CHAPTER-II

THEORITICAL FRAME WORK OF THE STUDY

In the preceding Chapter, the Introduction, the Problem, Education, Rationale of the study, Title of the study, Objectives of the study, Operational definition of the term, Delimitation of the study were discussed. The present chapter is devoted to the Theoretical Framework of the Study, where Genesis of Indian People, Concept of Caste in India, Evolution of Scheduled Castes in India, Distribution of Scheduled Castes in India (Sate-wise and Community-wise), Different Groups of Scheduled Castes in Assam and Barak Valley, Kaibartta in Barak Valley is discussed.

2.1. Genesis of the People of India

India is a fascinating country where people of different communities and religions live together in unity. Indian population is polygenetic and is an amazing amalgamation of various races and culture. It is impossible to find out the exact origin of Indian people. The species known as, 'Ramapithecus' was found in the Siwalik foot of North-Western Himalayas. The species believed to be the first in the line of hominids (Human family) lived some 14 million years ago. Researchers have found that a species resembling the Austrapithecus lived in India some 2 (two) million years ago. Even this discovery leaves an evolutionary gap of as such as 12 (twelve) million years since Ramapithecus.

India is a diverse country with different kinds of religions, cultures, traditional practices, life style etc. A perfect harmony exists between the people of different back grounds and they live in this vast country as one. It is very difficult to estimate the exact ethnic origin of the people of India. This is essentially because there is not a single group that can be attributed to be the origin of ethnic Indian groups. People from all over the world came here centuries ago; some settled here permanently and some left. A short summary of the various ethnic groups that came to India and laid the foundation for the present day population is given below;

As already stated that there are many diverse ethnic groups among the people of India, among these 6 (six) main ethnic groups are as follows: -

(I) Negrito /Negroids, (II) Proto-Australoids or Austrics, (III) Mongoloid, (IV) Mediterranean or Dravidian, (V) Western Brachycephals, and (VI) Nordic Aryans.

2.1.1 The Negrito / Negroids

The Negritos are believed to have come from Africa, and also one of the earliest settlers in India .They basically didn't barge into the deeper areas of the country but instead stayed at the islands of Andaman and Nicobar and some parts of southern India. They survived in that original habitat and can still be found living a rustic life style: The Jarawas, Onges, Sentinelese and the Great Andamanese are some of the examples. Some hill tribes like Irulas, Kodars, Paniyans and Kurumbas are found in some patches in Southern part of main land in India.

2.1.2 Proto-Australoids or Austrics

These groups were the next to come in India after the Nigritos. They were credited to have laid the actual foundation for the civilization of India. The Proto-Australoids were characterized by their brown skin, long heads, thick black hair, low foreheads, prominent eye ridges, flat noses, thick jaws etc. The Austrics of India represent a race of medium height and dark complexion. They cultivated rice and vegetables and made sugar from sugarcane. Now these people are found in some parts of India, Myanmar and the island of South East Asia. Their languages have survived in the Central and Eastern India.

2.1.3 Mongoloids

Mongoloids settled in the North Eastern parts of the country in high mountain ranges. They can be attributed to have paved the way for the present day population at places like Sikkim, Ladakh, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura. The Mongoloids were characterized by yellowish complexion, pale skin, small oblique eyes, blunt facial features, high cheek bones, medium height and sparse hair.

2.1.4 Mediterranean or Dravidian

The Dravidians came from the Mediterranean side and are supposed to be one of the earliest visitors in India. They have been believed to come before the Aryans. Dravidians are credited with the establishment of the Indus-Valley Civilization, whose remains have been found at Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa and other Indus cities. The Mediterranean has different sub-groups like the Paleo-Mediterranean, the true Mediterranean and the

Oriental Mediterranean. They had a wheatish complexion and were characterized by sharp facial features.

2.1.5 Western Brachycephals

These people were characterized by features like broad foreheads, brown skin, sharp features, etc. The Western Brachycephals include ethnic groups like Alpinoids, Dinarics, Armenaids, Parsis and Kodavas. They occupied the Western side of the country and can be called the foundation for the present day people in the states of Gujarat, Maharshtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

2.1.6 Nordic Aryans

This group was the last one to immigrate to India. They came to India somewhere between 2000 B.C. and 1500 B.C. They are now mainly found in the northern and central parts of India. They acquired majority of the northern parts of the country after driving away the Dravidians to the south. They were also characterized by heir stout appearance and white skin.

Thus, Negritos, Proto-Australoids, Nordic Aryans, Dravidians, Mongoloids and Western Brachycephals etc. constitute the racial elements of the population of India. It was these diverse racial elements, indigenous as well as immigrant, got mixed in different degrees under different climatic and geographical conditions at short and long intervals through a process of ethic combination that the peoples of India were divided. It is an admitted fact that a man's skin gets darken in tropical climate and geographical environment affects his physical features. The racial changes that are seen in India are

mainly the result of environment and climate. It is imperative to keep this racial composition in view for a proper evaluation of the caste structure in India in its proper perspective.

The archaeological record of Pre-historic human settlement in India goes back to a period of geological remoteness whose immensity leaves it without much meaning to the people. However, the vast period of times involved in geological reckoning, even in those final phases of the natural sequences which trace the origin of man and his culture can be explained in terms of the stone tool industry of the Pre-historic time, which runs, into different periods.

The whole of this geological era constitutes the major geological division of the quaternary period and the sub-division is known as Pleistocene phase. Archaeologically the human remains and the tools from the Pleistocene deposits are classed together as the Paleolithic period or Old Stone Age phase of man's development.

The Paleolithic Period is one of immense, monumental inavition over millennia, with human progress as deduced from the tangible remains of man's handy-work that have survived making the slowest imaginable moves. During the "Great Interglacial Period", probably lasting for nearly 200,000 years, the changes in the type of tools manufactured are matters archaeological importance which reveals a slow increase in mastery of the technique of fracturing and flaking stones to the required shape. However, in the later Pleistocene there appears some acceleration in modifying tools and weapons.

Through out the Paleolithic period the basis of subsistence was hunting and food gathering in one form or another and the evidence permits us to visualize a small

population living in tiny groups of families or small tribes, following the animals they killed for food over great tracts of country. Life was impermanent, precarious and isolated, and ideas could not readily be transmitted from group to group.

The surviving elements of Paleolithic material culture are confined to tools made of imperishable stone, and until upper Paleolithic times we hardly have even the certain traces of any human settlement. Discarded stone tools lying in rivers-gravels, and occasional human fossil and frequently those of the animals hunted are almost all we have to rely on for our study of lower Paleolithic man and his achievement.

There are a number of scholars who have worked on the different periods of Stone Age in India, special mention may be made of R. Bruce Foote, C. Oldham, V. Ball, A.C. Logan, P. Mitra, M.C.Burkitt, K.R.U, Todd, H. de, Terra, T.T. Paterson, N.K. Bose, D, Sen., and H. D. Sankhalia etc. Besides these scholars the excavations made by the Geological Survey of India from time to time revealed a lot of information about the Stone-Age culture in India.

In May 1863, R.B. Foote of the Geological Survey of India made a discovery by unearthing a Paleolithic tool from a literate pit at Pallavaram near Madras. Working between 1863 and 1904, he located as many as 459 Pre-historic sites in Peninsular India. Among these, 42 belong to the Old Stone Age and 252 to the new. In 1864, C. Oldham similarly found a number of Paleolithic tools while V. Ball recovered some stone implements in the same year in various parts of Bengal and Orissa. As most of these objects were surface finds their geological age remained uncertain. It was only when A.B. Wynne discovered an agate knife flake near Paithan on the upper Godavari in 1865, and

C. Hackett found a Quartzite Hand-Axe at Bhurtra on the Narmada in 1873, that new light was thrown upon the age of early man in India because both of the last two examples of human workship were associated with fossil mammals belonging to the Pleistocene, period.

The first book on India Pre-history, Old chipped stones of India, was published in 1906 by A.C. Logan. The second work on the subject appeared in 1923, when P. Mitra's 'Pre-historic India' was published by the University of Calcutta. In 1924 and 1927, L.A. Cammiade published two interesting articles entitled, 'Pygmy Implements of the Lower Godavari and Pre- historic Man in India' and 'The Kurnool Bone Caves'.

2.2 Mesolithic Period

The later periods of the Stone-Age in India viz. the Mesolithic and Neolithic, have been studied in India very imperfectly indeed, some superficial discoveries of pygmy stone tools have been reported from nearly the whole country. But it appears from the various reports that a vast majority of them are of a late age, and that they range in age from Pre-historic to Historic times. In a few instances the objects have been assigned to the Pro-Neolithic or Neolithic Age. This was done with respect to a micro-lithic industry from the Narmada by De-Tera. Todd found a microlithic industry in both Bangalore and Bombay which succeeded the upper Paleolithic. M.M. Krishna described a Mesolithic industry from Mysore which proved by later excavation to be a part of Neolithic culture.

A. Aiyappan has described some Mesolithic artifacts from the Teris (red sand) of Tiruneveli which were first noticed by Foote several years ago.

The comparison of the typology of the tools shows that some of them to bear striking similarity with specimens belonging to Natuafian, Capsian and Tardenoisean cultures. It is only after further detailed work that we shall be able to find out if a true microlithic culture actually came between the Paleolithic and Neolithic Ages in India.

2.3 Neolithic Period

Among the stone implements which have been discovered from different excavations belonging to the Neolithic Age, special mention may be made of the stone Celts; adzes, chisels, picks, fabricators, ring-stones, hammer-stones, sling stones etc. but the largest number is formed of Celt of different varieties. The first discovery of Neolithic objects was made in Utter Pradesh by Le Mesurier in 1860. In 1872, Fraser made some important discoveries at Bellary. According to Coggin Brown, the Foote collection in the Madras Museum contains as many as 72 types of tools. Celts and other artifacts have also been reported from U.P., Behar, Orissa, Bengal and Assam by Roy, Anderson, Das Gupta, Coggan Brown, Cock Burn and Ball.

The true Neolithic culture is marked not only by ground and polished stone Celts and pottery, but also by agriculture and domesticated animals.

Eugene C. Worman (Jr) has suggested that the earliest Neolithic like stone tools appeared in India probably not earlier than 35000 B.C. or 25000 B.C. and various types were also introduced into the country at different dates. On comparison with the Neolithic sites of South-East Asia, he believes that Indian Neolithic Celts belong to the same culture group as those of the other regions, particularly, of Indo-China.

Thus, the tools type of the Neolithic period of India has almost a continuous distribution in South-East Asia.

2.4 Proto-Historic (Indus Valley Civilization) Culture of India

India had a glorious past. The earliest known traces of human life in India are found at Bhimbetka. It is now a world heritage site. Historians say that there was a very advanced civilization near the Indus River (now in Pakistan) around 2500 BCE. This is called the Indus Valley Civilization. Harappa was the first city discovered in India. Mohenjo-Daro is another important city found in this area. This civilization is also known as Harappa Civilization.

The first known urban society in India was the Indus Valley Civilization. As we know it was located along the Indus River and its tributaries. It extended from the Ganga-Yamuna doab, to Gujarat and beyond up to Northern Afghanistan. This civilization is known for its cities, built of bricks. The Indus Valley people built well-planned cities with important buildings such as Great Bath and Granary. Seals, pottery, jewellery and other remains of this civilization tell us about the lifestyle of the people who lived in that society. It also gives clues about the life of the people during that period.

At the city-sites of Harappa in Montgomery District of Punjab and Mohenjo-Daro in Larkhana District of Sindh (now in Pakistan) have revealed to us that in the third millennium B.C. a full fledged civilization flourished in Indian soil based upon a highly developed urban economy, which is known as Indus Valley Civilization.

At present more than 80 (eighty) sites are known which have yielding characteristic elements of this civilization. It has an extension over a large area between Ropar in the

North, below the Shimla Hills, and Sutkagendor, a site about 300 miles, west of Karachi near the Arabian Sea.

The finds recovered from the excavation carried out at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro have pushed the antiquities of Indian civilization far back into the past and enabled India to make a dramatic entry into and claim an important place among countries of the most ancient east. India must henceforth be recognized along with Iran, Mesopotamia and Egypt, as one of the most important areas where the civilizing processes of humanity were initiated and developed.

Both of the towns of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were roughly more than 3 miles in circuit and the Mount of each place can be divided into two groups: a high mounds towards the west and a series of lower mounds extending over a large area to the east.

In Mohenjo-Daro, between the Citadel and the main city, there is a north to South Street which crosses another street from east to west coming through the city almost at right angle, and at its north end turns east to join a main street of the city to which it runs parallel. These thorough-fairs link up entire city by means of feeder streets, lanes and by-lanes, the latter also running generally at right angles to them. The alignment of through fares and streets did not change with the various occupations. The thorough fares were each more than a half a mile long and fourteen to thirty-three feet wide. The lanes and by-lanes, even though they were crooked at times, were not fortuitous and usually, the lanes were four to six feet wide. Another feature of the street and lanes was the under ground drainage though water discharged from smaller drains coming out of the houses or by

lanes was collected into chess pools, which were built either entirely of masonry or with earthen ware jars enclosed.

A number of public buildings such as the Great Bath and possibly a monastery with a double row of bath-room in one alignment to its east, the large Hall along with platform which may have been used as open stalls in the market place to the South of them, all lying in the citadel mound at Mohenjo-Daro. The Great Granary has been found both at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

However, the most remarkable is the great both situated at the citadel wound at Mohenjo-Daro. It measures 180 feet from north to south and 108 feet from east to west. Its outer walls which are particularly massive were 7 ft. to 8 ft. thick at the base, most of the inner walls being about half as much.

The Great Bath in Mohenjo-Daro

Courtesy: http://www.nationalgeographic.com

At Harappa, however, the most remarkable and the largest building was the Great Granary, which consists of two precisely similar blocks together measuring 169 ft. from north to south and 135 ft. from east to west. Each block comprises six halls, measuring 51 ft. 9 inches long by 17 ft. 6 inches broad. This extraordinary structure at Harappa was a public building of great importance for the whole city.

The people of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa used utensils made of pottery, stones, coppers, bronze, silver and ivory of which pottery was the most common. They also used

jewellery. A medium sized silver goblet from Mohenjo-Daro was found to contain jewellery. Vessels of copper and bronze include dishes with tapering sides bowels, goblets and tumblers with or without covers, cups with tapering sides, saucers, ladles, flasks, broad open vases, frying pans, carinated cooking pots etc. Stone vessels, however, were rare but a few varieties of simple shapes have been found.

They also used toilet and cosmetic objects including handled capper-mirrors, ivory combs with handled tooled on both the sides, animal headed stoppers and toilet sets of copper, consisting of a piercers, ear-scoop and tweezers.

For their daily needs the people of Indus Valley Civilization depended on a variety of tools, implements and weapons mostly of copper and bronze from such tools as awls and needles of which the later were made of gold and ivory; razors, knives and sickles, the knives being also made of chert flakes, goats, fish-hooks and goues, the latter being sometimes fitted with strong alabaster handles; chisels, which were of bare metal, sanked or tanged for handles and employed for many- fold purposes.

The people of Indus-Valley Civilization had knowledge of metallurgy. It is proved by the presence of copper tools and weapons. Gold and silver were also found at both the sites. The intricate shapes and designs of jewellery show how conversant the artisans were with the elaborate delicacies of their trade. The people of both Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro also knew the art of domestication of animals. The domesticated animals include cats, dogs, goats, sheep, buffaloes, pigs etc. whose bones have been found in large quantity. In addition to pottery and metal implements, seals, statuary and jewellery from major objects of their arts and crafts.

The scripts, which the Indus-Valley people invented for their writing, belongs to the same order as other quasi-pictographic scripts of this period, such as the easy Sumerian, Egyptian etc. and remains still to be deciphered. Ordinarily the direction of writing is from right to left but when there is more than one line, it is boustrophedon, i.e. the direction of writing the lines is alternately from right to left and left to right. According to Langdon, there is strong case of the Brahmi alphabet being a directive of the Indus script.

It has been difficult to form a clear cut opinion about the religion of the people of Indus Valley Civilization, especially on the basis of the materials unearthed at Indus-valley sites. However, an attempt is made here to throw some light on their religious beliefs and faiths, in brief:

So far no structure looking like a temple has been discovered either at Mohenjo-Daro or at Harappa and so it may be suggested that they had no knowledge of temples. Again on the basis of different figures depicted through their seals, it may be argued that they worshiped the great mother or nature goddess, whose worship under various names and forms is still very common in India.

(Priest King of Mohenjo-Daro:)

Courtesy: www.harappa.com

The male divinities are characterized by a horned head-dress, which symbolized super-natural power. A very important seal showing a god seated on a raised thrown in the typical attitude of Yoga was discovered at Mohenjo-Daro. On the basis of all the characteristics John Marshal has suggested that the figure represents a proto type of historic Shiva in his Pashupati form.

The people of Indus-Valley Civilization also used to worship tree and animal. Another sacred symbol, whether it was an object of worship or had only a Talismanic value, has the simple-cross form or Swastika.

