CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL RELATIONS AMONG THE PERI-URBAN MUSLIMS

KHELS : UNITS OF FORMAL SOCIAL RELATIONS

It has already been mentioned that the present village is made up of settlers who came from two different villages. To a casual visitor, the village might appear to be a single social unit. However, when one attempts a slightly deeper probe into the social situation, the initial impression begins to change. There are two khels in the village, each made up of households belonging to settlers from one ancestral village. The creation of these two divisions appears to be an attempt by the people to keep alive their old identities of having come from

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1 For the convenience of description, we shall refer to the khel of the earlier settlers (i.e. those who came in 1936-37) as 'old khel'. The other khel made up of households of later immigrants from the other village, will be referred to as 'new khel'. The two village mosques will also be referred to as old and new mosques in relation to the two khels. Of the total village households, 15 belong to the 'old khel' and 33 belong to the 'new khel'.

two separate villages. The fact that the later migrants from the second village did not merge their identity with the earlier settlers seems to have been aided by the mosque organization. The earlier settlers had built a mosque in Uttar Jalukbari which was a carry-over from their ancestral village. Similarly, the later migrants also had their separate mosque. When they came to Uttar Jalukbari, they too erected a separate mosque instead of joining the already existing mosque organization. This relationship of the khel to the mosque shows a basic similarity with the Hindu khels in an Assamese village, where each khel, usually made up of people belonging to the same caste, has a namghar (community prayer house) of its own.

The two mosques are the main institutions which have helped the khels to retain their individual identities. When the villagers refer to a khel, they naturally imply those households who belong to one of the two mosque organizations. Prayers and festivals are performed by the villagers in their respective mosques.

Coming to the pattern of social relations in the village, it is found that there are many situations in which khel identity is clear. But there are also
some situations in which khel-level identities are submerged in the wider village-level identity.

The settlement pattern of the village has also helped to demarcate the two khels. The houses of the people belonging to one khel are situated on one side of the road only (see fig. 7). However, there is some overlapping. This has resulted due to the change of khel affiliation by certain village households following disputes arising within one's own khel. When a villager changes his mosque affiliation, his khel affiliation is also automatically changed. The two following cases illustrate the point.

Salim, who belonged to the 'new khel' once complained to some of his fellow khel members that he was given only a small amount of sacrificial meat by Rajek, another of his fellow khel member, who sacrificed a cow on the eve of Id-uz-Zuha festival. This led to a dispute between the members of the two households. The people of the 'new khel' generally found fault with Salim and criticized him for his feeling aggrieved over such a trivial matter. They also criticized Salim's family members for quarrelling with Rajek and his family on this issue. On finding that some of his own khel members are supporting Rajek, Salim finally decided to change his khel affiliation. He then joined the old mosque and thus became a member of the 'old khel'.

The second instance of changing khel affiliation is that of Anowar, who belonged to 'old khel'. He once rebuked the Imam of the mosque on the assumption that the Imam had acted against
his interest in a certain matter. Anowar's fellow khel members did not support him and they all condemned his behaviour towards the Imam, which according to them was unwarranted by the circumstances. They all asked Anowar to apologize to the Imam. But Anowar refused to apologize and decided to change his mosque affiliation from the old to the new. Accordingly his khel affiliation was also changed.

It should be pointed out that when a person changes his khel, the members of his household are also included. Decisions about changing khel affiliation are always taken by the head of a household.

The change of khel affiliation has never led to a change of the house site. Hence, some households have continued to live in their original khel area though they are now members of the khel whose traditional area is across the main road.

The change of khel affiliation, however, does not affect every sphere of social relations within the village. The two mosques along with their attendant khels are to be seen as constituting only one of the social fields within the village.

