Chapter 4
FIELD OF THE STUDY

This chapter attempts to discuss the general attributes of the field of the study. It analyses the attributes of social life in two villages; namely, Baghedhara and Namtemera under Gamariguri Development Block and Golaghat West Development Block respectively, and the Golaghat town in Golaghat district of Assam. Baghedhara is surrounded by non-tribal villages whereas Namtemera is situated amidst the Mishing villages. Golaghat town is having a number of Mishing families. Before taking up an analysis of the attributes of the Baghedhara and Namtemera villages and the Golaghat town, a brief account of historical, demographic and social aspects of Golaghat district is given for understanding of the social setting of the field.

I. THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL SETTING

Assam is a northeastern state of India with its capital at Dispur in the city of Guwahati. Located south of the eastern Himalayas, Assam comprises the Brahmaputra and Barak river valleys along with the Karbi Anglong Hills and the North Cachar Hills with an area of 78,438 sq. km. It is surrounded by six out of the region's eight states; namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya of the northeastern part of India, "the Unexplored Paradise", connected to the rest of India via a narrow strip in West Bengal called the Siliguri Corridor or Chicken's Neck. Assam also shares international borders with Bhutan and Bangladesh as well as shares cultures, peoples and climate with South-East Asia which is currently important element in India's Look East Policy. It became a part of the British India, following the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-1826 and occupation of the region by the British. Assam is known for Tea, large and old petroleum resources, silk and for its rich biodiversity. Assam has successfully conserved the one-horned Indian rhinoceros from near extinction, along with the tiger and numerous species of birds, and it provides one of the last wild habitats for the Asian elephant. It is becoming an increasingly popular destination for wildlife tourism. Kaziranga and Manas are both World heritage sites.

Assam is also known for its Sal tree forest and forest products, much depleted now. A land of high rainfall, Assam is endowed with lush greenery and the mighty river Brahmaputra, whose tributaries and oxbow lakes provide the region with a unique hydro-geomorphic and aesthetic environment. Amidst twenty seven administrative districts, in all, Golaghat district is located in the central part of the state. Carved out of Sivasagar district in 1987, it occupies an area of 3502 sq. km, 100 m above sea level, along with its administrative headquarters in Golaghat town.

Golaghat district, the land of the Doyang-Dhansiri rivers, was part of the ancient kingdom of the Kamarupa and, then, of the Kachari and the Ahom kingdom. From the ancient time the land has been well-known as a great centre of political activities and a great repository of artifacts of ancient culture and glory as evident from the extensive ruins of ancient buildings, temples, walls, ramparts, tanks, stone images scattered in different parts of the Doyang-Dhansiri valley. Prior to the rule of the Ahoms in the sixteenth century the valley was ruled by the Kacharies who called it Heramba and thereby the Kacharies living in this region came to be known as Herambial Kachari. The society that emerged in the region was cosmopolitan, broadly divided into the Aryan and the non-Aryan population. However, the non-Aryan elements, particularly the Mongoloid, predominated. Therefore, caste system could not effect a rigid horizontal division of the society as it did in other parts of India. During the Ahom rule the valley also emerged as an important centre of various economic activities, achieving self-sufficiency in various fields as well as fame for producing best varieties of rice. In the cultural realm, it is conjectured from numerous stone images, idols, temples, scattered in its different parts, that in ancient and medieval periods there was prevalent the worship of Vishnu or Vasudeva along with Siva-Sakti cults and animistic beliefs in the land. The significant feature of the land of Dayang-Dhansiri is that it became the meeting place of cultures of the plains and the hills. In 1826 A.D. the Britishers took possession of Assam by defeating the Burmese invaders and in 1838, the British East India Company divided the (Upper Assam) area into two districts; namely, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur and a proposal for the formation of two sub-divisions of Sibsagar district; viz.. Joypur and Golaghat was first considered. Hunter (1979) wrote that Golaghat sub-division came

into being in 1846 A. D. and on 23rd October 1987, Golaghat was elevated to the status of a district of Assam.

Today, its boundary extends up to the river Kakodonga or Dilsiri in the east and the Brahmaputra in the north, the districts of Sonitpur and North Lakhimpur are situated in the north and the district of Jorhat is in the east. Its plains are extended upto the Naga Hills in the south. The Karbi Anglong district (the Mikir Hills) and Nagaland state share its western boundary (Phukan 2000).

The district, situated almost in the middle of the state of Assam, is surrounded by the beautiful hills of Karbi-Anglong in the West and Naga Hills in the South. The mighty Brahmaputra flowing from the East to the West demarcates its northern boundary. The land is undulating with small hills, hillocks and river basins. It is within the temperate region and having a suitable climatic condition with monsoon type climate prevailing throughout the year. The total area of the district is 3502 sq. km. (Census 2011) and divided into 8 categories; namely, forests (156905 hectares), land put to non-agricultural uses (42756 hectares), barren and uncultivable land (8476 hectares), permanent pasture and grazing land (8314 hectares), land under miscellaneous trees graves not included in net area sown (8217 hectares), cultivable waste (5801 hectares), other fallows (2254 hectares) and current fallows (2301 hectares). Evidently, a small fraction of the land comprises net area sown (Source: Statistical Hand Book Assam 2011).

The district has the total population of 1058674, out of which 960892 (90.76%) are rural and 97782 (9.24%) are urban (Census 2011). The sex ratio is 961 females per thousand males as against 954 females of Assam in 2011. And the density of population per sq. km. is 302, as against 397 in Assam, leading to the decadal percentage variation of 16.93%. The male population is 539949 (51%) and the female population is 518725 (49%). The Scheduled Tribe population is 93920 (9.93%), comprising 48356 (51.49%) males and 45564 (48.51%) females. Out of the total Scheduled Tribes population 2.69% are urban persons and 97.31% are rural persons (Census 2001: Statistical Hand Book, Golaghat 2003).

In 2011 the district had 1093 primary schools, 464 middle schools, 274 high schools and 23 H.S. schools. The district is having 12 provincialised colleges and 4 junior colleges. The only police training college of Assam is located at Dergaon. There is a Homeopathic School at Chinatoli and a Junior Technical School at Pulibor. The total number of literate persons in the district of Golaghat is 728513 (78.31%) as against 72.19% of Assam in 2011. Out of this, 399525 are literate males (54.84%) and 328988 are literate females (45.16%) as against 77.85% and 63.00% for males and females in Assam respectively (Statistical Hand Book Assam 2011).

The people mainly belong to three religions; namely, Hinduism (76.82%), Islam (7.07%), Christianity (4.94%) and three minor religions – Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism (Census 2011). Ethnically, the population can be divided into four categories; viz., (i) indigenous, (ii) plain tribes, (iii) tea and ex-tea garden labourers and (iv) others. The indigenous population comprises Brahmins, Kalitas, Kayasthas, Banias, Barias, Ahoms, Chutias, Daivaijnas, Koches, Keots, Kaibartas, Kumars, Katonis, Muslims, Naths, Suts, Swarnakaras etc. The plain tribal population consists of the Deoris, Kacharis, Miris (Mishings), Nagas, Shyams, Sonowals etc. The tea garden and ex-tea garden population comprises the Bhumijs, Garhs, Kurmis, Lahars, Mundas, Oriyas, Robidases, Santals, Telengas etc. The other people comprise the Bengalis, Marwaris, Nepalis, Punjabis, Sikhs etc. All the communities are distributed over the entire district. But the tribal people, i.e., the Miris (Mishings), the Deoris and the Kaibartas live in the river sides and rural areas, while the Muslims prefer road sides (Sharma 2007). The major tribes in the district are Mishing, Kachari, Thengal Kachari and Sonowal Kachari. However, the Mishing is the largest tribe from the viewpoint of population. In the district the people of Mishing tribe are found settled in 57 villages out of a total of 1125 villages (Sharma 2007).

