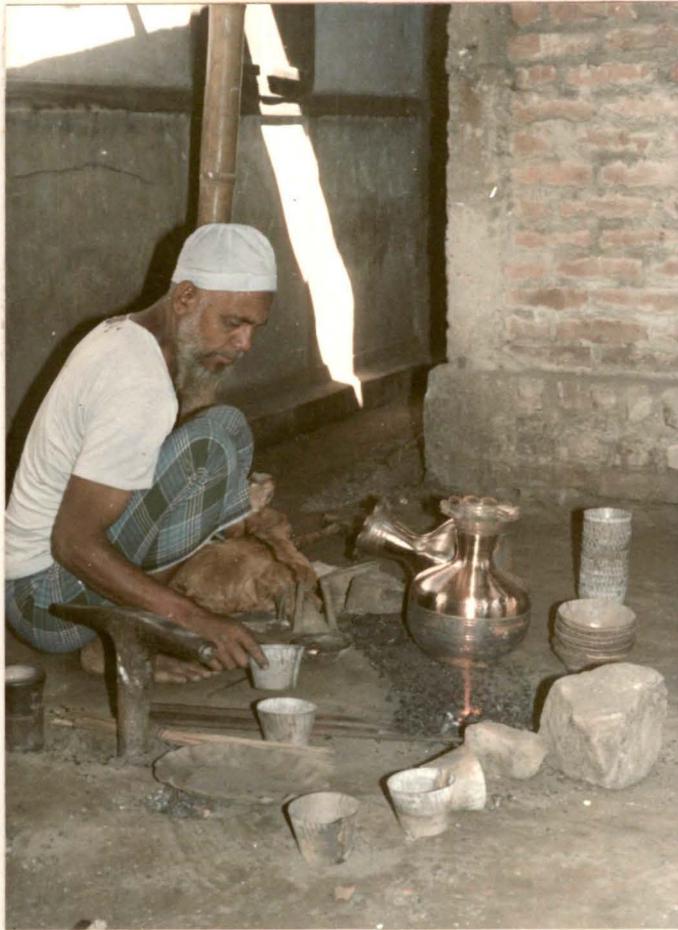
5.4 Cultural characteristics

5.41 Language Pattern :-

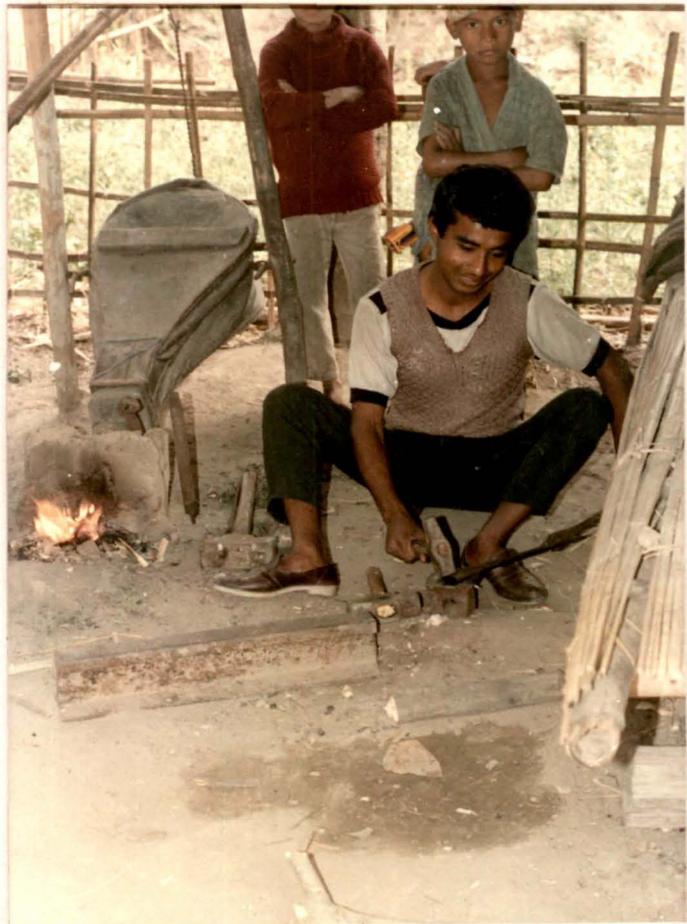
A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which members of a social group co-operate and interact (Sturtevant, 1947). Without language, the accumulations of knowledge that mark off the human race from other animal aggregates could not have been developed or maintained. Through language man has been able to devise, continue and change the great variety of his material and non-material cultural institutions. If a phenomenon has any cultural relevance, it is because it holds meaning in thought and in behaviour. This turn, is because men have the linguistic equipment to grasp and express its significance (Melville, 1955).

