CHAPTER – 3

PROFILE OF STUDY AREAS

The present chapter is aimed to focus on the characteristics features of the study area. The study was located in two different settings – Urban and Rural settings of Silchar. In Urban sector three localities (Malugram, Rangirkhari and Link road area) have been taken and studied by the researcher whereas in case of Rural sector the Silcoorie village has been studied as because it is the largest revenue village of Cachar district.

ASSAM –

The state of Assam is located in the North-Eastern region of India between the latitude, 28 degree, 18’ and 24 degree N and longitudes 89 degree, 46” and 97 degree, 4 “ E. The whole of Assam can be classified into two natural regions –

1. Brahmaputra Valley and
2. Barak Valley, depending upon the two big rivers, the Brahmaputra and the Barak.

The rainy season in Assam is prolonged from the month of June to October. The rainfall diminishes after September. October to February is usually the driest period of the year, again March to June may be considered as summer season throughout the state. In Assam, there are 23 districts, out of which three districts constitute the Barak Valley except two hill districts other 18 districts are in the Brahmaputra Valley.

The economy of Assam mainly depends upon Agriculture. About 74% of the total population is engaged in agriculture directly or indirectly. Total cultivable land is 35 Lac hectares and 78% of it is cultivable for corn. About 17,932 sq. km. land is reserve forest.

The main industry of Assam is tea. Tea is cultivated in 230 Lac hectares of land in Assam. There are 777 tea gardens in Assam. Of them about 112 are located in the Barak Valley. Assam’s tea is being exported abroad and Government is earning substantial amount of foreign exchange. Moreover, there are number of small and cottage industries - brass and bell metal industry, handloom industry, bamboo and cane industry. Assam has four oil refineries. It is to be noted that numerically Assamese people are large in number in the Brahmaputra Valley whereas Bengali speaking are numerically large in the Barak Valley.

BARAK VALLEY –

Barak Valley, which derives its name from the name of the river ‘Barak’ is situated in the southern part of Assam and consists of three districts namely Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj, covering an area of 6,942 sq. km. The valley is bounded by
Bangladesh in the west, Meghalaya in the north, Manipur in the East, Mizoram and Tripura in the south. Its current population is 24,91,546 (as per 1991).

The people of Barak Valley, both migrated and aboriginal have their distinctive arts, musics, dances, fairs, festivals, tales, rituals etc. Here one can trace a number of traditional art forms, music styles, dances, fairs, festivals etc. performed or observed throughout the year.

The Barak Valley is the natural extension of the adjoining Bengal plains and social formation through the ages was in same line as in Bengal. Inspite of the Manipuri settlement since Burmese occupation of Manipur in 1818 and he immigration of the North Indian labourers since introduction of tea plantations in 1855 by the Britishers, more than 80% of the people in the districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi today are the Bengalees. According to the census report of 1971 nearly 80% of the total population were Bengalees. At that time the total population was 17,43,400. Among them 13,32,200 were Bengalees, Hindi speaking people were 1,01,500 Manipuri were 1,01,500 Dimasa were 9,200 and the rest 6,800 were Ahom, Naga, Mizo etc.

Barak Valley is now a full fledge region having all the avenues for further prosperity. Provisions for Primary education to University education are available here. Central University, Regional Engineering college, Medical college and Hospital, Polytechnic college, B.Ed college, Agricultural training school, Basic training centres, Industrial Training Institute (ITI). Research centres serve the necessity in different sphere of this region. Moreover, one Airport is present here to connect this region with the rest of the country. The ‘Cachar Paper Mill located at Panchgram of this valley is the second biggest paper mill in Asia. Radio and T.V. centres have also been functioning here since long time. ‘Silchar’ which is the head quarter of Cachar district is the most developed town in Barak Valley.

CACHAR –

Cachar is bounded on the North by the North Cachar hill district, on the east by the Manipur state, on the South by the state of Mizoram and on the west by the Sylhet district of Bangladesh and Tripura state. The total area of this district is 3,786 sq. km. Its population is 12,15,952 according to 1991 census report and its head quarter is Silchar town. (Mazumdar, Acharjee and Bhattacharjee: 1998).

In ancient period this tract of land was known as ‘Haidimbadesh’. According to mythology ‘Haidimba’ a demon was inhabiting in this place while in exile, prince Bhima one of the heroes in Bhagavath, the sacred text, happened to meet Haidimba and married her. To them was born Ghototkoch was ruled this country. Hence, the name of ‘Kotch’ as Kachari came into usage from the 16th century A.D. and the Kachari kings were known as ‘Haidimbeswar’ according to several inscription of that time.
The Kacharies did not get their name from Cachar. It is rather possible, that the district of Cachar got its name from the word Kachar which is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Kaccha' which means lower region of a mountain. It is also possible that the district came to be known as Cachar when the Kacharies came to settle here. The tribe possibly came to be known as Kachari as they preferred to leave in 'Kachar', i.e., the lower region of mountains (Dutta, 1973).

The Kacharies of Cachar are generally supposed to be a section of the Tibeto-Burman family. The original place of this powerful race was somewhere between the Yearkhanddaria and Khasqardaria rivers in the Gobi desert of central Asia. They came down to Assam in successive waves and settle down permanently. Slowly and gradually their population increased greatly in numbers and they travelled by land and by water to 'Nilachal' the hill near Guwahati. From Nilachal they moved forward and finally settled down at Dimapur. At the beginning of the 13th century, they occupied the western portion of Sibsagar and large part of Nawgaon district.

Being harassed by the Ahoms, a race of people of the great Shan-Thai family who migrated to Assam in the beginning of the 13th century A.D. The Kachari Kings retreated southwards in the middle of the 16th century A.D. to Maibong in the North Cachar Hills (Choudhury, 1972).

The Ahoms never gave up the pursuit after the Kacharies as they were determined never to be subdued by the Ahom. In December 1706 A.D. Rudra Singh, one of the most powerful of the Ahom Kings successfully invaded Maibong where upon the Kaachari King, Tamradhwaj fled southwards to Khaspur and appealed to the Jaintia King for help to recover his lost territory. But unfortunately he was treacherously seized by the Jaintia King. Lastly, the Jaintia King was severely defeated by the Ahom army. The captured Kachari King was rescued by the Ahom and was reinstated on the Kachari throne. From this time onwards, the Kachari princes seemed to have settled in the plains of Cachar, their court being located at Khaspur. The Kachari King Suradarpa Narayan set himself to re-organize the people and improve the capital.

The first connection of the British with the district dates from 1762 when Mr. Verelst marched from Chittagong to assist the Manipuri King Jop Singh, who had been driven from his throne by the Burmese and halted with his army at Jatrapur near the present Silchar town. The army remained there for about a year but due to the difficult route to Manipur the army could not proceed further. Ultimately, Mr. Verelst was recalled. The next historical event of importance was the conversion of King Krishna Chandra to Hinduism in 1790 A.D.

A few years later, the last Prince Govinda Chandra was driven from the throne by Manjit Singh of Manipur with the help of the Burmese. Afterwards, the Burmese drove Manjit Singh from this place to Surma valley. The Burmese then threatened to annex Cachar, but the British Government which was in possession of Sylhet was unable to permit a powerful Nation to extend its territory high up to the frontier of Sylhet.
Taking the side of the Kachari King, they expelled the Burmese and handed back the state of Govind Chandra, but in 1830 he was assassinated by a batch of Manipur marauders.

The district of Cachar was formally annexed by the proclamation of August 14, 1832. During the Kachari region numerous Bengali emigrants came from Tripperah, Mymen Singh, Rongpur and Sylhet to Cachar and settled here. After the annexation of Kachari Kingdom by British the management of the affairs of the district was entrusted to Lt. Fisher, an officer of approved ability and great local experience for some months. Cachar continued to be administered from Cherrapunji, the head-quarter of the agents to the Governor – General, but in consideration of practical difficulties early in 1833 Fisher had his head quarter at Dudpatil which however soon shifted to Silchar for the sake of convenience. In 1832, Viceroy Lord Bentick, captured Cachar, which was then a small part of undivided Bengal. Before Cachar had been taken over by the British it covered great area of land, present days Nagaon, Hojai, Neelbagan and Doboka were also considered with in the border of Cachar. But as soon as the British came they completely changed the scenario of Cachar.

In 1950 under the leadership of Surendranath Banerjee the people of India destroyed the scheme of Lord Curzon’s dividing Bengal into two parts. But in 1911 among the three districts – Cachar, Sripatta and Goalpara which were transferred from undivided Bengal to Assam and Cachar was one of them, under the Valley of Surma, Cachar and Sylhet were regarded as twins. The language and literature, status of politics, everything of these two areas were dependent on each other.

SILCHAR –

Location - Silchar is situated on the left bank of the Barak river in 24.49' N and 92.48' E and commands a charming view down the river, which is dotted with he sails of native craft and grooves of the areca plam, while a little of the north, the purple hills of North Cachar rise sharply from the plain. It is surrounded by the Borail hills on the north, Mizo hills on the south, Manipur on the East and Bangladesh on the West. The valley is called aptly Barak Valley and consists of three districts – Cachar, Haflakandi and Karimganj districts. At the time of partition of India in 1947, Silchar, Halakandi and Haflong were the three sub – divisions of Cachar. After partition, Karimganj was included in Cachar as a sub – division and Haflong was separated from Cachar to North Cachar Hill district as the district head – quarter. Silchar was declared the district head quarter of Cachar. However, later, Karimganj and Hailakandi were also separated from Cachar as two independent districts.