The district consists of three sub-divisions; viz., Golaghat, Bokakhat and Dhansiri and eight development blocks; viz., Golaghat East Development Block, Padumoni; Golaghat West Development Block, Bokakhat, Golaghat South Development Block, Sarupathar, Golaghat North Development Block, Dergaon, Golaghat Central Development Block, Kothalguri, Morongi Development Block, Morongi, Kakodonga

Development Block, Sitalpathar and Gomariguri Development Block, Gomariguri. The Golaghat sub-division occupied the largest territorial areas of the erstwhile Sibsagar district. Until a few decades ago Wokha and Merapani areas of the present-day Nagaland and a substantial portion of the Karbi Anglong district including a portion of the Nagaland district were within the sub-division of Golaghat (Sharma 2005). Dimapur, an important historical place of yesteryears and a premier commercial centre of Nagaland, today, was also a part of the Golaghat sub-division at that time.

The Golaghat district has only five recognized towns at present; viz., Golaghat, Dergaon, Bokakhat, Sarupathar and Barpathar. But with the industrialization of the Numaligarh area, particularly after the establishment of the Numaligarh Oil Refinery (NRL), a small industrial township is fast growing here. Also, the places like Merapani on the border with Nagaland and Badulipara by the side of the National Highway No.37 are rapidly urbanized with the development of trade and commerce. Notably, the only major industry (other than the refinery) of the district is the tea industry. There are more than a hundred tea gardens within the territorial limits of the district. One fifth of the total population of the district lives in these tea gardens, earning their livelihood (Sharma 2007).

Golaghat town is the main town of the district. The town has a population of 34374 comprising 53% male and 47% female. It has an average literacy rate of 82%, higher than the national average of 74.04%, male literacy is 84%, and female literacy is 79%. In Golaghat, 11% of the population is under 6 years of age (Census 2011).

II. THE LOCATIONAL SETTING

Generally, the Mishing villages are set up on the bank of a river. No Mishing village is therefore seen far away from any river and because of this the Mishings have to face the furies of the river every year. Besides, they have to lead a nomadic life. However, the village Baghedhara is not situated on the bank of any river. It is situated at a distance of about 20 kilometers from Golaghat town and surrounded by non-tribal villages; namely, Jyotipur, Nabajyoti and the Bijoypur villages on the West and the South. It is extended up to Adarshagaon (A) on the East and Adarshagaon (B) on the North (according to the statement of the Secretary, Adarsha Gamariguri Gaon

Panchayat). On the other hand, the village Nam Temera is situated on the bank of two rivers; namely, Disoi River on the North and Gelabil River on the South. Thus, the locations of two villages differ from each other.

Baghedhara comes under the Adarsha Gamariguri Gaon Panchayat under the Gamariguri Development Block. The village is situated at a distance of about 20 kilometers from Golaghat headquarters town. The Golaghat-Merapani Road connects this village with Golaghat town. The motorable surface road connects it with other villages. It is situated on both sides of the Baghedhara Ali which starts from the Meradolong Bridge (on the Golaghat-Merapani Road). It is surrounded by Jyotipur village and Golaghat-Merapani Road on the West and Nabajyoti and the Bijoypur villages on the South. Its boundary is extended up to Adarshagaon (A) on the East and Adarshagaon (B) on the North. Generally, the Mishing villages are situated on the bank of a river. But the village Baghedhara is not settled on the bank of any river.

The total geographical area of the village is 1246 bighas (Secretary, Adarsha Gamariguri Gaon Panchayat). It has 79 households with a population of 545 persons. Males are 276 (50.64%) and female are 269 (49.36%). The sex ratio is 975 in the village as against 954 in Assam and 961 in Golaghat District (Census 2011).

The village Namtemera comes under the Duhutimukh Gaon Panchayat and the Golaghat West Development Block, Bokakhat. The village is 35 kilometers from Golaghat town, connected with it by three road routes; namely, NH No. 39 via Numaligarh, NH No. 37 via Dergaon and the historic road called Dhoodar Ali. Of course, the villagers mostly used the Dhoodar Ali to visit Golaghat town. The village is connected with National Highway by a small surface road via Mohuramukh Chari Ali. It is situated on both sides of the surface road which starts from the Gelabil Bridge. The total geographical area of the village is 2500 bighas and is surrounded by Morongial village on the East, Mohuramukh village on the West, Disoi River on the North and Gelabil River on the South. So, the village is surrounded by two rivers from two directions. Besides, the surrounding villages are of the Mishing tribe only.

There are 151 households in the village and the total population is 1094. Among these 593 (54.20%) are male and 501 (45.80%) are female. The sex ratio is 845 in the village as against 954 in Assam, 961 in Golaghat district (Census 2011).

Golaghat town, the headquarters of Golaghat district, is situated 300 kilometers east of Guwahati. The name Golaghat which comes from *Gola*, which means shop, and *Ghat*, meaning the **landing point of river ferry**, originated from the shops established by the Marwari businessmen in the mid part of 20th century AD on the bank of river Dhansiri, near the present-day Golaghat town.

The town has a population of 34374, comprising 53% males and 47% females. It has an average literacy rate of 84%, higher than the national average of 74.04%, male literacy is 84%, and female literacy is 79%. In Golaghat, 11% of the population is under 6 years of age (Census 2011).

The Mishing is the only tribal group found in Baghedhara whereas a small fraction of the total population of Namtemera is also from other tribal groups; namely, Bodo, Kachari, Thengal Kachari and Sonowal Kachari. However, the Mishing is the largest tribal group in the population of the village. On the other hand, the major tribes living in Golaghat town are: Mishing, Kachari, Thengal Kachari and Sonowal Kachari, Deori, Karbi and Lalung, though the Mishing is the largest among them from the view point of population. There are 393 Mishing people living in the Golaghat town of which 219 are males and 174 are females and the sex ratio is 795.

III. STRUCTURAL ASPECTS

Population

The study covers 286 households of the two selected villages, i.e. Namtemera and Baghedhara and the Mishing households found in the Golaghat town. Out of the total households the Namtemera village has 151 households with a population of 1094 persons. The number of male is 593 and female is 501. Similarly, the village Baghedhara has 79 households with a population of 545 persons out of which 276 are males and 269 are females. On the other hand, in the Golaghat town there are 56 Mishing households with a population of 393 persons, out of which 219 are males and 174 are females. The sex ratios are 845, 975 and 795 respectively for Namtemera, Baghedhara and Golaghat

town as against 961 for Golaghat district and 954 for Assam (Census 2011). It is shown in the following table.

Table 4.1
Total Population of Namtemera, Baghedhara & Golaghat Town by Gender
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Gender	No. of Persons			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
Male	593 (54.20)	276 (50.64)	219 (55.73)	1088 (53.54)
Female	501 (45.80)	269 (49.36)	174 (45.27)	944 (46.46)
Total	1094 (100)	545 (100)	393 (100)	2032 (100)
Sex Ratio	845	975	795	868

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table shows that there are 2032 persons in the two villages and Golaghat town out of which 53.54% are males and 46.46% are females. In case of Namtemera village, out of the total population 54.20% are males and 45.80% are females. In Baghedhara out of the total population 50.64% are males and 49.36% are females. In Golaghat town of the total Mishing population, 55.73% are male and 45.27% are female.

Thus, there is a vast gap in sex ratio as the number of females against per thousand males is 868 in general. The ratio of the Mishing is lower in Namtemera i.e. 845 and much lower in the town, i.e. 715. But the sex ratio is comparatively better in Baghedhara, i.e. 975 females per thousand males. This is because of patriarchal nature of the Mishing society where male members are given much importance.