The Maria Muslims are homogenous as a linguistic community. Their common language is Assamese. But the people who are the inhabitants of lower Assam (Kamrup district) use a dialect which is much common with Kamrupi, both phonologically and morphologically, with the admixture of the neighbouring Goalpariya (Datta, 1971). But in Upper Assam (Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Golaghat and even in Nowgong district) the Assamese dialect differ from that of the Lower Assam, both phonologically and morphologically. Besides Assamese, they also know Hindi (to some extent), a few of them can understand English also.

They had their own language known as Duan, in the past and they



Working with the fire oven.



Techniques of making brass utensil.

used to speak in that language. But at present it has become dead. A few of them know this language to some extent.

5.42 Food Habits:-

Natural environment influences the food habit of a society. Paddy is the main crop in the Brahmaputra Valley. So boiled rice continues to be their staple food. They take rice thrice in a day. Wheat products are slowly gaining a place in their menu. In the past, they also used to consume wheat but the rate was not so high as in recent years, this is due to availability of wheat flour at a reasonable price in the local markets.

Irrespective of their economic status, the village women prepare different types of rice products like 'chira', 'muri', 'mudki', 'akhai' (khai), 'laru' (mowa), 'semai' (Sewai) and various types of 'pitha' (home made cake). Among the pulses, they mostly take 'mosuri', 'moog', 'matidal', 'mash kalai', 'khesari', 'arhar' (raher), gram (boot/chana), motor etc. The cooking medium is mustard oil. They also take Tenga Dail.

This community is mainly non-vegetarian. They are fond of fish, meat and eggs alike. Beef is the main item at the time of socio-religious functions. Though pork is prohibited in the Muslim society but at present the young group of Maria Muslims who reside in urban and semi-urban areas take pork secretly. Young boys also consume alcoholic beverage purchasing it either from the market or from the nearby tribal people.

5.43 Ecological control of rural dwellings:-

Rural huts are constructed by the villagers with the materials available abundantly in the region. Soil and climate determine the type

of dwellings.

The rural dwelling houses are constructed with bamboo thatched roof, walls layered with mud. The materials like bamboo are available from the ^anearby forest. The thatch is available from the paddy field. But sometimes they also purchase bamboo from the nearby market. Soil used for layering the walls come from the locality. The dwellings consist of two to three rooms used for sleeping, storing and cooking. One to two windows are found in a room. Sometimes it may be more. Those who are in a better economic condition construct Assam type houses. These types of houses are typical that are found in Assam. This house is roofed with corrugated iron sheets and the walls are constructed either with bamboo, cut into strips, or Ekara (the walling reed) and layered either with mud or with cement. Tin sheets are purchased from the nearby market. Ekara and bamboo are available from the forest. But cement is purchased from the nearby market. Some dwellings sites are surrounded by a kitchen garden. Average area of the dwelling varies from one cottah to one and a half cottah.

5.44 Dress :-

A modern Maria Muslim, clean-shaved and clad in trousers and shirt, is not distinguishable from others. This is the result of cultural assimilation with neighbouring caste groups. The vast majority of poor people feel happy if they can afford a coloured lungi for social functions. Those living slightly above the poverty line put punjabis, pyjamas, dhoti and caps for social functions and wear flowing beards. Wearing dhoti is the influence of Assamese Hindu Society. At the time of marriage, the males wear sheroany, pajama (trouser) and pagiri (turban). In some urban

centres wearing of shirts and trousers have also been observed, at the time of marriage. The boys wear shirts and the girls frocks and briefs. Churidar with Kameez is gaining popularity among the young girls. The women folk, in the long past used to wear Mekhela like the kachari tribe. The Mekhela was kept tied above the breast. This manner of wearing the Mekhela is known as Methonimara. At that time females did not wear blouse. But at present the previous practice has stopped and they wear Mekhela and Chaddar along with blouse, like an Assamese lady. The Mekhela and Chaddar are made of Pat (Jute) , Silk, Muga etc. Females also wear Sari. But at the time of marriage wearing of Mekhala and Chaddar is compulsory.