At Harappa only two cemeteries have been excavated. It contained extended earth-burials with the head generally to the north. With burials there was a large quantity of pottery, which is a typical of the Harappa period both in style and decoration. At several earth burials the bones of the sheep and goat were laid down along side the dead body. At some grave sites the bow and arrow in the left hand of the dead person was also found. Generally, dead bodies were laid to rest fully stretched, but quite frequently with legs in-flexed.

2.5 Vedic Society and Culture

Around 1500 BCE, some tribes migrated in groups from Central Asia. They were called Aryans. This group came to India, and first settled in the present north-west frontier province and Punjab, which was then called 'Sapta Sindhu' (a region of seven rivers).They drove away the 'Dasas'or Dasyus living in North India and settled there. They lived there for many centuries and later built settlements along the Ganga and Yamuna rivers. They grew crops and domesticated animals. The Vedic civilization of the Indo-Aryans is associated with the Vedas. The Aryans were the first to write in Sanskrit. Many great books such as Vedas, Upanishads and epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata were written during this period. All these books are helpful in understanding the people and civilization of that time. Since the Vedas were written during this period, this period is known as the Vedic Age.

As we know, the Aryans were nomadic pastoral warriors, organized in tribes, who entered North Western India around 1500 B.C, their fore bears having come from Northern Eurasia (Wasson 1968). The Aryan tribes, governed by a chief (Raja) and two

councils, were already composed of two social classes, the nobility and commoners. The chief primarily was a leader (Bashan 1954). He was aided by a general and a priest, the predecessor of the later Brahman Priesthood.

Stone Age, rock shelters with paintings at the Bhimbetka rock shelters in Madhya Pradesh are the earliest known traces of human life in India. The first known permanent settlements appeared about 8,500 years ago and gradually developed into the Indus Valley Civilization, dating back to 3400 BCE in Western India and it was followed by the Vedic period, which laid foundations of Hinduism and other cultural aspects of early Indian society and ended in the 500s BCE. From around 550 BCE, many independent kingdoms and republics known as the Mahajanapadas were established across the country.

2.6 Concept of Caste and Varna in India

'Varna' and 'Caste' are the most important characteristics of Indian Hindu Society. It is the traditional form of division of labour. The word 'Varna' has been evolved by Shri Yaskacharya in 'Nimkta', from the root 'Vri' meaning Choice or Varna. In this sense Varna means anything chosen by an individual according to his choice.

The literal meaning of the word 'Varna' is 'Colour'. There are four Varnas in Indian Hindu Society which transcended into the classification of Indian Hindu society into four classes i.e. Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. Consequently these four Varnas have four different colours for their cultural identity (Brahmans are of white colour, Kshatriyas are red, Vaisyas are yellow colour and the Sudras are black.)

2.6.1 The Concept 'Varna'

The origin story of 'Varna' was first noted in the earliest scripture; the "Rigveda". A verse of Rigveda tells us how the four (4) Varnas of the Hindu society were born. The verse reads as below:

'Brahamanahsya Muhkhamasit Bahu Rajanya Krita.

Uru Tadasya Yadvaishya, Padabhayam Shudra Ajayat.'

(I.e. Brahmans came from mouth, Kshatriyas, from arms, Vaish from thighs and Sudras from feets of Virat purush)

(Source: 'Bangala Katha Sahitye Bratya Samaj', by Dr. Subodh Deb Sen, p, 14-15)

The myth that the four Varnas were born from different parts of primeval man can be interpreted to mean that these four Varnas were not born simultaneously but in a period of time. When a child is born, first comes the head, there after other parts of the body and last come the feet. There is a time lag. And there is a myth also that Brahamana's (the Creator's) 'one second' is equal to 'a few thousand years' of today. If it is so, then the birth of different Varnas at different times also becomes a part of natural evolution.

Since the four Varnas were boon from different parts of Virat Purush which are in a descending order, these Varnas must also have a hierarchical order. The 'Brahmins' must be at the top and 'Shudras' at the bottom.

In this connection it is further said that the Varnas have been classified according to their traditional profession for example, the first reference about the classification in our classical text, Geeta, where Lord Krishna says,

"Chaturvarna Maya Sriju Gunakarma Bibhagasha;-4.13"

"I have created the four Varnas according to their 'merit / Quality and 'Karma' (profession or act)'.

Traditionally, those who are Brahmin became priests and scholars, Kshatriyas became warriors and rulers, the Vaishyas became tradesmen and the Shudras became the slave. Those in the Brahmin category are supplied to manage the culture through their control of religion, Kshatriyas to manage the society through their control of armed might, Vaishyas to manage the distributive economy through their control of trade, and Shudras to provide physical labour.

Table no.2.1 Four Varna of Indian Hindu Society with their Colour, Guna and Yoga

Varnas	Twice Born	Class	Colour	Guna	Yoga
		Brahmins (Priests/Teachers)	White	Sattva	Jnanayoga
		Kshatriyas (Warriors/Rulers)	Red	Rajas	Karmayoga
		Vaishyas (Farmer/Marchants/ Artisans etc.)	Yellow	Rajas	Bhaktiyoga
Ekajati(once born)		Sudras (Servants/Labourers)	Black	Tamas	Bhaktiyoga

M.N.Srinivas said, 'The first three varnas are called 'Dwija' (Twice-born)' because they get first birth by mother and second birth by Upanayana samskara. These three varnas have to go through the initiation ceremony which is symbolic of rebirth. The shudras have are such ceremony of upanayana. That is why they are called 'Ekajati' (once born).

A few scholars are of the view that the Varna system or Varna-Vyavastha is found in Rigveda (as already mentioned) which is very old (about 5000 BC) since the origin of the Varna is from Virat Purush (Rigaveda, Tenth Mondal) the institution is divine the Almighty God Himself divided the whole Hindu Society into four Varnas. And since God did it, it must be for the good for the people and permanent in nature.

Since the four Varnas were from different parts of God which are in a deseeding order, these Varnas must also have a hierarchical order. The Brahmins must be at the top and the Shudras at the bottom.

A few scholars are of the opinion that the Varna-Vyavastha was originated as a social instruction because of the needs of time. It developed in one form or the other, not only in India but also in all ancient civilization. As life progressed, it could not answer the ever growing weds of time, if silently bade farewell and left.

The scholars also opined that in India the institution of caste was developed and when the caste system also failed to cope with the growing situation, sub-castes were in vented and added to it that why Varnas, castes and sub-castes were manmade social, institutions and there was nothing divine it them.

But what ever may be the logic behind the Varna-Vyavastha, it is true that in course of time it (Varna system) has broken into hundreds of castes and sub-castes as a result of the

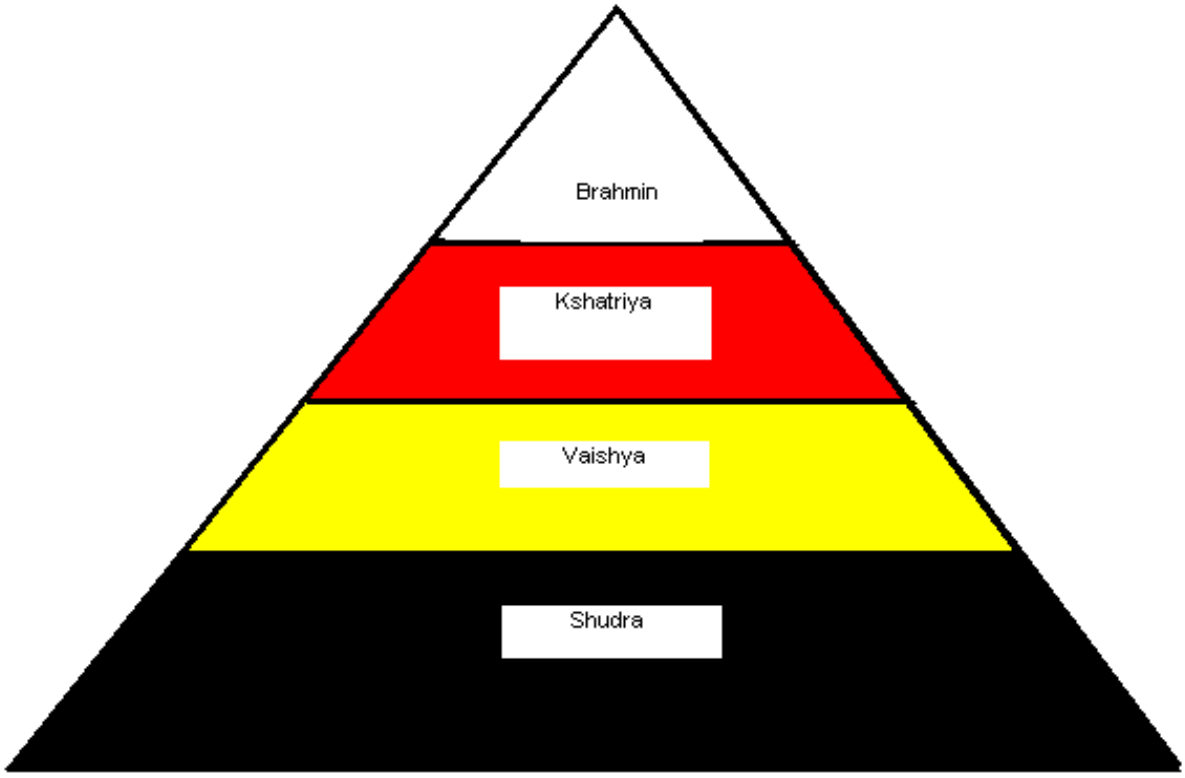
operation of a Variety of factors such as racial admixture, geographical expansion of the population, inter regional isolation of the various parts of the country hereditary. The result was the ever gene of caste system, as found today in the Hindu society.

The caste system is a distorted version of Varna-Vyavastha. At first, only the four Varnas were formed, then followed numerous castes thus the Varna-Vyavastha was the basis of all castes.

2.6.2 The Concept of Varna in Ancient Sanskrit Literature

There are many references in one classical text about the origin and development of Varnas. An attempt has been made to throw light, in brief, on the origin and development of Varnas in historical perspective.

All of us know that there are four Varnas viz. the Rig Veda, the Sam-Veda, the Yujur-Veda and the Atharv-Veda (which were classified by Rishi Vyas and hence Rishi Vyas was called as Veda Vyas. In Rig-Veda there is one section known as Purush Shukta, where we get a 'Montra' which throws light on the origin of Varnas for the first time. It says that the Great Creator Brahma created the four Varnas. The Brahman came out from the mouth of the Brahma and that is why the Brahmans are believed be engaged in teaching Vedas and such other activities. However, the Kshatriyas came out from the mighty arms of the Brahma, and therefore, the right of administration bestowed upon the soldiers of the Kshariyas. The Vaisyas came from the thighs of Brahma who were given the responsibility of production; trade etc. and finally the Shudras were born from the feet of Lord Brahma who were believed to bear the burden of the society.



(The system of Varna is presented in the above Pyramid)

But through the following verse the above argument is discarded:

“Chatvara Eksya Pitu: Sutashcha

Teshang Sutanang Khalu Jatireka

Ebang Prajanang Hi Piteika Eba

Petreika Bhaban Na Cha Jatibheda”

(Source: “Jati Dharma O Samaj Bibartan”By, Jatin Bagchi, page no.178)

That means: All the Figs, it may be of upper branch, middle-branch or of lower branch, of the same tree, are known as Figs and due to outturn in different branches (upper, middle or lower) they can not be considered as something else. Likewise, all the Varnas,

it may come from Mouth, Arm, Thy or Feet, all are the body parts of the same Super man 'Brahma'. Hence all are equal, none is of upper caste and none is lower caste.

Like the Vedas, the reference of the word 'Varna' is also found in some of the Brahmanas. Example; in the Eatiriya Brahmana, we get the three Varnas (viz. Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaisya) specially when direction have been given for the use of the 'Gaitri-Mantra' Brahmana should start with the first word 'Bhu', the Kshatriya should start with 'Bhuvha' and the Vaisya should begin the recitation of the Gaitri Montra with 'Swah'.

In Taitaraya Brahmana different seasons have been allotted for conducting the 'Yagna' by the different varnas,e.g. Brahman should conduct Yagna during the Basant Ritu (March-April), the Kshatriya should conduct the Yagua in the Grishma-Ritu (Summer-season); and the Vaisyas should conduct the Yagna in the Sharad-Ritu (after the rainy season)

In different Upanishad also we get references of the word Varna. For example; in the Brihadaranyka Upanishad, it is mentioned that in the beginning the Brahma was alone, and hence, in order to assist the Brahma, the Gods were divided into the four Varnas. After the Brahmins some of the gods like Indra, Varuna, Soma, Rudra and Yama etc. were classified as the Kshatriya among the gods, among the Vaisya god, special mention may be made of Vasu, Aditya, Marut etc. among the Sudra Varna, special mention is made of Pushan-Devata in the Upanishadi literature. In the Chhandoga Upanishad also, we get similar references of the four Varnas.

Beside these, in ancient texts, reference of the word 'Varna' is also found in Samhitas, Smritis, and Epics etc. In the Bhrigu-Samhita it is mentioned that Brahma has created the

four Varnas and allotted the colours-viz. white, red, yellow and black to the Brahmans, Kshariyas, Vaisyas and Sudras respectively.

In the Smrities also, we get reference of the word 'Varna' and special mention is made in the 'Manu Smriti', where it is mentioned that the four Varnas were created for the welfare of the society. However, in 'Yagna-Valka' Smriti also, we get reference of the world Varna.

In the 'Pitra-Medha Sutra' of Bandhyan, one can also find the reference of the word 'Varna'. Like wise all these ancient law givers have confirmed the use and relevance of the Varna-Vaivastha in the then existing society of ancient India.

In the Mahabharata also the word Varna has been referred to several times. The dialogue between Bharadwaj and Bhrigu is based on the interpretation, the origin and function of the Varnas. Again Yudhisthir, the eldest among the Pandavas, has also referred to the identification of the Varna which he answers in response to a question asked by king Nuhush. He says that if a person speaks true (Satya), gives charity (dan), if he has the capacity to pardon (Kshama), and has a nice character (Satya-charitra etc), he is a Brahma. Yudhistir further says that if all these Guna (Qualities) are found in a Shudra, he is also a Brahman.

Hence, from the above discussion it is clear that since time immemorial a Varna is not determined on the basis of one's birth, rather it is determined on the basis of its Karma.

A few decades ago also, some of our great thinkers like Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Maithili Saran Gupta etc. have emphasized that the so called Shudras, who had been neglected in the society during the last few centuries, are also respectable and

worshipable. R.N. Tagore said that the Charan (feet) of God are worshipable, and hence Shudras have been born out of the feet of the Lord, they are also worshipable. Maithili Saran Gupta said that Shudras are the Sohodar (uterine) brother of Sursari (mother Ganges) who also comes out from the feet of the Lord-Vishnu.

In this way, the modern thinkers have tried to give due importance to the so called Shudras in the present day social set up where they have been subject of neglect on various fronts. In the present social setup, however Varnas are not found in India but its ancient references and importance are still fresh in the minds of the ideologists and other social scientists, what we call as a "Cultural Fossil" of the ancient Indian social system.

2.6.3 The Concept 'Caste'

All human societies known so far are divided into different ranks corresponding to the social positions occupied by their individual members. Or it can be said that the most persistent feature of Indian society is its organization into micro communities which are large scale descent groups. One form of this organization is 'Caste'.

Another way it can be said that since the dawn of history, Indian society has suffered from a diverse types of social disabilities. Some of the most unsocial and unscrupulous social inequalities and disabilities were centered on the institution of caste.

Caste is the main basis of the present Hindu society and nobody can properly understand the Hindu law and social institutions without a good Knowledge of the system of caste and the rules governing it. The caste system is a peculiar feature of Indian society. It is very difficultt to trace its exact time of origin or its exact source of origin.

It is very difficult to define what a caste precisely connotes. The English word 'Caste' is a translation of Portuguese word 'Caste' means lineage'. The Portuguese used the word (in India) to describe the 'Jati' system. The connotation or meaning of the Portuguese word 'Casta' is close to that of Hindi word 'Jati' mean species, breed, race or lineage. Also, until the nineteenth century the, words 'Casta' and caste were used to refer to both tribes and castes in India.

The caste system has appeared to be one in which an individual inherits an occupation in which occupations are ranked and in which an individual's worth or worthlessness is or drained by birth. Caste system is a unique institution in Indian sub-continent. The system is such a peculiar and complex one that no satisfactory definition is possible.

There are a number of theories, definitions, and observations concerning the term caste. Many scholars have given their view points ranging from functional aspect, occupational, varnacular etc. the origins and reasons for the caste system have been written about and dealt with by eminent scholars from both India and abroad. However this term denotes the hereditarily imposed social status on an individual family, group, or community in a highly stratified Indian and South Asian Society. It is essentially, historical, hereditary, exclusive, discriminatory, iniquitous and inhumane in nature and has been sanctified by Hindu religious scriptures and has been accepted and regarded by Hindus and the priestly classes of non-Hindu religious in India and south Asia.

Many intellectuals have tried to define the nature of caste. Most prominent among them are as follows:

Senart, E (1927), "A caste is a closed corporation exclusive and in the theory at any rate rigorously, hereditary. It is equipped with certain traditions and independent

organizations including a chief and a council meeting on occasion in Assemblies endowed with, more or less full authority."

