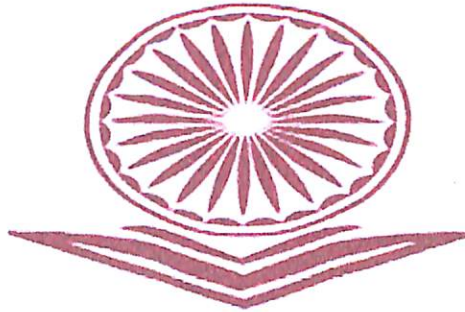


**“A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
RURAL SIKH PEOPLE OF ASSAM
AND PUNJAB”**

**A UGC SPONSORED MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT
SUBMITTED TO THE UGC, NERO, GUWAHATI**



ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये

UGC

University Grants Commission

SUBMITTED BY,

PARAG DUTTA

M.A., M. PHIL

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN GEOGRAPHY

ADP COLLEGE, NAGAON, ASSAM

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(Parag Dutta)

1.1: INTRODUCTION & STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Sikhism:

Sikhism is often considered to be the youngest and smallest of the major religions on the earth surface.¹ Literally, the term “Sikh” is derived from the Sanskrit term – “Sishya”- meaning a “disciple” or “a learner”²

Sikhs are the followers or disciples of Guru Nanak and nine of his succeeding “Gurus” and “Guru Granth Sahib” which is the holy religious scripture of the Sikhs”.³

The Sikh tradition originated with the endeavor of Guru Nanak from Punjab, ‘the land of five rivers’. He adorned striking hymns, set up the early Sikh principle of ‘one supreme God’ and gathered follower around him. Guru Nanak was followed by nine successors. Under these Gurus the Sikh community grew in size and undergone important developments.

Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs. He founded the ‘Khalsa’ order (meaning 'The Pure', soldier-saints). The main domain of the baptism in Khalsa introduced by Guru Gobind Singh is the Five ‘K’s – “Kesh” (Uncut hair and unshaved beard), “Kanga” (A comb to maintain the hair), “Karra” (A steel bangle worn on the right wrist), “Kaccha” (A knee length pair of breeches) and “Kirpan” (A sword).⁴

It is the Khalsa tradition that makes a traditional Sikh easily recognizable. Every Sikh man’s surname is “Singh”- meaning “lion” and every Sikh woman’s surname is “Kaur”- meaning “princess”.⁵

Guru Granth Sahib is the religious scripture of the Sikhs. It is also designated as the perpetual Guru of the Sikhs since the death of their 10th Guru Gobind Singh. The Gurdwaras (a Sikh temple) are the home of the holy scripture of the Sikhs i.e., the Guru Grant Sahib where Sikhs read it. People of all

religions are greeted with utmost enthusiasm in the gurdwaras. The Golden Temple or the Harmandir Sahib located at Amritsar in Punjab is the most significant historical religious center for the Sikhs.

Since Sikhism evolved and grew from the Greater Punjab region, Punjab is considered as the historic native soil of the Sikhs. The Sikh people throughout the history have never forced people to convert to Sikh faith neither attempted to set up an empire of their own till 1801 A.D. when Ranjit Singh formally set up a Sikh empire based at Lahore. Maharaja Ranjit Singh died in 1839. A few years after his death in 1849 sovereignty of Punjab was collapsed when the British annexed Punjab into the British Empire.

As per Wikipedia source there are approximately 27 million Sikh people in the world. This constitutes a meager 0.39 percent of the total population. Of these, 21 million live in India. However, presence of Sikh population in almost each and every country of the world presents a fascinating episode of migration and diaspora of the Sikhs.

Sikhs constitute a very small proportion of India's population. As per 2011 census data, Sikhs constitute about 1.7% of the total population of the country with a total of approximately 21 Million. Of these, just over 16 million Sikhs live in Punjab where they are majority with 57.7 percent of total population of the state. The remaining 5 million Sikhs of India resides primarily in the states of Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Union Territory of Chandigarh.

Sikhism in Assam and Assamese Sikhs:

The religious composition of people of Assam is somewhat different from all India pattern. As per 2011 Census of India provisional data sources, Hindu and Muslim are the dominant religions in the state with more than 95.6% of total population in the state. However, as against 79.80% of Hindus and 14.23% of Muslims at the national level, in Assam Hindu's and Muslim's shares are 61.47% and 34.22% respectively. While Christians comprised of 3.4% of total state's population, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism has a very small share of the state's population.

Sikhs also has its share in the socio-cultural mosaic of this vibrant state of Assam. However, the Sikh community in Assam is a very diminutive group of people on the basis of their size. They are considered to be the smallest religious minority community in the state. Yet, contributions of this community have augmented the Assamese identity, making them also a part of it.

Concentration of people following Sikh religious faith in Assam however, differs from the national scenario. As per 2011 Census Sikh Population in the state is 20672. At national level Sikh's share of total population is 2.08% whereas in Assam it is only 0.07% of total population. This small Sikh population in Assam is found scattered basically in the Brahmaputra Valley districts with Kamrup (Metro), Nagaon, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Jorhat, Sonitpur, Sibsagar and Goalpara having highest Sikh concentrated districts. Among these Sikhs of Assam 8272 live in rural areas and 12430 live in urban areas of the state (*Census of India, 2011*).

In Assam two distinct Sikh groups could be seen. One resides in a few special pockets of villages of the Nagaon district of Assam who speak Assamese and none knows Punjabi. Agriculture is the predominant occupation of this Sikh community. This section of Sikhs in Assam is known as *indigenous Assamese Sikhs*.

The other group of the Sikhs in the state is the Punjabi-Sikhs who mostly reside in the urban centres of the state and are in general, more affluent and mobile. According to Prof. Late H.P. Das, these Punjabi Sikhs came to Assam after the British annexation of the State. They are mostly engaged in commercial and industrial establishments of the region.

Asomiya Sikhs or Assamese Sikhs as they are called have wrapped up themselves in the local culture. They have lived in settlements in Borkola and Chaparmukh, in Assam, for over two centuries. They are ruralites who do not understand Punjabi. ⁶

Definitions of "Asomiya or Assamese Sikhs" so far put forwarded consider the Sikhs living in some of the specific areas of the Nagaon district of Middle Brahmaputra Valley of Assam only as "Assamese Sikhs". Regarding this Sarat Chandra Goswami, a renowned Assamese writer wrote in 1941

“The way in which the Sikhs have established perfect Assamese villages in the Nagaon district is not seen in any other district of Assam.”.

According to Dr. Bimal Phukan, an eminent Vaishnavite researcher of Assam, Asomiya Sikhs are found in areas around Chaparmukh, Borkola, Hatipara and Lanka in the Nagaon District of Assam.

Birinchi Kumar Medhi in his doctoral thesis writes, ‘The Assamese Sikhs identify themselves with Assam, their homeland, and Assamese, their language. They identify with the common culture which they share with the Assamese people.... The Assamese Sikhs are referred to as ‘Asomiya Sikh’ which denotes that they are indigenous to Assam. Besides Assamese language, they share many other elements of culture with the Assamese. Thus, there are many points of socio-cultural identity between the Assamese Sikhs and the Assamese people.’⁷

Dr. Himadri Banerjee, a prominent researcher on Sikh Studies from Jadavpur University referring to this community of Sikh people living in Assam writes: “Asomiya-Sikhs represent one of the small micro-level Sikh communities living outside Punjab. They claim Asomiya as their mother tongue and regard Assam as their native land. The group corresponds to less than 3000 in number and excludes those Sikhs of Brahmaputra valley who speak Punjabi....”⁸

Manjit Singh, a distinguished writer of Assam belonging to this community tries to define an “Assamese Sikh” as one ‘whose family has lived in Assam for generations or one who is born in Assam and is a permanent resident here, whose mother tongue is Assamese, who practices the Sikh religion but has whole heartedly embraced Assamese culture, and considers Assam as homeland’.⁹

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Sikh diaspora is a very closely watched phenomenon. Starting from the mid 19th century Sikhs have migrated to different corners of the world from their native homeland. Most of the published historical and ethnographic literary accounts relating to Sikh diaspora suggest that wherever the Sikhs have migrated and settled they have successfully adapted to the physical and socio-cultural

environments. However, each and every researcher studying the process is of the view that in comparison to other religions with definite stories of migration, Sikh diaspora differs a lot.

According to a published article entitled “Sikhism and Nursing”, wherever Sikhs have migrated, they brought with them cultural and traditional practices. They usually adopt cultural tinges of the new social environment while retaining fundamental code of conduct and principles of Sikh religion.¹⁰

Gibson (1988) in her study refers to the popular Sikh Say “wherever we go, we are successful”. According to Gibson (1988), it is very important for Sikhs to maintain their values and traditions even in a new environment. Sikhs have established themselves open to transformations and expert at learning new traditions from other groups with whom they come in contact in order to live a successful life and avoid confrontations, they consciously and unambiguously promote a strategy of adjustment to their new environment. To her, Sikhs were able to transform their own culture through acculturation or by amalgamation of traits from the host cultures. This occurred partly because of the environment that Sikhs came from and their desire for success in the new environment equally.¹¹

However, she wrote that the Sikhs in the USA instead of completely assimilating into society have been able to form a community for them in the newly settled places, strengthening their identity as a people and religion. However, according to her, the nature of their accommodation varies according to the social system of the host community and their specific situation within it.¹¹

Moreover, for most Sikhs even though they have settled in a new place under dissimilar environmental conditions to their native land, researchers have traced strong emotional bonding and attachment of the Sikhs with Punjab. This strong spatial association of the Sikh diaspora with Punjab, their natural homeland is thus the key feature of almost all sects of emigrant Sikhs throughout the world. The migrant Sikhs in a totally alien environment also according to this bunch of researchers have attempted to cultivate and uphold many of their inherited genera – worship, linguistic, territorial and occupational.

Dusenbery (1995) in this respect wrote “In the process, wherever possible Sikh migrants have constructed gurdwaras, maintained facility in Punjabi, remitted and visited natal village and avoid inappropriate occupations”.¹²

According to the published reports the Sikhs migrated to Assam and started settling permanently in the rural areas of Nagaon district of Assam some two hundred years ago since the Battle of Hadirachaki fought between the Burmese and Ahoms in the 1820s. Since then for the last two centuries the Sikhs have undergone tremendous genetic and socio-cultural changes. This process of adaptation acculturation and assimilation of the Sikhs in the rural areas of the Nagaon district is termed as “*Assamization*” by the scholars and historians.

The rural Sikhs of the Nagaon district of Assam consider themselves as a part of the larger integrated Assamese society even after maintaining their Sikh identity strictly over the period of time. This socio-cultural transmission of the Sikh people holding orthodox Punjabi culture to Assamese is thus, the result of bundle of processes interacting together ranging from historical to environmental as well as socio-economic, political and cultural assemblage and intermixing with other communities living in the same locality. Regarding the Assamese Sikhs of the study area Prof. Himadri Banerjee writes

“Assamese Sikhs basically speak Assamese and cannot speak or write Punjabi and generally follow the local code of conduct regarding marriage, food, social discipline, and dress. They, however, are no less aware of their Sikh identity and are very much conscious of the five Ks. Their gurdwaras do also have local environmental influences which basically follow the Sikh rituals but with a lot of room for the local style of worship. They are mostly cultivators, settled in villages of Borkola, Chaparmukh, and Hatipara besides the Lanka Township in Nagaon district”.¹³

The Assamese rural Sikhs of Nagaon district believes that unlike them the other section of the Sikhs in Assam i.e., the Non-Assamese migrant Sikhs shows vast adaptation differences. First of all the Punjabi Sikhs migrated to Assam starting during the British period only and preferred to settle mostly in the urban centres of the Brahmaputra Valley. These people are mostly involved in trade and commerce.

According to Dr. B.K. Medhi, the urban section of the Sikhs in Assam claim Punjab as their native soil, share with other Sikhs a common language (Punjabi), religion (Sikhism), distinctive dress and other traditional garb, history, family life, biradari (fraternity), art and culture and value system. On the other hand, the Assamese Sikhs possess certain characteristics which they do not share with the non-Assamese Sikhs. The Assamese Sikhs started inhabitation in the rural areas of the Nagaon district where they and the other communities share many common areas of life like language, economy, habitat, festivals, folk beliefs, customs etc. (Medhi)

Dr. Medhi again was of the view that the Assamese Sikhs have potted their distinctiveness largely through various exclusive community Institutions and organizations. At the same time, they maintain a fair degree of contact and communication with the wider Assamese society through their participation in different socio-cultural milieus. This indicates that an enquiry into the social relations within the community and also between the Sikhs and their immediate neighbors and the wider society can help in understanding the nature and content of Assamese Sikhs' social life.⁶

The rural Assamese Sikhs of Nagaon district of Assam presents an intriguing and matchless pattern of adaptation, acculturation and assimilation which hardly can be seen in any other Sikh diaspora, be it either India or outside India. This Sikh community living in Assam has assimilated themselves into the Assamese society to a large extent even after loyally maintaining their "Khalsa" religious tradition. The people representing this community say that they don't feel nostalgic about Punjab, Punjabi people and culture. This is a definite indication of their lost root in the midst of the 200 year long process of adaptation, acculturation and assimilation in the natural and socio-economic environmental settings of the areas where they live. In this respect the published literary accounts and evidences deems inconclusive to stand forth explaining the history of their migration and settlement in the study area villages.

The unique patterns and processes of adaptation to the environment of the Assamese Sikh people in the study area have brought in them perceptible deviations in physiographic appearance and socio-

economic from other mainstream Sikhs of the State as well as the country. These drifts have resulted in numerous reported incidences of racial discrimination of this small community of Sikhs in the study area by their mainstream counterparts who most often consider them “Duplicate Sikhs” or “Second Class Sikhs”.

This project report is an account of the investigator’s queries, studies and findings regarding the noticeable pattern of adaptation, acculturation and assimilation of the Rural based Assamese Sikh community living in three villages of the Nagaon District of Assam. Attempt is also made here to analyze some of the socio-economic traits of the Rural Sikh People living in three randomly selected villages of Punjab with an endeavor to measure the enormity of resemblances as well as differences between these two communities.

1.2: Objectives of Study:

Main objectives of this study were:

- ▶ To geographically validate the available literary and vocal interpretations regarding the history of migration and settlement of the Assamese Sikhs in the villages of Nagaon district.

- ▶ To explicate the visible demographic and socio-economic pattern among the Rural Assamese Sikh Community.

- ▶ To distinguish and compare some of the selected socio-economic traits of the rural Assamese Sikh Community with those of three randomly selected villages in Punjab.

1.3: Research Questions:

A few research questions associated with the objectives were set up. These are:

- When and how the ancestors of the Rural Assamese Sikh community came and started settlement in the areas under study?
- Is there any sort of observable relationship between the people of these two communities?
- What major demographic and socio-economic traits can be noticed in the Rural Assamese Sikh community?
- How the demographic and Socio-economic traits of the rural Assamese Sikh people fluctuate from those of Rural Sikhs in Punjab?

1.4: Database and Methodology:

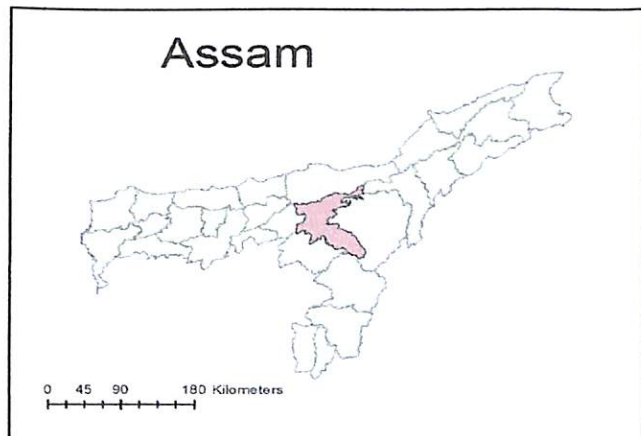
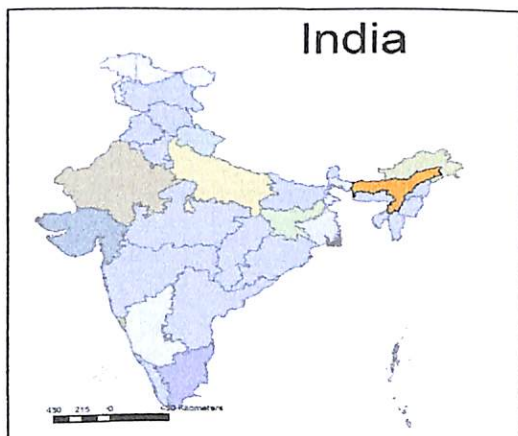
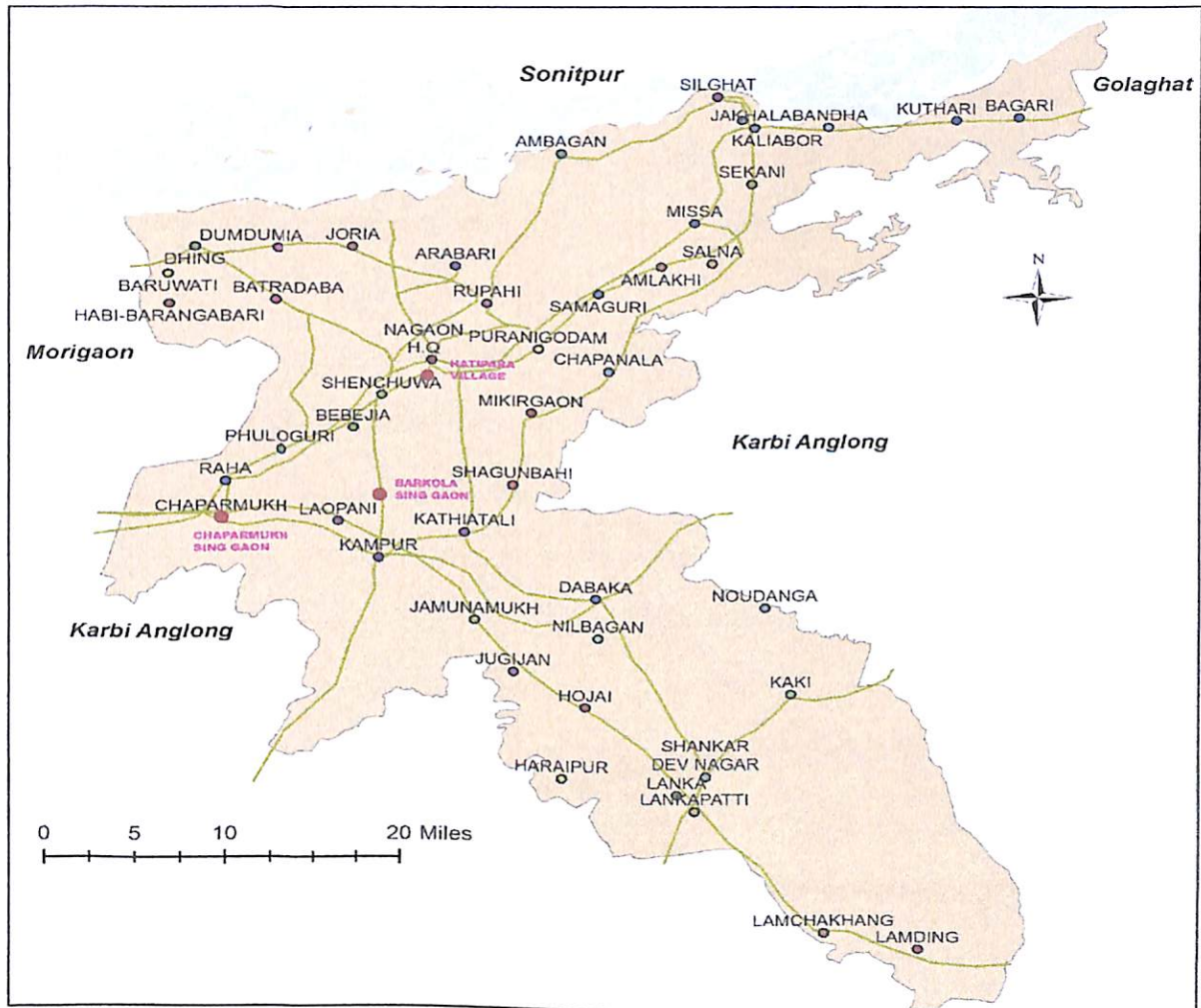
This study is being carried out in a number of phases and sequences. Firstly, for formulation of the research problem comprehensive study and review of relevant works done by different authors has been made. Since last few decades Sikh studies has got immense popularity in India as well as outside the country. However, in comparison to others, Assamese Sikhs are one of the least known and studied community of the Sikhs. Only a few systematic studies on this community are carried out so far. Studies made by Dr. Himadri Banerjee from Jadavpur University and Dr. B.K. Medhi from Gauhati University are mentionable in this respect. Apart from these two studies a few monographs depicting history and socio-cultural traits of these people has also been written and published.

On the basis of the claim of these Sikh people regarding the history of their migration and initiation of their settlement the three villages of Nagaon District viz., Chaparmukh, Borkola and Hatipara where the Sikhs are living from ages and have undergone tremendous genetic and socio-cultural transformations are selected as the study area under this study.

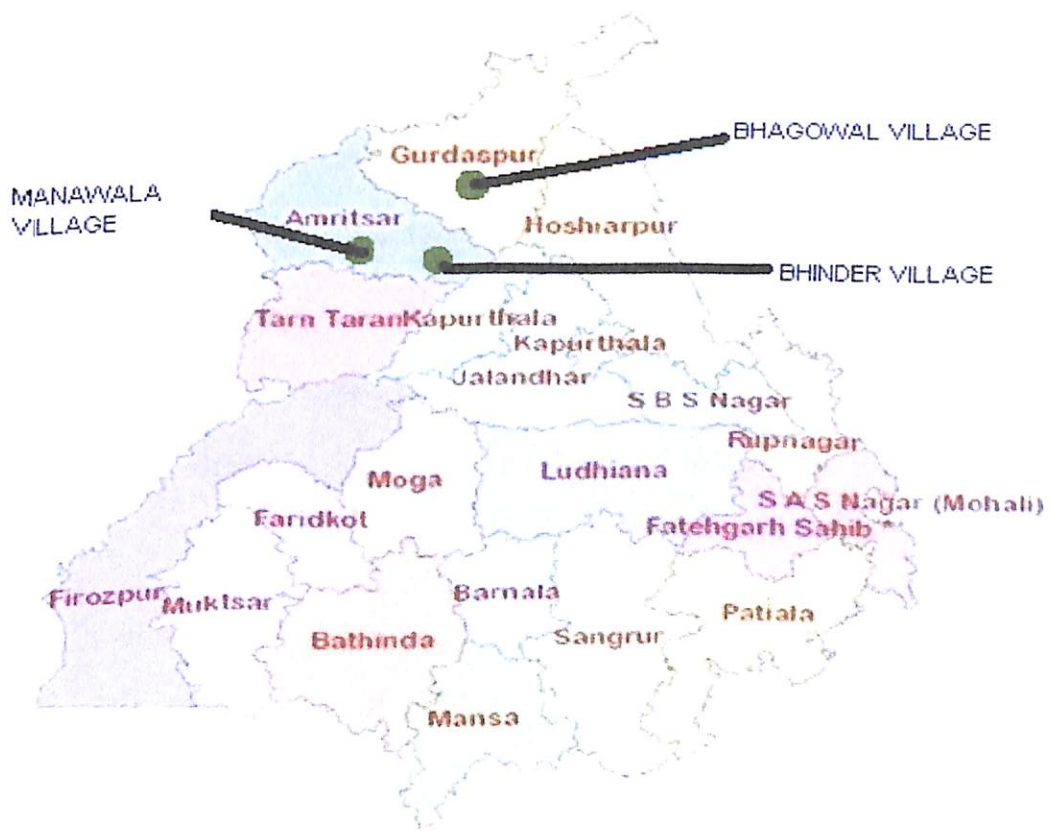
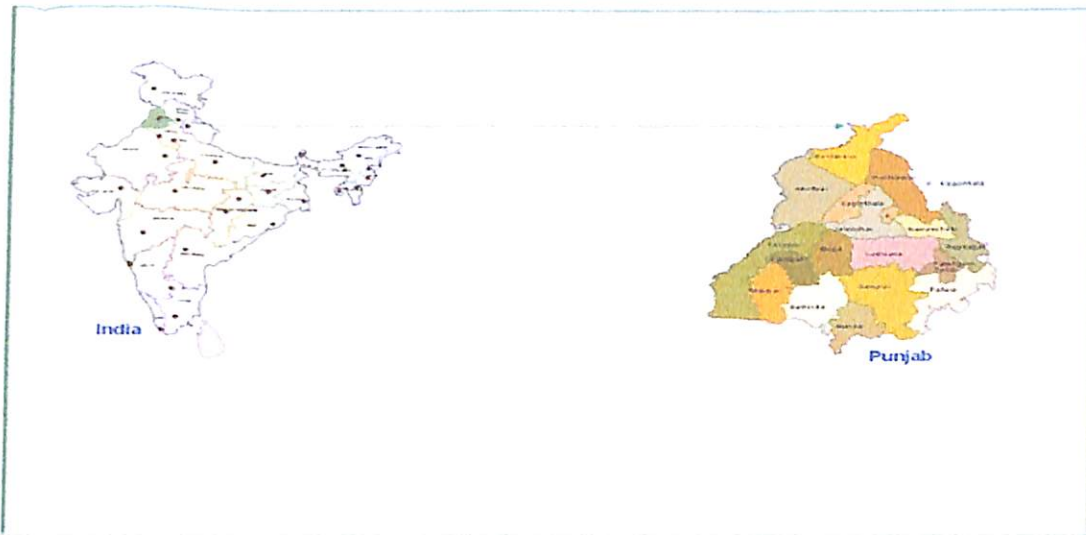
Secondly, three villages were randomly selected from Punjab within a radius of 50 Kilometers from Amritsar which has been the heart of Sikhism since historical past due to the existence of the famous Golden Temple where the religion is supposed to be best at its authority. These villages are –

1. Bhagowal Village from Bhullar Development Block of Batala Tehsil in Gurdaspur district
2. Manawala Village located just in the south eastern outskirts of the Amritsar City which falls in Manawala Development Block of Amritsar II Tehsil in Amritsar district.
3. Bhinder Village located in Rayya Development Block of Baba Bakala Tehsil in Amritsar district

LOCATION OF ASSAMESE SIKH VILLAGES IN NAGAON DISTRICT



LOCATIONAL MAP OF THE STUDY AREA VILLAGES OF PUNJAB:



Thirdly, due to lack of historical, literary and documented evidences, extensive literature review was performed to draw conclusion regarding the history of migration and settlement of the Assamese Sikh community people in the study area villages. Main literary sources in this respect are-

- Published and unpublished field based studies and monographs written so far to have a basic understanding regarding the initiation and progress of Sikh settlement in the study area
- Published historical accounts written on the journeys and life stories of Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur who visited Assam as well as other parts of India helping in expansion of the religion
- Historical accounts written on the Nagaon district in general and the study area villages in particular for a better understanding of the contemporary socio-economic and political setting those led to initiation of Sikh settlement in the study area villages.
- Historical accounts of Punjab as well as Medieval India to comprehend the socio-political conditions responsible for diffusion the Sikhs and Sikhism at that time of initiation of Sikh settlement in Assam.

Preparation of Database:

The database is prepared from different primary and secondary sources. Primary data are being collected with the following methods and techniques:

- **Photographing and Videographing** of different natural, social, economic and cultural aspects. These techniques are applied for documentation of features like: portraying their physical appearance and structure, land use pattern and agriculture practices, economic and household activities, housing conditions, socio-economic and cultural institutions and behavioural aspects

like food habit, dress pattern as well as their religious occasions. While many of these photographs are self explanatory others are being used as supportive evidences of the other forms of collected data.

- GPS based information are collected to know the latitude & Longitude of the study area villages as well as altitude of the villages from the mean sea level.
- A household schedule cum questionnaire is prepared and household data was collected from randomly selected sample households of the study area villages both in Assam and Punjab.

Name of the Villages	Total Households	Total Sikh Households (Estimated)	Total Population	No of sample Households for survey	Total Sample Population
Chaparmukh	239	62	1052	20	97
Borkola & Sing Gaon	624	300	2899	50	286
Hatipara	339	22	1583	10	53
Bhagowal	942	490	4881	30	337
Bhinder	604	580	3017	20	266
Manawala	1047	900	6029	50	422

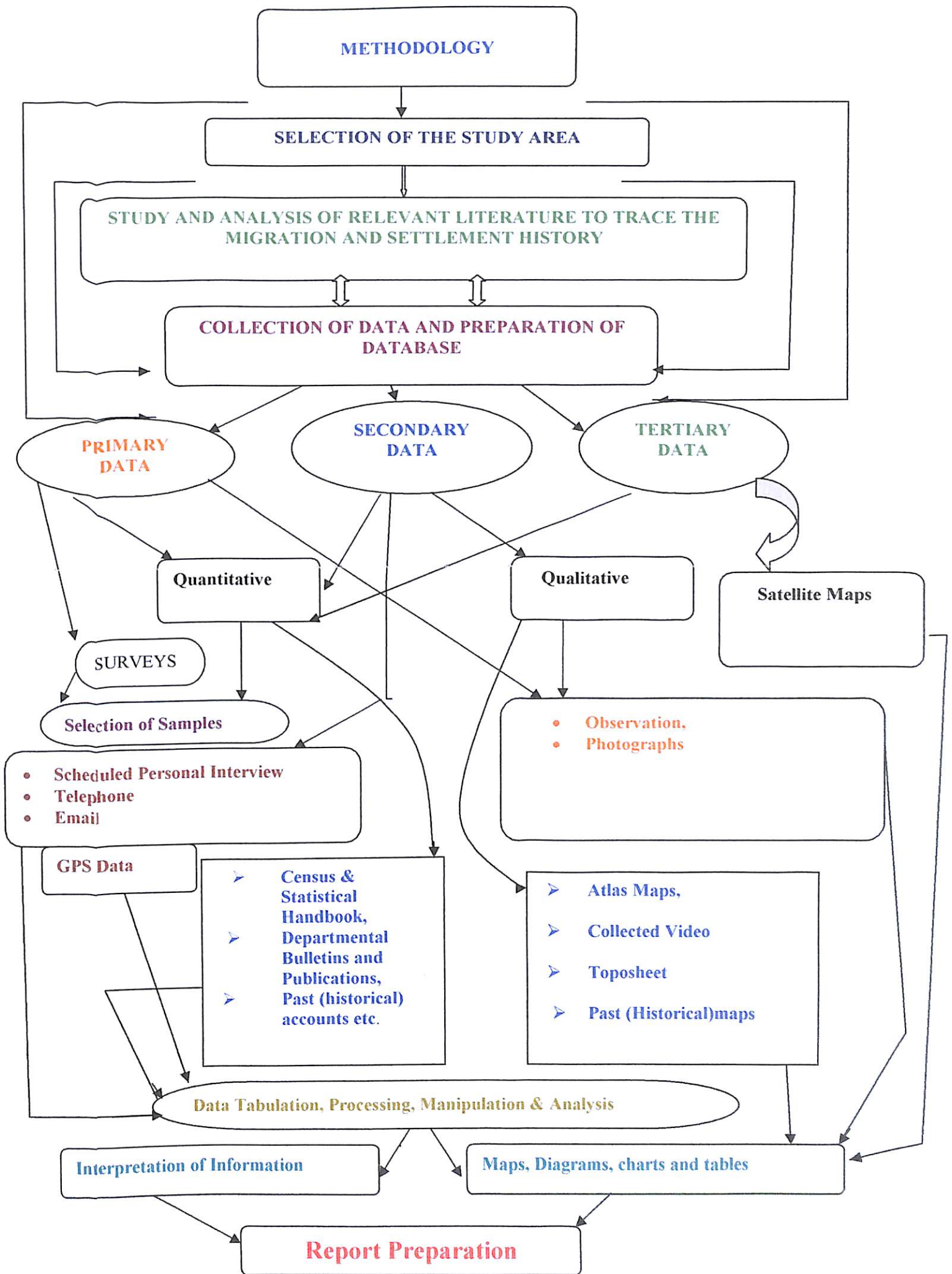
Secondary and tertiary data sources for the same study include- qualitative and quantitative data from different publications, census & statistical handbook, departmental bulletins, historical accounts, atlas maps, Toposheet, historical maps, satellite maps Etc.