If a villager decides to leave his khel and join the other khel, he is allowed by both the khels to act according to his wish. But if on the other hand a villager is excommunicated by his khel,
other khel will never accept him as a member. Thus excommunication from a khel implies excommunication from the village society. Such a person cannot have any social contact with other villagers. However, the male members of an excommunicated household are allowed to offer prayers in the mosque from which they have been excommunicated. But their contribution to the management of the mosque is not accepted.¹

In the course of field work it was not possible to detect any pervasive feeling of strong antagonism or rivalry between the two khels. There have been occasional rifts between the members of the two khels, but these have not left any permanent impression in village social relations. It is because the people realize that from persistent antagonistic feelings between the khels, the village as a whole suffers a lot in certain activities which are organized on village basis. Hence, whenever a dispute arises involving members of the two khels, the village elders as a whole try to resolve the matter and arrive at an amicable settlement.²

¹ See pp.177-79, for a case study of a village household which was excommunicated.
² See pp.175-77, for a case study of inter-khel antagonism.
KINSHIP AND THE KHELS

Each of the two khels in Uttar Jalukbari forms a loose patrilineal kin group in the sense that most of the male household heads trace their descent from a common ancestor. However, the identity of a khel as a descent group or a clear-cut kin group is rather weak at Uttar Jalukbari. Most of the villagers do not seem to emphasize the point that each khel is, by and large, also a patri-kin unit. Strictly speaking a khel does not function as a corporate kin group.

Marriage between members of the same khel is permitted and have in fact taken place, with the exception of certain restricted categories of kin. Marriage between persons of the two khels is also allowed. Thus a villager has consanguineal as well as affinal kin in both the khels. Thus intra-khel and intra-village marriages have linked up most of the village households in a kinship network.

The kin relationships between four village households outlined in fig. 8 may be cited as an example of inter-khel linking.
Fig. 8

Kin relationships between four households belonging to the two khels. Households 1, 2, and 4 belong to the 'new khel'. Household 3 belongs to the 'old khel'. Symbols as in fig. 5.

It appears that these days comparatively fewer marriages are contracted within the village itself. In former times, when each Uttar Jalukbari khel was a village, marriages between persons from these villages were more frequent. Some Uttar Jalukbari people now feel that the villagers have become so closely related to one another that it is no longer desirable to establish marital ties between village households. In the recent past there has been a clear trend among Uttar Jalukbari people to marry outside the village. The extension of kin ties through marriage beyond the village boundary
will be evident from table 16. The table indicates the number of Uttar Jalukbari girls married away to other villages as well as those who have been brought to Uttar Jalukbari through marriage. The distances of these villages from Uttar Jalukbari are also indicated in the table.

Table 16 shows that Uttar Jalukbari villagers have established affinal ties mostly with villages

1 It was found at the time of field investigation that as many as 28 marriages were contracted between persons belonging to the two khels.
situated within a radius of 5 miles from the village. Only a few women are married away to or brought in from villages lying beyond 5 miles of Uttar Jalukbari. In this regard Uttar Jalukbari people approximate the Singimari Muslims who too have affinal kin mainly in the neighbouring villages. However, Uttar Jalukbari is situated in a more advantageous position than Singimari in regard to transport and communication facilities. Despite this, the Uttar Jalukbari people prefer to establish marital ties in nearby villages. This is because, like Singimari Muslims, the Uttar Jalukbari people also want to maintain close social contact with their affinal kin. Thus in both the villages the people display a clear preference in choosing a bride or a groom from localities which are within easy reach.

It should, however, be noted that Singimari Muslims form an exogamous community. On the other hand, marriage between a boy and a girl belonging to Uttar Jalukbari is permitted by the village folk.

Since there are many ties of kinship among the Muslim inhabitants of Uttar Jalukbari, any dispute between members of the two khels frequently involve people who are also related to one another. However,
In such cases one's *khel* identity takes precedence over the kinship factor. At times, disputes might arise among closely related persons of the same *khel*. Even in such cases, the issue is frequently settled at the level of the *khel*, and not merely as a dispute between two kinsmen. For example, the case of changing the *khel* affiliation by a villager described in page 165 may be cited. In that case, Salim accused his wife's brother, also a member of his own *khel*, of being responsible for giving him a small share of sacrificial meat. In this case, Salim's complaint was not against a kin but a fellow *khel* member.