H.H. Risley, "A caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name; claiming common descent from mythological ancestor, human or devine, professing to follow the same hereditary calling."

J.C. Nesfield, "Caste is a class of the community which disowns any connection with other class and can neither inter marry nor eat nor drink with any but persons of their own community."

According to Ketkar, S.V., "Caste is a social group having two characteristics : (i) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born, the members are forbidden by an inerrorable social law to many out side the group."

E.A. Gait, "The main characteristics of a caste are, in brief, a common origin held by all the members and the possession of the traditional occupation. It may be defined as an endogamous group or collection of such groups bearing a common name, having the same traditional occupation, claiming descent from the same source and commonly regarded as farming a single homogeneous community."

A.L. Kroeber (1931), "A caste may be defined as an endogamous and hereditary sub-division of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social system in comparison with other sub-divisions".

Caste in India has been defined by M.N. Srinivas, "As a hereditary, endogamous, usually, localized group having a traditional association with an occupation and a particular

position in the local hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concepts of pollution and purity and generally, maximum commensality occurs with in the caste."

Thus, different thinkers have defined variously the term "Caste.'' To understand the term 'Caste' it is necessary to examine the various factors underlying the caste system. Following are the main features of Caste system.

2.6.3.1Main Features of Indian Caste System

Firstly, absolute rigidity and immobility is the most important feature of caste system. A man dies in the same caste in which he is born and it is the caste that determines his station in life.

Secondly, the prescription of certain kinds of food for different castes was allotted.

Thirdly, Endogamy is another most important element of caste system. According to this each must marry within his own caste and within the sub-group (if there is any sub-group in that caste).

Fourthly, the caste structure of the society is a hierarchy or a system of subordination held together by the relations of superiority and inferiority at the apex of which are Brahmins and at the lowest rung are the Shudras.

Fifthly, every caste regards some occupation as its own hereditary and exclusive calling and tries to debar the others from exercising it.

Lastly, the existence within it of an organ wielding authority which was compels obedience from the caste members.

2.6.3.2 Difference between Caste and Varna

Caste and Varna are very much confusing terms, some people use these two terms interchangeably, but one is absolutely different from other. As N. Jayapalan said, "Caste is the English version of 'Jati' is derived from the root 'Joha' meaning 'to take birth' or 'to be born'. It implies that jati or caste means birth. But Varna, on the other hand means to select or to choose. To be more precise Caste is acquired by birth where as Varna is assigned according to one's capabilities and mental tendencies.'(Source: 'Indian Society and Social Institutions'vol.-1, page no.31)

Many experts have warned against the misuse as well as misinterpretation of the two words.

Emile Senert warned that the two terms i.e. Varna and Caste are confused in literary tradition, which "is less concerned with the faithful record of facts than with their arrangements in systems conforming to the tendencies of a strongly raised group".

K.M.Panikkar also noted that, "this four-fold division is only ideological and is not in any manner based on the facts of the social system. It is what Hindu sociologists wanted their society to be a theory of caste-idealism unrelated to actual practice."

N. Jayapalan is of the view that, "Caste identification is based on birth but Varna is on action. In the parlance of caste system an uneducated Brahmana is given respect where as an educated Shudra is looked down upon for belonging to a lower caste. But in the Varna system more emphasis is laid on action and not on birth. In the scope of Varna system, a Brahmana is respected only when he is educated and imparts the role of giving knowledge to others. Thus, Varna emphasizes the ethical and intellectual capabilities of

individuals; where as in caste system particular emphasis is laid on the birthrights and the effect of socialization if left unconnected….Varna system, since its introduction has remained a flexible system of classification. Varnas are four but Castes are so many."

Actually, Caste and Varna are the two sides of the same coin and one is interrelated to other. Because as is the Varna, so is the Caste. If the Varna is of higher rank then the Caste is also of higher level and if the Varna is of lower rank, then the Caste is of lower rank.

2.6.3.3 Theories of Caste system

There are a number of theories available about the origin of caste system in India or it can be said that the origins and reasons for the caste-system have been 'written about and dealt with by eminent scholars from both India and abroad of which a few are discussed below:

(i)The Theory of Tradition/Divine Theory (ii)The Racial Theory of Castes (iii) The Occupational Theory of Castes(iv) The Evolutionary Theory of Castes (v) The Religious Theory of Castes (vi)Political Theory/The Clever Devices of Brahman (vii) Continental Drift Theory.

2.6.3.3.1 Traditional Theory

According to this theory, the Caste System is of divine origin. Brahma the supreme creator, the creator of the universe had created the Caste System.

In the Rigveda it is mentioned that the four castes have been originated from the four different parts of Supreme Brahma. The Brahmins are born from the mouth, the Kshatriyas from the arms, the Vaishyas from the thigh and the Sudras from the feet. The

mouth is the main source of speech and learning and therefore the duty of Brahmins is to work as teachers or instructors in the society. The arms are the source of strength and therefore the function of Kshatriyas is to defend the empire. The thighs are the principal repository organs of the body and so the Vaishyas have been assigned the duty of supplying food for others. The Sudras originated from the feet and their duty is to serve others just as the feet serve the other parts of the body. It is said in the Ramayana, as in the Purusha Sukta of Rig-Veda, this same theory of the creation of the varnas was mentioned.

2.6.3.3.2 The Racial Theory

According to this theory the Caste System took its birth after the arrival of the Aryans in India. In order to maintain their separate existence the Indo-Aryans used for certain groups and orders of people the word 'Varna', 'Colour' etc. thus they spoke of the 'Dasa varna', or the Dasa people.

2.6.3.3.3 Occupational Theory

This theory states that, the origin of caste system can be found in the nature of the work performed by the various groups of people. The professions which were regarded as better and respectable made the persons engaged in such professions superior to those who were engaged in uncleanly occupations. Nesfield is of the opinion that functions and function above all is responsible for the origin of caste structure in India only with functional differentiation reflects on occupational differentiation and numerous sub-castes such as Lohar, Sonar, and Chamar, Mali etc. came into existence.

2.6.3.3.4 Evolutionary Theory

According to Vidya Bhushan and Sachdeva (1978) the caste system did not came into existence all of a sudden or at a particular time. The present caste system is the product of historical evolution. It is the result of a long process of social evolution. There are various factors which encouraged the formation of small groups based on petty distinctions from time to time. Lack of rigid unitary control of the state, unwillingness of the rulers to enforce a uniform standard of law and custom, their readiness to recognize the customs of different groups as valid and their usual practice of allowing things somehow to adjust themselves led to the growth of groups and promoted the spirit of solidarity and community feeling in every group.

2.6.3.3.5 The Religious Theory

It is believed that various religious customs had given birth to the Caste system in India. People connected to religion like Brahmins and Kings were given higher positions. Different people used to perform different tasks for the administration of the ruler that later on became the basis of Caste system.

2.6.3.3.6 Political Theory/ the Clever Devices of Brahmin

According to this theory, Caste system is clever device invented by the Brahmins in order to place themselves on the highest ladder of social hierarchy. Ghurye states, “Caste is a Brahminic child of Indo-Aryan culture cradled in the land of the Ganges and hence transferred to other parts of India.”

2.6.3.3.7 Continental Drift Theory

This theory states that the northern part of Australia was linked with the southern part of India, as the eastern part of Africa was linked with the western part of India. As the equator passes through the centre, the climate is very hot on account of direct sun rays. The inhabitants of this part of the world are different from those of the other parts. Short structure, brown colour, black hair, weighty lips, round heads etc. are the important features of the people of the region. Owing to the climatic conditions, people's working efficiency is low. Due to this the people of this region could not make progress compared to the progress achieved by people in other parts of the world. Taking advantage of their backwardness the Dravidians were the first to attack the aborigins of India. They were a nomadic people and wanted to like a settled life. After defeating the natives of India, they settled. Some of the defeated natives joined the Dravidians and some fled away into forests and mountain regions. Later on the Dravidians attained a higher stage of civilization as compared with other races.

After the Dravidians, another major attack against Indian was made by the Aryans. It is believed that the Aryans originally inhabited central Asia from where they spread to east and west. The Dravidians were defeated by the Aryans. The defeated aboriginals were made slaves in the Aryan social order, given low status in the society and assigned the duties of serving other people. Those who did not accept slavery were driven into forests and they remained aboriginals with their social, economic and cultural distinctions. Some turned to a nomadic way at life and began to roam from place to place.

In this way ancient Indian society was divided into four classes: The Aryans, the Anaryans, the Aboriginals and the Nomadic aboriginal criminal tribes. It was during the

early Vedic period, there were only two main classes; Aryans and Anaryans. Though there was no sharp distinction between their relationships. The feeling of superiority was there in the minds of the Aryans since they were the conquerors with a distinct philosophy and religion of their own.

The Aryans were the enemies of the Aryans. The Aryans defeated the Anaryans who were considered 'dases' and at later period the 'dasas' were assign the status of 'sudras' in varna vyavastha hierarchy. The victory of Aryans over An-Aryans gave rise to the caste system. The historians are of the opinion that the first three varnas viz. Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya of the Aryan society were already established and the defeated An-Aryans were given the status of 'Sudras.'

However, among all the theories of the origin of castes in India, the occupational theory or what is called the functional theory occupies great importance for explaining the origin of castes. Narmadeshwar Prasad (1957) has also emphasized the adoption of occupation was the strongest cause for the formation of caste in India. According to him, "the whole discussion leads to the point that castes were more or less, occupational groupings and that the lower the profession of a group, the lower was its social status."

2.6.4 Causes and Consequences of Casteism

To discuss about the causes, consequences as well as remedies of casteism, N.Jayapalan in his famous book "Indian Society and Social Institutions" (vol-1, page no.66-76) has written that the following factors are responsible for the growth of casteism in India:

2.6.4.1 Causes of Casteism

(i) Sense of Caste-prestige, (ii) Urbanisation, (iii) Marriage Restrictions, and (iv) Mobility and increased means of transport and propaganda.

2.6.4.2 Consequences of Casteism

(a) Casteism is stumbling block (b) Casteism breeds Corruption (c) Casteism hinders democratic process. (d) Affects Efficiency

2.6.4.3 Steps to Abolish Casteism

Casteism is an evil practice and it must be abolished. Attempts to abolish casteism are as old as its origin. In the pre-Independence as well as post-Independence era, many movements and governmental actions took place to eradicate caste-based inequalities in India. Different people have different opinion on this very point, as for example we can cite the following:

N.K. Dutta in his 'Origin and Growth of Caste in India', Tattvabhushan Sitanath in his 'Development of Brahmanic Doctrines', Shivnath Sastri in his 'History of Brahma Samaj' and B.Kuppuswamy in his 'Social Change in India' have elaborately discussed the measures to be taken to abolish Casteism in India. In addition to this, in his 'Social Change in Modern India' M.N. Srinivas has given immensely useful measures for the abolition of casteism.

Much is being done to free the Indian masses from evils clutches of casteism. Our national leaders have, time to time decried the system of casteism as a social evil because

they realized the fact that casteism leads to many problems and poses invincible challenges to the endeavours of putting the nation on the rails of development.

Under casteism, members of lower caste can not have matrimonial relationship with members of upper castes and members of upper castes even can not take water from the people of lower castes. Casteism is very dangerous from every angle and critising the deplorable existence of casteism, as early as in 1935, Gandhiji strongly shelled it down in his article entitled, “Caste must go.”

Lord Buddha spoke against the caste system 2,500 years back. Not only this but right from the time of Upanishads, thinkers, from time to time have asserted their views against the castesim. In spite of all these efforts, casteism has managed to flourish till today.

During the present century so many steps have been taken to eradicate the evil of casteism. Many social reformer as well as poets like Kabir, Chaitanya etc. tried their best to uplift the people belonging to lower castes and the untouchables.

In the nineteenth century ‘Brahmo Samaj’ was formed by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, to give an opportunity to the people belonging to different castes to hear discourses or Upanishads, in his effort to abolish casteism.

The first step of inter-caste marriage a crusade aginst the casteism was initiated by Keshabchandra Sen in 1862.

The second great crusade against casteism after the introduction of inter-caste marriages was that of Arya Samaj.

The Rama Krishna Mission was the third crusade against the practice of casteism. Swami Vivekananda observed, "The caste system is opposed to the religion of the Vedanta. Caste is a social custom and all our great preachers have tried to break it down. From Buddhism downwards, every sect has preached against caste and every time it has only riveted the chains."

To eradicate the dominance of the Brahmins, (the so-called upper caste people) Swamiji made a clarion call to the Shudras (the so called lower caste people);

"Come be men! Kick out priests who are always against progress because, they would never mind. Their hearts would never become big. They are the off-springs of century's superstition and tyranny. Root out priest craft first. Come be men! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad."

After Independence, the Government of India took up the removal of untouchability as one of its main and important task. In order to end exploitation of these sections at the hands of upper caste Hindus, the modern polity provided many protective measures in the constitution and initiated many provinces of their social development. The schemes which have been taken up for socio-economic upliftment of scheduled castes are in the field of education, occupation, economic upliftment health and housing schemes. The Indian Government has provided many facilities in the field of education and occupation to scheduled castes in order to bring about their upliftment. And finally, the constitution of India came with the declaration to abolish, inequality, on the basis of 'caste, sex, religion, colour and creed.'

In order to develop a positive attitude towards lower castes; Gandhiji introduced the word 'Harijan'. Now it is necessary to throw some light on the manner in which the term 'Harijan' is used and practiced by different thinkers and writers. Sometimes one can find that the terms 'untouchable' and 'Scheduled Caste' are mistakenly used to indicate the same class of people. The anomalous situation leads to a lot of difficulties in perceptual understanding of the Scheduled Castes, but all Scheduled Castes may not be 'Harijans' or 'untouchables.' The Constitution of India has been quite candid in the identification of Scheduled. The census of India 1961; Volume-V, (for Gujarat) gives a clear understanding that the religion is the main reference element on which the existence of scheduled caste rests. It says, "Unlike the Scheduled Tribes, which may belong to any religion scheduled castes can only belong either to the Hindu or the Sikh religion."

It is well known fact that the 'Sudras' were classified as inferior and the last 'Varna' to other three Varnas, in ancient social system in India. Along with this several social, economic and political restrictions were imposed on them. This classified 'Sudras' includes various caste groups, which have suffered social and economic inequity since ages. They had to stay outside the villages. The concept of pollution was attached to them and they were treated as untouchable castes. These untouchables were officially defined as depressed castes in 1932 and systematically listed in the 1931-Census of India. M. K. Gandhi named the untouchables as 'Harijans ('Hari' means 'God' and 'Jan' means 'People'. Hence, Harijans means 'People of God' or 'Children of God') and wanted the society to accept untouchables within them.

So far as the remedies of casteism is concerned, N. Jayapalan in his famous book "Indian Society and Social Institutions" (Vol-1, PP.66-76) has put forwarded the following remedies of casteism:

(a) Encouragement to the inter-caste affiliations (b) Proper Education (c) Restrictions on the use of word 'Caste' (d) Achievement of cultural and economic equality, and (e) Discouragement to the claims of the casteism at all levels of public life.

2.7 Evolution of the Scheduled Castes in India

The Hindu Social organization was traditionally divided into the two main sub strata known as 'Dwijas' (twice born) and 'Sudras' the 'Dwijas' comprised the three upper caste Hindus i.e. the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas, while the 'Sudras' consisted of the lower castes who were lower by virtue of their low gradation in the Hindu Social order (who in due course of time were denied access to religious places and even watering points).

The first three castes are twice-born (Dwija), because they have the right of 'Upanayana Sanskar' (initiation ceremony) by which they come to religious maturity, able to study the Vedas (holy texts), perform Vedic rites and study other Sanskrit texts. It occurs for the boys at the age of 8 for Brahmins, 11 years for Kshatriyas and 12 years for the Vaishayas. The equivalent for girls comes with marriage. But the Sudras are considered as 'Ekajati' (once born), because they have no such 'Upanayan Sanskara' which is symbolic of re-birth. They are not supposed to study the Veda and other Sanskrit texts as well as perform Vedic rites.

In the ancient times, the under-privileged people were known by the various names such as 'Avarna', 'Sudra', 'Ashprishya' etc. All these names in the past signified that the caste Hindus (so called high caste) looked upon them as degraded human beings worthy of all categories of so-called lower occupations. The greatest stigma attached by Hinduism is related to ritual uncleanlines of a person. This was a unique way of isolating a particular group of people serving the so-called high caste people in the Hindu society. No where in the world, we find that a person is looked down upon as unclean because he undertakes certain activities of keeping the environment clean for maintenance of hygienic standards. Thus, the question of unclean is illogical. Many scholars and thinkers have tried to explore as to have this custom of untouchability has come to be practiced by the Hindus. There is no mention of such a practice in the Hindu Dharma Shashtras where one finds some historical perspective of development of Hindu ethos.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, one of the architects of the constitution of India, made vigorous efforts to study Hindu scriptures and to find out whether there is any mention of the practice of untouchability either in treatise called Dharmashutra or Shruti of the Hindus. The term "out caste" does not indicate in any way that the Scheduled Castes are thrown out of the Hindu fold. On the contrary, it simply signifies that they do not have the privilege to mix with in day to day social life with the people of other three 'Varnas' based on specialised occupational structure of the society.