In the following table an attempt has been made to show the population of the two villages and Golaghat town by their age groups:

Table 4.2
Population of Namtemera, Baghedhara & Golaghat Town by Age
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Age group	No. of Persons									Grand Total		
	Namtemera			Baghedhara			Golaghat town					
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Neonatal (0-30 days)	7 (1.80)	10 (2.00)	17 (1.55)	9 (3.26)	4 (1.49)	13 (2.39)	7 (3.20)	3 (1.72)	10 (2.54)	23 (2.11)	17 (1.80)	40 (1.97)
Infant (0-12 months)	18 (3.04)	15 (3.00)	33 (3.02)	13 (4.71)	7 (2.60)	20 (3.67)	11 (5.02)	6 (3.45)	17 (4.33)	42 (3.86)	28 (2.97)	70 (3.44)
Toddler (1-3 years)	32 (5.40)	39 (7.78)	71 (6.49)	15 (5.43)	12 (4.46)	27 (4.95)	8 (3.65)	10 (5.75)	18 (4.58)	55 (5.06)	61 (6.46)	116 (5.71)
Child and Teen Age (4-12 years)	53 (8.94)	32 (6.39)	85 (7.77)	14 (5.07)	17 (6.32)	31 (5.69)	11 (5.02)	11 (6.32)	22 (5.60)	78 (7.17)	60 (6.36)	138 (6.79)
Adolescent (13-19 years)	99 (16.70)	83 (16.57)	182 (16.64)	36 (13.04)	62 (23.05)	98 (17.98)	39 (17.81)	27 (15.52)	66 (16.79)	174 (15.99)	172 (18.22)	346 (17.03)
Young adulthood (20-39 years)	204 (34.40)	177 (35.33)	381 (34.83)	104 (37.68)	89 (33.09)	193 (35.41)	51 (23.29)	39 (22.41)	90 (22.90)	359 (33.00)	305 (32.31)	664 (32.68)
Middle adulthood (40-59 years)	140 (23.61)	110 (21.96)	250 (22.85)	64 (23.19)	63 (23.42)	127 (23.30)	77 (35.16)	67 (38.51)	144 (36.64)	281 (25.83)	240 (25.42)	521 (25.64)
Advanced adulthood (60 + years)	40 (6.75)	35 (6.99)	75 (6.86)	21 (7.61)	15 (5.58)	36 (6.61)	15 (6.85)	11 (6.32)	26 (6.62)	76 (6.99)	61 (6.46)	137 (6.74)
Total	593 (100)	501 (100)	1094 (100)	276 (100)	269 (100)	545 (100)	219 (100)	174 (100)	393 (100)	1088 (100)	944 (100)	2032 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table shows that out of the total population (2032) in the field of study 32.68% are of the age group of 20-39 years, followed by the age group of 40-59 years (25.64%). Of the total males 33% are in the age group of 20-39 years and 25.83% in the age group of 40-59 years. Similarly, of the total females 32.31% are in the age group of 20-39 years and 25.42% in the age group of 40-59 years.

Thus, it reveals that the number of dependents (persons below 15 years or above 60 years) or economically active persons (of 15 to 59 years age) is very low in general.

In the village Namtemera out of the total males 34.40% are in the age group of 20-39 years and 23.61% in the age group of 40-59 years. Similarly, of the total females 35.33% females are in the age group of 20-39 years and 21.96% females are in the age group of 40-59 years.

In case of Baghedhara, of the total males 37.68% belong to the age group of 20-39 years and 23.19% belong to 40-59 years. Of the total females of this village 33.09% fall in the age group of 20-39 years and 23.42% in the age group of 40-59 years.

The picture is same in case of Golaghat town where out of the total Mishing males 23.29% are in the age group of 20-39 years and 35.16% in the age group of 40-59 years. In case of females of the town 22.41% of the total females are in the age group of 20-39 years and 38.51% in the age group of 40-59 years. Thus, it indicates the strong workforce of the both the genders in the three places.

Health

Baghedhara avails medical and health care from the Merapani Community Health Centre under Kamarbandha Ali Block PHC, 9 km. from the village. The Baghedhara Gaon Sub-Centre, located in the village, is not fully equipped. So, for the treatment of all kinds of diseases the villagers have to go either to the Merapani CHC or to District Hospital, Golaghat. Of course, majority of households go to the District Hospital for the treatment of diseases because of more facilities available there. Besides, some medical specialists are also available from whom the villagers avail better treatment.

On the other hand, Namtemera avails the facility from the Mohuramukh MPHC under Bokakhat PHC. It is 2 km. from it. There is the Namtemera Sub-Centre, which is also not fully equipped. So, the villagers go for treatment either to the Mohuramukh MPHC or to Bokakhat CHC. Of course, majority of the villagers of Baghedhara go to the District Hospital for treatment of diseases.

The Golaghat town has the largest number of health care institutions in the district. These institutions comprise a district hospital and four private nursing homes, situated in the heart of the town.

Economy

Agriculture is the main source of economy of the Mishing community. It still plays a dominant role in the village economy of the Mishings. But agricultural development is very slow. It accounts for a small income of the Mishing people. Uneconomic holding, extreme dependence on agriculture due to lack of other employable oppourtunities, underemployment due to low educational qualification, chronic indebtedness and presence of a small secondary sector creates poverty amongst the Mishing.

The Mishings in both the villages practise settled cultivation. Ahu cultivation occupies an important place among them. They also cultivate mustard seeds, potatoes, pulses, bananas etc. Now-a-days, *Sali* paddy cultivation has also become popular among the Mishing. The contribution of women towards the economy is of great importance. They weave, spin, rear worms for thread and thus fulfill the clothing needs of the members of their families. Their great source of income is piggery and poultry farming. In fact, the Mishing women contribute a lot towards the betterment of their families and the society.

Agriculture

Agriculture still plays the dominant role in the village economy of the Mishings. But agricultural development is very slow. Recurring floods, absence of facilities for winter cultivation and small land holding are all important factors for slow development of agriculture. Again, the operational holding in areas with high tribal population is very small. It accounts for the very low level of income of the tribal people. Uneconomic holding, extreme dependence on agriculture due to lack of other employable oppourtunities, underemployment due to low educational qualification, chronic indebtedness and presence of a small secondary sector creates poverty amongst the Mishing.

The Mishings are habituated in settled cultivation. *Ahu* cultivation occupies an important place among the Mishings. Ahu is widely grown by the Mishings. The Mishings also cultivate mustard seeds, potatoes, pulses, bananas, etc. Now-a-days, *Sali* paddy cultivation has also become popular among the Mishings.

However, the following table shows the method of cultivation used by the Mishings of the two villages, i.e., Namtemera and Baghedhara, and Golaghat town:

Table 4.3
Method of Cultivation
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Kind of Power Used in Agriculture	No. of Households			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
Animal	65 (43.05)	30 (37.97)	2 (6.45)	97 (37.16)
Power tiller	17 (11.26)	6 (7.60)	24 (77.42)	47 (18.01)
Animal as well as power tiller	69 (45.69)	43 (54.43)	5 (16.13)	117 (44.83)
Total	151 (100)	79 (100)	31 (100)	261 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The above table shows that out of the total households (261) which have the agricultural fields 97 (37.16%) use animal power to cultivate their paddy fields, where as only 47 (18.01%) use power tiller. On the other hand, 117 (44.83%) households use both, i.e., animal power and power tiller to cultivate their paddy fields. In Namtemera village all the households have paddy fields and of its total households 43.05% use animal power, 11.26% use power tiller and 45.69% use both the methods for cultivation. Similarly, of the total households of Baghedhara 37.97% use animal power, 7.60% use power tiller and 54.43% households use both of these methods. On the other hand, out of the total Mishing households (56) in Golaghat town 31 have paddy fields, out of which only 6.45% use animal power, 77.42% use power tiller and 16.13% households use both the methods.

Thus, the table indicates that of the total households in both the villages majority use animal power and power tiller for cultivation. But in case of Golaghat town, majority households use power tiller for this purpose.

Table 4.4
Use of Chemicals/ Fertilizers in Paddy Field (Crops)
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Whether Used	No of Households			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
Yes	5 (3.31)	36 (45.57)	23 (74.19)	64 (24.52)
No	146 (96.69)	43 (54.43)	8 (25.81)	197 (75.48)
Total	151 (100)	79 (100)	31 (100)	261 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table shows that the use of fertilizers and chemicals in the paddy fields is not so popular among the Mishings of the Namtemera and Baghedhara villages as well as Golaghat town as out of the total households only 64 (24.52%) use these materials and the rest 197 (75.48%) do not use any kind of these materials in their paddy fields. In case of Namtemera village majority of the households (96.69%) do not use these chemicals in their paddy fields. On the other hand, though 54.43% households of Baghedhara do not use these types of chemicals in their paddy fields, a good number of household, i.e., 45.57% use both fertilizers and chemicals in their paddy fields for more production. Similarly, in case of Golaghat town also, of the total households (31) which have paddy fields, 74.19% use fertilizers as well as chemicals in their paddy fields and only 25.81% do not. Thus, the table reveals that use of fertilizers and chemicals in paddy fields in the Mishing households is increasing.