5.45 Personal adornments:-

Regarding personal adornments the bamboo made Thuria has lost its vogue now. At present the Thuria is made of gold, silver or brass. It is shaped long, the length is about half an inch to one inch. Besides Thuria the women also use ear ring like Phooli, Dul, etc. made of gold, silver or brass. Females also wear chain, Necklace, Galpatta, Har etc. round the neck. Different types of bangle like Balakharu, Churikharu, Kharu, Muthikharu etc. are seen on the wrist. Gezera and Maduli are seen on the arm. On the finger the females wear Anguthi (finger ring). Kari and Payal increase the beauty of the ankle of the young ladies.

Males wear Anguthi at the time of marriage.

The personal adornments are made of either gold or silver or brass. Those who are above the poverty line use the adornments made of gold

and silver. But the poorer section use the ornaments made of brass.

5.46 Techniques in brass industry :-

The brass utensils are prepared from brass-sheet metals. Pieces of the sheet are at first hammered over a series of different tools and implements to give it the shape of the required article. The different parts are then joined to make the finished utensil. They mainly prepare Kalash because its demand is high in the market in comparison with other articles. Besides pitcher they also prepare Tou, Charia, Harahi, Thali, Lota, Hata, Dunari and Doba. The Doba is prepared only when the order is placed.

Equipments :-

In brass industry the following equipments are in use.

Hammers

In this brasswork they use 8 (eight) types of iron hammers. Out of eight types of hammer, six types are two-headed tools and the rest are one-headed. These hammers are used to beat the brass sheet to give them different shapes like flat, pointed, blunt and round. Each head of the hammer is used to perform different types of work.

Some differences are observed at the time of the work. The hammer is locally known as Haturi.

Chatuli:

This is a long shaped tool made of solid iron. It is pointed at one end and blunt in the other end. This tool is used at the time of



Brass utensils in the making.



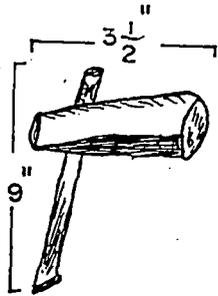
Making of brass products in progress.



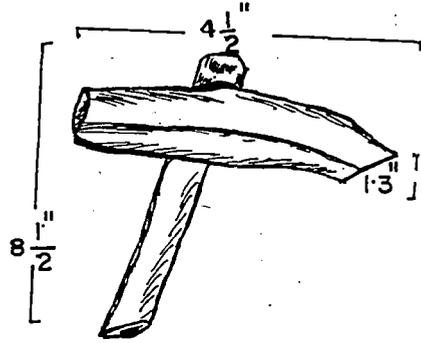
Making of brass utensils in progress.



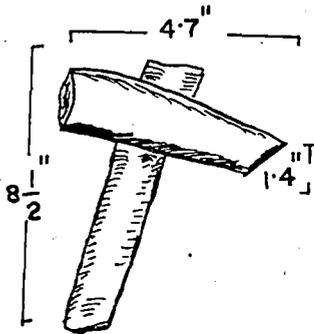
Agricultural practice in Maria village.