People and Economy - Silchar is a land Bengalis contributing to more than 80% of the 1.45 lakhs population. Majority of people speak Sylheti, a dialect of Bengali.
Silchar calendar year is full of festivals. The most awaited being the Durga Puja celebrated around October. Another important occasion is the Gandhi Mela, a local fair. Local cultural and sports clubs like Jyoti, Town club, Cachar club, Dishari, Bhabhikal, shan to sena give the town the much needed cultural relief. Silcharities are mostly rice-eating people and most of the people living in the outskirts rely on farming and tea cultivation. The river Barak is the lifeline of Silchar, might be the very reason why Silchar is existing today. It flows through the town affecting the culture, the economy and the general life of all Silcharities. Every year when the sky breaks down with its shower the river floods the nearby areas sometimes even threatening to flood the whole town. And rightly so the whole region is called the Barak valley. It flows out of the town and is converted to Surma and Kushiara river near Bhanga Bazar and moves into Bangladesh. The Silchar region has 125 tea gardens and many of them producing the best tea in the country. Tea, Oil and natural gas, bamboo, cane, rice .... are the major contributors to Silchars economy.

John Edgar was the first civil district officer of Cachar during the British regime. Edgar did his best to improve the living condition of Silchar town. Because of his direct supervision Silchar began to grow fast. He gave up the former policy of restricted emigration and opened the doors of Cachar to the emigrants. He encouraged the Hindus to come and settle in Silchar and other places of trade marts. He preferred the Hindus in white collar jobs and in the business enterprises. He gave them the government license liberally . He invited his known acquaintances from Dacca to Silchar. It was during his time the emigrant enterprising Hindus became the pilot of local trade and commerce. It was because of Edgar’s initiative the new market complex of Silchar got a shape. The grateful merchants of Silchar renamed the market after him – ‘Johnyganj’ [present Janiganj ]. Edgar was the president of the Local Board and hence as per Law supervised the works of the Public Works Department. Under his supervision metal roads were constructed in the town and connected Lakhipur with Silchar by a Pucca road.

Climatic Condition - Floods, earthquakes, landslides and cyclones, everything happens in Silchar. Silchar like the rest of Assam is a seismic area and experiences earthquakes pretty often. Most tremors are result of earthquakes with Shillong as the epicenter. At Silchar the wind generally blows from the north east in the morning and from the south east in the afternoon. About the end of February stormy weather sets in and in March there are often thunderstorm and the soon the water level starts rising in the river bank. It rains quite heavily in July and August and generally the outskirts of the town get flooded causing extensive damage to the poor farmers. In summer its hot and in winter its cool. But it never reaches extreme levels. The early rains in the summer brings in the most needed relief to the people.
Seat of Education – Silchar is proud to be endowed with the best educational institute in the whole of North East India. As far as education is concerned the male literacy rate goes to 88.1% and female literacy to 78.2% and the total figure comes at 83.8%. There are a number of primary schools, high schools, higher secondary schools, college etc. There is also significant growth of English medium and Hindi medium schools. In Silchar, there is a Polytechnic college, a Regional Engineering College (NIT), now attained the status of a deemed university, a Medical college and a Civil Hospital. A Central University namely ASSAM University, Silchar was established in 1994 by an Act of Parliament of 1989 (Act no. X111). The university came into existence on 15th January 1994 through a notification of the Government of India. It is a teaching cum affiliating university. All the colleges of five districts of South Assam – Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi, North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong stand affiliated to Assam university. This includes three Law colleges, five B.Ed. colleges, one Medical college also. There are a number of Vocational institutes controlled and guided by various government and non-government organizations (NGO’s) in Silchar.

Political Scenario - Silchar have always been politically different from the rest of Assam all through out ... when its AGP at the state, its congress in Silchar, when its congress at the state its BJP at Silchar. Silchar in the recent years (after the Babri Masjid issue came up) have been pro – BJP and pro Santosh Mohan Deb. In 1998 Kabindra Purkayastha (BJP) defeated S.M.Dev (INC) BY 19425 votes. In 1996 S.M.Dev (INC) defeated Kabindra Purkayastha (BJP) by 68141 votes. In 1991 Kabindra Purkayastha (BJP) defeated Nurul Huda (CPM) by 10851 votes. (the sitting MLA has been from BJP for the last few polls). In the year 2009, in Silchar’s Political scenario one new political party AUDF under the leadership of Badruddin Aajmal emerged as a third strongest party. During the MP election (2009). AUDF gaves a strong counterattack to both National parties (BJP & INC). In this MP election Kabindra Purkayastha (BJP & INC). In this MP election Kabindra Purkayastha (BJP) defeated Santosh Mohan Dev (INC) by -------- votes. After a long time BJP can snatched power from the monopoly rule of S.M.Dev (INC). Apart from this Silchar is always affected by National issues more than the state issues. The local associations like ACKHSA (All Cachar Karimganj Hailakandi Students Association) and ABVP (Akhil Bhartiya Vidhyarti Parishad) have become big forces when it comes to voice our local demands and needs.

Silchar from the History Records –

History of Polo – In the 1850s British tea planters discovered the game in Manipur (Munipoor) on the Burmese Border with India. The first Polo club in the world was
formed by them at Silchar, west of Manipur. Other clubs followed and today, the oldest in the world is the Calcutta club, founded in 1862.

**Report on the Eastern Frontier of the British India** – ‘In the year 1830 the Rajah, Govindchandra, was assassinated and there being no descendent either lineal or adopted, the country was annexed to the British territories, by proclamation on the 14th August 1832, in compliance with the frequent and earnestly expressed wishes of the people.’

**Communication Facilities** - Silchar is connected by road, rail and air communication. It is connected to other states – Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura by road. State transport buses and private buses ply between all these places. The Assam Bengal Railway brought Silchar into the railway map in 1899. The railway entered into Cachar near Badarpur Junction across Sylhet. A branch line from Badarpur through South bank of Barak pushed up Silchar pass. Katakhal, Salchapra and Gagra. The N.F. Railway touches the different towns like Karimganj, Dharmanagar and Jiribum connecting the state of Manipur with Silchar. It is likely to be transformed into a broadgauge in near future – work is on the way. The Indian Airlines connects Silchar with Kolkata – Guwahati, Agartala and Imphal. The Kumbhirgram aerodrome is located at a distance of about 29 kms. from Silchar. The All India Radio, Silchar is serving for the people of Barak Valley for last 30 years. The programmes are broadcasted in Bengali, Manipuri, Dimasa and in Hindi languages. Silchar Doordarshan Kendra was started in 1995. There are no heavy industries in Silchar town, but there are about 61 registered small and medium size industries like, small scale candle, Match stick, Home pipe and Brick industries. From Silchar four Bengali Daily newspaper namely, Dainik Jugasankha, Dainik Jankantha, Dainik Praotojyoti and Samyeek Prasanga are published from Silchar. Meanwhile, one local private cable network named Barak Television Network (BTN) emerged and run successfully providing various contents to their viewers. News, Film songs, Drama, Cinema, reality show, Live programmes during auspicious occasions served and entertained the people of Silchar whole heartedly. The growth of mass media is quite significant. It plays a vital role in entertaining Silcharian. Not only that there are two cinema halls whose popularity sadly lacking due to the advent of multimedia.

The proposed study is focused in three urban localities and one rural locality of Silchar. Among three urban localities of Silchar town the study carried in Malugram, Rangirkhari and Link road. The Researcher done the study in these three urban localities because Malugram is the oldest locality of Silchar town and it is here, where the foundation of Silchar town was laid. Rangirkhari locality was chosen because it consists maximum number of wards and it is centre of Silchar town. It developed mainly
in the post Independence period. Link road is popularly known as New Silchar, established and developed after 80's.

The silcoorie is the largest revenue village of Cachar district. Earlier it was very backward in case of literacy and economy rate. But now the village is gradually developing.

**Malugram** - Malugram is the oldest locality of Silchar town. It is in the north of Silchar town. It is here, where the foundation of Silchar of Silchar town was laid. Before Independence it was the heart of Silchar town. All showrooms, shops and quarters of the British Government officials were located in Malugram area. The Mighty river Barak has taken a large portion of Malugram into its laps. The road which now stretches from the Paul Sadan through Ghaniala, Itkhola to trunk road was previously far away towards the bank of river Barak. But due to drastic extension of river Barak many office buildings of then British period, huge go downs along with a part of B.C. Gupta's house were taken away by the mighty river and the road was shifted to where it as at present.

The present Malugram is divided into four wards. Among them the most thickly populated wards are ward 1 and ward 2 and they are considered as study area by the researcher. According to the General election of the year 2011, the total number of households of ward no. 1 is 1000, out of which 217 represents Muslims households, 2 households belongs to Christian religion and rest no. of 781 carrying Hindu majority. In this ward Hindu comprising of all castes say – Brahmans, Chhetrias, Vaishyas and Sudras. Here, one get multi-lingual people speaking their own dialect – Hindi, Bengali, Manipuri and Assamese. Bengali is the dominating language. In this ward 75% source of drinking water provided by PHE (Urban water supply scheme) and rest 25% inhabitants thrust of drinking water covered by river water. The residents of this ward live a modern way of life. Almost all the households have television sets with cable connection, some subscribe Dish Antennas also. Many households have owned VCD and DVD players. Not only that one NGO (4 years old), six Youth club (1 registered), two Cyber Café (1 registered) run by the Youth who organize cultural functions and sports events on various occasions. Moreover, majority of the Youth enjoyed their own personal Computers with Internet connection. Concerning Education level of the ward no. 1 – it has two L.P and two High schools of Bengali medium. Here maximum people have Assam type household pattern. There are also a good number of CD shops speaks of the development of modern mass media. [The information provided by ward Commissioner – Ittideb Nath of ward no. 1, according to 2011 census].