Data analysis and Representation:

The data collected from field and offices have been compiled, tabulated, processed, analyzed and summarized using redolent techniques. While most results are displayed in the form of tables and relevant graphs and maps, Kendall's ranking coefficient method and composite Z-Score are used to find out the spatiotemporal variation and disparity in the level of agricultural development.

Many socio-economic traits between the rural Assamese Sikhs and those from Punjab and differences observable are expressed in terms of comparative table, charts, figures as well as photographs.

The following graphic chart demonstrates the methodology and standpoints followed to carry out the study as per the problem and objectives of this study.



1.5. Interdisciplinary Relevance:

Throughout the history the Sikhs have proved to be an immensely mobile and dynamic community. The Sikhs living in Assam migrated from the soil of Punjab long ago and have adapted to the natural and cultural landscape of Assam. Systematic investigation of the community's migration and settlement history as well as trend and pattern of adaptation and changes as differentiated from their Punjab counterparts calls for a purely interdisciplinary approach and is supposed to pour the windows of academic disciplines like published Assamese fiction and non-fiction literature, Sikh philosophy, documentation of facts both from Assam and Punjab history, History of India as well as Sikh religion as well as relevant literature of Sikh studies and natural and social sciences like ecology, geography, anthropology, demography, and sociology. The analysis part will certainly involve expertise in inferential statistics and last but of course not the least, mapping aided by traditional and modern methods.

1.6: Significance of Study:

The Sikhs have their own rules and regulation that shapes their distinct identity. Common normative patterns of Sikh behavior are constructed by the teachings and practices of the Gurus who nurtured the community during the first two centuries of its existence, not only set for their followers a strict moral standard, but also distinctive patterns of personal appearance and social behavior

Sikhs have proven themselves as one of the most dynamic communities in the world. Accordingly, lots of issues are emerging most of which are associated with their Identity and new possibilities and challenges. The dispersion of Sikhs is making the "Sikh" vision and identity broader and has reshaped it. Thus, at global level, migration from the Punjab plays vital role in reshaping the Sikh identity that is emerging in various forms. In day-to-day practice, Sikhs are becoming more open and they are trying to accommodate with diverse social, religious, economic, and political settings. Distance from their community and challenges they are facing in new social environments and minority

feelings, make them conscious to their distinctive identity. However, these Sikhs migrating from Punjab in search of better livelihood have kept emotional concerns and deep association with Punjab.

In contrast, the rural Sikhs living in the villages of Nagaon District possess a great deal of distinctiveness in terms of their adaptation and change pattern. In general, the Sikh identity has globally been interrelated with its institutions and Punjabi Language. To the contrary, The Rural Sikhs in the study area have completely transformed themselves into an “Assamese” and totally lost their “Punjab” link. Moreover, there has been mammoth religious as well as socio-economic deform of this community in Assam from their Punjab counterparts resulting in reported negligence and socio-cultural and political discrimination of them by the larger wing. In view of the published reports regarding discrimination of the Rural Sikhs of Assam by the other sections of Sikhs a comparative study holds immense importance to chalk out preventive and remedial measures.

In the recent years, Sikh Studies with special reference to Sikh identity and its changes and challenges have received a global concern. Many Universities not only in India but also in other countries like the UK, USA and Canada have offered Sikh Studies an Academic repute.

In this study attempt has been made to geographically analyze the present and past pattern of adaptation of the same community in two distinctively different rural environmental setting i.e Punjab and Assam with a view to chalk out reformative and remedial measures to bring back emotional and social cohesion among them as a matter of national interest.

1.7: Review of Literature:

Sikhism is one of the youngest religions of the world, and its followers, “Sikhs” are renowned as fierce and proud warriors¹⁴. The Sikhs believe in one supreme and formless god. They are now settled in almost every country of the world. Their dedication, hard work and entrepreneurship have earned those lots of success and glamour globally which tempted people around the world more about their religion, culture, history, traditions and politics. As such, in recent few decades Sikh Studies have got

immense popularity not only in India but also outside the country. In this respect not only a number of books relating to Sikhism have been published but also several conferences and seminars are being organized at international level on different aspects. This growing awareness have resulted in have resulted in a large number of publications regarding Sikhism, Sikhs and different issues associated with the Sikhs and Sikhism.

On the Philosophical Issues and regarding the Sikhism there has been numerous publications from historical researchers.

Gurinder Singh Mann, retd. Professor at the University of California in 2004 wrote a book entitled **“Sikhism: Religions of the World”** published by Prentice Hall publishers. This unique and astute book capably combines recent researches in the Sikh studies to present an accurate and comprehensive overview of Sikh history and religiosity against the milieu of other major religions of the world.

Dr Nikky Guninder Kaur Singh, a Crawford Family Professor of Religion at Colby College, Maine, USA, worked a book on Sikhism which was published by I B Tauris & Co, London in 2011. In this comprehensive book entitled **“Sikhism: As Introduction”** she reviews the history, theology and worship of a community poised between reconciling its hereditary creeds and certainties with the fast-paced pressures of modernity. She outlines and explains the core Sikh beliefs, and explores the writings and teachings of the Ten Sikh Gurus in Sikhism's Holy Scriptures, Sikh ethics, art and architecture, gender issues like place of women in the tradition as well as Sikh migration and Diaspora. The book attractively combines the warm empathy of a Sikh with the objective insights and acute perspectives of a prominent scholar of religion.

W.H. McLeod, internationally recognized scholar of Sikh studies, provides an accurate description and interpretation of the Sikhism and the Sikhs exploring their history, doctrine, and literature in his much acclaimed work entitled **“The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society”** published by Columbia University Press, 1989

Another distinguished work of Dr. McLeod in this field is **Sikhs and Sikhism** published by OUP, India in 2004. This volume is an omnibus edition of four classic studies on the history and evolution of Sikhs and Sikhism. It comprises Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, an analysis of the life and teachings of the first Guru of the Sikhs; Early Sikh Tradition traced in the Janam Sakhi style; the evolution of the Sikh Community, an essay questioning traditional views of Sikhism's development; and lastly Who is a Sikh?, a lucid account of key phases in the evolution of a distinctive Sikh identity.

The Illustrated History of the Sikhs by Khushwant Singh published by Oxford University Press in 2006 is an edited, updated and illustrative edition of two volumes of the book “**A History of the Sikhs**” on the community. Written in his trademark style to be accessible to a general audience, it is based on scholarly archival research of original documents in Persian, Gurmukhi, and English. It examines the social, religious, and political background that led to the formation of the Sikh faith in the fifteenth century. The transformation of the Sikhs from a peace lover sect to a militant group called the Khalsa led by Guru Gobind Singh is portrayed in detail, as is the relationship of the Sikhs with the Mughals and the Afghans, until the consolidation of Sikh power under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The continuing Sikh struggle for survival as a separate community marked by the demand for a distinct Sikh state is chronicled in this volume.

Jagjit Singh, in 1999 wrote a book entitled “**Dynamics of Sikh Philosophy**” published by Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh. The book brings to focus the revolutionary ideology and its application to the social structure of the Sikh movement. He explains in this book the revolutionary character of the Sikh Panth.

Sikhs started to migrate from Punjab starting from the British annexation of the state basically on two counts. Firstly, many Sikhs were recruited by the British in their military forces and Secondly, with the expansion of the British empire tremendous job and trade & commerce opportunities generated in different parts of the British empire not only in India but outside also. Resultantly, issues regarding Sikh migration and diaspora got ample scope to be studied.

Verne A. Dusenbery, Professor of Anthropology, Hemline University, USA, is studying dynamics of Sikh diaspora since 1970's. In fact, Dusenbery in 1986 coined the term "Sikh Diaspora" to the study of the issues involving the Sikhs residing abroad. In 1989 he along with Barrier N. Gerald edited a book entitled: *The Sikh Diaspora: Migration and the Experience beyond Punjab.*"

"Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora" edited by Peter Van Der Veer and published by University of Pennsylvania Press in 1995 Dusenbery published an article entitled **"A Sikh Diaspora? Contested Identities and Constructed Realities"** where he illustrates the processes and techniques the Sikh migrants living outside India have adopted to adapt themselves to the new environments. According to him, this section of the Sikhs living in different parts of the world outside India are maintaining strict Sikh identity and a strong sense of being a "Punjabi" through construction of gurdwaras, maintaining facilities in Punjabi, remitting and visiting birth villages in Punjab occasionally and avoiding inappropriate occupations.

Accommodation without Assimilation: Sikh Immigrants in an American High School published by Cornell University press in 1988 is a documentation of findings of Margaret A. Gibson's two-year study of Sikh children in a rural California educational setting. In this work the author details the context of adjustment of the Sikhs to life in America, particularly the factors that affect their progress in school. The micro-ethnographic detail on economic adaptation, home life, and family values is skillfully linked to both larger societal issues (immigration policy, assimilation, minority-majority relations) and to educational theory on school performance. The result is a holistic portrait which reveals why Sikh high school students, despite language barriers, prejudice, and significant cultural differences, often outperform their majority peers and other United States minority groups.

In 1997, Michael Angelo, a doctorate in International Education from New York University in 1993 and presently teacher and education consultant in USA, published his research based work entitled **The Sikh Diaspora: Tradition and Change in an Immigrant Community** in the edited

work of Franklin NG entitled **Asian Americans: Reconceptualizing Culture, History, Politics**. In this study he illustrated various historical, demographic, socio-economic and cultural aspects of the Sikh people living in the Capital district of New York on the basis of data collected through field study.

The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood (Global Diasporas) published by University of Washington Press in 1999 is an important book which initiated Diaspora studies associated with the Sikhs. This is a striking, inquisitive and creative assessment of the Sikh communities living in Britain, Canada, and the United States. The author Dr. Darshan Singh Tatla investigates the cultural, economic and social linkages between Sikh communities of Punjab and overseas, and discussed the Sikh Diaspora's support for a Sikh home land and its role in highlighting human rights issues in Punjab.

The Sikh Diaspora in Vancouver: Three Generations amid Tradition, Modernity, and Multiculturalism is a research based study made by Kamala Elizabeth Nayar and published by University of Toronto Press in 2004. This book illustrates the complex and complex transition of Sikh social culture in Vancouver and the British Columbia lower mainland of Canada who migrated here from small Punjab villages and highlights differences and tensions with regards to the role of familial relations, child rearing, and religion. She focuses particularly on the younger generation, and underlines the role of Sikh youth as a catalyst for change within the community. Nayar also examines the Sikh community as it functions and interacts with mainstream Canadian society in the light of modernity and multiculturalism, exploring the change, or lack thereof, in attitudes about the functioning of the community, the role of multicultural organizations and the media, continuity in traditional customs, modifications in behaviour patterns, and changes in values within the larger Canadian social environment of diversity.

Radha Sharma, submitted her doctoral thesis entitled "**Society and culture of the Punjab late eighteenth early nineteenth century**" to the department of Sociology, GND University, Amritsar in

2013. In this dissertation she analyzed the socio-political scenario and events in Punjab arising as a result of Sikh conflicts with the Mughals & Afghans following execution of Banda Bahadur, a loyal follower of Guru Gobind Singh. During this period, several “Misls” were formed in Punjab from different socio-economic and cultural background and under the banner of “Dal Khalsa” these “Misls” continued to fight with the invading forces leading to formation of a strong Sikh empire under Ranjit Singh in 1799 at Punjab.

In 2014, Maiko Kamoza submitted his doctoral dissertation entitled **“Family, property and migration in colonial Punjab”** to the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. This study investigates through the socio-economic and cultural conditions of Punjab during the colonial period with particular interest to the Doab regions triggering the initiation of migration of Sikhs to different parts of the world.

However, Studies regarding different issues and problems relating to Sikhs living in other States than Punjab in India very few research based works have been done so far. Most of the works published in this respect are in the form of monographs rather than field based analysis.

In this respect Dr. Himadri Banerjee’s work **“The Other Sikhs: A view from Eastern India”** published in 2003 still remains vital and most acclaimed work throughout the country. In this monumental book Dr. Banerjee made extensive search for literary and historical evidences and explained the history attached to the Sikh people living in eastern India States of Assam, Bengal and Orissa.

Dr. Maheswar Neog in 1984 for the first time in Assam made a field based study of the religions of northeastern India in their historical perspective with due emphasis on Sikhism. On the basis of the collected literary and historical materials region he compiled the book **“Religions of the North East”** which was published by the Assam Publication Board in 2008.

In 1998, Jyotirmoyee Devi, lecturer in Philosophy in DCB Girls' College at Jorhat in Assam submitted her doctoral work entitled "**Sikhism in Assam**" to the Department of Philosophy of Gauhati University. In this dissertation she studies the religious nomenclature of Sikhism in Assam from a historical and methodological viewpoints and studies history, philosophical relevance and differences of religious viewpoint between the Sikhs of Assam and other parts of the world.

Dr. B. K. Medhi, professor in the dept. of Anthropology of the Gauhati University conducted years of ethnographic study on the Assamese Sikh Community especially living at Borkola village during 1980's. He submitted his doctoral dissertation to the Gauhati University in 1989 entitled "**The Assamese Sikhs a study on their social relations in a rural situation**". This dissertation describes the nature of social relations and certain other associated aspects of the contemporary Assamese Sikh social life.

Another notable work on this community of Assam a compilation of manuscripts compiled and edited by Nanda Singh Borkola and Kabita Rani Singh in the form of a book named "**Hadirachakir Para Borkolaloi**" published in 2013 by NL Publications, Guwahati. In this work writings and manuscripts of a number of scholars, historians, social researchers, and famous literary personalities of Assamese Literature contributed.

Kolong-Hariya is the name of the souvenir of the 5th Special Session of the Assam Sahitya Sabha held at Dakhinpat in March 2008. In this commemorative edition a few monographs were published regarding the Assamese Sikhs of this area as well as the history of the area which facilitated the Sikhs to settle

However, there is no dearth of study and work regarding socio-economic status of the Sikhs living in rural Punjab.

Arvinder Singh¹ from Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum , Kerala in April 1999 submitted his doctoral degree thesis to the JNU entitled **“Industrial Transition in an Agricultural Surplus Region – A Study of Punjab”**.

Ranjit Singh Ghuman, Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh in his research paper entitled **“The Sikh Community in Indian Punjab: Some Socio-Economic Challenges”** states about formidable socio-economic problems and challenges being faced by the Sikh community of Punjab in view of the changing development pattern and emerging global scenario and stressed on the need to address these challenges and thus play a vital role in translating the challenges into opportunities.

1.8: Organization of the Study:

The report is prepared in seven episodes or chapters.

The First chapter is devoted to introduction, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, relevant research questions, database and methodology, review of relevant literature and works, organization of the study.

Chapter II deals with the geographical setting of the study area villages in Nagaon district of Assam as well as those of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts of Punjab.

In chapter III the migration history of the Assamese Sikh people in the study area is analyzed in details with due emphasis on the geographical factors associated in the entire process with relevant maps showing the pattern of diffusion of the Sikh settlers in this region from historic cum geographic perspective.

In Chapter IV of this report demographic and socio-economic traits of people in the study area villages are documented, analyzed, illustrated and compared with relevant tables, graphs, maps, photographs etc.

Chapter V is built up with the summary and conclusion, findings of the study and suggestions

Chapter II: Geographical Background of the Study area

2.1.1: Location of Nagaon District & Villages:

Assam is one of the seven north-eastern states of India lying between 24.3⁰ North to 28⁰ North latitudes and 89.5⁰ East to 96.1⁰ East longitudes. It embraces four diverse geographic regions in the Brahmaputra valley, the Barak valley, Karbi Anglong Plateau and North Cachar Hills or Dima Hasao Hills. Assam covers an area of 78,438 Km² and is the second largest state in this region. The state is divided in to 27 districts (At present 32 with the creation of 5 nos of new districts in 2016). Nagaon district is one of the districts of Assam located in the Brahmaputra valley.

Nagaon district is situated in between the Latitudes 25⁰66' N and 26⁰66' N and Longitudes 92⁰43' E and 93⁰35' E in the flood plains of river Brahmaputra. On the north, Nagaon is bounded by Sonitpur district & the Brahmaputra, towards south lies West Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao Hill district, towards east the districts of East Karbi Anglong and Golaghat and towards west by Marigaon and West Karbi Anglong districts. Nagaon district at present comprises of three subdivisions *viz.*, Nagaon, Hojai and Kaliabor and covers an area of 3993 sq. km however, following bifurcation of the Hojai Subdivision as a new district since 2016, now Nagaon district has only two subdivisions in Nagaon and Kaliabor. Nagaon, the district's headquarter is a city and a municipal board. Located approximately 120 Km east of Guwahati, Nagaon is the 5th largest urban area of Assam with a population of 147,231 as per 2011 Census.

Location of Chaparmukh Village:

Chaparmukh the first our study area where the Assamese Sikhs live is an important village in Nagaon district is located approximately 26 Km from Nagaon and 4 Km south east of Raha and 91 KM from State capital Dispur. The village falls in the Raha Tehsil / Revenue Circle under Nagaon subdivision. Chaparmukh is an important railway Junction cum station in Nagaon District.

Observed latitudinal and longitudinal values of Chaparmukh in GPS are $26^{\circ}12'79.1''$ North and $92^{\circ}51'46.0''$ East.

Location of Borkola Village:

Borkola village in the study area has the biggest rural Assamese Sikh population among all places. Borkola is situated at about $26^{\circ}23'$ North latitude and $92^{\circ}65'$ East longitude as per the observed GPS values. Borkola village falls in the Nagaon Tehsil of Nagaon subdivision of the district. The village is located at the Bebejia-Kampur PWD road at a distance of about 7 KM north of the Kampur, 18KM south east of the district headquarter.

Location of Hatipara Village:

The Hatipara Village is located adjacent to the Nagaon municipality limits and is located 4 Km South West from Nagaon at the Nagaon-Dakhinpat PWD road. This village falls in the Nagaon Tehsil of the district. Hatipara is situated at $26^{\circ}31'80''$ North Latitude and $92^{\circ}6'76.8''$ East Longitude.

2.1.2: Physiography and Drainage of Nagaon District:

Nagaon District is situated at the Central Brahmaputra valley in Assam. The entire district is located in a flat terrain. The average altitude of the district is 60.6 meters. However, since the district is in close proximity to the hill districts of Assam as well as Meghalaya Plateau, many isolated hills and hillocks have penetrated through the plain topography of the district. These hills are found mainly the southern, south western and South Eastern margins of the district. Towards the east, the plain area gradually narrows down on account of the penetration of the Karbi Anglong Hills in to the plain. On the other hand towards the west, the plain gradually widen up and merges with the Kapili valley.

Basundari Hill (776.02m), Rangamati Hill (167.65m), Kathiatoli Hill, Udmari Hill, Sagunbahi Hill and Bor-Kandali Hill (852m), Hatimura Parbat (186m), and the Kamakhya Hill (244m) are the highland hills of the district.

According to Sharma (1993) the district can be divided in to the following geographical divisions:

1. The hilly areas of the eastern and southern parts of the district. The elevation ranges from 100-300 m, including isolated hillocks.
2. Piedmont and high lands with undulating topography between the alluvial plain and the plateau region in the south-east.
3. Extensive flood plain area from the river Brahmaputra to the piedmont zone.
4. The sandy and silty bars and island of different shaped in the river Brahmaputra which locally known as 'Char' or 'Chaporis'.
5. Low-lying areas including the beels, marshes, swamps and waterlogged areas.

The general gradient of land surface of Nagaon district is from east to west. The river Brahmaputra flows in the east-west direction along the northern boundary of the district. As a result all the tributaries and channels of the district show a tendency to flow from east to west towards the Brahmaputra. The river Kolong is the main tributary channel of the Brahmaputra in Nagaon district. Earlier, it used to be a channel of the river Brahmaputra which used to take off from the river Brahmaputra from Hatimura. But due to the construction of an embankment along the Brahmaputra near Hatimura Hill the Kolong was cut off at its source. Now Kolong is fed by waters of three small tributaries viz. Diju, Misa and Dipholu. Other major tributaries of the river Kolong are the Hariya, Nonoi and Batalimari.

The river Kopili is one of the major South Bank tributaries of the Brahmaputra / Kolong River. It originates from the Jaintia Hills in the Meghalaya Plateau and flowing through the Dima Hasao district of Assam, it enters Nagaon district at Panimur. The main tributaries of the River Kopili are Doyang, Killing, Barapani, Jamuna, Lankajan, Dighalpani, Burhiganga and Dimoru.

After crossing a very tortuous path, the Kopili River meets the main stream of Kolong at Jagi in Marigaon district.

Jamuna is another important tributary, which rises from 1,324 m altitude near Bardambakshu in Karbi Hills and joins meets the Kopili River at Jamunamukh.

The river Nonoi originates from the Chapanala Hills and flows through the plains of the Nagaon district. After flowing for a few kilometers it meets the Hariya River and flows westward to merge with the Kolong River at Hariyamukh near Raha.

The river Barapani originating from the Meghalaya plateau is an important tributary of Kopili. After crossing the Karbi Anglong district it runs through the Lutumari forest and finally meets the Kopili at Chaparmukh.

Apart from these some other tributaries of the river Brahmaputra in the district are the Pakaria, Sonai, Leteri, Leterisuti, Haldiasuti and Mora-Leteri.

The rivers and their tributaries flowing across the alluvial plains of the district, frequently change their course in different directions. As a result the abandoned channels form a large number of ox-bow shaped lakes or cut off meanders locally called as 'beel' or 'erasuti'.

The study area villages of Chaparmukh, Borkola and Hatipara three riverine villages located between the region in the district lying between the Kapili River in the South and Kalong towards North.

The part of Chaparmukh village where the Assamese Sikhs have formed settlement is in the bank of the Titaimora Suti which is only a few kilometer long water channel that connects the water of Kapili River flowing through the south of the Chaparmukh Village and the Kolong River flowing through the north of the Village.

Borkola Village is located at the north bank of the Hariya River..

Hatipara village is situated at the Southern bank of the River Kalong. The eastern limit of the village is in the form of a former channel of the Kolong River or an ox-bow-lake locally known as "Marikolong Beel".



2.2: Geographical Overview of Punjab:

The word "Punjab" is a conjunction of the two words- "Panj" meaning "Five" and "Aab" meaning water. Thus the name of the state itself symbolizes five rivers located here.¹⁵

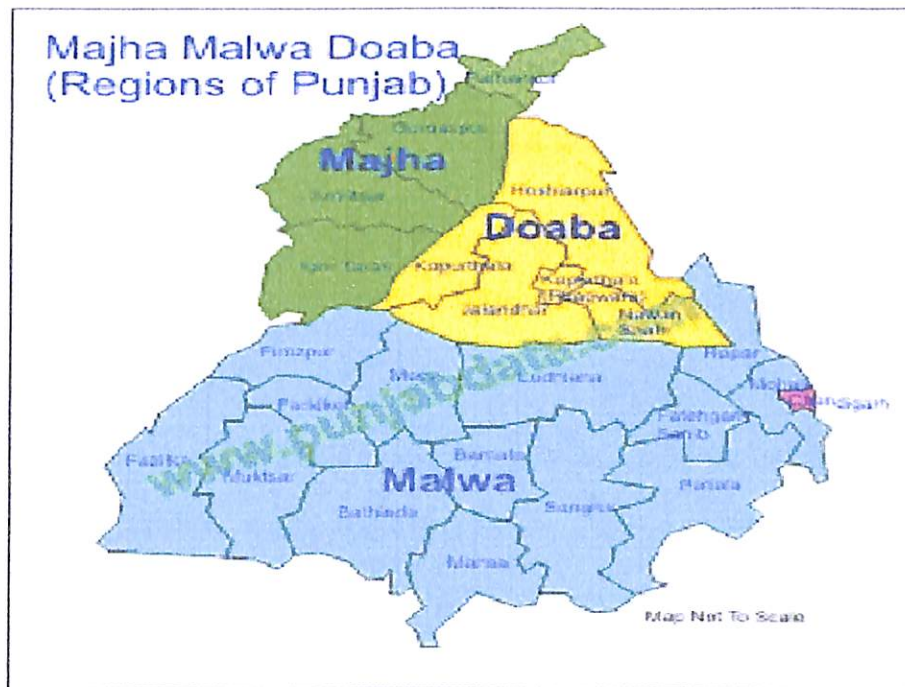
The state of Punjab is situated in the north-west of India, between 29°30'' north to 32°32' north latitudes and 73°55' east to 76°50' east longitudes between the rivers Indus and Ganges. Historically, the boundary of Punjab stretched in both India and Pakistan which was actually confined between the Beas river basin in the east and the Indus to the west. On the north the state was bounded by the Kashmiri Himalayas and on the south it reached the plains of Rajasthan and Cholistan in Pakistan. However, with the partition in 1947 the borders of the region shrank to its current size, with its division into the Pakistani province of Punjab and the Indian state of Punjab

The Indian state of Punjab is bordered by Pakistan on the west, the Indian states of Jammu & Kashmir on the north, Himachal Pradesh on its north-east and Haryana and Rajasthan on its south. With an area of 50362 KM², Punjab occupies 1.57 % of the country's total geographical area. Punjab is a part of the greater Indo-Gangetic plains formed due to alluvial deposits by rivers and tributaries. From geomorphology perspective, hills, table lands, intermountain valleys, piedmont plains, alluvial plains, sand dunes, palaeochannels, flood plains, wetlands and salt affected areas can be observed in the state. However, most of the state lies in a luxuriant alluvial plain with many rivers and an extensive man-made irrigation canal system. Punjab's semi arid southern and south western border merges into the Thar Desert. A belt of undulating hills extends along the northeastern part of the state at the foot of the Himalayas. Its average elevation is 300 meters (980 ft) above sea level, with a range from 180 meters (590 ft) in the southwest to more than 500 meters (1,600 ft) around the northeast border. The Shiwalik Hills extend along the northeastern part of the state at the foot of the Himalayas. Two major rivers, the Sutlej and Beas, pass through Punjab and Ravi and Ghaggar pass through its northern and southern borders, respectively. The drainage pattern in Punjab divides the state into three distinct geographical

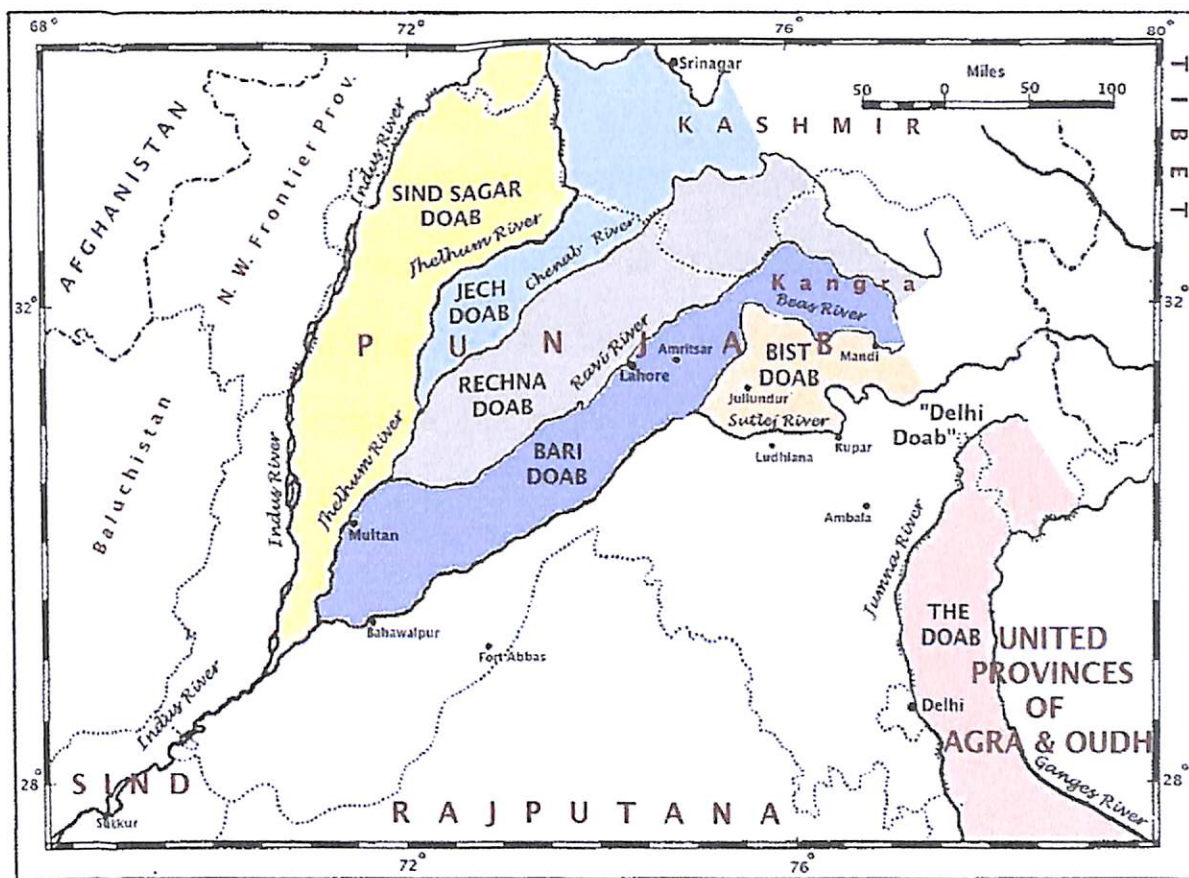
areas popularly known as ‘Majha’, ‘Malwa’ and ‘Doaba’. (State of Environment Report of Punjab, 2007)

The following table gives a summary of the regions of Punjab:

Regions of Punjab			
Region	Area	Language	Demonym
Majha	Between Ravi and Beas	Majhi	Majhi or Majhel
Malwa	South of Sutlej	Malwai	Malwai
Doaba	Between Sutlej and Beas	Doabi	Doabia



(Source: <http://www.punjabdata.com/Majha-Malwa-Doaba.aspx#Majha-Area-In-Punjab>)



The climate of Punjab is typically subtropical. Average winter temperature in the state is approximately 13°C (55°F). However, night temperature during the winter months often lowers to freezing point. During summer months, the average temperature is about 34°C (93°F). However during May and June, day temperature of the state often rises as high as 45°C (113°F). Annual average rainfall in Punjab ranges from 1250 mm (49 inches) in the north to 350 mm (14 inches) in the semi arid southwestern part. More than 70 percent of the annual rainfall occurs during the monsoon season i.e., from July to September.