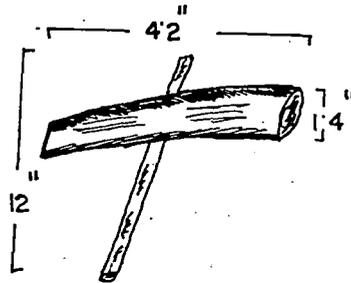
MATHA



TOURKANHECHA



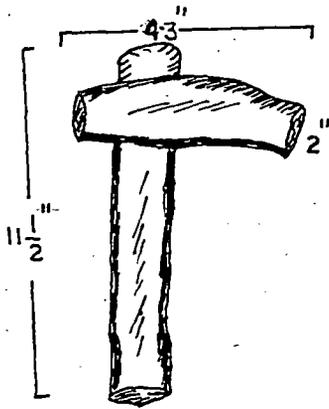
ALOA



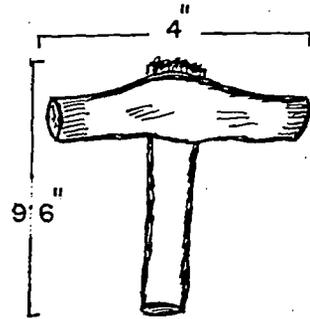
KEOSBHANGA

DIFFERENT TYPES OF HAMMER

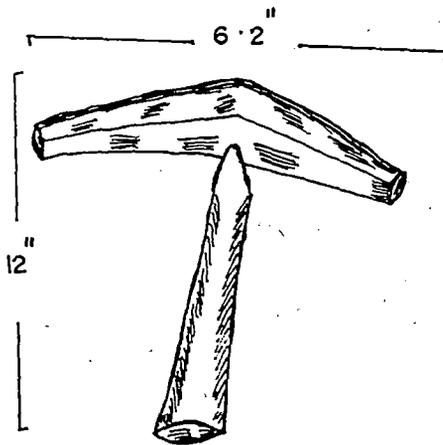
FIG-23



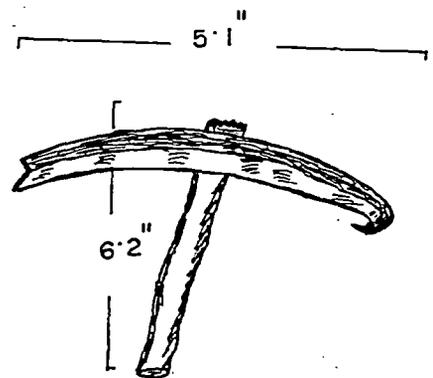
EKI MUKHIA (One mouth)



DUMUKHIA (Two mouths)



GALIMATHA



AKOA

DIFFERENT TYPES OF HAMMER.

FIG-24

beating the pitcher, lota etc. The pointed end is fixed in the soil at the time of work. Its length is 31 and $1/2''$ and the diameter is 2 and $1/2''$ inches.

Belmuri:-

This tool is used to beat the flat brass strips to make the roll. This instrument is made of solid iron. The top is flat and the upper portion is slightly broader than the lower portion. Its length is 6 inches. Lower span (which is fixed on the piece of wood) is 9 and $1/2''$ inches and the upper span is 10 and $1/2''$ inches.

Niari:-

This is an iron-made T-shaped instrument. This tool is used at the time of joining the mouth and neck of the pitcher. At the time of work it is fixed in the earth. Its height is 16" and the upper length is 17" . The diameter of the lower portion is 2 and $1/2''$ and that of the upper portion is 3 and $1/2''$. One end of the upper portion is pointed and the other end is blunt.

Kati :- This is an iron-made scissor and it is used to cut the brass sheet into different pieces. Its length is 12".

Beri Ghura Kath : This is a wooden slab and it is used to give the shape of the bottom of the pitcher, Tou, Charia, Harahi etc. The bottom circle is beaten on the orbicular, on the wooden slab to give it the desired shape and size.

Chepna : This, 14" long, iron made tool, having two arms is used to catch the warm articles.

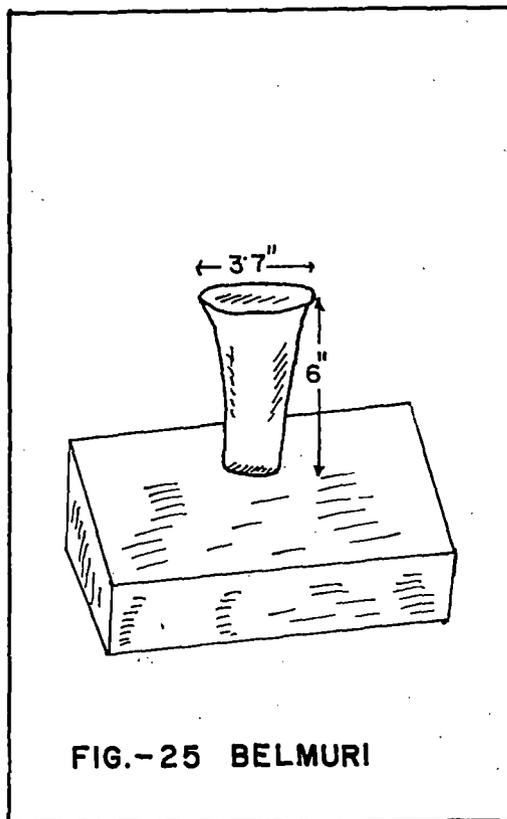


FIG.-25 BELMURI

Kun : This is a wood made equipment and it is used to polish the pitcher and Lota. It is a polished long-shaped piece of wood with line patterns at one end. It is broader at one end and gradually tapers towards the other end. Its length is 37", and the circumference at one end is 12" inches and that of the other end is 6.5" inches. This wooden piece is kept horizontally at a height of 8" inches from the floor. The wooden sticks are fixed in the soil to hold Kun, in the proper position. A nail which is driven into one end of the wooden piece, freely turns and the opposite end bears on a wooden piece. It is turned with a rope at the time of polishing the article.