Malugram ward no. 2 is inhabitate by 1036 households. Where different religious and linguistic people together enjoy and performed their cultural activities. Having Hindu in majority, the ward inhabitate by Muslims and Christians also (2 Christian households). Comprising various dialect the ward dominated by Bengali speaking people followed by Hindi, Assamese and Manipuri. In case of household
pattern is concerned the area covers Assam type, RCC and buildings equally. Here, maximum families depends on Urban water supply scheme (PHE) as their source of drinking water but some houses has well also. The ward has four Cyber Café, three Youth clubs, one Print media house (Samyeek Prasanga) and two NGO’S give their immense support in serving people of Silchar. [Information provided by ward commissioner Rajkumar Majumdar of ward 2].

Rangirkhari - Rangirkhari area is developed mainly in the Post Independence period. It consists of eight Municipal wards, i.e., from 13 to 20, but for the purpose of the present study researcher has taken only two wards 13 and 18 because these wards are thickly populated. Ward number 13 starts from Netaji school to Sonai road DIC covering opposite side of Janata lane, Rangirkhari point to Green View nursing home. This ward is inhabited by more than 1160 households. The ward has three L.P schools, two High schools of Bengali medium; it has also one Hindi medium and one English medium High school. Moreover, three NGO’S (registered) and seventeen Youth clubs (7 registered) speak their presence by providing their service to society. People of this ward performed different rituals and festivals having their own religion like – Hindu, Jain (15 households) and Christian (5 households). Hindus are in majority. As such dialect is concerned Bengali is the dominating language followed by Hindi and Manipuri. Basic source of drinking water provided by urban water supply scheme (PHE), some households also have well but in less number. Here, maximum household pattern is Assam type. There are also four Cyber café and two CD shops which attract the Youth. [Information provided by 13 no. ward commissioner Attanu Bhattacharjee, according to 2011 census report].

Rangirkhari ward no. 18 covers Dr. Sundari Mohan Road, Rishi Aurobindo Sarani, Panchyat Road, A.K. Azad road and in National Highway road – Pallasri Lane, Surodhani Lane to Srihatt Lane. This ward is inhabited by 1500 households. Out of these total numbers of households 90 Muslims, 2 Christians and rest 1408 covers Hindu households comprising of all castes. Maximum inhabitants have buildings and less number has Assam type household pattern. This ward has two slum pockets which covers Janata lane and A.K.Azad road and last part of Indrani road. Urban water supply scheme (PHE) fulfill the thrust of maximum families. Some families also used well and tube well as their source of drinking water. In case of Education ward has two L.P schools, one M.E. and one High school of Bengali medium. Moreover, it has seven Aaganbari centre and one Jyoti Kendra, which serves the Education needs of the inhabitants of this ward. The ward 18, comprised of every linguistic people having Bengali as majority, while Hindi and Manipuri dialects also reminds their presence. Speaking about the Social workers like D.P.Roy founder member of Cachar Cancer Hospital and Subhash Choudhury of Lions club, one NGO and four Youth club serves
the purpose of the local people with their immense support and service. [According to 2011 census, information provided by 18 no. ward commissioner – Gopal Roy].

**Link Road** – Link Road ward number 16, popularly known as New Silchar covers first Link road to second Link road, joining Hailakandi and Sonai road. Constituting 1000 households the ward comprised different dialect like – Bengali, Manipuri and Hindi. With Hindu majority the ward 16 also possess Muslims (100 households) and Christians (3 households) families. Inhabitants of this New Silchar area enjoys the facility of Urban water supply scheme as their source of drinking water which reaches every house of this locality. Maximum inhabitants have RCC household pattern. Concerning Education, ward 16 has only one L.P. school of Bengali medium. Whereas Social service is concerned five NGO’S and five Youth clubs (all registered) serves the needs of the inhabitants. Four Cyber café of this ward not only attracts the attention of the Youth but it speaks the development of modern mass media.

**Silcoorie Tea Estate** – The Silcoorie Tea Estate is situated in 1939 A.D. Silcoorie Tea Estate is the main garden having its three division gardens namely – Dharamkhal, Dargakona and Borahkai Tea Estate. The garden is belongs to North Western Cachar Tea Garden Limited. Its head office is at Barbourne Street Calcutta-1 (New Kolkata). Silcoorie T.E. comes under Silcoorie Grant. It covers the entire revenue village. Silcoorie grant has divided into 10 parts. It represents two G.P., one is Borakhai (108 no.) and another is Silcurie (109 no.) under Chatla Pargana (part 9 & 10). Silcoorie is the largest revenue village of Cachar district of Assam State. The inhabitants of this Silcoorie village got their first Gaon Panchayat voting right in the year 1979. At present Pradeep Chandra Das is the Silcoorie G.P. President (BJP Party). For present study the researcher has chosen Silcoorie (main garden) and Dharamkhal (division garden) village which comes under Silcoorie Tea Estate.

The village Silcoorie is home for people belonging to different communities. People of the garden are mainly migrated landless agricultural labourer who came here during British Colonial period either by force or for the dream of better livelihood like other Tea Gardens of Barak Valley.

**History of Tea Garden Labourers of Barak Valley** - The discovery of tea in the Barak Valley was made in 1855. Williamson of the Assam Company applied for waste land for the purpose of cultivation of tea in Cachar. Rule was made for the grant of waste land in Cachar in 1856 and the tea industry was first established in Burhangur in Cachar. Tea grants were made under the old Assam Rule of 1854 and free simple tenure rule of 1861. Both ways the tenure was for 99 years.
The introduction of tea industry in Barak Valley was in 1856 but its expansion was not without labour problem. The indigenous people of Barak Valley were traditionally agriculturist and were too well enough to work under someone for a wage. The superintendent of Cachar reported to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal on 20 January 1862, “..... the people of Cachar are generally speaking too well off to labourer for wages, except on their own fields ....... the very highest wages would not tempt him from his own fields.” [General Deptt. Proceedings, November, 1862 WBSA].

The paid labour system was also completely unknown to them. This posed a great problem to the ever expanding industry which required an increasing labour force. R. Steward the Superintendent of Cachar was wrong when he said, “With regard to labour one do not anticipate there will be any great difficulty in obtaining the quantity which may be required, if not in Cachar, in the neighbouring district of Sylhet, the inhabitants of which districts and of Jayantia came very willingly to Cachar and settle down in it.” [J.B. Bhattacharjee,.....op. cit., p. 993] . Even his assumption that each acre of tea cultivation would require the constant service of one man which could be obtained from neighbouring densely populated district of Sylhet also did not come true. The Bengali agriculturists of Sylhet had no inclination to join as tea garden labourers as there were ample opportunities of employment there. It may be mentioned that Sylhet also had tea gardens and the environment there was better than that of Assam or Cachar.

An attempt was also made to employ the hill tribes of Cachar, like the Kukis, Nagas, Cacharies and others into tea planting work by the agents of tea companies. It was a matter of great importance to offer every inducement to those tribes to abandon their migratory habit to take root on the soil and amalgamate themselves with the peasantry of the plains. [W.J.Allen, Report on the Administration of Cachar, No. 1002, Cherrapunjee, 1858, p. 22. WBSA]. They were free from the payment of hill house tax. But in a thinly populated district like Cachar, where labour was so scarce, this offer of inducement could not solve the problem of labour shortage in tea industry.

It appears from the Bengal Administrative Report, 1867 – 68, that the planters sometimes usurped the grazing fields and encroached upon the Jhum rights of the tribal shifting cultivators. [Ibid, P. 144]. The planters even disrupted inter – village communications by fencing the partition of the existing public roads and denying the right of way to the villages. [ Amalendu, Guha, .....Planter Raj to Swaraj, New Delhi, 1988, P. 15].
Having failed from all quarters of inducements to obtain labourers from the local population and the neighbourhood, on May 13, 1858, the manager of Goongur T.E. Mr. Sunderman put a proposal of importing labourers from North India. Mr. Stewart readily agreed and opined “it would be a measure attended with much benefit to the country, and to the tea planting interests.” [J.B. Bhattacharjee, op. Cit, P. 192]. He also expressed his opinion that the ‘coolies’ be given the opportunities to take up cultivation of their own while laboring in the tea gardens. This facility would motivate the labourers to settle in Cachar permanently and be a permanent source of labour to the industry. The period then, coincided with the migration of Indian labourers to Mauritius and West Indies. [Ibid, P. 193]. It was assumed that the willing migrants would prefer Cachar to a distant foreign land. A proposal to this effect was submitted by the tea committee to the Government of Bengal to import labourers from North India. The Government of Bengal, knowing fully the dearth of labour force in the district accepted the proposal and allowed the immigration of labourers with immediate effect. Thus, the immigration of labourers into Barak Valley started from 1858 after initial difficulties.

**Circumstances leading to migration** - There were several factors for the immigration of such a magnitude of labourers to the North East India. To begin with, the Chotanagpur Plateau in the early and mid 19th century was marked by several unrests. In the early second half of the 19th century the region witnessed Sardai Lrai, Birsa movement, the Tana Bhagat movement, the Santh movement of 1855 and the Kharwar movement. [J.C. Jha, ‘Santhal Movement,’ P.N. Chopra (ed.) India’s Struggle for freedom: Role of Associated Movement,’ Agan Prakashan, Delhi, 1985, PP. 395 – 434]. These movements were violent in nature and left a trial of death and destruction of men and money. In the tribal area of South Munger and South Bhagalpur. Santhal leaders were replaced by strangers called mustajirs leading to the resumption of old rates of rent had been fixed at the time of land reclamation. [Dharma Kumar (ed.), the Cambridge Economic History of India, New Delhi, Vol. 11, P. 63 ……].