It is observed that the Mishing women also contribute a great deal in family income. The Mishing women are industrious and work side by side with their menfolk in field and forests. Thus, they not only contribute to the family income but also develop an independent spirit. The contribution of women towards the economy is of great. They weave, spin, rear worms for thread and thus cater to the clothing need of the members of the family. They rear pigs, fowls, etc., which is a great source of income. In fact, the Mishing women contribute a lot to the betterment of the economic life of their families and thereby to the economy of the society.

Education

Mishings are more backward in the field of education when they came down to the plains. But, now-a-days, their literacy rate is higher than some other tribes of Assam.

This is due to their growing conciousness in the field and acculturation with other non-tribal communities. Now, one can see doctors, engineers, and other professionals in their society.

Table 4.5
Educational Level of Mishing in Namtemera, Baghedhara & Golaghat Town
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Educational Standard	No. of Person									Grand Total		
	Namtemera			Baghedhara			Golaghat town					
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Children (below 7 yrs)	77 (12 98)	75 (14 97)	152 (13 89)	43 (15 58)	32 (11 90)	75 (13 76)	29 (13 24)	23 (13 22)	52 (13 23)	149 (13 69)	130 (13 77)	279 (13 73)
Illiterate (above 7 yrs)	137 (23 18)	108 (21 56)	245 (22 39)	23 (8 33)	31 (11 52)	54 (9 91)	8 (3 65)	7 (4 02)	15 (3 82)	168 (15 44)	146 (15 47)	314 (15 45)
Elementary (Class I – VII)	194 (32 72)	181 (36 13)	375 (34 28)	44 (15 94)	33 (12 27)	77 (14 13)	28 (12.79)	21 (12 07)	49 (12 47)	266 (24 45)	235 (24 89)	501 (24 66)
Secondary (Class VIII – X)	73 (12.31)	39 (7 78)	112 (10 24)	79 (28 62)	127 (47 21)	206 (37 80)	24 (10 96)	19 (10 92)	43 (10 94)	176 (16 18)	185 (19 60)	361 (17 77)
HS (XI – XII)	57 (9 61)	36 (7 19)	93 (8 50)	48 (17 39)	22 (8 18)	70 (12 84)	37 (16 89)	31 (17 82)	68 (17 30)	142 (13 05)	89 (9 43)	231 (11 37)
Graduation	29 (4 89)	46 (9 18)	75 (6 86)	27 (9 78)	19 (7 06)	46 (8 44)	66 (30 14)	57 (32 76)	123 (31 30)	122 (11 21)	122 (12 92)	244 (12 01)
Post Graduation	13 (2 19)	12 (2 40)	25 (2 29)	7 (2 54)	4 (1 49)	11 (2 19)	14 (6 39)	9 (5 17)	23 (5 85)	34 (3 13)	25 (2 65)	59 (2 93)
Computer certificate course	8 (2 19)	3 (0 60)	11 (1 01)	4 (1 45)	1 (0 37)	5 (0 92)	6 (2 74)	5 (2 83)	11 (2 80)	18 (1 65)	9 (0 95)	27 (1 33)
LL. B.	3 (0 51)	1 (0 20)	4 (0 37)	-	-	-	5 (2 28)	2 (1 15)	7 (1 78)	8 (0 74)	3 (0 32)	11 (0 54)
ITI education	2 (0 34)	-	2 (0 18)	1 (0 36)	-	-	2 (0 91)	-	2 (0 51)	5 (0 46)	-	5 (0 25)
Total	593 (100)	501 (100)	1094 (100)	276 (100)	269 (100)	545 (100)	219 (100)	174 (100)	393 (100)	1088 (100)	944 (100)	2032 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The educational standard as shown in the above table in the three areas is not good as, out of the total persons, 24.66% have the elementary level of education and 15.45% persons are illiterate. On the other hand, 17.17% persons are found educated upto the level of secondary school, i.e., class VIII-X. The table also shows that 12.01% of the total persons are graduated and 11.37% persons are educated up to Higher Secondary level. The number of Post-Graduates is very low as out of the total persons, only 2.93% have this education. As is concerned technical education, 1.33% of the total persons are computer literate and only 0.25% have ITI education. On the other hand, except Golaghat town the illiteracy rate is quite high in both the genders in the villages as, out of the total persons of Namtemera and Baghedhara villages, 22.39% and 9.91% persons are illiterate respectively. From the viewpoint of gender the females are lagging far behind than the males in all the levels of education irrespective of nature of their residence. The patriarchal nature of their society, where women are given less importance, is the main cause high illiteracy among the females in both the villages.

Social Organizations

Every Mishing village has a bachelor's dormitory, *Morung*. In Baghedhara they organize their major annual functions such as *Ali-Ai-Ligang, Porag* and other festivals, and public gathering, i.e., *Kebang* in the dormitory. It is also the venue from where the *Gam* (Village Chief) gives judgment in various cases. There is also a youth club called, Chirchang Yuvak Sangha, and one Anganwadi Kendra in Baghedhara village. The village Namtemera has also some institutions such as; a *Morung* (dormitory), a Community Hall, a *Namghar* (prayer hall), and a Club. The *Morung* is used by both boys and girls of the village and there is no separate dormitory for boys and girls. Of course, some old men also used the dormitory along with boys and girls. The dormitory is a big hall having an average measurement of 25 feet length and 15 feet width. Its construction is identical with that of their houses. The village headman uses this venue for giving judgment on different cases. There is also a community hall, used for the purpose of organizing social functions, three prayer halls and five Anganwadi Centers in Namtemera village. Similarly, these organizations, such as *Morung, Prayer Hall, Kebang* are also available in the Mishing areas of Golaghat town.

Power Structure

Kebang is the traditional political organization of the Mishing. *Kebang* in villages is consisted of elders of the village, headed by the village headman. Kebang is of supreme importance for the villagers. Any complaint or anti-social activities are brought to the notice of it and it has the power to deliver judgment and punish the offenders. The punishment usually depends upon the nature of offence. Generally, it is in the form of the imposition of fines in money or kind, physical punishment or ex-communication. Usually women are not allowed to be members of the *Kebang*.

The village Baghedhara has a *Kebang* through which judgments are delivered to any kind of the village related matters. But in Namtemera the villagers do not have any *Kebang* separately. Instead of this they form their *Kebang* with the elder members of other three nearby villages. Any complaint or anti-social activities of the four villages are brought to the notice of it and it has the power to deliver judgment. The punishment usually depends upon the nature of offence. Generally, it is in the form of the imposition of fines in money or kind, physical punishment or ex-communication. As in Baghedhara there are no woman members in this *Kebang* also. Though the Mishing households of Golaghat town have a *Kebang* their legal matters are solved through the district court of Golaghat only.

Status of Women

The Mishing women are very shy to face the strangers. If a Mishing woman happens to come across an outsider, she will quickly turn her face. But in the family circle, especially in cultivation, the women have a better position in the two villages whereas the women in the Golaghat town influence their husbands in case of taking decisions such as selection of educational institutions to admit their children, investment of their income, etc. On the other hand, they are not members of their traditional political institution, *Kebang*, and they have no say in decision making which affects the whole village.

In both the villages, the Mishing women get married very early. As a result, the women get conceived in their early age. This is detrimental to the health of, both, the mother and the child. Besides, they are very reluctant to adopt family planning methods.

But the Mishing women of Golaghat town have occupied a better position in the field of marriage.

Property and Inheritance

The Mishing social structure is patriarchal. After the death of the father, the property is owned by the sons. Property is divided among the sons. Daughters are not entitled to share the property of father. But if a man has no son, his property is divided equally among the daughters on the condition that the daughters will bear the funeral expenses of their parents. During the lifetime of a father the sons may demand partition of the family property provided all the sons have attained matrimonial status. In the event of such a partition the father will not keep a share for himself but divide the whole property equally among his sons. He can choose to remain with any of his sons that he likes. On the other hand, if a man has no son but his son-in-law lives in the father-in-law's house till the latter's death, he may inherit the father-in-law's property. In the absence of the children the nearest agnates of the deceased inherit the property. These rules are equally followed by every Mishing households of Baghedhara, Namtemera and Golaghat town.