The state supports 2.4% of the country's population with a population density of 484 persons per sq km as per 2011 census. Land use in the state is shared by agriculture, forests, water bodies, built up areas, barren & uncultured land, etc.

2.2.1: Gurdaspur District -An overview:

The Gurdaspur district is the northern most district of Punjab state. It falls in the Jalandhar division in the Majha region of Punjab, and is squeezed in between the Ravi and Beas rivers. The district is located between 31°36' and 32°34' north latitudes and 74°56' and 75°24' east longitudes. Gurdaspur district shares common boundaries with Pathankot and Pakistan district in the North and North West respectively, Beas River in the North-East, Hoshiarpur district in the South-East, Karputhala district in the South and Amritsar district in the South West. Total area of Gurdaspur is 3,551 km². Gurdaspur has a population of 22, 98,323 as per 2011 census.

Gurdaspur district is divided into 03 revenue circles or tehsils. Total It Consist of 11 blocks; Gurdaspur, Dhariwal, Kalanaur, Dorangla, Kahnuwan, Dinanagar, Batala, Qadian, Shri Hargobindpur, Fatehgarh Churian & Dera Baba Nanak

It is said that the name of the district “Gurdaspur” was given after Guriya Ji, a Sanwal Brahmin of Kaushal Gotra in the beginning of 17th century who bought land for Gurdaspur from Jats of Sangi Gotra. It is also established that some people used to live in huts in the old city. Guriya Ji, whose came from Ayodhya long time ago and settled in Paniar situated 5 miles north of Gurdaspur. Guriya Ji had two sons Nawal Rai and Pala Ji. The descendants of Nawal Rai settled in Gurdaspur. Nawal Rai’s son Baba Deep Chand was a contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. It is believed that Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave the title of Ganj Bakhsh (Owner of Treasure) to Baba Deep Chand.

The topography of the district is mostly plain and similar to the rest of the Punjab plains in structure comprising of undulating plain, the flood plains of the Ravi and the Beas and the up land plain. Elevation of the district ranges from 60 meters to 381 meters from the MSL. Beas and Ravi are the two main rivers flowing through the district. Both of these rivers originate from the adjoining state of Himachal Pradesh. However, like other rivers of the state the water of the Beas and the Ravi also do not permit navigation since water discharge in these rivers fluctuate from season to season and from year to year.

Gurdaspur district owns a reasonably dense network of artificial water canals which are part of the famous Upper Bari Doab Canal system irrigating most part of the district. Its main branches are Lahore branch, Kasur branch and the Sabhraon branch. The Ravi Beas link which was completed around 1954 diverts part of the Ravi water into the Chakki khad which is a tributary of the Beas.

The district experiences subtropical monsoon type of climate with two distinct seasons i.e. summer and winter. The summer season is usually hot as the temperature touches 44°C or even more. Rainfall in the district mostly occurs during the summer influenced by the S-W Monsoon which generally arrives in the first week of July and continues up to the end of August. 70% of the rainfall occurs during this period.

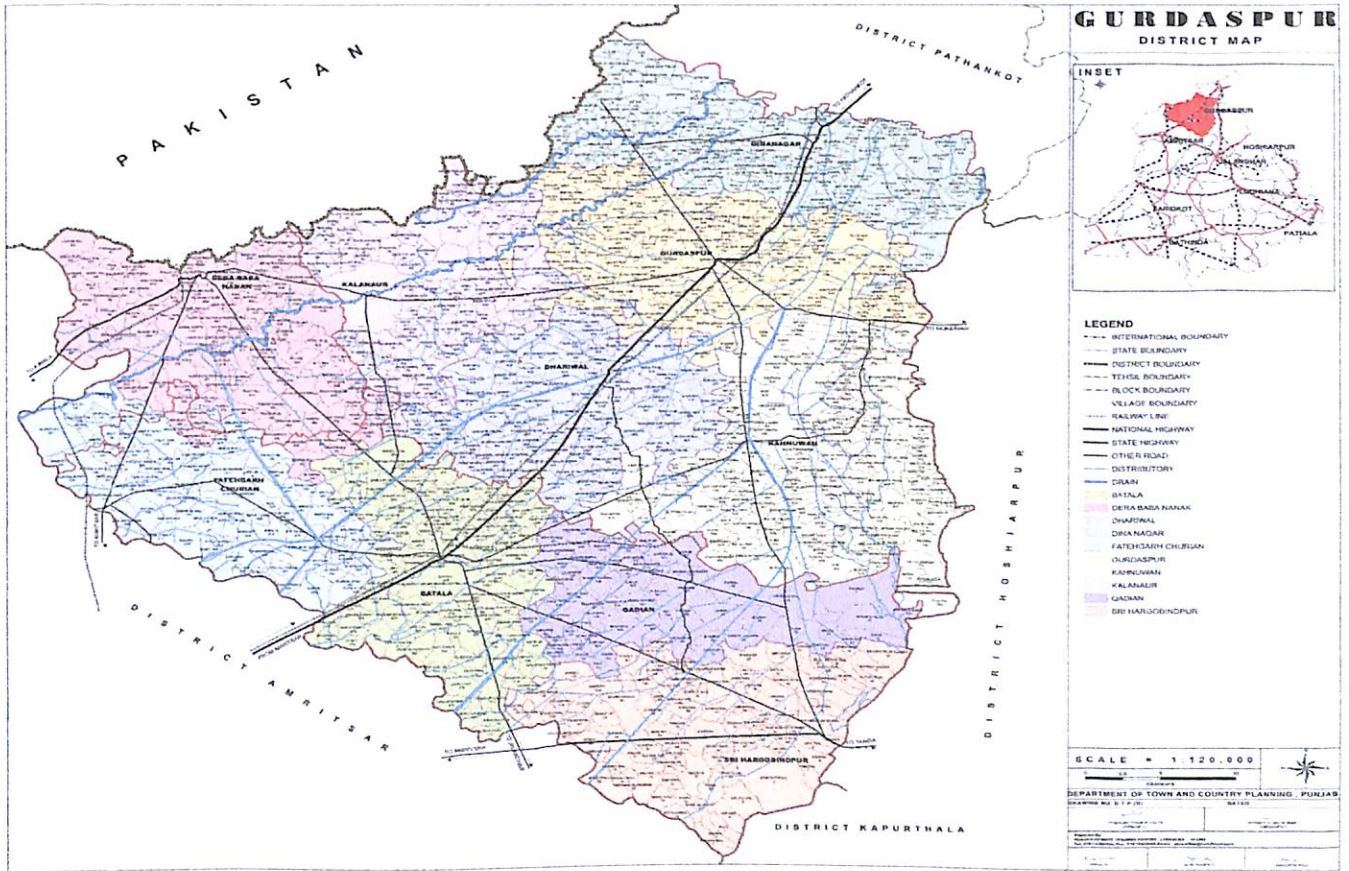
Winters are too usually dry and cold in this part of the state as night temperature often touches freezing point during December-January months. The district also experiences some winter rainfall during January and February. The dust storm occurs in the month of May and June.

In general, the soil of the district is quite fertile which is suitable for various types of agriculture. The soils are generally loamy with clay content below 10 percent. Soils contain small quantities of lime but the magnesia content is high. They are well supplied in potash and phosphoric acid but the quantities available are low. The agriculture is dependent to a large extent on the nature of its soils which in turn, is influenced materially by availability and supply of water.

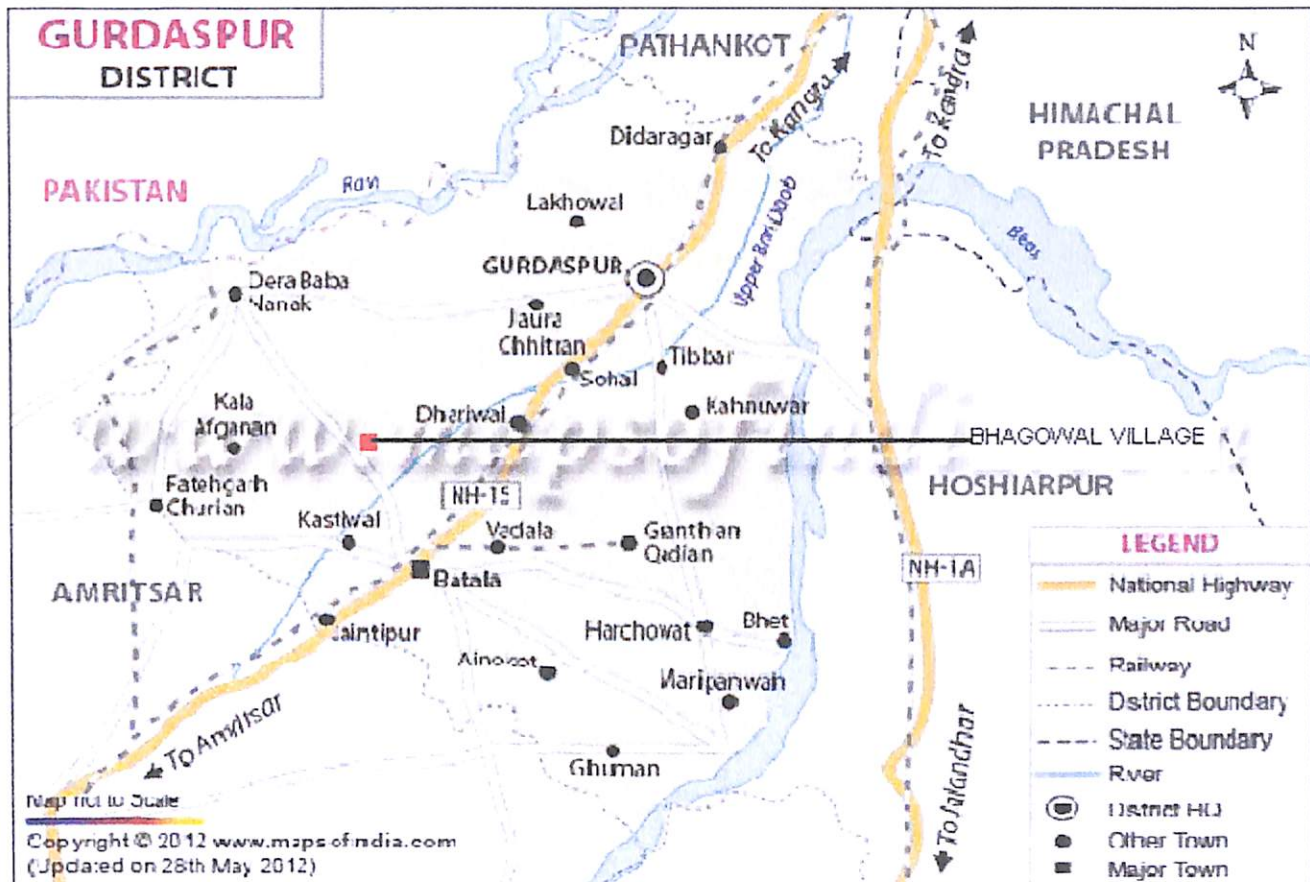
Location and brief introduction to Bhagowal Village:

Bhagowal is a large village Panchayat located in Batala Tehsil of Gurdaspur district of Punjab. Observed geo-coordinate of Bhagowal as found through GPS reading is 31.89⁰North Latitude and 75.16⁰ East Longitude and observed altitude of the village from the MSL is found to be 251 meters. State capital of Punjab i.e., Chandigarh is located around 200 Km away from this village while it is situated 9km north of Batala and 46km away from district headquarter Gurdaspur. Total geographical area of the village is found to be approximately 10.495 km². It has a total population of 4,881 peoples as per

Population Census 2011 of which 2485 are males and 2396 are females. There are about 942 households in Bhagowal village.



Map Source: <http://gurdaspur.nic.in/html/mapgsp.pdf>



2.2.2: Amritsar District -An overview:

Located in the Majha region of Punjab, Amritsar is one of the border districts lying in the North West frontier of Punjab. The district is bounded by district Gurdaspur in the north east, district Karputhala in the east and district Tarn Taran in the south east. The city of Amritsar is headquarters of this district which lies about 15 miles (25km) east of the Indo-Pak border.

Amritsar at present is one of the important cities in Punjab. It is a major commercial, cultural, and transportation centre. Historically, Amritsar has been the centre of Sikhism and the holiest place to the Sikhs as the Golden Temple is located in the city itself. **Amritsar, literally a Pool of Nectar, derives its name from “Amrit Sarovar”, the holy tank that surrounds the fabulous Golden Temple.**¹⁶ This tank was originally a small natural pool and is said to have been visited by Guru Nanak Dev. However, the Fourth Sikh Guru Ram Das in 1577 permanently settled here. He obtained more of land in its

neighbourhood. Thereafter, the pool soon acquired a reputation for sanctity, and the followers of the Guru migrated to the sacred spot, and there a small town grew up and was known at first as Ramdaspur or Guru-ka-Chak, and later, as the pool was converted into a tank, it came to be known as Amritsar.¹⁷

Amritsar district lies between $31^{\circ} 28' 30''$ to $32^{\circ} 03' 15''$ north latitudes & $74^{\circ} 29' 30''$ to $75^{\circ} 24' 15''$ east longitudes. It is bounded by river Beas in the south eastern side and river Ravi on the North West side. Total area of the district is 2403 sq km.

There are 04 Tehsils in the district namely, Amritsar I, Amritsar II, Baba Bakala and Ajnala. There are eight development blocks namely Ajnala, Chogawan, Harsha Chhina, Jandiala, Majitha, Rayya, Tarsika and Verka.

The Amritsar District falls in the Jullundur Division of the Bari Doab tract of Punjab. In shape, it is a trapezium, with its base resting on the River Beas. Average elevation of the district is 219 m from the MSL. The Bari Doab area is enclosed between the perennial Beas and Ravi Rivers which is a sub-basin of the main Indus Basin. It is considered to encompass one of the most productive aquifer systems. The Upper Bari Doab area is thus a well defined tract delimited by the Ravi and Beas Rivers. Towards north and north east, it is delineated by the Siwalik foot hill zone and towards southwest the area is truncated by the international boundary with Pakistan beyond which it continues as the lower Bari Doab area.¹⁸

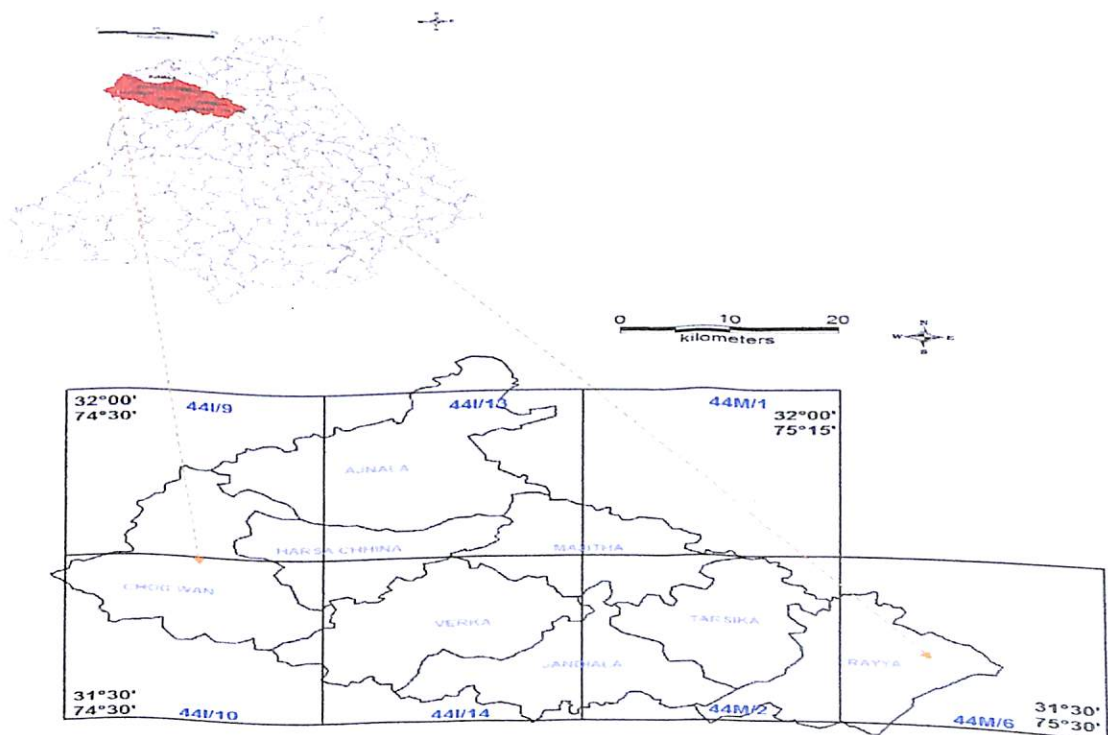
Amritsar district falls in between Ravi River and Beas River. Ravi River flows through the North West of the district and forms international border with Pakistan. Beas River flows in the eastern part of the district. Upper Bari Doab canal is the main canal passing through central part of the district. Lahore branch and Kasur branch lower are the major distributaries of the Upper Bari Doab canal. Soils in the western part of the district are coarse loamy, calcareous soils, where as in the central part of the district soils are fine loamy, calcareous and are well drained and are very much fertile and productive.

The climate of Amritsar district can be classified as subtropical-semi arid extreme climate which is very hot during summer and cold during winter. The normal annual rainfall of the district is 680 mm which is also unevenly distributed over 31 rainy days. The south west monsoon contributes 75% rainfall

and sets in last week of June and withdraws in middle of September. Rest 25% of annual rainfall occurs in the in non monsoon months in the wake of western disturbances and thunder storms. The rainfall increases from southwest to northeastern part of the district.

Amritsar district is amongst the thickly populated district of the Punjab state. As per official census 2011 and population data 2018 of Amritsar district, total population of Amritsar district is 2,490,656 which constitute 8.99 % of the total population of the state. Sikhs constitute 68.94% of Amritsar population

Base Map of Amritsar District



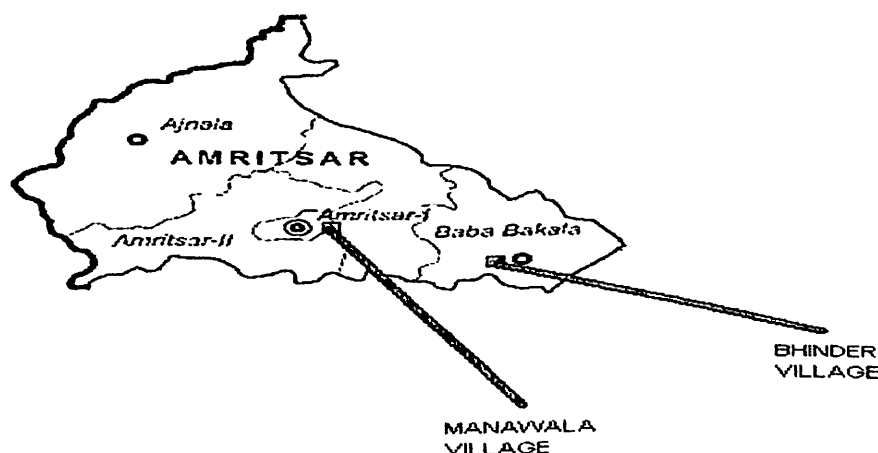
Map source: <http://cgwb.gov.in>

Location and brief introduction to Bhinder Village:

Bhinder village is located in Baba Bakala Tehsil of Amritsar district in Punjab. It is situated 10km away from sub-district headquarter Baba Bakala which is also one of the holiest places for the Sikhs since it is the birthplace of the 9th Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur. The village is located approximately 32 Km south-east from district headquarter Amritsar just off the famous GT Road or popularly known as the NH 1. The village is located at an altitude of approximately 233 meters from the MSL as observed in GPS. Total geographical area of the village is calculated to be approximately 7 km². Bhinder has a total population of 3,017 peoples. There are about 604 households in Bhinder village. Rayya is nearest town to Bhinder located 2 KM away. Observed latitudinal value of Bhinder village is 31.54⁰ North and longitudinal value is 75.19⁰ East.

Location and brief introduction to Manawala Village:

Manawala village is located in Amritsar I Tehsil of Amritsar district in Punjab, India. It is situated approximately 10 km south east of the Amritsar City on the Grand Trunk Road i.e., NH1 at an altitude of 233 meters from the MSL. Observed latitudinal and longitudinal value of the village is 31.61⁰ North and 74.97⁰ East respectively. Geographical area of village is calculated to be approximately 7.012 Km² as observed in GPS. Manawala has a total population of 6,029 and 1,047 households.



Chapter III: Rural Sikhs of Nagaon District: Migration and Habitation

The connection of Assam with Sikhs dates back to Guru Nanak's visit to Assam. Biographical sources on Nanak's life known as Janamsakhis (life accounts) depict Nanak's four major tours of the world during the period from 1500 to 1524 where he is believed to have travelled more than 28,000 km. Of the four tours of Guru Nanak, the first was towards east including Bengal, Assam (then Kamrup), the second towards Sri Lanka, third towards Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh and the final tour west towards Baghdad, Mecca and Medina.¹⁹

Referring to the visit of Guru Nanak Harbans Singh remarks that "Guru Nanak roamed extensively in Assam preaching love and prayer to a people attached to Tantrik's ritual and theurgist practices."²⁰

Although it is very difficult to locate the exact year of Nanak's visit to Assam yet it may be inferred from different accounts that Guru Nanak visited Assam in the first decade of the 16th century A.D. Encyclopedia of Religion stated about the visit of Guru Nanak as "Abandoning worldly pursuits, Nanak undertook four long voyages. On the first, he went eastward as far as Assam, visiting Hindu places of pilgrimage and meeting and discussing spiritual problems with ascetics and holy men."²¹ Dr. B.K. Kakoti is of the opinion that Guru Nanak visited Assam after 1517 A.D.²²

Janamsakhis uses the word "Udasi" for the travels made by Guru Nanak. The first "Udasi" of the Guru was eastward beginning from Punjab-Haryana to Delhi and Haridwar onwards upto the Garhwal Himalayas and then Assam via Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Dhaka to reach Dhubri. From Dhubri, the Guru proceeded along the river Brahmaputra to reach Guwahati. Janamsakhis also say that here the Guru met Nura, the head of conjurers, who adopted Sikhism under his influence.²³

During the time of his visit, Kamrup was an important centre of “Shakti” Worship. Janamsakhis mentions visit of the Guru to the famous Kamakhya Temple. However, there is no historical evidence of Guru Nanak's visit to the Kamakhya temple.

Guru Nanak, instead, visited Dhubri where he rested for some days. Ever since Guru Nanak's visit to Dhubri, the place was held sacred by the people belonging to different religions.⁷

The Guru also met the great Vaishnava Saint from Assam Sankardev at Dhanpur located in Kamrup who was ousted by the order of hardcore “Shakti” worshipper Ahom king **Chuhungmung** (1497-1539 A.D.). Both Nanak and Sankardeva preached a religion of Supreme surrender to One God. About the influence of Guru Nanak upon Sankardeva Trilochan Singh stated "Two factors strongly indicate the personal influence of the Founder of Sikhism on Sankardeva. This is the only Vaishnava sect in India the mode of worship of which strongly resembles the one preached by the Sikh Gurus"²⁴

The Guru thereafter continued his upstream journey towards east through the river Brahmaputra to reach Golaghat and wherefrom he entered the “Dhanasri Valley” lying between Naga and Mikir Hills inhabited by “Koda Rakshas” people illustrated as cannibals. From Dhanasri Valley Guru Nanak went back to Guwahati. From Guwahati he started his journey to Puri Jagannath via Shillong, Sylhet and Dhaka²⁵.

The third “Udasi” of Guru Nanak covered Himalayan places of Kashmir- Ladakh and Tibet upto the Mansarovar Lake. He returned from Tibet in the same route he visited. However, some people believe that Guru Nanak in his third Udasi or Travel came to Nepal and then entered Sikkim where he stopped near a very high altitude lake. This lake thereafter came to be known as the **Gurudongmar Lake** named after him. Some of the scholars also believe that continuing his journey he came to Assam for the second time; this time via Arunachal Pradesh where he covered most parts of Arunachal including Twang, Mechuka, Gelling, Tuting, Tezu, Parashuram Kunda and Walong before entering Assam again through Sadiya to reach Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Golaghat and Guwahati. Gurdwaras at Golaghat and Mechuka evidences his visit.²⁶

After Guru Nanak, the Ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was the next to come to Assam. He came along with the Mughal forces under General Raja Ram Singh sent to launch a full scale invasion of Assam. Towards the close of 1668, they crossed the Brahmaputra and reached Dhubri from Dhaka. Guru Tegh Bahadur marked out the spot where the Guru Nanak had stayed in Dhubri during his visit to Assam. According to the existing belief, people thronged to see Guru Tegh Bahadur. According to Sikh chronicles, the Guru brought about peace between the warring forces – The Mughal and the Ahoms. As a mark of respect to the Guru, first Gurudwara was established at Dhubri by the Mughal soldiers as a memorial of the Guru. Guru Tegh Bahadur further travelled upto Hajo near Guwahati which a modern researcher marks out the name of a nearby hillock, Teghpur or Tegh Parbat.²⁷

Dr. S. K. Bhuyan is of the opinion that "Ram Singha brought with him the ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur and five Mohammedan Pirs popularly known as "Panch Pir" to undo the effects of Kamrup's black magic."²⁷

Encyclopedia of Sikh Religion and Culture also recorded that Guru Tegh Bahadur visited eastern India in 1669 and stayed at Dhubri and visited the sacred places where Guru Nanak had first preached to the local people during his Assam Visit.²⁸

Accompanied by his wife and mother, Guru Tegh Bahadur left Anandpur Sahib in Punjab and moved towards east and by travelling through Agra, Allahabad, Banaras and Gaya he arrived at Patna. From Patna the Guru visited Sylhet, Chittagong and Sondip and Dacca. From Dacca Guru Tegh Bahadur moved towards Assam.

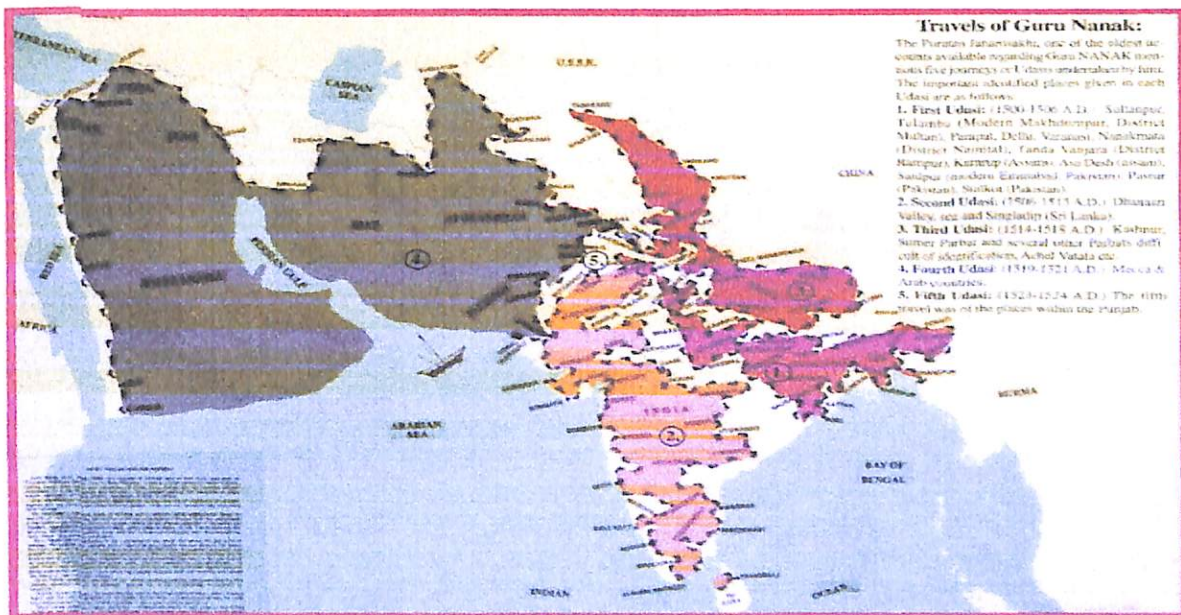
Some of the followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur according to McAuliffe, "remained in Kamrup, and their descendants are now found both in Dhubri and Chaotala."²⁹

Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to Assam is important for some reasons: Firstly, Guru Tegh Bahadur's main purpose was to spread the voice of God among the people of Assam. Secondly, the Guru tried to stop unnecessary blood-shed between the invading Mughal Army and Ahom soldiers.