The tribals went through immense sufferings and as to be out of such situations. They immigrated to the North – East India, particularly Assam and Cachar. E.T. Dalton the Commissioner of the Chotanagpur Division in 1872 said, ‘the unfortunate simple tribal races were neglected by their N.W.masters, oppressed and deprived of the means they had formerly possessed of obtaining redress through their own chief [E.T. Dalton, Descriptive Ethnology of Bengali, Calcutta – 1972, PP. 169 – 70]. The Deputy Commissioner of old Lohardanga district said that in some villages the tribals had completely lost their proprietary rights under the Kamiauti system the tribals had to serve as slaves for life and even their children were forced to serve as long as their debt was not cleared. [W.W. Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal: Hazaribagh and Lohardaga District, P.254]. Under such a situation it imperative for them to find an alternative means for survival.
Destructive of handicraft industries and the influx of cheap machine made goods into the Indian market reduced the artisans and craftsmen of India to simple wage earners. The introduction of the system of cash payment of revenue forced the peasants to sell their crops to the mahajans on a price dictated by them. In case of the failure of the crops the peasants were compelled to mortgage their agricultural land as security. Once a loan was taken it was impossible for a peasant to come out of the vicious circle of loan till he parted away with the land mortgaged. [Kalyan Choudhury, New History of Modern India and World, Oriented Book Company Pvt. Ltd. Guwahati, 1998, PP. 4-5]. Such a miserable situation forced the people to emigrate to the gardens of Barak Valley and Assam.


The traditional rights of the Bihar peasants of forests for pasture and irrigation, for wood for fuel, building timber, fruits, fodder which were essential to sustain the victims of famines were denied by the Zaminders. Besides, the frequent floods, epidemics and the social oppressions of the lower caste at the hands of the higher castes led the people to find alternative in emigration.

In 1988 an enquiry was conducted in some villages of Patna districts and it was found that the minimum size of ‘Subsistence holding’ for a family of five was 7 bighas and 40% of the peasant families owned less than 4 bighas. In Gaya district 48% of the families did not own 5 bighas even. The survey and settlement reported in some North Bihar districts in 1890’s revealed that more than 45% of the families owned less than subsistence holding [B. Choudhury, ‘Eastern India’, Dharma Kumar (ed.), The Cambridge Economic History of India, New Delhi, P.163]. The bonded labour system was also widespread in the districts of Gaya, Patna Purnea and Bhagalpur. Sonepur in Saran districts also became a great emigrating centre. The low and backward Bhojpuri speaking people of districts were the main recruits. They were hardy and sturdy people with a spirit of adventure and seriousness at work. [AAYang, the limited Raj : Agrarian Relation in Colonial India, Saran district, 1789 – 1920, Delhi, 1989, P.194]. A report of 1903 recorded that 64% of the population of the district supplemented their meager income through emigration. A labourer would get only two to three annas and three pies in Saran. [L S O Malley, Bengal district Gazetteer, Saran, 1912, P.4]. Such conditions opened the gate for mass migration of labourers.

Last, but not the least, when Bengal was partitioned in 1905, a new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam Nwas created. The water communication was improved.
upon, the railway system which was already in existence also introduced some new branches that ran from Laksham Junction to Chandpur [The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Calcutta, 1909, P.i, NAND]. (The word 'coolie' is now considered derogatory and has been replaced in official documents by 'Labourer' or 'Mazdoor'). These services facilitated the labourers to emigrate to the tea districts.

**Systems of Recruitment** - Different methods were used to recruit labourers. The first system of recruiting labourers was the Arkatti system or free contractor's system. The Arkatti was an individual or individuals appointed by the planters as agents in the recruiting districts to recruit labourers. Through this system, at the initial stage of recruitment of the labourers in 1858–59, 400 labourers were imported into Cachar from Benaras, Ghazipur, Chotanagpur and Bihar [R.K.Kar, Savaras of Moncotta, Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1981, P. 9]. This system of recruitment led to gross abuses by the Arkattis since there was no restriction upon them. Contractors collected coolies by the hundred on false promises of high pay and light work and dispatched them to the tea districts without taking any sanitary precautions for their welfare on the journey, the result was shocking, mortality in the voyage, while many of the immigrants were of low caste and construction which precluded all hope of their surviving many months in the jungles of the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley [The Inland Emigration Manual, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1901, P.4, NLC].

The abuses meted out by the Arkattis to the destined labourers found expression in the words of one Kumar Dakshineswar Malia. He said, "the Arkattis were devoid of all feelings of humanity, with scarcely any scruple of conscience, not content with enticing only the low caste people – away, often employ their vice – arts on young women of good but ruined families. They often succeeded in their nefarious practices and bring shame and disgrace not only on the women they abduct, to ultimately swell the numbers of inmates of brothels, but also on the families to which the wretched women belong. For several years past, I have been a close observer of the brutal outrages committed by these pests of society (arkattis) sometimes assisted by female arkattis whom they take into their confidence. These latter, owing to their sex, obtain easy access into good families and some means or other ingratiate themselves into their favour and accomplish their object without exciting the suspicion of anyone. Thus, the arkattis impose upon women of high caste people whom they confine in their vile dense of population and after satisfying themselves with criminal enjoyments with the unhappy women, afterwards send to tea gardens, there to rot and die, or leave them to their fate. Innumerable cases of this kind had from time to time been brought to my notice. It is however, a wonder to me that in every case the culprits (arkattis) escaped quite unscathed. The abolition of arkattis is a desideration amongst all classes of the community. Therefore, on the broad principle of mortality, I would advocate the total and speedy abolition of a system which has been denounced in unmeasured terms.
everywhere. The following quotation from the letter written by the magistrate of a district in the North Western province will uphold my view in reference to the abolition of the arkatti system, which is working great moral evils in places where it exists. The quotation runs thus ‘if common rumour be true, the free recruiting is looked upon here as a species of licensed abduction.’ [Labour Enquiry Commissions Report, NLC, P.31].

Mr. Grimley the late Commissioner of Chotanagpur described the arkattis as a ‘lawless body of men turned Arkattis, who are frequently released convicts, or men of doubtful character.’ (A place called Arkattipur in the neighbourhood of Silchar still bears reminiscene of the torture of the coolies).

In 1861, an enquiry commission was formed by the Government of Bengal to investigate into the working of free contractor’s recruitment system. Following the investigation it was learnt that mortality on voyage was 10% to 12% and the contractor’s did little to improve its conditions. As a result of this the First Inland Emigration Act, Bengal Act III of 1863 was passed to control emigration to Assam. [P. Griffiths, History of tea Industry, Weldenfield and Nicolson, London, 1967, P. 269].

The Bengal Act III of 1863 was amended and Bengal Act VI was passed in 1865. This Act provided for minimum wages, limited hours of work, i.e., 9 hours per day, and 6 days per week and contracts were not to extend beyond three years. This Act also did not work satisfactory. In 1868, again a commission of enquiry was appointed to look into the working of the Bengal Act VI of 1865. The Enquiry Commission found that the coolies were still imported through inducements and misrepresentation. The licensed contractors still employed unlicensed sub – contractors. The gross cruelty became less but the death rate became alarming due to bad housing, over crowding, improper water and insufficient water. The commission then proposed for recruitment of labourers by garden Sardars. Under the Amendment Act of 1870, the Sardary System of recruitment was recognized but the Arkatti system was not immediately abolished under the Sardary System, a Sardar used to go to his original place outside the Barak Valley and brought his own relatives and friends. [Indian Tea Association, Calcutta, 6 July 1905, P. 128, NLC].

Progressive views were gradually gaining ground while the hatred for the contractors was growing all the more. At the same time, there was an attempt to recruit local labourers which consisted of the immigrant labourers who decided to stay back in the tea districts after their expiry of contract. It may be mentioned that Assam, Cachar and Sylhet were included in the same tea district before the creation of the chief commissionership of Assam in 1874. However, in 1873, the Government of Bengal considered a proposal to divide the tea districts into two whereby Cachar and Sylhet would form separate tea districts and to permit the planters in Cachar the free recruitment of tea labourers. [J.B. Bhattacharjee, OP. Cit, P. 202].
Bengal Administration Report, 1867 – 68, gives the figure of Assam plantation labour force as 34,433. Of them two – thirds were imported and one – third local labourers. The total number of outside recruits after death and discretion etc. stood at 24,000 in the Brahmaputra Valley and 20,000 in Silchar and Hailakandi on December 1872. [Indian Tea Association P. 204]. However, during May 1863 to January 1868 a total of 52,155 labourers were imported to Cachar. Of them, 2456 died during the voyage. The journey having taken a month, the rate of mortality was characterized to be alarming. [J.B. Bhattacharjee, OP. Cit., P 200].

During the 70’s of the 19th century the policy of recruitment of labour from the Northern, Central and Eastern India was going on in full swing. [Census Report of India, 1901, P. 85]. The Deputy Commissioner of Cachar informed the Commissioner of Dacca in 1873, the difficulty in getting labour at low rates might be lessened by removing the regulations for recruiting and transport of labourers to Cachar. The first few years of export to Cachar showed that the regulations were necessary but the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar felt that it was not so because fewer labourers were imported. He deemed the Sardary System as the most advantageous both to the employers and the employed. [ OGR MC William, officiating Deputy Commissioner Cachar to Commissioner of Dacca Division, April 1873, Vide Parliam entry papers (1874 – III) SVBITA]. Statistics of this immigration though was not adequate still they supply us information as to change in the ethnic composition of labour resource in the tea gardens of the Barak Valley.

The annual report of the superintendent of Emigration on the transport of emigrants to the labour districts of Assam, Cachar, Sylhet recorded fluctuation of transport of labourers to the tea districts of Cachar and Sylhet as shown below:

1872 – 73 ----------------------- 6,271  
1873 – 74 ----------------------- 10,460  
1874 – 75 ----------------------- 10,423  

During the first half of the year 1875, 5985 labourers were imported, 4229 by garden Sardars and 1729 by Contractors the number for the whole years was probably 9000 or more. In 1876 of the 10423 coolies sent to Cachar and Sylhet 6348 were dispatched by garden Sardars and 4039 by contractors. [Annual Report of the Superintendent of Emigration to the labour districts of Assam, Cachar and Sylhet for the year 1874 – 75, P. 234, DRRS].