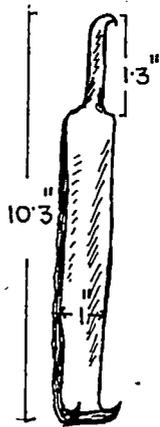
Bagi :- An iron-made tool, shaped long having a bend at the tip, is used to fashion the pitcher, Lota etc. Its length is 10.3" inches and the width is one inch. At one end there is an iron handle for holding at the time of work with the Kun. The length of the handle is usually 1.3" inches.

Furnace :- The furnace is a hole dug in the ground about 5" inches deep. A piece of hollow bamboo having a diameter of 2" inches and length of 11" inches is inserted into the hole. One end of the hollow bamboo piece is connected with handmade bellows made of goat skin, locally known as Bhati, and the other end remains inside the hole. Air is blown through the bamboo channel. Charcoal is used as fuel.

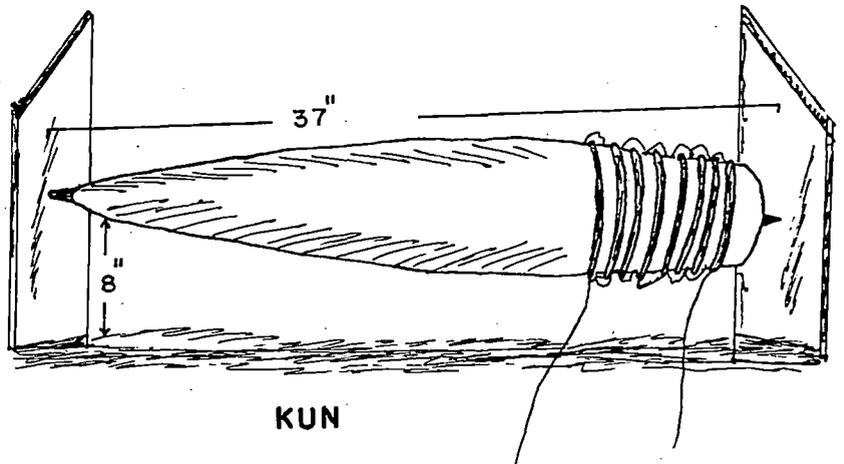
Aphorianabari:-

It is a one and half feet long stick use to clear up the ash at the time of work.

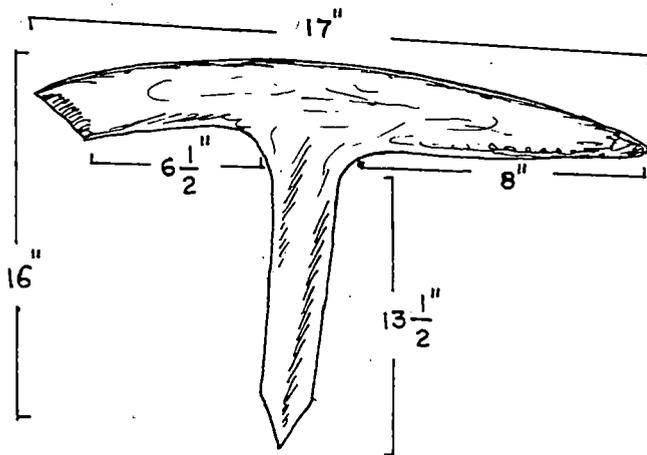
Paenokhati:- This is the local name of a solution which is used to join the different parts of the articles. The solution is prepared by Hethu,



BAGI



KUN



NIARI



PAE NOKATHI

FIG. 26

Rang, Silver and Hauga. These things are purchased from the goldsmith-who are mostly Hindus.

Materials :-

Brass-sheet - To make a pitcher weighing one and a half kilogram a sheet of 20" inches length and 20" inches width is required which contains six mouths and six chumohi (necks), 15" inches length and 15" inches breadth brass sheet gives one piece of shoulder. Belly is divided into two parts:- (a) Beri and (b) Hura. A 24" inches length and 16" inches breadth brass sheet provides 5 Beris and 15" inches length and 15" inches width brass sheet makes one Hura. Ten bottoms are obtained from a circular sheet of brass of 2.4" inches diameter. The round brass sheet is purchased from the Marawaris (traders). The round sheet is manufactured in the factory. They purchase the brass-sheets and the round brass sheets ready made from Guwahati, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and Sibsagar towns.

