The present study is the result of a research work on the Economic Life reflected in the Folklore of the Kaibarta community of undivided Kamrup District of Assam. According to the social status accorded to the Kaibartas in Assam, they are fishermen by occupation. Once they were labelled as untouchables in the society. The Kaibartas in Assam occupy the predominant position with 32.4 percent population to the total Scheduled Caste population as per 1991 census report (Draft of 10th Five Year Plan: 2002-2007, Special Component Plan for S.C.: I). The Kaibartas i.e. fishermen are distributed throughout Assam from Dhubri in the West to Sadia in the east. One of the peculiar characteristics observed among them is that there has been upward mobility among them through sanskritisation. On the basis of the criteria of untouchability they are specified and considered as one of the sixteen Scheduled Castes of Assam by Constitutional (Scheduled Castes) Order (a) Part-II Assam under provision of Articles 341 and 342. The national objective of identifying them as Scheduled Castes is to uplift their socio-economic status at par with the general people and to get higher status and better privilege.

Since independence many efforts have been made at national and state level through the constitutional privileges, planning mechanism and participatory development for their steady and speedy development. Despite these efforts made at different levels for their betterment, the present plight of this class of people has not changed much. It is, therefore, imperative to think that the policy so practiced be restructured on the basis of experience gathered. Rapid change in the occupational structure may also raise the question of whether a particular movement was vertical or merely horizontal. Say for instance, what kind of occupation pattern that they had earlier and what occupation they have adopted later besides fishing. Also, there is
ground for in-depth study to find the causes of the change of their traditional occupations and establish the relationship between the caste structure and occupational pattern.

Apart from that, inspite of having potentialities and colourful folk culture, the Kaibarta community of Assam has failed to receive adequate attention from the authority. The folk cultural aspect of the above community has not yet been studied systematically although the importance of folklore studies is being increasingly recognised in academic circle of India and abroad.

All these and many other vital problems are to be resolved and therefore, we need an intensive investigation among the Kaibartas. The present study is the outcome of such realisation. The main objective of the present study is to describe the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the Kaibarta community of undivided Kamrup district of Assam.

The present study consists of all the Kaibartas of Assam for general discussion, but for an in-depth study of their various parameters related to socio-economic and cultural aspects, the universe is restricted to the undivided Kamrup district including Kamrup Rural and Kamrup Metropolitan districts of Assam for the constraints of time and means.

On the basis of the index of data and the research design whole research work is prepared under eight chapters with major divisions and sub-divisions of each of the chapters. The first chapter deals with introduction where we have discussed mainly the objectives of the study and the methodology of the data collection for our study. The second chapter deals with background of the study area, basically based on secondary information. The third chapter highlights the socio-demographic contours of the universe. The fourth Chapter throws light on the social organisations of the Kaibartas. The fifth Chapter explains the folklore and folklife of the Kaibartas. The sixth chapter deals with the traditional life and economic condition of the Kaibartas. The seventh chapter puts importance on the environmental awareness among
the Kaibartas. The discussion incorporated in the chapters from three to seven is based upon primary information. On the basis of the analysis made in the chapters from one to seven, some observations and suggestions have been made in the eight chapters.

The writings of many folklorists, economists and social scientists have been relied upon in carrying out this study. An extensive bibliography, glossary, a list of the villages surveyed and a list of informants are also appended.

This study is based on diverse source of materials which consists mainly field investigation, official and non-official reports and documents as well as records and reports of various Commissions and Committees in addition to books and journals.

The present study bears a great significance in the sense that it contributes a lot towards finding out the root factors lurking behind the all round backwardness of the Kaibartas of Assam. Again it is quite sincerely anticipated that the findings and conclusions drawn from the study will contribute a lot to the store house of knowledge of the readers about the origin, socio-religious, cultural and economic life of the Kaibartas and it will help the planners and policy makers in prescribing measures for solution of their problems and ameliorating their plight. This study depicts the picture of folk culture of the traditional Kaibarta community and its relationship with the wider Assamese culture. So it is anticipated that this study will help the readers to change their attitude and render their services for the uplift of these downtrodden people. This is however a modest beginning in this field, which would certainly build up foundation for future research and betterment of the social aspects of the fishing community.

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