In later years of the 19th century the immigration of the labourers in the Valley took place in a massive scale. In 1881 the Govt of Bengal set up another commission to examine the working of Bengal Act VIII of 1873 and it was satisfied with it. The
Commission's Report led to the passing of Bengal Act I, 1882. This Act came to be known as Dhubri system. [Dhubri is the head – quarters of Goalpara district in Assam]. Under this system coolies were sent to Dhubri and from there contracts used to be executed. [Amalendu Guha, Opp. Cit., P. 40].

The Act of 1882 abolished the contractors system but it gave rise to many abuses. According to Lyall, the women who emigrated to Assam and Cachar without husband after became prostitutes in the gardens or contracted unlawful marriages with others. According to Ganganand Mukherjee, Deputy Magistrate in charge of emigration Manbhum had 58 applications in 1882 – 83, complaining the elopement of their wives, brothers and sisters. [Letter of JFK Hewit to Bengal Government, 11 June 1883 (Gen. Emigration) No. 216, proceedings, Lieutenant Governor, Bengal Inland Emigration, August 1883, NALC].

Despite the fact, that the labourers were passing through untold miseries, the import of labourers continued in greater measure. The labourers who immigrated from Assam were not the local people of Assam but all those who had come from United Province. They preferred Cachar to Assam as the former was not so much inaccessible and jungle lands in nature and lands for cultivation were available near the gardens. The immigrated labourers in the beginning of the 20th century stood at 4 lakhs in Cachar. It changed the demography of Cachar like that of Brahmaputra Valley. [R.K. De, an interviews taken on 20 April 2000 at Silchar].

**Transport of the Labourers** - There is no clear information about the journey of the labourers to the tea districts of Cachar and Assam in the first two years. But in 1862, the impending problem of the transport labourers was discussed and took for granted that journey by that to Cachar would be much shorter than that to Assam. [From Secretary, WF Fergusan of Landholders and Commercial Association to EH Lushington to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, 7 March, 1862, NLC].

Thus beginning from 1858 the transportation of labourers by boat to Cachar and Sylhet started. The work load at Kushita was ever on the increase. The expansion of Kushita office was imperative. Therefore, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar requested the Bengal Government for acquisition of two plots of lands at the Sardar Station of Cachar and the others at Fenchuganj at a cost of Rs. 100 debitable to the labour Transport Fund, for building depots to disembark coolies imported under the Act III (BC) of 1863. [Ibid].

The mode of Transport and Transit was much responsible for the mortality among the emigrants. The steamers were often found to be over crowded, dirty and vulnerable to attacks of Cholera and other diseases. [Resolution on Surgeon Major Cambell's Report on the Administration for the year 1872 – 73, P.4, NLC].

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The government from its end, took several measures to prevent further mortality. But in spite of the precautions the mortality rate among the emigrants who arrived in Cachar on 21 July 1865 on the steamer ‘Colgong’ and flats under the charge of an Indian doctor. All Bux there were 59 deaths. On the same steamer and flats Indian doctor Tipan Malik and Ishwar Chandra Chakraborty took 335 labourers of Messers Andrew and Hendry’s. They were mainly Bhojpuri speaking people of West Bihar and East UP with a few Dhangars. Ten of these Dhangars died. In desperation the Medical Inspector of Labour Transport, R.A. Barker wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar about these death. [From R.K. Barker, Medical Inspector, and officer, Cachar to Captain R. Stewart, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, 21 July, 1865, no. 88]. Proceedings of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Emigration Department August, 1865, no. 94 NAND.

In 1867 Sir John Edgar, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar declared that there was a mortality among coolies on the voyage to Cachar which was generally described as ‘rivalry the horrors of the middle passage. [Resolution on Surgeon Major Cambell’s Report on the Arrangements for the Transit of Emigrants to Assam, Bengal General Administration for the year 1872 – 73, P.4.NAND].

In 1908 – 09 there were 7293 emigrants to Cachar and Sylhet from the central provinces. In 1903, Fuller suggested that during the river journey by boat or steamer the supply of cooked food be stopped and they should be allowed to cook on board for themselves or permit them to purchase their favourite dry food (Chira), Gur (Jiggery) or Sattu (ground gram). The Indian general steam Navigation and the River Steam Navigation companies agreed to offer facilities for both these alternatives coolies from Gualundo to Chandpur and from here to labourers travelled on rail to the Surma Valley districts. [From C Banks, to Bengal Government, General department, 29 April 1908, no. 1556, proceedings, Lieutenant Governor, Bengal (Emigration) no. 1908. NAND].

The report on the administration of Bengal, 1914 – 15 recorded that the depots, places of accommodation and rest houses for the emigrant were inspected and kept in proper sanitary condition. The transport arrangements were also satisfactory. This is evident from the fact that among 2316 emigrants sent to Gualundo by the licensed contractors there were no death during the journey and also among the 1099 Sardari labourers embarked for Cachar and Sylhet there was not a single case of death. Even during the steam journey to Chandpur none of the 3389 emigrants who set off for the Surma Valley died. [EAW Hall, Report on Inland Emigration for the year ending 30 June, 1918, Calcutta].

The transportation of the Labourers o the labour districts became better in later years as improved means of transport were brought about. The labourers who came to
Cachar all these years stayed on even after the expiry of the contracts. In the course of time they formed a separate community of tea gardens of their own.

**Accommodation** – After arrival, the labourers were accommodated in barracks situated on the edge of the plantations where thick vegetation existed. Such places were normally the hotbed of malaria, kalazar, cholera, dysenteries, leprosy and many other diseases. The houses were made of mudthatch which were temporary in nature. In every labour line there existed country wine shops cheaply consumed by the labourers. The managements desired the ‘status quo’ to continue [Late Biswanath Upadhya, an interview conducted on 27 June – 2000, at Cachar Shramik Union office, Silchar].

**Education** - Education in the tea gardens was a late beginning in Barak Valley. A formal committee for the purpose was formed only in 1906 with the name Longai and Jhuri Valley District Committee. The Committee was of the opinion that ‘Bengali’ would be adopted in schools dependent on government however, the government would not interfere with the teaching of ‘nagri’ on a garden where the population was composed of north west provinces coolies. [Ibid., P.2] A year later the government extended help with grants for books, appliance and with some help towards the construction of a school house, or the pay of the teacher where such was required. The report was said to have underestimated the amount of teaching done on most gardens in the Surma Valley in private classes by clerks, sirdars and educated coolies. Further suggestions were made for the improvement of education in tea estates. The committee suggested for three types of schools, -

a) Ordinary government lower primary whole day schools,
b) Subsidized private evening schools,
c) Purely private unsubsidized evening schools.

Occasional informal visits were recommended but the unnecessary interference was not favoured as it would lessen the interest of the managers to the well being of the schools. [Ibid.] For this sorry state of education in the gardens there was without doubt latent objective of the planters. The planters were generally speaking in favour of giving garden labourers only such teaching as would be useful to them as labourers. The planters apprehend that the labourers education would ultimately bring awareness with regard to their nature of work and cause problems to the management on many fronts. [Ibid, P.2].

**Social Problem** – Socially, the tea garden labourers were looked down upon since they came from different backward, it was difficult for them to adjust themselves with the local population. The local population took little interest in mixing with the labourers before the Gandhian movement started. The tea communities were given lesser importance in the social activities. They used to be called coolies by the local people.
But from 1880’s congressmen began to visit the gardens for organizational purpose and closed societies began to be opened soon where the socialists too established their contact. In the last decade of the 19th century, Bipin Chandra Paul, the well known nationalist leader and a Brahmo, raised storm of protest against the exploitation of the coolies by the Sahibs. Both Bipin Chandra Paul and Dwarkanath Ganguly took up the cause of the downtrodden tea labourers of the Barak Valley. They published the deplorable condition of them and demanded better wages and lesser working hours through the book THE NEW ECONOMIC POWER OF INDIA, and the Bengali Journal Samhati, The Indian National Congress also took up the cause of the tea labourers of the Barak Valley in their annual conference in 1896. [J.B. Bhattacharjee, OP. Cit., P. 198].

**Social Structure** - The tea garden workers were brought by the colonial rulers from various parts of the country and were put in various tea gardens of Barak Valley. Due to physical isolation of the population of these gardens from each other, in the initial years the marriage took place within the same garden. But in later years with the improvement of their economic condition, some of the tea garden labourers used to go to their own area (desh) and take back the groom or bride from the nearest garden. To a great extent they were able to sustain the caste structure particularly caste endogamy but they also made certain adjustments as per the demands of the new situation. The rigidity of sub-castes blurred and kinship ties between people of the same caste drawn from different villages. Sometimes marriage relation between equivalent castes of the same cultural zone took place.

As far as caste structure is concerned every caste or sub – caste had their own samaj. The notion of purity and pollution was also there, particularly, in performing the rituals rigidity of the caste system was high at that time. There was also great respect for the members of upper caste among the people though they were under the same mode of production process. There were some near about 4 or 5 aged experienced persons in every caste out of which one was the Mukhia or Choudhury and he used to settle all the disputes related to his own samaj. It is found that here people mainly migrated from U. P (Ajamgarh District), Bihar (Bardhaman and Kissanganj district) and West Bengal (Bakura and Mednipur district) representing different caste and sub-castes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindustani Samaj</th>
<th>Bengali Samaj</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhor</td>
<td>Patra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goala</td>
<td>Maal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabidas</td>
<td>Bhti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verma</td>
<td>Majhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhoby [applicable only]</td>
<td>Chanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallah among the people</td>
<td>Paul</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here it is found that society is divided on the basis of linguistic groups. Here though people from Hindustani Samaj is in majority but they are to some extent following the culture of Bengali community. Similarly, Bengali samaj also adopted some cultural and ritual practices from the Hindustani samaj but at the same time it should be noted that in Silchar and in surrounding villages of Silcoorie, Bengali is the dominating language which influence the garden culture.