Another notable incident during Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to Assam was that one local ruler of Koch-Bihar named Raja Ram, as stated by S.K. Bhuyan "obtained a son through the blessings of the Guru and the Guru kept name of his children as Rattan Rai"³⁰

Rattan Rai became the Raja after the death of his father and he visited Anandpur Sahib to Guru Gobind Singh and stayed at Anandpur for about 5 months. In the words of Mann, "The Raja at the time of leaving Anandpur assured the Sikh guru that of care and protection to the Sikh community who was living in Dhubri region in considerable numbers considering this province as their homeland, started settling as agriculturists, and in other businesses and identified themselves completely with Assamese, through their matrimonial relations, manners and outlook."³¹

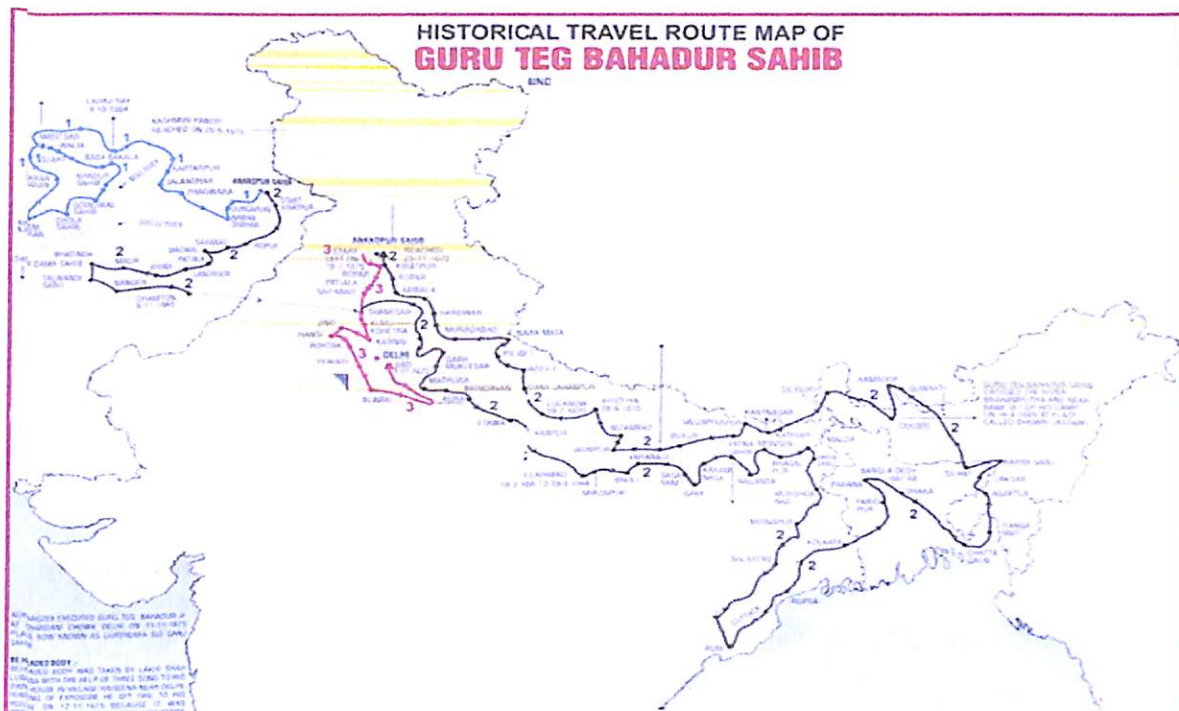
According to S. L Baruah, the history of settlement of the Sikh population in Assam dates back to the middle of the 17th century. According to her, early Assamese Sikhs are successors of the disciples of Guru Tegh Bahadur who came to Assam in 1669 AD"³²



ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਯਾਤਰਾਵਾਂ

Travels of Guru Nanak Dev Ji

Map Source: <https://www.desicommments.com/sikhism>



Map Source: <http://www.singhsahib.com>

The Sikhs who claim themselves as the earliest Sikh settlers in Assam live in three villages of the Nagaon district namely, Chaparmukh, Borkola and Hatipara along with Lanka municipality of the same district. They are also popularly known as the “Assamese Sikhs” who have whole heartedly embraced Assamese culture, speak only Assamese, and consider Assam as their homeland (Manjit Singh).³³

Initiation of Sikh Settlement in the State according to the explanations put forward in an Assamese book entitled: “**Raha Chowkir Itibritta**” dated back to early 17th Century. As per the information provided by this book the present Sikh community of Raha-Chaparmukh and Borkola are descendants of a few Sikh architects and Soldiers whom the contemporary Punjab ruler sent to the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-1641) to assist him in the construction of the Raha Chowki as well as to train the Ahom soldiers with superior skills in the battlefield. In order to keep these people permanently with the Ahoms, they were facilitated to settle at Chaparmukh near the Raha Chowki and probably given charge of the outpost to the Sikh Soldiers. Assam historical accounts also elucidate the fact that King

Pratap Singha left a strong army at the Raha Chowki to monitor the Kachari king. However, later, the Kachari king made a fierce attack on the Raha Chowki and defeated the army who was protecting the Chowki. The soldiers who were defeated at the hands of the Kachari king badly escaped to Borkola region and started settling there permanently. Later, these Sikhs soldiers and the Ahoms reorganized again and recaptured the Raha Chowki from the Kacharis by defeating them. In this book the writer writes “The Sikh Soldiers who came to Assam during the rule of Pratap Singha brought with them arms and artilleries, handwritten religious scripture of them, Kirpan, Chakki; a traditional two stone plated apparatus to grind wheat flour, etc”³⁴

However, ample of doubts arise regarding the assertions to relate the initiation of the Sikh Settlement in this area in this book. Firstly, there is no suggestive report available till date that the Sikhs were engaged by the Ahom king to protect the Raha Chowki. Secondly, the region Borkola was once located at the vicinity of the Kachari Kingdom. As such, the refuge and habitation of the Sikhs at Borkola by escaping the Kachari turmoil at the Raha Chowki and trying to reorganize at Borkola seems unreal. Finally, during the tenure of Pratap Singha as the King, the Sikhs at Punjab was headed by Guru Hargobind (1606-1644) who transformed the Sikh fraternity by introducing martial arts and weapons for the defence of the masses from the Mughals. During that time Punjab was ruled by Muslim Governor **Panida Khan**³⁵.

The authentic historical sources however give description of involvement of Hindustani Militiamen known as Barkandazes in the historic “Dandua Droh” in 1794.

However, historical accounts on Assam state that before the Dandua Droh the *barkandazes* or men with raffle were hired by Krishnanarayana of Darrang to fight against the Ahom in the last part of the 18th century. Krishnanarayan’s father, ruler of Darrang Hangshanarayan II was assassinated by the Ahom king Gaurinath Singha and one Bisnunarayana was appointed as the ruler of Darrang by depriving Krishnanarayana. This dismissal was regarded unfair by Krishnanarayana and he began to chalk out plans to dethrone Bisnunarayana and capture power. During this process he got the support from the

Koch rulers and sought the support of the British East India Company located at Bengal. The Britishes rejected to put forward any help to him and following this, Krishnanarayana himself made personal attempts to strengthen him by collecting manpower from outside the state. He recruited the Barkandazes especially from northern India, Coch Behar and Rangpore against monthly payment basis³⁶. With the help of these Barkandazes he was able to gain dominance in Darrang. In the subsequent times, Krishnanarayana with the help of these Barkandazes made severe assault on the Ahom King Gaurinath Singha who at that time was pitching his camp at Guwahati following his defeat in the hands of the Moamaria revolutionaries. Krishnanarayan's armed assault made Gaurinath Singha to seek for the British help and the Britishes replied positively. A cantonment of British Army under Captain Welsh was sent for the assistance to the Ahom king to help him conquer the King of Darrang and the Moamarias at Upper Assam. With the help of this army the Ahom King overpowered Krishnanarayana and ultimately the Moamarias to retain his power again in 1792.³⁷

During the reign of Ahom King Kamaleswar Singha, two brothers of North Kamrup, Hardatta and Birdatta, recruited some Sikh and Hindustani soldiers, with a secret scheme to force out the Ahoms from Gauhati. According to S.L. Baruah, Hardatta and Birdatta collected a large force of Barkandazes mainly of Hindustanis and Sikhs, against the Ahom government."³⁸ This uprising was known as the 'Dandua' or 'Dumdumiya'. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan' also opined "this band of soldiers were called 'Dumdumiyas' or 'Dundias', probably because these Sikhs had their headquarters at the Gurdwara Dumdume at Dhubri set up by Guru Tegh Bahadur when he was in Assam"³⁹ Macauliffe also accepted the view that Sikh soldiers who fought against Ahom government were called Dumdumiyas or Dundias, because the Sikhs had their main centre at the Gurdwara Damdama Sahib at Dhubri, which was founded by Guru Tegh Bahadur.⁴⁰

Regarding the presence of Sikh Soldiers at British army as well as the Barkandazes W.W. Hunter's "A Statistical Account of Assam" also says that "Shortly before the Burmese invasion of Assam, a few hundred Sikhs were brought in the pay of the native government."⁴¹

Present Assamese Sikhs in the Study area consider themselves to be descendants of Chaitanya Singh. Chaitanya Singh was the commander of the Sikh army who fought for the Ahoms against the Burmese at the Battles of Mahgarh and Hadirachaki fought during 1820-1822. At the Hadirachaki Battle the Ahom troop was defeated badly and most of the Sikh Soldiers who took part in the battle for the Ahom king including their leader Chaitanya Singh attained martyrdom. Following the Battle of Hadirachaki the survivor Sikhs in the battle came to Chaparmukh near Raha and started settling there permanently as the first permanent Sikh Settlers in the district. Popular public belief states that Chaitanya Singh came from Punjab as the commander of 500 Sikhs sent by the Punjab ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh to help the Ahom King Chandra Kanta Singha to fight against the powerful Burmese force.

The portrait of the Battle of Hadirachaki and martyrdom of Chaitanya Singh can be drawn in Assamese Novel "Manomati" written by Rajani Kanta Bardoloi. Rajani Kanta Bardoloi wrote this novel integrating folk belief and fiction.³³

Dr. Himadri Banarjee from the Department of History in the Jadavpur University has made deep rooted systematic study and investigation to trace the history of the rural Sikhs living in Assam. He found it extremely hard to believe the customary belief and folks of the Sikh people regarding their initiation of settlement at Assam. In his book "*The Other Sikhs: A view from Eastern India*" he writes:

"One may question the veracity of the Sikhs coming from Punjab. First the long distance between Punjab and Assam made undetected movement of troops almost impossible. Second, the Treaty of Amritsar (1809) between the East India Company and the Lahore darbar prohibited the Sikh monarch's armed intervention east of Sutlej River." He further says: "Finally, our doubts are deepened with the supposedly Sikh decision of staying back in Assam when Burmese had already let loose hell-fire and destruction (manor din) in Brahmaputra Valley... These Sikhs took a decision which is inexplicable in the context of their coming from Punjab...." As per his conjecture settlement history of the Sikh people in the study area villages might be older than the period of popular common belief. He writes: "They were probably well aware of the total landscape. Their resolution to move deep into the

rural areas of Nagaon by waterway was perhaps an outcome of their desire to protect those who were not only very dear to them, but were probably awaiting their presence during critical moment. The rapid upstream journey was dictated by their need of saving their beleaguered that were left behind in the territories fertilized by the waters of Kalang-Kapili-Titiora Suti?”¹³

The Sikh *barkandazes* according to Dr. Banarjee came to Bihar and Bengal as members of the British Army and subsequently came to Assam where they were hired by the Zamindaars/landlords or Choudhuries of the lower Assam region against higher remunerations. However, in the historical “Dandua Droh” they fought against the same landlords on behalf of the Ahom “Barphukan” Later on, they were probably given permanent employment against higher salary and land to cultivate in the Chaparmukh area located near Raha Chowki of the Ahom. ¹³

There is enough scope for discussion and research regarding when and where did the Sikh settlement in the state grow. The historical evidences are also not sufficient to illustrate whether the earliest Sikh settlers came from Punjab or they were local Assamese people who were converted to Sikhs under the influence of the Sikh Gurus who visited this part of the country.

A few of the Assamese literary sources mentions the historico-political situation of Assam during the Dandua Droh. Rajani Kanta Bardoloi’s novel “Dandua Droh” (1919), Lakshmi Nath Bezbarua’s “Padum Kuwari”(1895), “Haradatta”, a play written by Daibachandra Talukdar in 1935. All of these literary works portrait a character – “Kumedan Singh” who was the leader of a group of Barkandazes or Hindustani Militiamen who were basically brought from erstwhile Bengal under the special efforts of the Koch rulers of Koch Behar. This group of Barkandazes consisted of a fair number of Sikhs whose leader was Kumedan Singh. These works describe that the Barkandazes were brought by Haradatta, the ruler of Kamrup against monthly payments. However, when Haradatta was unable pay them their expenses for long these Barkandazes got engaged with the Ahom forces and fought against king Haradatta. These works also portray the fact that following the revolt these Barkandazes were given

permanent commission and land by the Ahom rulers and they started living at Assam permanently marrying local Assamese girls.⁵³

However, regarding the commencement of Sikh Settlement at Chaparmukh-Borkola villages and the contemporary social setting thereof it is very difficult to come to any short of generalized wrap up since this region lying between Kalong-Hariya-Kopili is one of the least historically recorded portion of the state. As pointed out in the earlier part of this dissertation for ages this region remained under historical and intellectual blur and that is the reason why only conjectures can be drawn regarding their migration and settlement in the study area.

While Dr. Banerjee doubted the forefathers of these people Chaitanya Singh coming from Punjab through the British dominated areas Manjit Singh, a distinguished Sikh writer was of the view that Britishes wanted to help the Ahom kings during the Burmese invasion of Assam owing to their interference policy with the states. However, they did it finally to expel the Burmese from Assam in 1826. It is therefore, it might be possible that Britishes helped the Ahom king indirectly by allowing the Sikh soldier's passage through their territory sent in favour of the Ahom king by the Punjab ruler.⁵⁵

British army sent under Captain Welsh to help the Ahom ruler Gaurinath Singha to neutralize the threat of the Barkandazes and Moamarias did possess Sikh soldiers. After conquering the Barkandazes under Krishnanarayana by defeating them they proceeded from Guwahati to Kaliabor through the Brahmaputra and camped there for quite sometime. It is also highly probable that a few of the Sikh soldiers under captain Welsh might have stayed at the Raha Chowki since it was an important strategic point for the Ahom kingdom located at the juncture of the Kachari Kingdom who traditionally has been enemies of the Ahoms and got accustomed to the areas lying between the Kolong-Hariya-Kapili Rivers. Some of them also might have stayed here permanently or made some kind of social relationship here through marrying local girls.

Jajneswar Sharma, a former president of Assam Sahitya Sabha was of the view that the Ahom king Chandra Kanta Singha constructed a fort at Misa near Kaliabor to resist the Burmese. This fort was

built jointly by a contingent of 40 Sikh and 200 Ahom Armies. These Sikh soldiers later, stayed permanently in Assam.⁴²

William Robinson (1841) in his book “**A Descriptive Account of Assam**” mentioned that the Sikhs who came to Assam from Punjab dominated the trade and commerce of Nagaon district as well as in the Raha area. Regarding this he wrote: “Some years back, the trade of the Raha Division was entirely in the hands of a few Seiks (Sikhs) who had migrated from the Punjab, to seek fresh channels of profitable traffic in the remote corner of India.”⁴³ According to B.K. Medhi (Page-66), “The concentration of the Sikh traders from Punjab in the Nagaon district was probably influenced by the presence of the Sikhs in that area before the coming of the migrants”⁷

It might also be probable that these Sikhs coming from Punjab evidenced the growing sense of Assamese Nationalism during the first part of the British rule in Assam. This growth of Assamese nationalism was as a result of rapid expansion and dominance of the people coming to Assam from the other parts of India in different socio-economic and political spheres. The British policy of replacement of the Assamese language in the law courts and schools by Bengali in 1836 left a permanent scar on the linguistic life of those two communities in Assam⁴⁴

In such a situation the Sikhs living in this part of the state started to assimilate more with the local people through different socio-economic reformation by restructuring several of their unique socio-economic and cultural attributes what has been termed as “*Assamization*” by the scholars and historians.

Allen (1905) was of the view that the followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur who came to Assam during the late 17th century were the first Sikh settlers in the state had intermarriages with various indigenous Hindu castes and tribes⁴⁵ These people settled in the present Dhubri and Goalpara District in and around the Damdama Sahib at Dhubri. These people took agriculture as profession and as per the assurance given by Raja Rattan Rai to the Sikh Guru Gobind Singh these people assimilated to the social-economic environmental condition of the area totally. The soil, climate and physiography of the area of Goalpara and Dhubri district of Assam is favourable for the Jute Cultivation. As such, it can be

inferred that these earliest Sikh Settlers in Goalpara also might have been engaged in Jute Cultivation along with other crops and it. Further, settlement of the Sikh settlers in the banks of the Titaimora Suti seems to have some connection between the Sikhs of Goalpara and Nagaon Districts. “**Titamora**” is one type of Jute Cultivation done in Assam. Thus, the decision to settle in the bank of the Titaimora Suti at Chaparmukh hints at the fact that these Sikh people might have some sort of connection with Goalpara Sikhs who probably were recruited as Barkandazes and later under Ahom sponsorship selected this region for settlement. Later on, with addition of Sikhs from Punjab who came to Assam with Captain Welsh or during the tenure of Chandra Kanta Singha among them they became more attracted to other forms of Cultivation and occupations and shifted to other places in the district like Borkola, Hatipara and Lanka. However, there is no historical or materialistic evidence to affirm the statement and as such, detailed research investigation is due.

However there is little doubt that in subsequent years these Sikhs coming to Assam have undergone tremendous genetic and socio-economic transformation through adaptation and acculturation and become a part and parcel of the Assamese Society. In the language of Manjit Singh, “The Assamese Sikhs have shown the unique example in adopting the social customs and usages of the Assamese society even by accepting Assamese as their mother tongue. They have fully identified themselves with the land and people in the socio-cultural field and for generations they are quite at home and in harmony in Assam”.³³

In this regard Dr. Banerjee opines, “It goes to the credit of these men that they could combine military engagements with the life of a peaceful peasant since the closing decade of eighteenth century”.⁸

Thus the investigator in this dissertation sees the factors adding to the migration and settlement pattern and socio-cultural transformation and changes seen in the history of the Sikh people area which can be summarized as the following:

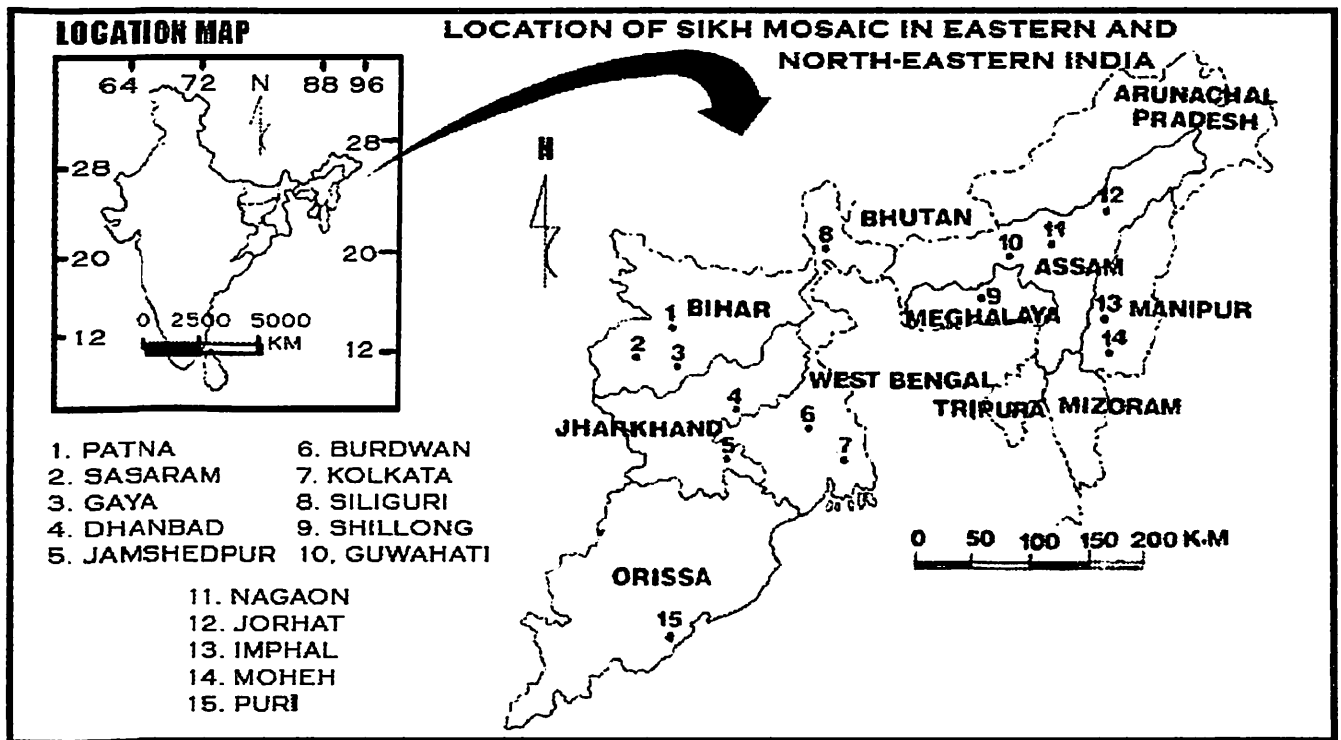
- Interlinking of the places through river ways played a pivotal role in the entire process of Sikh dynamics in Assam. Dhubri, Hadirachaki, Guwahati, Raha, Chaparmukh, Borkola, Hatipara, Kaliabor etc all places are interlinked with navigable river routes provided by the Brahmaputra and its tributary river system. The historical accounts state that most of the pitched engagements of Ahoms against different forces were through these water routes formed by the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. The location of these rural Assamese Sikh settlements near the rivers states the history of association of the Sikhs with the happenings in the state during the Ahom period
- Plain topography and fertile alluvial soil conditions in study area villages near the Kalong River and its tributaries like Titaimora or Hariya with fertile alluvial soil aided by abundant rainfall facilitated them more to cultivate different crops.
- The first place of Sikh settlement in the study area has been considered to be Chaparmukh near the Titaimora Suti, a short natural Channel connecting the Kopili and the Kolong near the study area. Further just few kilometers north of the Chaparmukh village the Hariya River meets the Kolong. Located at the confluence of many channels and rivers at Chaparmukh this region faced chronic menace of flood.⁴⁶ which in subsequent times made many of the Sikhs to migrate from Chaparmukh to the other parts of the districts.
- Borkola village in the study area is located in between Kolong and Hariya rivers. This region was relatively less affected by floods than Chaparmukh. Even today it is found during the field study that most area of the Village do not support rice cultivation as water in these areas do not remain stationary in the agricultural fields even during the rainy season. As such, historically, the people in the village are concentrating sugarcane and other commercial vegetable farming in these highlands besides doing rice cultivation in the lower lands. As such, inferences can be drawn that since the earliest inhibitors of

Chaparmukh were basically of Guru Tegh Bahadur's followers' descendants they were already adopted to the flood situations at Goalpara-Dhubri region, but the Sikhs who started settlement at Chaparmukh following the Battle of Hadirachaki probably were not accustomed to flood and in search of flood free zone they arrived at Borkola where they started cultivating Rice, Sugarcane, Ridge gourd, Pointed gourd, Sponge gourd, pulses, and mustard.

- The Field study also reveals that during subsequent years many Sikhs from Borkola moved to Lanka where they saw ample scope for agriculture and business. However, during the British period many Sikhs came to Lanka from Punjab in search of livelihood through trade and commerce. The Sikhs in Lanka who migrated from Borkola have started different non-agricultural activities at par with the non-Assamese Sikhs besides continuing agricultural practices.
- It was also revealed during the field studies that many families moved to Hatipara, Nagaon town and Helem located at Sonitpur District from Borkola Village. While the Sikhs settling at Nagaon and Hatipara are basically associated with various service sectors and business, the Sikh families of Helem were found to be associated with the tea industry.
- The rivers were not only served as a tool of their settlement diffusion, but were also used in commercial perspectives by the Sikh settlers. During the field study many of the respondents revealed their forefathers' functional as well as business/commercial relations with the people of other places through these navigable rivers.
- Throughout the period of Ahom history Kolong – Kopili – Hariya riverine region located in the western part of the present Nagaon district has been acting as a frontier transitional zone between the Ahoms and other Tribal kingdoms and very little information regarding the past administration of these areas are affirmed so far. In such a politico-historical

setting it was highly probable that the early inhabitants of this region accepted the presence of the Sikhs among them.

- Another account relating to the population history reveals the fact that the present region between “Hariya-Kolong” was once inhabited by the Kachari people. Later, these people under different circumstances retreated to Doboka ⁴⁷. The factors were cited as flood, epidemics like Kala Azar and Cholera in many of the monographs published later. As a result, the region might have gone through spatial and demographic restructure in Ahom style following the subsequent years. Belief of the present inhabitants of the area about the presence of 363 ponds and the name of the village “Borkola” in tune with the erstwhile Ahom capital “Meteka-Borkola” makes the researcher here to postulate of such a process which is supposed to be initiated by the soldiers of Rudra Singha who came this region, probably stayed here for some time and defeated the Kachari king in a battle. However, there is lack of historical materials to be affirmed of.
- Inter religious and inter ethnic marriage brought in the Sikhs many genetic as well as socio-cultural changes. Further, long term socio-cultural cohesion with other religious and social groups in the same habitat brought present pattern of attributes in them.



Map Source: <http://www.sikhfoundation.org>

Chapter IV: Demographic and Socio-Economic Status:

In this chapter, demographic and socio-economic traits of the people of the villages of Assam and Punjab are separately documented and analyzed. The same results are compared to arrive at some definite conclusion regarding the spatial patterns visible between these two communities. Most of the demographic data are collected from census publications while socio-economic data and information are collected through household data collection in the study are villages as well as govt. publications like socio-economic handbooks.

4.1: Demographic Status:

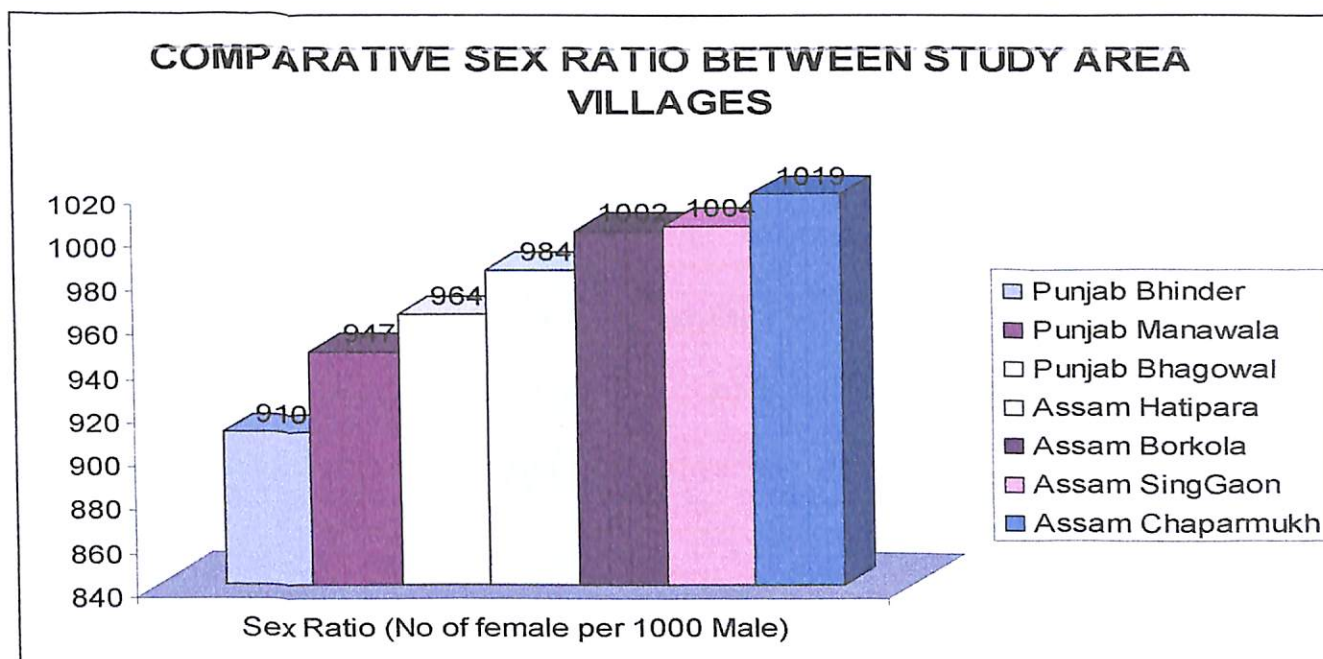
In the following table population data of the study area villages both from Punjab and Assam as extracted from 2011 census publications are represented.

Villages	Total Households	Total Population	Total Male	Total Female	Female per 1000 Male (Calculated)
Bhinder (Punjab)	604	3017	1580	1437	910
Manawala (Punjab)	1047	6029	3096	2933	947
Bhagowal (Punjab)	942	4881	2485	2396	964
Hatipara (Assam)	339	1583	798	785	984
Borkola (Assam)	215	1069	534	535	1002
Borkola Sing Gaon (Assam)	409	1830	913	917	1004
Chaparmukh (Assam)	239	1052	521	531	1019

Above table shows a mass difference in the demographic aspects between the villages of Punjab and Assam. Size of settlement in the villages of Nagaon district of Assam is comparatively much smaller to those of Punjab under study. Smallest of the study area settlement located in Punjab i.e., Bhinder has

604 households with a total population of 3017 is larger than the largest settlement in Assam i.e., Borkola Sing Gaon with 409 households and a total population of 1830. This reveals that population density as well as size of settlement in the villages of Punjab under study is much higher and larger than those of Assam.

On the other hand, Sikh villages of Assam possess much healthier sex ratio than those of Punjab. Sex ratio refers to no of female per 1000 male population. On an average, in the rural Sikh villages of Assam female population against male is either equal or even higher than the male population. On the other hand, in Punjab villages there is significant gap between male and female population which is represented with the help of the following graph.



Sikh Population in the villages:

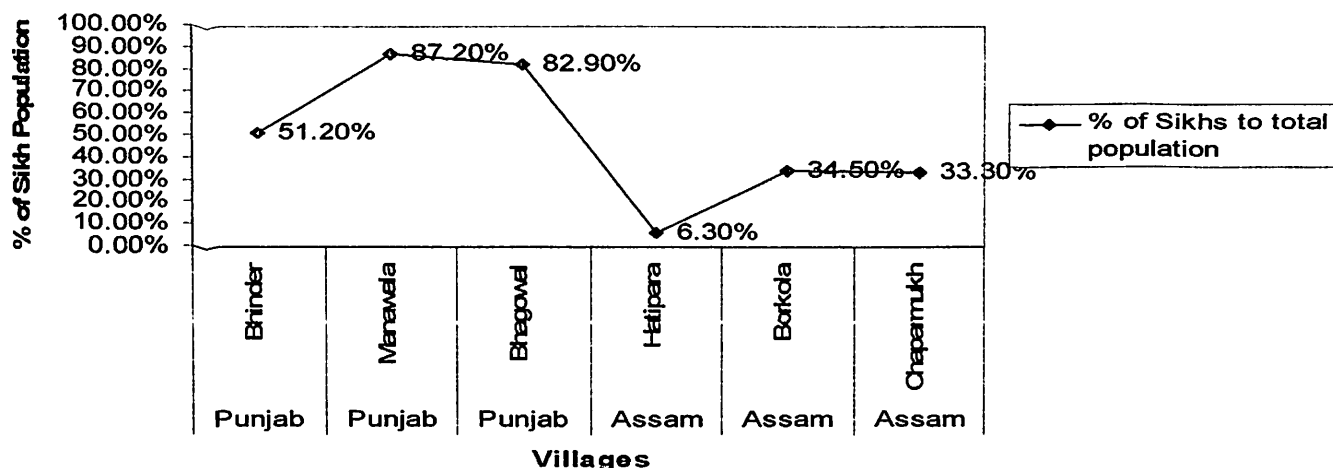
In the following table, Sikh household as well as population statistics in the study area villages of Punjab and Assam as extracted and compiled from household field data are shown.

Villages	Total Households	Total Sikh Households (Estimated)	Total Population	Total Sikh Population (Estimated)	% of Sikhs to total population
Bhagowal (Punjab)	942	490	4881	2500 (Approx)	51.2%
Bhinder (Punjab)	604	580	3017	2630 (Approx)	87.2%
Manawala (Punjab)	1047	900	6029	5000 (Approx)	82.9%
Hatipara (Assam)	339	22	1583	100 (Approx)	6.3%
Borkola & Sing Gaon (Assam)	624	300	2899	1000 (Approx)	34.5%
Chaparmukh Gaon (Assam)	239	62	1052	350 (Approx)	33.3%

* Data Source: Field Survey/ Household data (Information provided by Gaon Bura/ Sarpanch)

From the village level data regarding the Sikh population as shown in the table it is evident that Sikhs enjoy majority in the villages of Punjab while they are minority in the villages of Nagaon district of Assam.