Family

Mishing family is patriarchal. Both joint and nuclear types of family are found in Baghedhara and Namtemera villages. On the other hand, all the Mishing families in Golaghat town are nuclear. This is because of their acculturation with non-tribal population as well as the influence of education upon them.

The following table shows the structure of the Mishing families in the two villages and the Golaghat town:

Table 4.6
Type of Family
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of Family	No of Household			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
Joint	67 (44.37)	41 (51.90)	9 (16.07)	117 (40.91)
Nuclear	84 (55.63)	38 (48.10)	47 (83.93)	169 (59.09)
Total	151 (100)	79 (100)	56 (100)	286 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The above table shows the predominance of nuclear families in the Mishing society as out of the total Mishing households (286) of the two villages, i.e., Namtemera and Baghedhara, and Golaghat town, 169 (59.09%) are found nuclear and the rest (40.91%) are joint nature. Of course, in Baghedhara of the total households (79), (51.90%) are joint whereas (48.10%) are nuclear. On the other hand, in Namtemera and Golaghat town, nuclear families are playing dominating role. In Namtemera, of the total households (151), 84 (55.63%) are nuclear and the remaining (44.37%) are joint. Similarly, in Golaghat town, of the total Mishing households (56), 47 (83.93%) households are nuclear type and the remaining (16.07%) are joint.

Thus, though both the types of families are found in the two villages as well as Golaghat town, the dominance of nuclear family is more in Golaghat town in comparison to the villages. This is because of the spread of education among the Mishings, non-dependence upon agriculture, lack of living rooms in their houses, individualistic attitudes, etc.

Miboo* and *Bej

Miboo looks after all pujas and festivals performed by the villagers. There are two *Miboos* in Baghedhara whereas Namtemera has no *Miboo*. The Mishing families in the Golaghat town also do not have *Miboo*. *Miboos* are supposed to know the *uies* (sprits) which are responsible for all evil happenings. All the festivals as well as the offerings are performed with the help of *Miboos* in the village.

Bej occupies a significant position in the Mishing society, who is considered as the liaison between nature and supernatural world. In Baghedhara there are two Bejes who treat diseases like pox, snakebite, dogbite, etc. After completion of a modern treatment for dogbite and snakebite the villagers undergo more than two courses of treatment by their native Bejes. Both the Bejes of the village are cultivators and they never demand any remuneration for the treatment they give. On the other hand, no *Bej* or *Miboo* is found among the Mishings of Golaghat town.

Clan

The Mishing families in Baghedhara belong to five sub-clans; namely, Doley, Patir, Pegu, Tayung and Morang. However, the Mishing families in Namtemera belong

to four sub-clans; namely, Bori, Morang, Pathori and Loying. They have introduced themselves by their sub-clans and marriage is strictly prohibited among the members of the same clan. Thus, they practice clan exogamy. On the other hand, all the sub-clans found in the two villages are found in the Golaghat town.

The following table shows the clan-wise distribution of households in Namtemera, Baghedhara and Golaghat town:

Table 4.7
Clans of Households in Namtemera, Baghedhara & Golaghat Town
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Name of Clan	No of Household			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
Doley	10 (6.62)	11 (13.92)	12 (21.43)	33 (11.54)
Pegu	-	63 (79.75)	13 (23.21)	76 (26.57)
Loying	37 (24.50)	-	9 (16.07)	46 (16.08)
Bori	27 (17.88)	-	7 (12.50)	34 (11.89)
Morang	34 (22.52)	1 (1.27)	6 (10.71)	41 (14.34)
Pathori	32 (21.19)	1 (1.27)	5 (8.93)	38 (13.29)
Pawo	11 (7.28)	-	-	11 (3.85)
Tayung	-	1 (1.27)	-	1 (0.35)
Patir	-	2 (2.53)	4 (7.14)	6 (2.10)
Total	151 (100)	79 (100)	56 (100)	286 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table shows that there are nine clans found in the two villages and Golaghat town. Of the 286 households in the three places, 26.57% belong to Pegu clan which is followed by Loying (16.08%), Morang (14.34%), Pathori (13.29%), Doley (11.54%) Pawo (3.85%), Patir (2.10%) and Tayung (0.35%). So, Pegu is the major clan in the areas. On the other hand, in case of Namtemera village Loying is the major clan instead of Pegu as out of the total households (151) of the village, 24.50% belong to this clan, which is followed by Morang (22.52%), Pathori (21.19%) and Bori (17.88%). Pegu, the major clan in Baghedhara, is absent in Namtemera. The village also has no households of Tayung and Patir clans. On the other hand, in case of Baghedhara Pegu is the major clan as out of the total households (79), 79.75% belong to this clan which is followed by

Doley (13.92%) and Patir (2.53%). There are also three other clans; namely, Morang, Pathori and Tayung in the village. But their number is very small. There is a difference of clans in Namtemera and Baghedhara villages. On the other hand, in the Golaghat town Pegu is the largest clan, as in Baghedhara. Of the total Mishing households of Golaghat town, 23.21% belong to this clan which is followed by the clan Doley (21.43%), Loying (16.07%), Bori (12.5%), Pathori (8.93%0 and Patir (7.14%).

Thus, the number of clans in Golaghat town is more than that of the two villages. This is because of the fact of migration of Mishing population from different villages to the Golaghat town. The main pull factor is the better way of life in the town as compared to villages.

Housing

Most of the villagers of Baghedhara have their houses on piles, where the floor is about 4-5 ft. above the ground. There are three house types found in Baghedhara; namely, kachcha, semi-pucca and Assam-type. Similarly, the villagers of Namtemera have also their houses on piles though some of them have semi-pucca and Assam-type houses. But there are no Mishing houses on piles in the Golaghat town. Due to acculturation with non-tribal people all the Mishings who are living in town have constructed their houses either as RCC-type or as Assam-type.

The following table shows the types of house of the Mishings in the two villages and Golaghat town:

Table 4.8
Types of House Namtemera, Baghedhara & Golaghat Town
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of House	No. of Households			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
Kuccha	120 (79.47)	65 (82.28)	11 (19.64)	196 (68.53)
Pucca	7 (4.64)	7 (8.86)	29 (51.79)	43 (15.03)
Semi Pucca	24 (15.89)	7 (8.86)	16 (28.57)	47 (16.44)
Total	151 (100)	79 (100)	56 (100)	286 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table shows that basically there are three types of house in the field of the study, i.e., kuccha, pucca and semi-pucca. Of these the number of the kuccha houses is

more than other two types. Of the total households (286), 68.53% houses are of kuccha type followed by semi-pucca (16.44%) and pucca (15.03%). Similarly, in Namtemera, majority of the houses are kuccha as of the total households of this village, 79.47% houses are kuccha type followed by semi-pucca (15.89%) and pucca (4.64%). The same picture is also found in Baghedhara. Because out of the total households of this village 82.28% houses are kuccha and the rest houses are pucca (8.86%) and semi-pucca (8.86%). On the other hand, in Golaghat town, majority of the households are pucca. Of the total houses (56), 51.79% are of this type. Likewise, 28.57% houses are semi-pucca and 19.64% are kuccha house. Thus, the Mishings of the Golaghat town have better housing condition than the two villages, i.e. Namtemera and Baghedhara.

The following table shows the ownership of houses:

Table 4.9
Ownership of House in Namtemera, Baghedhara & Golaghat Town
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of House Ownership	No. of Households			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
Own	151 (100)	79 (100)	46 (82.14)	276 (96.50)
Rented	-	-	10 (17.86)	10 (3.50)
Total	151 (100)	79 (100)	56 (100)	286 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The above table shows that there are two types of ownership in the Mishing houses, i.e., owned and rented. However, maximum of them have their own houses. Of course, none of the in the two villages have rented houses. This is because of the absence of the system of rented house in both the villages. On the other hand, in Golaghat town, out of the total Mishing households (56), 96.50% households have their own houses and the rest have rented houses. Therefore, as compared to the Mishings of Golaghat town the villagers have a good status regarding ownership of households.