**Caste structure – Hindi and Related –**

1. Brahmin – Sharma, Shukla, Tiwari, Pandey
2. Kshatriya / Kayastha – Verma, Singh
3. Vaishya – Goala, Koiri, Bhor, Passi, Kurmi, Dhobi, Gour
4. Sudra – Mallah, Bhumij, Rabidas, Dusad, Nunia, Dom, Rikiason, Razoar

**Bengali and Related** –

1. Paul
2. Maal, Bagti, Bouri
3. Majhi, Patro, Malakar, Chanda, Modak, Dutt Choudhury
4. Das

In the social hierarchy of Silcoorie T.E., there is well consensus about the superior position of the Brahmin and Kshatriya / Kayastha castes in both the societies of Hindustani samaj and Bengali samaj. Here, Vaishya are in majority. It should be mentioned here that people of U.P. and Bihar i.e., Hindi speaking or the dialects related to Hindi formed their own samaj of course in their mental structure and at the same time Bengali samaj also emerged among the Bengalis of West Bengal. Here, language plays a vital role. Since Silcoorie is very near to Silchar town or surrounded by the Bengalis so the Bengali labourers have superiority complex whereas Hindi speaking labourers though have a majority in the garden but behave as a minority in this area which also help them to remain united. In Bengali samaj Patro and Das are in majority. Another point which should be noted that Paul community of the garden who came here as a
trader from East Pakistan (Present Bangladesh). Their culture is somewhat similar to the Bengalis of Cachar. But in the eyes of town people, Bengali tea garden labourers have no status. To them, they are just coolie (derogatory word now govt. replaced it as Labour / Mazdoor). So in social hierarchy differences comes in the third stratum where Goala, Verma, Koiri, Bhor, Passi, form an OBC category and got the rank in the Hindustani samaj whereas in Bengali samaj traders Paul have the same status. Mallah, Bhumij, Dhobi are in the fourth stratum whereas Maal, Bagti, Roy, Bouri having the same position in the Hindustani and Bengali samaj respectively. Majhi, Malakar, Chanda, Das form the lowest stratum of Bengali samaj and Rabidas, Dusad, Dom, Nunia together constitutes the lowest stratum of Hindustani samaj.

Numerically more than 90% people belong to either other backward caste or schedule caste. Goala(Yadav), Verma, (Sonar/Goldsmith), Koiri, Bhor, Pssi, Paul traders, Maal, Bagti, Roy, Bouri belong to other Backward caste while Mallah, Bhumij, Dhobi, Majhi, Malakar, Chand, Rabidas, Dusad, Dom, Das are from schedule caste category. Here it is important to mention that with Hindu families; good numbers of Muslim families are also existing here (migrated from U.P and Bihar).

For any affinal relationship, first issue comes of language. Hindustani Samaj and Bengali Samaj tries to offer relationship within their own Samaj. Then comes the question of social status in this regard they take into consideration – (a) Economic status, (b) Caste status and (c) Gotra status.

Economic status is a new criterion came into existence with the change of time. But caste status and Gotra status are very important. Gotra endogamy is found among various sub – castes like Bhor, Goala, Maal, Koiri where after three generations affinal relationship is not prohibited within the same Gotra. Again there some sub-castes who practice Gotra exogamy strictly. But with the passage of time and with an increase in population size they tried not to make any affinal relationship at least upto three generations of the conjugal kins. Here some adjustmet is made within the caste. For instance, within the Maal community there are seven sub-castes, for example, Devangshi, Rajbangshi, Madrasie etc. So for a Devangshi Maal bride, Devangshi Maal groom the first choice earlier. But due to non-availability of the bride or groom from the same group little adjustment was made and now first choice is that whether both the families are from the same community or not. That is why at present every person writes Maal in the surname without mentioning their sub-castes status what he or she used to use previously his or her middle surname.

Similarly in the of Hindustani society where this type of adjustment is made. First they tried to know the origin from where the family migrated and then on the basis of their caste affinal relationship were taken into considerations. Here at first, they try to know whether there is a similarity within the caste or not. If it is found then they don't consider the Gotra. So, this type of adjustment is emerging in caste structure of this village. Again a new phenomenon of economic status is also coming up. If economic
status is sound then member of new generation do not take other things barrier. Here role of samaj and their decision to make anybody outcaste or include them within caste is very vital. It is found that instances of love marriage are increasing day by day. For any inter caste marriage or which are not recognized by the samaj of that particular caste then caste Panchayat outcaste that new couple for six months and after six months by giving a daot (feast) to the common people this couple can come back again in this caste. Again among the Bagti there are two Gotras – Saal and Kashyap and they are following gotra endogamy in making affinal relationship.

**Class Structure of Silcoorie T.E.** – Class structure of Silcoorie can be analysed with the help of the diagram shown below. Taking the economic position as well as status of occupation in the garden production process this diagram is framed which was prevailed even after the two decades of Independence.

1. Malik
2. Saheeb
3. Babu
4. Sardar
5. Coolie/ Shramik (coolie word is now considered as derogatory word by the govt. and in official documents it has been replaced by Shramik/Labour).

**Malik** – Being the owner of the garden Malik provides the royalties to the govt. and at the same time earns more and more profit. For profit, he employs manager to manage the factory. Thus, Malik’s role is of absentee landlord.

**Saheeb** – Managers are considered as Saheeb in the tea garden. They have the controlling power but not having any ownership right. They are enjoying the maximum powers in the garden. There is head managers, managers, junior managers depending on the right of the garden.

**Babu** – In each garden there are some assistance managers, under manager works in various wings like – factory, field, welfare etc. and under assistance manager Tilababu, Factory babu, Borobabu and other official acts in field factory and offices respectively. According to the labourers all the supervisory staff are Babu whose interest is not in the quality of production. They are more salary oriented.

**Sardar** – Headman of each caste or sub – caste are having the status of sardar who also act as labour contractor. They represent the common tea labourers.
**Shramik** – Common masses in the lowest strata, functioning as the main working force in the tea garden production process with identity of coolie. This term is imposed by the British during the colonial period.

Above mentioned class structure is still existing in the tea gardens and it is only applicable for the tea garden workers.

Silcoorie Tea Estate is mainly inaugurated for tea cultivation in 1840 by the Britishers and named as Silcoorie. Silcoorie Tea Estate comes under Silcoorie Grant. It covers the entire revenue village. Silcoorie Grant has divided into ten parts. It represents two G.P. One is Borakhai (no.108) and another is Silcoorie (no. 109) under Chatla Pargana (part 9 & 10). For this present study researcher has taken main Silcoorie village and its division garden Dharamkhal which comes under Silcoorie Tea Estate. This Silcoorie village is the largest revenue village in Cachar district of Assam State. The tea gardeners of this village got their first voting right in the year 1979. At present Pradeep Chandra Das is the Gaon Panchayat President (BJP Party).

As far as language is concerned, Bengali is dominant language in Cachar as well as in Barak Valley, so medium of study is Bengali. Here it should be noted that in Silcoorie people used to speak in Bengali with the outsiders but within the garden there are two divisions. People who migrated from U.P and Bihar developed their own dialect which is a mixture of Bhojpuri and Meithali and people who migrated from west Bengal used to speak in Bangla dialect which is again different from the Bengali dialect of Barak Valley which is mainly influenced by Sylhetty.

**Physical Structure**-

Distance between the Silcoorie village and the Silchar town is about 15 km. Silchar town being the gateway to the entire southern part of North East India is the hub of commercial activities and is known for its history as the Tea capital of South Assam. Away from the humdrum of the busy town –life of Silchar and set amidst its sylvan surroundings, the people engage themselves in their village life. The sprawling Silcoorie village area is spread over an area of about 383 hectre, Cultivatable area covers 153 heactre, road, river and non- cultivatable area covers 172 hectre (as per settlement office records) on which 15,500 bighas covered as tea garden area approx. 17,000 bighas gone under ceiling area including ‘Shaan Beel’ area. The tea plantation was done mainly on the slope of hilly land. The plain land is inhabited by the tea garden workers. Tea garden labourers and workers mainly live within and around the garden. Majority of the Youth of this village has left the occupation as tea garden labour. Now they are engaged in various types of business activities like tent house, tea stall, sweet shop, milk selling, saloon, grocery shop, pan shop, photo studio and computer printing, C D shop, cycle repairing shop wine shop, carpentairing, tailoring, cloth shop, stationery, fishery etc.,.
Silcoorie G.P. is divided into a number of population clusters namely Silcoorie village, Dharamkhal and Silcoorie camp. Silcoorie village constitute ward no. 9&10, Dharamkhal division garden constitutes ward no. 4, 5, 6, & 7, and Silcoorie camp constitutes ward no. 1, 2, 3, 8. Silcoorie camp is divided into different hill type structures areas locally called ‘tilla’. Silcoorie village is a multi – caste village. Inter caste relations can be seen in terms of the traditional hierarchy, economic interdependence and respective roles of various castes in rituals. As the villagers migrated from different parts of the country their language pattern, life style, ritual behaviours differ from each other in some respect. It is predominantly inhabited by schedule caste people.

The people of this village suffered with various kinds of problems in initials years. But with passage of time their standard of living improved. All the villagers has their own household land property but very few pucca houses (17%) can be seen in this village. Village enriches itself by extending its Urban contacts in the economic, political and ritual spheres of social life. The village has some ‘tillas' with varied density of population such as ‘Peyarie tilla’, ‘Chakma tilla’, and ‘Tanky tilla’ respectively. There are at least twenty tillas, which are called by different names by the local people.