SIKH POPULATION IN THE STUDY AREA VILLAGES



Composition of SC/ST population:

2011 census data reveals that SC population concentration in the villages of Punjab under study is considerably higher than those in Nagaon district of Assam. The figures are shown in the table below. The table also shows that the villages in Punjab do not have any scheduled tribe population. In Borkola and Sing Gaon villages however, a considerable share of population belong to ST community.

Villages	Total Population	Total SC Population	% of SC to total Population	Total ST Population	% of ST to total population
Bhagowal	4881	1260	25.8	0	0
Bhinder	3017	1283	42.5	0	0
Manawala	6029	3445	57.2	0	0
Hatipara	1583	147	9.3	4	0.25
Borkola & Sing Gaon	2899	74	2.6	430	14.8
Chaparmukh Gaon	1052	282	26.8	8	0.8

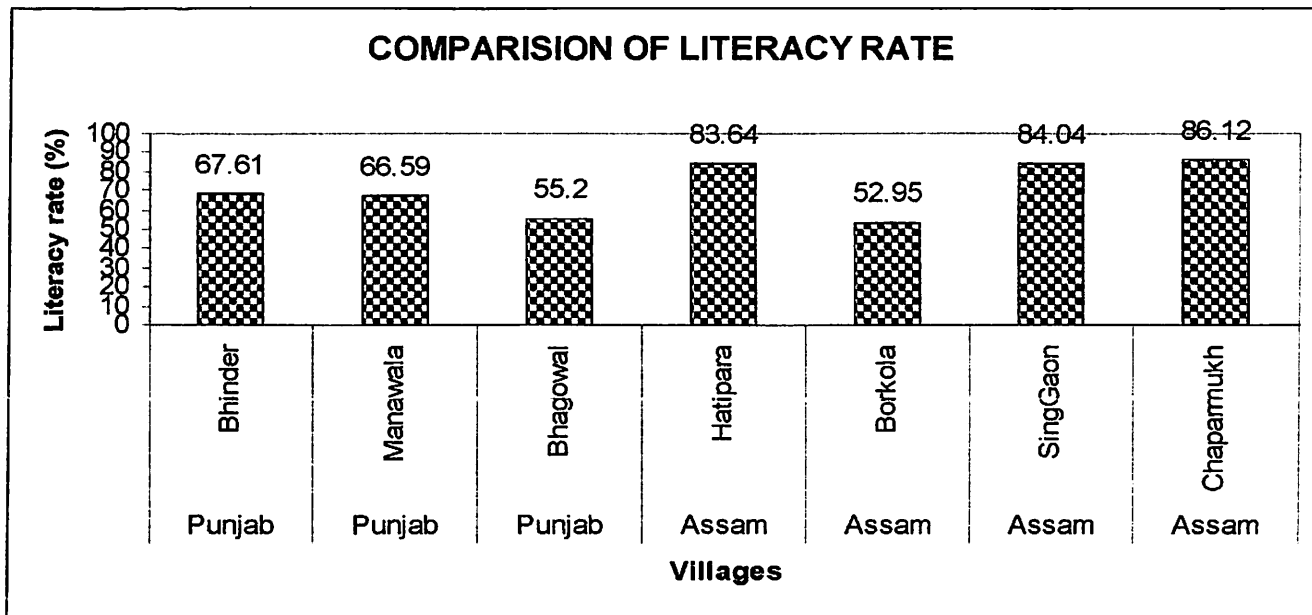
• Data Source: 2011 Census Publications

Literacy Rate:

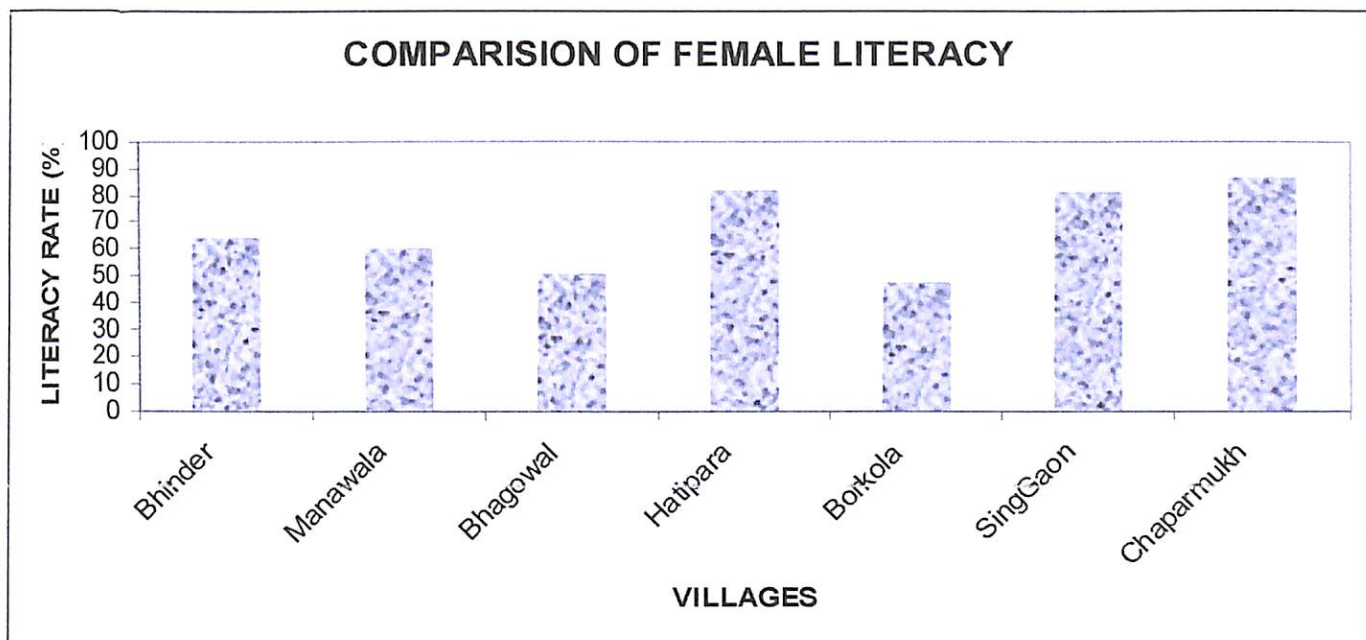
2011 census data reveals the fact that Rural Sikh Villages under study from Nagaon district of Assam possess more literacy rate than those of Punjab. Overall literacy figures are shown in the table below which is represented in graphical form.

Villages	Total Population	Total Literates	Literacy Percentage	Female Literates	% of female literacy
Bhagowal	4881	3300	67.61	1526 / 2396	63.69
Bhinder	3017	2009	66.59	870 / 1437	60.54
Manawala	6029	3328	55.20	1491 / 2933	50.84
Hatipara	1583	1324	83.64	641 / 785	81.66
Borkola	1069	566	52.95	254 / 535	47.48
Sing Gaon	1830	1538	84.04	747 / 917	81.46
Chaparmukh Gaon	1052	906	86.12	461 / 531	86.82

• Data Source: 2011 Census Publications



Female literacy rate is also found to be higher in the Sikh inhabiting villages of Assam than those from Punjab.



Migration Pattern:

Migration is a very important demographic facet of any given settlement. Migration has significant impact on population composition and change of any given region. While the Sikhs living in the villages of Nagaon district themselves all migrated to the study area villages under blurry socio-economic and political situation during the early 19th Century, Sikhs living in Punjab are mostly original inhabitants of the Punjab. However, in this study attempt has been made to analyze the nature and pattern of migration of the Sikh people from their place. Here, the relocation of the married women in their in law's home as well as temporary displacements of the people from the villages is excluded from documentation. Statistics used here are derived from household sample survey in the villages under study.

Name of the Villages	Total Relocated / Migrated persons from the village	International Migration	Inter-State Migration	Inter district Migration	Intra District Migration
Chaparmukh	17	0	1 (5.9%)	6 (35.3 %)	10 (58.8%)
Borkola & Sing Gaon	159	0	16 (10.1%)	42 (26.4%)	101 (63.5%)
Hatipara	13	0	0	4 (30.8%)	9 (69.2%)
Bhagowal	215	8 (3.7%)	141 (65.6%)	28 (13%)	38 (17.7%)
Bhinder	49	3 (6.1%)	24 (49%)	10 (20.4%)	12 (24.5%)
Manawala	164	14 (8.5%)	82 (50%)	21 (12.8%)	47 (28.7%)

Source: Field data

Above table shows the pattern of Sikh people movement from their native villages in search of better facilities and life standards as evidenced in the field study. It is seen that Sikh people in the rural areas of Punjab are more enthusiastic to move to distant places including places outside India. Total of 25 Sikh People are found in the survey from Punjab Villages who have moved/migrated outside India compared to none in Assam. On the other hand considerable cases of inter-state relocation of the Punjabi Sikh people are also found in the study. On the other hand, the mobility pattern of the Assamese Sikhs in the study area villages is found mostly within the state of within the district itself.

Migration Factors:

In demography different factors are associated with mobility/migration of people from one place to another which are usually categorized as Push and Pull factors. In this study it is found that main factor inflicting movement of people from the villages in Assam and Punjab bears a great diversity. While most migration from Punjab villages are mostly found to be mostly in search of business/commerce opportunities as well as labour related activities, mobility of the Assamese Sikhs are mostly affected by job mainly in Government sector.

Factors of Migration	Chaparmukh	Borkola & Sing Gaon	Hatipara	Bhagowal	Bhinder	Manawala
Business/ Trade & Commerce	02	19	5	88	16	42
Agriculture	0	-	-	5	04	09
Government Job	07	112	6	31	03	05
Private Job	03	11	1	21	05	22
Labour	03	12	1	64	19	79
Other	02	05	-	06	02	07
Total Migrated Person	17	159	13	215	49	164

Source: Field Data

International Migration Pattern of the Sikhs:

It is found from the study that there has been no Assamese Sikh migration outside India while from Punjab villages 25 no of people have moved outside India and settled in those countries. Among the 25 Sikh migrants from Punjab 11 people have moved to the European countries, 08 to the USA and Canada, 04 to Australia & New Zealand 01 nos to the African Countries and 01Nos to other countries.

International Migration Destinations	European Countries	USA - Canada	Australia – New Zealand	African Countries	Others	Total
No	11	8	4	1	1	25
Percentage of Total	44%	32%	16%	4%	4%	100%

Source: Field Data

4.2: Economic Status:

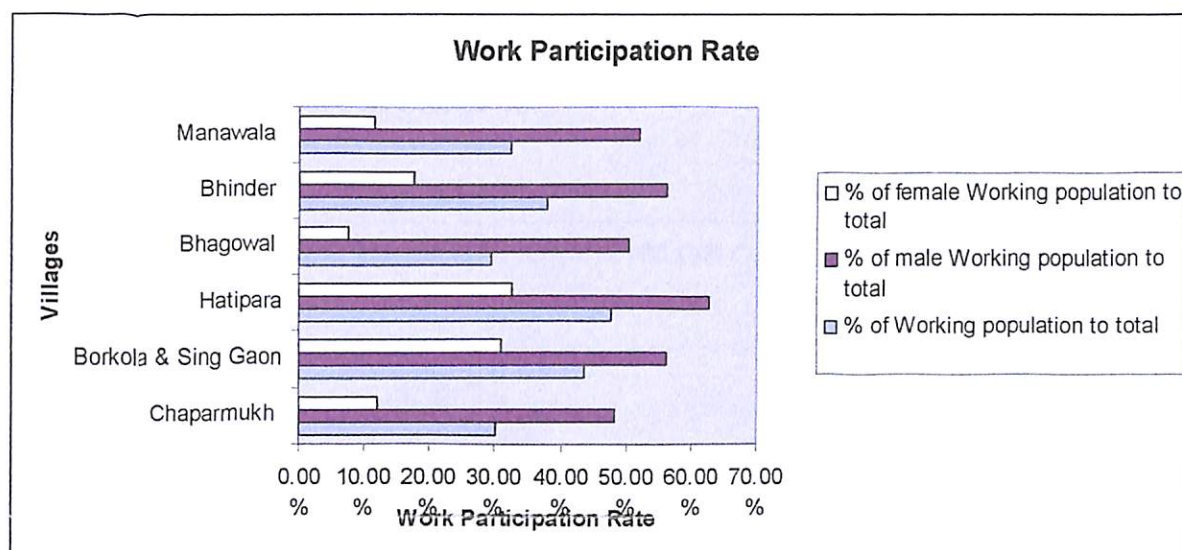
Work Participation Rate:

Work Participation Rate refers to the number of people who are either employed or are actively looking for work. It is a measure of the active portion of an economy's labour force. In general, it is calculated by dividing the number of people actively participating in the working force by the total number of people eligible to participate in the working force. However, here the data regarding number of eligible people to participate in work is not accumulated for interpretation and in lieu of work participation calculation is made to find out percentage of working population to total no of persons in the villages only and comparison is made.

In the following table working population of the study area villages and percentage of the working population to the total population of the villages are calculated and represented. Moreover, gender division the same is also calculated and shown in the table. The table shows that percentage of working population to the total population of the villages of Assam on average is more than the villages of Punjab. Female work participation rate in the villages of Assam is found strikingly more than the villages of Punjab.

Name of the Villages	Total working Population	% of Working population to total	male Working Population	% of male Working population to total	Female Working Population	% of female Working population to total
Chaparmukh	316	30.04%	252	48.37 %	64	12.05 %
Borkola & Sing Gaon	1262	43.53 %	811	56.05 %	451	31.06 %
Hatipara	755	47.69 %	499	62.53 %	256	32.61 %
Bhagowal	1432	29.34 %	1251	50.34 %	181	7.55 %
Bhinder	1140	37.79 %	887	56.14 %	253	17.61 %
Manawala	1949	32.33 %	1611	52.03 %	338	11.52 %

Data Source: Census of India, 2011



Family Economic Base:

On the basis of randomly collected sample household data economic base of the people living in the study area villages are analyzed.

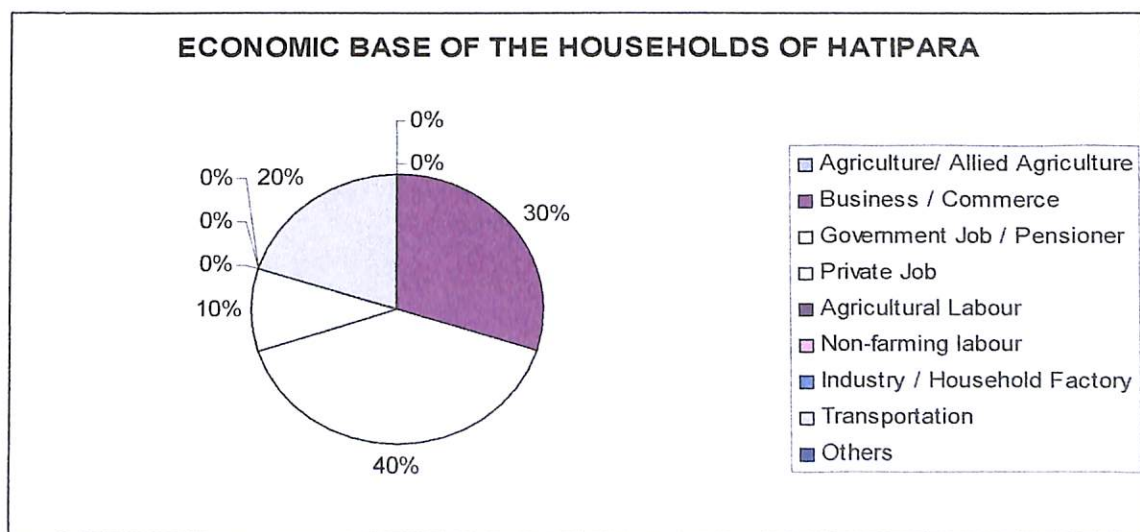
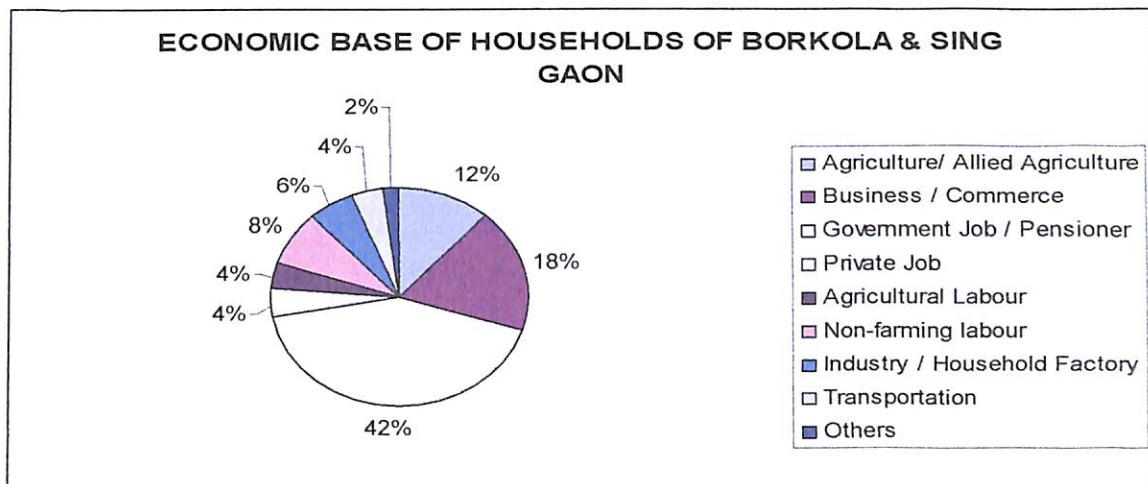
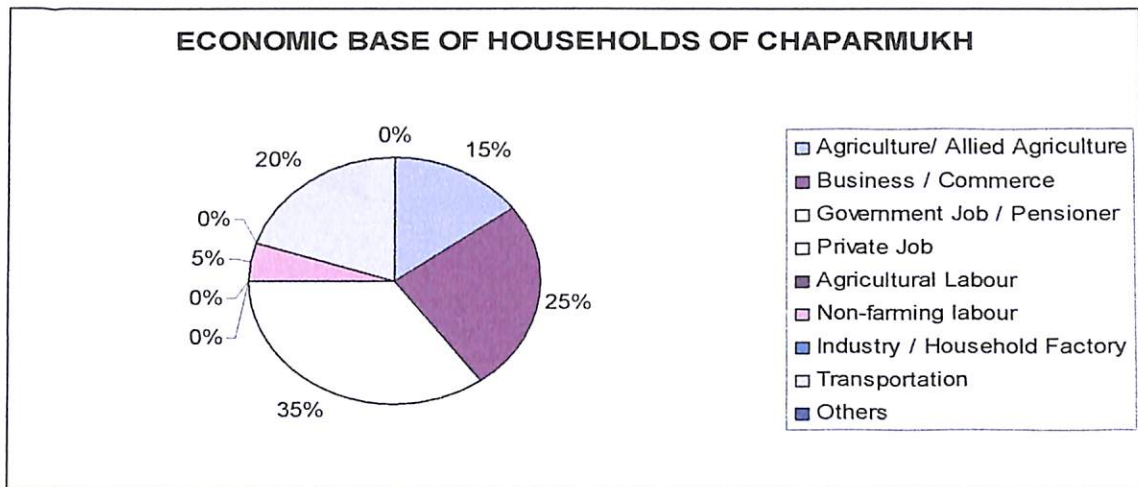
Table: Economic base of the households of the study area villages

Economic Activities	Chaparmukh	Borkola & Sing Gaon	Hatipara	Bhagowal	Bhinder	Manawala
Agriculture/ Allied Agriculture	3	6	-	3	5	9
Business / Commerce	5	9	3	8	2	1
Government Job / Pensioner	7	21	4	2	1	2
Private Job	-	2	1	3	2	1
Agricultural Labour	-	2	-	7	3	11
Non-farming labour	1	4	-	6	6	19
Industry / Household Factory	-	3	-	-	-	5
Transportation	4	2	2	1	1	2
Others	-	1	-	-	-	-

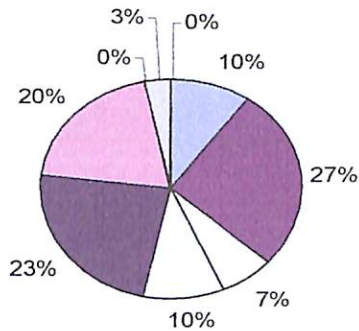
Source: Field Data

Above table shows that in Assam majority rural Sikh households' major economic base is found to be either government service or Pension after retirement from job. On the other hand in Punjab most of the working population from the surveyed families is either farming or non-farming labourers or

direct farmers. In the villages of both the states however a considerable portion of the surveyed families are fond to be dependant on trade & Commerce.

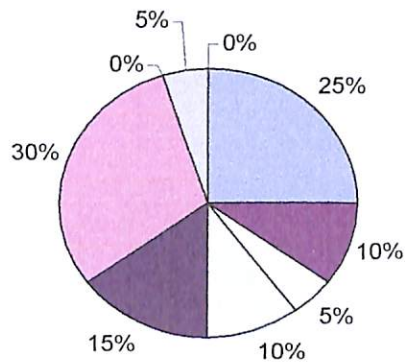


ECONOMIC BASE OF THE HOUSEHOLDS OF BHAGOWAL (PUNJAB)



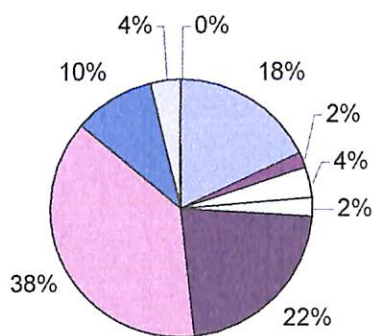
- Agriculture/ Allied Agriculture
- Business / Commerce
- Government Job / Pensioner
- Private Job
- Agricultural Labour
- Non-farming labour
- Industry / Household Factory
- Transportation
- Others

ECONOMIC BASE OF HOUSEHOLDS OF BHINDER (PUNJAB)



- Agriculture/ Allied Agriculture
- Business / Commerce
- Government Job / Pensioner
- Private Job
- Agricultural Labour
- Non-farming labour
- Industry / Household Factory
- Transportation
- Others

ECONOMIC BASE OF HOUSEHOLDS OF MANAWALA (PUNJAB)



- Agriculture/ Allied Agriculture
- Business / Commerce
- Government Job / Pensioner
- Private Job
- Agricultural Labour
- Non-farming labour
- Industry / Household Factory
- Transportation
- Others

Image: Economic Activities of Rural Punjabi Sikhs



Image: Economic Activities of Rural Assamese Sikhs



Size of Landholding & Operational Landholding:

According to the All India Report on Number and Area of Operational Holdings Published by Agriculture Census Division of Department of Agriculture & Co-Operation and Ministry of Agriculture Government of India, 2014, “all land which is used wholly or partly for agricultural production and is operated as one technical unit by one person alone or with others without regard to the title, legal form, size or location is known as *Operational Holding*”. As the family is the unit of labour for agricultural operations in India, land holdings per family and the nature of these holdings affect the economic efficiency of farming.

Landholding structure of any given area displays its unambiguous characteristics of settlement, socio-cultural system, economic circumstance, law of inheritance and pattern of land ownership. On the other hand, its land use pattern displays its physical, geographical, historical and socio-economic backgrounds of the people. The process and pattern of land use broadly reflect the traditional human responses to the ecological settings of the area and their changes in course of time. The pattern of rural land use in any area is thus the result of long-continued effort of the inhabitants to convert lands into agricultural and other productive uses.⁴⁸

In the table below calculated average landholding size of the villages under study are shown. The areas of the villages are calculated using BHUVAN webpage of the ISRO and the estimated village areas are converted to hectares and the same value is divided by total no of households in the villages. It is seen that average landholding size in the villages of both Assam and Punjab are between 0.67 to 1.27 hectares.

Name of the Villages	No of sample Households for survey	Total No of House hold	Total Area (Hectare)	Average Landholding size (Hectare)
Chaparmukh	20	239	192	0.80
Borkola & Sing Gaon	50	624	683	1.09
Hatipara	10	339	431	1.27
Bhagowal	30	942	1040	1.10
Bhinder	20	604	712	1.18
Manawala	50	1047	700	0.67

Source: Field Survey 2016-18

There are five kinds of land holdings in India depending on size. These are as follows:

- Marginal holdings: Size 1 hectare or less
- Small Holdings: Size 1 to 2 hectares
- Semi- medium holdings: Size 2 to 4 hectare
- Medium holdings: Size 4 - 10 hectares
- Large holdings: Size above 10 hectares

[\(https://www.gktoday.in/gk/operational-land-holding/\)](https://www.gktoday.in/gk/operational-land-holding/)

Size of Landholding (Hectares)	Percentage of Surveyed families holding given land size					
	Chaparmukh	Borkola & Singgaon	Hatipara	Bhagowal	Bhinder	Manawala
> 0.40	40%	34%	40%	30%	30%	60%
0.40 – 1	35%	42%	40%	36.6%	45%	22%
1- 2	15%	14%	20%	6.7%	10%	8%
2 - 4	10%	8%	-	6.7%	5%	6%
4 – 10	-	2%	-	20%	10%	4%
Above 10	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Field Survey 2016-18

As represented in the above table, most families, in both Assam and Punjabi Sikh families is either marginal or very small. Among the villages, in Manawala village of Punjab, 60% of the families belong to much marginalized section of the society whose operational landholding size is below .40 hectares only. There is visible lack of large size landholding in Assam. Only 2% families of Borkola-SingGaon village of Assam bear landholding size above 4 hectares, while this figure is considerably higher in the Punjab villages where Bhagowal and Bhinder village account for 20% and 10% of the families respectively bears landholding size above 4 hectares. Thus these figures indicate that most families both from Assam as well as Punjab Sikh villages possess marginal landholding size of less than 1 hectare per family. Nevertheless, in Punjab a portion of the families however possess medium to large operational landholding size.

4.3: Status of Agriculture:

“Agriculture” is a composite term and Agricultural development is a difficult process. Agricultural development of any given region is often synonymously applied to its efficiency and productivity. Agricultural efficiency refers to the properties and qualities of various inputs, the manner in which they are combined and utilized in production. Agricultural productivity may be put synonymous to production efficiency which is a part of agricultural efficiency. Productivity or efficiency is used to evaluate the quality of agriculture. It helps in cross-regional comparison of agriculture. Agricultural productivity is used to express the powers of agriculture in a particular region to produce crops (Das, 1993). It is the ratio of the index of total agricultural output to the index of total input used in farm production.

Many methods are being applied to measure agricultural efficiency, productivity and development. Here agricultural productivity in the study area villages is attempted to find using Kendall’s Ranking Coefficient and composite z-score as the tools.

At first, Average Yield (kg/ ha) of different food and commercial Crops in the study area villages of Assam and Punjab are calculated using Kendall’s Ranking Coefficient Method.

Crop productivity in the study area villages are figured out by computing ranking coefficient of per hectare production of some of the major cultivated food and cash crops based on Kendall's Ranking Coefficient method. The calculation is shown in the table below along with data matrix collected through field survey. However, in the data matrix, a few crops are intentionally left out for calculation of ranking coefficient like jute, maize, cotton etc which are among the most cultivated crops in the respective areas; but in the cultivation of these crops, climatic conditions plays a big role.

Villages	Rice		Wheat		Sugarcane		Total Pulses		Oil seeds		Potato		Summation of Rankings	Ranking Coefficient
	KG/HA	Rank	KG/HA	Rank	KG/HA	Rank	KG/HA	Rank	KG/HA	Rank	KG/HA	Rank		
Chaparmukh	2600	6	-	4	-	5	150	6	300	6	20000	5	32	5.33
Borkola & Sing Gann	2800	4	-	4	23000	4	320	4	500	4	22000	4	24	4
Hatipara	2700	5	-	4	-	5	200	5	350	5	16000	6	30	5
Bhagowal	4400	2	4300	3	65000	1	980	1	1000	3	45000	2	12	2
Bhinder	4800	1	5200	1	45000	2	950	2	1200	1	43000	3	10	1.67
Manawala	4300	3	4500	2	42000	3	850	3	1300	2	48000	1	14	2.33

Data Source: Field Survey

Thus from the above table, through the ranking coefficient values against each village against 6 of the selected crops, it can be ascertained that agricultural productivity of the villages of Punjab are far higher than those of Assam and among the villages of Assam also Chaparmukh holds the least position while agricultural productivity is concerned.

Major Crops:

In the table below crops produced in the study area villages are shown as distinguished from the household survey.

Crops	Village wise Rank of Crops					
	Chaparmukh	Borkola & Sing Gaon	Hatipara	Bhagowal	Bhinder	Manawala
Paddy	1	1	1	2	2	2
Wheat	-	--	-	1	1	1
Sugarcane	-	2	-	3	5	4
Cotton	-	-	-	5	3	5
Maize	7	8	-	4	9	6
Oilseeds (All)	3	5	2	6	4	3
Pulses (All)	6	4	3	8	6	9
Potato	4	6	4	7	7	7
Onion	-	-	-	9	8	8
Vegetables	5	7	5	10	10	10
Jute	2	3	6	-	-	-

Level of Agricultural Development:

To determine the overall levels of agricultural development in the study area villages data regarding 08 Nos of selected agricultural variables collected through household survey were collected have been transformed into indices using Z-score technique. The formula is-

$$Z = \frac{x - \bar{x}}{SD}$$

Where, X is the individual row score on a given variable and \bar{X} is the Mean and SD is the Standard Deviation.