These so called lower castes were variously known until the eighteenth century as 'broken man', outcaste, antyajas, avarnas, atisudras, untouchable etc. In British official some time late in the last century the term "depressed classes" was introduced and

remained the most commonly used, though vogue name of the group for many decades, till the census report of India.

The British census which was first undertaken in 1801 was the ancestor of the Indian census but there was an important difference between the two. The census in Britain was primarily concerned with demographic and economic issues (only once in 1851 there was question on religion and that too was incorporated after a lot of discussion).

From 1806 onwards, the listing of castes started and it gained momentum during the census (1871-1931) and was discontinued after independence.

In the year 1885, the format of the first ethnographic survey in terms of fundamentally altered parameters of post-colonial ethnography. The reason was that the ethnographic survey of the colonial period did not cover the whole of India not even cover all communities and treated communities as islands; it ignored the linkages, interaction and integration at the grass roots levels. There was also on enormous information gap about our people, in spite of years of anthropological research. Therefore, the survey on the people of India was undertaken in 1985 with a fourfold objective to generate a brief descriptive anthropological profile of all communities; to show their linkages to ascertain the impact of change and development and to bridge the information gap. The project was completed seven (7) years later. The tentative findings are recapitulated below:

The project enabled us to identify, locate, and list up as many as 4635 communities in all parts of India, consequently, the first definitive list of communities in India was prepared which included castes, tribes, and minorities etc. This has helped to prepare probably the most comprehensive list of communities, their sub groups, divisions, clans, lineages, surnames and titles on both primary and secondary materials.

2.7.1 Emergence of the concept Scheduled Caste

Not much of elucidation is available about the introduction of the term 'Scheduled Castes' either in the constitution or in any laws or rules. In the year 1901 Risley, the then Census Commissioner attempted for the first time to classify the Hindu castes dividing the community into seven categories. Then in the year 1911 an enquiry was made to ascertain which of the castes and tribes were discriminated against on religious and social grounds. In 1921, for the first time, the discriminated castes and tribes were given the name 'depressed classes'. J.H. Hutton, the then Census Commissioner systematically categorized the depressed classes.

The expression of the term 'Scheduled Castes' first was coined by the Simon Commission and was placed in the Government of India Act. 1935. So the term Scheduled Caste first appeared in Government of India Act. 1935,(Although, Hutton started systematization in 1931). In April 1936, the Government of India Scheduled Caste order issued by British Government specified certain castes, races and tribes as Scheduled Castes in different provinces of India. The list of Scheduled Caste (issued in 1936) was continuation of the earlier list of depressed classes. In the list drawn in 1950 was the revised version of the list of Scheduled Castes under the Government of India Scheduled Castes order, 1936 (the ground was social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of the historical customs of untouchability).

At the time when free India's constitution was on avail, our first Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, realized that special attention needed to be paid to the backward sections of the society. The three sections of our society were under consideration viz. (i) the Scheduled Castes (SCs), (ii)

the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and backward classes who were neither SC nor ST, but were backward due to social, educational and economic factors.

Article 341 of the constitution empowers the President of India, after consulting the head of the particular state to notify by an order, "The castes, races or tribes which shall for the purpose of the constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Caste in relation to that state." Hence, Scheduled Castes are those groups which are named in the Scheduled Caste order in force for the time being.

2.7.2 Constitutional Provisions regarding Scheduled Castes

According to the provisions of article 341 of the Constitution the President of India is empowered to notify the list of Scheduled Castes. The Constitution of India Schedules Castes order 1950, stressed that no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a scheduled caste. It was again modified in 1956 and persons professing Sikhism were also deemed to be a member of a scheduled caste.

The Preamble itself has provided the provision to secure to all our citizens; Justice, Social, Economic and Political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and opportunity; whereby the concept of disabilities arising out of the practice of untouchability in earlier period find no place in our solemn pledge for a united and integrated India.

According to the 8th Schedule of Indian Constitution, scheduled castes are recognised and identified as weaker sections of society. The President of India issued two constitutional orders, one for the scheduled castes and another for the scheduled tribes in

1950. The constitutional order for recognising the scheduled castes was issued under Article 341. The important constitutional provisions and their implementation in the state relating scheduled caste and scheduled tribes are:

Article 15,Denotes, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, castes, sex or place of birth.

Article 16,Provides, equality of opportunity in matter of public employments.

Article 17, States about 'abolition of untouchability'.

Article 23, Provides the provision of 'prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour or bonded labour'.

Article 29, States about the 'protection of interest of minorities by religion, race, caste, language against bar on the admission to educational institutions.

Article 39, Provides equal justice and free legal aid and protection against atrocities.

Article 46,States about the protection of educational and economic interest.

Article 330, Deals with the 'reservation of seats for scheduled castes / scheduled tribes in the house of people.

Article 332, Deals with the reservation of seats in the state Legislative Assemblies.

Implementation of the above constitution provisions has been enhanced by the appointment of Commissioner for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and the institution of various commissions from time to time under the Article 338 and Article 340 respectively".

Article 335 of the constitution provides the claims of the members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistent with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in making appointments to posts and services, in connection with the affairs of the union or of a state.

2.7.3 Measures Undertaken for the Welfare of the Scheduled Castes in India

The state governments have separate departments to look after the welfare of the Scheduled Castes in India. Their administrative set-up, however, varies from state to state. A number of voluntary organizations also promote the welfare of dalits. The important organizations of an all India character include the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Delhi; the Hindu Sweepers Sevak Samaj, New Delhi etc.

2.7.4 Five Year Plans and the Backward Castes

One of the major concerns of Indian planning has been the welfare and development of the weaker sections of society and among them more especially that of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes who constituted nearly one quarter of the total population. These groups have, for historical reasons, remained socially and economically backward, and hence consorted efforts have been made under the plan to raise their social and economic status, as required by the Directive Principle of Article 46 of the Constitution.

The welfare of the 'Dalits' has been given special attention in the Five Year Plans. The size of the investment on the special programmes has been increasing from plan to plan. The expenditure (Rs.30.04 crores) in the First Five Year Plan(1951-56) increased

by 2.6 times in the Second five Year Plan(1956-61),by 3.3 times in the Third Five Year Plan(1961-66),by 5.7 times in the Fourth Five Year Plan(1969-74),by 9.8 times in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79),by 44.5 times in the (1,337 crores)in the Sixth Plan (1980-85),by 52 times in the Seventh Five Year Plan(1985-90) and by 59 times in the Eighth Five Year Plan(1992-97).

It is known to almost all that the developmental planning launched in 1951 through the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) envisaged that the programmes under various sectors of development would benefit all sections of the population including SCs. But, unfortunately, it never happened so. Therefore, special programmes under the Backward Classes Sector were formulated, keeping in view the special requirements of SCs. The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) promised to ensure that the benefits of economic development accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society in order to reduce inequalities. The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) advocated greater 'equality of opportunity' and a reduction in disparities in income and wealth and even distribution of economic power. The Fourth and Fifth Five year Plan (1969-78) envisaged the 'basic goal as rapid increase in the standard of living of the people through measures which also promote equality and social justice'. One of the important features of the subsequent Annual Plan (1979-80) was the launching of the special mechanism of Special Component Plan (SCP) for SCs to ensure that these groups receive their due share of funds/benefits from the other developmental sectors. The Sixth Plan (1980-85) marked a shift in the approach to the development of SCs. Special emphasis was laid on the implementation of the newly launched SCP for SCs facilitating easy convergence and pooling of resources from all the other developmental sectors in proportion to the

population of SCs and monitoring of various developmental programmes for the benefit of the SCs. In the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90), SCP for SCs was strengthened, while the other schemes for the welfare and development of SCs continued. There was a substantial increase in the flow of funds for the development of the SCs under SCP from State Plans, Central Plans, Special Central Assistance (SCA) and Institutional Finance resulting in the expansion of infrastructural facilities and enlargement of their coverage. Priority in the Seventh five year Plan was given to the educational development of SCs. Another important achievement of this Plan was the setting up of a national Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) in 1989 to extend loans-cum-subsidies and thus encourage these Groups to become gainfully engaged in various income-generation activities.

The major objectives of the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) was to intensify the efforts and to bridge the gap between the development of SCs and other sections of the society, so that by the turn of the century these disadvantaged sections of the population could be brought on par with the rest of the society. It was envisaged that all forms of oppression of SCs, suppression of their rights, untouchability, non-payment of minimum wages etc. would be eliminated, so as to enable them to avail of the benefits of all developmental efforts. Although the efforts have paid dividends with regard to improvement of socio-economic status of these groups, the benefits were, however, not evenly distributed among all communities. As such, a lot remains to be done to achieve the goal of bringing these groups on par with the rest of the society.

The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) was committed to empower the Socially Disadvantaged Groups as agents of socio-economic change and development through-

creating an enabling environment conducive for SCs and other sections of the society to exercise their rights freely, enjoy their privileged and be able to lead a life with confidence and dignity on par with the rest of the society; ensuring removal of disparities; eliminating exploitation and suppression and providing protection to the disadvantaged groups; ensuring developmental benefits to 'reach the un-reached' through equitable distribution and social justice; ensuring participation of these groups in the process of planning not merely as beneficiaries but also as participants in planning programmes and their implementations; accelerating the ongoing process of improving socio-economic status through the effective implementation of various policies and programmes to bring them on par with the rest of the society; and ensuring a certain percentage of funds/benefits under SCP for SCs and Tribal Sub-Plan(TSP) for STs. The approach adopted towards empowering these groups in the Ninth Plan was holistic in nature, to accomplish their all round development through (i) Social Empowerment; (ii) Economic Empowerment; and (iii) Social Justice with an inter-governmental focus and inputs from both governmental and non-governmental agencies. The same is sought to be achieved through the efforts put in by various welfare-related Ministries/Departments and nodal Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment which is responsible for the development of SCs. They include the following: Education and Literacy, Health Policy, Employment, Development of Women and Child, Development of Rural People, Educational Development, Development in Economy etc (Source: Dalits from Marginalisation to Mainstreams, Umesh Bhatt, P: 98-135).

In the first two plans, welfare programmes were drawn up and implemented for providing the educational and economic status of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes

and other backward classes. In addition, in the tribal and the scheduled areas, an area development approach was adopted. By the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974), however, it was evident that the strategy for the development of these disadvantaged groups would have to be based on comprehensive economic and human resource development efforts so that these sections of the population would acquire the ability to utilize the fruits of general economic development arising from the various sectorial development programmes. The Tribal Sub- Plan approach was adopted in the Fifth Five Year Plan(1974-1979), and the Special Component Plans (for SCs) formulated in the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-1985), and these resulted in earmarked allocations for the Tribal Sub- Plan and scheduled castes socio-economic development, apart from the general programmes of economic development undertaken by the Central and State Governments. In the Sixth five year Plan the emphasis shifted from welfare to family and beneficiary- oriented development schemes with the general framework of socio-economic programmes specially directed at and designed for the benefit of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In the Sixth five year Plan, a definite target of assisting 50 per cent of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe families to cross the poverty line was adopted for the first time.

At the beginning of the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990), an assessment is called for in order to ascertain if the major objective of narrowing the socio-economic gap between the general level of economic and social development and that of the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) have been achieved and to know how far the modified strategies have been successful in tackling

the historical legacy of their backwardness. Specially, it was important to know what has been impact of the programmes undertaken for their benefit in the following areas:

(a) Education, which accounted for over 50 per cent of all expenditure up to the end of the Sixth Plan

(b) Economic programmes, which accounted for about 28 per cent of expenditure till the end of the Sixth Plan, and

(c) Social welfare schemes, which accounted for about 22 per cent of total expenditure till the end of the Sixth Plan.

In the Eight Five Year Plan (1992-1997), high priority was given to SCs in addressing such issues as the removal of Untouchability, Suppression of rights, Land alienation, Non-payment of minimum wages, etc. The elimination of scavenging and rehabilitation of scavengers and provision of scholarships to children of parents engaged in unclean occupations were also emphasized. The National Safai Karamchari finance and Development Corporation was set up for guaranteeing employment generation and finance for Safai Karamcharis, with a major thrust on ensuring benefits for women. Voluntary organizations were promoted and assisted to play a partnership role in the designing and implementation of programmes, especially trainings for mobilizing community resources.

The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002), emphasized for SCs their 'participation' in Panchayat Raj institutions, in pursuance of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. The strategies adopted for them were social empowerment, economic empowerment and social justice in order to accelerate the socio-economic status of SCs.

The plan focused on the relationship between the rapid economic growth and the quality of life for the people of the country. The prime focus of the plan was to increase growth in the country with an emphasis on social justice and equity. The plan also aimed at correcting the historical inequalities which were still prevalent in the society. The plan paid due importance to Empowering the socially disadvantaged classes like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes.

Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) continued the three strategies of the Ninth Plan for the SCSP (Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan): (i) Social Empowerment through strengthening the existing educational development schemes and starting new higher education schemes; (ii) Economic empowerment through employment-cum-income generation activities; (iii) Social Justice through the elimination of all types of discrimination so as to improve their socio-economic conditions and bring them on par with the rest of society.

The efforts made in the previous Five year Plans have brought about some empowerment of SCs. However, gaps still exist in almost all social and economic dimensions between SCs and the general population. The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), provides an opportunity to restructure policies for faster, more broad-based and inclusive growth. In the Eleventh Five Year Plan, the thrust was on the expansion and inclusion of higher education, residential schools for SC/ST girls, adult education etc.

Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are among the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups in India. With its focus on 'faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth' the 12th Five Year Plan(2012-2017), highlights that concerns of the poor, the

Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes etc. must be addressed for growth to be inclusive. The state governments have also been spending a sizeable amount on the welfare of the 'Dalits'.

2.7.5 Central Schemes and Welfare of the Backward Castes

Some of the important centrally sponsored schemes are; (1) Coaching and Training for various competitive examinations (I.A.S, I.P.S etc.) in order to improve the representation of the Scheduled Castes in various services; (2) providing post-matric scholarships to students for higher education; (3) construction of Hostels for providing residential facilities to the Scheduled caste girls studying in Schools, Colleges and Universities; (4)Financial assistance to reputed social science research institutions for research in development and problems of Scheduled castes;(5) providing text books to Scheduled Caste students of Medical/ Engineering courses, and (6) scholarships and passage grants for higher education in abroad.

Besides the above measures to bring about their speedy development, the Constitution has also provided for adequate representation in the legislative organs at different levels as well as reservation in services and educational institutions. The reservation is 15 percent for the Scheduled Castes.

Though the principle of separate electorate was not accepted but the constituencies are earmarked from time to time from which persons belonging only to either Scheduled Castes can seek election.

In government services, special quotas are allotted to them. The reservations are not only confined to recruitments but they are also extended to promotions for higher

positions. To facilitate their adequate representation, concessions such as relaxation of age limit, relaxation in the standards of suitability, relaxation of the qualification and experience, have also been provided to them.(source: “Backward Castes, Tribes and Classes” in the book: Social Problems in India by Ram Ahuja Page no.158-192) Rawat publications, Jaipur, N.Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabd. Guwahati).

2.7.6 Commissions and Organisations for Backward Castes

(I) Kalelkar Commission; (II) Mandal Commission; (III)National Commission for SCs and STs; (IV)National Commission for Safai Karmcharis; And (V) National Commission for Backward Classes;

2.7.6.1 Kalelkar Commission and its Recommendations

Kalelkar Commission, the First Backward Classes Commission was constituted in 1953 under privision of Article 340 of the Constitution of India under the chairmanship of Dattatreya Balkrushna Kalelkar popularly known as Kaka Kalelkar (source: “Beyond Mandal and After” B.K. Roy Burman, p-19).The main aim of the commission was to develop better system and ensure that all the backward classes could get thorough boost up to lead respectable living.

Kalelkar commission gave several recommendations to the central government of India ever since it was established. The commission advised the Union and the State governments to look at the factors which could make it easy for them to uplift the backward a classes to improve their conditions through economic and social growth perspective.

Submission of the detailed report on 30 March 1955 was highly research based as it contained the whole list of 2,399 backward castes and communities besides 837 starred communities being categorized in "most backward" sections. The also suggested for caste-wise enumeration of population in census to implement in 1961 census and treat women into backward class category for their privilege.

A suggestion was also for the 70 percent seats reservation for qualified students of backward classes in all technical and professional institutions. Many new steps were suggested by the commission chairman, Kaka Kalelkar to improve the conditions of the backward classes of the society. This commission also encountered several disputes as Central government didn't on few of its recommendations.

In the words of B.K.Roy Burman, "I was connected with the First Backward Classes Commission (Kalelkar Commission) as an officer and also I was associated with the Second backward Commission (Mandal Commission) as an expert in an honorary capacity."(Source: 'Preface' of the popular Book entitled, "Beyond Mandal and after" by B.K. Roy Burman).