**Village resources**-

Village resources refer to any available developed or underdeveloped materials or energies, both natural and human, or means that are available in the area for use by the people for meeting their needs and needs of the society in which they live. While rural resources have been classified in various ways, the following are sufficiently analytical to serve our purpose here:-

**Natural resources**:-

**Land** - The village Silcoorie is rich in flora and fauna. Among the flora, Coconut, Bettlenut, Mango, Jackfruit, Banana, Cauliflower, Spinach, Cabbage, Beans, Potato, Tomato, Brinjal, Lemon, and Bamboo are worth mentioning. As far as fauna is concerned, it is observed that in wild animals only fox are found in the village mainly domesticated animals found like Cow, Bull, Buffalo, Goat, Hen, Pigeon, Dog, Duck, Pig, and Cat are found in large numbers. The land is very fertile here. The main crops grown in this village are:- Sali, Ranjeet, Ahu, Rabi, Barah, Basful, Burodh, Latma, Suiamara, Aaus, Tarabali, Kalagira and China. Not only crops but vegetables are also grown in large quantities. All the respondents (100%) have their own household land and 66% have cultivated land. Only 10% respondents have agriculture as their main occupation, while 55% respondents practice share cropping, out of this 55% respondents doing share cropping 32% respondents given land to others for practicing share cropping and rest 23% doing share cropping on others cultivated land.
Traditionally, cultivators do not know how to cultivate the land scientifically, they follow the method of tilling the land with a plough and a pair of oxen. But with the exposure to modern media of mass communication like Radio, Television, improved rail road communication in the area, and advancement in production capacity and the helping attitude of the District Town Agricultural Offices, people are now more conscious about their economic condition and some of the traditional cultivators are shifting to some other occupations because of huge loss in cultivation activity. AIR broadcast programme for the cultivators, it is called ' Khete Khamare '. It is very useful for the cultivators as they learn many things about modern methods of cultivation. The farmers used to send their queries to the programme organizers and in the programme one representative from the farmer groups also participate in the programme. It helps them resolving their problems.

The land ownership pattern is ceiling / surplus land system i.e., it is not registered at the time of selling or buying. [Information provided by Gaon Panchayat President Pradeep Chandra Das, BDO- Nikhil Das and Girija Prasad Kumar]

**Water:** Main source of water in the Silcoorie village are well 76% and pond 24% on which villagers depend as a source of drinking water. Though for safe drinking water Rural Public Health Engineering (PHE) has started by the Govt. for supply water connection but supply of water is still unavailable for the villagers because the project is incomplete. However, crisis of water is not found in the village because ponds and well are always full and it solved the problem of drinking water. The village has three big fisheries. Fishery and fish culture also forms a subsidiary occupation here.

**Climate:** The area enjoys a moderate climatic condition followed by heavy rainfall and scorching heat in summer days. The rainy season starts from early month of May and continues up to month of October during which the river Barak and another river Saal Ganga overflows and is often devastated by flood. During the summer it becomes extremely hot and temperature reaches upto 38 degree celcius. The best period is winter which starts from early month of November and continues up to mid month of February. The area experiences heavy rainfall during the monsoon and causing harm to peddy fields.

**Man-Made Resources:** In rural society some resources have been purposefully created to meet specific needs, but are available to serve in various ways –

One of the important dimensions of rural –urban articulations is cultural sphere of life. It may be analysed in terms of religion, education, health and communication.

**Religion:** One of the important religious institutions in the area is Barambaba Temple. It plays a significant role in the religious life of the people of this area and provides an opportunity to extend the relations beyond the boundry of the village. Barambaba’s...
temple is a very old and well-known temple in the region under study. It has a great attraction for outside people. The urban settlers also come with their friends to see such a pleasant place everyday. There is a beautiful lake around the temple, which attracts travelers. It was established by Hindi speaking community of tea garden area who were brought here in later part of 19th century by British tea planters from different parts of India where caste barriers are very strong.

The temple was established at least eighty years ago, when the tea garden started its functioning. The tea garden authorities called a Brahmin from Uttar Pradesh to perform the ritual for the migrated population in the tea garden area. He was a young, literate Vaidic Brahmin and very soon became popular in the tea garden area and attained the status of a saint. The people were used to follow him. In an early age His soul lost His body. The people in the locality started to worship Him after His death. The temple was constructed under a 'Baat Tree' where a 'Asthi' of His body was put by the villagers. In its early stage, it was in a poor condition. But gradually the temple gained popularity and people started to donate money for the construction of the temple. A huge amount of money was donated by the business class for the construction of the temple. The local politicians of the area also contributed in order to gain popularity among the people of the tea garden area. Now a temple complex has emerged at this place with an estimated expenditure of Rs. 8,00,000 with all kinds of facilities. The Head Priest of the temple is permanent. He appoints some junior priests who perform the routine activities in the temple. Their salary is paid by the head priest. The head priest belong to Ghazipur district off UP but he is permanently settled down here. The junior priests are also drawn from his native place. The temple is now standing in a very well constructed posture. The tea garden authorities and other local leaders not only donated money in establishment of this religious complex but also help in various ways for the maintenance of the temple. This is also a fact that after the establishment of Assam University, Silchar the number of urban visitors to the temple has increased in a significant manner as the students, teachers and non-teaching staff of the Assam University, Silchar pass the temple complex daily while going to the university. The students like to spend some of their time in the temple area. The buses also stop for a while in front of the temple and passengers show respect in a symbolic manner while remain sitting in the bus and donate some amount of money to the assistant priests of the temple who in turns offer them 'Prasad' through windows. The temple is a major place of worship and a centre of the religious activities in the area. It plays a significant role in the religious life of the villagers. It organizes discourses and collective social and religious functions and serves people in performing major rituals of life cycle like Marriage, Annaprashan (first food of child) ceremony, Upnayan ceremony (holding of sacred thread by Brahmins etc.). The temple celebrates at various occasions Yagya, Hom for the welfare of the society. People from outside visit the temple to fulfill their desire (manna) by performing puja and tie a thread in the 'Baat Tree' in front of the
temple. The priest plays an important role in the celebration of the festivals like Sivaratri, Hanuman Jayanti, Barambaba Mela and Bhabani puja. The head priest of the temple stays at Borjalanga in a house with all modern facilities like, electricity, telephone and other modern equipments and also maintains a car. This priestly group exercise a powerful influence over the religious life of the rural people.

Occasions like Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated in a big way. At this occasion, whole non- Bengali community of Silcoorie and Silchar town area intermingled. The religious processions start from various points in Silchar early in the morning. In every procession the role of Ram, Lakshman, Sita and Hanuman are played by the children. They move in the procession in the streets of the town on trucks, cars, vans and the pedestrians and all they finally arrive at the Silcoorie temple. It is an occasion when rural – urban articulation take place. The temple also plays an important role in the economic life of the village. The temple is at the midway point between Silchar town and Dargakona (where the Assam University is located). Buses, trucks, cars, etc., passes the temple every day. The mela which is organized every year is the only occasion when the people of both the rural and urban areas assemble at this place. Barambaba mela is a famous fair in Barak Valley. Mela organized every year in Rash Purnima Tithi. In this fair people from outside the district also come. The mela starts with the inaugural function distinguished guests usually a minister cut the ribbon and delivers lectures at this occasion. It is followed by the lectures of other distinguished personalities of the area present there. The shops come from different town with products of Ludhiana, U.P. Delhi, etc. In mela market shopkeepers come from different places like Hailakandi, Haflong, Tripura, Siliguri, Guwahati and from the nearby towns of the region. The interaction between the villagers and the people coming from other states can also be seen. The shops have a variety of items, utensils, clothes, garments, shoes, jewellery shop, different delicious food (rice, chat, sweets, chowmin, etc.). The local people make themselves familiar with these food items during the mela. They also prefer to buy different ornaments which are used by urban people. Females have the great opportunity to buy latest dresses, ornaments b, cosmetics. Etc. People also come from outside to see the fair. Some of them are invited by the local people at these occasions. The invited people are treated as athithi (guest). There is an ‘athithisala’ (guest house) near the temple.

As it is the only road to reach the Assam university and Dwarbandh commuters and others passengers face problems on such occasion. University teachers and students have to go on foot through the mela area. The rural people also observe the behavior of the students, their language and their dress patterns at this occasion. The temple has extended the facility of a tin shed so that people coming from outside may stay there on auspicious days. Homs and Yagyas are also performed in the temple for welfare of the society on a special day (on Purnima) during the mela every year. Siva
Ratri, Hanuman Jayanti, Barambaba mela and Bhabani puja are celebrated in a very colorful way in the temple complex. Sanyasis (saints) from different places also used to visit the temple from time to time. Members of all castes generally worships at Brambaba temple complex in Lord Shiva, Parvati, Lakshmi Narayan and Hanuman temples. In recent times, the members of the depressed classes like SC community also offer prayers to deities inside the temple. In the temple, a variety of sacred acts can be observed ranging from the sprinkling of some drop of water, scattering of leaves or grains in front of various deities. To the offering of animals (as sacrifice of animals like pigeon, goat etc.is not permitted in the temple), some of the people mainly from Bengali community who had a tradition of animal sacrifice bring such animals to the temple and after puja leave it free near the temple in the name of God.

The temple has been a place of attraction for the leaders of various political parties in order to attract the people of tea garden to their side. A number of political leaders like Indira Gandhi, Lokenath Mishra, Gopinath Bardoloi, Pranob Mukherjee, Mahendra Mohan Choudhury visited the temple at the time of their visit to this area and offered prayer in the temple complex. Here Vishwa Shanti mela Yagya was performed by the Acharya Bamadeb Mishra (HOD, Sanskrit and Veda, Kashi Vidya Pith, Vr Hans). Other worship starting from 1942 (Satachaandi Maha Yagya in 1961 and 1962, Vishnu Yagya in 1995 etc) are the occasions which are still in the memory of local people of Silcoorie.