**Leaders of the Khels**

Some elderly men are regarded by the villagers as informal leaders of the two *khels*. There are four such men in the 'new *khel*' and three in the 'old *khel*'. They are usually referred to as *Murabbis*, an Arabic word which means 'headmen'. The powers of the *Murabbis* are operative within their respective *khels*. All matters relating to the *khel* are usually discussed by the people under the general guidance of the *Murabbis*. The opinions

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1 Usually the Assamese Muslims also refer to the head of the household as a *Murabbi*. 
The Murabbis are respected by their fellow khel members. Their verdicts are usually obeyed by the people. The Murabbis of one khel cannot exercise any power over the members of other khel. However, there are certain occasions when the Murabbis of both the khels meet informally to discuss matters involving both the khels. For instance, when a marriage proposal between a boy and a girl belonging to the two different khels of the village is negotiated, the Murabbis from the two khels are also invited by the families of the boy and the girl to take active part in the negotiations. Such discussions are held in the house of the future bride.¹ Again, when a marriage negotiation is started

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¹ In such a marriage between a boy and a girl from the two different khels, wedding feasts are arranged by each party to which only fellow khel members are invited. But if the bride and the groom happen to belong to the same khel, then each party is expected to invite the whole village to the wedding feasts in their respective homes. Again, when the bride or the groom hails from another village, it is customary to invite all the households of Uttar Jalukbari to the wedding feast and not just households of one's own khel. However, the list of invitees is determined by the economic condition of the household. Sometimes, in the case of a marriage where both the bride and the groom come from the same khel, only the khel members are invited. It is because the family cannot afford to invite the entire village.
with a family in some other village, the Murabbis of both the khels are invited by a villager to take part in the finalization of negotiations. However, in all such cases of marriage negotiations the parents and the close kinsfolk of the future bride and the groom also join the Murabbis.

The four Murabbis of the 'new khel' are about 60 years of age each. In the 'old khel' the youngest Murabbi is 55 years of age and the oldest is 70 years old. Coming to the occupations of these men, it may be noted that one of the Murabbis in the 'new khel' is the owner of a modest grocery shop. The remaining three are cultivators. All the Murabbis of the 'old khel' are cultivators. The occupations of the Murabbis are essentially village-based. Most of them also lead a near-retired life. They are thus able to devote a lot of their time to village affairs. On the other hand, those who have given up cultivation for various types of jobs outside the village are not in a position to pay much attention to village affairs. In fact, many of these relatively younger men are against the khel system and its role in the village society. They are also unwilling to take active part in the village social
organization by accepting leadership roles. According to them, the present system needs to be changed in keeping with the changing times. However, even these people also have to obey the verdicts and decisions of the Murabbis. They cannot stay in the village without being members of one or the other khel. Thus such people remain as quiescent members of the present-day village organization.

The Murabbis from the two khels constitute an informal council of elders in matters where the village as a whole is concerned. Disputes between persons across the khel boundaries are also taken up for settlement by this informal body of Murabbis. The following case may be cited as an example.

Jahir, who belongs to the 'new khel', quarrelled with his wife and divorced her on the heat of the moment. The wife went away to live with her elder sister who belongs to the 'old khel'. Jahir's elder brother, Nasim, came forward to arbitrate in the matter. He finally succeeded in changing his younger brother's mind. Jahir agreed to take back his wife which, as per Islamic Law, implied a re-marriage. In accordance with the village custom, Nasim met the Murabbis of the two khels and requested them to come to his brother's house so that the ceremony of re-marriage could take place in their presence, which alone could give it the approval of the village society. Nasim also invited the Imam of their mosque to come and conduct the ceremony. Jahir faced the assembled Murabbis of the two khels and expressed his regret for hastily divorcing his wife. He also sought their
forgiveness for his past act. The Murabbis decided to impose a fine of Rs. 30.00 on Jahir for his act. Jahir agreed to pay the fine later on as he did not have the cash just then. His elder brother, Nasim, took the responsibility of collecting the fine and deposit Rs. 15.00 to each of the mosque funds as per decisions of the Murabbis. Nasim fetched the divorced woman from her elder sister's house. The woman expressed regret for quarrelling with her husband and begged forgiveness of the Murabbis. She also apologized to Jahir. The Murabbis accepted the apology of both the parties and commanded the Imam to perform the re-marriage ceremony.

After a few days, the Murabbis of the 'old khel' learnt that the fine realized from Jahir was not equally distributed between the two mosque funds by Nasim. It is reported that Rs. 20.00 was given to the 'new khel' mosque fund while only Rs. 10.00 was given to the 'old khel' mosque fund. This act of Nasim created a bitterness between the two khels.