The following table shows the number of living rooms of the households:

Table 4.10
No. of Living Rooms Namtemera, Baghedhara & Golaghat Town
(Percentage in Parentheses)

No. of Room	No. of Households			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
1 – 2	29 (19.21)	11 (13.92)	17 (30.36)	57 (19.93)
3 – 4	73 (48.34)	31 (39.24)	23 (41.07)	127 (44.41)
5 – 6	38 (25.17)	19 (24.05)	16 (28.57)	73 (25.52)
7 - 8	11 (7.28)	18 (22.78)		29 (10.14)
Total	151 (100)	79 (100)	56 (100)	286 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table shows that there are four kinds of houses in the two villages and the Golaghat town which have minimum two and maximum eight living rooms. Of course, the number of households which have more living rooms are mostly in the villages. However, out of the total households (286) of the Mishing under study, 44.41% of households have 3-4 living rooms. Similarly, 25.52% households of the total have 5-6 living rooms and 10.14% households have 7-8 living rooms. But 19.93% households have only 2-3 living rooms in general. On the other hand, in Namtemera, out of the total households (151), 48.34% have 3-4 living rooms and 25.17% have 5-6 living rooms. Similarly, 19.21% households have 2-3 living rooms and only 7.28% households of this village have 7-8 living rooms. Similarly, maximum households in Baghedhara have 3-4 living rooms as of the total households (79) of this village 39.24% households have 3-4 living rooms. Besides, 24.05% households have 5-6 living rooms and 22.78% households have 7-8 living rooms. The number of households which have only 2-3 living rooms in Baghedhara is 13.92%. In Golaghat town there is no Mishing household which has 7-8 living rooms. Here, most of the households (41.07%) have 3-4 living rooms and 30.36% households have 2-3 living rooms. Similarly, 28.57% Mishing households have 5-6 living rooms in Golaghat town.

The variation between the two villages and Golaghat town regarding the number of living room is found because of the fact that most of the Mishing families of Golaghat

town are living in rented houses. Therefore, they want to reduce their living cost by letting in a small house of 2-3 living rooms.

However, all the households, irrespective of nature of ownership, type and size, have separate kitchens in the villages as well as Golaghat town. Therefore, no difference is observed among the households of the villages and town in this regard.

Table 4.11
Electricity Facility in Namtemera, Baghedhara & Golaghat Town
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Electricity Facility	No. of Households			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
Yes	102 (67.55)	56 (70.89)	56 (100)	214 (74.83)
No	49 (32.45)	23 (29.11)	-	72 (25.17)
Total	151 (100)	79 (100)	56 (100)	286 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table shows a vast difference on the electricity facility between the two villages and town. In the Mishing households of Golaghat town all the houses have electricity facility whereas 67.55% houses in Namtemera and 70.89% houses in Baghedhara have this facility. On the other hand, in the two villages the position of Baghedhara is better than that of Namtemera as 29.11% households in the former and 32.45% households in the latter do not have electricity. Of course, the households which have electricity facility have alternative lighting facilities as well due to the irregular power supply by the electricity board. The following table shows the substitute means of lighting for those households:

Table 4.12
Alternative Lighting Facility in Namtemera, Baghedhara & Golaghat Town
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Means	No. of households			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
Kerosene	91 (89.22)	43 (76.79)	5 (8.93)	139 (64.95)
Candle	11 (10.78)	13 (23.21)	16 (28.57)	40 (18.69)
Inverter			35 (62.50)	35 (16.36)
Total	102 (100)	56 (100)	56 (100)	214 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The above table shows that there are three substitute means of lighting in the households which have electricity as their main source of lighting. Of the three means of lighting, majority, i.e., 89.22% in Namtemera and 76.79% in Baghedhara use kerosene. On the other hand, of the Mishing households in the Golaghat town 62.5% have inverter facility whereas 8.93% household use kerosene and the rest (28.57%) use candle as the substitute means of electricity. Thus, use of kerosene as a means of lighting is more in use in both the villages than the Golaghat town.

Like the source of lighting, type of fuel used for cooking is also important. Basically the Mishings of the two villages and Golaghat town use three different kinds of fuel for cooking, e.g., LPG, firewood, and kerosene stove. Of course, some of the households are using more than one fuel for cooking, such as firewood as well as LPG, firewood as well as kerosene stove, etc. The following table shows the type of fuel used for cooking purpose by the Mishings of the two villages and Golaghat town:

Table 4.13
Type of fuel Used for Cooking
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of Fuel	No. of Households			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
LPG	19 (12.58)	31 (39.24)	51 (91.07)	101 (35.31)
Firewood	97 (64.24)	37 (46.84)	-	134 (46.85)
Firewood & LPG	29 (19.21)	9 (11.39)	3 (5.36)	41 (14.34)
Firewood & kerosene stove	6 (3.97)	2 (2.53)	2 (3.57)	10 (3.50)
Total	151 (100)	79 (100)	56 (100)	286 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table shows that firewood is used by majority of the households in both the villages for cooking purpose as out of the total households in Namtemera 64.24% households and 46.84% households in Baghedhara use firewood for this purpose. On the other hand, in the town 91.07% households use LPG for this purpose. Thus, it shows that the use of LPG in both the villages is lower than the town.

Marriage

Out of the two main forms of marriage; *Midang* and *Duglalanam*, the villagers of Baghedhara and Namtemera perform only *Duglalanam*. Due to high expenditure the villagers do not observe *Midang* and prefer *Duglalanam*. But some well-to-do Mishing

families of Golaghat town have observed *Midang* form of marriage. This is possible because of their good economic condition. The following table shows the marital status of the Mishings of the filed of study:

Table 4.14
Marital Status of the People
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Marital Status	No. of Person									Grand Total		
	Namtemera			Baghedhara			Golaghat town					
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	Male	Female	Total
Married	326 (54.97)	326 (65.07)	652 (59.60)	99 (35.87)	99 (36.80)	198 (36.33)	66 (30.14)	66 (37.93)	132 (33.59)	491 (45.13)	491 (52.01)	982 (48.33)
Unmarried	263 (44.35)	175 (34.93)	438 (40.04)	177 (64.13)	158 (58.74)	335 (61.47)	152 (69.41)	108 (62.07)	260 (66.16)	592 (54.41)	441 (46.72)	1033 (50.84)
Widowed	4 (0.67)	-	4 (0.37)	-	12 (4.46)	12 (2.20)	1 (0.46)	-	1 (0.25)	5 (0.46)	12 (1.27)	17 (0.84)
Total	593 (100)	501 (100)	1094 (100)	276 (100)	269 (100)	545 (100)	219 (100)	174 (100)	393 (100)	1088 (100)	944 (100)	2032 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The above table shows that out of the total population under the study 982 persons are married. On the other hand, in Namtemera village, out of the total males 54.97% are married and 65.07% of the total females are married. Similarly, in Baghedhara village, 35.87% of the total males and 36.80% of the total females are married. On the other hand, 30.14% males and 37.93% females of the total Mishing males and females of Golaghat town are married. Of the total males in Namtemera 0.67% are widowed whereas 4.46% females in Baghedhara village and 0.46% males in Golaghat town are widowed.