The forces of modernization and advancements in communication and transportation have given the fair a new looked and its popularity has also been increased over past years. The mela, traditional institutions has not only religious significance for the people of this area but also adds the elements of modern culture by introducing new items of households consumption to the villagers. The temple authorities raise Rs. 40 from each shop from the mela ground. The outsiders also donate large amount of money on this occasion. Local political leaders plays an important role in managing the activities of mela, and thus create an impression upon the local people. The outsiders people who stay at this place create new job opportunities for the rural people. People in this area get jobs for three days as shops assistants. They are also exposed to different types of occupations at this occasion and are inspired to engage in such occupations. Although the temple is owned by non-Bengali, non-Bengali and even Muslims also participate in the activities of mela with equal enthusiasm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Festivals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baisak (April-May)</td>
<td>Akshaya Tritiya / Bengali New Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asharh (June-July)</td>
<td>Rath Yatra</td>
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Sravan (July-August) ............. Naag Panchami / Mansa puja, Jhula Yatra
Vadra (Aug-Sept.) ............... Vishwakarma puja
Aasin (Sept.-Oct.) ............... Durga puja, Vijaya Dashmi, Lakshmi puja
Kartik (Oct.-Nov.) ............... Kali puja / Depawali, Bhaiatri Dwitya
Agrahan (Nov.-Dec.) ............. Chhat puja, Jagadhatri puja
Paush (Dec.-Jan) ................. Paus Sankranti
Magh (Jan-Feb.) ................. Saraswati puja
Falgun (Feb.-Mar.) .............. Shiv Ratri, Holi / Dol Jatra
Chaitra (Mar.-April) ............ Charak puja / Chaitra Sankranti.

Being a Hindu dominated village with a few Muslim households, it is observed that almost all Hindu deities are worshipped here. There are three temples in the village, one temple of Goddess Kali, one Shitala Mata temple and one temple of Lord Shiva still stand and speaks the ritual performance of the villagers. Durga puja is major religious activity. The puja held with the help of Bagaan Panchayat. During puja, Ramleela and other plays organized in the community hall (Naach ghar) by the puja committee and the Youth took part in the plays in numbers. It not only promoted traditional folk culture but also encourage the Youth talent. But now-a-days Youth keenly interested in video culture i.e. they organize video shows during Durga puja.

Transport and Communication facilities: - The village is well connected by road. Sumo and Auto – Rickshaw plying from Silchar town. Two busses of Assam State Transport Corporation also plying from Silchar to Hailakandi. The study reveals that majority travel by Sumo (90%), 45% has personal vehicle (Bike / Scooter / Bicycle), and only 3% hire vehicles. In certain cases there is some local auto-rickshaw which can be hired from the Silcoorie stand to reach other division garden of the village.

Market: - The market only meet the daily needs of the people which has a few (50) shops. The weekly market held on Friday and Sunday. Another weekly market is held in a neighbouring division garden, on Tuesday and Saturday (named as Fakirtilla Bazar). Besides, daily needs product, agricultural products also found, not only that in this weekly market the trading of domestic animals also takes place and people from different nearby place also participates in trading activities.

One CO-Operative Society was also established in 1980 by Silcoorie G.P. located near R.E.C. It is managed by a managing committee whose office bearers are
elected by its members. People buy commodities like Rice, Sugar, Kerosene at reasonable price.

In Silcoorie village and Dharamkhal division village has a Fair price shop whose dealership is given by Food and Civil Supply Department, Silchar. They are given essential commodities at a controlled rate fixed by Government. The officers of the Food and Civil Supply Department visit and inspect the shop periodically.

**Health, Welfare and Sanitation:** - Traditionally the villagers were used to take care of their health through the indigenous systems of medicine – Homeopathy and Ayurvedic. But recently some Registered Medical Practitioners (RMP) have started their practice in the village. There is one medical health centre in the village but not in use. Not only that there is one Primary health sub-centre in the village where only one person serves. It mainly serves the children community of the village. Not only that Ramkrishna Mission Seva Samiti also provide medical treatment facility to the villagers through a mobile medical unit. The State Govt. has opened a health sub-centre in 1987 for family planning by deputing two nurses visiting the village twice a week for routine checkup of cases of maternity and child care from the district town. It created the scope of opening some pharmacies in the village which provide a vital link between the villagers and personnel of modern system of medicine. Medical representatives visit these pharmacies regularly from town. The nurses of health sub-centre visits the village regularly but the doctor is seen very rarely in the centre. Three homeopathy and one Allopathy doctors chamber are there in the village. The study reveals that 60% respondents prefer Homeopathy treatment, 35% prefer Allopathy + Homeopathy treatment and other 5% prefer Ayurvedic + Allopathy treatment. More than half of the population visits to Local doctors chamber for treatment (66%). In the locality now a sort of competition among the homeopathic and allopathy self proclaimed medical practitioners can be seen. In addition, the Dr. of the Ramkrishna Seva Unit enables the people to keep contacts with the professionals both at the district and the State levels under certain circumstances. The local homeopathy doctor T. Das has been awarded by the district authorities as one of the best practitioners of the area with a silver medal and a certificate. He used to visit various places of India and tries to collect the best medicines from various homeopathy stores of the country. The Silchar medical college and hospital is about 10 km. away from the village. The local residents prefer to go for their checkup in SMC. The wealthy people of this village, however prefer to go in the private nursing homes( 4%) . The Aaganwadi workers distribute bread, chana (gram) in their centre. At present two female aaganwadi workers are performing this task. Both are paid a stipend per month for this job. The facility for medical care to the animals is extended through Bistita Gaon Unnayan Parikalpana by the Assam Govt. The veterinary personnel visit their centre regularly. A Doctor and a Veterinary assistant is
there to look after the centre. The doctors come from the district town twice a week. The local people visit the centre with their pet animals suffering from various diseases.

There are three clubs in the village. Dharamkhal Nehru Memorial Club (1985), Silcoorie Light Boys Club, Silcoorie Alert Social Development Club and Dharamkhal Satsanagh Club (1999). These clubs yearly organizes sports and different social activities. It also organizes Pulse Polio immunization programme. Not only that it organizes Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja and Chhat Puja every year. The Baagan Panchayat (Tea garden Panchayat) helped the clubs in organizing social activities but the sponsored of these activities are the village people. Every month the village people organizes Lokgeet, Bhajaan and Kirtan. Here, one interesting fact arises from the survey that cent-percent (100%) Youth visited the local yearly Barambaba mela not only for entertainment but for ritual practices also. This indicates that Youth are still respect their culture and ritual performances. The villagers are not very conscious about sanitation. Very few households in the village has sanitary latrines in the premises of the households. However, due to financial crunch not all households are able to build up sanitary latrines and use Kuccha latrine. Still in the village some villagers are used to go in the open field to deficate. Also the drainage system of the village is not well maintained by the villagers for themselves and hygiene. For cremation one particular place is there near the bank of the river.

Educational facilities: - Silcoorie is not cent-percent literate village but now the Youth understand the importance of education and they try to be educated. There are six educational institutions in the village. Among Four Lower Primary school (1 venture), one Middle English School and one is venture High School providing education to the future generation. In Dharamkhal 66 no. L.P.school two male teachers and in Dharamkhal Har- Gouri L.P.school there are one female and one male teacher prosecuting the study, they are coming from Silchar town. In Durgabari L.P. school has two female and one male teacher with about 50 students in every class, while 914 no. Silcoorie L.P. school has three teachers. One female and one male teacher commute from Silchar while one female teacher comes from Chota Jalanga. In M.E. School i.e. Lakshmi Narayan M.E. school has nine male and two female teachers are local. One female science teacher commutes from Silchar. The strength of the students in a class is between 40-50. As there is no school after seventh standard here the students go outside for further education. They have two options for further studies either to join Borakhai high school or Irongmara high school; both are located within the radius of 5 km. The school is managed by a school committee consists of a President, a secretary, one teacher’s representative and two guardian representatives and an ex-officio member. The M.E. school building is also used for conducting meetings and cultural programmes etc. by the villagers during holidays. In M.E. school there are four graduate teachers and five non-graduate teachers. All other teachers are matric and higher
secondary pass. In the village, four students have passed out graduate level examination and 30 have passed out high school and HSLC exam. In the lower primary school building one music school has also been opened very recently. The music classes held on every Sunday. A music teacher used to come from the district town to take classes particularly for classical music. The music school is affiliated with the Bhatkhande University, Lucknow for graduate level course in classical music and with the Bangiya Parisad University of Calcutta for other graduate and upper graduate level courses. The Rajib Gandhi Open Institute has opened up a study centre under CAPART scheme mainly for the children of fisherman community. In the local school, the majority of the students belong to the S C community. But at the level of 7 & 10 standard the drop out children number is highest among the S C because of the poor economic condition of their parents. But those who have good economic condition usually go to Aairangmara, Jalanga or near R E C campus high school or in Silchar town for further study particularly for the secondary level of education. For college level of education they have to go to nearest township of Silchar. The students who are continuing their studies after seven standard commutes to these places and have daily contact with the urban people. After the setting up of AUS in in this area people's interest towards higher education is enhanced significantly. The situation in this area is now changing as people have vast urban contacts with modernizing agencies such as Banks, school health centre, pharmacies, etc. The members of higher caste however send their children to the district town for further education. The school observes the occasions like the birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore, Republic Day, Independence Day, Saradiya Utsav, Saraswati Puja. The school also organizes cultural programmes and competitions for the children.