Sometime later, an occasion arose which deepened the bitterness between the two khels. The occasion was the distribution of meat of a cow slaughtered in connection with the circumcision ceremony held in one of the village households belonging to the 'new khel'. As per custom, small portions of meat were distributed among all the village households. But the 'old khel' people refused the gift of meat coming from a 'new khel' household. The 'new khel' people took this as an insult to the khel as a whole and not merely to the family which had sent the gift packets. They decided to cut off all kinds of formal social contact with the 'old khel' people. Some Murabbis of the 'new khel' thought this was too rash a decision. But they could not act against the general consensus of their khel people. It was also decided by the men who had assembled in the 'new khel' mosque premises that anybody found visiting the 'old khel' people would be punished with a fine of Rs. 10.00. The fine would go to the mosque fund. Following this
decision of the 'new khel' people, the estrangement of the two khels was complete. The khels remained totally cut-off from one another for sometime. But this could not continue for long. As indicated earlier, there are many situations in which villagers have to interact and khel interests can never be pervasive. Hence, the Murabbis of both the khels one day sat down to review the entire episode. They finally asked Nasim to retrieve Rs. 5.00 from the 'new khel' mosque fund and deposit this amount in the 'old khel' mosque fund. Nasim followed the order of the Murabbis. Thus a partial compromise was made between the khels, following which the relationship between the khels gradually became normal.

This case shows how all the village households become involved in certain disputes through their respective khels. However, it is left to the village elders to settle disputes and bring back peace in village social life. There was another episode in the village in which the khels were involved indirectly following the excommunication of a household head by the village elders for disobeying their verdict.

Khalifa, who belongs to the 'new khel', once beat up a Bihari Muslim woman, a widow, who has been living in the village for sometime. She earned her livelihood by taking up casual work in the village itself. Khalifa's wife complained to him that this Bihari woman had called her names and accused her that she did not pay the woman properly for certain work. On hearing this, Khalifa beat up the woman. This woman then lodged a complaint with the Murabbis.
af the 'new khel'. She told them that she feared that Khalifa might again beat her up. The Murabbis assembled in the courtyard of one of the members' houses and summoned both Khalifa and the Bihari woman. They first called upon Khalifa to narrate his version of the incident. But Khalifa refused to say anything and just left the place. Nothing further was done that day. Next day, the Murabbis assembled again and summoned Khalifa and the Bihari woman to appear before them. This time also Khalifa came but would say nothing about the incident. Instead, he rebuked the Murabbis for listening to the Bihari woman who, according to him, had deliberately framed him in a false charge. He was contemptuous of the Murabbis and just left the place. The Murabbis thought Khalifa's attitude to them most unbecoming of a villager and decided to excommunicate him and his household from the khel. They felt that Khalifa had not merely insulted them as persons but have disregarded the very basis of village social control. The decision was informed to Khalifa and other village households by the Murabbis themselves. As per custom, none of the villagers could now even visit Khalifa. However, the male members of Khalifa's household were permitted to offer prayers in the 'new khel' mosque. This state of affairs continued for about a month. Then Khalifa's son Mahibul proposed to marry a girl belonging to the 'old khel'. But his father opposed him and argued that he would not allow his son to marry a girl from the village from which his family has been excommunicated. But Mahibul was adamant. On the other hand, the girl's father also refused to marry away his daughter to Mahibul since they were now "out side" the village society. The girl's father was of the opinion that he could consider Mahibul's proposal only if the excommunication charge on Khalifa and his family was lifted by the khel elders. Mahibul told his father that if the family was not accepted by the villagers, then he would ask for a separation from his father and would become a member of the 'new khel' on his own.
There was now no way for Khalifa to keep the family intact. He approached the Murabbis of the two khels and requested them to come to his house. When the Murabbis came he regretted his past behaviour and sought their forgiveness. He further promised to obey their verdicts in future. They could punish him and he would no more object. Only he should be taken into the village social fold. The Murabbis decided to impose a fine of Rs. 10.00 on Khalifa which was to be distributed equally between the mosques of the two khels. Khalifa also had to promise that he would never take law into his own hands in the future. (In the meantime, the Bihari woman had left the village, so her case did not need to be taken up by the Murabbis). After this the village elders lifted the 'excommunication' charge and allowed him to rejoin the village society. The Murabbis then sent for the father of the girl whom Mahibul had proposed to marry. The marriage negotiations were thus conducted in the same gathering and the wedding details were fixed.