Method:

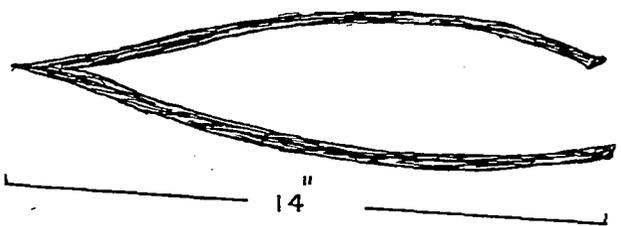
They mainly make Pitchers. So, the method of manufacture of the Kalash (Pitcher) is described below :

The mouth : The mouth is prepared first. One rectangular brass sheet is joined to form a hollow cylinder, this is hammered on Belmuri until it is curved.

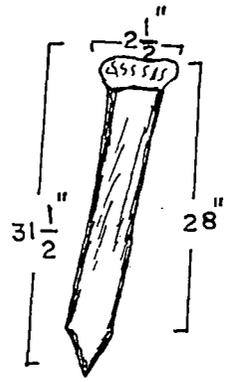
The neck :- The neck is made next, by joining the rectangular brass sheet and it is beaten from inside to give it the desired shape. The neck is locally known as Chumohi.



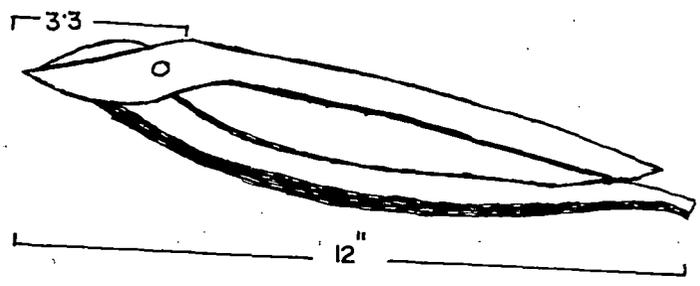
APHORIANABARI



CHEPNA



CHATULI



KATI

FIG. 27

The Shoulder :

The local name of the shoulder is chakori. It is also made from a square brass sheet of 15X15" inches size. The sheet is bend and joined and beaten on the Belmuri. As a result of the beating the shoulder gets the proper shape with a slightly raised collar, to join with the neck of the Pitcher, but the lower edge brodens into a rim to fit with the first portion of the belly.

The Belly :-

The Belly is divided into two parts - (a) Beri and (b) Hura.

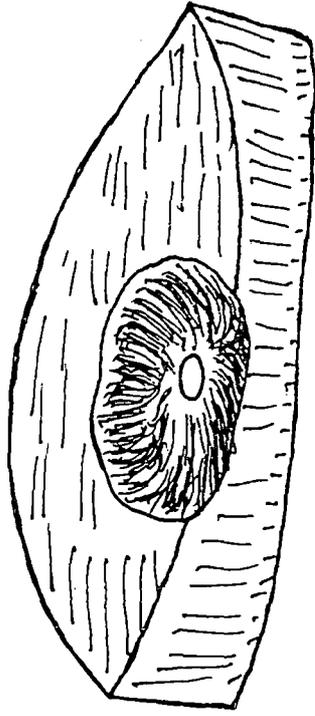
(a) Beri is made from the rectangular brass sheet. Two ends are joined first then it becomes a hollow cylinder and it is beaten from inside and outside for the desired shape. But it remains almost rectangular in shape.

(b) Hura is made of square brass sheet of 15X15" inches size in the same way as the Beri is made. It is beaten and it becomes tapering towards the bottom.

The Bottom :- The bottom is made from the round brass sheet. The sheet is beaten until it fits the bottom of the pitcher.

Soldering:- All these different parts of the Pitcher are now joined by putting a solution - locally known as Paerokhati, applied at the joint between the two parts. The joint is then heated and hammered for increasing the longevity of the joint.

Before joining the bottom the Pitcher is polished and decorated by placing it in the Kun.



BERI GHURUA KATH

FIG. 28

5.47 Household articles :-

The common use of brass utensils are seen in the kitchen of a Maria family. In the urban areas a modern family uses decorated chinaclay utensils besides the brass utensils. Those who are above the poverty line decorate their drawing rooms with sofa-set etc.

In the rural areas, the cooking fuel is either firewood or kerosene. But in the urban areas cooking gas is used in the well-to-do family. In the rural areas the people use Guwahati made cycle for easy conveyance. In the urban areas a very few of them use West Bengal made car.