Another important aspect influencing health is the age at marriage of boys and girls in the family. The Mishings have no tradition of child marriage. According to them, pregnancy of women below 18 years of age is inadvisable because it threatens the life and health of young mothers and the risk involved increases sharply with the birth of second and third child during teen years. Therefore, according to them, there is a need for legal step for rising the marriageable age of the girls. The following table shows the age at marriage of boys and girls in different age groups:

Table 4.15
Age at Marriage
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Age Groups (in years)	No. of Persons									Grand Total		
	Namtemera			Baghedhara			Golaghat town					
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
< 18		17 (5.21)	17 (2.59)	1 (1.01)	21 (18.92)	22 (10.48)	-	10 (15.15)	10 (7.52)	1 (0.20)	48 (9.54)	49 (4.90)
18 – 20	93 (28.18)	229 (70.25)	322 (49.09)	29 (29.29)	53 (47.75)	82 (39.05)	13 (19.40)	31 (46.97)	44 (38.08)	135 (27.22)	313 (62.23)	448 (44.84)
21 – 25	186 (56.36)	62 (19.12)	248 (37.80)	39 (39.39)	24 (21.62)	63 (30.00)	33 (49.25)	15 (22.73)	48 (36.09)	258 (52.02)	101 (20.08)	359 (35.94)
26 – 30	23 (6.97)	7 (2.15)	30 (4.57)	13 (13.1)	6 (5.41)	19 (9.05)	11 (16.4)	4 (6.06)	15 (11.2)	47 (9.48)	17 (3.38)	64 (6.41)
31 – 35	19 (5.76)	10 (3.07)	29 (4.42)	9 (9.09)	6 (5.41)	15 (7.14)	4 (5.97)	6 (9.09)	10 (7.52)	32 (6.45)	22 (4.37)	54 (5.41)
> 35	9 (2.73)	1 (0.31)	10 (1.52)	8 (8.08)	1 (0.90)	9 (4.29)	6 (8.96)	-	6 (4.51)	23 (4.64)	2 (0.40)	25 (2.50)
Total	330 (100)	326 (100)	656 (100)	99 (100)	111 (100)	210 (100)	67 (100)	66 (100)	133 (100)	496 (100)	503 (100)	999 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The above table highlights that out of the total married persons of the two villages and Golaghat town, 496 (49.65%) are males and 503 (50.35%) are females. Out of the total married persons of both the genders 448 (44.84%) persons are married at their age at 18-20 years, of which 135 (27.22%) are males and 313 (62.23%) are females. Similarly, 359 (35.94%) persons are married in their age at 21-25 years of which 258 (52.02%) are males and 101 (20.08%) are females. On the other hand, that 25 (2.50%) persons of both the villages and Golaghat town are married after their 35 years of age of which 23 (4.64%) persons are males and only 2 (0.40%) are females.

Thus, it reveals that females are married in their early age in comparison of males. In Namtemera also the picture regarding the preferred age of marriage is the same. In this village, out of the total 656 married persons 322 (49.09%) are married in the age of 18-20 years of which 229 (70.25%) are females and 93 (28.18%) are males. It is also found that 248 (37.80%) persons of this village are married in the age in 21-25

years: 186 (56.36%) are males and 62 (19.12%) are females. In Baghedhara, of the total 210 married persons, 82 (39.05%) are married in 18-20 years: 53 (47.75%) females and 29 (29.29%) males. This is followed by the age group of 21-25 years. In this group of age 63 persons are found married: 39 (39.39%) males and 24 (21.62%) females. In Golaghat town out of the total Mishing 44 married persons in the age of 18-20 years: 31 (46.97%) males and 13 (19.40%) females. Similarly, 48 persons are married in the age of 21-25 years, of which 33 are males and 15 are females.

Marriage under 18 years of age is also prevalent in both the village as well as Golaghat town, as out of the total married persons 49 persons are found married under 18 years, of which 17 persons are found in Namtemera, 22 persons in Baghedhara and the rest (10) in Golaghat town. Of course, out of these 49 persons, 48 persons are females and 1 person is male. Thus, the preferred age of marriage for the Mishing males and females is 21-25 and 18-20 years respectively.

As the two forms of marriage prevalent in the Mishing society, i.e., *Midang* and *Duglalanam* are considered as conventional types of marriage. But besides these the some of the Mishings also prefer to marry in court and temple. In the following table the types of marriage preferred by the families in the two villages and Golaghat town are shown:

Table 4.16
Type of Marriage
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of Marriage	No. of Households			Total
	Namtemera	Baghedhara	Golaghat town	
Conventional	148 (98.01)	79 (100)	47 (83.93)	274 (95.80)
Court marriage	1 (0.66)	-	5 (8.93)	6 (2.10)
In temple	2 (1.33)	-	4 (7.14)	6 (2.10)
Total	151 (100)	79 (100)	56 (100)	286 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table demonstrates that out of the three types of marriage the conventional type of marriage is more popular in there society. Of the total households (286) in the field of study, 95.80% households have preferred this type of marriage. On the other

hand, 2.10% households preferred court marriage and equal number of households, i.e., 2.10% has preferred marriage performed in temple. The conventional type of marriage is preferred in both the villages and Golaghat town as of the total households, 98.01% of Namtemera village, 83.93% of Golaghat town and all the households of Baghedhara have preferred conventional type of marriage. On the other hand, only 0.66% households of Namtemera have preferred court marriage and the rest (1.33%) prefer to marry in temple. But in Golaghat town, the number of households which have preferred to marry in temple and court is more in comparison of Namtemera as out of the total Mishing households of Golaghat town 8.93% prefer to marry in temple and the rest (7.14%) prefer to marry in temple.

Thus, conventional marriage still has a dominant place in Mishing society. As conventional marriage is socially accepted and recognized, almost all the Mishing irrespective of village and town have preferred this type of marriage. However, it is observed that though the Mishings have preferred conventional type of marriage irrespective of village and town, some changes have taken place in their marriage system such as community of spouses, bride price, divorce, etc. In Namtemera and Golaghat town some life partners have been selected from other communities.

The following table shows the number of spouses selected from other communities:

Table 4.17
No. of Spouses from Other Communities
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Community of Spouse	No. of Persons									Grand Total		
	Namtemera			Baghedhara			Golaghat town					
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Ahom	-	1 (33.33)	1 (33.33)	-	-	-	-	1 (100)	1 (100)	-	2 (50.00)	2 (50.00)
Kachari	-	2 (66.67)	2 (66.67)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (50.00)	2 (50.00)
Total	-	3 (100)	3 (100)	-	-	-	-	1 (100)	1 (100)	-	4 (100)	4 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The above table reveals that there are some cases of marriage with other communities in Namtemera and Golaghat town. It also shows that they have established marital relations with two other communities, i.e., Kachari and Ahom, which are also considered as major tribes of Golaghat district as well as Assam. Of the total spouses from other communities (4), 50% are with Ahom and the rest (50%) are with Kachari communities. In Namtemera, of three (3) such marriages, 66.67% have taken place with Kachari community and the rest (33.33%) with the Ahom community. There is only one spouse from other community and the same was selected from Ahom community. It means the Mishings gave more and received less as spouses.

Divorce is also an aspect of marriage where changes have taken place. Traditionally, though it was not acceptable in their society, now a day, it is acceptable to some extent in their society also. In their society divorce can be made effective if the parties concerned mutually agree to it. No social ceremony is necessary for divorce. Yet, divorce is very rare among them. It is observed that no divorce case has taken place in Namtemera and Baghedhara. But there is one divorce case in Golaghat town. The reason for divorce was domestic violence.

The payment of bride price is also an aspect of marriage where changes have taken place. It is known as *Alig* in their society. In earlier days, a Mithun or its equivalent of Rs. 100/- or so was charged as bride price. Today, the amount has been considerably minimized by the effort of the enthusiastic and educated Mishings. A sincere effort has been made to root out the system, which has harmful effect upon the marriageable boys and girls. The custom is not favoured by the Mishings of today.

Some cases of remarriage are also found in both the villages and Golaghat town among the Mishings. Like divorce, remarriage was also not acceptable in their society in earlier days. But gradually this system is prevalent in their society. The following table shows the cases of remarriage in the field of study:

Table 4.18
Cases of Remarriage
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Case of Remarriage	No of Persons									Grand Total		
	Namtemera			Baghedhara			Golaghat town					
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Yes	4 (0.67)	3 (0.60)	7 (0.64)	2 (0.72)	1 (0.37)	3 (0.55)	1 (0.46)	-	1 (0.25)	7 (0.64)	4 (0.42)	11 (0.54)
No	589 (93.33)	498 (99.40)	1087 (99.36)	274 (99.28)	268 (99.63)	542 (99.45)	218 (99.44)	174 (100)	392 (99.75)	1081 (99.36)	940 (99.58)	2021 (99.46)
Total	593 (100)	501 (100)	1094 (100)	276 (100)	269 (100)	545 (100)	219 (100)	174 (100)	393 (100)	1088 (100)	944 (100)	2032 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table shows a few cases of remarriage in the two villages and Golaghat town. Of the total 11 (0.54%) remarriages 7 (0.64%) are males and 4 (0.42%) are females. The cases of remarriage is more in Namtemera where out of the 7 cases of remarriage, 4 (four) are of males and 3 (three) are of females. In Baghedhara village, out of the 3 (three) cases of remarriage 2 (two) are of males and one is of female. There is only one case of remarriage among the Mishings of Golaghat town.