The leadership pattern at Uttar Jalukbari is not very well-defined. Only certain individuals within a khel are loosely referred to by the people as 'leaders'. Outside the khel boundary the identity of these elderly men are of little significance. It is only when the Murabbis of both the khels meet as a common body that they tend to carry some weight in the village society. However, this is not at all a formally constituted body of elders. It is essentially an informal body concerned with the settlement of petty disputes that arise within the village from time to time.
So far in chapters VI and VII we have described the nature and quality of social relations which operate at the level of the khels including certain aspects of kinship as a dimension of social relations. The village social relations may now be discussed in terms of certain institutions and their organizational frameworks.

THE VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS

(a) The Mosques

The two mosques are the only religious institutions in the village. We have earlier stated that these mosques have their antecedents in the two ancestral villages from which the people of Uttar Jalukbari came.

Both the mosques are simple brick and mortar structures, each covering an area of nearly 450 sq. ft. Regular prayers, five times a day, and Friday congregational prayers are held in each mosque. Only the elderly men attend daily prayers, but on Fridays the attendance is large. Besides the villagers, some outsiders who stay in the vicinity of the village also attend prayers in the mosques. Prayers during two important Islamic festivals, Id-uz-Zuha and
Id-ul-Fitr, are held in the mosques. Besides these, other Islamic festivals are also observed in the mosques.¹

Each of the mosques has an Imam to conduct the prayers and religious festivals held in the mosque premises. Both the Imams are residents of a nearby Muslim village. They are paid regular salaries from the mosque funds. The Imam of the 'old mosque' gets Rs. 120.00 per annum while the Imam of the 'new mosque' gets Rs. 70.00 per annum. The remunerations of the Imams are paid from contributions of the households to the mosque funds. Besides the household contributions, small sums come occasionally to the mosque funds from other sources, e.g., fines levied upon villagers. The 'old khel' mosque has a house in its premises which is rented out to some college and university students. The money (Rs. 20.00 per month) realized as rent also goes to the mosque fund. The 'old khel' households contribute Rs. 1.50 each and the 'new khel' households Rs. 3.00 each as monthly contributions to their respective mosque funds. This contribution is regarded as

¹ See pp.100-103 for details of the Islamic festivals.
'membership fees' of the mosque as well as of the khel. The contributions from various households are collected by the secretaries of the mosque managing committees.

Each mosque managing committee is made up of members who are chosen unanimously by the people of a particular khel. The Murabbis of the khels are always included as members of the committee. All matters relating to the mosque are the concern of this committee. One of the members is chosen as a secretary who is the only official. It is the duty of the secretary to collect the dues and maintain regular accounts of income and expenditure.

A managing committee may be regarded as a representative body of the khel on whom the other members of the khel entrust the responsibilities in regard to the management of their mosque. Table 17 summarises the age and occupations of the members of the two mosque managing committees at Uttar Jalukbari.
Table 17.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-Groups</th>
<th>Committees</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'New Khel' Mosque</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(No. of Members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 35</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>36 - 45</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>46 - 55</td>
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<td>56 - 65</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>66 - 75</td>
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</tr>
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Occupations

<table>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
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<td>Cultivator</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopkeeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Holder</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Student</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 indicates that the age of the committee members varies between 25 and 75 years. It is interesting to note that though there are job holders of a variety of descriptions at Uttar Jalukbari few of them are to be found in the committees. Except
for the college student and the two job-holders, all
the other members are elderly cultivators. The
shopkeeper is also leading a more or less retired
life.

A managing committee, once constituted, carries
on indefinitely for a number of years. New members
might be included in the committees when some one dies
or leaves the committee because of ill health.

The mosques are the only institutions at the
level of the khels and not the whole village. In the
case of other institutions in the village people of both
the khels join hands. These are village-level
institutions in which khel identity is inoperative.

(b) The Primary School and the Village Library

The two other institutions within the village
are the primary school and the library. Besides the
children of this village, pupils from the neighbouring
villages also attend the school. The school has two
teachers who draw their salaries from the State Board
of Elementary Education. Both of them are Hindus from
a neighbouring village. The school managing committee
is made up of eleven members, all from
Uttar Jalukbari. All these members are above 30
The village library was established in 1957 through the efforts of the students and other young men. There are nearly 1,000 books in the library. A part of the library house is rented out to college students. Most of the younger men and job-holders from the village are enrolled as members of the library. They have to contribute 0.25 paisa each per month to the library fund. There is a committee for the management of the library which consists of 15 members. Ten among them are students and five are job-holders. Their age ranges between 20 and 35 years. The elderly villagers take little interest in the library. It is essentially a young people's enterprise.