The variables chosen to calculate composite Z-Score in the selected villages are-

- Percentage of area under commercial food crop farming to total cropped area (X1)
- Percentage of families adopting multiple cropping (X2)
- Percentage of net area under irrigation to net sown area (X3)
- Percentage of families owning tractor or power tiller (X4)
- Percentage of families using chemical fertilizer, insecticides and pesticides (X5)
- Percentage of families using cold storage/ warehouse facilities (X6)
- Percentage of families aided by co-operative crop yield marketing (X7)
- Percentage of families using crop insurance/ agricultural credit (X8)

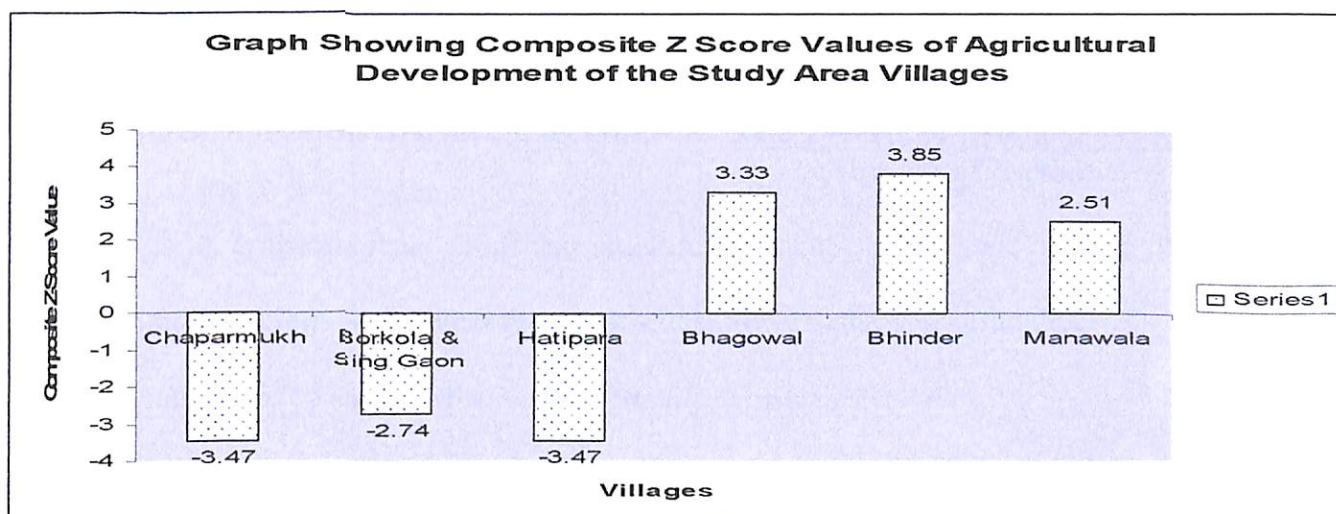
Table: Data Matrix at Village Level

Villages	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8
Chaparmukh	12	28	0	0	10	0	0	0
Borkola & Sing Gaon	16	35	20	6	14	0	4	5
Hatipara	19	20	0	0	12	0	0	0
Bhagowal	68	88	80	35	90	31	58	28
Bhinder	72	85	86	52	92	25	62	34
Manawala	56	84	83	27	85	22	46	31

Source: Field data, 2016-17

Table: Composite Z-Score

Villages	ZX1	ZX2	ZX3	ZX4	ZX5	ZX6	ZX7	ZX8	Composite Z Score Value
Chaparmukh	-0.42	-0.40	-0.48	-0.45	-0.43	-0.41	-0.43	-0.45	-3.47
Borkola & Sing Gaon	-0.36	-0.31	-0.27	-0.32	-0.39	-0.41	-0.37	-0.31	-2.74
Hatipara	-0.32	-0.52	-0.48	-0.45	-0.41	-0.41	-0.43	-0.45	-3.47
Bhagowal	0.40	0.44	0.38	0.34	0.42	0.57	0.45	0.33	3.33
Bhinder	0.46	0.40	0.44	0.73	0.44	0.38	0.51	0.49	3.85
Manawala	0.23	0.38	0.41	0.16	0.37	0.28	0.27	0.41	2.51



Composite Z-score values calculated out against selected agricultural development indicators are suggestive of highly developed agricultural system in the study area villages of Punjab. On contrary, in the Sikh villages of Nagaon district of Assam agricultural development is very much dejected.

Crop Diversification Index:

Crop diversification refers to competition among different crops grown in a given region for space. It entails raising a variety of crops involving intensity of competition amongst field crops for arable land: the keener the competition, the higher the magnitude of crop diversification. It is a concept which is opposite to crop specialization. It is an indicator of multiplication of crops which obviously involves intensive competition among the growing crops. (Singh J, 1976). Crop diversification also

provides relationship between the relative areal strength of the crops grown in a region. The magnitude of crop diversification shows the impact of physical, socioeconomic and technological influence on cropping pattern of an area (Hussain M, 1986).

Several studies have been made in detail about the crop diversification. Many scholars from geography, economics and allied disciplines have developed techniques for measurement of crop diversification. Among them Gibbs and Martin, Bhatia and Singh are prominent. Here crop diversification in the study area is attempted to be delineated using Bhatia's formula which is by far the most acceptable and widely used among all.

In 1965-66 Bhatia developed the formula to calculate the degree of crop diversification.

The formula is: Index of crop diversification =
$$\frac{\text{Sum Percent of Cropped Area under X Crops}}{\text{Number of X crops}}$$

Here, X crops are those crops that individually occupy 10 per cent or more of the total cropped area in the study region. Here higher the index value, lower is the diversification.

Table: Calculation of Crop diversification by Bhatia's formula/calculation:

Villages	Crops / No of Crops	PC of total cropped area	Crop Diversification Index Score
Chaparmukh	Rice, Oilseed, Jute	96	32.0
Barkola & SingGaon	Rice, Sugarcane, Pulses, Oilseed	95	23.75
Hatipara	Rice, Oilseed	92	46.0
Bhagowal	Wheat, Rice, Maize, Sugarcane, Oilseed, Pulses, Cotton, Potato	95	11.87
Bhinder	Wheat, Rice, Cotton, Sugarcane, Oilseed, Pulses, Potato, Onion, Vegetable	86	9.55
Manawala	Wheat, Rice, Sugarcane, Cotton, Oilseed, Pulses, Potato, Onion, Vegetable	98	10.89

The figures acquired from the calculation by using Bhatia's formula are indicative of high crop diversity in the villages of Punjab under study in comparison to the villages in Assam.

Image: Irrigation System in Punjab



Irrigation Canal



Irrigation by Pump



Wheat Cultivation in Punjab



Rice Cultivation in Punjab



Pumpkin Cultivation in Punjab



Vegetable cultivation in Punjab

Barren Agricultural Field of Borkola Village during March-April



Kitchen Gardening in Assamese Sikh Household



Jute Cultivation at Chaparmukh Village



An Abandoned Irrigation Sluice Gate at Borkola Village



Sugarcane Farming at Borkola Village

Commercial Rabi Crop Farming at Borkola Village



Cows: the mainstay of agriculture in Assamese Sikh Villages



BullockCarts



Mustard Cultivation at Assamese Sikh Villages during winter



Family Income Distribution Pattern; Income Groups:

Here, attempt is made to assess the economic condition of the Sikh people in the study area villages by determining their household monthly income through the household data obtained from the field survey. Accordingly, families are grouped into five different categories viz., monthly income below

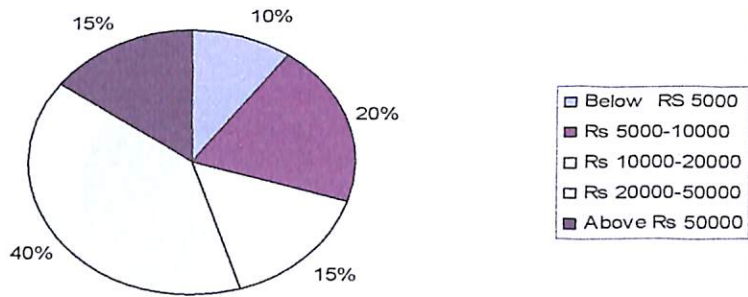
Rs 5000, monthly income Rs5000 to 10000, monthly income Rs10000 to 20000, monthly income Rs 20000-50000 and monthly income above Rs 50000. The family wise grouping pattern is shown below.

Table: Percentage of households under different income groups

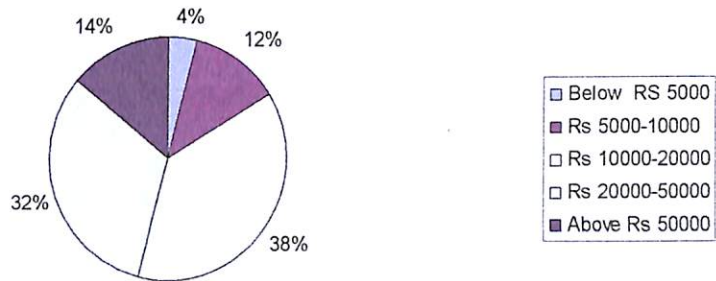
Villages	Percentage of households				
	Below 5000	5000-10000	10000-20000	20000-50000	Above Rs 50000
Chaparmukh	10%	20%	15%	40%	15%
Borkola & Sing Gaon	4%	12%	38%	32%	14%
Hatipara	0	10%	40%	30%	20%
Bhagowal	20%	23.3	10%	16.7 %	30%
Bhinder	10%	45%	15%	20%	10%
Manawala	34%	30%	14%	10%	12%

Above table is indicative of the fact that the members of Assamese Sikh community living in the study area villages are basically middle class people whose monthly income ranges between As10000 to Rs 20000 as well as Rs 20000 to 50000. On the other hand In Punjab the disparity between rich and poor is more prominent where maximum people belong either from the bottom two income groups. On the other hand percentage of high income families in these villages is also considerably higher than those villages in Assam.

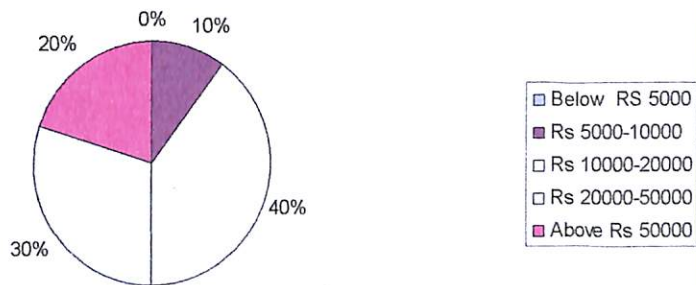
Monthly Household Income Pattern of Chaparmukh



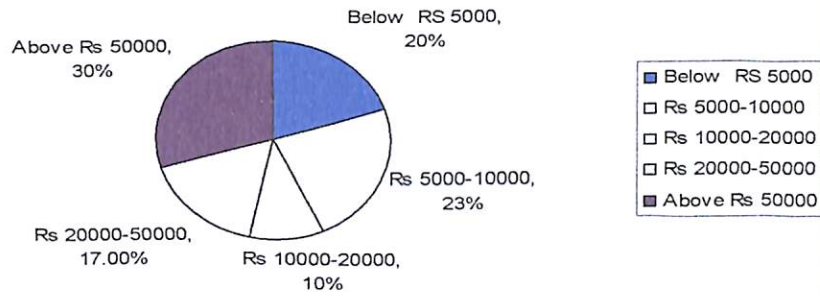
Monthly Household Income Pattern of Borkola & Sing Gaon



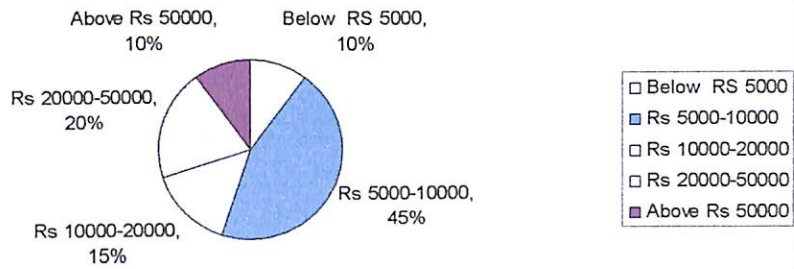
Monthly Household Income Pattern of Hatipara Village



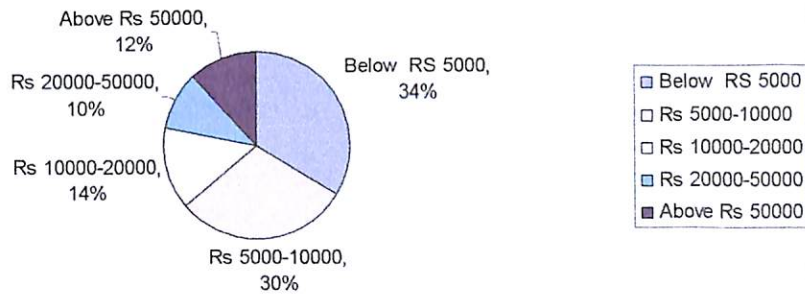
Monthly Household Income of Bhagowal Village of Punjab



Monthly Household Income of Bhinder Village, Punjab



Monthly Household Income of Manawala Village of Punjab



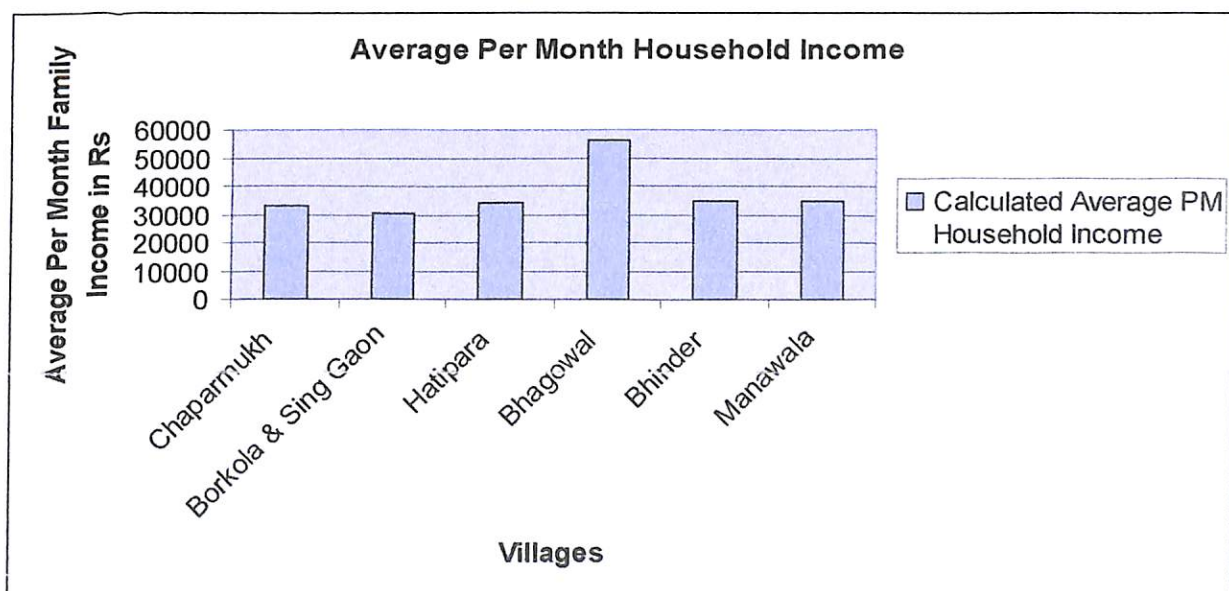
Per Capita Income of the Villages:

Per capita income of any given region is one of the strongest economic parameter to measure the economic development of the people of the region. It is calculated by dividing total income of the region by the size of its population. In this study attempt has been made to calculate per capita income of the

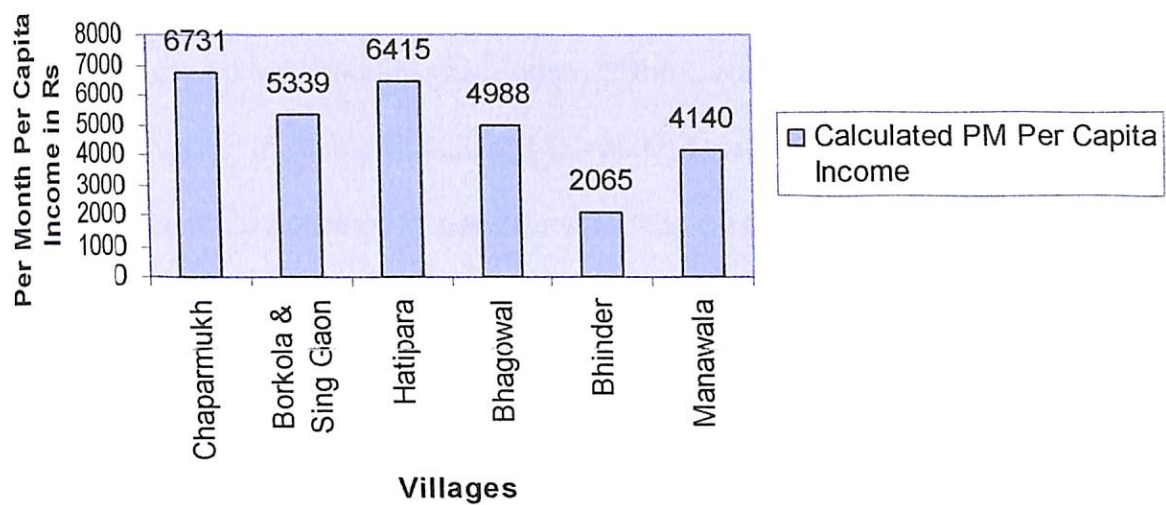
people in the study area villages by dividing their household income by the family size and aggregating the outcome figures for the whole village.

Villages	Total Sample Households	Total no of sample Family Members	Calculated Average PM Household Income	Calculated PM Per Capita Income
Chaparmukh	20	97	32650	6731
Borkola & Sing Gaon	50	286	30540	5339
Hatipara	10	53	34000	6415
Bhagowal	30	337	56033	4988
Bhinder	20	266	34650	2065
Manawala	50	422	34950	4140

In the table it is clearly visible that average per month household income of the people in the villages of Punjab is higher than those in Assam. However, due to more concentration of small nucleated families in the villages have resulted in higher per capita income (per month) than those in Punjab where size of the families are much bigger due to higher amalgamation of joint and extended families.



Per Month Per Capita Income



4.3: Socio-Cultural Status:

According to Colson (1953:88), when people belonging to diverse cultures live closely connected, they understand and acquire each others habits, customs, motivations and symbols while showing a range of respect. In such a situation, it can be said that different the cultural groups inhabiting in a region share “*common definitions of the situations*” where they assemble and show signs of similar behaviour.” In so far as the Assamese Sikh situation is concerned, the above observations apply to a considerable extent. The Assamese Sikhs and the other Assamese people living in the same villages may also said to share “*common definitions of the situations*” and a “common culture”. (Medhi B.K)

Sub Castes Among Sikhs in Punjab:

Guru Nanak in Sri Granth Sahib calls for treating everyone equally⁵¹. Other Sikh Gurus also denounced the hierarchy of the caste system. However they all came from just one caste, the Khatri⁵². Despite that social stratification exists in the Sikh community.

Some prominent castes among Sikhs are Arora, Khatri, Ramgarhia, Jat, Saini, Kamboh, Mahton, Chhimba, Mohyal , Chamar, etc. Each caste has its sphere of influence and specialization. In the cities, *Khatri* and *Arora* dominate the sphere of business activities.⁵³

Khatri and Aroras and Bhatias are essentially alike caste and are mostly a caste of traders and shopkeepers.

Jats are the biggest group in terms of numbers among Sikh castes. The jatt sikhs are mainly farmers. Sikh Jats enjoy a status much superior to their Hindu Jat who is officially part of the backward castes in most states. Jat Sikhs are also now very well educated and have taken up various professions besides agriculture, which is their signature trade. About 66% of all Sikhs in Punjab are said to belong to this caste.

Among the other rural landowning castes among Sikhs, prominent ones are *Mahton*, *Saini* and *Kamboh*. Among these three Mahton and Sainis are of Rajput origin, while Kamboh who claims their origin from Kambojs mentioned in Mahabharata.

Ramgarhia is also a prominent Sikh caste. They are primarily expert carpenters and blacksmiths. In rural areas they provide their services as makers of agricultural implements and also weapons to the landowning castes like Jat, Mahton, Saini, etc.

There are few other minor Sikh castes. These are - Chhimbas are tailors (*darzi*) and printers (*chhipa*), *Suniyaras* are goldsmiths, distillers or liquor sellers are called Ahluwalias.

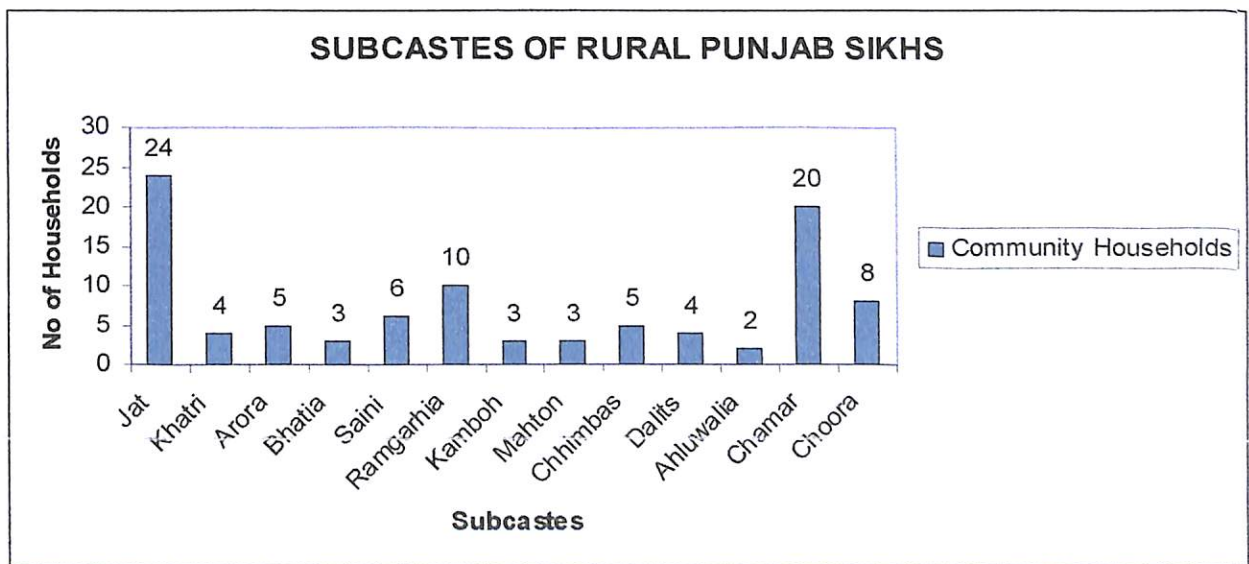
Brahmin, the highest caste among Hindus, does not have the same rank in Punjab, especially among Sikhs. In rural areas most of them are ordinary farmers and generally not as prosperous as *Jats*, *Mahtons* and *Sainis* etc. They also used to work as cooks in villages in the absence of sufficient land for ploughing.

There are two Dalit caste groups among Punjabi Sikhs - *Chamars* and *Chooras*. Both communities are called *Mazhabi* Sikhs. The word "Chamar" is derived from Charnakar or leather tanner. They used to be expert shoe-makers. Some poor men and women of this caste also work as agricultural laborers and weavers.

The Sikh religion does not advocate discrimination against any caste or creed, however, in practice; because of their Dalit status, over the centuries, the Chamars have been subjected to discrimination, as a result of which many of them remain poor and backward to this day. For this reason, Mazhabi Sikhs are extended reservation as scheduled caste. The Dalits are allowed to enter entry into the village gurdwaras but they are not permitted to cook or serve langar (Communal meal). Therefore, wherever they could mobilize resources, the Sikh Dalits of Punjab have tried to construct their own Gurdwara and other local level institutions in order to attain a certain degree of cultural autonomy.⁵⁴

In this study conducted in three selected villages of Punjab also Jats dominate the population composition of the villages followed by Dalits as well as a few other castes whose share is lesser than the Jats and Dalits. The following table shows caste composition of the villages of Punjab as extracted from the sample based study.

Communities	Community Households
Jat	24
Khatri	4
Arora	5
Bhatia	3
Saini	6
Ramgarhia	10
Kamboh	3
Mahton	3
Chhimbas (<i>darzi</i>)	5
Dalits	4
Ahluwalia	2
Chamar	20
Choorā	8
Total	100



Sub Castes Among Rural Sikhs in Assam:

In contrary to the rural Sikhs of Punjab where Sikhs are discriminately placed in caste hierarchy, Assamese Sikhs living in the rural areas of Nagaon District have no such visible social divide among them. However, it is found that many households in the study area villages are categorically placed in General Caste; some are under other backward class category and a section who introduce themselves as “Bhangi Sikhs” are under Scheduled Caste category. In spite of this division the Sikhs living in the study area villages live under utmost harmony and unity without any sort of cast discrimination.

Noteworthy that in Punjab there is no caste among the Sikhs as “Bhangi Sikhs”. However, in Punjab History “Bhangi” has been quoted as one of the “misls” who fought in the form of clustered groups against the “Mughals” following the demise of the 10th Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh and his successor and follower Banda Bahadur.

Evolution of the Sikh Misls began with the Sikh challenge to the Mughal rulers and the Afghan invaders, which continued for nearly half a century. As an outcome of this protracted period of struggle, the Sikhs not only managed to save themselves from the oppression and injustice of the Mughals and Afghans but also succeeded in establishing their own independent rule in the Punjab under twelve Misls and among these, the Bhangi misl was the largest in its size and area it occupied.

The word Bhangi is derived from bhang or hemp, a plant of wild growth found in the jungles and in abundance along river the banks. When crushed in a mortar with a grinder and sifted through a piece of coarse cloth, it leaves behind a thick liquid of green colour. Its drink is intoxicating and soothes the effect of heat in summer. The members of the Bhangi Misl liberally indulged in this drink, and liberally entertained others with it. At the time of fighting, it made them furious and reckless. On account of addiction to it, this group of Khalsa came to be called Bhangi.⁵⁵

It is found in the history of the state that the Bhangi misl engaged in numerous power struggles with other Misl until they were severely weakened at the Battle of Basin and the loss of Lahore to Ranjit Singh.

Bhangi Misl held the possession of “Zamzama”, the famous cannon, which was at the time named Bhangi Toap, or Bhangian di Top, names it retains till today.⁵⁶

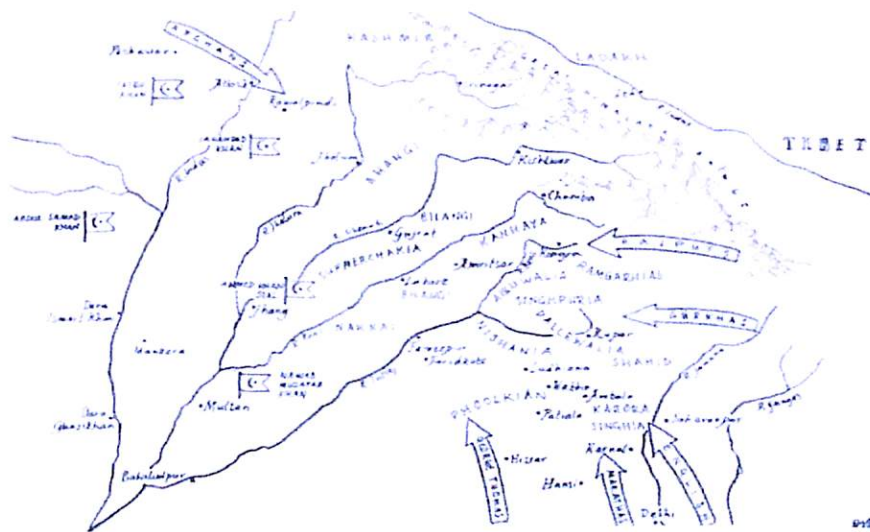


Figure: Map of the *misl* period, 1780 (Source K.Singh, 2001)

In all India perspective, Bhangi is a caste that was previously classed as untouchable. Bhangi caste is referred to those communities who are basically sweepers and latrine cleaners. All such workers in India today are included under the general nomenclature “The Bhangi”. They are known in different names and assume different titles in different parts of the country. In Punjab, the Chooria community people are generally the so called greater Indian Bhangi people. Nevertheless, none of the Sikh households of the study area villages are engaged in such economic activity other Bhangi people are doing.

Family Type:

Family is one of the key socializing foundations of the social order. Since earliest times, the family has been the most vital child care foundation in India. Families in India may be observed from diverse view-points and the categorization attained thereby are different in nature. From the view-point of structure, we can divide family into three basic types:

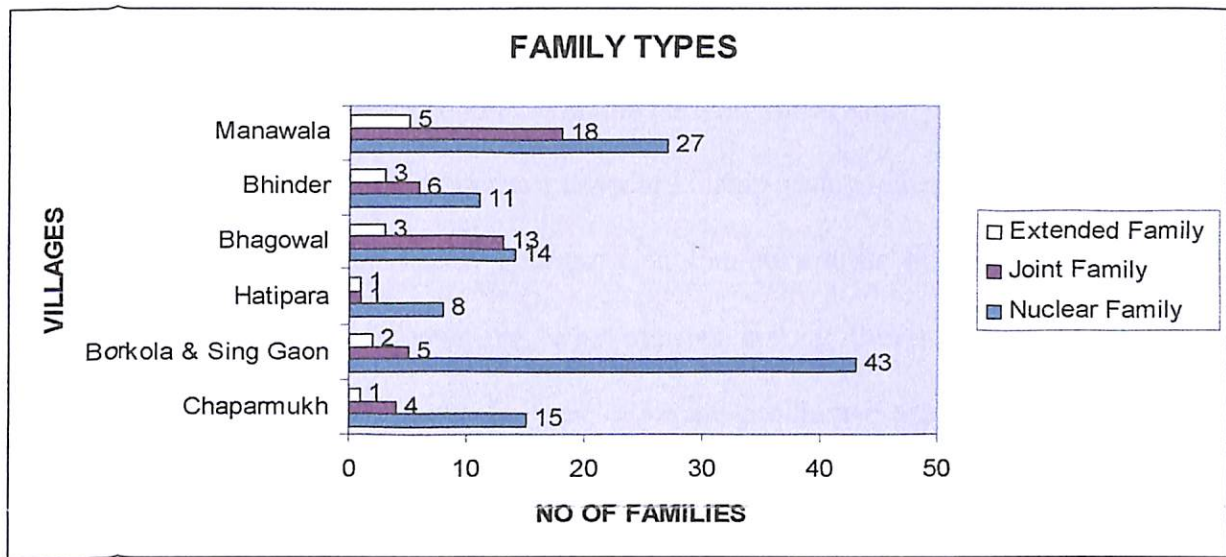
Simple, elementary or nuclear family: It is composed of a man, his wife, and unmarried children. It is most conspicuous in the modern European and Indian societies as well among the tribal societies.

Joint family: If two or more nuclear families live together under a common shelter, and share a common hearth, and a common purse, then this type of family is known as joint family. The Hindu joint family is the best example of such type of family in which several uterine brothers live together.

Extended family: When a few nuclear families are found to be extended on all sides by certain adhesions in the form of relatives, then it can be declared as an extended family. In most of the patrilineal societies of India, such type of family is found where persons originally of some other nuclear families stay together due to some adverse circumstances when they are forced to live together.

In this study, most families in the Assamese Sikh dominated villages are found to be nuclear in nature. On the other hand in the villages of Punjab, considerable amount of joint and extended families are found.

Villages	Nuclear Family	Joint Family	Extended Family	Total Sample Households
Chaparmukh	15	4	1	20
Borkola & Sing Gaon	43	5	2	50
Hatipara	8	1	1	10
Bhagowal	14	13	3	30
Bhinder	11	6	3	20
Manawala	27	18	5	50



Kinship:

The term “Kinship” denotes affinity, relationship, similarity or association which is denoted by the term “Atmiya” or “Mitir-Kutum” in local language of Assam or “Vansh” in India denoting family tree or descendent group from a common ancestor which in both the Assamese as well as Punjabi Sikh villages is found to be a male one. This denotes that both Assamese and Punjabi Sikhs of the study area villages belong from patrilineal family background.