There are three main causes of remarriage found in the field of study, i.e., death of husband or wife, infertility and divorce. The following table shows the causes of remarriage in both the villages and Golaghat town.

Table 4.19
Causes of Remarriage
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Cause of Remarriage	No of Persons									Grand Total		
	Namtemera			Baghedhara			Golaghat town					
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Death of husband/ wife	3 (75.00)	2 (66.67)	5 (71.43)	2 (100)	-	2 (66.67)	-	-	-	5 (71.43)	2 (50.00)	7 (63.64)
Infertility	1 (25.00)	-	1 (14.29)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 (14.29)	-	1 (9.09)
Divorce	-	1 (33.33)	1 (14.29)	-	1 (100)	1 (33.33)	1 (100)	-	1 (100)	1 (14.29)	2 (50.00)	3 (27.27)
Total	4 (100)	3 (100)	7 (100)	2 (100)	1 (100)	3 (100)	1 (100)	-	1 (100)	7 (100)	4 (100)	11 (100)

Source: Field survey conducted during 2nd May – 30th September 2011

The table showcases that there are three causes of remarriage among the Mishings. Of the total cases of remarriage (11), 63.64% cases happened due to the death of either husband or wife. The divorce caused by domestic violence is also found as out of the total cases of remarriage 27.27% happened due to this factor. Likewise, infertility is also found as a factor of remarriage. In Namtemera, out of the total cases of remarriage, 5 (five) cases happened due to the death of either husband or wife. Of these five cases 3 (three) cases happened due to the death of wife and the rest 2 (two) cases happened due to the death of husband. There are also two other cases of remarriage out of which one is due to the factor of infertility of wife and the other is found as a result of divorce. Of the 3 (three) cases of remarriage in the Baghedhara 66.67% remarriages happened due to the death of wife and the rest one is due to divorce. Lastly, there is only one remarriage found among the Mishings of Golaghat town which happened due to divorce.

Thus, death of spouse and divorce are the two dominating causes of remarriage among the Mishings as both are responsible for remarriages in Namtemera and Baghedhara and Golaghat town.

Festivals

The villagers of Baghedhara and Nam Temera perform various festivals. The most significant of which are the *Ali-Ai-Ligang* and *Po:rag*. *Ali-Ai-Ligang* or the spring dance festival is associated with agriculture, especially with the beginning of the Ahu paddy cultivation. The festival is celebrated on the first Wednesday of the month of *Falgun* of Hindu calendar and continues for five days. *Po:rag* is also associated with agriculture which marks the harvesting time of paddy. Besides, the villagers also perform the three Bihus of Assam; namely, the *Magh bihu*, the *Bohag bihu* and the *Kati bihu* with equal enthusiasm. These Bihus, now a days, are considered as a part of their culture. Similarly, the Mishings of Golaghat town also performs the above festivals with equal gaiety and enthusiasm.

Occupations

Cultivation is the main occupation of the people of Baghedhara, although some of them are government service holders and businessman. Besides, a few of them are

daily wage earners, welders and handloom owners. Similarly, in Namtemera also, the main occupation of the people is cultivation and their major item of cultivation is paddy. Some men and women are also going for wage labour on daily basis. Since the villagers of Namtemera are educationally very backward, very few of them are government employees.

Cultivation is not the primary occupation of the Mishing households of Golaghat town. Their main occupation is government service in various institutions such as, educational institution, banks, various state or national offices etc. Besides, many of them businessmen.

Diet

The Mishing's staple food is rice. Food habits of the Mishing are now-a-days similar to those of the non-tribal neighbouring Hindus. But, to a certain extent, their food habits have still a similarity with the Adis of Arunachal (Elwin 1964; Roy 1966). Thus, rice is found as the staple food in Baghedhara, Namtemera and Golaghat town. Along with rice they take leafy vegetables, edible roots and fish. Meat and fish are not items of daily diet but are occasional delicacies. Their great delicacies are fowl and pork. There are certain food taboos among the Mishings. If any member of the family dies, then, taking of meat is prohibited for all the members of the family until the obsequial performances of the deceased are observed. This taboo is equally followed by the Mishings of Baghedhara, Nam Temera and Golaghat town.

Dress

The dress of the Mishings can be divided into two distinct types; namely, (i) the general dress for everyday use and (ii) the special dress for festivals and ceremonial functions. The dress for the everyday use of the people is very simple. A simple white dhoti *(ugon)* or sometimes a long coloured towel *(dumer)* and a shirt *(galuk)* constitute the dress of the men. The dress of the women is also simple, but divided into two pieces of garments. They generally wear a skirt covering the part from the waist to the knee. The upper piece fastened above the breast falling along with the skirt. The dress for the special occasions is the special product of their loom. On special occasions, such as festivals, marriage etc. they wear their special dresses. The dress of the women is the

same as they use daily, but the dresses for festivals and functions are more colourful and decorated.

Except Golaghat town, the Mishings of Baghedhara and Namtemera wear both of their traditional dresses. Due to easy communication and other facilities, mill made clothes have penetrated into the farthest corners and the traditional cloths are fast disappearing among the Mishings of Golaghat town.

Language

The Mishing have their own dialect which belongs to the Northern branch of the Indo-Tibeto-Burman languages. In the process of acculturation Assamese language is also visible among the Mishings. They have adopted various Assamese words in the Mishing language. In short, Assamese language is the part and parcel in the daily conversation of the Mishing. Moreover, majority of them can speak Hindi and English.

In case of language a variation is observed between the two villages and the Golaghat town. In Baghedhara, the villagers use only their traditional dialect among them. But the villagers of Namtemera do not know their traditional language so they use Assamese as their common language. On the other hand, the Mishings of Golaghat town speak both the languages. Besides, some of them also use Hindi and English for communicating with other non-tribal people. This is because of the acculturation with nontribal people in an urban setting.

Religious Beliefs

The villagers of Baghedhara are the followers of Hinduism and so their traditional religious practices are based on three major belief systems; viz, beliefs about the creator of the universe, beliefs about existence of spirits around human habitats and beliefs about human soul. They worship the spirits underlying thunder and lightening (*Mukling Teleng*), earth and water (*Among Asi*), air and fire (*Esar Emi), Asi uie, Adi uie, Umrang uie, Dopum Dorum* etc. On the other hand, though the Mishings of Namtemera and Golaghat town introduce themselves as Hindus, some of them follow Mahapurushia Vaishnav Dharma and they worship different gods and goddesses. Worshipping of spirits, sacrificing of fowls and consumption of rice beer are practiced, hand in hand,

with the *Vaisnava* ideals, according to which worshipping of different gods and goddesses and sacrificing of animals in the name of god is prohibited.

HEALTH STATUS

Among Mishing a person is considered healthy when he/she is not afflicted by any disease, consumes food as usual and carries out his normal functions without any difficulty. When somebody is sick, they will employ all efforts to heal his illness and bring him back to normal condition. However, the Mishings followed certain health practices of their own. The traditional notion about disease of the people is that there are unknown spirits behind all kinds of diseases suffered by them. They worship their ancestors with *pujas* like *Dabur, Dotgang, Urom Apin*, etc., for the prevention of unknown diseases.

In sum we can say that Baghedhara is well-connected to the district headquarters of Golaghat as compared to Namtemera. The difference is also seen in economic status of the villagers, health care institutions, physical conditions of the villages, sub clans of the villagers, etc. Their traditional trend of livelihood is visible in types of house, occupation, family system, marriage, etc. in both the villages. On the other hand, the Mishings in Golaghat town have acculturated with the non-tribal people and they have better economic condition, health care facilities, educational institutions, etc. as compared to the Mishings of the two villages.