The library plays an important role in the socio-political spheres of village life. I attended two meetings of the members of the library. The first was an annual meeting. The other meeting was held to discuss the undertaking of certain developmental work in the village. From these meetings I gathered the impression that the library members, i.e., the younger
people, are against the existing divisions (khels) within the village. Many of them indirectly criticized the village Murabbis for perpetuating these divisions and also condemned the custom of excommunication of a village household. As a matter of fact, when Khalifa was excommunicated by the khal elders the library members requested them to remove the ban and allow Khalifa and his family to maintain contacts with the villagers. However, the young men could not change the attitude of the Murabbis. These young men also supported Mahibul when he wanted to marry the girl of his choice. They thought that if the girl's father could be persuaded to accept Mahibul's proposal, the excommunicated household would be reinstated in the village society. For the younger, educated and urbanized section of the village community, the library functions as a rallying point for expressing their opinion against what they consider to be outmoded customs and practices in the village perpetuated by the elders. In the dispute between the two khels described earlier, the young members of the library tried to persuade the Murabbis of

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1 See pp.177 - 179.
2 See pp.175 - 177.
both the *khels* and other elderly villagers to come to an amicable settlement.

The library members are of the opinion that there would be little progress in the village as long as the *khels* continue to exist. The elderly villagers usually turn a deaf ear to the criticism of the library members. One elderly villager commented: "what they feel may become true one day but not as quickly as they want the change to come". The library may thus be seen as an agency of social change in the village. The line of division between the young and the old has been sharpened through the emergence of this organization in the recent years.

(c) Cultivators' Co-operative

We have pointed out in chapter VI\(^1\), that the loss of land had compelled the cultivators of the village to form a co-operative. The wage-earners have little interest in the activities of this co-operative. However, there are households in the village where there are both cultivators and wage-earners. The members of such households are associated with the activities of the co-operative.

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\(^1\) See pp.154 - 155.
All the members of the cultivators' co-operative contribute Rs. 10.00 per head before any task is taken in hand in a year. The total amount raised through such contributions are invested in the purchase of paddy seeds for cultivation.

(d) Graveyard Committee

The village graveyard and its management concern all the villagers. The graveyard is situated to west of the village. The villagers, irrespective of khels, join hands to keep the graveyard clean. A committee made up of members from both the khels looks after the management of the graveyard.

An elderly villager once pointed out to me that the graves within the yard are to be found primarily in two clusters. According to this informant, they have retained the separate identities of the khels even in the grave. On further inquiry it was found that there are in fact two clusters of graves. However, these clusters are on the basis of kinship and not khel. It has been indicated earlier that most of the village household heads trace their descent from two separate ancestors. It is these kin clusters who normally bury their deceased relatives in particular parts of the
graveyard. I have come across a number of Muslim graveyards both in the villages and the towns of Assam, where clusters of graves are to be found for groups of patrilineally related kinsfolk. It may be recalled here that in the case of Singimari Muslims also, each kin unit possesses its own graveyard.

The graveyard committee of the village is made up of seven members. Money for managing the graveyard is collected by both the mosque committees during Id festivals. The amounts collected are handed over to the graveyard committee. This money is spent for the upkeep of the graveyard, including the maintenance of a fence.

We have so far described the nature of social relations among the Assamese Muslims inhabiting a peri-urban village. The immigrant background of the present village, loss of land due to migration, and further denudation of cultivable land in the wake of urban developments have contributed to the emergence of new dimensions in the field of social and economic relations. The khels have emerged within the village and kinship identity has become merged in the khels. Again, khels also have been merged within the framework
of an emergent village-level identity which is advocated strongly by the younger people. The occupations of the villagers have become diversified. The impact of urban way of life has made the village society less cohesive.

Uttar Jalukbari is still a village. But it is a village where one notices a great diversity in the attitudes, aspirations and the outlooks of the people. The unity and homogeneity in social life that one still finds in a village like Singimari is less evident here. Once the generation of elderly men passes away, Uttar Jalukbari will be more like a suburb of Gauhati than a rural village with a clear-cut internal social organization having powers of social control over the villagers.