2.7.6.2 Mandal Commission and its Recommendation for Reservation

Mandal Commission is the Second Backward Class Commission. On 1st January, 1979 the then Janata Dal government formed a commission under the presendentship of B.P. Mandal, (Ex. Chief Minister of Bihar) and on 31st December, 1980 submitted its report. In the report it was mentioned that 52% of Indian population are, SC, ST, and OBC. So, equal percentage i.e.52% of central govt. should be reserved for them. But from 1980 to 1989 the govt. did not take any decision on that. During that time (in 1980) the Supreme

Court fixed that the reservation of seats should not be more than 50% any how. Hence, the Commission recommended 15% for the SCs, 7.5% for the STs and 27% for the OBCs total 49.50% of the total seats reserved for Backward Communities in India. In the year 1990, 7th August the Prime Minister of India, V.P. Singh declared that according to the recommendation of Mandal Commission, central govt. and under central govt. seats will be reserved i.e. 15% for Sc, 7.5% for ST and 27% for OBC.

The Janata Dal government took necessary steps to implement the Mandal Commission's Recommendations. But basing on the recommendations a wide agitation and protest took place. Former P.V Narsima Rao government delared on reservation policy in following ways, 15% reservation for the SCs, 7.5% for STs, and 27% for the OBCs in 1991, 25th September. Challenging which a case was filed in the Supreme Court and though in 1992, 16th December the Supreme Court gave its judgement that the reservation should not more than 50% at any cost but the Supreme Court also declared the decision of reservation as a legal one. The Minority Commission also supported the reservation system.

2.7.6.3 National Commission for SCs and STs

The first National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was setup in 1978 with Sri Bhola Paswan Shastri as its chairman and other four members. In 1990 the Commission for SC and ST was renamed as the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and it was set up as a National Level Advisory Body to advise the Government on broad policy issues and levels of development of Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Consequent upon the Constitution (Eighty-Ninth Amendment) Act.2003 the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has been replaced by (i) National Commission for Scheduled Castes and (ii) National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

The first National Commission for Scheduled Castes was constituted on 2004 with Suraj Bhan as the Chairperson. The Second National commission for Scheduled Castes in series was constituted on May 2007 with Buta Singh as the Chairperson. The Third National Commission for Scheduled Castes has been constituted on October 2010 with P.L. Punia as the Chairperson. It is a constitutional body (Article 338) established with a view to provide safeguards against the exploitation of Scheduled Castes to promote and protect their social, educational, economic and cultural interests, special provisions were made in the constitution.

The commission for SCs and STs also played an effective interventionist role in reviewing the progress of the implementation of Special Component Plan (SCP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) by the Central Ministries/Departments and the State Governments and also utilization of Special Central Assistance (SCA) to SCP and TSP. The outstanding contribution of the Commission during Plan period was holding national-level consultations with district District Development Commissioners/Collectors to develop a direct district-wise dialogue for receiving the first-hand report on the progress of the implementation of various policies and programmes in improving the status of these Target Groups.

2.7.6.4 National Commission for Safai Karmcharis

The Natioanal Commission for Safai Karmcharis, set up in 1994, has been playing its role in promoting as well as safeguarding the interests and rights of Safai Karamcharis, besides investigating specific grievances as well as matters relating to implementation of programmes and schemes for the welfare of the Safai Karamcharis.It also has the responsibility of over-seeing the progress of fulfilling the national commitment of Total Eradication of Manual Scavenging. Implementation of Special Mechanisms of SCP and SCA to SCP for SCs. (source: Dalits from Marginalisation to Mainstreams, Umesh Bhatt, and P: 117-118).

2.7.6.5 National Commission for Dalits

The National Commission for Backward Classes, was set up to advise the Government with regard to inclusion of various communities in the list of OBCs and also attend thereto the complaints received, could successfully tender advice to the Government in respect of 1,067 castes/communities. Out of which, 652 castes were included and 415 were rejected. The commission also initiated action on completing the task within the available time-frame. (Source: Dalits from Marginalisation to Mainstreams, Umesh Bhatt, P-117).

Besides the above commissions, there are various other organizations and committees which have played important role in the welfare of the Scheduled Castes, as for example we can cite the name of Dalit Panthers**.** Dalit Panthers is a reformist anti-caste organization, founded by Namdeo Dhasal and J.V. Power on 29 May 1972 in Mumbai.

Later on many Dalit activists joined this organization. In the mid-19th century, J. Phule started a Dalit movement to uplift the status of lower caste people.

2.8 Distribution of Scheduled Caste Population in India

After Independence the Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950 lists 1,108 Castes across 25 states in India. Among the 25 states / Union territories Karnataka alone includes (101) Scheduled Castes which is also the highest number and Goa includes the lowest number (05) of Scheduled Castes in India. Assam incorporates 16 castes as Scheduled Castes.

After independence Indian Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950 lists 1,108 castes across 25 sates of India. Among these 1,108 castes (commonly known as Scheduled Castes), Kaibartta is one of the Scheduled Castes who are also considered as lower castes.

Consequent to the promulgation of Constitutional Orders/ Amendments from 2002 to 2008 new entries have been made in both Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes list of 22 and 20 States / Union Territories respectively. In the list of Scheduled Castes 20 new castes have been added as main Scheduled Castes in the States and Union Territories. So, the number of main Scheduled Castes have been increased from 1221 to 1241 and number of main Scheduled Tribes from 664 to 705 during the last decade. In addition, 115 sub entries as synonymous / sub group / sections have been notified along with the main Scheduled Castes in 15 States / Union Territories.

Table no. 2.3 Distribution of Scheduled Castes in India (State-wise)

Sr.No.	State /Union territory	Number of Caste
1	Andhra Pradesh	60
2	Arunachal Pradesh	0
3	Assam	16
4	Bihar	23
5	Chhattisgarh	44
6	Goa	05
7	Gujarat	30
8	Haryana	37
9	Himachal Pradesh	57
10	Jammu and Kashmir	13
11	Jharkhand	22
12	Karnataka	101
13	Kerala	55
14	Madhya Pradesh	48
15	Maharashtra	59
16	Manipur	07
17	Meghalaya	16
18	Mizoram	16

19	Nagaland	0
20	Orissa	93
21	Punjab	39
22	Rajasthan	59
23	Sikkim	04
24	Tamil Nadu	76
25	Tripura	34
26	Uttar Pradesh	66
27	Uttaranchal	65
28	West Bengal	60
29	Andaman & Nicobar Island	0
30	Chandigarh	36
31	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	04
32	Daman & Diu	05
33	NCT of Delhi	36
34	Lakshadweep	0
35	Pondicherry	16
Total no. of castes =1208		

(N.B: State-wise list of Scheduled Castes is presented in the Annexure.)

The Scheduled Castes population in India is unevenly distributed. The above table shows that out of the 35 states / Union territories Karnataka are having the highest

number (101) of Scheduled Castes where as Sikkim, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, are having the lowest number (04) of Scheduled Castes.One noticeable point is that Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Andaman & Nicobar Island and Lakshadweep have not recorded any Scheduled Caste. The Indian state, Assam incorporates 16 numbers of castes as Scheduled Castes.

Table no. 2.4 Scheduled Caste Populations in Indian States / U.Ts.

States/ U.T.	Name	Total Population	Scheduled Castes Population
00	India	1210854977	201378372
01	Jammu & Kashmir	12541302	924991
02	Himachal Pradesh	6864602	1729252
03	Punjab	27743338	8860179
04	Chandigarh	1055450	199086
05	Uttarakhand	10086292	1892516
06	Haryana	25351462	5113615
07	NCT of Delhi	16787941	2812309
08	Rajasthan	68548437	12221593
09	Uttar Pradesh	199812341	41357608
10	Bihar	104099452	16567325
11	Sikkim	610577	28275
12	Arunachal Pradesh	1383727	0
13	Nagaland	1978502	0
14	Manipur	2855794	79328

15	Mizoram	1097206	1218
16	Tripura	3673917	654918
17	Meghalaya	2966889	17355
18	Assam	31205576	2231321
19	West Bengal	91276115	21463270
20	Jharkhand	23988134	3985644
21	Odisha	41974218	7288463
22	Chhattisgarh	25545198	3274269
23	Madhya Pradesh	72626809	11342320
24	Gujarat	60439692	4074447
25	Daman & Diu	243247	6124
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	343709	6186
27	Maharashtra	112374333	13275898
28	Andhra Pradesh	84580777	13878078
29	Karnataka	61095297	10474992
30	Goa	1458545	25449
31	Lakshadweep	64473	0
32	Kerala	33406061	3039573
33	Tamil Nadu	72147030	14438445
34	Puducherry	1247953	196325
35	Andaman & Nicobar Island	380581	0

(Source: Census-2011)

The above table shows that the total population of India according to 2011 census is 1210854977 out of which 201378372 are Scheduled Caste population. The table also proves that Uttar Pradesh is having the highest number of Scheduled Caste population with 41357608 Scheduled Caste populations and Mizoram has the lowest number of Scheduled Caste population with 1218. The very table further shows that Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Lakshadweep, and Andaman & Nicobar Island have no Scheduled Caste population. From the table it is clear that the total population of Assam is 31205576 of which 2231321 are Scheduled Caste population.

Table no. 2.5 Size of Population, Literacy Rate and Work Participation Rates among Scheduled Caste by Sates, in India

India/ States/U. T.	Population (million)	Literacy (%)			Work Participation Rate (%)			Agricultural Worker (%)
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	
India	166.64	55	67	42	40	51	29	66
Jammu & Kashmir	0.77	59	70	47	37	50	22	58
Himachal Pradesh	1.50	70	80	60	49	54	43	71
Punjab	7.03	56	63	48	37	51	21	42
Chandigarh	0.16	68	76	57	35	52	15	0
Uttaranchal	1.52	63	77	49	38	46	29	63
Haryana	4.09	55	67	42	39	48	27	50
Delhi	2.34	71	81	59	30	48	10	01
Rajasthan	9.69	52	69	34	42	49	34	65
Uttar Pradesh	35.15	46	60	30	35	47	21	73
Bihar	13.05	28	40	16	40	49	30	86

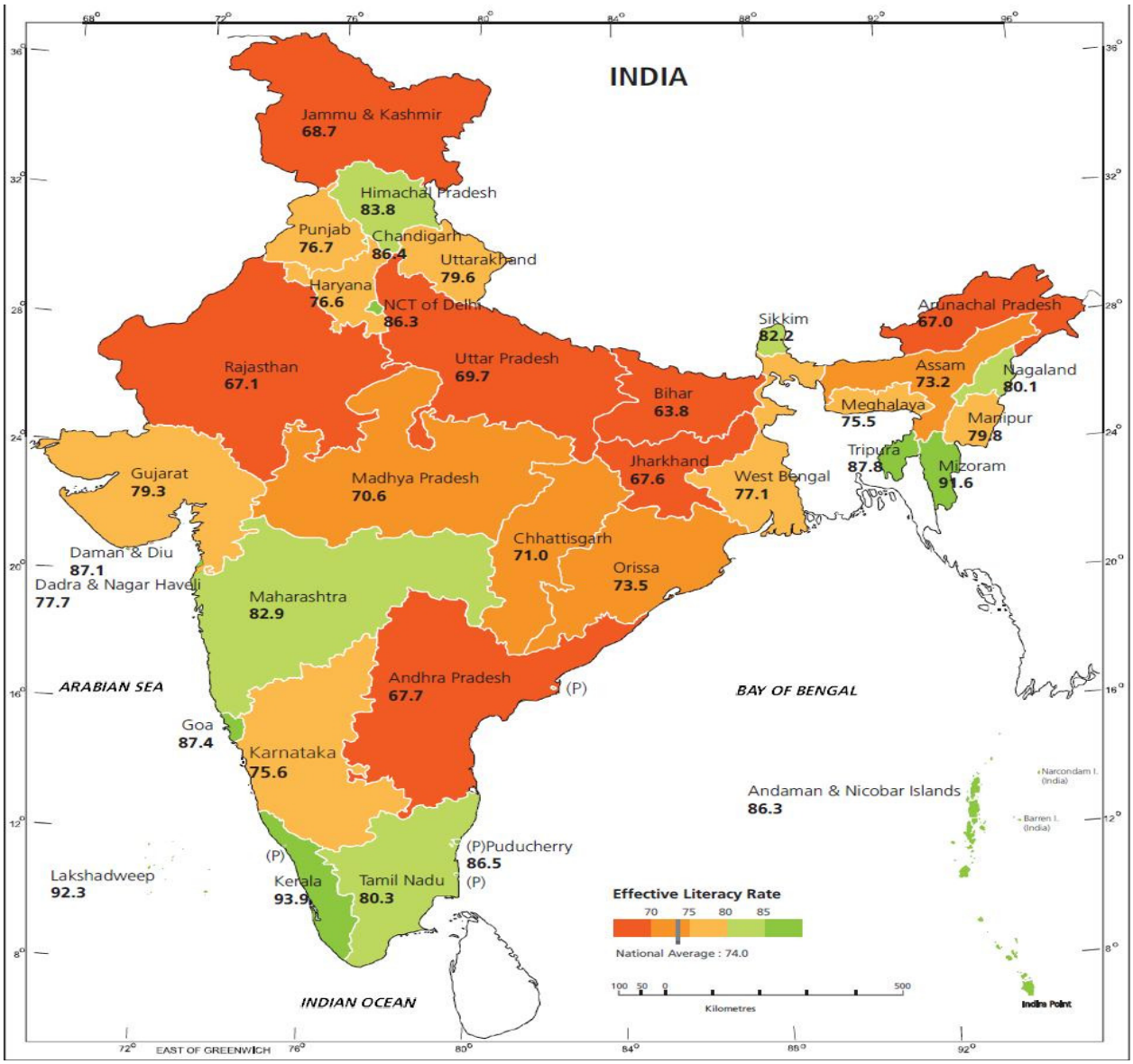
Sikkim	0.03	63	70	56	43	52	34	52
Arunachal Pradesh	0.01	68	76	55	38	57	13	16
Manipur	0.06	72	82	63	51	55	47	55
Mizoram	0.0003	89	88	92	69	85	12	01
Tripura	0.56	75	82	67	33	50	14	41
Meghalaya	0.01	56	66	45	31	49	12	17
Assam	1.83	67	76	57	34	50	17	46
West Bengal	18.45	59	71	47	39	54	22	57
Jharkhand	3.19	38	52	23	38	47	28	66
Orissa	6.08	56	70	40	39	52	26	64
Chhattisgarh	2.42	64	79	49	43	48	38	74
Madhya Pradesh	9.16	59	72	43	43	50	36	70
Gujarat	3.59	71	83	58	39	51	27	49
Daman & Diu	0.005	85	94	76	31	49	12	03
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0.004	78	88	67	38	53	21	14
Maharashtra	9.88	72	83	60	42	50	33	59
Andhra Pradesh	12.34	54	64	43	51	55	46	78
Karnataka	8.56	53	64	42	46	54	38	64
Goa	0.02	72	82	62	41	53	29	11
Kerala	3.12	83	88	78	40	54	27	35
Tamil Nadu	11.86	63	73	53	48	56	40	69
Pondicherry	0.16	69	78	60	40	51	30	57

(Source: 2001 Census of India)

Note: (1) Work participation rate includes main and marginal workers.

(2) Agricultural workers include cultivators and agricultural labourers.

Literacy Map of India



Source: Census of India 2011

So far as Literacy is concerned, among the Indian States and Union Territories, Mizoram secured highest rank with 89 percent, where as Bihar got the lowest rank with only 28 percent. In case of male literacy, Daman and Diu secured highest position with 94 percent and Bihar secured lowest position with 28 percent of literacy. In case of female literacy, Mizoram got the highest rank with 92 percent and again Bihar got the lowest rank with 16 percent of literacy.

Regarding Work Participation Rate, Mizoram is the state which has highest percentage of work participation with 69 percent; on the other hand Delhi has the lowest percentage of work participation with 30 percent. In case of male work participation, Mizoram secured top most position with 85 percent and Uttranchal secured bottom most position with 46 percent of work participation. In case of female work participation, Manipur occupies first position with 47 percent and Delhi occupies last position in work participation in India.

So far as Agriculture Work in India is concerned, the credit goes to Bihar for having the highest position with 86 percent and on the contrary, Delhi and Mizoram both have lowest position with 01 percent of agricultural worker.

2.9 Different Groups of Scheduled Castes in Barak Valley

In Barak Valley also there are different groups of Scheduled Castes viz. Bansphor, Bhuimali, Brittal Bania, Dhupi, Dugla, Hira, Jalkeot, Jhalo, Kaibartta, Lalbegi, Mahara, Mehtar, Muchi, Namasudra, Patni, Sutradhar etc. who live in a significant number.

Table no.2.6 Distribution of Scheduled Castes in Barak Valley (2001 census)

Sl. No.	State /Districts	Percentage of SCs to total population of the State /District	Percentage of SCs to total State's SC population
1	Assam	6.9	100
2	Barak Valley	38.3	21.8
3	Cachar	14.4	11.4
4	Karimganj	13.0	7.2
5	Hailakandi	10.9	3.2

(According to 2001 census)

The above table reveals that in Assam out of the total population, 6.9% population are Scheduled Castes (according to 2001 Census) .In Barak Valley out of the total population 38.3% are Scheduled Castes, which is 21.8% of the total state's Scheduled Caste population. The district, Cachar comprises 14.4% SC population out of the total population of the district which is 11.4 % of the total State's (Assam) SC population. Out of the total population of the district, Karimganj includes 13.0% SC population which is 7.2% of the total State's SC population. The table again shows that out of the total population of the district, Hailakandi incorporates 10.9% SC population which is 3.2% of the State's total SC population.