Dr. B.K Medhi, former professor in Anthropology in the Gauhati University have made a detailed study regarding kinship status of the Assamese Sikhs living in the rural areas of the Nagaon District. In his study he finds that the Kinship pattern, practices and functioning among the Assamese Sikhs is very much closely associated or similar to those followed or practiced by the common Assamese people inhabiting around them. For example, he writes in his doctoral dissertation “The notion among the Assamese including the Assamese Sikhs is that a descent group lasts forever and that no marriage should take place as long as any connection can be traced. However, a person can marry a girl after a lapse of nine generations” (Medhi, B.K.)

Likewise he also writes, "When an Assamese Sikh marries an Assamese Hindu girl, the Sikh uses Assamese kinship/relationship terms to address and refer to his affine kin. At the same time, he uses Assamese Sikh kinship terms to address and refer to his consanguineal kin."

In Punjab however, the most important descent/kinship groups are caste (*Jati*), clan (*Gotra*), village (*pind*), division (*patti*), and family (*parivar*). In Punjab a caste is referred to as a group of families in an area, with common ancestry, who marries among themselves and has a common traditional occupation based upon a common type of innate productive assets. Castes generally have common and unique origin stories that elucidate how they came into the area and their present occupational arrangement.

In the customs and traditions kinship plays a significant role in Punjab which varies from group to group. However, the general mode of behavior and attitude is more or less the same throughout the state. Each relation has certain duties and responsibilities towards others in his group, in the day-to-day life, birth and marriage ceremonies, funerals and other social occasions.

Most of the kinsmen of a person are found to be residing in the same village. Since joint family system is still found in considerable quantity in the villages, the real brothers, even married ones, live in the same household. There are some other agnates who generally reside in the same locality or *Patti*, participate in all the household as well as social functions, like marriage, funeral as well as different festivals and exchange gifts.

Kinship also plays a very vital role in the social and cultural life of the people because most of the kin have to perform certain specified and obligatory functions on social occasions. Thus, for example, the *Choorā* (red ivory bangles) which a bride wears at her wedding is to be gifted by the maternal uncle. Likewise, the maternal grandparents send their *khat* (bridal gift) to the girl on the occasion of marriage which generally comprises clothes, jewelry and other household objects.

The joint family system having been in vogue for ages, the entire responsibility for the maintenance of the household and of social relations falls upon the father. No one in the family can

question his authority. Even in such personal matters as contracting a marriage, the eldest, as the head of the family, takes the ultimate decision.

It is found that relations between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law are not very cordial in many families. Frictions are observed over the domestic tasks between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law.

It is seen that in the societies, mother occupies a very respectable position everywhere in the Punjab. On the other hand, relations among brothers are generally found to be very friendly and cordial. They are always out to help one another. However, it is also observed that in many instances when the brothers get married and their wives start internal strife resulting in domestic quarrels. In many instances it is seen that over the distribution of ancestral property have resulted in fragmentation of the joint families in the villages.

The relationship between a brother and a sister is the warmest and cleanest of all relations. Right from her childhood a sister idealizes her brother and looks up to him as her solitary shield and anticipates assist from him whenever she is in difficulty.

The agnates living in a separate house though in the same village are generally the brothers or first cousins of the head of the family. Relations with them are generally kept pleasant and they in their turn join in all sorts of festive as well as sad occasions⁵⁷.

It is found that among many clans, eating or even drinking water in the house of a married daughter is prohibited. However, with the change of times people's views have changed.

Marriage:

Marriage is one of the common social institutions established to organize and control the life of mankind. Marriage is a tradition with diverse allusions in diverse cultures. Marriage patterns may vary from society to society but it is present everywhere⁵⁸.

Punjabi wedding traditions as well as ceremonies are conducted in many traditional ways. It is also done with strong reflections on Punjabi culture. The marriage ceremonies are conducted by Kazis

for Muslims in Arabic, by Pandits for Jains and Hindus in Sanskrit, and by Granthi for Sikhs. The occasional commonalities in the ceremonies include dress, food, dance, songs, and rituals. Apparently, over the years, the ceremonies and rituals have evolved since the traditional times.

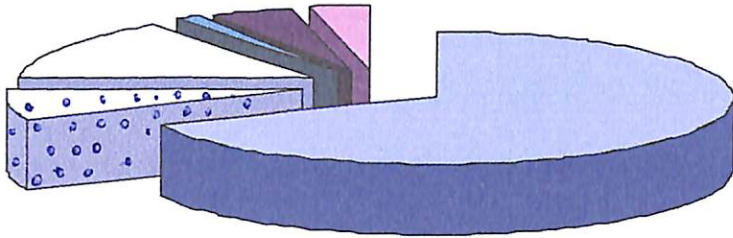
Marriage is a very vital element of Sikhism. It is regarded as a promise before Waheguru or the god by the bride and groom on their divine path. A **marriage** also brings two families closer. In Sikhism however, marrying people of other faiths is acceptable, but conducting that marriage in a Sikh temple is not allowed. Non-Sikhs can only be involved if they accept the Sikh faith and change their name to include Singh or Kaur. In Punjab, it is observed that inter-community marriage especially marriage between different castes is generally not acceptable. Differences in cultures seem to create problems.

The caste system in India as well as Punjab prohibits marriage outside the caste⁵⁹. However, **inter-caste marriages** have gradually gained acceptance due to increasing education, employment, middle-class economic background, and expansion of urban culture.

Here, marriage data of the families in the study area villages since past 10 years is collected and it is observed that most marriages in the study area villages are family arranged marriages among the same caste (76.5%). Other types of marriages occupy insignificant proportion of total marriage percentage. This signifies strict social norms and common rural Sikh peoples' inclination towards maintaining a inter caste divide in this very important ritual.

Marriage Type	Total No of Wedding	PC of Total
Family Arranged marriage within the same caste	126	69
Family Arranged Marriage with other caste within Sikh Community	14	8
Family disagreed Marriage with other caste within Sikh Community of Punjab	26	14
Family Arranged Marriage with Non-Sikh Community within Punjab	3	2
Family disagreed Marriage with Non-Sikh Community outside Punjab	8	4
Marriage with Non-Indian (Including NRI)	6	3
Total Marriage Ceremony	183	100%

WEDDING TYPES AMONG RURAL PUNJABI SIKHS



- Family Arranged marriage within the same caste
- Family Arranged Marriage with other caste within Sikh Community
- Family disagreed Marriage with other caste within Sikh Community of Punjab
- Family Arranged Marriage with Non-Sikh Community within Punjab
- Family disagreed Marriage with Non-Sikh Community outside Punjab
- Marriage with Non-Indian (Including NRI)

Family as well as kinship plays a very important role in the overall procedures of a Sikh wedding. Overall, the eldest male members of the family is seen to have the decision making power in each and every rituals associated in the wedding. However, it is seen that the financially sound members of the kinship offers financial aid; whatever possible.

Assamese Sikhs living in the study area villages of Nagaon district of Assam however are very much open to inter-caste as well as inter religious marriages though marriage within the same community is always their first choice. Though caste divide among the Assamese Sikh appears; it is only in papers. In reality, the people living in the same village do show a strong sense of bonding, cohesion, correlation, mutual dependency and spatial association.

The rituals and traditions observable in an Assamese Sikh marriage ceremony is almost identical to those in an Assamese Hindu household marriage rituals. Only difference can be observed during the time of the actual marriage religious ritual where they take oath to remain united for whole life before the “Waheguru” or lord and religious hymns are sung before them.

Kinship also plays an important role in Assamese Sikh marriage rituals and the entire process. These people like their non-Sikh neighbor possess strictness in marrying from within same “Bangsa” or kin till nine generations are descent or lapsed.

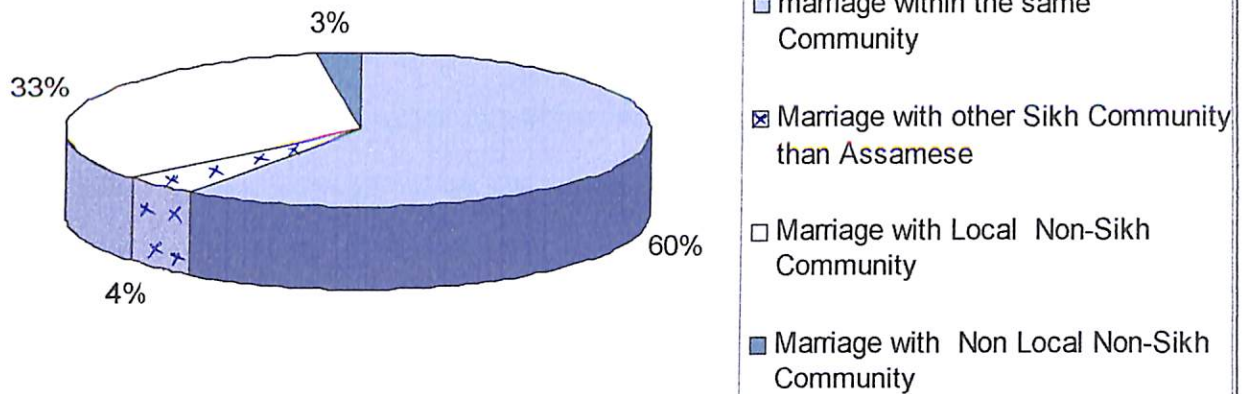
According to Prof. Dr. B.K. Medhi, among Assamese Sikhs several other factors play decisive role in selecting a mate for marriage other than the caste factor. Marrying from within the same community has always been the first consideration of the Assamese Sikhs. However, many times they get it difficult to get a suitable boy or girl from within their community since the community is a small community of a few thousand people spreading over the state. In such instances the local Hindu boys and girls are considered for marriage especially with Koch and Kalita sub-castes.

Regarding selection of girl or boy when marriage area is concerned the Assamese Sikh possess a strong associated with Assamese Sikhs and Assamese Non Sikhs living in other places located nearby. For example, Sikhs of Barkola SingGaon village have so close marriage relationship with the Assamese Sikhs living in Hatipara, Chaparmukh, Lanka, Nagaon Town as well as other places.

While the history of the community continuously hints regarding selection of local Hindu girls for marriage by the ancestors of the Assamese Sikh Community this process is still going strong as the collected household data indicates. The following table demonstrates past 10 years’ marriage tradition and patterns in the Assamese Sikh Villages under study as extracted from the primary household survey samples.

Marriage Type	Total No of Wedding	PC of Total
marriage within the same Community	69	60%
Marriage with other Sikh Community than Assamese	5	4%
Marriage with Local Non-Sikh Community	38	33%
Marriage with Non Local Non-Sikh Community	3	3%
Total Marriage Ceremony	115	100%

MARRIAGE PATTERN AMONG ASSAMESE SIKHS



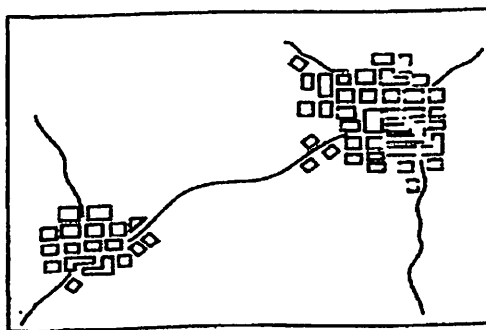
Settlement Type and Pattern:

Rural settlements are a significant feature of settlement and human Geography. Pattern of settlement has been defined as the relationship between one house or building and another. The pattern of settlement may be easily identified by reading and observing a large-scale map, like that of the topographical maps. According to Enayat Ahmad (1965) 'settlement type' refers to the typical consortium of rural residences in that well defined framework of space. According to M. Aurrousseau (1920), settlement refers to display of rural settlements as geographical bodies to articulate the grouping of dwellings and their interrelationship.

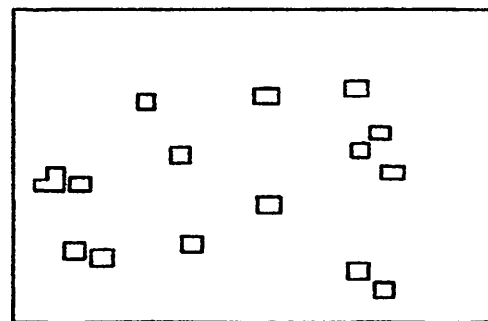
In general, every settlement is different from the other, but with some generalization it is possible to classify them into many groups. Different physical factors like relief, fertility of soil, rainfall, dry land and cultural factors land use, land tenure, cropping pattern, clan and caste system, social relationships, transportation etc plays vital roles in the formation of a definite visible pattern of settlement in a specific area. Since these factors differ from place to place, different types of settlements, each appearing different from other can be identified.

In general, rural settlements are of two types- compact or nucleated or clustered and dispersed settlement.

- **Nucleated settlement pattern:** Nucleated settlement patterns are those where a lot of buildings are grouped together. This type of rural settlement is characterised with agglomeration of almost all the dwellings of the village in one place (Ahmad, 1952). The concentration of houses varies from 30 to 40 in small hamlets to a hundred or thousand of houses in large villages. In India clustered rural settlement appears as an agricultural based community in which a number of families live in close proximity to each other, with fields surrounding the collection of houses and farm buildings.
- **Dispersed settlement pattern:** Dispersed settlements type are those where scattered huts or homesteads found all over the village area and relatively long distance between dwellings.



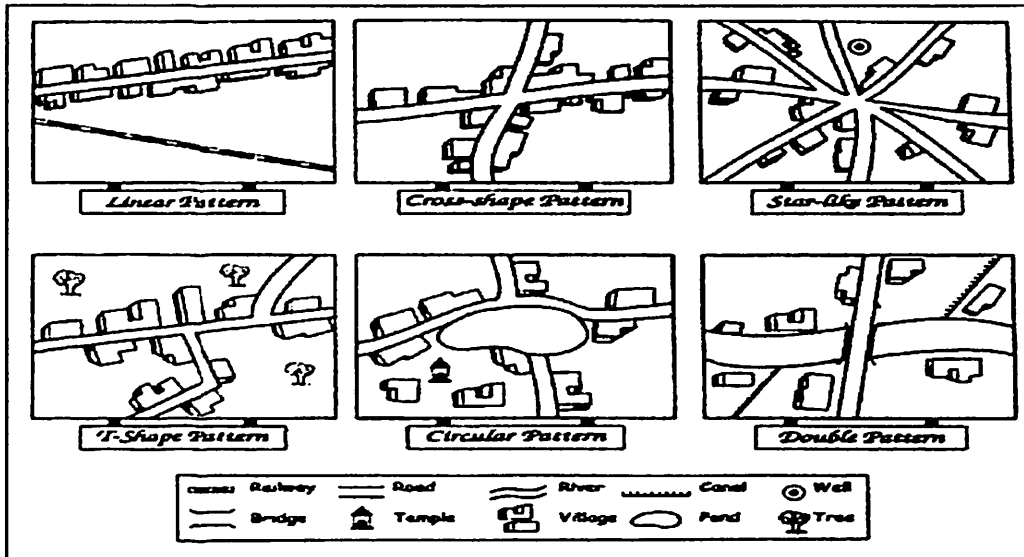
Nucleated Pattern



Dispersed Pattern

Pattern of settlement is defined as the relationship between one house and building to another. It can be identified by reading and observing a local scale map. The term 'pattern of settlement' deals with only compact and semi-compact settlements only as each of the dispersed settlements has its own shape.

The rural settlements are classified under following patterns: Rectangular, Linear, Circular, Semi-circular, Star-like, Triangular, and Nebular Pattern.



- **Rectangular Pattern:**

This is the most common pattern observed in rural settlements. Rectangular settlements are developed over flat, fertile, alluvial plains and wide valleys. The streets in rectangular settlements are straight and at right angles to each other.

- **Linear Pattern:**

The houses are aligned along the sides of a road, railway line, river, canal or valley. The physical restrictions associated with these sites give rise to the linear pattern.

- **Circular and Semi-circular Pattern:**

Settlements along seacoasts, around lakes, over mountain-tops and along meandering rivers, develop circular or semi-circular pattern. The population is mostly engaged in fishing, salt production and tourist services like boating, providing boarding and lodging.

- **Star-shaped Pattern:**

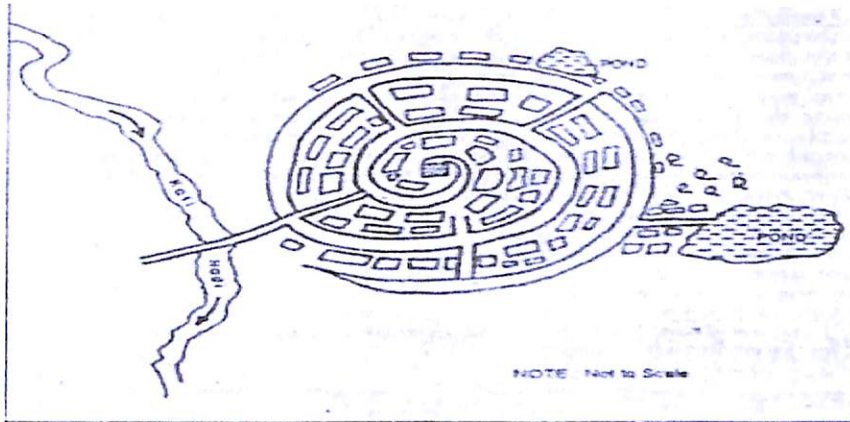
At places where roads converge, radial or star-shaped settlements develop. The new parts of settlement grow along the roads in all directions.

- **Triangular Pattern:**

Points, such as meeting place of rivers give rise to a triangular pattern of settlements.

▪ **Nebular Pattern:**

It is a circular pattern developing all around a centre. This centre could be anything ranging from a temple to a landlords house etc.

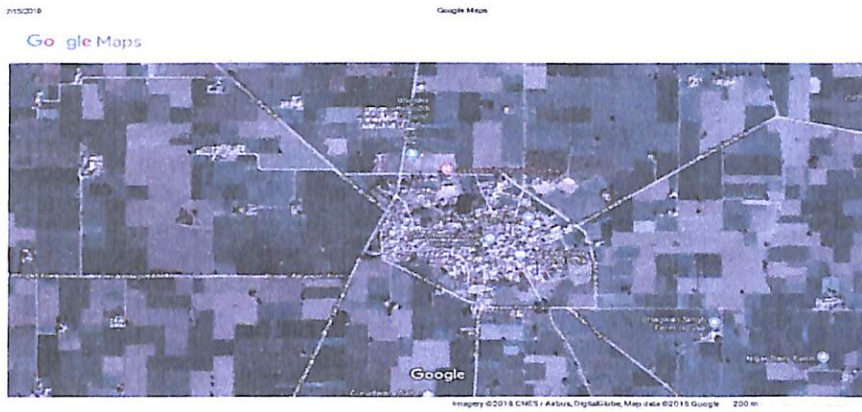


Clustered Settlement in Punjab Villages:

Manawala Village



Bhinder Village



Map data ©2018 Google, Imagery ©2018 CNES / Airbus, DigitalGlobe, Map data ©2018 Google

12

Bhagowal Village



Map Source: Google Map

Linear Settlement Pattern in Assam Villages:

Borkola-SingGaon Village

7/15/2018

Google Maps

Go gle Maps



<https://www.google.co.in/maps/@26.2327054,92.644965,2749m/data=!3m1!1e3>

1/1

Chaparmukh Village

7/15/2018

Google Maps

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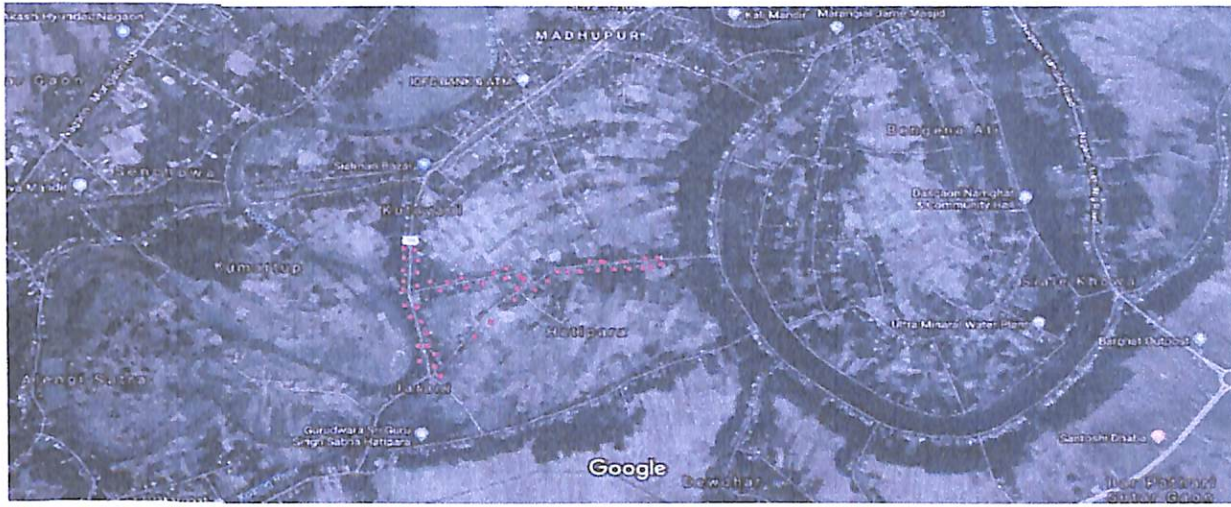
1/2

Hatipara Village

7/15/2018

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Map Source: Google Map

Shape and pattern of settlement visible in the Sikh villages of Punjab and Assam under study shows marked difference as observable in the satellite pictures of the villages. While the settlements in the villages of Punjab exhibit a clustered rectangular pattern, those in Assam exhibit linear and circular pattern. This difference is caused by the factors like topography, soil fertility, location of rivers and other water bodies like beels near the villages, flood, layout pattern of transportation network amidst the rivers and beels in Assam as well as social stratification and other social factors.

House Types:

House type refers to categorization of various types of house, residence, dwelling, domicile or habitation used by people to live in. In general, houses in towns and cities exhibit technological and architectural development and modernization. However, in rural areas, especially in India and other developing and underdeveloped countries around the world house types express the basic relationship between man and their immediate physical and social environment as well as their socio-economic status.⁶⁰

House Types of Rural Punjab:

Compared to surrounding regions, Punjab's population is evenly spread and dense, particularly in the central areas. Here, the rural population accounts for about 60-70% of the total population of the state. Settlement pattern in the rural areas under study are found to be nucleated where the villages are laid out in mass at intersections and houses are built collectively in a compact area. The outer walls of the houses are found to be joined together to make a common wall, with restricted points of entrance. Houses are found to be adjoined to along narrow lanes, sharing many common walls. Beyond the settlement houses lie the agricultural fields.

Since independence many houses have been built outside the former rampart, and farmers have begun building houses directly in their fields, particularly at well sites. Many small new hamlets have also been established. The changes in settlement patterns reflect increased geographical mobility and regional integration. In India's Punjab all villages have been electrified and connected by paved roads. Almost all now have some kind of private motorized transport vans, motor rickshaws, or minibuses.⁶¹

In this study, modern houses amidst the agricultural fields by some wealthier section of the society are also found who basically belong to higher social caste like Khatri, Jat and Aroras. However, most rural dwellings are found to display common rural type of house type where houses are primarily pucca or semi pucca thatch houses.

House Types	RCC Multi-Storied	Pucca	Semi Pucca Thatched	Kachha Thatched
Total No of families	14	23	55	08
Percentage	14%	23%	55%	08%

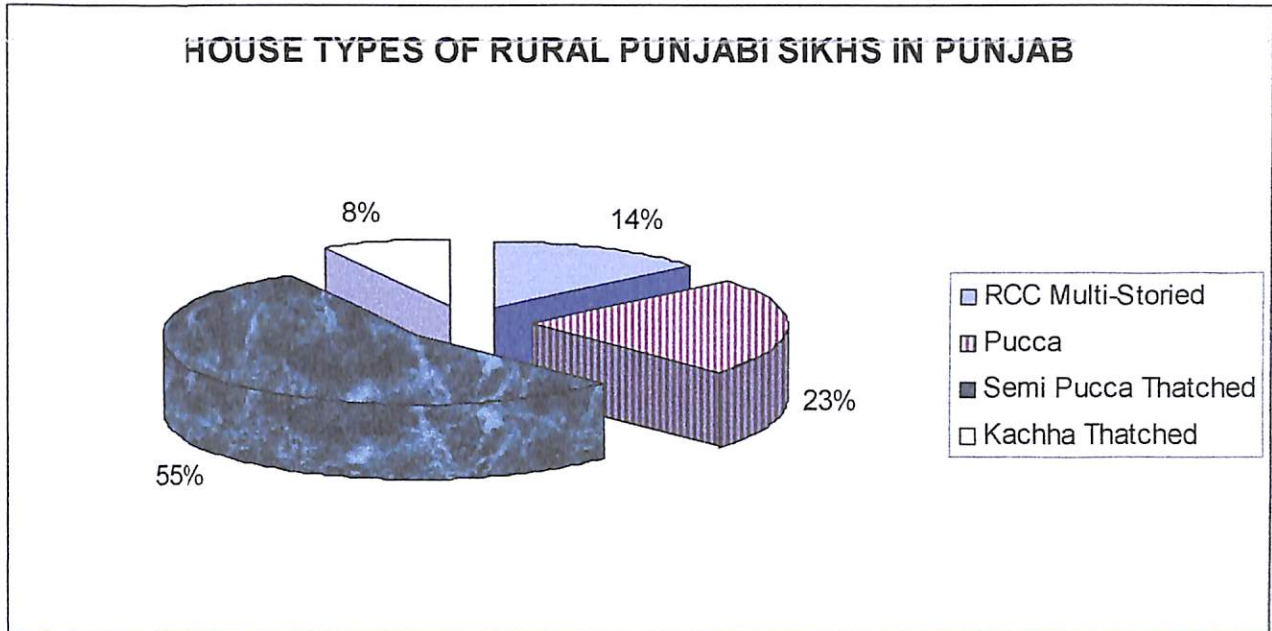
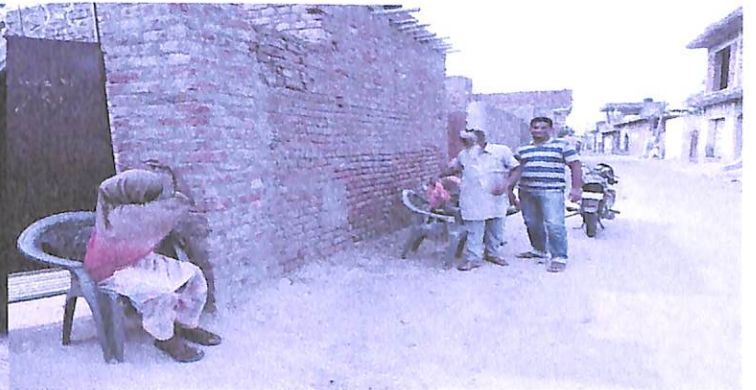


Image: House Types of Rural Punjabi Sikh Villages:



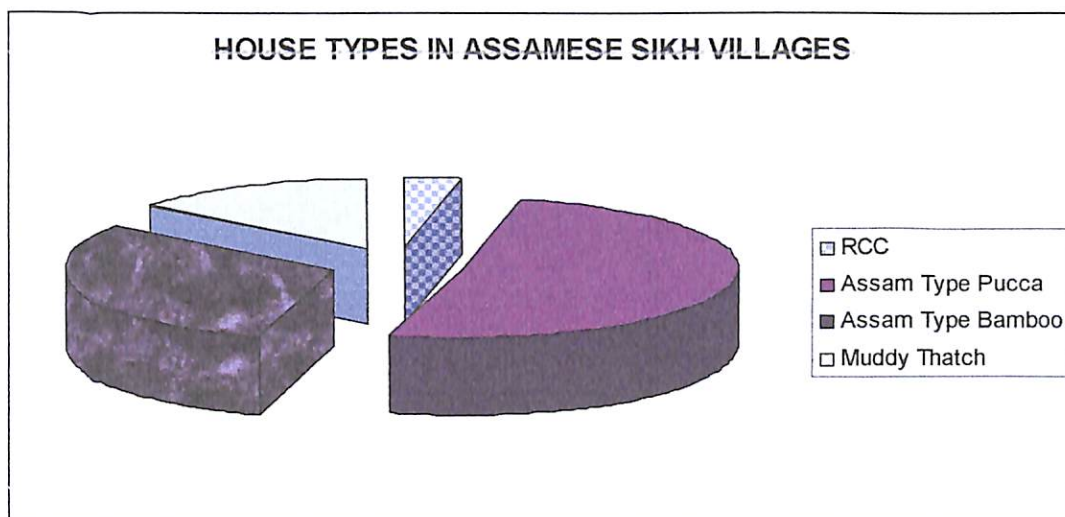
House Types of Rural Assamese Sikh Villages:

The rural housing in Assam largely depends on the environmental factors such as climate, drainage, sunrays, topography etc. The building space, house type, layout, height, plinth level, roof pattern and interior arrangement depend on culture and tradition of the communities and locally available building materials. Environmental impact is well reflected on the layout of the houses, building materials, orientation etc. People belonging to same community but living in two different environmental conditions, for example hills and plains have different house types. In many communities some methods adopted for keeping household items found to be highly scientific while many are controlled by the age old traditions⁶².

The North-Eastern region of India, being prone to many types of natural calamities, uses building construction techniques which prove to be resilient to disasters. One of the most common types of traditional housing practices found in this part of the country is the Assam-type housing, predominantly witnessed in the state of Assam. Typically these houses are built with light weight locally available materials like bamboos, wooden planks, thatch etc. Such houses have a proper system of wooden beam-column. Today, the Assam type houses are single-storey structures consisting of brick or stone building materials walls. The roof generally consists of GI sheets supported on wood trusses, which laterally connect the parallel walls.⁶³

In the study area villages, the house types of the Sikh people are found to be similar to the non-Sikh communities living in the same village. Apart from the visible Khalsa or Guru Nanak Images in the front roof top walls of the houses, it becomes nearly impossible to delineate houses of the Sikh community and other non Sikh communities' houses. Predominantly Assam Type house with a distinct courtyard and Tamul-Pan and other trees are grown in the ample spaces available behind the houses which is locally known as "Bari" is the most common house pattern seen in the study area villages with occasional muddy-thatched houses and a few RCC structured houses with multi story provision.

House Type	RCC	Assam Type Pucca	Assam Type Bamboo	Muddy Thatch
Total Households	3	46	28	13
Percentage	3.4%	51.1%	31.1%	14.4%



Images: House Types in Assamese Sikh Villages of Assam:





Food and Drinking Habit:

Fooding and drinking habits are very important socio-cultural aspects of any community. These are actually indicator of one community’s regional and cultural authentication. It also indicates of one community’s adaptation and acculturation process in a region through intra and intercommunity interactions.