Table no. 2.7 Distribution of Scheduled Caste population in Assam and Barak Valley (2011-Census)

Name of the Place	Scheduled Caste Population	Male	Female
Assam	2231321	1145314	1086007
Barak Valley	493446	253804	239642
Cachar	264897	136051	128846
Karimganj	157890	81384	76506
Hailakandi	70659	36369	34290

(Source: Statistical Hand Book Assam, 2011

2.10. Kaibartta in Assam and Barak Valley

2.10.1 The Origin and History of the Kaibartta Community

Regarding the origin and history of the Kaibartta community there is no reliable source and universally accepted view. Different expert provide different views. As for example H.H.Risley, in his famous book 'The Tribes and Castes of Bengal' (page no.375-382) has written, "No serious attempt can be made to trace the origin of the Kaibartta. The physical character of the caste are not marked enough to through any certain light on their descent, while their exogamous divisions, having been obviously borrowed from the

Brahmans, contribute in no way to the solution of the question. All that can be said is that they are one of the characteristic castes of the deltaic districts of Bengal that the nucleus of the group was probably Dravidian, but that their original cast of feature may have been to some extent refined by a slight infusion of Aryan blood. The type as it stands at present is distinctly an intermediate one, equally removed from the extreme types of Aryan and Dravidian races found in Bengal."

Concerning the etymology of the word Kaibartta, H.H.Risley opined,"there has been considerable difference of opinion. Some derived it from 'ka,' water and 'varta', livelihood; but Lassen says that the use of 'ka' in this sense is extremely unusual in early Sanskrit, and that the true derivation is 'Kimvarta,' meaning a person following a low or derading occupation. This, he adds,would be in keeping with the pedigree assigned to the caste in Manu, where the Kaibartta, also known as Margava or dasa, is said to have been begotten by a Nishada father and an Ayogavi mother,and to subsist by his labour in boats.On the other hand, the Brahma-Vaivartta Purana gives the Kaibartta a Kshatriya father and a Vaisys mother ,a far more distinguished parentage; for the Ayogavi, being born from a Sudra father and a Vaisya mother,is classed as 'Pratiloma',begotten against the hair ,or in the inverse order of the precedence of the castes." The writer again said, "There seem to be good grounds for the belief that the Kaibartta were among the earliest inhabitants of Bengal and occupied a commanding position."

In the 'Preface' of the book "Bangalir Jatitattwa O Krishijibi Sampraday" (by Dr.Suhrid Kumar Bhaumik, year of publication-1986) Sri Atul Sur has written,

"It seems to me that the Kaibartta Community was the inhabitants of the place named 'Korbot' and basing on the names found in the ancient Sanskrit literature an equation can be made.The equation can be presented in this way;

Korbot = Kebot =Kaibartta.

So, from the above equation it can be said that the word 'Kaibartta' has come from the place they have inhabited.

Sri Atul Sur also said, "Once upon a time the Kaibartta community has established their kingdom and they have created their own language also. There is no confusion that they have a glorious history."

In the Vyasa-Sukta and Padma Purana we find that Kaibartta is the creation of Kshatriya father and Vaishya mother.

As for example we can cite the verse of Padma Purana;

"Kshatrabirjena Vaishyanang Kaibartta Parikirttita"

(Source: Bangalir Jatitattwa O Krishijibi Sampraday, page-17)

Anthropologically, Kaibartta belong to the Dravidian origin and Hindu by religion. In the study entitled "Ethnic Communities of Bangladesh" by Kibriaul Khleque, we find that the Kaibartta fall in the Indo-Aryan Language family.

Regarding the history of the Kaibartta Shri Samarendra Das Choudhury (Author:Kaibartta Samajer Itibritta) is of the opinion that the ancestors of the today's

Kaibartta in time immemorial past were living on the bank of river 'Suryu' and 'Gogri' of eastern India's north- west province. There they were very much dominant and due to various reasons, the forefathers of the present Kaibartta community changed their place of residence and reached Southern place i.e. Central India and started their colony. Later on they crossed the East side by attacking and conquering different habitation they reached at the sea shore and entered in the Utkal (Orissa) province. This Utkal province is famous in history as 'Kalinga' (Orissa including the Dravidian region on its south). From that very place the Kaibartta most probably in 822 Shakabda (the Scythian Era) reached in Midnapore district. Some people are of the view that Midnapore was under Orissa province. From the census 1872, it is clear that Midnapore of West Bengal was the Kaibartta populous state. Then generally, in the whole Bengal and the then in Assam Province they extended their living and segregated themselves.

The author of the book, also opined, " In the last part of the 11th century as the big fishes eat the small fishes, similarly the powerful king conquered the kingdom of the weak king as a result a lawlessness condition was created.In that situation in Gauda (Bengal) the public together selected the Kaibartta hero Dibyak as their King. Dibyak by establishing peace and disciplined administration formed a powerful Kaibartta Kingdom.Arising of this is known as 'Kaibartta Bidroha'or "Kaibartta Rebellion of Bengal" in the history. After the death of Dibyak, his brother 'Rudak' took the responsibility of the kingdom but he was not competent enough for administration. After his kingship, his son 'Bhim' took the responsibility and became the king. He extended the jurisdiction of the pre-established Kaibartta kingdom by incorporating the subordinate small kingdom and made a big and powerful Kaibartta administration in 'Barendri'. Bhim was a powerful and

popular administrator. He never gave up his duty due to greediness (he was not greedy at all) and that's why he became popular and famous. Due to which Ram Pal could not attack the Barendri, basing only on his own strength, rather seek help (tried heart and soul to get help) from the king of the nearby state by spending money and land. Then they came forward to help him (1) Mathan, maternal uncle of Ram pal and who was also the chieftain of 'Rastrakot' with his two sons as well as a nephew.Along with them almost (fifteen) 15 chieftain jointly attacked the Kaibartta kingdom .So it was very difficult to face that big and powerful militancy, yet he fought heart and soul to save his kingdom and tenants but the mighty force headed by Ram Pal caught hold, then arrested and later on killed him. In this way the age of Kaibartta kingship came to an end.

From the famous book, "Bangalir Itihas (Adi Parva)" by Sri Nihar Ranjan Roy, it is shows that in Barendra (ancient Gauda or North Bengal) the Kaibartta dominance was there for 25 years.

Among the several of work of Bhim the most important are "Bhim Sagar', "Bhimer Jangal", etc. are till date lying at different places of Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Baguda of Bangladesh. (Source: "Kaibartta Samajer Itibritta"by Sri Samarendra Das Chaudhury, page no.22-28).

Sri Samarendra Das Chaudhury in his book also mentioned that in Integrating Bengal and Assam both the places were the declining place (abode) of the people of Kaibartta community. A huge number of this people of Kaibartta community lived in Syhlet, Mymansing, Kumilla and Dhaka district of Bangladesh. Before partition of India 50% of

the people of the said community seems were the inhabitants of these few districts and rest 50% lived in Midnapore Hoogly, Hawrah, Nadia districts of West Bengal.

They lived largely in Habiganj and Sunamjganj Sub- Division of Syhlet.In comparison to that in proper Syhlet, Maulabhibazar and in the then Karimganj sub-division they were less in number. But after partition of India portion of land of Karimganj sub-division which added to Cachar and came under Indian administration, in those areas they formrd /created a few new villages. In Kishoreganj Tangail, and Netrokona sub-division under the district of Maymansingha , the people of the Kaibartta community were living in a large number in comparison to the other sub-divisions like Jamalpur and proper Maimansingh their number was very less.Nowhere as much as the Kaibartta people were living as they were in Brahmanbadia and Chandpur sub-division of Komilla district in Bangladesh.It is said that In the village of Kalikachha of Brahmanbadia sub-division many educated Kaibartta people were living there.Under the district of Dakha, in proper Dakha, Manikganj, Narayanganj also the people of Kaibartta community were found in large quantity. Beside these the number may be more or less they were also living in Faridpur, Khulna, Barishal, Pabna, Nuakhali, Rongpur and Chittagong district.

In West Bengal also in almost all districts the Kaibartta were living and among those in Midnapur ,Hoogly, Howrah, Nadia, 24 Parganas they were more in number but in Bardwan, Birbhum , Bankura, district they were less in number. Sri Samarendra Das Chaudhury (author of the book ‘Kaibartta Samajer Itibritta’) is of the opinion that out of 27 Lac people of the Kaibartta community of Integrated Bengal and Assam 13,58,531 people (1872 Census) were living in Midnapore, Hoogly, Haurah, Bardhawan, Bankura, Birbhum, 24 Parganas and Nadia etc eight (08) districts of West Bengal .among those

number of population 6,92,140 were living in Midnapore and 2,88,621 were in Hoogly and Haurah districts of West Bengal. That means these were their original place of residence.

As we know that the Kaibartta is an ancient community. Now a days one section of the said community is known as 'Mahishyas' but before the 1872 census, there was no such type of division among them. But later on (in 1901 census), a portion of Kaibartta people who were rich, and educated tried to create a division among the people of this community, and enlisted themselves as Mahishyas. consequently a big portion of them separated from the main stream of the Kaibartta.But the learned people could able to realize the fact regarding the Mahishyas and that is the famous Mahishya writer Sri Judhisthir Jana in his famous book, "Brihattara Tamrolipter Itihas" has written, "Infect before Sen rule,there was no caste division in Bengal. So it seems to me that to whom we call Mahishya today, were Kaibartta in the past."

Like-wise, in the words of J. H. Hutton, "The Haliya Kaibartta, when they aspired to climb, began first to segregate themselves from the Jalia Kaibartta, then get the newly discovered name of Mahishyas accepted and by now may be regarded as a separate caste, the Kaibartta origin of which may be in time become completely forgotten."

In the words of Sri Atul Sur, *"Mahishya tatha Kaibartta jati je Bangalir ek suprachin jati se bishaye ami lekhaker sange ekmat……."* ("I agree with the writer in his point that Mahisyas or Kaibartta is an ancient caste of the Bengalese.")

(Source: Preface of the book "Bangalir Jatitattwa O Krishijibi Sampraday" (by Dr.Suhrid Kumar Bhaumik, year of publication-1986).

From the above statement it is clear that Mahishya and Kaibartta is one and same community and it is an ancient community.

Table no. 2.8 Different Jati and their Occupations according to Amarkosh

Sl. No.	Father	Mother	Jati	Occupation
1	Vaishya	Sudra	Karan (Kayasta)	Lipi Lekhan (Calligraphy)
2	Brahman	Vaishya	Ambastha (Baidya)	Treatment
3	Brahman	Sudra	Ugra(Aagari)	Warfare
4	Vaishya	Kshatriya	Magadh(Bhat)	Stutipath (An Encomiast)
5	Kshatriya	Vaishya	Mahishya	Jyotish O Sangeet Shastra (Astrology and Music)
6	Sudra	Vaishya	Kshatree	Seba-britti(Service)
7	Kshatriya	Brahman	Suta	Sarathi(A Chariot-Driver)
8	Vaishya	Brahman	Baidehak	Trade and Commerce
9	Mahishya	Karani	Rathkar	Rath-maker(A Chariot-maker)
10	Sudra	Brahman	Chandal	Shav-Daha(Cremation)

(Source: Bangalir Jatitattwa O Krishijibi Sampraday, page-16)

From the above table it is proved that according to Amarkosh the occupation of the Mahishya was ‘Jyotish and Sangeet Shastra’ (Astrology and Music).

Regarding history of the Kaibartta Sri S. Das Chaudhury again said, "Due to partition of the country the Kaibartta who came from East-Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to India , many of them segregated themselves in almost each and every district of west Bengal of which in Jadavpur, Taliganj, Dumdum, Beleghata, Baubazar, Birati etc. places the people of the Kaibartta community started residing. More over, in Agartala, Kamalpur, Udaypur, Dharmanagar of Tripura state, Barak Valley (Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi),Tinsukia, Hojai, Lanka, Jagi Road, Guahati, Chaparmukh and Goalpara district of Assam the Kaibartta started dwelling newly.

To talk about the partition of the country and migration of the Hindus, S, K, Khanna, in his "Encyclopaedia of North-East India" (page-201-350), has said, "After partition of the country, teams of Hindu refugees flowed in to Assam from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).The census 1951 showed the number of refugees in Assam as 274,455: of these 272,075 came from East Pakistan, 647 from West Pakistan and 1,733 from other specified areas. Because of their proximity to East Pakistan, the Cachar district sheltered 93,177 refugees."

S.K. Khanna also said, "There had been a steady and abnormal influx of population after 1962.There had been tremendous increase in population in Assam, obviously, on account of migration of people from across, the border. The influx as a result of internal disturbances in Bangladesh was to be taken as unavoidable as persons were originally of Indian origin and there were no other outlet for them except to look to their mother country across the border in Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, West Bengal, etc.…." Hence, it can be said that the Kaibartta along with other Hindus, have migrated from East-

Pakistan (now Bangladesh) took shelter in Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, West Bengal etc. Accordingly they started their colony in Barak valley also.

2.10.2 Physical Structure of the Kaibartta and a few other Bengali Castes

There may be differences in qualities between the Kaibartta and Brahmins, Kayastha, Baidy etc. but there is no significant difference in physical structure and appearance. Today's Bengalees are the mixture of Alpeo Adi-Astral, Dravid etc. race. The Kaibartta is a Bengali caste that is why among the Kaibartta on the one hand one can find people with black complexion and flat nose, on the other hand, fair complexion and sharp nose also observed. An anthropological account of a few Bengali castes including the Kaibartta is given below;

Table no. 2.9. An Anthropological Account of the Kaibartta and a few other Bengali Castes

Sr.No.	Caste	Size of the Head	Size of the Nose	Height of the Body
1	Brahmin	78.8	70.8	1676
2	Kayastha	78.4	70.7	1636
3	Kaibartta	77.5	76.6	1629

(Source: Kaibartta Samajer Itibritta by S.Das Chaudhury.Page No.17)

From the above table generally it appears that none of the above caste is having a wide head. All of them are the owner of an average size head which is neither so large nor so small.

2.10.3 Kaibartta in Barak Valley

Among the sixteen notified Scheduled Castes of Assam the Kaibartta is the largest one. In Barak Valley also among the major Scheduled Castes, Kaibartta is a prominent one. The Kaibartta are scattered in all over Barak Valley but mainly in those areas, where they can practice either fishing/cultivation, simultaneously or in urban slum areas where they can opt some other occupations of almost equal status. The Kaibartta populous areas of Barak Valley are ;Anandapur ,Kalyanpur, Swastipur, Sontoshpur, Bagantilla, Nabingram, Kalibari, Shantipur, ArjunNagar,Nagendra Nagar, Phakua, Rakesh Nagar, Nishinta Pur, Sangatipur etc. of Karimganj district,

Sonbeel in Winter Season, Karimganj

Irongmara, Baghmara, Harintila, Harinagar, Ratanpur, Das-Para, Boalmara(both North and South),Silkoorie,CollegeRoad,AshramRoad,Malinibill,KalibarirChar,Rongpur (Karatigram, Shimultala), Hawaithang, Sayaidpur,Salemabad, Dodhpatil, Katigorah etc.

of Cachar district and Panchgram, Thandapur, Bakri Hawar, Hailakandi town area etc. of Hailkandi district.

2.10.3.1 Society

The people of Kaibartta community are placed in the lower strata of the Hindu society.Their social status is considered after the three upper most castes viz. Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya. They are one of the Scheduled Castes in India. As we know that in Assam, among the sixteen notified Scheduled Castes, the Kaibartta is the largest group.

Among the Kaibartta, there are different clans like Kashyap, Sandilya, Maudgalya, Bharadwaj, Alamanya etc. Like wise, there are different surnames also among them viz. Das, Das Chaudhury, Cahudhury, Das Mazumdar, Mazumdar, Adhikari, Pandit, Biswas, Sarkar, Nag, Paramanik, Kazi, Bag, Khasnabish, Bhuyan, Baishnab, Das Gupta, Shahaji,Mazumdar,Talukdar,Haldar,etc.

2.10.3.2 Family Structure

The people of Kaibartta community of Barak Valley follow the patriarchal system of family structure. The head of the family is the father. Traditionally, the Kaibartta lives in joint families, where the head of the family is all in all. Though now a days, like people of other communities, they have opted nuclear/single family system (when the un-married sons and brothers get married and if some family problem arise, they form nuclear families to live separately also), but in rural areas till date they prefer to live in joint families.

2.10.3.3 Birth Ritual

The birth of a child be it a boy or girl, is an occasion of joy for the family, the same is true in Kiabartta family also. After birth of a child, the relatives of the child (women) convey the message to their neighbours. To welcome the new-Nate by "Uluddhani" (a sound is created by the Hindu women by moving their tongues within their mouths on any festive occasion) they invite them and also have a small party by "Paan" (Betel-leaf) and if possible sweets too.

After birth, in Kaibartta family, both mother and the baby are kept isolated (untouchable) from others still the ceremony of "Shasti" (a purification ceremony by the Brahmin on the sixth or ninth day of birth of the baby).On the 30th day the ceremony of 'Shuddha" (for complete purification) is done and the next day "Rupashi Brata" is organized, basing on which again a party is organized according to financial capacity of the owner of the family. Gifts are presented to the new-born baby as a token of love and blessings.

2.10.3.4 Marriage

The Kaibartta used to get married in early age. The illiterate boys in rural areas get married mostly at the age of 18 to 25 years and girls at the age of 15 to 25 years. But those who are educated are acquainted to the modern life; prefer to get married after at the minimum age of 25 years and maximum 35-37 years of age for male, 20 and 30 years of age respectively. Like other Hindu, Bengalese, after marriage the girls has to leave their fathers, house and go to her husbands, house for ever.

In the marriage of the Kaibartta, dowry is common factor. The family of the girl (Kane) has to present either cash or ornaments or other materials as dowry to her counterpart (Bor).But the problem of dowry among the educated Kaibartta is comparatively less.

2.10.3.5 Religious Life

The people of Kaibartta community of Barak Valley are Hindu by religion and Bengali by language. Hence, the Gods and Goddesses that are worshiped by the other Bengali Hindus, almost all are also worshiped by the Kaibartta. But there are some typical festivals which are completely of their own. In some of the 'Pujas' Brahmins are compulsory but not in all.

2.10.3.6 Dance and Music

Like other Bengalese the Kaibartta are also lover of dance and music. Basing on different occasions they organize dance and music. The common dance of the Kaibartta is "Dhamail" and dance in various "Kirtan" programmes. The popular music of the Kaibartta are; "Baul, Bhatali, Lokogeet, Shyama Sangeet, Bhaktigeeti, Padmapuran, Kirtan and marriage song etc." Like other Bengalese the Kaibartta of Barak Valley are also fond of 'Dhamil Nach', 'Ojha Nach' also popular among themselves.

2.10.3.7 Games and Sports

People of the Kaibartta community are also fond of Games and Sports. Traditional games and sports of the Kaibartta are: Kabadi, Dang-Gutty, Bolai, Lai, Gullar-Chut, Bagh-Bandi etc. but the people of the Kaibartta community also like Football, Volleyball, Cricket and other modern games and sports.

2.10.3.8 Dress and Ornaments

The traditional dresses of the Kaibartta are Shari for women and Dhoti fort he men. But now a days besides Shari the women specially the girls also wear Sallower, Frock etc. and men specifically boys wear Shirt, Pent and other modern dresses.

Bengali women are lover of ornaments. Kaibartta women are also no exception. They also try to save money according to their financial capacity to buy ornaments of both gold and silver. The most popular jewelleries are: Necklace, Wristlet, Finger ring, Ear ring, Breast let etc.

2.10.3.9 Type of House of the Kaibartta

In the primitive age, people lived in forests, caves etc. But when the civilization gradually started developing people also learned to save themselves from wild animals, rain and cold, by preparing a shelter which is popularly known as a “House”. Hence, each and every person rich or poor need a house. The Kaibartta also live in the houses but observing the very sight of the house of the Kaibartta community, one can gauze about the status of the dweller of the houses. Because house of the rich people are made of

bricks, rod, tin, cement etc. costly materials and the house of the poor are of 'thatched roof' and 'mud flooring.'

Majority of the people of the Kaibartta community are poor, so their dwelling houses are also of such type that some how they have to hide their head under a roof and save from natural calamities. Maximum of the houses of the Kaibartta community are 'Huts' which are prepared by using mainly bamboo, straw, mud etc. The houses are of low-height without proper ventilation.

Condition of the House of the Kaibartta, Station Road, Karimganj.

Condition of the House of the Kaibartta, Kalibarir Char, Cachar District.

Condition of the Lavatory used by the Kaibartta, Kalibarir Char, Cachar District.

Courtesy: Dainik Jugasankha, Dated, 31.07.15

But now a day the picture has been little bit changed and some of the old thatched roof and mud flooring houses are being replaced by tin roof and paved flooring, respectively. Buildings are also found among the people of the Kaibartta, though the number is very negligible. Each of rural area possesses a compound (big /small) enriched by fencing. They have Pak-ghar (kitchen), Gohal-ghar (Room for Cow) and Devata-ghar (Thakur-ghar /place for worship).Use of electricity for lighting purposes is also seen in some of the houses of the said community. Generally, maximum of the Kaibartta have only single room houses, (those who are poor) but people who can afford, have more than one room and even separate room for each member of the family. In the villages and specially those who are poor and humble use 'fire wood' and 'dung cake' for cooking and the rich people use L.P.G. There is lack of proper sanitation in the Kaibartta dominated villages, Majority of the people use Kutcha lavatory which are not prepared keeping the view the hygienic aspect or go in the 'open air' and a few people have modern, scientific sanitary latrine. For drinking water, they have to depend on ponds, well, beel, river etc. because maximum of the Kaibartta live in either remote rural areas or in urban slum areas, where supply of pure drinking water is not proper.

2.10.3.10 Mother Tongue of the Kaibartta

People of modern India speak many languages. There are twenty-two major languages in India which are officially recognized by our Constitution. These are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia (Oriya), Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Santhali, Maithali, Konkani, Dogri and Bodo. Hindi is our official language and is also spoken by majority of Indians. Almost all the languages spoken in India are written from left to right except

Urdu, Kashmiri and Sindhi which are written from right to left. Thus Bengali is a Constitution recognized language. Researchers are of the opinion that Bengali language is grouped in to Indo-Aryan languages with local variations. Bengali is the Mother tongue of almost all Kaibartta in India and Bangladesh. In Barak Valley also mother tongue of all the people of Kaibartta community is Bengali. But the people of the said community speak a typical Bengali widely away from the Bengali spoken in Kolkata or the written form of Bengali. But now a day the mother tongue of the Kaibartta community is influenced by the area and its language where they live.

2.10.3.11 Life style, Dress and Food habits of the Kaibartta

Gregariousness is the main Characteristic of the Kaibartta that is why, the people of the said community opt those areas where they can live with their kith and keen as well as members of the same caste group. But they are not free from quarrel. They are very much helpful and hospitable.

The Kaibartta lead a very simple life that is why, Food, Clothing and Shelter are the basic needs, and fulfillment of those only can make them happy. Generally, they are far away from the modern luxurious life. But very recently, due to the advancement of science and technology the Kaibartta also (though not all) have connected themselves with modern amenities of living such as Computer, Internet, Mobile phone etc.

Generally, like other members of the Hindu society, the male Kaibartta wear 'Dhoti-Payjama', Women wear 'Shari' and Girls wear Frocks, Salowar etc. The married women use 'Vermilion' (Sindur) and 'Conch-shell' bangles popularly known as 'Shankha' as signs and symbols of married life and the unmarried girls wear bangles, bindis but not vermilion.The men have no such sign of married life.Like other Bengalees, Rice and Fish

is the primary and common food item of the Kaibartta. But 'Roti' and different types of 'Pitha', 'Mudi' (Fried rice) 'Cida' (flattened rice), Milk, and Curd etc. are also popular among them. Some of the common and typical recipies of the Kaibartta are: 'Chuka Dail', 'Aammaricha,' 'Shuktani', 'Shutki o Sidaler Bharta', 'Shutki o Sidaler Bejun', 'Macher Dara', 'Ambal', 'Masam', 'Dail' etc.

The widely used spices of the people of the Kaibartta community are: Chili, Termaric, Jeera, Dhania, Garammasala, Musteredseeds, Methi, Tejpata etc.

2.10.3.12 Music, Games and Sports of the Kaibartta

The people of Kaibartta community are lover of joy so poverty, busyness etc. nothing can refrain them from joyfull activities. They have a rich heritage of Falk-song which incorporates; Palagan, Deha-tattwa, Bhatiali, Bhawaiya, Kirtan, Pada Kirtan, Sarigan, Jatragan, Padmapuran, Holirgan, Agamoni, etc. Beside these, the Kaibartta also organize programme of music for different occations like: Birth, Annaprasan, Marriage and even Death.The popular musical instruments of the Kaibartta are: Harmonium, Dhol, Karatal, Dutara, Behala (Violin), Khol, Banshi (Flute) etc.

Games and sports has an important role in the life of a human being, among the Kaibartta one can find various types of games and sports maximum of which are different from the modern games and sports.viz.Football,Kabadi.Dadibanda,Mon-khela,Danguli, Kanamachi,Swimming, Lathi-khela,Kusti,Tug of war, Plain card (Tas), Pasha, Daba(Chess), Ludu, Baghbandi etc.

2.10.3.13 Vows, Rituals and Festivals of the Kaibartta

Vows, rituals and festivals vary from place to place, community to community. Vows, rituals and festivals hold a vital place in the life of the people. They spread colour in their life and keep them alive to their traditions. Festivals remind the people of their traditions and values. Every festival has religious importance and they are closely related with the religious practices. Different Gods and Goddesses are worshiped on the occasion of different festivals. Festivals provide occasions on which people belonging to different castes meet together and exchange their views. In this way festivals contribute to social harmony and progress. All the differences are settled when the people exchange sweets and embrace each other. Festivals provide recreation to the people. Various cultural activities, like dance, drama, music, etc. are organized on several festivals. Grandeur and art are the inseparable parts of the festivals. Many kinds of decoration are done on the occasion of festivals. Temples become the place of artistic importance. Thus festivals provide natural enjoyment of religious events that are celebrated on the occasion of so many festivals. Festivals are the integral part of life and condition of life especially of village. Without festivals life is beyond imagination. Festivals bring social unity as well as boon to the poor people who get rewards from the rich on such festive occasions.

Chauddamadal Harinam Mahasankirtan Mandap, Anandapur, Karimganj

'Kali Temple', popularly known as, 'Mokam Kalibari', Anandapur, Karimganj.

Among the Bengalese there is proverb, “Baro Mase Tero Parban” which means thirteen festivals in twelve months. This indicates the abundant of festivalivity throughout the year.But modern society is a composite (mixed) society. That is why culture and rituals also becoming composite, but till date the Kaibartta have become able to keep their originality by preserving their culture and tradition, hence one can observe different vows and rituals which are typically of Kaibartta community, as for example: Jara-jarir barta, Subachanir barta, Darai puja, Burai-buri puja, Bhulapuda, Shankat-thakurer barta, Ghata banda, Huchurpuda, Maghmandal brata, Banadurga puja, Rupashi Barta, Kalkinarayaner Seba, Byanger Biya (Marriage of Frog), Karmapurusher Barta, Bipadnashini Barta, Sontoshimayer Barta, Hajirthakurer Barta, Trinather Seba, Surya Barta, Nauka Puja(Boat Puja), Charak Puja etc. Kaibartta is also a Bengalee community; hence they have also some common festivals, and some typical festivals (which are celebrated by the Kaibartta only) which are dicussed below:

Table no.2.10 Vows, Rituals and Festivals of the Kaibartta with Month of Celebration

Sl.No.	English Month	Bengali Month(Mas)	Name of the festival
1	January-February	Magha	Magh-Mondal
2	February-March	Phalguna	Shivaratri, Holi (Dolyatra), Ghata Banda
3	March-April	Caitra	Charak Puja.
4	April-May	Vaisakha	Nababarsha, Nabanna

5	May-June	Jyaistha	Shankat Thakurer Brata
6	June-July	Asadha	Bipadnashinir Brata,Sankat Thakurer Barta
7	July-August	Sravana	Manasa Puja(Padmapuran)
8	August-September	Bhadra	Taal Nabami
9	September-October	Ashvin	Durga Puja
10	October-November	Kartik	Kartik Puja,Bholapuda
11	November-December	Agrahayan	Jarajarir Barta
12	December-January	Paush	MakarSankranti(PaushSankranti)

Bholapuda

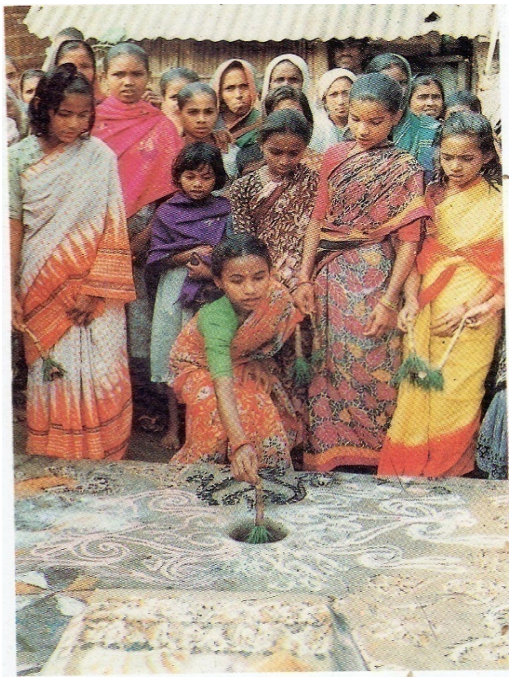
On the last day of the Bengali month, Kartik, (in the evening) this vow is observed. Both male and female member of the family can take part in the vow. To observe the vow, a human model made of straw (known as Bhola) is prepared and a stick is attached to it so that it can be burn easily without any harm in the hand. After completely preparing the Bhola dryfish, fly, mosquito and a piece of cake (pitha) is placed inside the head of the 'straw-man' (Bhola) then it is taken outside the house for burning. At the time of burning the Bhola, a piece of tamarind is also burned in the fire and after completion of Bholapuda, a small quantity of ashes of the Bhola is taken and after diluting in water, it is sprayed in the house. The piece of tamarind which is burnt is eaten by the members of the family. Lastly, with the consumption of Pitha (cake) the vow comes to an end.

Makar Sankranti

Maker Sankranti is celebrated every year on the 14th day of January (last day of Paush) and on this day every one rises early in the morning and takes bath. Special food (different types of Pitha) is also prepared on this day.

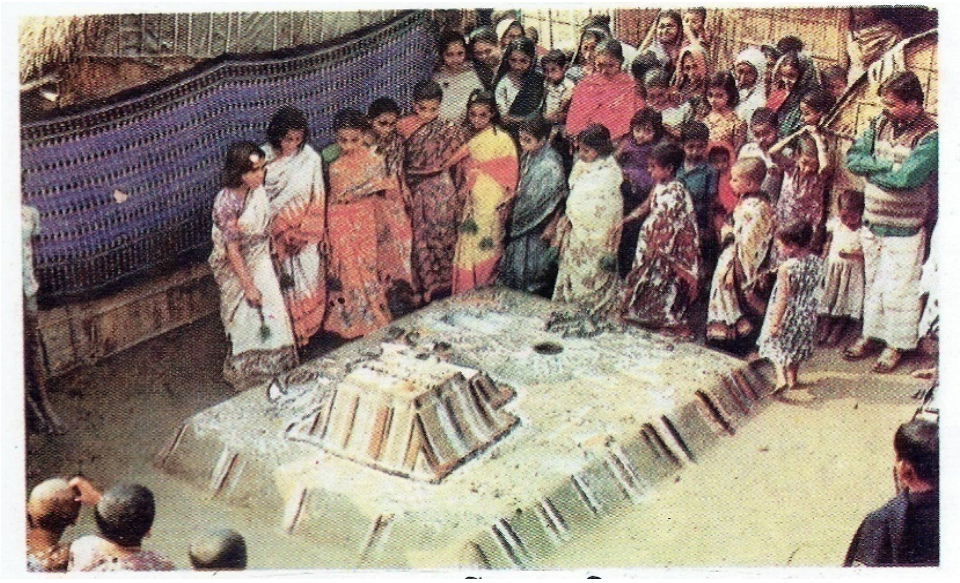
Magh-Mandal

'Magh-Mandal Brata'is mainly the worship of the Sun. From the last day of Bengali 'Paush Maas' to the last day of the Magh Maas (Magh Sankranti) i.e. for one month this vow is observed. Only the un-married girls for their happy future married life observe this vow.



Magh Mandal Brata, Mitamon, Kishoreganj, Bangladesh.

(Source: 'Banglar Brataparban', by - Dr. Sila Basak)



Magh Mandal Brata, Mitamon, Kishoreganj, Bangladesh.

(Source: 'Banglar Brataparban', by - Dr. Sila Basak)

Dolyatra (Holi)

Dolyatra is a festival falling on the day of fullmoon in the month of Phalgun.On this day colours are exchanged and people of the Kaibartta community sing folk song based on Holi which is popularly known as "Hori gan."

Shivaratri

Phalgun is the month in which Shivaratri is celebrated. On the very day lord Shiva is worshiped and flower of 'Dhatura'and leaf of 'Bilva' and other materials are put around the idol of Shiva. Generally people observe fast on the day.

Ghata Banda

On the last day of the Bengali month 'Phalgun' this is celebrated. On the very day female folk awake up early in the morning (dawn) and collect cow-dung and spread it in front of the door (Chaukat) then a specific type of flower, paddy, special type of grass (Dhan,

Durba) etc. are thrown on that with ‘Uluddhani’ (special type of sound created by Hindu women by moving the tongue).

Jara-Jari Barta

To remain safe from fever or to get rid of fever this vow is observed. In the month of Kartik, Agrahayan and Paush this vow is observed. In some places people of Kaibartta community observe this vow in the month of Phalgun and Chaitra.