When staple food and other fooding habit is concerned, vast difference is observed in the foods of the rural Sikhs of Punjab and Assam. While roti with small quantity of rice in the dish is the staple meal of the Sikhs in Punjab, almost all Assamese rural Sikhs’ staple food is found to be traditional Assamese dish which generally comprise of rice, dal, local green herbs and vegetables’ curry usually which are less spicy and oily than those cooked by the Punjabi rural Sikhs. On the other hand, while the rural Assamese Sikhs are fond of eating fish, the Sikhs of Punjab are fond of meat tandoor items and other items which are usually oilier and spicier than those of the Assamese Sikh dishes.

When the drinking habit of the people is concerned, tea is generally consumed by both the Assamese and Punjabi Sikhs. Another important aspect is that black tea without milk is preferred by a considerable section of the respondents in the Assamese Sikh villages (N = 43%) while 57% of the respondents prefer milk tea to black tea. On the other hand, in Punjab most respondents are found to prefer milk tea (86%) to black tea (14%).

Image: Launch of a Punjabi Sikh Family



Image: Launch of an Assamese Sikh Family



Dress Habit and Pattern:

Dressing habit and pattern is a very important aspect of any cultural socio-cultural study. With present day influences of modernization, westernization, globalization and liberalization of culture, there have been enormous changes in traditional as well as conventional dressing pattern of any community; yet, a person can easily observe a generalized pattern of vinaigrette among the inhabitants of a community. It is interesting to note that in our country, traditional attire is usually observed among the females only since trousers and shirts have almost become universal among the male section of the

population. This is the rationale why only dressing pattern of only adult females have been considered in this study for analysis in the study area villages. Household data is collected regarding the dressing pattern and behaviour of the adult female members both at home as well as outside home. In general, in the entire North India including Punjab, *Salwar of Churidar* is the common and most accepted dress for the females while a considerable section of the females wear *Sari* while going or travelling outside home. On the other hand, in Assam *Mekhela Chador* is the traditional home and outside attire of the Assamese female. A considerable number of female in the state is expert in weaving the *Mekhela Chador* as well as other traditional apparel of the community. In Assam, traditionally a women has been considered to be a “*complete women*” if she knows the art of weaving. However, this art and trend among the females has gradually shown a declining trend.

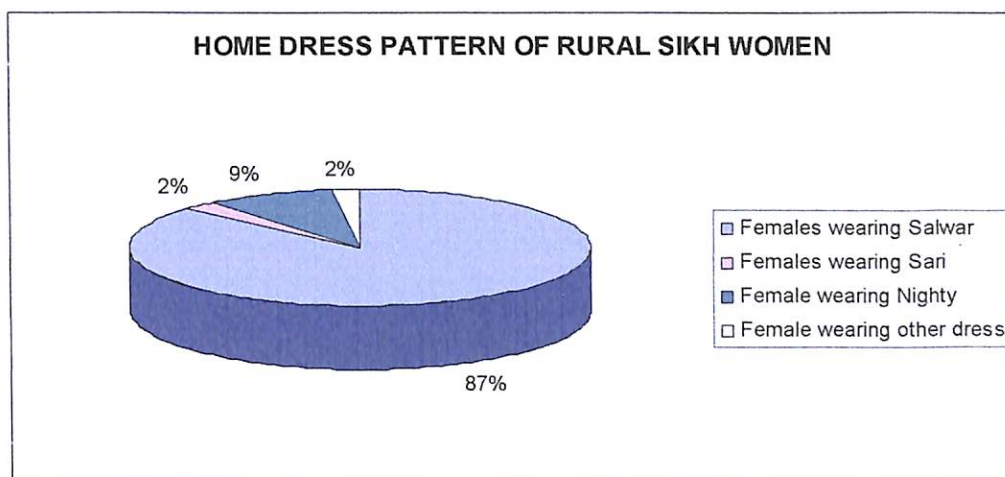
The traditional dress for women in Punjab is the *Salwar suit* which replaced the traditional Punjabi *Ghagra*. The *Patiala Salwar* is also very popular.

The Sikh females in the villages of Punjab mostly wear Salwar or Churidar at home with a dopatta (87%). A small section among them are found wearing cotton Sari (2%), Nighty (9%) and other dresses (2%) in this study.

Image: Dress pattern of Punjabi Rural Sikhs



Villages	Females wearing Salwar	Females wearing Sari	Female wearing Nighty	Female wearing other dress
No of Female	351	10	37	8
Percentage of Female	87%	2%	9%	2%



On the other hand the traditional dress for women in Assam is the *Mekhela Chador*. Moreover, many females once used to wear *Riha* during ancient times. At present Assamese women generally wear *Riha* only during some ceremony or other social occasions. Moreover, sari, Salwar, kurti, nighty and other casual dresses also have gained popularity among rural Assamese women section now a days. In this study it is observed that the societal viewpoint of the Assamese rural Sikh people regarding the dress of the Sikh female is very much open and liberal. Accordingly the rural Assamese Sikh females are found to wear a assemblage of dresses at home starting from *Mekhela chador* to sari, Salwar, nighty

and other casual dresses. However, **Mekhela chador** has always got priority among the rural Assamese Sikhs as the most preferred home and outside dress as the others.

Villages	Females wearing Mekhela Chador	Females wearing Salwar	Females wearing Sari	Female wearing Nighty	Female wearing other dress
No of Female	149	56	23	52	15
Percentage of Female	50%	19%	8%	18%	5%

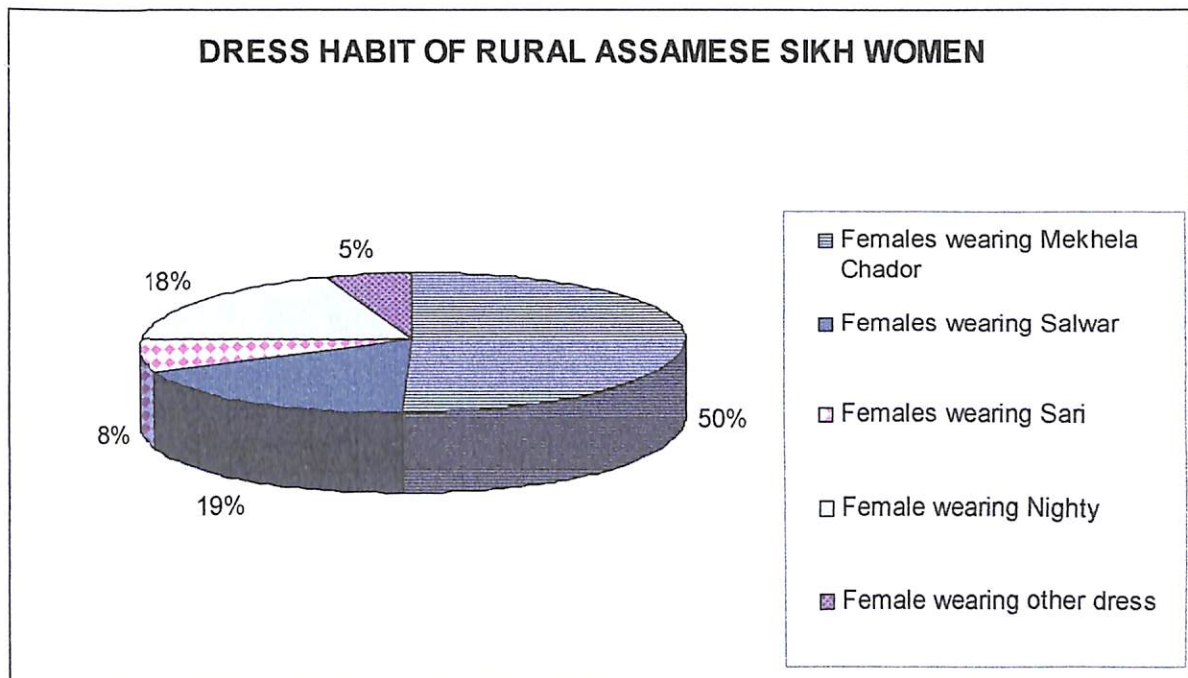


Image: Dress pattern of Assamese Rural Sikhs





Another survey was conducted among selected female household members from both Punjabi and Assamese Sikh communities regarding their preferred dress while going out of their home. Here, 58 females from Punjabi Sikh community and 47 females from the Assamese Sikh community put forwarded their views. The results of the survey are displayed below.

Preferred dress of the rural Punjabi Sikh females while travelling out of their home is found to be Salwar Suit. 49 females from the community which accounts for 84.4% of the total female considered as sample. The remaining female preferred either Sari (N=8 or 13.8%) or other casual dresses (N=1) while moving out of their home.

In the villages of Assam the Sikh female are found to be somewhat sober regarding selection or preference of dress while travelling out of their home. 18 of the surveyed females have shown preference of Mekhela Chador (38.3%), 15 have chosen Sari (31.9%), 12 have preferred Salwar suit (25.5%) while the remaining 2 have preferred other casual dress while moving out of their home.

Religious Practices:

Sikhism originated and grew around the teachings of Guru Nanak and nine of his successor Gurus and the baptism of five “K”s introduced by the 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh known as “Khalsa” which makes a Sikh easily recognizable from others. Written in Gurmukhi language, Guru Granth Sahib

is the religious scripture of the Sikhs and the Gurdwaras are the home of the religious scripture where the Sikhs read it.

In Punjab, according to the Britannica Encyclopedia, in addition to the orthodox, several sects are found.

These are –

- *The Nirankaris,*
- *The Nam-Dharis,*
- *The Akhand Kirtani Jatha,*
- *The Kes-Dharis,*
- *The Amrit-Dharis ,*
- *Sahaj-Dharis and*
- *Mona Sikhs or “Shaven Sikhs”*

In the household survey, it is found that most people in the study area villages of Punjab are orthodox Sikhs. However, it is found that the customs, traditions and rituals seen as per Khalsa norms are seldom practiced with rigidity by the people. Especially the youth generations of the orthodox rural Punjabi Sikhs do show their unwillingness to rigidly follow and practice all the five “K”s of the “Khalsa” panth, especially “Kesh” or uncut hair and beard which gives the Sikhs their distinctive identity. A large section of the older Sikhs are however, found to practice at least a few “Khalsa” norms with some enthusiasm. More people are found to visit the Gurdwaras occasionally than daily or regularly basis. A total of 78 randomly selected male respondents from different age groups from rural Punjabi Sikh community from the study area villages were taken as samples to assess the spiritual behaviour of the community’s male people. Among them, 46 (N=59%) are against the strictness of practicing the five “K” of the “Khalsa” panth and believe in less rigid or alternate path of spirituality. Moreover, only 13 respondents among the 78 (N=16.7%) in the community are found to visit the Gurdwaras either daily or regularly. The remaining people visit gurdwaras only occasionally. Another

important spiritual aspect of the Punjabi Sikh community is that the members of the community hardly believe or visit any other religious institution other than the Gurdwaras.

In contrast to the Sikh people of the rural areas of Punjab, the Sikhs in the rural areas of the Nagaon district exhibit contrasting spiritual behaviour among themselves. Here, on one hand, maximum people are in favour of visiting the Gurdwaras either on daily or regular basis, while the community members often visit or even worship other religious institutions in the region like temples or namghars on the other hand. This displays a mixed and less rigid sense of spirituality among the Assamese Sikh community members in the study area villages. Views from 80 randomly selected male members of the community from different age groups from the study area villages are collected and analyzed to find out the pattern of spiritual behaviour of the community. It is found that in contrast to the Punjabi Sikh community members where only 41% of the males were in favour of practicing the five “K”s of the Khalsa panth with some seriousness, 85% of the males from the Assamese Sikh community believe in practicing the rules of the “Khalsa” panth with sincerity (N=68). Among the 80 sample male people from the community, 36 people (N = 45%) are in favour of visiting other religious institutions on regular or occasional basis like the temples, namghars or satras.

Festivals:

Festival is a propitious day or period of religious or other celebration prevalent in all societies and communities. As per Wikipedia, "A **festival** is a special occasion of feasting or celebration, usually with a religious focus." Most of the festivals in India are associated with religion. Aside from religion, folklore and agricultural practices also trigger beginning of many festivals in our country. Moreover, there are different National festivals, New Year's days, birth and death days of different important personalities are celebrated as festivals in India

Festivals are an important part of our life. It is noticed that during the time of a festival, the whole aura of the society changes, the whole community gets directed towards a faith, a surrounding full of good hopes, happiness, joy, celebrations is created. Festivals increase the relations among the people

and help the people of community to share their feeling and exchange. Festivals also enable the families to gather together and have some fun, eat different kind of sweets, purchase new stuff and spend time together. Apart from these from the viewpoint of sociology and cultural studies, from festivals one can gather many important facts from the festivals.

- Festivals help us to keep connected to our roots, culture, values, origin and to preserve these.
- These help us to document culture in an undocumented manner.
- Festivals tell about the tale of evolution of a society or community throughout the years from the changes in the way of celebration.
- These also mark the significant events important to the society or community.

Punjab has traditional, religious and state festivals organized and celebrated throughout the state.

These festivals are full of messages and are linked with Punjab's religion and culture and reflect the various phases of its life depicting some of the distinct Punjabi traits. Among the most important festivals of Punjab Holi, Basant Panchami, Bhai Duj, Diwali etc are celebrated by the Hindu community while "*Teeyan*" festival is celebrated to welcome the monsoon and "*Lohri*" usually on January 13th, is celebrated as a mark of culmination of the chilly winter days.

The Sikh community in Punjab also celebrates different festivals. The most important festivals observed by the Sikhs in Punjab are-

- **Gurupurabs** which are anniversaries associated with the lives of the Sikh Gurus. The Sikhs celebrate 10 Gurupurabs in a year.
- **Baisakhi** which is New Year's Day in Punjab. It falls on the month of Vaisakh or April. This festival marks the ripening of the Rabi harvest. It was on this very day that the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa panth in 1699.
- **Holla Mohalla** is a Sikh festival celebrated a day after Holi. This is an annual festival held at Anandpur Sahib in Punjab. Holla Mohalla was started by the tenth Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh, as a gathering of Sikhs for military exercises and mock battles.

- **Maghi Mela** is held at the holy city of Sri Muktsar Sahib each year in January, or the month of Magh. It is one of the most important religious fair of the Sikhs.
- **Bandi Chorrh Divas** is the Sikh celebration of the return of their sixth Guru Hargobind from detention in the Gwalior Fort by the Mughal emperor Jahangir along with 56 other rajas. This festival coincides with Hindu festival of Diwali.

On festive occasions the whole Sikh families of a particular place gather in a Gurudwara where the Guru Granth Sahib is read constantly and hymns are sung and prayer is offered. Sweet pudding (karah) is distributed among the people attending worship. Langar at the Gurudwaras is a must for every Sikh fair and festival.



Image: Teeyan Festival in Punjab

In comparison to the Sikhs of Punjab, the Assamese Sikhs in the study area villages of the Nagaon district shows a distinctively different pattern of adaptation when celebrated festivals is concerned. The enthusiasm and affection shown towards the festivals associated with the Sikhism is equally observed among the community members towards the festivals celebrated by the other local communities especially Hindu Assamese people. As such the Sikh people are observed to celebrate and enjoy festivals like Durga Puja, Holi, Diwali, Three Bihus celebrated by the Assamese people, Saraswati Puja, Shivaratri, etc.

A survey was conducted among 90 randomly selected Assamese Sikh people from different age groups of the study area villages of the Nagaon District regarding their most preferred festival. The

results of the survey have brought interesting fact regarding their choice of the most preferred festivals which are displayed below in the table-

Table: Preferred festival of the Assamese Sikh People

Festivals	Total person preferring the festival	PC of people preferring the festival
Baisakhi	18	20%
Gurupurabs	10	11%
Holi	09	10%
Diwali	21	23%
Durga Puja	18	20%
Bihu	09	10%
Saraswati Puja	05	06%

From the collected data it is clearly visible that the Diwali, Baisakhi and Durga Puja are the most cheered festivals among the Sikh community people in the study area villages. Apart from these, 11% of the people have shown their affection towards different Gurupurabs and 10% of the people have shown their affection towards Holi and Rongali and Bhogali Bihu gracefully celebrated by the Assamese people in the state.

Preference of Non-Sikh related festivals by the members of the Rural Sikh community members in the villages of Nagaon district of Assam is indicative of very strong spatial association and interaction of the Sikh community people in the study area villages with non-Sikh especially local Assamese Hindu community people. This strong spatial association beyond reasonable doubt can be attributed to frequent matrimonial relationship of the people from Sikh with the non-Sikh people in the study area.

MOST PREFERRED FESTIVALS OF THE ASSAMESE SIKHS

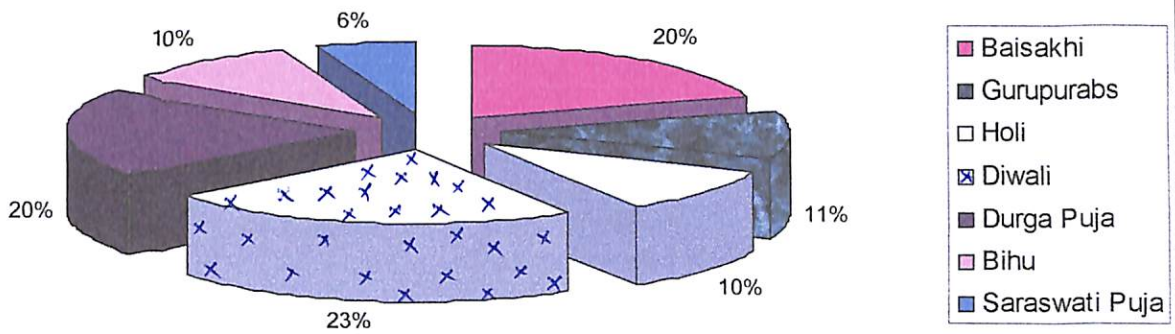


Image: Assamese Sikh boys playing Holi



Recreational Art:

According to Wikipedia, "arts" refers to the theory and physical expression of creativity found in human societies and cultures. Major constituents of the arts comprise literature including drama, poetry, and prose, performing arts like dance, music, and theatre, and visual arts including architecture, ceramics, drawing, painting, photography, and sculpting while Recreation is an activity of leisure. The "need to do something for recreation" is an essential element of human biology and psychology. Recreational activities are often done for enjoyment, amusement, or pleasure and are considered to be fun. Here, study of recreational art of the Sikh communities in Punjab and Assam is kept confined to the peoples' fondness as well as attachment to music and dance only



The Punjab State in India is called as the northwest region of the country. Its art and culture are one of the richest and oldest in the world. The basic element of Punjabi culture is found to be humor, lusty dancing, and love stories.

Punjabi art and culture is rich in various dance forms that include Gatka, Kikli, Jaago, Dhamal, Sammi, Dankara Julli, Luddi, Jhumar, Giddha, and Bhangra. These dances have resulted from the long history of Punjabi arts and culture.⁶⁴

Music is another important ingredient of Punjabi art and culture. Bhangra is the most popular Punjabi musical art form though classical as well as Sufi essence has always been part and parcel of Punjabi folk songs. However, Bhangra now a days is increasingly heard and rapidly becoming a mainstream favorite.

A study was conducted among 80 respondents in the villages of Punjab regarding their favourite music/song. Among them 47 respondent told that their most preferred music is Punjabi while remaining 33 respondents are found to be fond of Hindi /Bollywood songs.

Punjabi Sikhs generally follow the Punjabi culture. Bhangra and the Giddha are two forms of indigenous Punjabi folk dancing that have been appropriated, adapted and pioneered by Punjabi Sikhs. The Punjabi Sikhs have championed these forms of expression, such that Sikh Culture has become inextricably linked to Bhangra, even though "Bhangra is not a Sikh institution but a Punjabi one."⁶⁵

In the study also it is found that almost each and every Sikh people met in the villages of Punjab are fond of their music and dance forms and they know how to sing or dance in Bhangra or Giddha style.

Contrary to the Sikhs of the villages of Punjab preference of music and dance among the rural Sikhs of Assam is utterly different. Assamese Sikh people are more fond of local dance forms of Assam especially Bihu. Almost each and every Assamese Sikh in the study area villages is found to be familiar and comfortable with Bihu and other dance forms from Assam. In the social occasions also the people dance Bihu rather than Bhangra or other Punjabi dance forms. There are many female members in the community who are expert Bihu dancers and are rewarded on many occasions in Bihu competitions held locally.

Pattern of Choice of frequently enjoyed/heard music among the rural Assamese Sikhs has been found to be heterogeneous. A study conducted among 90 respondents show that 29 respondent's favourite music is Assamese while only 6 respondents' favourite music is found to be Punjabi. Remaining people (N = 55) are found to be fond of Hindi/Bollywood songs.

Chapter V: Findings and Conclusion:

Sikhism is considered to be the youngest and one of the smallest religions in this world. It originated and grew in the Indian state of Punjab from the teachings of Guru Nanak and nine of his successor "Gurus". There are approximately 27 million Sikhs in the world scattered in different states of India as well as countries outside India though lion's share of them lives in Punjab. Presence of Sikh people in almost each and every part of the world presents fascinating episodes regarding their migration, settlement and adjustment and adaptation from their homeland. As such, Sikh diaspora in different parts of the world is a very closely watched phenomenon now a day.

Sikhs constitute a very small fraction of the demographic scenario of Assam. As per 2011 Census Sikh Population in the state is 20672 which is 0.07% of total population. They are considered to be the smallest religious minority community in the state. Yet, contributions of this community have augmented the Assamese identity, making them also a part of it.

However, in Assam two distinct divisions of the Sikh people can be seen each of which exhibit and display to a large extent separate socio-cultural mannerism though origin of both the group lies from the same land. One section of them exhibits mostly Punjabi tradition and culture and basically lives in the urban areas of the state while the other section holds primarily Assamese tradition and culture and mostly inhabit in three villages of Nagaon viz., Chaparmukh, Barkola and Hatipara along with Lanka municipality of the same district. They are also popularly known as the "Assamese Sikhs". With a debatable population between 3000 to 10000, they practices Sikhism, but has whole heartedly embraced Assamese culture, speaks only Assamese, mother tongue is Assamese and considers Assam as their homeland (Manjit Singh).³³

The Assamese Sikhs settling in the rural areas of the Nagaon district of Assam believe that they are the descendents of Chaitanya Singh who was general of 500 Sikh army sent by Punjab king Maharaja Ranjit Singh to help the Ahom King for the fight against the Burmese invaders in the battle of

Hadirachaki during 1820-1822. The battle resulted in the defeat of the Ahom king by the Burmese invaders and most of the 500 Sikh soldiers who came from Punjab died in the battle along with their general Chaitanya Singh. After the war, the remaining Sikh soldiers decided to stay permanently in the state in lieu of returning back and guided by "Mataji", the widow of late general Chaitanya Singh made an upstream journey through the Brahmaputra-Kapili. Finally, they decided to stay permanently on the mouth of the TITAIMARA SUTI, at Chaparmukh in Nagaon district. Later, from Chaparmukh they migrated to Barkola and subsequently to Hatipara and Lanka in the same district. However, the story regarding their initiation of settlement in the study area is still a debated fact and further in depth genealogical study is still the need of the hour to trace their migration and initiation of settlement in the study area villages.

Nevertheless, the Sikh people who settled in these villages subsequently married women from local communities resulting in tremendous genetic and socio-cultural changes among them. This is been termed as "*Assamization*" by the scholars and historians. Today, members of this community consider themselves as a part of the larger integrated Assamese society even after maintaining their Sikh identity strictly over the period. They have been playing significant roles to serve the cause of the State at various levels from time to time. This socio-cultural transmission of the Sikh people is noticeable in various spheres starting from their physical appearance to language, economic activities, housing pattern, food habit, dress pattern, marriage and other rituals and occasions.

Main objective of this study was to differentiate the traits seen among the rural Assamese Sikhs staying in the villages of Assam from those of mainstream rural Sikhs staying at Punjab, the original homeland of the Sikhs. Key differences between the two communities as found in the study are summarized below.

Firstly, the territory of the Rural Sikhs in the Punjab is found to be in the fertile alluvial plains of the state. On the other hand, the rural Sikhs of Assam have chosen areas which are actually very much flood prone areas and are frequently inundated by water.

Secondly, there are noticeable differences of demographic aspects between the two communities.

These are –

- Sex ratio is much more even among the Assamese Sikh community than the Sikh community in the villages of Punjab.
- Percentage of SC population among rural Punjab Sikhs is much more than the rural Assamese Sikhs.
- Literacy rate among rural Assamese Sikh community is considerably higher than the rural Punjabi Sikhs.
- Migration pattern of the Sikh people considerably varies between the rural Sikhs of Assam and Punjab. Among the Assamese Sikhs there is considerably higher share of intra district and inter district Sikh migrants and negligible inter-state migrant. On the other hand inter-state migration and even international migration is a common phenomenon among the rural Sikhs in Punjab in search of livelihood.

Major economic differences among the two communities under study can be sorted out as following -

- Percentage of working population to the total population of the villages of Assam on average is more than the villages of Punjab. Female work participation rate in the villages of Assam is found strikingly more than the villages of Punjab.
- In Assam majority rural Sikh households' major economic base is found to be either government service or Pension after retirement from job. On the other hand in Punjab most of the working population from the surveyed families is either farming or non-farming labourers or direct farmers.
- Agricultural productivity of the villages of Punjab is found to be much higher than those of Assam.
- Composite Z-score values are calculated against selected agricultural development indicators. The values against each selected village are suggestive of highly developed

agricultural system in the study area villages of Punjab. On contrary, in the Sikh villages of Nagaon district of Assam agricultural development is very much miserable.

- Bhatia's formula is adopted to find out crop diversification index of the selected village communities. The results are indicative of high crop diversity in the villages of Punjab under study in comparison to the villages in Assam.
- Wheat is the principal crop produced in the villages of Punjab against rice cultivation in the villages of Assam.
- Assamese Sikh community living in the study area villages are basically middle class people whose monthly income ranges between Rs10000 to Rs 50000. On the other hand In Punjab the disparity between rich and poor is more prominent where maximum family's monthly income is below Rs 10000. On the other hand percentage of high income families in these villages is also considerably higher than those in the villages of Assam.
- Per Capita monthly income of the Assamese Sikhs of the study area villages is found to be higher than those of the Punjab due to small family size.

Socio-cultural differences are much more prominent between the Rural Sikh communities of Punjab and Assam which have recognized them as two distinct entities. Major differences as summarized from the detailed analysis in the previous chapters are mentioned below –

- Most families in the Assamese Sikh dominated villages are found to be nuclear and very small in size. On the other hand in the villages of Punjab, considerable amount of joint and extended families are found as such average size of the families are much higher than the Assamese Sikhs.
- Stratification of society on the basis of sub castes among the Sikhs is much more prominent in Punjab than those of Assam where there are numerous sub castes among the Sikhs. On the other hand sub-caste in the rural Assamese Sikhs is almost absent.

- Kinship patterns also vary considerably between the rural Sikhs of Punjab and Assam. Kinship and marriage pattern among the Sikhs of Assam are very much attached and resemble to those non-Sikh (Hindu) communities living in the same area. The kinship terms of the Assamese Sikhs are found to be recognized in Assamese common kinship terms. On the other hand, kinship pattern found in the rural Punjabi Sikhs is related to caste (*Jati*), clan (*Gotra*), village (*pind*), division (*patti*), and family (*parivar*). Most of the kinsmen of a person are found to be residing in the same village. Since joint family system is still found in considerable quantity in the villages of Punjab, the real brothers, even married ones, live in the same household. As such mutual cohesion among the kinsmen is found to be much stronger among the Punjabi Sikhs than those of the Assamese Rural Sikhs.
- Marriage patterns also vary considerably between the rural Assamese and Punjabi Sikhs. The rituals and traditions observable in an Assamese Sikh marriage ceremony is almost identical to those in an Assamese Hindu household marriage rituals. Many Sikh people are found to marry from local non-Sikh Assamese families. On the other hand caste plays an important role in the marriages since most of the marriages are found to commence within same caste. Marriage rituals and practices observed by the rural Punjabi Sikhs are similar to those other North Indian communities of People.
- Shape and pattern of settlement visible in the Sikh villages of Punjab and Assam under study are also markedly different caused by factors like topography, soil fertility, location of rivers and other water bodies like beels near the villages, flood, layout pattern of transportation network amidst the rivers and beels in Assam as well as social stratification and other social factors. While the settlements in the villages of Punjab exhibit a clustered rectangular pattern, those in Assam exhibit linear and circular pattern.

- House type between the Assamese Sikhs and Punjabi Sikhs also presents a strikingly different pattern. Assam type house pattern is much common in the Assamese Sikh villages while pucca and semi pucca thatched house pattern dominate the rural Sikh households in Punjab.
- Punjabi Sikhs' staple food is found to be roti made of wheat flour while staple food of the Assamese Sikhs is found to be rice. Cooking style of the Assamese Sikhs resemble to those of other non-Sikh Assamese communities.
- Assamese Sikhs' dressing pattern and style resemble to the common Assamese non Sikhs. The women of the community prefer to wear Mekhela Chador which is the most common Assamese ethnic dress for women. Many of the Assamese Sikh women are found to be expert weavers. On the other hand Punjabi Sikh women mostly wear Salwar Suit both at home and outside home as well.
- Assamese Sikhs are found to follow the customs and traditions associated with Sikhism with more strictness, enthusiasm and passion than those of Punjabi Rural Sikhs where many sects of the greater Sikhism are found omnipresent. On the other hand local Assamese Sikhs are also found to be associated with Hindu god and goddesses and often worship them or treat the temples and namghars with dignity.
- When celebrated festival is concerned, there are marked differences in the types and nature of festivals observed and celebrated by these two communities. While rural Sikhs of Punjab observe the festivals related with Sikhism and Punjab overall society as a whole more enthusiastically, the Assamese Sikhs are found to be more joyful and enthusiastic about non-Sikh festivals celebrated by the local Assamese communities like the Durga Puja, Bihu, Diwali, Holi etc. On the other hand they celebrated the festivals associated to Sikhism with the same passion.

Conclusion:

During the period of their settlement in Assam since two centuries the Sikhs of the study area have diverted so much physically and socio-culturally from the Sikhs of the other parts of the country that they are considered as "duplicate Sikhs" or "second class Sikhs" by their counterparts in Punjab. Punjabi speaking section of the Sikhs residing in the urban areas of the same district even does not consider the Assamese Sikhs equal to them in any aspect and marry girls belonging to the Assamese Sikhs.

Parbina Rashid published an article in the April 19, 2003, Saturday issue of The Tribune newspaper entitled "**Sikhs who enjoy doing Bihu, not Bhangra**" where she has raised the issue of dubbing and discrimination of the Assamese Sikhs by the Sikhs in Punjab. This is the rationale behind the selection of the topic to geographically reconcile and scrutinize the collected resources and materials of the Punjabi Rural Sikhs as well as the rural Assamese Sikhs to appraise the connection between these two communities.

Very few similarities were noticed in this investigation between the Rural Sikhs of Assam who are better known as the "Assamese Sikhs" and the mainstream rural Sikhs of Punjab to establish any close or probable linkage between these two communities living in two entirely different environmental set up. The investigator also failed to find any kinsmen of the rural Sikhs of Punjab among the rural Assamese Sikhs in Assam or vice versa.

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