Charak Puja

Charak Puja is one of the oldest festivals of Bengal, which is associated with the Shiva Sects and known as ‘Shiver Gajan’. It lasts for a month; peaking on the last day of the Bengali calendar month of Chaitra (mid-March to mid-April).The participants are required to renounce worldly life, but only for the duration of the ritual. Primarily, members of the so-called lower caste participate in this festival and Brahmans, the highest in the caste hierarchy usually stay away from it.

Shiver Gaajan, 2nd Link Road, Cachar District.

Nauka Puja

"A special form of religious ceremony is known as the Nauka or Boat Puja and is performed by wealthy man in satisfaction of a vow, who generally spends Rs.300 to 500 on the ceremony. A shed is built, at the end of which is a boat painted and gift, from which rise, tier upon tier, the images of various gods, amongst whom Bishahari is generally the most prominent. For several days sacrifices are offered to the deities, and Brahmans, who are well paid and feasted for their service, offer up their prayers. At the end of this time the house and its contents are abandoned and allowed to fall to pieces."(Srihatta Cacherer Prachin Itihas O Sanskritir Ruprekha-"Surma Barak Upatyaker Naukapuja: Prasangik Tathya, Ekti Punarbibechana" by Amalendu Bhattacharya.pp-209).

The centre of 'Nauka Puja' is 'Devi Manasha'. On an Alter the idol of Manasha is placed and on both the sides various other Gods and Goddesses. They placed in different rows and these rows are known as stair. Some one may organize Nauka Puja of 'Panch Sidi (Five Stair), other may of 'Sat Sidi' (Seven Stair) which depend up on the financial strength of the organizer of the puja. The first day of Nauka Puja is known as 'Adhibas'. The responsibility of 'Adhibas' is mainly on the team of 'Ojha'. Ojha dance is also a part of this puja. On this occasion 'Mela' (fair) is also organized. (Source: 'Barak Upatyakar Lok Sanskriti' by Dr.Shibtapan Basu, Page-126).

Kalki Narayan

'Kalki Narayan'is known as Non-Aryan god has mentioned that in Sonbeel area of Barak valley till today 'Kalki Narayaner Seba'is organized with great respect. The people of Kaibartta community organize "Kalki Narayaner Seba" in their homestead. In this 'Seba' Brahmin (Purahit) is not require. On the permanent alter (bedi) of tutelary deity of the homestead or on feet of main pillar (Matan Pala) flower, fruits, 'Kalki' and other things etc. are needed in this 'Seba'. But there is no role of Brahmin in this programme. In this puja victory of the Non-Brahmin on the Brahmin is declared. (Source: 'Barak Upatyakar Lok Sanskriti' by Dr.Shibtapan Basu, Page-123).

2.10.3.14 Popular Fruits and Vegetables of the Kaibartta

The people of the Kaibartta community also grow fruit trees like; Jackfruit, Mango, Banana, Pineapple, Sugarcane, Cucumber, Guava, Coconut, Orange, Tamarind etc. and vegetables like; Papaya, Potato, Sweet-potato, Tomato, Brinjal, Radish, Pumpkin etc.

2.10.3.15 Animals domesticated by the people of Kaibartta Community

Like other Bengali communities, the people of Kaibartta are also lover of animals and birds, that is one can find various animals which are domesticated viz. Cow, Bull, Goat, Buffalo, Duck, Swan, and Pigeon etc. are the domestic animals commonly found in the house of the Kaibartta community.

2.10.3.16 Traditional Profession of the Kaibartta

Basing on the profession, the Kaibartta are divided in to two groups, viz. (i) Fishermen (Jalia), and (ii) Cultivators (Halia). But actually Kaibartta practice both fishing and cultivation simultaneously or interchangeably because the Kaibartta have started their habitation mainly on the bank of River, Beel, and Hawar or near by such water bodies. The specialty of all these areas is that, in Summer (peak fishing season) the water bodies of such areas fills up with water, then the fishermen (not only the Kaibartta but also other fishing communities like Patni, Namsudra, Mahimal etc. catch fish and in Winter season almost all of these wetland dry up and become farmland where they can cultivate Paddy (Boro Dhan) and other Rabi crops and earn their livelihood.

A Kaibartta Fisherman is selling fish (Cachar District)

Though maximum of the wetlands becomes dry in winter but in some areas (though in very small quantity), water remains in the lower part of that water bodies where the fishermen can catch fish in winter also. As for example: In summer season when great flood occurs the famous "Shonbeel"(which is the largest beel in Assam) fills up with water and (sometimes destroys 'Boro Dhan') becomes mighty but the fishermen of its surroundings becomes happy only because they will be able to catch more fish and earn more money. It should be mentioned here that the due to heavy rain, different rivers, tributaries, ponds etc. overflows and fish of that water bodies with flow of water come out and fall in side Sonbeel which increases the quantity of fish in there and more number of mother fish can lay eggs in that water more safely, consequently, quantity of fish increases and the fishermen becomes happy hoping more and more income. In summer season cultivation is not possible in those areas, because as already stated the whole cultivable land goes under water so they have to wait for winter season when the land again becomes dry and cultivation is done.

In winter season both fishing and cultivation is done but fishing is done in a limited areas (because maximum portion of that area dries up) where as cultivation is done in a wide manner, specially 'Boro' paddy (Jagli-Boro, Khaiya-Boro, Busi-Boro, Tepi-Boro etc. are some of the varieties of Boro paddy) and other Rabi crops like, Potato, Sweet-potato, Tomato, Pumkin, Cucumber, Cabge, Cauliflower, Chili etc.

Among the Kaibarta, there are also people (though very few in number) who has no cultivable land ,those people have no alternative but to opt only fishing or to take land from others (Bhagi)and cultivate that land and share the produced crops with the land lender.

There are such people also (although very less in number) whose livelihood is not depend up on fishing but depend only on cultivation. They are as big farmers produce hundreds of quintal of crops and lead a happy life in comparison to others.

2.10.3.17 Instruments used in their traditional Profession

In the fishing the role of fishing instrument is very much important. The fishermen communities use different traps like; Spindle Trap (Sepa), Cylindrical Trap (Runga), Box Trap(Dori), Cage Trap(Faron),etc. and different fishing nets viz.' Lift net(Dub Jal),Fine Mesh nylon net(Net Jal / Moshari Jal),Gill Net(Ural Jal),Seine Nets(Ber Jal and Fas Jal) and (jhaki, pain, chitki, ghanjaal, berjaal, Ghuraina jaal, Patanjaal, Paluin jaal etc.) as well as various Hooks / Spears viz. Fishing Hooks (Barshi,Lar), Fishing Spear and other instruments for fishing like Polo (cage trap) made of bamboo strips, Khaloi (fishing busket),Dori, Huphi, etc. Previously,maximum of fishing nets were prepared with the help of cotton and nylon thread but recently people have started using plastic net which is popularly known as 'Current jaal' for catching fish.

It is mentioned earlier that the Kaibartta used to carry out fishing in the land-locked waters through the year. Fishing is entirely a masculine job but the role of women falk also not negligible.A few years ago when'Current Jaal'and other modern plastic net were not available, the people of Kaibartta community specially, the women played the most important role of preparing the 'Jaal'spending day and night. The weaving of fishing net was mainly done by the women falk, although there were some men Falk who were also expert in weaving of fishing net. But due to shortage of time the men had to depend on the women for this important task. When the weaving is completed the net is not ready

for fishing until and unless the juice of Mango-steen (Gaber Kosh) is used in coating the strings of the net.

Regarding cultivation maximum of the people of the Kaibartta community till date use traditional method of cultivation i.e. Cow, Bull, Buffalo etc. and a very few of them use modern scientific method of cultivation i.e. Tractor, Power-tiller, Pump set etc.

2.10.3.18 Fishing Activity and the Business of Khola

As already mentioned 'fishing' is the traditional occupation of the Kaibartta and that fishing activity is divided in to two sections viz. Fishing in summer season and Fishing in winter season. In summer fishing activity starts in the month of May-June and continues up to October-November where as in winter season fishing activity starts in the month of October-November and continues up to May-June.

"With the advent of winter large fishing parties proceed to the centres of capture and commence the preliminary arrangements for fishing"-(Southwell).

In Bangladesh, Fishing and Khola are closely related. The word 'Khola' is a Hindi word which means' a big courtyard used for drying crops. In fishing activity also such type of Khola is needed, because the surplus or the unsold fish is preserved by drying. The dry fish is popularly known as 'Sutki'or 'Sukti'. The Kaibartta who are engaged in 'Khola Business', (especially in Bangladesh) they used to leave their house and go for that business for six months and prepare a temporary house there. The temporary living house is prepared in the nearby areas of the water bodies where they are supposed to carry on their business are known as 'Fishing Camp' or Khola. Generally the Khola is named after

the name of the water bodies or the name of the nearby villages. Khola is a joint venture for fishing because it requires many people.

"The common variety of cured fish is known as Sutki or Sukti. The drying operations begin in December and continue till March of April when the fishermen return home laden with boatloads of dried fish. The drying yard is called a Khola. The process of drying fish is simple enough. The heads of the larger fishes are served with a thin sharp bent Dao (Knife), the breasts cut open and the entrails pulled out by the fingers. Very large fishes are divided into pieces of suitable size. The smaller verities are dried with the heads on and the entrails are only squeezed out by the thumb. The smallest fish are dried entire. The cleaned fish are laid side by side on mats made of nal-reeds and exposed to the sun. In some localities they are laid in rows on bamboo platforms three or four feet high or strung on a rope hung from two poles. In some parts of Assam they are dried on the hot sands on the bank of Brahmaputra. A net hung on a bamboo frame is spread above the drying fish to protect them from the depredations of birds and animals. At night, the mats containing the dried fish are exposed in the air. This process continues day after day for a week or so. A week of fair weather is sufficient for drying fish, but if wet weather intervenes, the process is continued for a few days longer and the quality of the dried deteriorates. A certain portion of dried fish is soled on the Khola (drying yard) but the bulk of it is brought home. Dried fish is sometimes preserved by being packet into large earthen jars called 'Matkas', well smeared with fish oil inside and buried in shallow tranches in a shady place. But the greater portion of dried fish is kept in the tranches dug in the ground. These tranches are about two feet deep lined with mat and then with straw over which the fish are placed and covered again with straw and then with mats, and then

with earth which is pressed down in the form of an arch and smoothed over. They are dug out from time to time as required. By this burial, dried fish acquires its peculiar brownish-red colour and the odour undergoes a certain change which is liked by the consumers. Small qualities are packet in gunny-bad. Fish dried in this way is supposed to keep good for one year but at all times it emits an offensive odor, but it is palatable to the people who have acquired the taste for it. Sutki is made of only such varities of fish which do not decompose easily and have firm flesh." (Southwell's report: Dept.of Fisheries, Bengal, Bihar & Orissa, Bull.- no.5, 1915).

2.10.3.19 Method of Treatment among the Kaibartta of Barak Valley

The people of Kaibartta generally are not so conscious about different diseases and their proper treatment. That is why they follow traditional folk treatment. To get rid of deaseses they go for Jhara (Chanting), Bharan (folk medicine pasted over head of the patient), Mansa /Manat (promising to offer something to the God/Goddess for the recovery from illness) etc. They usually opposed to provide vaccination to their children. But now a day a trend to immunize the children as well as to consult the Physician/ Doctor is observed among them.

2.10.3.20 Women in the Kaibartta Society

"Samskaro hi atmani samavaiti, na strainam paurusam va vibhgam apekshate".

I.e. Genius inheres in the soul; it makes no distinction between man and woman.

(Source: 'Status of Women in India', by Dr. Kasim Ali Ahmed. pp-1).

In any society, women are the basic indicators of social and economic development. Any behavioural change in the role of women (wife and mother) brings changes in social, economic, and demographic structure of the society.

During the Vedic age, women were held in high esteem. They enjoyed equality with men in every sphere of life. No religious rite could be performed without their presence. They occupied an important place in the social and religious life. As for example we can cite the famous name of the learned women like Lopamudra, Sikata, Nivavasi, Vishwamvara, Ghosha and Apala who composed hymns and attained the status of Rishis. In the Upanishads, which constitute the last part of the Vedas, we meet with the brightest example of a Brahmavadini.As a Brahmavadini we can cite the name of Gargi, daughter of the sage Vashaknu whose highly learned, philosophical discussions with the great sage Yajnavalkya have been recorded twice in the old and celebrated Brihaaranyaka Upanishad.

During the early part of medieval or period, the women in general were secluded. Women were denied freedom in many aspects. But having this type of obligations many Rajput women were known for their bravery. As for example we cite the name of Rani Padmini of Chittor. In medieval India, particularly in period of Muslim rule, the social relations between men and women were, in all their aspects, the result of compartmentalized thinking, which had become established as a tradition and gave a stereotyped character to the behaviour of both. Apart from this it would be necessary to note here the unfading name of Sultana Rezia, a historic woman of early medieval India. So far as the education is concerned, it has been stated that female education of some sort existed during the Mughal period.

In modern age, the women of India are no more under the veil.Today men and women enjoy equal status. That is why we got Smt. Indira Gandhi, as our Prime minister, Smt.Pratibha Devisingh Patil, as our President, Sarojini Naidu as a Governor (UP), Vijayalakshmi Pandit as ambassador in Moscow and Washington, Smt. Mira Kumar and Smt. Sumitra Mahajan as the Speaker of Loksobha, Kalpana Chawla (went to space), Amrita Pritam (writer), Kiran Bedi, Arati Saha (crossed English Channel), Bachendri Pal (climbed Mount Everest) are names we take with proud.

The constitution of India not only provided for equal rights and privileges of men and women but has gone a step further and made special provisions for women. In spite of many constitutional guarantees and legislative measures, lion's share of the Indian women, particularly the women of the backward castes such as SCs, STs and OBCs women are still backward and stay deprived of their rightful place in the society. Even after 67 years of independence of our country, these women continue to live in a state of neglect and over exploitation. They generally have lower incomes and seldom have equal opportunities to develop their capacities.

The women of Kaibartta community are no exception. The society of the Kaibartta community is Patriarchal one. As the Kaibartta society is organized in the patriarchal model, the status of women is lower to that of males in every filed of life social, economic and political. That means the head of the family is the father. Hence the dominating role is played by the father and nextly, uncle then brother, husband etc. i.e. male member of the family. The women falk of the Kaibartta community generally occupy comparatively lower status in the family as well as in the society. In fact, the female member has no such role in decision making process. The male member used to

take decisions (though sometimes the aged female members are also asked for their consent) for the family and the women has no alternative but to obey those. Till date the boys are given more importance it may be at the time of sending schools or at the dining-table. Even today, the girls have no role to select or to reject her bridegroom. But exception is there also. In the Kaibartta society, such family is also there where boys and girls are equally treated and final decision is taken by giving due importance to girls and women. Such family is there the girls are encouraged for education and even higher learning. Consequently, B.A., M.A., and even Ph. D, degree holder girls are also found among the Kaibartta. But it is a fact that the number of such family is very rare.

In the Kaibartta society, generally widow-remarriage is rare. After death of husband of a young woman, the widow either stay with her in-law's house or come back to her father's house it depends on the situation and economic status of such family.Having all these shortcomings, the women in the Kaibartta society are happy because they think that all these norms are necessary for maintaining the balance in the society.

2.10.3.21 Death Ritual of the people of Kaibartta community

The Kaibartta cremate the dead bodies. However, the babies who die before the age of seven years are buried. When it is confirmed that a particular person would die soon, the Gita and other religious books are read allowed so that the person in the death bed can listen that. Because it is believed the basing on the Holy name of the almighty any body can leave the world without any suffering.

After death, the Kaibartta observe “Ashouch” (Impurity) for a period of 30 days and on the 31st day the formal “Ashouch” is removed with the programme of “Shraddha”which is organized for the peace the departed soul where the presence of a Brahmin is must.

2.10.3.22 Education of the Kaibartta in Barak Valley

Inspite of the protection given to the SCs, STs and minority group in the Constitution and various measures for the development of education among the SCs/Stys and minorities, the progress of education among these sections of population is far from satisfactory.

Being the largest group among the sixteen notified Scheduled Castes of Assam, the people of Kaibartta community of Assam as well as Barak Valley are also till date very backward in education due to which they are lagging behind in all aspects of life.

From the table no.1.3 Literacy Rate among the Kaibartta and other major SCs in Assam, it is seen that being the largest group among the sixteen notified SCs in Assam, the Kaibartta community are not able to achieve first position in literacy rather they occupy the sixth position in this regard. Kaibartta of Barak Valley is also no exception. The people of Kaibartta community of Barak Valley too are very backward in comparison to the other communities. Although a few people of the said community have done higher degrees like M.A, M.Sc. M.Com., M. Phil. and even Ph.D. But a large number of the people of the said community are away from education. Consequently they not much economically sound and socially of higher status. So, most of them are busy in fulfilling their basic needs in their existing life. But gradually a change is observed among the people of Kaibartta community and that is why Doctor, Engineer, Lawer,

Professor, Teacher, S.P, D.S.P, M.L.A, and M.P are also found among them who are economically sound and socially of higher status though the numbers of such people is very less.